

**Wednesday
4 September 2019**

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**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

Wednesday 4 September 2019

House of Commons

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The House met at half-past Eleven o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

The Secretary of State was asked—

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act

1. **Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab): What recent assessment he has made of the effect of the provisions of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 on trends in the level of sustainable development in Wales. [912224]

The Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office (Kevin Foster): While the UK Government have not made a formal assessment of this legislation from the National Assembly for Wales, the wellbeing of future generations is already at the heart of UK Government policy.

Kerry McCarthy: The aim of this Act is to focus minds on the long term so that we leave things better off for the next generation than they are for us. Given the decade of austerity, the risk of a no-deal Brexit and the climate emergency we are currently in, how does the Minister think this legislation would fare in UK law judging by what we are doing to the future generations now?

Kevin Foster: If we were looking well to the future, we would say that this was the first Government of one the major industrialised countries to set a legal target for zero carbon emissions. We can look at the work being done in the north Wales growth deal to drive forward sustainable growth. Given that one of the tests for future generations is not handing them unsustainable debt, we can look at how we got on and tackled the deficit that was completely unsustainable when we inherited it in 2010.

Anna McMorrin (Cardiff North) (Lab): As someone who helped to develop this law from its beginning to its end in Welsh government, I have seen what a difference it has made to our public bodies, to Welsh government, and to people's lives in Wales in terms of long-term decision making. Will the Minister commit his Government to bringing in this future generations law for the whole of the UK?

Kevin Foster: As I said, the UK Government already have the wellbeing of our future generations at the heart of our policy. Looking at Labour Members, it would be interesting to know exactly how the provisions around handing on unsustainable debt would apply to the shadow Chancellor's economic policy.

Withdrawal Agreement

2. **Wayne David** (Caerphilly) (Lab): What recent economic assessment he has made of the potential effect on Wales of the implementation of the withdrawal agreement. [912225]

10. **Bambos Charalambous** (Enfield, Southgate) (Lab): What recent economic assessment he has made of the potential effect on Wales of the implementation of the withdrawal agreement. [912233]

The Secretary of State for Wales (Alun Cairns): The best outcome for Wales and the Welsh economy is that the UK leaves the European Union in an orderly manner with a deal. We will continue to work with energy and determination to make sure that that happens. However, the UK will be leaving the European Union on 31 October.

Wayne David: Given that 90% of Welsh lamb is exported to other countries in the European Union, does the Secretary of State still believe that, in the event of a no-deal Brexit, a viable alternative market will be Japan?

Alun Cairns: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point. I met the Farmers Union of Wales yesterday, and I will be meeting NFU Cymru quite soon. The Japanese market is a new market that opened in January. It is wholly separate from the free trade agreement that the European Union has with Japan, so there has been lots of misreporting that the hon. Gentleman fails to recognise and understand. However, his constituency voted to leave the European Union—why is he trying to stop the process?

Bambos Charalambous: Will the Secretary of State confirm what conversations his Government colleagues have had with the manufacturing industry concerning a hard Brexit?

Alun Cairns: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, because manufacturing is an extremely important part of the Welsh economy. Wales has the fastest growth in the manufacturing sector across the whole of the UK economy. The Welsh manufacturing sector is in good strength, and I look forward to the new opportunities after we have left the European Union.

Mr David Jones (Clwyd West) (Con): This House has rejected the withdrawal agreement on three occasions, and it is therefore a dead letter. Given that the people of Wales voted to leave the European Union, does my right hon. Friend agree that we have a positive obligation to deliver Brexit and that that is less likely to be achieved if this House decides to pass the Bill that it will be considering later today?

Alun Cairns: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. I pay tribute to him for his work in this area. The Welsh and the British public want Members in this place to act on the result of the referendum, to draw a line and move on, and to focus on growing and supporting the Welsh and the UK economies for the opportunities after we have left the European Union.

Michael Fabricant (Lichfield) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the 594 pieces of legislation that this Parliament has passed in the event of a no-deal Brexit and the corresponding pieces of legislation passed in Brussels mean that the future for Wales, whether it be deal or no deal, is bright?

Alun Cairns: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The UK Government are making comprehensive preparations, in the event of a deal or in the event of no deal, to best position the UK and the Welsh economy to take the new opportunities as we leave the European Union. I am determined to work with colleagues right across Whitehall to ensure that Wales is at the forefront of their thinking.

Liz Saville Roberts (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC): Last night, 85% of Welsh MPs voted against no deal, including some very honourable Members who braved their own Whip. No deal has no mandate from the people and no mandate from Parliament. Is the Secretary of State proud of being complicit in his Administration's attempt at pushing through an anti-democratic, damaging version of Brexit by silencing Welsh MPs who are representing our nation's best interests?

Alun Cairns: The right hon. Lady's party jointly published a document, "Securing Wales' Future", with the Welsh Government, which said that they would honour the outcome of the referendum. The reality is that the right hon. Lady and her party are frustrating the process. People in Wales want to draw a line and move on.

Liz Saville Roberts: Evidently the Prime Minister has a kennel of little pet dogs. As this place descends into further chaos, when the Senedd is recalled early tomorrow, Plaid Cymru will be calling for a Welsh national constitutional convention, to look at the options for Wales's constitutional future. Can the Secretary of State confirm whether his party will get behind this national conversation, or will his seniors—the Minister for the Union and his advisers—stifle every attempt at our nation's democracy?

Alun Cairns: The right hon. Lady claims to be the leader in Westminster of the party of Wales, but she fails to remember and to act on the instruction that came from the people of Wales to leave the European Union. She is seeking to frustrate the process. She is causing uncertainty to the Welsh economy, which is undermining business confidence.

Christina Rees (Neath) (Lab/Co-op): I have listened intently to the Secretary of State's answers, and I am struggling, because he appears to be totally out of touch with what is going on in this place and in Wales. Does he now believe that the backstop is anti-democratic and risks undermining the Good Friday agreement, as his current boss claims?

Alun Cairns: The hon. Lady did not support the withdrawal agreement—she voted against it—which has contributed to the current circumstances. Does she genuinely recognise and want to act on the instruction that came from the Welsh people, which is to leave the European Union? We need to draw a line.

Christina Rees: That is another non-answer from the Secretary of State, among many. I thought the system here was that I ask the questions and he answers them, unless I have got it wrong or he wants to swap positions. I will ask him again: why did he vote for the backstop three times under his previous boss? Was that to curry favour and keep his job then, or is he trying to keep his job now, or both?

Alun Cairns: I am seeking to act on the democratic will of the Welsh and British people, and I am also seeking to respond to the demands that have been made in Parliament. The withdrawal agreement has been killed three times. We are working energetically and enthusiastically with our European allies in order to come back to this House with a deal, so that we can move on and focus on growing the economy and delivering on public services.

Universal Credit

3. **Liz Twist** (Blaydon) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the economic effect on low-income families of the roll-out of universal credit in Wales. [912226]

8. **Ruth Jones** (Newport West) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the economic effect on low-income families of the roll-out of universal credit in Wales. [912231]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Kevin Foster): People claiming universal credit move into work faster, stay in work longer and spend more time looking to increase their earnings. The latest labour market statistics show the positive impact of universal credit, with unemployment in Wales down 10,000 on the previous quarter.

Liz Twist: What discussions has the Minister had with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions about making it easier for private sector tenants in Wales to have their housing element of universal credit paid directly to their landlord?

Kevin Foster: We are always having discussions across Government about how we can improve the experience for universal credit claimants. It is possible already in certain circumstances for rent to be paid directly, but part of universal credit is ensuring that benefits mimic more the experience of being in a job and encouraging people to find one.

Ruth Jones: Does the Minister agree that, thanks to the changes that his Government have introduced this year, couples forced to transfer from pension credit to universal credit will lose up to £7,000 each and every year? What is he doing to mitigate that personal economic disaster for those couples all across Wales?

Kevin Foster: I must say that I do not recognise the figures the hon. Lady has just given, but I would say that the introduction of universal credit has ended the 16-hour cliff edge that many families faced and the introduction of the national living wage has helped boost the incomes of many across Wales.

11. [912234] **Carolyn Harris** (Swansea East) (Lab): Mr Speaker,

“Women survive violence then have to survive on peanuts, we have nothing, no furniture, no food, no recourse to public funds, we need money to live on, otherwise we are either destitute or die.”

Those are the words of a Welsh survivor of domestic violence. Is the Secretary of State aware that his Government’s universal credit scheme is responsible for causing victims more pain, more hardship and more heartbreak? These survivors need help, not hurdles. When will he start speaking up for them?

Kevin Foster: I can say that the Department for Work and Pensions has been working with Welsh Women’s Aid to deliver training for domestic abuse specialists in jobcentres. By the end of September, every jobcentre in Wales will be covered by a specialist who will further raise awareness of domestic abuse and be able to provide additional support.

Shared Prosperity Fund

4. **Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP): What recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the shared prosperity fund. [912227]

6. **Scott Mann** (North Cornwall) (Con): What steps the Government are taking to establish the shared prosperity fund. [912229]

The Secretary of State for Wales (Alun Cairns): I have regular discussions with my Cabinet colleagues on a range of issues, including the UK shared prosperity fund. The Government are committed to consulting widely on the design of the fund, which will provide a real opportunity to strengthen the bonds of the Union through a programme of investment to tackle inequalities between communities.

Alison Thewliss: That does not really tell us very much. The Government snuck out a statement pre-recess, with no guarantees and a very vague promise of consultation. Can the Secretary of State tell me today whether Wales and Scotland will be able to set their own priorities under the shared prosperity fund, or is this just another blatant Westminster power grab?

Alun Cairns: Wales has received more than £4 billion—or almost £5 billion—over the last 17 years or more, but remains the poorest part of the UK. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to change that funding, so it can be more responsive to the needs of communities, rather than perhaps centralised bureaucrats.

Scott Mann: Like Wales, Cornwall has benefited from the European regional development fund and objective 1 funding. Can I ask what representations the Welsh Secretary is making to the Treasury to ensure that small businesses are able to bid in, because that was the big problem with the funding in the previous round?

Alun Cairns: My hon. Friend makes an excellent point. He talks about the engagement of the private sector and small businesses, particularly with what are currently European programmes, and the difficulty they have had. The UK shared prosperity fund will allow us to respond to the demands of businesses in my hon. Friend’s constituency and right across Wales.

13. [912236] **Nick Smith** (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab): The Ebbw Vale to Cardiff train line is critical for Blaenau Gwent’s economy. It needs track, bridging and signalling work to run more trains an hour, but Wales has received just 2% of rail enhancement funding since 2011, so the shared prosperity fund would really help here. Will the Secretary of State meet me, Transport Ministers and the Welsh Government to help provide funding and improve this line for Blaenau Gwent?

Alun Cairns: I will happily work constructively with the hon. Gentleman, as I regularly do—I pay tribute to the work he has been doing to highlight the challenges and opportunities that the Ebbw Vale railway line brings—and I will meet him and our colleagues. I would highlight, however, that Cardiff Central is also important to the network in and around south Wales. The renewal of the station, which we have announced, has been well received within the region, as has the new West Wales Parkway, which will take tens of minutes off journey times between Cardiff and west Wales.

Glyn Davies (Montgomeryshire) (Con): Can the Secretary of State give this House an assurance that every part of Wales—not just west Wales and the valleys, but every part of Wales, including mid-Wales—will be in a position to benefit from the funding opportunities that will arise from the UK shared prosperity fund?

Alun Cairns: May I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for highlighting and championing this cause for some time? He recognises that some of the poorest wards in Wales are outside the current European rules about where money can be spent. His constituency is one and my constituency is another, so reshaping the UK shared prosperity fund will give us an opportunity to support his most vulnerable constituents and others, wherever else they are in Wales.

Albert Owen (Ynys Môn) (Lab): Agencies, small businesses and local authorities are making post-2020 plans now. What assurances can the Secretary of State give those businesses and agencies that the money will become available, and how will they manage to access this money?

Alun Cairns: The hon. Gentleman makes an important point. Even if we were remaining in the European Union and we had not had the referendum, there would be no clarity on his question from a European perspective. The way in which the Labour party is prolonging the Brexit debate means more uncertainty for community groups that want to benefit from the post-Brexit policies, such as the UK shared prosperity fund.

Leaving the EU: No Deal

5. **David T. C. Davies** (Monmouth) (Con): What recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on economic preparations for the UK leaving the EU without a deal on 31 October 2019. [912228]

The Secretary of State for Wales (Alun Cairns): I have regular discussions with Cabinet colleagues. We would prefer to leave the European Union with a deal, but if it is not possible, we will leave without a deal, and the Government are committed to preparing for this outcome.

David T. C. Davies: Wales will benefit from Brexit with or without a deal. Does the Secretary of State agree that we could deliver an extra boost to the economy of south Wales by devolving air passenger duty to the Welsh Government, allowing them to cut that tax in Wales, which would put Wales on an equal footing with Scotland and Northern Ireland?

Alun Cairns: My hon. Friend has made many points. I pay tribute to the research and report that the Welsh Affairs Committee, which he chairs, has published. It has recently received a response from the Government. It highlighted that this is one aviation market. Therefore, we cannot act in a way that would benefit one part and destroy another. I fear that the Welsh Government would increase air passenger duty in Cardiff and make the airport even more uncompetitive.

David Hanson (Delyn) (Lab): What provision have the Government made to support Welsh farmers in the event of a 40% tariff on 1 November?

Alun Cairns: I met the Farmers Union of Wales yesterday to discuss the challenges and opportunities that Brexit will bring. I plan to meet NFU Cymru shortly. We recognise that there are new markets that we need to be exploring. I have already highlighted Japan as one of those markets, but there are many more.

Chris Ruane (Vale of Clwyd) (Lab): To continue that point, 40% of the UK's sheepmeat is exported tariff-free to the EU. Yesterday, our shadow team met the FUW, which said that on 1 November there will be a huge lamb market in Dolgellau. If we crash out of the EU without a deal on Halloween, the lamb export market will disappear overnight. The lambs in Dolgellau will have no market value and will be culled, buried or sold off as pet food. Which of those options does the Secretary of State think is the best?

Alun Cairns: Our record supporting rural Wales and the rural economy across the whole of the UK is strong. It compares favourably with the hon. Gentleman's performance. I hardly saw him as the champion of Welsh agriculture in the past.

Leaving the EU: No Deal

7. **Andrew Bowie (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (Con):** What recent discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on planning for the UK leaving the EU without a deal. [912230]

The Secretary of State for Wales (Alun Cairns): I have regular discussions with Welsh Government Ministers on a range of issues, including preparations for leaving the EU. Within days of the Prime Minister's appointment at the end of July, the Prime Minister and I met the First Minister in Cardiff. Naturally our departure from the EU was central to these discussions.

Andrew Bowie: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. There are some concerns that the devolved Administrations might not be as ready as this Government for a no-deal exit. Can he confirm that this Government are doing all they can to ensure that the entire UK is ready to leave, come what may, on 31 October?

Alun Cairns: My hon. Friend has hit the nail on the head. The devolved Administrations are invited to the exit planning committees that the UK Government hold. They are fully aware of the proactive, positive steps and measures that we have introduced in preparation for leaving the European Union. I am only disappointed that the same courtesy and invitation have not been extended by the Scottish and Welsh Governments, which would allow and give us the same confidence.

Jessica Morden (Newport East) (Lab): The Secretary of State talked about manufacturing and the economy. The impact of Tata's announcement on Monday that it will close Cogent's Orb steelworks will be keenly felt in Newport. It is devastating news for workers and their families. Will he meet me urgently to discuss what the Government will do?

Alun Cairns: Absolutely. I will meet the hon. Lady and work with her to co-ordinate our response. I recognise the priority she has placed on this operation for some time and she highlighted some of the risks and concerns she had some time ago. Yesterday, I spoke to Roy Rickhuss from Community union. I have, naturally, also spoken to Tata. We are working with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy in terms of challenging the issues that Tata is raising to seek to bring it to the most competitive position possible.

Jonathan Edwards (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (PC): With reports that the British Government are stockpiling body bags as part of their no-deal Brexit preparations, what assessment has the Secretary of State undertaken of the amount of Welsh people who may die as a result of medical shortages for a no-deal Brexit?

Alun Cairns: The hon. Gentleman, by supporting the motion last night and the Bill this evening, is simply prolonging the uncertainty. The Welsh people and the British people want certainty about our exit from the European Union. We are determined to leave at the end of October. We would like to leave with a deal—that will give us the smoothest possible exit—but at least we can plan for the opportunities the future brings. [*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. I appeal to the House to calm down. There are a very large number of noisy private conversations taking place, which, at the very least, is rather discourteous to and disrespectful of the people of Wales.

Strength of the Union

9. **Ross Thomson (Aberdeen South) (Con):** What steps the Government are taking to strengthen the Union. [912232]

The Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office (Kevin Foster): This Government are a Unionist Government firmly committed to strengthening our United Kingdom. My noble Friend Lord Dunlop is conducting an independent inquiry to ensure UK Government structures are configured to strengthen the working of the Union, while respecting and supporting the current devolution settlements.

Ross Thomson: Does my hon. Friend agree that all four nations of our United Kingdom benefit from the close bonds of our Union and that, as we leave the EU with powers returning from Brussels, we can strengthen those bonds even further?

Kevin Foster: I totally agree with my hon. Friend. Seeing powers coming back to this United Kingdom and going to the devolved tier of government will help to bring our four nations closer together. That is why it is so strange that those people who call themselves nationalists actually want to take powers back so they can give them away again to Brussels.

Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab): Is it not the case that the real nationalist party in this Chamber now, after last night's events, is the Tory party, which is rapidly turning into the right-wing English nationalist party?

Kevin Foster: Well, what a load of rubbish. This party is absolutely firmly committed to being a Unionist party, and we will not be fanning the flames of division by raising the prospects of second referendums, including second referendums on separation.

Leaving the EU: Potential Benefits

12. **Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con):** What assessment he has made of the potential benefits to Wales of the UK leaving the EU on 31 October 2019. [912235]

The Secretary of State for Wales (Alun Cairns): The Welsh economy approaches EU exit from a strong position. Leaving the EU will allow us to shape our own ambitious trade and investment opportunities, putting Wales and the wider UK at the forefront of global trade and investment.

Mr Bone: My gosh, Mr Speaker, the Minister has answered the question for me. I cannot ask a supplementary.

Alun Cairns: We can take great pride in how the economy has performed since the referendum took place: record levels of employment; low levels of unemployment; and inactivity levels in Wales now that are better than the rest of the UK for the first time in decades. I look forward to the opportunities being a participant in new free trade agreements right around the world will give to the Welsh economy.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab) rose—[Interruption.]

Mr Speaker: Now the hon. Gentleman knows how popular he is, he has a right to have his question heard with courtesy. We will keep going for as long as necessary to ensure that that happens in every case.

Chris Bryant: I'm not sure it's worth it, to be honest. [Laughter.] If the UK leaves the European Union without a deal, how will Welsh farmers be able to sell their lamb in the European Union?

Alun Cairns: I have already mentioned the positive engagement that we have with the farming and rural affairs community, and the new markets that are open

to us. The hon. Gentleman, by voting last night in favour of a motion and by supporting the Bill tonight, will just prolong the uncertainty and will not allow farmers to prepare. We are determined to leave the European Union. We want to leave the European Union with a deal, but we must draw a line and move on to exciting economic opportunities thereafter.

Severn Bridge Tolls

14. **Christian Matheson (City of Chester) (Lab):** What recent economic assessment he has made of the effect of the removal of tolls on the Severn bridge. [912237]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Kevin Foster): I am delighted to say that July 2019 saw a 20% increase in traffic westbound and an 8% increase eastbound compared with July 2018. It is too early to make a detailed economic assessment, but our initial estimates were that it would boost the Welsh economy by around £100 million a year.

Christian Matheson: I am really pleased to hear of those benefits. Will the Minister have a word with the Transport Secretary—just along from him on the Government Front Bench—and get him to take notice of them and have him remove the tolls on the Mersey crossing, which the Conservative Government said that they would never levy in the first place?

Kevin Foster: Each crossing is based on an individual case, and the Mersey Gateway, which, as the hon. Gentleman will know, was built in 2017, was based on a 30-year concession to fund its construction.

RAF St Athan: School of Technical Training

15. **Mrs Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab):** What recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Defence on No. 4 School of Technical Training at RAF St Athan. [912238]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Kevin Foster): The Secretary of State has regular discussions with Ministers at the Ministry of Defence on No. 4 School of Technical Training. I will be meeting Ministers at the MOD shortly to explore options not only on maintaining St Athan's role as an important military and civilian site, but on how to enhance the wider military presence in Wales.

Mrs Moon: The commandant has said that the school will close before April 2024. What steps is the Secretary of State taking, given that it is in his constituency, to ensure that the people there will have a chance either to move to Cosford or Lyneham, or, even better, to remain in Wales with this viable school remaining where it should be?

Kevin Foster: Thankfully, those who are based in St Athan have a very strong champion in the local MP and the Secretary of State for Wales in ensuring that the military presence is maintained. We just wish that the Welsh Government were slightly more co-operative.

Prime Minister

The Prime Minister was asked—

Engagements

Q1. [912209] **Siobhain McDonagh** (Mitcham and Morden) (Lab): If he will list his official engagements for Wednesday 4 September.

The Prime Minister (Boris Johnson): I know that the whole House will want to join me in paying tribute to PC Andrew Harper, who was killed while on duty. His death and the serious injuries sustained by PC Stuart Outten in London and PC Gareth Phillips in Birmingham are a powerful reminder of the dangers that police officers face every day to keep us safe.

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

Siobhain McDonagh: May I associate myself with the comments about the brave acts of the police officers?

On Brexit, the former Prime Minister's deal was unacceptable to this House, but to leave without a deal is unthinkable, yet the Prime Minister pursues a game of brinkmanship built on the livelihoods, health and future of my constituents and our country. There is still an option to resolve this once and for all: if the Prime Minister really believes in no deal, let him put it to the people and ask our people if that is the price they want to pay.

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Lady knows very well, this Government will take this country out of the European Union on 31 October. There is only one thing that stands in our way: the surrender Bill currently being proposed by the Leader of the Opposition. I invite the Leader of the Opposition to confirm, when he stands up shortly, that if that surrender Bill is passed, he will allow the people of this country to have their view on what he is proposing to hand over in their name with an election on 15 October.

Q3. [912211] **Robert Halfon** (Harlow) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that when we leave the European Union on 31 October, we will no longer be subjected to EU rules on VAT on our energy bills, costing Harlow constituents and households around £55 extra every year? Will he confirm that we will take back control of our energy bills and save households around £1.5 billion a year on their heating and lighting?

The Prime Minister: I thank my right hon. Friend for his excellent suggestion. As he knows, we currently apply the reduced 5% rate on domestic fuel and power, which is the lowest allowed under EU law, but of course when we leave the EU on 31 October, it will be open to us to change this to the benefit of the people of Harlow.

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab): I start by paying my deepest respects to PC Andrew Harper, who died in the line of duty. It is a reminder of the risks that he faced and that police officers face all the time trying to protect communities. We send our sympathies to his family, colleagues and friends.

I also send our condolences to those affected by Hurricane Dorian, which hit the Bahamas at the weekend. I hope and am sure that the Government and the Department for International Development will do all they can to send all the help that is necessary.

Yesterday, it was revealed that the Prime Minister's negotiating strategy was to run down the clock and that the Attorney General told him that his belief that the EU would drop the backstop was a complete fantasy. Are these reports accurate, or can the Prime Minister provide the detail of the proposals he has put forward to the EU?

The Prime Minister: Our negotiating strategy is to get a deal by the summit on 17 October, to take this country out of the EU on 31 October and to get Brexit done. The right hon. Gentleman's surrender Bill would wreck any chances of the talks. We do not know what his strategy would be if he took over. He is asking for mobs of Momentum activists to paralyse the traffic. What are they supposed to chant? What is the slogan? "What do we want? Dither and delay. When do we want it? We don't know." That is his policy. Can he confirm now that he will allow the people of this country to decide on what he is giving up in their name with a general election on 15 October? Or is he frit?

Jeremy Corbyn: My first question to the Prime Minister, and no answer given! I asked what proposals had been put to the EU. We asked yesterday—many colleagues asked—and he seems utterly incapable of answering. Any rational human being would assume therefore that none have been put and there is no answer. The Prime Minister and his Cabinet colleagues have said he is making progress. The EU's chief negotiator, the Chancellor of Germany and the Taoiseach of Ireland say that no proposals have yet been made by the UK. If the Prime Minister thinks he has made progress, will he publish the proposals he has put forward to replace the backstop?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman knows very well, you do not negotiate in public. We are making substantial progress and we will get that backstop out. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. Forgive me for interrupting, Prime Minister, but there is a long way to go and a lot of questions to be reached. The questions must be heard, and the Prime Minister's responses must and will be heard.

The Prime Minister: Let us be absolutely clear. This Government will get a deal from our friends in Brussels and we will get the backstop out. We will get an agreement that I think the House can agree with. The only thing standing in our way is the undermining of our negotiations by this surrender Bill, which would lead to more dither and delay. We delayed in March; we delayed in April; and now the right hon. Gentleman wants to delay again for absolutely no purpose whatever. What does he intend by this? The Government are spending £1 billion to put 20,000 more police officers on the streets. He wants to spend £1 billion a month—net—to keep us in the EU beyond 31 October. I will never allow that.

Jeremy Corbyn: I really fail to see how I can be accused of undermining negotiations, because no negotiations are taking place. The right hon. Gentleman

has been Prime Minister for six weeks, and he promised to get Brexit sorted. In six weeks, he has presented nothing to change the previous Prime Minister's deal, which he twice voted against. The negotiations that he talks about are a sham. All that he is doing is running down the clock.

At the weekend, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster said that food prices would go up under no deal. Will the Prime Minister publish the Yellowhammer documents so that people can see which food prices will go up and by how much?

The Prime Minister: The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster said absolutely no such thing, and I can tell the right hon. Gentleman that, thanks to my right hon. Friend's good offices and thanks to his efforts, preparations for no deal are very far advanced. I can also tell him that the surest way of getting no deal is to undermine this country's ability to negotiate, which is what he is doing.

If this Bill is passed this afternoon—I do not want an election, and I do not think that the right hon. Gentleman wants an election, but there is a petition on his own Labour website in which 57,000 people, including Carol, Nigel, Graham and Phoebe, have called for an election. I do not know whether there is a Jeremy on the list. I do know that the right hon. Gentleman is worried about free trade deals with America, but I can see only one chlorinated chicken in the House, and he is sitting on the Opposition Front Bench. Will he confirm that he will let the people decide on what he is doing to this country's negotiating position by having a general election on 15 October?

Jeremy Corbyn: Perhaps the Prime Minister will tell us what the negotiating position actually is.

The Prime Minister may have forgotten the question that I asked, given his rather lengthy peroration. When the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster denied that there would be shortages of fresh food, the British Retail Consortium said that that was "categorically untrue".

I hope that no more young female staff are going to be frogmarched out of Downing Street, because there was another Government leak at the weekend, concerning disruption of our ports. The leaked documents, written by the Government in the last fortnight, show that no deal would lead to shortages on the shelves and shortages of medical supplies in hospitals. People need to prepare. So I ask the Prime Minister again: will he publish the Yellowhammer documents in full, so that people can see which foodstuffs are not going to be available, which medicines are not going to be supplied and what will happen given the shortages of vital supplies in every one of our hospitals all over the country?

The Prime Minister: I am afraid that the right hon. Gentleman is guilty of the most shameless scaremongering. We have made ample preparations for coming out of the EU. What his party is recommending is yet—*[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. It is very difficult to hear the responses from the Prime Minister. Members must calm themselves. There is a long way to go.

The Prime Minister: What the right hon. Gentleman is recommending is yet more dither, yet more delay and yet more uncertainty for business. What we in the Government want to do is deliver on the mandate of the people. The right hon. Gentleman used to be a democrat. He used to believe in upholding the referendum result. Can he say now whether he would vote in favour of leave or remain, and can he say now whether he is in favour of a second referendum or not?

Jeremy Corbyn: The Prime Minister failed to answer my questions about food supplies, about medicine supplies and about the problems in hospitals. He refuses to publish the Yellowhammer documents. He talks about scaremongering. Where does the information come from, other than his office in his Government? He is obviously so confident of the position that he has adopted that he is now prepared to spend £100 million of our money on an advertising campaign to try to persuade people that everything is fine. He knows it is not, and they know it is not. He is hiding the facts.

The Government have refused to publish their impact assessments on how a no-deal Brexit would affect poverty in this country. They received a request under the Freedom of Information Act from the Glasgow-based Poverty Alliance; the DWP replied that the public interest would not be served by that disclosure. Will the Prime Minister publish that analysis? If he will not, what has he got to hide?

The Prime Minister: Unlike the right hon. Member, who would squander £1 billion a month of taxpayers' money on staying pointlessly in the EU, this Government are getting on with running a sound economy so that the poorest people in our country are seeing increases in their wages for the first time in more than a decade. I am proud to say that those on the living wage are now taking home £4,500 more every year than they were in 2010, thanks to this Conservative Government.

Jeremy Corbyn: Mr Speaker, you do not have to go very far from the portals of this House to see real destitution: people begging and sleeping on the streets; child poverty is up compared with 2010; pensioner poverty is up; and in-work poverty is up. The Prime Minister will not give us any of the information of the assessments of increased poverty that could come from his Government's proposals.

We are fewer than 60 days away from leaving the EU with no deal. The Prime Minister had two days in office before the summer recess and then has planned to prorogue Parliament. Yesterday, he lost one vote—his first vote in Parliament—and he now wants to dissolve Parliament. He is desperate—absolutely desperate—to avoid scrutiny. *[Interruption.]* In his third day in office, after five questions from me, we have not had an answer to any of them. I can see why he is desperate to avoid scrutiny: he has no plan to get a new deal—no plan, no authority and no majority. If he—*[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. If we have to go on longer because people sitting on the Treasury Bench are yelling to try to disrupt, so be it, we will go on longer. Some people used to believe in good behaviour; I believe in good behaviour on both sides of the House. It had better happen or it will take a whole lot longer—very simple, very clear.

Jeremy Corbyn: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

If the Prime Minister does to the country what he has done to his party in the past 24 hours, a lot of people have a great deal to fear from his incompetence, his vacillation and his refusal to publish known facts—that are known to him—about the effects of a no-deal Brexit.

The Prime Minister: I really do not see how with a straight face the right hon. Gentleman can accuse anybody of being unwilling to stand up to scrutiny when he will not agree to submit his surrender Bill to the verdict of the people in an election. He is frit; he is frightened.

He makes a contrast between this Government and his own proposals. The contrast could not be clearer: we think that the friends of this country are to be found in Paris, in Berlin and in the White House, and he thinks that they are in the Kremlin, in Tehran and—[*Interruption.*] He does. And in Caracas—and I think he is “caracas”!

We are putting 20,000 police on the street, we have 20 new hospital upgrades, we are growing the economy. The right hon. Gentleman, by contrast, would put a £300 billion tax on every company in the country, he wants a tax on homes, and he is calling incessantly for a general strike. The shadow Education Secretary says that Labour’s economic policy is—and I quote, by your leave, Mr Speaker,—“shit-or-bust”; I say it is both.

What this country needs is sensible, moderate, progressive Conservative government and to take this country out of the EU on 31 October, and that is what we are going to deliver.

Hon. Members: More!

Mr Speaker: There will indeed be more, starting with the closed question from Dr Julian Lewis.

National Security Adviser

Q8. [912216] **Dr Julian Lewis** (New Forest East) (Con): I should like to ask a well-behaved Question 8 on the National Security Adviser. For what reasons the roles of Cabinet Secretary and National Security Adviser were merged; and if he will make it his policy to separate those roles.

The Prime Minister: As my right hon. Friend is aware, the decision to put the two roles together was taken by my predecessor, although I have a high admiration for the gentleman in question.

Dr Lewis: I hope that my right hon. Friend is not going to follow every policy adopted by his predecessor. This is one that he should not follow. The Defence Committee needs to take evidence from the National Security Adviser on the failure to anticipate the Iranians’ reaction to the British seizure of a tanker. It is hardly likely, however, that the Cabinet Secretary will come before the Defence Committee, so would it not make sense to have a full-time occupant of the post of National Security Adviser as soon as possible so that Select Committees and the National Security Committee can do our jobs properly?

The Prime Minister: I think that the role has been very well performed in recent times, but I take my right hon. Friend’s point very humbly and sincerely, and I

will ensure that invitations to appear before his Committee are considered in the usual way and that he gets all the satisfaction he desires.

Engagements

Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): Last night, Parliament once again defeated this shambolic Tory Government. Today, we have seized back control from a Prime Minister who is behaving more like a dictator than a democrat. The Prime Minister must be stopped, and MPs must tonight unite across this House to take no deal off the table. We will defeat the Government again, so, when we succeed, will the Prime Minister respect the democratic vote of this House and the democratic will of the people we represent and finally act to remove the threat of a catastrophic no-deal Brexit?

The Prime Minister: I might ask the right hon. Gentleman if he will respect the democratic will of the people of the United Kingdom, which this House voted to do time and again, to implement the result of the referendum.

Ian Blackford: I know that the right hon. Gentleman is a new boy, but may I suggest to him that we ask the questions and he is supposed to answer them? Quite simply, my colleagues and I are sent here by the people of Scotland, where we have a majority. The people of Scotland voted to remain in the European Union and we are not going to be dragged out against our will by the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister must also not be paying attention to the polls this morning. They show that the Scottish National party is polling to win a majority in Scotland once again, with the Tories in retreat, so if he wants an election, he should enable the Bill and bring it on.

It is clear for all to see that the Prime Minister is playing a game of bluff and bluster. He does not care about stopping a no-deal Brexit. His strategy, as his lead adviser put it, is a sham. This is not a Parliament versus the people; it is a Parliament standing up for the people. The people did not vote for a no-deal Brexit. This Prime Minister is robbing the people of power and handing control to the Leave campaign, the cult now running No. 10. Once again, I ask the Prime Minister: are you a dictator or a Democrat? Will he accept the legislation today so that no deal can be avoided, and will he let us vote for an election so that the people can truly decide the next steps?

The Prime Minister: I am a democrat, because I not only want to respect the will of the people in the referendum but want to have an election—or I am willing to have an election—if the terrible Bill goes through.

There is a reason why the separatists in Scotland drone on and on about breaking up and smashing the oldest and most successful political union, and that is to detract from their appalling domestic record. They are a total shambles. They have the highest taxes anywhere in Europe. Their educational standards are falling, for which they are responsible. Their signature policy—[*Interruption.*] This is a useful point. Their signature policy is to return Scotland to the European Union after Brexit, complete with the euro, the full panoply of

EU laws and, as I never tire of saying, the surrendering of Scottish fish just when they have been taken back by this country.

Q13. [912222] **Lucy Allan** (Telford) (Con): I warmly welcome the Prime Minister to his place. My constituents sent me here to speak for them, and what they care about is better hospital care, more police on our streets, and good schools for their children. Does the Prime Minister agree with people in Telford that those are the issues we should be discussing in this place? Will he commit to building on his welcome spending announcements to deliver great public services for my constituents?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend very much. We love Telford, of course, and it is going to see even more when my right hon. Friend the Chancellor announces his spending review shortly. There will be investment in the NHS, more police officers to keep our streets and the hon. Lady's streets safe, and more money for every school in this country. Conservatives are delivering on the priorities of the British people.

Q2. [912210] **Douglas Chapman** (Dunfermline and West Fife) (SNP): Mr Speaker, you know that I am not a doomster or a gloomster. On that positive note, I thank the Prime Minister for boosting support for Scottish independence just a few weeks into his premiership—they may be his last few weeks, too.

According to research by the UK Trade Policy Observatory, a no-deal Brexit would cost up to 1,100 jobs in my constituency and over 63,000 jobs across Scotland. Will the Prime Minister explain to me and my constituents, who are facing that dreadful prospect, what their families should do about the heavy price that they may pay for a Brexit that they never voted for?

The Prime Minister: Of course we are preparing for a no-deal Brexit if we absolutely must have one. I do not think that the consequences will be anything like as bad as the merchants of Project Fear have said, but the way to avoid a no-deal Brexit is to allow this Government to get on and do a deal at the summit on 17 October. The choice for this country is who they want doing that deal: this Government or that Labour party, led by Jeremy Corbyn.

Mr Speaker: Order. We do not name people in the Chamber. People must observe the rules—[*Interruption.*] Order. I am simply and politely informing the Prime Minister of the very long-established procedure with which everybody, including the Prime Minister, must comply. That is the position—no doubt, no argument, no contradiction—and that is the end of the matter.

Dame Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham) (Con): I welcome the new Prime Minister to the Dispatch Box and tell him that this year we celebrate 10 years since this House passed the Autism Act, which is still the only disability-specific piece of legislation in the UK. The all-party parliamentary group on autism, made up of Members from all parts of the House, will publish next week the 10th annual review, with recommendations for the Government right across the board. Will my right hon. Friend undertake to look at the recommendations carefully and instruct his Chancellor to put more resources and more money into helping people with autism and their families receive the help and services they need?

The Prime Minister: I thank my right hon. Friend very much for everything she has done for that cause over many years, and I reassure her that, very shortly, the Chancellor of the Exchequer will outline not just more money for primary schools and secondary schools, but also a big investment in schools for special educational needs and disabilities. That is, again, delivering on the priorities of the British people.

Q4. [912212] **Geraint Davies** (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op): People in Swansea voted to leave the EU, but leave voters are saying to me that they did not vote for a no deal or for “do or die” on 31 October. They want to live. They voted for good things—for more money, more jobs and more control—and now they see that they will get less money, less jobs and less control, so they want a final say.

Will the Prime Minister undertake, when he goes to extend article 50 after the passage of the Bill we are considering this afternoon, to ensure there is a proper referendum so that there is a choice between a managed deal and remain, and not a kamikaze no deal?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman wants to put that matter to the people, the best thing he can do is persuade his right hon. Friend to summon up his courage and to stop being so frit. If he is going to pass this wretched surrender Bill, at least he should submit it to the judgment of the people in the form of a general election.

If the hon. Gentleman wants to implement the will of the people of Swansea, what he should do is vote with this Government and not for the surrender Bill tonight.

Mr David Gauke (South West Hertfordshire) (Ind): The Prime Minister has said that the Prorogation of Parliament is nothing to do with Brexit. Is that still his position?

The Prime Minister: As my right hon. Friend knows full well, there have been demands for the Prorogation of Parliament ahead of a Queen's Speech from the hon. Member for Walsall South (Valerie Vaz) and from across the House. This Session has lasted longer than any in the last 400 years, and there will be ample opportunity to debate the Brexit deal in this House after 17 October if this Government are allowed to get on and deliver a deal.

Q5. [912213] **Mr Adrian Bailey** (West Bromwich West) (Lab/Co-op): The Chancellor today announced another £2 billion, on top of the £6.3 billion already allocated, to help companies after a no-deal Brexit. Industry, the public and Parliament have a right to know which industries will benefit, for how long and what the total cost will be to the taxpayer. Can the Prime Minister tell us?

The Prime Minister: There is a great deal of preparatory work going on—particularly in the west midlands, which the hon. Gentleman represents—to make sure that automotive supply chains are indeed ready for a no-deal scenario, but we do not want a no-deal scenario. And the way to avoid it is not to vote for the absurd surrender Bill that is before the House today and to let the Government get on and negotiate a deal, because that is what we want to do.

Douglas Ross (Moray) (Con): The Scotch whisky industry is hugely important in Moray. The potential tariffs applied by the US as part of its trade war with the EU could cost hundreds or thousands of jobs across Scotland and the United Kingdom, so what representations has the Prime Minister made to President Trump? Will his Government do everything possible to avoid these tariffs being applied to the Scotch whisky industry?

The Prime Minister: I congratulate my hon. Friend on everything he does to represent that vital industry, which earns billions of pounds in revenue for this country. Tariffs on Scotch whisky would be absolutely absurd—a point we have made repeatedly to our friends in the United States—but, again, when we do free trade deals around the world, Scotch whisky is one of those many products that will have its chances boosted in growing export markets.

Q6. [912214] **Karen Lee** (Lincoln) (Lab): Last weekend, in Lincoln and right across the country, there were cross-party protests against the Prorogation of Parliament. Does this unelected Prime Minister, who has no majority in this House, believe that his attack on our democracy is his only means of forcing a disastrous no-deal Brexit on Lincoln and on the businesses and people of this country?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Lady wants to speak for the people of Lincoln, who, after all, voted to leave—yes, they did—the best thing she can do is make sure we come out of the EU on 31 October with a deal. If she is genuinely prepared to frustrate that ambition, through the surrender deal being proposed today, will she at least have a word with her friend on the Front Bench and urge him, as she speaks of democracy, to submit his Bill to the will of the people, in the form of a general election on 15 October? Will she at least say that to him?

Karen Bradley (Staffordshire Moorlands) (Con): Many of us in this House will know the value of community hospitals in our constituencies, with none more valued than Leek Moorlands Hospital in my constituency. A consultation has recently been undertaken on the provision of healthcare in north Staffordshire, and there is understandable concern about the future of Leek Moorlands. So will the Prime Minister join my campaign to keep the hospital open in Leek, with enhanced services, for the benefit of all the people of Leek and Staffordshire Moorlands?

The Prime Minister: First, let me thank my right hon. Friend for everything she has done for the people of Northern Ireland and for rightly raising this issue in her constituency with me. Of course she will understand that decisions affecting Leek Moorlands must be led by clinicians, but I hope a solution can be found that benefits everyone in her constituency.

Q7. [912215] **Paul Blomfield** (Sheffield Central) (Lab): In a desperate attempt to win yesterday's vote, the Prime Minister apparently made emotional appeals to Conservative MPs that he was serious in seeking a deal, but his answers in the House yesterday and today make it clear that there are no real negotiations, in public or in private. Those with whom he claims to be negotiating in the European Union have said:

“Nothing has been put on the table”.

So does the Prime Minister understand why, across this country, people find it difficult to trust a word he says?

The Prime Minister: May I tell the hon. Gentleman that what the people of this country want to see is us come together to come out of the EU on 31 October with a deal? We are making great progress with our friends and partners in Brussels and Dublin, and even in Paris, but I am afraid those talks are currently being undermined by the absurd Bill before the House today. I urge him to reject it. If he must pass it, will he have a word with his right hon. Friend and ensure that that Bill is put to the people, in the form of a general election?

Mr Dominic Grieve (Beaconsfield) (Ind): In the light of the Prime Minister's answer to my right hon. Friend the Member for South West Hertfordshire (Mr Gauke), could the Prime Minister please explain why it has proved impossible to find any official or Minister prepared to state that the reasons for Prorogation were to pave the way for a Queen's Speech, in the course of the current legal proceedings in which the Government are involved? Would the Prime Minister like to reconsider the answer he has just given to the House?

The Prime Minister: I hesitate to advise my right hon. and learned Friend about legal proceedings but, if he looks at what happened in Scotland this morning, he will discover that that case was thrown out.

Q9. [912217] **Ms Karen Buck** (Westminster North) (Lab): As a result of budget cuts to the Home Office, largely enacted while the right hon. Gentleman was Mayor of London, police numbers plummeted: we have 1,000 fewer officers in the west London command unit alone; and we are one third down on police officers in my borough of Westminster. He is now promising to get us back to where we were in 2010, with an additional 20,000 officers. He has told us, and he said this again today, that those 20,000 will be frontline police and on the streets. It is, however, now clear that at least 7,000 of those officers will not be frontline police. So in order to help this House build some trust in any of the promises he makes, can he tell us whether that is true?

The Prime Minister: I think it absolutely bizarre that a London Labour Member of Parliament should ignore the role of the present Mayor of London, who is, frankly, not a patch on the old guy. I left him £600 million and he has squandered it on press officers. Sadiq Khan has squandered it on press officers, and the faster we get rid of him and get more police officers out on the street, the better. That is the best possible argument for Shaun Bailey as Mayor of London.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. In the remaining minutes of this session, I appeal to colleagues to take account of the fact that we are visited by a distinguished group of Lebanese parliamentarians, at the invitation of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the all-party group on Lebanon, which is chaired by the right hon. Member for South Holland and The Deepings (Sir John Hayes). We would like to set them a good example; I am not sure at the moment how impressed they will be.

Sir Gary Streeter (South West Devon) (Con): I think I can comply with that advice, Mr Speaker.

I welcome the extra £14 billion that was recently announced for schools, especially in respect of South West Devon, where I understand we will have the largest increase in the country to correct historical underspending. Does my right hon. Friend agree that this cash boost will help our hard-working teachers to prepare the next generation to reach their full potential? Will it not be wonderful, when we get through Brexit, to start to talk about education, health and social care—the things our constituents are really bothered about?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is exactly right. That is exactly why we need that three-year investment in education, and to get Brexit done on 31 October and not be attracted to any more dither, delay and confusion under the Labour party.

Q10. [912218] **Vernon Coaker** (Gedling) (Lab): Yesterday, the Prime Minister booted 21 MPs out of his own party for voting against a reckless no-deal Brexit. They included well-respected Members of this House, including a former Chancellor, Churchill's grandson and the Father of the House. Presumably, that was done on the orders of the Prime Minister's chief of staff. Given the fact that the Prime Minister himself voted against the former Prime Minister's deal without losing the Whip, does this not demonstrate to the British public his view of life—namely, that there is one rule for him and another for everyone else?

The Prime Minister rose—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. Leave me to control the proceedings; I should be immensely grateful for your assistance in that regard. The heckling must cease and we will hear the reply.

The Prime Minister: I am not going to take any lectures from anybody in the Labour party about how to run a party. There is a party in which good, hard-working MPs are daily hounded out by antisemitic mobs. Let us be absolutely clear: if the hon. Gentleman is interested in democracy, I hope he has been listening to what I have been saying today. In an anti-democratic way, the Bill that will come before the House today would hand over this country's right to decide how long to remain in the EU, and it would hand it over to the EU itself. That is what the Bill involves. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that is a good idea, let him submit it to the judgment of the British people in an election.

Richard Harrington (Watford) (Ind): I am sure that you, Mr Speaker, will know that tomorrow is the ninth annual Watford jobs fair. I am taking particular interest in the 1,000 or so vacancies this year, and I feel that other Members on both sides of the House might be interested as well. I thank Victoria Lynch and Anna Cox for organising it. We have 1,000 vacancies in more than 60 companies. If the Prime Minister has any spare time tomorrow—there is not much going on here—perhaps he could pop up to Watford, where he would be very welcome.

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend, who has been a wonderful champion for Watford and for conservative values. I have been to campaign for him in

Watford and seen how popular he is. There are now 20,000 job vacancies in the police, if he or anybody in Watford wishes to take up that role, and there are many more in nursing. As my hon. Friend knows, in Watford and throughout the country, unemployment is at a record low and employment is at record highs, because of the sound economic policies that this Government have followed.

Q11. [912220] **Liz McInnes** (Heywood and Middleton) (Lab): This week, the director general of the CBI wrote to all MPs in the north-west urging us to do everything we can to get a deal that works for businesses in our region. The CBI says that a no-deal Brexit would be disastrous for north-west business, particularly small businesses. We all know what the Prime Minister has said in the past about business but, now that he has assumed a position of some responsibility, will he stop this relentless posturing around no deal, listen to the CBI and work to protect our vital businesses?

The Prime Minister: Again, that is a bit rich from a member of a party whose shadow Chancellor says that business is the enemy—[*Interruption.*] Where is he? He has gone. The hon. Lady should listen to the people of her constituency who voted to leave the EU and implement their wishes, and that is what this Government are going to do.

Sir Roger Gale (North Thanet) (Con): Much has been made about provision for EU nationals resident in the United Kingdom post Brexit. Much less comfort has been offered to those 1.5 million United Kingdom nationals resident throughout the rest of the European Union. Is the Prime Minister in a position to confirm not on a piecemeal, but on a pan-European basis that all pensions will be paid in full, that exportable benefits will continue to be paid in full, that healthcare will be covered in full, and that rights of domicile and freedom of movement will be protected? There are frightened people who need an answer.

The Prime Minister: I thank my right hon. Friend and I can assure him that that matter is, of course, at the top of our concerns with all our EU friends and partners. We have made it absolutely clear that the very, very generous offer that this country has rightly made to the 3.4 million EU citizens here in this country must be reciprocated symmetrically and in full by our friends in the way that he has described.

Q12. [912221] **Stephen Morgan** (Portsmouth South) (Lab): The Prime Minister has said that the great city of Portsmouth is too full of obesity and drug addiction. Despite that disgraceful and inaccurate statement about my home city, how would he expect our much-loved NHS to deal with these issues when it is his Government who are exposing us to medicine and staff shortages, according to his own Health Secretary, by hurtling us towards a no-deal Brexit?

The Prime Minister: I must correct the hon. Gentleman because, in fact, unemployment is well down in his constituency, employment is up and health outcomes are up. When I made those remarks, which was many, many years ago, it was, I am afraid, when his constituency had the sad misfortune to have a Labour Government in power. That is no longer the case.

Ross Thomson (Aberdeen South) (Con): I know that, like me, my right hon. Friend has deep concerns about the unfair retrospective loan charge. It is tearing families apart, driving people to despair and reportedly some to suicide. With more than 8,000 people signing my petition saying that we cannot go on like this, can he advise the House on what urgent action his Government will be taking to address this?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for his question because this is an issue that my own constituents have raised with me, and I know that many of my hon. Friends have also had this issue raised with them. I am sure that Members on all sides of the House have met people who have taken out loan charges in the expectation that they can reduce their tax exposure. It is a very, very difficult issue and I have undertaken to have a thoroughgoing review of the matter. Of course, I will make sure that my hon. Friend has every opportunity to have further discussions with the Treasury about how to redress the situation and about the gravity of the situation.

Q14. [912223] **Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi** (Slough) (Lab): If I decide to wear a turban, or you, Mr Speaker, decide to wear a cross, or he decides to wear a kippah or skull cap, or she decides to wear a hijab or a burqa, does that mean that it is open season for right hon. Members of this House to make derogatory and divisive remarks about our appearance? For those of us who, from a young age, have had to endure and face up to being called names such as towelhead or Taliban, or to people saying we come from bongo-bongo land, we can appreciate full well the hurt and pain felt by already vulnerable Muslim women when they are described as looking like bank robbers and letterboxes. So rather than hide behind sham and whitewash investigations, when will the Prime Minister finally apologise for his derogatory and racist remarks? [*Applause.*] Those racist remarks have led to a spike in hate crime. Given the increasing prevalence of such incidents within his party, when will the Prime Minister finally order an inquiry into Islamophobia within the Conservative party, which was something that he and his Chancellor promised on national television? [*Applause.*]

The Prime Minister rose—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. The response from the Prime Minister will be heard.

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman took the trouble to read the article in question, he would see that it was a strong liberal defence of—as he began his question by saying—everybody's right to wear whatever they want in this country. I speak as somebody who is proud not only to have Muslim ancestors, but to be related to Sikhs like him. I am also proud to say that,

under this Government, we have the most diverse Cabinet in the history of this country. We truly reflect modern Britain. We have yet to hear from anywhere in the Labour party any hint of apology for the virus of antisemitism that is now rampant in its ranks. I would like to hear that from the hon. Gentleman.

Margot James (Stourbridge) (Ind): The great lady, whom I am sure you and I both revere, Mr Speaker, once said, "Advisers advise, Ministers decide." Can I ask the Prime Minister to bear that statement closely in mind in relation to his own chief adviser, Dominic Cummings? [*Applause.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. The reply must be heard. If the House were to want as a matter of course to allow clapping, by decision of the House, so be it, but it should not otherwise become a regular practice. We have heard the question, pungently expressed. Let us hear the answer from the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: I am used to breasting applause from Labour audiences, particularly since, unlike the Leader of the Opposition, we are actually devoted to delivering on the mandate of those Labour constituencies and we are going to take the UK out of the EU on 31 October. As for the excellent question that my hon. Friend asked, be in no doubt that we are deciding on a policy to take this country forward, not backwards, as the Leader of the Opposition would do.

Jo Swinson (East Dunbartonshire) (LD): The Prime Minister's response to the hon. Member for Slough (Mr Dhesi) was appalling. An apology was required, rather than some kind of justification that there is ever any acceptable context for remarks such as the Prime Minister made in that column. He is the Prime Minister of our country. His words carry weight and he has to be more careful with what he says. My constituent Kristin is afraid because her mum, a European citizen, has been struggling to get settled status after 45 years in this country. Our friends, colleagues and neighbours deserve better than his failures and carelessness with language.

The Prime Minister: In the case of his constituent Kristin—

Valerie Vaz (Walsall South) (Lab): His?

The Prime Minister: Her constituent Kristin—if she has indeed been here for 45 years, and I am sure she has—should be automatically eligible for settled status. Clearly, it is a difficult case, but the answer is for the hon. Member for East Dunbartonshire (Jo Swinson) to bring it to the Home Secretary, and I am sure we can sort it out.

Spending Round 2019

12.56 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Sajid Javid): Let me start by saying a few words about the circumstances surrounding today's statement. We are in uncharted waters. I understand the strong feelings around the House on these important questions, but it cannot be right for a proud, sovereign democracy to ignore the will of the people. If the House votes for the Bill this afternoon, all we will be doing is delaying what the people have entrusted to us to do, and creating even more uncertainty for our democracy and our economy through a general election that nobody wants. We cannot allow that uncertainty to distract us from delivering on the people's priorities, so today, to give certainty where we can, I announce our spending plans for Britain's first year outside the European Union.

After a decade of recovery from Labour's great recession, we are turning the page on austerity and beginning a new decade of renewal. A new economic era needs a new economic plan, and today we lay the foundations with the fastest increase in day-to-day spending for 15 years. The plans I announce today mean that we will be able to build a safer Britain where our streets are more secure; a healthier Britain where we can care for people throughout their lives; and a better educated Britain where every child and young person has the opportunity to succeed, no matter where they come from or who their parents are. We will build a global Britain where we walk tall in the world with more, not less, of a presence on the international stage; a modern Britain where we embrace diversity as a strength; an enterprising Britain where we are proud of our scientists, our inventors and our entrepreneurs; and a prosperous Britain where we live within our means and growth comes from every corner of this nation. Today we lay the foundations for a stronger, fairer and more prosperous future for our great country.

It has been three years and three months since the British people gave us their instruction to leave the European Union. If people are going to have faith in the ballot box again, we absolutely have to follow through on that instruction. That is why we have set a deadline of 31 October—just 57 days away. The Government still believe that the best outcome would be to leave with a deal, and we could not be more serious about negotiating for such an outcome. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has set out our position, and our central ask is clear: to remove the anti-democratic backstop from the withdrawal agreement. But without the ability and willingness to walk away with no deal, we will not get a good deal.

I know that some businesses and households are concerned about what a no-deal outcome would mean for them. I recognise that, and I understand that the uncertainty around Brexit is challenging, but this is ultimately a question of trust in our democracy. In the end, a strong economy can only be built on the foundation of a successful democracy.

Mr Kenneth Clarke (Rushcliffe) (Ind): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. What has this got to do with the spending review?

Mr Speaker: Points of order ordinarily follow statements, as I know the Father of House is well aware. The Chancellor's opening remarks were, frankly, out of order. That is the reality of the matter. [*Interruption.*] Order. I do not need any help from anybody chuntering from a sedentary position. With the very greatest of respect, I will provide the rulings from the Chair. I hope everybody is very clear that that is the way it works in this place. The opening remarks from the Chancellor were out of order and I exercised a degree of latitude, but the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke) is right that the statement should be focused on and exclusively concerning the spending round. As it is, the Chancellor consulted me yesterday because he was concerned about the length of the statement. It should not be longer as a result of remarks that do not relate to that subject. That is all I need to say; it is very straightforward, and I know that the Chancellor of the Exchequer will comply with that simple stricture.

Sajid Javid: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Let me reassure people of this: if we leave with no deal, we will be ready. Within my first few days as Chancellor, I provided £2.1 billion of extra funding for Brexit and no-deal preparedness, and today I can announce that we will provide a further £2 billion for Brexit delivery next year as well. That means more Border Force staff, better transport infrastructure at our ports and more support for business readiness. I have tasked the Treasury with preparing a comprehensive economic response to support the economy if needed, and will work closely with the independent Bank of England to co-ordinate fiscal and monetary policy.

Sensible economic policy means that we should plan for both outcomes, and we are doing so, but we should be careful not to let our focus on planning and preparedness distract us from the opportunities that lie ahead. Brexit will allow us to reshape the British economy and reaffirm our place as a world-leading economic power. We will have the opportunity to design smarter, more flexible regulation and to cut red tape that stifles innovation. We will be able to replace inefficient EU programmes with better, home-grown alternatives. Even if we leave with no deal, I am confident that we will be able to secure a deep, best-in-class free trade agreement with the EU and pursue a genuinely independent free trade policy with the rest of the world. Deal or no deal, I am confident that our best days lie ahead.

Although the immediate outcome of the talks is uncertain, there are some things that we can be certain about when it comes to the economy and our ability to set out what we can afford to spend. As we look towards our future outside the EU, we can build on some extraordinary economic strengths. At its heart, this country is an open, outward-looking trading nation. We are at our best when we look out to the world beyond our shores. That is not just a slogan. We are the No. 1 destination in Europe for inward investment. Our language, our location, our legal system and, most of all, our people make the UK a global hub for business. We are the home of world-class businesses. A stream of ideas and innovations flows from our brilliant universities and research institutes, making the UK second only to the United States in the all-time rankings of Nobel prize winners. We also have an economic landscape that

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has been watched over by long-standing, well respected institutions. All that will continue as we forge a new economic relationship with the EU.

But the vision of an open free-market enterprising economy is under threat, and if that threat transpires, it will have a direct impact on our spending power. It is under threat not from the people on the other side of the channel, but from the people on the other side of the Chamber. Let us be in no doubt about the biggest threat to the UK economy. The No. 1 concern raised by businesses and international investors is not the form of our exit from the EU; the real “Project Fear” is the agenda of the Labour party. If the Opposition had their way, whole sectors of the economy—

Mr Speaker: Order. This really is very unseemly, and I am sorry to have to say that to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who has always been unfailingly courteous in his personal dealings with me and probably with everybody else. I say what I say with a heavy heart and not without reflection. There is a very long-established procedure to statements of this kind, and it bothers me greatly that the right hon. Gentleman, in the course of a statement, seems to be veering into matters outwith—not even tangential to, but unrelated to—the spending round upon which he is focused, and I know that I say what I do with the vigorous concurrence of people who have been in this House a great deal longer than he or I. I must therefore ask the Chancellor, who I am sure is fleet of foot, so to adjust his remarks from his prepared text in order that he focuses upon that which he should focus on and not upon that which is immaterial to the statement. I am setting out the position and no one, be he ever so high, is going to tell me what the procedures in the Chamber of the House of Commons are.

Sajid Javid: Mr Speaker, you will recall that when I first took my seat as the Member of Parliament for Bromsgrove, the economy was in a very difficult and different position. Since then we have had to work hard to restore the nation's finances, and it is precisely because we have restored the nation's finances that we can have the spending commitments that I am about to make today. I have to—if I may, Mr Speaker—set out the context of the situation then and how we got out of it, so that we can focus on how we can generate the spending power that we are able to deploy today.

Back then, our budget deficit was 10% of GDP. We borrowed £150 billion in Labour's last year in office. It was the highest deficit in our peacetime history. We were borrowing £1 in every £4 that was spent. The Labour party lost control of the nation's finances, as it always does, and it fell to the Conservatives to pick up the mess.

My two immediate predecessors took the difficult decisions that we needed to bring the deficit under control, allowing us to have the spending that I am setting out today. They did that not for ideological reasons, but because running an enormous deficit meant that our debt was rising at an unsustainable rate, making our economy vulnerable to shocks and passing on a huge burden to the next generation. The deficit is now 1.1% of GDP. For the first time in a generation, public sector debt is falling sustainably as a share of our national

income, and we have boosted our credibility around the world and built confidence in the UK economy again. Labour left behind a bankrupt Britain, and we have fixed it.

Thanks to those difficult decisions and the hard work of the British people, we can now afford to turn the page on austerity and move forward from a decade of recovery to a decade of renewal. Our careful management of the public finances means that we can now afford to spend more on vital public services, so today I am deciding to set the real increase in day-to-day spending next year at £13.8 billion, delivering on the people's priorities across the NHS, education and police, and giving certainty to all Departments about their budgets for next year—clearing the decks for a Government who are delivering Brexit.

I have always believed in the importance of living within our means, and—unlike the Labour party—I will not squander the hard work of the last nine years, so even with the extra spending, we are still meeting the current fiscal rules. While the biggest challenge a decade ago was getting the deficit down, our biggest challenge today is getting our long-term economic growth back to where it was before Labour's great recession. If we can do that, we can ensure that there can be future spending increases that can also be sustainable, boosting wages and raising living standards, which have stagnated for too long, levelling up across the regions and nations.

We need to improve our productivity—the amount that is produced every hour worked. That is not just a technical term. Slower productivity means lower wages and uneven growth across the country. If productivity had continued to grow at its pre-crisis levels, then average annual wages would be £5,000 higher. That pressure on people's pay packets speaks to a wider sense of disillusion and unfairness, especially in so many towns and cities outside London and the south-east. Even as the economy has grown, and people have worked hard, not everyone feels they have benefited. There is a real sense of anxiety that has emerged over the years: a sense that politicians are not listening and that the system is not working; that the free market model is not living up to its promise. We are seeing divisions emerge throughout society between regions and communities, rich and poor, rural and urban, young and old. Addressing those concerns will be a serious effort, and that is what will be shown in these spending plans today. We will develop a new economic plan for the years ahead—a plan that moves beyond the last decade of economic recovery and looks forward to a decade of renewal; a plan that invests more in the future growth of this country.

We can afford to invest more because our economy is growing and our public finances are strong. We are also deciding on our fiscal approach at a time when the cost of Government borrowing is at record lows. Interest rates have been low for many years, and in recent weeks the cost of Government borrowing has fallen below 1% across all maturities. In the years after the financial crisis, many expected interest rates to swiftly rise to pre-crisis levels, but structural factors have kept interest rates low, not just in the UK but across the developed world, increasing our confidence that we will be able to continue to see low rates for a number of years. So it is my judgment today that with a strong fiscal position and record low cost of borrowing, we can invest more in our growing economy.

That does not mean that we can borrow more for ever and ever. The sustainability of our public finances depends on wider factors, not just the cost of borrowing: our population is ageing; the global economy is slowing; the challenge of decarbonisation is real. So we will not be writing blank cheques, unlike Labour. We will not be able to afford everything, and we will need to prioritise investment in policies that deliver real productivity gains and boost economic growth in the long term. We will still need to make difficult choices about our national priorities, within a clear set of rules, to anchor our fiscal policy and keep control of our national debt. So today I can announce that ahead of the Budget later this year I will review our fiscal framework to ensure that it meets the economic priorities of today, not of a decade ago.

The first priority of our new economic plan will be to rebuild our national infrastructure. High-quality and reliable infrastructure is essential to how we live, work and travel, but the truth is that across many decades Governments of all colours have under-invested in infrastructure. The quality of our infrastructure means that we have fallen behind our competitors. We are the fifth largest economy in the world. It is not good enough that we are so far behind on infrastructure. It is not good enough that so many commuters spend their morning staring at a “Delayed” sign at their train platform. It is not good enough that our small business owners waste so much time because of slow internet speeds and poor mobile communications. We are going to change that. We want faster broadband for everyone in the country, quicker mobile connections and better signal coverage, cleaner energy, greener transport, and more affordable fuel bills for our homes and offices. We want more trains and buses to connect the great cities of the north. We want to build world-class schools and hospitals. We want to push the frontiers of science and technology and turbocharge our ambition on research and development. We want to build and invest in every region and every nation of this great United Kingdom. From the motor highway to the information highway, we will settle for nothing less than an infrastructure revolution.

To keep spending under control, we will of course set a high bar for funding projects. They will have to show real value for money with credible delivery plans and budgets, starting with the Government’s rapid review of HS2. We will target that investment at national priorities like regional growth and decarbonisation. Let me take this opportunity to thank my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Vicky Ford) for her tireless work as chair of the all-party parliamentary group on infrastructure. So yes, we will use the Government’s resources to kickstart the infrastructure revolution, but we will also do more to give private investors the confidence to back these projects too. We want all this to be underpinned by strong, independent institutions. We set up the National Infrastructure Commission in 2015, and we will continue to rely on its expert advice as we look carefully at other institutional reforms that might be needed. So our infrastructure revolution will be strategic and carefully planned.

Speaking of revolutionaries, let us contrast that with Labour’s approach. I will invest in new infrastructure that will grow the economy, and Labour will borrow hundreds of millions to renationalise unproductive assets and then run them into the ground. The choice for the

country is clear, between a wasteful ideological Opposition with outdated ideas and a Government who will kick-start a decade of renewal for this country.

Today we lay the foundations of a new economic plan. We are turning the page on a decade of necessary work to fix the public finances and writing a new chapter in our public services. Health and Education are not just the names of Departments; they are lifelines of opportunities, just as they were for me when I was growing up: the teachers and lecturers who persuaded me to study economics in the first place—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. There will be ample opportunity for colleagues to question the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but the statement must be heard.

Sajid Javid: Health and education are lifelines of opportunities, just as they were for me when I was growing up: the teachers and lecturers who persuaded me to study economics in the first place; the police officers who kept us safe when the street I grew up in became a centre for drug dealers; the NHS that cared for my dad in his final days. These are not just numbers on a spreadsheet; these are the beating heart of our country, and we invest to support them today.

As I turn to the details of today’s announcement—[HON. MEMBERS: “Hooray!”] Wait—it is coming. Let me first thank the dedicated officials in the Treasury for all their hard work delivering what I am told is the fastest SR in history. Let me particularly thank the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, my right hon. Friend Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Rishi Sunak), who takes the approach to spending you would expect from an adopted Yorkshireman. He has displayed his typical mix of energy, courtesy and rigour. Let me just say that there is no productivity problem in the Chief Secretary’s office.

Next year, I will add £13.4 billion to the plans for total public spending, including £1.7 billion pounds added to capital spending. These extra funds take the real increase in day-to-day spending to £13.8 billion pounds, or 4.1%. That means I am delivering the fastest increase in day-to-day spending for 15 years. That funding allows us to start a new chapter for our public services and to fund the people’s priorities. Our decisions today have been guided by our ambition to build a safer Britain, a healthier Britain, a better educated Britain and a more global Britain.

My family grew up on a road in Bristol that a national newspaper described back then as Britain’s most dangerous street, but to us it was just home. After we left, my brother became a policeman and has been in the force for over 25 years. I have seen the impact the job has on the lives of those who are courageous enough to do it. So today I pay tribute to the bravery, courage and dedication of our hard-working police officers. As Home Secretary, I saw first-hand how the demands on our police forces are changing and increasing. Yes, traditional crime is down by a third since 2010, but the threats from terrorism have escalated and evolved. The internet is changing how criminals operate and break the law, and we have seen too many horrifying stabbings on Britain’s streets. With our frontline officers reporting that they are overstretched, it is clearly time to act and do more.

Today I can announce a 6.3% real-terms increase in Home Office spending—the biggest increase in 15 years. That means £750 million to fund the first year of our

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plan to recruit 20,000 new police officers, with an extra £45 million this year, so that recruitment can start immediately, getting the first 2,000 officers in place by the end of March. Let me thank my hon. Friend the Member for South West Bedfordshire (Andrew Selous), my right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (John Redwood) and my hon. Friends the Members for Isle of Wight (Mr Seely), for Nuneaton (Mr Jones) and for Telford (Lucy Allan) for championing the police and police resourcing.

The threats facing our police officers are evolving too, so the way we resource them will have to evolve in three areas. First, serious and organised crime is the most deadly national threat faced by the UK, costing the nation at least £37 billion a year. The scale and complexity of this threat means that we need to do more to develop our response, so I am announcing today a formal review to identify the powers, capabilities, governance and funding needed ahead of a full spending review next year.

Secondly, this year sadly has seen more attacks on places of worship, including mosques and synagogues. That is unacceptable in a diverse, open, tolerant society like ours. To protect our religious and minority communities, I am announcing today that I will double the places of worship fund next year. I thank my hon. Friends the Members for Hendon (Dr Offord) and for Finchley and Golders Green (Mike Freer) for their tireless work in combating hate crime. I am also today announcing £30 million of new funding to tackle the scourge of online child sexual exploitation.

A better resourced police force will deliver better outcomes for the British people, and it will increase the demands on our already overstretched criminal justice system. So today we invest more in our criminal justice system to manage that increasing demand, with a 5% real-terms increase in the resource budget for the Ministry of Justice, an increase in its capital budget to £620 million next year and an extra £80 million for the Crown Prosecution Service. Taken together, today's spending round will dramatically improve the functioning of the criminal justice system, with more prosecutors, a reformed probation system, better security in prisons and funding to begin delivery of 10,000 new prison places.

The spending round is delivering on the people's priorities, and there is no higher priority than the NHS. Last year, we increased NHS spending by an extra £34 billion a year by 2023-24. That was the single largest cash increase in our public services for more than 70 years. Today, we reaffirm our commitment to the NHS with a £6.2 billion increase in NHS funding next year. We are investing more in training and professional development for our doctors and nurses, and over £2 billion of new capital funding, starting with an upgrade of 20 hospitals this year, and £250 million for groundbreaking new artificial intelligence technologies to help solve some of healthcare's biggest challenges today, such as easier cancer detection, discovering new treatments and relieving the workload on doctors and nurses.

We cannot have an effective health system without an effective social care system too. The Prime Minister has committed to a clear plan to fix social care and give every older person the dignity and security that they deserve. I can announce today that councils will have

access to new funding of £1.5 billion for social care next year. Alongside the largest increase in local government spending power since 2010, and on top of the existing £2.5 billion of social care grants, that is a solid foundation to protect the stability of the system next year and a down payment on the more fundamental reforms that the Prime Minister will set out in due course.

But that is not the only action I am taking today to support vulnerable people. On any given night, there are too many people sleeping rough on our streets. The human cost is too high. Today we do more, with £54 million of new funding to reduce homelessness and rough sleeping, taking total funding to £422 million next year. That is a real-terms increase of 13%. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow East (Bob Blackman) for his tireless work in fighting homelessness.

A healthy environment is a precondition for a healthy population, and that is why we have set out an ambitious 25-year plan for the UK's natural environment. Today we go further. Leaving the EU provides an opportunity to set world-leading environmental standards, and we are giving the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs £432 million of funding to do so. We are providing £30 million of new money to tackle the crisis in our air quality and another £30 million for biodiversity, including the expansion of our Blue Belt programme—a vital part of our campaign to protect precious marine species such as turtles, whales and seabirds. We are stepping up our leadership on climate change, with new funding for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to develop new programmes to help meet our net zero commitment by 2050, and we will set out further details of our plans for decarbonisation in the infrastructure strategy later this year, keeping our promise to be the first Government in history to leave our environment in a better condition than we found it.

Alongside providing for the health of our population, the most important task of a Government is to educate the next generation. Education and skills are at the heart of our vision for national renewal. The economy is not just about GDP or PSNB—there are many broader tests that matter too. Are children growing up to be better off than their parents? Do hard work and talent matter more than where you are born? A good school and inspirational teachers are the most effective engine for social mobility. That is why today we are delivering on our pledge to increase school spending by £7.1 billion by 2022-23, compared with this year.

Next year, we will make sure that day-to-day funding for every school can rise at least in line with inflation and rising pupil numbers, with the schools that have been historically underfunded benefiting the most. Every secondary school will be allocated a minimum of £5,000 for every pupil next year, and every primary school will be allocated at least £3,750 per pupil, on track to reach £4,000 per pupil the following year. This funding will mean that teachers' starting salaries can rise to £30,000 by 2022-23, so that we can attract more of the best graduates into teaching. We have allocated nearly £1.5 billion per year to contribute to teachers' pensions, and we are providing over £700 million to give more support to children and young people with special educational needs—an 11% increase compared with last year.

The funding for nearly every other Department I am announcing today will be for just one year, but we recognise the importance of schools being able to plan, so we are announcing today a full three-year resource settlement for schools, levelling up education, improving standards and giving every young person the same opportunities in life wherever they live in our great country. Let me particularly thank my hon. Friends the Members for Bexhill and Battle (Huw Merriman), for Cheltenham (Alex Chalk) and for St Albans (Mrs Main) for championing schools.

The education system is about more than just schools. For too long, further education has been a forgotten sector. Over 1 million young people continue their education beyond the age of 16 at colleges or sixth-forms—and I know because I was one of them. I went to my local FE college. If I had not had the teachers and the lecturers that I did, I would not be standing here today as Chancellor. Further education transformed my life, and today we start transforming further education, with a £400 million increase in 16-to-19 education funding next year. The base rate will increase to £4,188, a faster rate of growth than in core school funding. Let me congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Robert Halfon) and my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Neil O'Brien) on their representations on further education.

The Government will also increase early years spending by £66 million to increase the hourly rate that is being paid at maintained nursery schools and other childcare providers that deliver the Government's free childcare offer. I want to thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Theresa Villiers) for raising this issue with me.

Our young people deserve high-quality services and support even after the school day is over. Earlier this year, following a recommendation from my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr Duncan Smith), I visited the fantastic OnSide youth zone in Barking. It was a brilliant example of how much Britain's network of youth centres adds to their local communities, getting young people off the streets and changing lives for the better. Today, I am asking the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to develop proposals for a new youth investment fund, and to set out plans to build more youth centres, refurbish existing centres and deliver high-quality services to young people across the country.

Better schools, higher pay for teachers, more youth centres—that is how this Government will improve social justice and create opportunity for all, but our ambitions for a truly national renewal do not stop there. We are a one nation party and this is a one nation Government, so at the heart of our new economic plan is the need to level up across this country. Every region and nation in the United Kingdom will benefit from the new funding I am providing today for the police, schools, health and social care, and much more. Today, we confirm funding of £3.6 billion for the new towns fund, providing a wave of investment to our regions and places, and better transport links across the country will be a crucial part of levelling up across the nation. We have already allocated a total of £13 billion for better transport across the north. We will fund the Manchester to Leeds route of Northern Powerhouse Rail, and we will set out more details—far more details—in the autumn on our new infrastructure strategy.

Mr Speaker, you may not know this, but my dad was a bus driver. Having watched him work, I know that local buses can be a lifeline for many communities. Today, we put the wheels back on the great British bus, with more than £200 million to transform bus services across the country. We are funding ultra low emissions buses, and we will trial new on-demand services to respond to passenger needs in real time. We will set out more details of our new buses in due course—once my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has finished painting models of them.

Our new economic plan will not stop at the borders of England; it will be a plan for all the nations of the United Kingdom. In Scotland, decisions taken in today's spending round will provide over £1.2 billion of extra funding for next year. We are taking a further step today to support Scottish farmers. In 2013, when the UK Government allocated common agricultural policy funding within the UK, Scottish farmers lost out. Today, we correct that decision, making available an extra £160 million for Scottish farmers—something I know my hon. Friends from Scotland on the Conservative Benches will be pleased to hear. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank my friend Ruth Davidson for everything she has done for that great nation.

In Wales, today's spending round means an extra £600 million of funding for the Welsh Government. In Northern Ireland, we are providing an extra £400 million from today's announcements. I welcome the case that has been made by the DUP for improved hospice care and for support for those who have been tragically wronged in the contaminated blood scandal. Those are rightly devolved matters, but I sincerely hope that the Northern Ireland Administration will use some of the new funding that we are providing today to address those issues. Taken together, today's announcements will give the devolved Administrations the biggest spending settlement for a decade.

Throughout our history, Britain has always been at its best when we are open, global and outward looking. Trading with the world beyond our shores has always been key to Britain's economic prosperity. As we seize the opportunities of Brexit, we can establish new partnerships and trade relationships across the globe. For too long, we have let those trading relationships wither. As my right hon. Friend the International Trade Secretary would be the first to acknowledge, this is a disgrace. Today, we invest in securing Britain's influence in the world. We support diplomacy, with £90 million of funding for 1,000 new diplomats and overseas staff, and 14 new and upgraded diplomatic posts. We will boost trade with £60 million to extend the GREAT campaign for next year.

If hon. Members are in any doubt about Britain's important role on the world stage, they should just look at the bonanza of international festivals and events that I am funding today. In December, we will welcome the NATO leaders meeting. Next year, we will host the COP 26 discussions, if our bid is successful, thanks to the leadership of my right hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Claire Perry). In 2021, we will host the G7, and in 2022, we will host the Commonwealth games in Birmingham. Today, I can confirm the Government's total commitment to this celebration of sport will be over half a billion pounds. The games will be a huge

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boost for the west midlands, and I would like to congratulate Andy Street on the leadership he has shown in that region.

One of my personal highlights of the summer was meeting the England cricket team in the Downing Street gardens. That world cup winning side showed us the importance not just of talent and hard work, but of diversity—a skipper from Ireland, a bowler from Barbados and an all-rounder from New Zealand. As with our cricket team, so with our country: we are the most successful multi-ethnic democracy in the world. I am proud to live in a country where someone with my background can be Chancellor of the Exchequer. This spending round embraces modern Britain in all its diversity. We make available today an additional £10 million to continue the integration areas programme that I first announced in 2018 as Communities Secretary. That fund will continue to support thousands of the estimated 1 million adults in the UK who do not speak English well or at all.

Openness to talent from around the world matters for our economy, too. Once we have left the EU, we will be able to create a points-based immigration system that meets the needs of the UK economy and the British people. We have already dropped arbitrary immigration targets. We have recently announced a new, highly flexible fast-track visa for scientists. Today, I am putting funding in place to give victims of the Windrush scandal the compensation that they deserve. This is all part of confirming, once and for all, that Britain will always be open to the world's brightest and best talent.

Nowhere are our values of openness and tolerance better expressed than in international aid. The UK aid logo can be seen around the world—on health clinics, school books, emergency food suppliers. Today, we protect our commitment to spending 0.7% of our national income on aid.

Global Britain is about projecting our values into the world, but we know that hard power matters, too. Britain already spends more on our defence and national security than any other country in Europe. We are one of only seven countries to meet the 2% commitment to NATO. Today, we go further still, with an additional £2.2 billion of funding for the Ministry of Defence—a real-terms increase of 2.6% for the budget next year—increasing again the share of our national income we spend on defence and national security.

This year is the 75th anniversary of the D-day landings. We pay tribute to the sacrifices of the extraordinary generation of British soldiers who fought and died during that campaign. Today, I can announce £7 million of funding for the Normandy Memorial Trust to complete its memorial overlooking Gold beach, where so many troops came ashore. We will also support the veterans of today's wars, as we confirm the funding today for the new Office for Veterans' Affairs. I congratulate my hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Plymouth, Moor View (Johnny Mercer) on his tireless work in championing veterans.

I have set out today a big increase in public spending that will pay for more police and safer prisons, more nurses and better hospitals, and more money for schools and further education. I now turn to the remaining Departments across Whitehall, those that have not been

protected over the last decade. Investing in the people's priorities inevitably means difficult decisions elsewhere. Every spending review presented to this House over the past 15 years has had to find cuts from those Departments. This party has never shied away from taking the difficult decisions to make sure that we live within our means. Those decisions were tough, but they have paid off, so I can announce today that no Department will be cut next year. Every single Department has had its budget for day-to-day spending increased at least in line with inflation. That is what I mean by the end of austerity: Britain's hard work paying off, and our country living within its means and able to spend more on the things that matter.

I am delivering today's spending round in unusual circumstances. Understandably, much of our attention and the attention of the country is focused on the important matters before the House later today, but we must not forget that Brexit is not all that matters to the British people; it is not the only topic at the dinner table. Today's spending round ensures that if you fall ill, you can get the care and support that you need; that when you drop off your child at the school gates, you can trust that they will get the best possible education; and that when you walk down the street, you can feel safe and secure. Today, we move from a decade of recovery to a decade of renewal. Yes, we will keep control of the public finances, but we will invest, too, in the long-term growth of this country.

It was just six weeks ago today that this new Administration took office. The Prime Minister promised that we would not wait until Brexit day to deliver on the people's priorities, and today we meet that promise with a new chapter for our public services, a new plan for our economy and a new beginning for this country. I commend this statement to the House.

1.43 pm

John McDonnell (Hayes and Harlington) (Lab): I welcome the Chancellor to his new job, although, after that, I am beginning to miss the old one. I believe the Chancellor may be the first person to hold that role whose father—like my own—was a bus driver. I would like to welcome him to his new job. I also hope that what they say is true: you wait ages for one son of a bus driver to become Chancellor of the Exchequer, only for them to be followed soon after by another.

I am afraid that that is probably the end of what the Chancellor and I have in common. I thank him for abiding by the convention of providing me with a copy of his statement. It was a compendium of meaningless platitudes. I ask him to take a message back to the person who obviously drafted the statement. Could he tell Mr Cummings, the man who cancels the Chancellor's own speeches, sacks his staff without telling him and then has them—

The Prime Minister (Boris Johnson): You don't like spending on education?

John McDonnell: Mr Speaker, I believe that the right hon. Member for Uxbridge is shouting at me. The last time he was shouting at someone, they had to call the police. I do not think we need to go as far as that. Mr Cummings, who had the member of staff escorted—[Interruption.]. You might need to call the police.

Mr Speaker: Order. Calm must descend on the Chamber. People should try to operate at the level of events and, in all parts of the House, at the level of their important responsibilities as Members of the House.

John McDonnell: Thank you, Mr Speaker. The member of staff was escorted off the premises by an armed police officer. Can I just say that that is no way to treat a member of staff? I ask the Chancellor to tell Mr Cummings, on the spending review: do not insult the intelligence of the British people. The people will see today's statement as the grubby electioneering that it is.

This is not a spending review as we know it. This is straight out of the Lynton Crosby handbook of opinion-poll politics. The Tories have checked what the top three or four issues in the polls are and they have cynically judged how little money they have to throw around to try to neutralise those issues and the concerns of people. To come here and try to fool us with references to people's priorities is beyond irony.

When did this extremist, right-wing Tory group ever put the people first—ever? Were they putting the people first when they froze child benefit year after year or when they introduced universal credit, a brutal regime? The result this summer, according to the Childhood Trust, was children scavenging for food in bins because they did not have free school meals in the summer holidays. Were they putting people first when they cut council budgets, and prevented 1 million elderly and disabled people from getting the social care they needed? Were they putting people first when they cut social services budgets so much that we now have record numbers of children coming into care and 155 women a day turned away from refuges?

We are expected to believe that these Tories, who for years have voted for harsh, brutal austerity, have had some form of damascene conversion. I tell you, they treat our people with contempt. Announcements have been dripped out over the last week or so, all designed to give the impression of a spending spree—announcements dictated by No. 10 and meekly accepted by a Chancellor too weak to conduct a full multi-year spending review as he should, even before the Government's majority disappeared yesterday.

We have seen the so-called headroom, which the Chancellor's predecessor had claimed was needed to prepare for a no-deal Brexit, spent instead on preparing for a general election. We all know that the Chancellor may not be in his job very long and maybe that is why he felt he needed to rush a spending round based on figures from March, rather than wait for the Office for Budget Responsibility to tell him officially what the rest of us have known for some time: that the economy, after nine years of Tory austerity, is in bad shape and, yes, is getting worse, stagnating.

A full fiscal event would have meant new economic forecasts and the need for a fiscal framework to give Departments security over the Parliament, allowing them to plan ahead after years of cuts. Instead we get this sham of a spending review. The Tories are claiming to be against austerity after years of voting for it. They are claiming to be using headroom, which the Chancellor knows has largely disappeared, yet they are still failing to deliver a real end to austerity.

Let us take a look at some of the announcements that the Chancellor has confirmed today. For schools, the Chancellor announced new spending of £1.8 billion next year. The Institute for Fiscal Studies has previously estimated that it would cost £3.8 billion this year alone to reverse the cuts that have been made. Was the Chancellor aware, when drawing up his spending plans, that the Department for Education budget as a whole has been slashed by almost £10 billion in real terms since 2010? The reality is this, is it not: heads will still be sending out begging letters and teachers will still be buying basic materials for their classes?

The Government have some front to mention childcare after hundreds of Sure Start centres closed on their watch, undermining the start in life for our children. They mention that £700 million was announced for children with special educational needs and disabilities. Does the Chancellor know that the Local Government Association found that councils already face a funding shortfall for SEN children of £1.2 billion by 2021? The reality is that these children will still be left vulnerable and in need, with their futures in jeopardy. That is what it means today.

Further education colleges are getting a one-off £400 million. Does the Chancellor really think that they should be grateful when he has cut £3.3 billion from them since 2010? The reality is that the economy will continue to desperately need skills and training, and our young people will still be denied them.

On the NHS, the announcement of £1.8 billion spending for the NHS has already been exposed as largely a reannouncement of existing money. There is no mention, is there, of the £6 billion backlog in the maintenance we need in our hospitals? Our hospitals are still using buckets to catch water coming through leaking roofs. Operating theatres are closed because of the lack of maintenance over the past nine years of austerity. The Government mention GP waiting times. Any announcement on GP waiting times is likely to turn out to be totally undeliverable. Why? Because we have just lost 600 full-time equivalent GPs over the past year. They are just not there because of nine years of lack of investment.

On local government, any new money for local government today will be a drop in the ocean compared with the 60% funding cuts that councils have suffered in recent years. What effect does the Chancellor estimate his announcement today will have, for example, on the crisis in children's services that we have highlighted at every spending review and budget over the past two years? There has been a 29% drop in Government funding after eight years and as a result vulnerable children are left at risk.

On homelessness, the Chancellor mentioned £54 million of additional spending to tackle homelessness. There has been a 160% increase in people sleeping rough. In the past two years, people have died near the doors of Parliament. The LGA says that there is a £100 million spending gap just to get by. The most vulnerable in our society have been put at risk as a result of the Government's austerity over nine years, and he expects us to celebrate an inadequate attempt to plaster over the problems we have.

On bus services, the Chancellor mentions £200 million allocated to them. That is a third of the £645 million that has been cut from bus services since 2010.

[John McDonnell]

The Government seem to forget that they cut 20,000 police officers. The Chancellor expects us to celebrate what he has announced today, when we now know that at best there will be only 13,000 on the streets. Can he tell us how many will be frontline? We will support him in the investment to protect religious establishments and communities, and we will support him in tackling the problem of protecting young children from online abuse—of course we will—but the real protection comes from the safer neighbourhood teams that we constructed under Labour and that we had in every one of our wards, with a sergeant, police officers and police support officers, all of whom have been wiped out. [Interruption.] An hon. Member shouts, “Not true.” He needs to go out into the community and talk about the increase in violent crime in our communities as a result of what has happened.

The Chancellor spoke of money to create another 10,000 prison places. Can he just tell us: are they the same 10,000 prison places promised by previous Justice Secretaries in 2016, 2017 and yet again in 2018? Can he answer how many suicides and how many assaults on staff have taken place because of the Government’s cuts to prison staff over the past nine years? Will he, or someone in the Government, ever apologise to the Prison Officers Association for ignoring its warnings about the effect of staff cuts on safety in our prisons?

Those are just some of the announcements we heard today, but there are many that we have heard very little about. What about those who have been effectively forgotten in the Chancellor’s opportunist, one-year spending round? What about real structural reform to address the social care crisis, which we have been waiting for, for how many years—three, four? All we have now is a sticking plaster of £1 billion, which will leave this sector in the same sorry state as it is in now. What does that mean in real terms? It means 1.4 million people not getting the care they need and 87 people a day dying before they get the social care they need to support them.

I understand that the Chancellor’s mates, the bankers, were pushing the other day for more tax cuts and less regulation. I suppose they think they have a soft touch in No. 10 and No. 11. I hope he sent them packing. When we compare how much has been cut from the basic social services that we and vulnerable people need for support, with what is calculated to be, by the end of the next couple of years, £110 billion given out in tax cuts to corporations, we can see why people do not believe the Government have any concept of social justice or equality. Does the Chancellor have any words for the thousands suffering—[Interruption.] The right hon. Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson) said, “Pathetic.” I’ll tell you what develops real pathos. Many of us in our constituency surgeries are having to deal with people who are dependent on universal credit. Yet the Chancellor did not have any words for the thousands who are suffering from the brutal roll-out of universal credit—the people we represent who are now queueing up at food banks as a result of the cuts. Traditionally, the spending review concentrates on departmental expenditure limits, rather than social security. I appreciate that. But there was no reason why the Chancellor could not have signalled the Government’s

intent at least to end the misery and hardship that their policy is causing and to end the roll-out of universal credit as it now is.

Most shockingly, the Chancellor has given no sign that he understands the scale of the climate emergency facing us and the urgency of the significant Government response that is needed. He mentions the climate but allocates minuscule amounts of funding to address an existential threat to our society. I hope that in the next few weeks Members will remember those who got no comfort from today’s announcements, if the Government push ahead with their plans for tax cuts that mainly benefit the wealthy, as is widely rumoured. I hope that Members will remember all those individuals and services that were deemed too unimportant by the Chancellor to address today. I tell him that whenever that election comes—in any election campaign—he can be sure that the Labour party will remind those people and the voters what nine years of austerity have done to them, and of today’s failure to act. The opportunity was there today really to end austerity—to start reversing austerity—and to give people some hope. What a missed opportunity.

We remember when we were told that there was no alternative, and that there was no money. We all know the lines—we have heard them enough times. They were not true then and they are not true now. The majority of economists have always agreed that there was another approach that the Government could have taken, rather than austerity, and we always argued—and we were right—that austerity was a political choice, not an economic necessity. As recently as March, the Conservatives ploughed on, saying that there was no alternative. Look at them now suddenly proclaiming an end to austerity—after 125,000 excess deaths as a result, after £100 billion has been taken out of the economy, and after the worst decade for wage growth since the 19th century—just because there may be an election around the corner. After all that, to deliver a pathetic sum to spending Departments, who are on their knees at the moment, is just adding insult to injury.

This is a Government who are not just callous and uncaring, but hypocritical. This is not a Government—it is a racket. They pretend to end austerity when they do nothing of the sort. They pretend to plan ahead while they plot a no-deal Brexit that would devastate parts of our economy. They are a Chancellor and a Prime Minister, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn) said yesterday, with no mandate, no morals and no majority. They are trying to distract us from the crumbling public services and stagnating wages that they have created after a decade in charge. It is almost as if they forget they have been in government for nine years. They seek to fool the British public with fantasy promises of a Brexit deal that they knew they could not deliver and they were not even trying to negotiate. This short-lived Government will go down in history for its unique combination of right-wing extremism and bumbling incompetence. This is a Government that betrays the people it is meant to serve—a Government that will never be forgiven, but will soon be forgotten.

Sajid Javid: At least the shadow Chancellor did not try to throw a little red book at me this time. He attacks the decisions that were made over the last decade to restore the nation’s finances. He attacks the same free enterprise system that has delivered the prosperity that

our nation enjoys. He refuses to understand that a strong economy is absolutely necessary to pay for public services.

Why have we made these decisions over the last decade that get us to where we are now, where we can properly end austerity for good? Labour trashed the economy the last time it was in power, like it always does. The shadow Chancellor talked about cuts that were made to public services over the last decade. Let us just remember what we inherited—the absolute mess that we inherited—in 2010: a deficit that was 10% of GDP, with £150 billion in borrowing in that year. It was the biggest budget deficit in our peacetime history and the biggest budget deficit of any large industrialised nation. Labour was borrowing £5,000 a second. There was the deepest recession that we had seen in almost 100 years. The shadow Chancellor talked about the bankers. Which Government gave us the biggest banking bailout in global history? It was the last Labour Government. That was our inheritance.

It was absolutely clear that had that unsustainable rate of spending continued, with no link between what was coming in and what was going out, the country would have gone bankrupt, just like it did with Labour in the past, when we had to go cap in hand to the International Monetary Fund. That is the legacy of every Labour Government. It took Conservatives to clear up Labour's mess, bringing the deficit under control, bringing debt under control—having it falling for the first time in a generation in terms of the proportion of national income—reducing taxes for 40 million people and backing millions of businesses. And we have had a jobs miracle, with more people employed today in Britain than at any other time in our history and the lowest unemployment rate since 1975.

The shadow Chancellor talked about the impact of our policies on economic growth. Let me tell him about the impact on economic growth: since 2010, since the Conservatives were back in office, our economy has grown by 18.7%—faster than the economies of France, Italy and Japan. I will tell him about the risk to the economy—the only risk to the economy is from the shadow Chancellor, his policies and the entire Labour party. They have a tax hike for everyone. They have a tax hike if you happen to own a garden, if you want to give a gift to someone, if you want to go on holiday, if you own a home—whatever you are, they have a tax hike for you. They want to raid private pensions. Just this week, we learned more about their plans. They want to confiscate 10% of almost all our large companies. That is £300 billion that they want to confiscate from pensioners' private plans. They also want to renationalise industries—is it seven, eight or nine? I do not know how many industries they want to renationalise—

Mr Speaker: Order. Please resume your seat, Chancellor of the Exchequer. I gently point out that there is a difference—long understood and observed—between a debate, in which there is a free play of arguments, ideas and commentary on policies, and a statement. The Chancellor, with a little encouragement from me, delivered a statement and he has been questioned on the statement. To the questions, he is supposed to provide replies. This is not an occasion for a general political debate—*[Interruption.]* No, I know exactly what the situation is and I have very much more experience of these matters

than some of the people who think that they can criticise, so I do know what I am doing. The answer is to provide the answers to the questions—*[Interruption.]* Order. Provide the answers to the questions and then other colleagues will have the opportunity to question the Chancellor. It requires just a little versatility on one's feet.

Sajid Javid: I have to say, Mr Speaker, I did not detect many questions, so I will finish very quickly to give an opportunity for Members to ask proper questions.

The simple truth is that Labour is unfit to govern. It would not deliver Brexit. It would wreck our economy over again. Hard-working families will pay the price and we will not let it happen.

Mr Kenneth Clarke (Rushcliffe) (Ind): I genuinely welcome my right hon. Friend to his appointment and congratulate him on it, and I sincerely wish him every success in carrying out his extremely important duties. I also welcome the many spending announcements he made. In particular, I single out further education, to which successive Governments have been trying to give better priority for the last 30 or 40 years. I hope that it shows in effect. Will he reassure me that the announcements that he has made are consistent with the fiscal rules of his predecessors, that we are still subject to the same limits on the deficit that were laid down, and that he is still aiming to achieve year-by-year reductions in debt as a proportion of GDP? If he can give me those assurances, it demonstrates what he has just said: that he is able to make these welcome announcements because austerity has been brought to an end by the achievements of his two predecessors over the last nine years.

Sajid Javid: I welcome the warm words of my right hon. and learned Friend. I remember all the excellent work he did when he held this position and I hope that I can learn from the way in which he performed his duties as Chancellor.

My right hon. and learned Friend asks me a specific question about the fiscal rules. This spending round is within the current fiscal rules. According to our forecasts, we expect to meet both the key rules of borrowing staying inside 2% of GDP and seeing a further fall in debt as a proportion of GDP. I would, however, point him to some of the other comments I made in my statement about looking again at the fiscal rules, particularly with an eye to taking advantage of record low interest rates and investing more—credibly—in an infrastructure revolution.

Kirsty Blackman (Aberdeen North) (SNP): I thank the Chancellor for advance sight of the statement.

The gimmicks and gems the Chancellor has presented today are nothing more than an effort to distract us from the crippling crisis that the Government are dragging us into. If that was meant to be a pre-election Budget, if I was a Back-Bench Tory I would be quaking in my boots right now. In less than two months, we could face a no-deal Brexit, unless that threat is removed today by the House of Commons supporting the cross-party Bill to secure an extension. The threat cannot be underestimated. We are standing here facing increased uncertainty due to Brexit. The outlook for our economy and for public finances remains extremely uncertain. The economy

[Kirsty Blackman]

has already taken a hit, as we saw GDP contract 0.2% in the second quarter of 2019. As Paul Johnson of the Institute for Fiscal Studies put it in *The Guardian*,

“Making big fiscal announcements in a period of great economic uncertainty means we will have little idea how sustainable or costly decisions made this week will be. The risks are exacerbated by not having up-to-date forecasts from the OBR.”

While the Chancellor has announced increased spending today, this will not help to end austerity; it will only pause some of the hardship in the short term. Meanwhile, Brexit will bring lasting and long-term damage to our economy, and to our citizens’ livelihoods.

With the economy already faltering, the Chancellor’s predecessor has warned that a disruptive no-deal Brexit could have a £90 billion hit on the Exchequer and suggested there would be no money available. A no-deal Brexit would be devastating for Scotland, with the potential to destroy 100,000 Scottish jobs and cost every person the equivalent of £2,300 a year. Brexit caused UK manufacturing activity to contract in August for the fourth consecutive month to the lowest level since 2012. According to the BBC, sterling fell below \$1.20 on 3 September to its lowest since October 2016. The Chancellor pretends his Government are putting people first, when in reality they are putting the cult of leave campaigners and their Brexit obsession before the interests of the economy and citizens.

Yesterday in Scotland the First Minister announced our programme for government, putting tackling climate change, protecting our economy and reducing inequality at the heart of our policy-making agenda. Here we are talking about food and medicine shortages, reducing opportunities for our young people and complete Brexit chaos. For the people of Scotland, this is a tale of two Governments, and only the SNP Scottish Government are acting in our interests.

The IFS is clear that pre-election bribes do not mean an end to austerity—that decade of austerity that cumulatively cut the Scottish block grant by more than £12 billion in real terms, left people having to choose between heating their homes and feeding their children and reduced social security payments for disabled people four times faster than the cuts for others.

If the Tories seriously wanted to make life better for citizens, they would give Scotland its fair share. This means the Chancellor should repay the £140 million of VAT owed to Police Scotland in refunds. We have been arguing for years for the convergence uplift moneys to be returned. There are 50 mentions of it in *Hansard*, 45 of them from the SNP, and most of the others in response to SNP questions. I am pleased with the pressure that we and our colleagues in the Scottish Government have brought to bear on this Government. It also means that Scotland must get its £3.4 billion share of the DUP’s dirty deal Brexit bung. Will the Chancellor rule out any new confidence and supply agreement with the DUP that would give them more money before we get the £3.4 billion we are owed?

Furthermore, it would appear that the Chancellor will overshoot his Government’s borrowing targets. Will he confirm that, and will he tell the House what borrowing rule changes he will introduce in the Budget? Will he guarantee that Scotland will not lose any of the EU funding

it currently receives? The UK Government must, at the very least, match the compensation scheme already put in place by the EU and the Irish Government for the beef and suckler sectors in Ireland.

Finally, the Government must scrap the proposed £30,000 salary limit on foreign nationals entering the UK. Scottish Government analysis has found the average EU citizen in Scotland adds £10,400 to Government revenue and £34,400 to GDP each year. The proposed £30,000 salary limit on foreign nationals to the UK has been shown to be unworkable and should be scrapped. While the Tories balance the books on the backs of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, the SNP Scottish Government are leading the way to deliver a fairer Scotland.

Sajid Javid: The hon. Lady complains about the settlement with respect to Scotland. I remind her that, under the Barnett block grant, Scotland will see an increase of £1.2 billion in its spending power next year. On top of that, it will receive an additional £160 million for Scottish farmers, thanks to the representations of Scottish Tory MPs, who seem to actually care about Scottish farmers. Despite that, she complains.

The hon. Lady talked about uncertainty. I would have thought, therefore, that she would have welcomed today’s statement. I think she referred to it as a Budget. First, there is a spending round, which is focused only on spending, not taxes or capital investment, and designed to give certainty to all Departments across Government on funding for the next year. Without it, they would not have that certainty. She claimed that Brexit uncertainty was damaging the economy. Need I remind her that, since the referendum, we have had record growth in British businesses, record growth in jobs—almost 1,000 new jobs created a day, with more people employed today than ever before—and record inward investment? If she wants to end uncertainty, she should support this spending round and make sure we leave the EU on 31 October.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Speaker: Order. There is extensive interest in the Chancellor’s statement, but I remind the House that there is a ten-minute rule motion to follow and other important business that must come onstream absolutely no later than 3 o’clock, and that therefore there is a premium on brevity from Back and Front Benches alike. I also make the obvious point that realistically lots of people who want to contribute will not have the opportunity to do so.

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): Wokingham and West Berkshire Councils need money for social care and schools. The current funding is not adequate. I am grateful to the Chancellor. This is very welcome. Does he agree that, at a time of world slowdown, led by a manufacturing recession in several leading countries, a boost to the economy is much needed here and that this is part of that boost?

Sajid Javid: My right hon. Friend speaks with great experience. I very much agree that one of the outcomes of today’s spending round will be a further confidence boost to our economy.

Alison McGovern (Wirral South) (Lab): The Chancellor claims that this is a boom in public spending, but we all know how big the bust has been, and nowhere has it been bigger than in DWP spending. Its spending will see a real-terms rise of 1.9%, which is welcome, but I ask the Chancellor: taking into account increases in the state pension and population increases, will he commit to no further cuts within that budget to working-age benefits?

Sajid Javid: The hon. Lady will know that this spending round covers day-to-day departmental spending and that the vast majority of DWP spending is not covered by day-to-day spending. So, when we get to a Budget, we can say much more about DWP spending. She will also recognise that this spending round will help more vulnerable people by protecting our economy and making sure it continues to grow and to generate jobs, which is the best way out of poverty.

Sir Michael Fallon (Sevenoaks) (Con): I welcome the increase in defence spending, which is well justified by the increase in the threats that the country faces. However, can my right hon. Friend reassure the House that any revision of the fiscal rules will never make the Government vulnerable to the charges of fudged targets, reference periods and spending classifications that characterised the last Labour Government?

Sajid Javid: I thank my right hon. Friend for his support for the increase in defence spending and I can give him that assurance. When the fiscal rules are looked at in time for the next Budget, that will be done openly, transparently and clearly, which is exactly what is needed to maintain market confidence.

Sir Edward Davey (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD): I welcome the Chancellor to his post, but is it not the case that headteachers, chief constables and NHS managers simply cannot rely on his fantasy figures if Britain crashes out of the EU?

The independent watchdog, the Office for Budget Responsibility, said just two months ago that a no-deal-Brexit would add £30 billion a year to public borrowing for the next four years. What insurance has the Chancellor taken out against that massive risk to his spending plans? Is this not just a con?

Sajid Javid: The right hon. Gentleman should know that the Government have no plans to—as he puts it—crash out of the EU. Our plan is to get a deal and, if he wants to help us to get a deal, he should not vote for the surrender Bill tonight.

Justine Greening (Putney) (Ind): The real revolution that Britain needs is a revolution in social mobility and equality of opportunity. I welcome the announcement of investment in schools, but may I encourage the Chancellor to revisit investment in children's services if he really wants to close the opportunity gap? May I also encourage him to look at reform closer to home, in his own Department? The Treasury is simply not fit for purpose when it comes to understanding how to invest in Britain's biggest asset, which is its human capital—its people.

Sajid Javid: My right hon. Friend speaks with great experience and is right to highlight issues relating to children's services. I can assure her that in the numbers that I have given today she will see, beyond the excellent investment in schools, investment across the board that will benefit children, especially vulnerable children, through social services in particular. She also made a good and valid point about human capital and the need to view it in a different way, and that is something that I am very interested in pursuing in the Treasury.

Wes Streeting (Ilford North) (Lab): If Dominic Cummings had not sacked his special adviser, he might have come up with a better speech.

I note that the Chancellor did not mention the growth figures, which is not surprising given that our economy is shrinking and every major sector of it—services, manufacturing, construction—is struggling. Is it not the case that, whether we are talking about the future of those industries or the spending plans that the Chancellor has set out today, every single promise is at risk from the no-deal recession that his Government are pursuing with their reckless no-deal policy?

Sajid Javid: The hon. Gentleman claimed that I had not mentioned growth figures. There are no new growth figures today because there is no OBR forecast, but I did refer to growth: in fact, I drew attention to the IMF forecast that we would grow faster this year than France, Italy and Japan.

The hon. Gentleman also talked of the risk to the economy. The risk to the economy is the uncertainty of not leaving the EU, and we must leave by 31 October. If he wants to end that uncertainty, he knows what he must do tonight.

Kirstene Hair (Angus) (Con): I warmly welcome the spending review. I welcome the extra £1.2 billion for Scotland and the extra £160 million for our farmers, and I was delighted to note the increase in Ministry of Defence spending. I urge the SNP Scottish Government to spend that money on education, health, policing, and connectivity in my constituency. Does the Chancellor agree that what we should be doing—what the SNP should be doing—is welcoming this extra investment, which shows the strength of being part of our United Kingdom, and removing the threat of independence, which would unleash the economy in Scotland?

Sajid Javid: I agree wholeheartedly. Let me take this opportunity to thank my hon. Friend for—along with other Conservative colleagues—helping me to focus on the issue of Scottish farmers, which has helped to secure the £160 million. She is also right about the extra £1.2 billion for Scotland. It is a huge amount—a record amount—but, unfortunately, one thing that we can be sure of is that the SNP will waste it.

Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP): Notwithstanding the best efforts of some Opposition Members to talk the economy down, I am glad that the Chancellor has been able to make these announcements. I welcome the £400 million for Northern Ireland, which will help us to recruit police officers, reduce waiting lists and give some relief to school budgets. Does he recognise, however, that, if he is to realise his goal of levelling growth across

[Sammy Wilson]

the United Kingdom, much more still needs to be done to ensure that resources are sent to Northern Ireland and other regions of the United Kingdom to ensure that growth is experienced equally across the UK?

Sajid Javid: My right hon. Friend has made an important point. I thank him for his welcome for the extra £400 million for Northern Ireland, and also for his reference to levelling growth across the country. In my statement, I referred a number of times to the need to ensure that we have growth in every part of our great United Kingdom. That will require infrastructure investment and I hope that, when I set out the infrastructure strategy later this year, he will welcome it for those reasons.

Mr Richard Bacon (South Norfolk) (Con): Will the Chancellor tell us when we can expect an announcement on funding for serviced plots of land?

Sajid Javid: Let me take this opportunity to thank my hon. Friend for all the work that he has done in relation to self-build homes and more generally, in promoting easier access to homes for everyone. We are discussing that issue with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, but I will pursue it further and get back to him.

Rachel Reeves (Leeds West) (Lab): I am surprised that the Chancellor has the cheek to call this a spending review because it is nothing of the sort. It is no surprise that the Office for Budget Responsibility did not dignify it with its own economic and fiscal analysis, as normally happens with spending reviews.

When the Chancellor made his three-year commitment to school spending, he said that he recognised the importance of schools' being able to plan. May I ask him whether local authorities should also be able to plan for the future when investing in social care and youth services and tackling homelessness? If he thinks that they should be able to do that, why did they not get a three-year settlement as well?

Sajid Javid: Let me first say gently to the hon. Lady that this is a spending round. I have not referred to it as a spending review. As she may know, a spending review normally covers a number of years, whereas a spending round covers a single year. She said that I had not "dignified" it with an OBR forecast. No spending review or spending round comes with an OBR forecast; that is normally the case with a Budget, and there are two forecasts a year. I thought that she might already know that, but I am happy to let her know now. She also talked about the funding of sectors such as social care and youth services. I did refer to those: I set out plans for next year, but also plans for the future involving, for example, the new youth investment fund.

John Stevenson (Carlisle) (Con): The Chancellor clearly recognises the importance of growing the economy, because it is through a growing economy that we can afford public services. I understand that, with a view to achieving growth—particularly in the north—there have been discussions about the possible creation of free ports in the north of England. Carlisle Lake District Airport, which is owned by the Stobart Group and

which commenced commercial flights recently, has the ambition to create an airport free port. Would the Chancellor support that?

Sajid Javid: As my hon. Friend will know, we have accelerated our work on the free ports generally, which is being led by the Trade Secretary and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. However, I should be happy to consider a proposal for an airport free port.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): Instead of wasting £4 billion on no deal, can the Chancellor just spend some money in the Rhondda, please? Just 2% of that figure would pay for finishing off the Rhondda Fach relief road; for rebuilding Llyn-y-Forwyn school; for buying new trains, which might actually be clean and run on time, for the Treherbert line; for providing a new home for the Rhondda sea cadets; and for a new PET-CT scanner for south Wales.

Sajid Javid: The good news is we do not have to choose between investing in leaving the EU and investing in Rhondda or anywhere else in the country, and the reason is that, under the Conservatives, we have a strong economy. But if the Labour party were ever in charge, we would not have the money to invest anywhere.

Stephen Metcalfe (South Basildon and East Thurrock) (Con): I thank the Chancellor for his statement and particularly the focus on rebuilding our infrastructure. Of course he is right to ensure that it delivers value for money. May I therefore ask that he has another look at the lower Thames crossing to ensure that it is delivering value for money and that it delivers its primary aim of relieving congestion at the existing Dartford crossing?

Sajid Javid: The general point my hon. Friend makes about infrastructure and value for money is of course absolutely right, and as we spend more on infrastructure we must make sure that that principle is always maintained. He has invited me to take a further look at the lower Thames crossing. I will be happy to do that and to discuss it with him.

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): The Chancellor tells us that the challenge of decarbonisation is real, as if he has only just discovered it. But we face a climate emergency, so why have we not had a spending round that would actually match that climate emergency? Green groups are urging him to commit at least 2% of GDP on immediate climate action. Is he going to do it, or is this just going to pile up with all his other broken promises?

Sajid Javid: This spending round is focused on day-to-day resource spending. The hon. Lady may know that some very important investments that will need to be made on decarbonisation will be capital investments and that is just not covered today, but that does not mean to say it is not going to happen and is not taken seriously. However, one step that we have taken today is to provide more funding to the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to work with the Treasury on the decarbonisation plan to meet the net 2050 targets; there is additional funding of £30 million to work on that programme. There are also other measures I have announced today that would help—for example, the £200 million on ultra-low emission buses. I hope the hon. Lady would welcome that, too.

Alberto Costa (South Leicestershire) (Con): I welcome the Chancellor to his position. The leaders of Conservative-led Blaby District Council and Harborough District Council, both in my South Leicestershire constituency, would greatly welcome a meeting with the local government finance Minister. Will the Chancellor help to organise that, so that the Minister can discuss the additional funds that the Chancellor has announced today?

Sajid Javid: I will gladly help my hon. Friend to organise such a meeting. I will certainly speak to Ministers in the relevant Department.

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): The Chancellor will know that the Select Committee on Home Affairs has called for a long time for substantial additional resources for policing and that is important, so can he confirm that the £750 million he refers to is a real-terms increase and is all central Government funding, as he will know that central Government funding for policing has been cut by £3 billion since 2010? Can he also confirm that this is not yet enough to fund the restoration of the over 20,000 police officers who have been cut since 2010, and it also does not reverse any of the cuts of 7,000 PCSOs and 5,000 specialists since 2010?

Sajid Javid: What I can confirm to the right hon. Lady, and I hope she will find this helpful, is that for the Home Office my starting point was to roll over all funding in real terms that it had received this year, so that was the baseline, which had not been done before. I added to that the extra costs that would be required, with the major cost being for the extra officers. So the real-terms increase in the Home Office budget is £800 million. That is an increase in the real-terms growth rate of 6.3%, the biggest real-terms increase in the Home Office budget in 15 years.

Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con): As we saw on the Public Accounts Committee during the Labour years, if there are rapid increases in public spending, particularly on health, they are invariably accompanied by increasing levels of unproductivity, so how is the Chancellor going to maintain his laser-like focus on economy and efficiency and ensure that a greater proportion of our spending is not sucked into administration, away from the frontline? In other words, tax and spend on its own does not work.

Sajid Javid: My right hon. Friend makes an important point. He talked about it in the context of health, but we could apply it to the spending of many other Departments. He is absolutely right that as we allocate this new spending, especially if it is multi-year funding amounting to billions of pounds, it is imperative that we make sure every penny is spent wisely. That work is done jointly with the Department, but also in a unit in the Treasury. We will have a laser-like focus on efficiency, and if we need to take action we will not hesitate.

Frank Field (Birkenhead) (Ind): The Chancellor did not mention families who are today hungry and facing destitution; those families have suffered cuts of £1,200 in benefits. What message would he like to send them today?

Sajid Javid: I will say two things on that to the right hon. Gentleman. First, as I said in reply to a previous question, for welfare and the DWP today's settlement covers only day-to-day resource spending and, as he will know, most spending on benefits is not day-to-day resource spending. Secondly, to answer his question on how this spending round will help people in such vulnerable positions, what I have announced today underlines the fundamental economic strength, and that will bring more confidence, meaning our economy can continue to grow and continue to generate jobs—and jobs will always continue to be the best sustainable way out of poverty.

Luke Graham (Ochil and South Perthshire) (Con): I welcome the Chancellor's statement, including the £1.2 billion extra that will be coming to Scotland, which is an increase on the real-terms increase we already received in the Budget last year. May I especially thank him for the £160 million that will be coming back to our constituencies in rural funding, which was demanded by NFU Scotland and requested by my constituents, and is delivered by the Scottish Conservatives, with his help?

Sajid Javid: My hon. Friend is right on every count; it has been delivered by Scottish Conservatives, and may I take this opportunity to thank him for all the representations that he made to me, along with his colleagues, and for achieving this result? It just shows that Scottish Conservatives really care about their constituents, unlike the SNP.

Dr Sarah Wollaston (Totnes) (LD): This morning I met with NHS trust leaders from around the country; they painted an absolutely shocking picture of infrastructure that is crumbling, unsafe and broken. They welcome the unfreezing of £1 billion so that they can get on and fix some of that, but it does not go far enough; there is a £6 billion backlog, and they are asking for us to reach the levels of comparable countries in spending on NHS infrastructure. Will the Chancellor meet me to discuss their serious concerns and the measures that we need to take to move this forward?

Sajid Javid: I thank the hon. Lady for welcoming one of the changes I made a few weeks ago, which was to unlock or bring forward £1 billion of new capital investment in our hospitals and an additional fresh £850 million on top of that to upgrade 20 hospitals. She makes an important point, but today's announcement is about day-to-day resource spending whereas she is talking about another important area, which is capital. I will make sure she gets the meeting with Ministers she wants.

Sarah Newton (Truro and Falmouth) (Con): I very much welcome this additional investment in our vital public services. The "Britain's Leading Edge" report that I helped launch in July evidenced an historical bias in the funding of our public services between England's regions and major cities. Will my right hon. Friend use the spending review to end this bias, so that regions such as Cornwall can play their full part in the Treasury's economic renewal plans?

Sajid Javid: I agree with my hon. Friend, and she has made this point powerfully on a number of occasions. In the past, for example, we talked about making sure that police funding reflects local need. I hope she will have noted that in my remarks today I talked a lot about levelling up across the country, whether in infrastructure investment or in investment in public services, and I can give her an assurance that Cornwall will not be left behind.

Seema Malhotra (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op): I look forward to sharing plans for the Southern Rail access to Heathrow, which I hope will form an important part of the Chancellor's new infrastructure strategy.

This month, Hounslow clinical commissioning group was due to present the full business case for the planned and urgently needed Heston health centre redevelopment to its governing body. However, the project is on hold after questions about whether the local improvement finance trust scheme, which was originally advised by the Department of Health and Social Care as the best-value funding option, could still go ahead following confusion around the Treasury's policy on LIFT schemes last year. Will the Chancellor meet me to review the situation, so that we can see whether the existing plans can be approved or whether any of the alternative capital funding he has announced will be available to enable this important and urgent development to go ahead?

Sajid Javid: I will happily discuss with officials the issue that the hon. Lady has raised, and I am sure that they will be happy to meet her.

Huw Merriman (Bexhill and Battle) (Con): I thank the Chancellor for the extra money for local government and social care, which will prove hugely impactful for East Sussex. I should like to make particular reference to the schools spending increases. The increase to £5,000 for secondary schools and £4,000 for primary schools next year will help East Sussex schools to almost catch up with some of the wealthier parts of the country. I should also like to thank the teachers, headteachers and governors who have fought their campaign, with me, with respect, reason and absolute passion to deliver the best for their schoolchildren.

Sajid Javid: I want to take this opportunity to thank my hon. Friend for his campaigning and for the way in which he has worked with the Treasury and the Department for Education on this. I think he is referring to the f40 campaign, with which I am very familiar as a constituency MP. I am pleased that we have been able to make this huge step change in school funding, which I know has been welcomed across the country.

Meg Hillier (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/Co-op): After all the announcements over the summer, I had hoped for more detail today. The Chancellor and his Department might have a laser-like focus, but he can rest assured that the Public Accounts Committee will be delving through these figures and holding him to account.

As others have said, the Chancellor has indicated that he is going to change the fiscal rules. We already have an 85% ratio of debt to GDP. Can he advise us of the tolerance level that he would go up to in that debt level, and is he considering increases in taxation?

Sajid Javid: I welcome the scrutiny from the hon. Lady's very important Committee. She might not have enough time, but there is a lot of detail in the book that has been published alongside my statement today. She referred to a figure of 85% for the ratio of debt to GDP. I think the last Office for Budget Responsibility forecast in March had it at 82.2% and on a declining trajectory. On the changes to the fiscal rules, I have set out that I am looking at the fiscal rules in time for the Budget. There may well be changes, but I do not want to set out what they will be today, because we have not decided.

Jeremy Lefroy (Stafford) (Con): I welcome the Chancellor and his statement. Does the spending round contain any provision for the establishment of a UK development and investment bank, which I believe would be an extremely strong vehicle to make the kinds of investments that he talks about in the public and private sectors and internationally?

Sajid Javid: Today's statement does not focus on capital, but my hon. Friend's suggestion would certainly involve capital investment if it happened. I know that he has spoken to the Economic Secretary to the Treasury about this, and we are happy to have further discussions.

Dame Louise Ellman (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab/Co-op): The people of Liverpool have suffered a horrific 64% cut in funding for local services. I was pleased to hear the Chancellor say this afternoon that no Department will be cut next year, but is there an absolute guarantee that Liverpool City Council will not have any real-terms reductions in its funding for local services next year? And when will he make the money available to complete the new Royal Liverpool Hospital?

Sajid Javid: The hon. Lady will know that local council funding will be a combination of grant funding and locally raised funding, so it is hard to say specifically what might happen to any particular council's funding, as it will depend in large part on what that council chooses to do. However, I hope that I can give her some reassurance by telling her that, following today's announcement, the core funding for local government next year across England will receive its highest increase in a decade.

Mary Robinson (Cheadle) (Con): In the north, there are 42,000 more people in work than there were a year ago, and 280 businesses are being supported through the £400 million northern powerhouse investment fund. I welcome the Chancellor's announcement of the infrastructure revolution, and indeed the acceleration of the HS3 Northern Powerhouse Rail project. Will he ensure that, throughout the next year, the northern powerhouse is kept at the heart of Government thinking on the economy and on what we can do in the north to close the productivity gap and really deliver for the country?

Sajid Javid: Yes, I can absolutely give my hon. Friend that guarantee. I should also like to congratulate her on the excellent work that she has done locally to bring this issue to the attention of the Treasury, especially in relation to infrastructure investment in the north. She has done a fantastic job, and I would be happy to meet her and listen to her ideas, especially on infrastructure.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Speaker: Order. I am sorry to disappoint remaining colleagues, a point of which I did give notice at an earlier stage. I should, just as a courtesy, advise the House that it is the terms of the order the House of yesterday that require me to stick to time and to move on to the next business. I am genuinely sorry that some colleagues are disappointed.

Compulsory Purchase and Planning

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

2.46 pm

Emma Hardy (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle) (Lab): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to grant local authorities increased powers of compulsory purchase; to amend the law relating to land valuation and compensation; to make provision requiring landowners to fulfil conditions relating to planning permission; and for connected purposes.

Mr Speaker, it will be of no surprise to you or any Member that I begin this speech by extolling Hull's virtues. Hull is a growing, successful city that is attracting significant investment and undergoing really positive change. The council has already granted numerous housing, commercial, industrial and educational permissions, the majority of which have been implemented, and taking vital steps to secure our future. Members who were present at my Westminster Hall debate yesterday will have heard me talk about one such step: Hull's bid to become Yorkshire's maritime city. They will have heard me talk about the proud place that the sea plays in the history of Hull and how, for years, the shipping and deep sea trawling industries dominated our economy and their buildings stood prominently along our skyline. One such building was the Lord Line building on St Andrew's dock, which was constructed for the Lord Line trawler fleet in 1949. The Lord Line building is locally listed and a site of personal significance to the people of Hull, as it is one of the last buildings relating to Hull's fishing heritage. It is the site of the dock where the fishing boats used to come in and out when we were the capital city of the UK fishing trade, but it has been left to go to ruin, causing great upset in Hull's fishing community.

Young people go in there for reasons that I do not wish to elaborate on here. We can see from the discarded needles, from the bricks thrown from the top of the building and from the fire engines that attend the site regularly that it is not being properly safeguarded or protected. There will end up being a tragedy there, because people keep going to the building and it remains unsafe. If you ask people who is to blame, they will answer: Manor Properties. The company owns the Lord Line building and has a habit of promising wonderful, big, pie-in-the-sky dreams to the people of Hull. It would have been fantastic if it had been able to deliver on its original proposals, but time passes and the work is not done. The building continues to be damaged and to lose its integrity, and a vital and beloved part of our history as a seafaring city goes to rack and ruin.

This is an exceptionally important local issue, and it is one that goes to the very heart of the concept of property rights and what we value in this country. The question that we, as the representatives of the people, must answer is whether owning something gives someone the right not just to use it and earn from it but to actively destroy it, especially when it is of cultural significance to others. Of course this is a philosophical question, but that does not make it any less important to answer. If anything, abstracting the question makes it easier to answer. Imagine if, instead of a building, the thing being owned was a priceless piece of art or a beloved

[Emma Hardy]

public service. There are few among us here who would say that anyone, even those who own such artefacts, had an absolute right to take a shredder to the Mona Lisa, for example, or to destroy our NHS. The fact that we can accept that there is no absolute right to destroy property that one owns is one of the bases of our compulsory purchase system, but unfortunately, in one area in particular, our current system of compulsory purchase does not go far enough. This is a situation in which a property developer continually fails to fulfil the conditions of their planning permission within a reasonable amount of time, such as in the Lord Line case. It is such situations that my Bill seeks to address.

The first of the main provisions through which we aim to do that is enhancing compulsory purchase powers when planning permission has not been implemented in full for five years. Such powers would enable a local authority or other relevant body to acquire a site provided that development commences within 12 months of the acquisition and that at least 50% of the development is completed within three years. Secondly, we would introduce compulsory sale orders that could be utilised by councils under the same conditions. Compulsory sale orders would give local authorities the power to order that a piece of land that met the required conditions be put up for open auction. Related to that, the Bill makes provision for the introduction of completion notices and for changing what it means for a developer to make a “material start” to a property, which would prevent a developer from just digging a hole and claiming that work has been done.

We are lucky in Hull, because we do not have a particular problem with land being held back from the housing supply, but that is an additional issue that the Bill could tackle. The two new powers would allow for a common-sense system for the transfer of ownership of buildings in a productive way that will prevent anyone from being able to sit on a piece of land and run it down. They would also give local authorities a choice, and even allow cash-strapped councils to free pieces of land from abusive ownership while properly compensating the owner.

However, we must consider what we mean by proper compensation and, again, my Bill contains two provisions to address that. The first establishes that the rate of proper compensation should be that provided in the Planning (Affordable Housing and Land Compensation) Bill, which was introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich and West Norwood (Helen Hayes). The second would require a discount in compensation when a notice has been issued under section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. We must also look at removing VAT for any conversion works to properties in heritage action zones and making new pots of money, to be administered by Homes England, available to local authorities to unlock such pieces of land.

The situation is not unique to Hull. It is also not a particularly party political issue, because such problems exist in constituencies up and down the country—the recent report by the right hon. Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) on land banking revealed as much. This Bill offers a common-sense method to address the issue that is potentially acceptable to both sides. Yes, there may be tangential issues in my particular version of the Bill that some Members may disagree with, but I plead with those who do disagree, and with the Government as a whole, not to throw the baby out with the bathwater and to work with me. Let us find a common-sense compromise solution that will not allow Lord Line to crumble. Let us act now to save this piece of Hull’s history. The people of Hull will not forget or forgive us if we do not.

Question put and agreed to.

Ordered,

That Emma Hardy, Mike Amesbury, Siobhain McDonagh, Bambos Charalambous, John Spellar, Stephen Pound, Rosie Duffield, Vernon Coaker, Mrs Madeleine Moon, Debbie Abrahams and Catherine West present the Bill.

Emma Hardy accordingly presented the Bill.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Thursday 5 September, and to be printed (Bill 434).

Point of Order

2.53 pm

Thangam Debbonaire (Bristol West) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I am sure that you, like so many people across the country, will have been moved by the sight of my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr Dhesi) asking such a rousing question at Prime Minister's questions this afternoon. However, many of us felt that the answer was woefully inadequate, and the question was on such a serious matter that there was a danger that an unhelpful impression was being given to the public. I wonder whether you could advise me on what further steps I can suggest that my colleague take in order to get his question—a serious question on the matter of racism in this country—properly dealt with.

Mr Speaker: I am not sure that my counsel is of particular value in this matter, although I am touched by the hon. Lady's faith in my capacity to assist the hon. Member for Slough (Mr Dhesi) in his quest. What I would say is twofold. First, if the hon. Gentleman is disconcerted or irked by the answer that he received, it is open to him to table further questions in pursuit of satisfaction. Secondly, if the hon. Gentleman wishes to pursue the matter further beyond merely simple question and answer, it is open to him to seek an Adjournment debate on the matter, which could potentially attract the interest of other colleagues on both sides of the House. My immediate response is that those two devices may usefully meet the needs of the case. I am obliged to the hon. Lady for raising the matter, demonstrating not only her commitment to the issue, but her altruism on behalf of colleagues.

BILL PRESENTED

EUROPEAN UNION (WITHDRAWAL) (No. 6) BILL

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)

Hilary Benn, supported by Alistair Burt, Mr Philip Hammond, Mr David Gauke, Tom Brake, Stephen Gethins, Jonathan Edwards, Joan Ryan, Caroline Lucas, Chris Bryant, Stephen Doughty and Nick Boles, presented a Bill to make further provision in connection with the period for negotiations for withdrawing from the European Union.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time today, and to be printed (Bill 433).

Speaker's Statement

2.55 pm

Mr Speaker: Under the terms of the Order of the House yesterday, amendments for the Committee stage of the Bill may now be accepted by the Clerks at the Table only. An amendment paper containing all amendments tabled up until 3.30 pm today will be available in the Vote Office and on the parliamentary website by 5.15 pm. Members may continue to table amendments up until the start of proceedings in Committee of the whole House. If necessary, an updated amendment paper will be made available as soon as possible during proceedings in Committee. For the benefit of everyone, however, I encourage Members to table their amendments as soon as possible.

The Chairman of Ways and Means will make a provisional decision on selection and grouping on the basis of amendments tabled by 3.30 pm, and that provisional selection list will be made available in the Vote Office and on the parliamentary website before the start of proceedings in Committee. In order to make the texts of the amendments available to Members as soon as practicable, it may not be possible to publish all the supporting Members' names immediately. I hope that colleagues will not be unduly discombobulated or offended if that is the case. Those names will be added to the permanent online version of the Committee notice paper in due course. I hope that that advice is exhaustive at least for the narrow purpose that I had in mind.

Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. It will be perfectly obvious to anyone watching these proceedings and, for that matter, the entire House that this incredibly rushed procedure is a travesty in itself. This will be incredibly difficult, even given the manner in which you put your statement just now, due to the speed with which we are going to have to assess the Bill, which we have not even seen yet and which, I understand, is only just being made available in the Vote Office. We will then have to make amendments to the Bill and then see the people who might support them. All that raises some incredibly difficult questions not only of procedure, but of the drafting of the amendments. That is my first point.

My second point is that there is an issue regarding Standing Order No. 14, which relates to the timing within which private Members' Bills of this kind should be introduced. I would be grateful if some consideration was given to that point right now or shortly after you have had a chance to talk about it with the Clerks.

My third and fourth points are to do with Queen's consent and the money resolution, because we went through all this in relation to the so-called Cooper-Letwin Bill. You made rulings on these matters then but, of course, this Bill is significantly different from that Bill on a whole range of matters. I understand you have had an opportunity to consider these questions privately, with the Clerk of Legislation I imagine, and I would be grateful if, in that context, you could give a ruling on the questions of both the money resolution and whether Queen's consent is required.

The issues are there, and it is perfectly apparent that vast sums of money are being involved on a monthly basis as a result of the extension of time under the

[Sir William Cash]

Cooper-Letwin Bill. It is at least £8 billion from April to October, and now it is being extended by a further three months, which is even more money.

Mr Speaker: I am extremely obliged to the hon. Gentleman for his point of order, and I will attempt briefly to respond to each of the important points that he legitimately raises.

In terms of timing, it seems to me that there are two senses in which that concern can be aired and needs to be answered. The hon. Gentleman, if I understood the terms of his point of order correctly, focused in particular on the issue of time in the sense of the lack of it for Members to study the Bill and to table amendments. My response is as follows.

First, the hon. Gentleman is a quite remarkably experienced, skilled and dextrous parliamentarian. Now, admittedly not everybody has his level of experience, skill or dexterity, but I know he would not imagine that that of which he is capable is completely beyond everybody else. In other words, if everybody else has the opportunity to study the Bill and to come to a view about whether they wish to table amendments—the basic subject matter of the Bill was well known to them—they will be able to do so, probably at least close to his own level of acceptability and his own standard. That is the first point.

The second point on timing is that, of course, it is intended that the Bill will go through all stages today but, of course, there are several precedents for that. Those Bills have ordinarily been Government Bills, very often concerning Northern Ireland, but I accept it is unusual. What it is not, in any sense, is disorderly.

The hon. Gentleman has raised very important questions about a money resolution and Queen's consent. Yes, this Bill is different, but I have, of course, consulted the Clerk of Legislation and other senior Clerks, on whose procedural expertise we regularly call. My ruling on Wednesday 3 April 2019, in respect of the earlier Bill that the hon. Gentleman referenced, was that

“the European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 5) Bill does not require either a Ways and Means motion or a money resolution... extending the period under article 50 would continue the UK's rights and obligations as a member state of the EU for the period of the extension, which would have substantial consequences for both spending and taxation.”—[*Official Report*, 3 April 2019; Vol. 657, c. 1130-31.]

Clause 4(1) of the Bill before us today would require exit day to be moved to match any extension agreed with the European Council. The financial resolutions passed on Monday 11 September 2017 give fully adequate cover for the exercise by Ministers of their powers under sections 23 and 24 of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 to move exit day in order to keep in lockstep with the date for the expiry of the European treaties, which, of course, is determined by article 50 of the treaty on European Union.

So far as Queen's consent is concerned, my ruling on Wednesday 3 April was that

“as no prerogative consent was required for the Bill in 2017 giving parliamentary authority to the Prime Minister to take action under article 50 of the treaty on European Union, there is no requirement for new and separate prerogative consent to be sought for legislation in 2019 on what further action the Prime Minister should take under the same article 50 of the treaty on European Union.”

The Bill before us today could require the Prime Minister to seek and accept an extension in certain circumstances, although it would still be up to the European Council to agree unanimously to an extension with the UK. In these circumstances, and I say this on the basis of professional advice, my ruling is that Queen's consent is not needed for this Bill.

It will probably not satisfy or even humour the hon. Gentleman when I conclude my response with what I am about to say, but it is this: he will not be altogether surprised to know that we did consider these matters, not least in the expectation that they are legitimate issues that might be raised either by him or by others. I have been advised, I am satisfied with that advice and I would not rule unless I had asked the questions and got the answers, and I have done. I have asked the questions, I have received the answers and I have been satisfied that it is orderly to proceed and that the answers I have given in respect both of the money resolution and of Queen's consent are correct.

Nick Boles (Grantham and Stamford) (Ind) *rose*—

Mr Speaker: I call Mr Nicholas Edward Coleridge Boles.

Nick Boles: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. I am not sure whether the hon. Member for Stone (Sir William Cash), with his great distinction, is nevertheless blessed with the application called Twitter—if he is not, I am sure someone in his office is—but if he is, he will have seen that the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) tweeted a full and complete image of the Bill and all its provisions at 5.25 pm yesterday.

Mr Speaker: That point stands on its own and requires no response from me.

Mr Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. I have a small question on the basis of your judgment. As this whole issue of Queen's consent hangs on whether, when this House triggered article 50, the statute covered and assumed the right under article 50(3) to extend and accept that extension, or whether that right still remains a Government prerogative under the prerogative powers. In a court case on 19 August, Lord Justice Hickinbottom of the Court of Appeal ruled categorically that it did not assume such a thing in the case brought by the English Democrats and ruled that the Government still retained the prerogative rights under article 50(3).

Mr Speaker, I wonder whether you have seen that ruling and whether you would take consideration of that prior to Third Reading, when I gather a final decision will have to be made.

Mr Speaker: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his point of order. My initial response is that we are guided in these matters by House rules in respect of Queen's consent. It would be a mistake to think that they are extrapolated from or dependent upon judicial interpretation of the kind he references. We have our own procedures in relation to Queen's consent, and what I am saying is consistent with those procedures.

I will certainly reflect further on the point the right hon. Gentleman has made, but it is not something that has a bearing on the Second Reading of this Bill.

Mr David Davis (Haltemprice and Howden) (Con): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. You say you have taken advice on this. You may remember that the last time a Bill was put through the House at this speed was the Data Retention and Investigatory Powers Act 2014. That was done relatively quickly, supposedly under the pressure of the Government of the day needing that law. That Act was effectively overturned in court in *Davis and Watson v. the Home Secretary* of the day—she was subsequently Prime Minister—and part of the argument that I am sure affected the judges was the speed with which the House came to decisions on matters of fundamental constitutional importance.

Have you taken advice from Speaker's Counsel as to the robustness of the legislation before us today in the face of such a judicial challenge?

Mr Speaker: It is not ordinarily the case that the courts look at how we make our decisions. There is quite an established principle of comity with the courts, and the principle is that our procedures are respected and, in turn, we respect those of the courts. As I say, I will happily reflect further on the right hon. Gentleman's point, as I will reflect upon the point raised by the right hon. Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr Duncan Smith), but I am entirely comfortable that we are proceeding in a proper way.

I ought to say to the right hon. Member for Haltemprice and Howden (Mr Davis) that, of course, I am conscious, as every Member is, that there are different opinions about the merits of the procedure being followed today, as there are about the merits of the procedure followed yesterday and of the procedure followed at the time of the Bill introduced by the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper), but those are matters of political dispute, not, in my judgment, of rule observance or procedural propriety. We are proceeding in a proper manner. That manner may offend the instincts of some Members, but that does not make it improper. It may mean simply that it is distasteful to the right hon. Gentleman. I am sorry if that is the case, but it does not mean that he has made a valid point of a procedural character.

Sir William Cash *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Well, I am so fond of the hon. Gentleman and have such respect for him that I will take one more point of order, but after that we really must proceed.

Sir William Cash: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. I understand your ruling. I just want to put on the record the fact that where I was referring to discussions that have taken place, those have been based on some extremely learned analyses, for example, those by Dr Robert Craig, which are available on blogs and in various papers, and Sir Stephen Laws, a former First Parliamentary Counsel. So these issues have been looked at over the last period, and I just wanted to put that on the record.

Mr Speaker: I am very grateful to the hon. Gentleman for putting that on the record. What he is really saying, if I may put it in shorthand, is that there are clever and distinguished people who take a view with which he agrees and which it is therefore useful for him to invoke in the course of this exchange. I absolutely accept that, but, knowing him as I do, I know that he would not, for one moment, cast aspersions on the character, integrity or ability of the Clerk of Legislation, who is deeply versed in these matters and regularly consults his scholarly cranium in order to provide advice to Members in all parts of the House on them. If, on this occasion, the view of the Clerk of Legislation is uncongenial to the hon. Gentleman, that is, obviously, most unfortunate, notably for the hon. Gentleman, but it does not further advance his cause this afternoon. I hope that we can leave it there, because—

Charlie Elphicke (Dover) (Con) *rose*—

Mr Speaker: If it is a completely different point, I will take it. If the hon. Gentleman just wants to pursue the same argument, I will not.

Charlie Elphicke: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I simply seek your guidance. I am reading this Bill, which I have just received, as it has just come from the Vote Office, and I see that it directs the Prime Minister to seek from the European Council an extension to article 50. As I understand it, that is an exercise of prerogative powers. I just want—

Mr Speaker: Order.

Charlie Elphicke: I just want to further—

Mr Speaker: Order. Please resume your seat. I am sorry, but when the Speaker is on his feet—it is not about me, but about the office of the Speaker—the hon. Gentleman resumes his seat. He is making a point that is important to him. It is a perfectly valid point of debate, but it is not a new point and it is not one that requires adjudication by the Chair. Sorry, but it is a political point and he can make it in the course of debate. There is nothing further to be added.

European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 6) Bill

Second Reading

3.13 pm

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I want to say at the start that every Member of this House, whatever view they hold on the fundamental political question before us, is trying, as they see best, to act in the national interest and in the interests of their constituents. The problem—the reason why we are here today—is, of course, that each of us has a slightly different view of what those best interests are.

I recognise that we have only a very short amount of time in which to debate this Bill. Let me respond on that point by quoting—I can do no better—the right hon. Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin), who said: “it can only be done at high speed, because there is no time left.—[*Official Report*, 3 April 2019; Vol. 657, c. 1065.]

Wherever we stand on this issue, we know there is very little time left, and following the decision on Prorogation, there is even less time than would have been available previously. Therefore, I hope that, recognising that we have strongly held views, we will treat each other with respect and consideration during this debate.

The purpose of the Bill is simple: to ensure that the United Kingdom does not leave the European Union on 31 October without an agreement. The Bill has wide cross-party support; may I say that it is a great pleasure to be just above the right hon. Member for North East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt) on the list of names? The Bill is backed by Members who have very different views on how the matter of Brexit should be finally resolved, including Members who until very recently were senior members of the Cabinet. People could describe this as a somewhat unlikely alliance, but what unites us is a conviction that there is no mandate for no deal, and that the consequences for the economy and for our country would be highly damaging. Those supporting the Bill believe that no deal is not in the national interest.

Mr Bob Seely (Isle of Wight) (Con): The right hon. Gentleman talks about no deal. There are multiple sector deals. So does he not see those sector deals as being multiple deals in their own right?

Hilary Benn: I do not know where these sector deals are. My concern, and the reason for this Bill and the support I hope it will enjoy in the House today, is that the Prime Minister has made it absolutely clear that he is prepared to leave on 31 October without a deal. Those who I hope will support the Bill today do not wish that to happen.

Frank Field (Birkenhead) (Ind): Does my right hon. Friend agree that these debates have been going on for long periods and many of us have tried to learn lessons from them, and that in that process people have changed their mind or the order of importance they give to things in respect of preventing a no-deal Brexit? One of the amendments today seeks to give people another look at what we might call the “May plus” proposal. Some people turned that down at the time but feel that

if they had had then the experience that they have now they might have voted differently. Given all the rush that there, necessarily, has been, has he had the chance to look at that amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Aberavon (Stephen Kinnock), which now has quite a large amount of support? Can we have another look at that as an alternative to a hard Brexit?

Hilary Benn: I have not had a chance to read the final version, and it will be tabled with the Clerks during this Second Reading debate, but I am aware of the intention of the amendment and I completely understand what my hon. Friends are trying to achieve. We cannot continue to delay taking a decision, and I shall come back to that point later in my speech. I will, of course, also listen to the debate that follows in Committee. I would just say that the Bill is deliberately open as to the purpose of the extension; it provides a framework for reporting and debate. As I have just pointed out, it is supported by right hon. and hon. Members who have already voted for a deal and would vote for one again. It is important that we focus on the principal purpose, which is to prevent a no-deal Brexit, and keep the coalition that shares that view together. I will have more to say about that—

Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con): Does the right hon. Gentleman believe that, irrespective of the speed with which all this is being done, a matter of such importance should really be dealt with in the context of a general election?

Hilary Benn: There may well be a general election at some point, but this legislation needs to be passed. It needs to go through the other place and receive Royal Assent, and it needs to be given effect. In other words, we must secure that extension to article 50, otherwise there is a risk that the election would result in our leaving without a deal, which, as it may turn out at 7 o'clock tonight, is not what the House of Commons wants. We should respect the view of the House of Commons.

Mark Pritchard (The Wrekin) (Con): If this Bill passes and is given Royal Assent, can the right hon. Gentleman think of any other reason why the Labour party would not accept a general election?

Hilary Benn: I think I have just explained the reason, which has been made clear by my right hon. Friend the leader of the Labour party, my right hon. and learned Friend the shadow Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, and others. We must deal with first things first, and preventing a no-deal Brexit is the central, most important question facing the country.

Jonathan Edwards (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (PC): I think the right hon. Gentleman has answered my query. The reality is that an election at this stage, or even next week, would undermine the purpose of the legislation. We cannot support one.

Hilary Benn: I can only agree, and I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for being one of the Bill's sponsors.

Several hon. Members rose—

Hilary Benn: I will take just one more intervention at this stage, because many people want to speak and time is short.

Tim Loughton (East Worthing and Shoreham) (Con): I applaud the right hon. Gentleman's call for respect on all sides; we need to calm down the whole debate. I voted for the deal twice; he voted against the deal three times, presumably because he thought it was not in the country's best interests. How does he think this procedure to delay any agreement yet further is going to produce an offer from the EU that might actually tempt him into voting for something because it is in the better interests of the UK than what has gone before? How can that possibly come about through this procedure?

Hilary Benn: The reason why I voted against the deal three times was not really to do with the withdrawal agreement—the legally binding treaty; it was to do with the nature of the political declaration and the absolute lack of clarity about where the then Prime Minister wanted to take the country. That is my view and other Members have different views.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Hilary Benn: If Members will forgive me, I am not going to give way again at this point. I have been reasonably generous and I am conscious of the time.

It is important that we acknowledge the evidence before us about the consequences of no deal, because that evidence is the fundamental reason behind the Bill. As we heard from my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) when she spoke to her Bill earlier this year, it was reported that the Cabinet Secretary and National Security Adviser, Sir Mark Sedwill, had told the previous Cabinet that no deal would make our country “less safe”. If the National Security Adviser says that to the Cabinet, we ought to pay attention.

We have all seen the Government's own economic assessment, which makes it clear that no deal would cause the greatest loss to the economy. Make UK, the body that represents British manufacturing industry, has described no deal as “an act of economic vandalism”.

Since we last debated the question of an extension, new information about the consequences of no deal has come to light. The Government themselves have now admitted that there would be damage to companies. They have said that they are prepared to compensate certain businesses and industries. This is the first time in my experience that a Government have advocated a policy that they know will do economic damage.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Hilary Benn: Let me finish this point.

Operation Yellowhammer, on which the report was published in *The Sunday Times*, talked about the potential for protests; significant delays for lorries at Dover and other ports—the Exiting the European Union Committee heard powerful evidence on that subject only this morning—a potential impact on medicines; a decrease in the supply of fresh foods and some price rises; an impact on petrol refineries; huge uncertainty for businesses; and serious damage to farmers. Given the progress that Northern Ireland has made in the past 20 years, in some

ways most worrying of all was the expression of the view that the current open border between Northern Ireland and the Republic could be unsustainable because of economic, legal and biosecurity risks.

Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): I am of course keen to support the Bill. My right hon. Friend made the point about security. Is he aware that the Home Affairs Committee repeatedly heard evidence from senior police officers and security officials about the devastating impact of a no-deal Brexit? We keep hearing all the time from the Government about bilateral security treaties, but they are not in place and we do not have agreements to keep our borders safe from terrorists, criminals, paedophiles and others who would exploit our national security.

Hilary Benn: I completely agree with my hon. Friend. That is one of the many unanswered questions about what happens the other side of Halloween. I shall come back to that point a little later in my speech.

Steve Double (St Austell and Newquay) (Con): May I clarify something? Members of the Labour party have commented in the media, and I think the right hon. Gentleman said earlier, that the Bill stops no deal. We should be clear that the Bill does not stop no deal; it prolongs the time until the date we leave. The likelihood is that, unless something changes dramatically, we will be at exactly this same point a few weeks before the new deadline. The only way to stop no deal is to revoke article 50. If that is really what Opposition Members want, they should be honest with the British public.

Hilary Benn: If someone says, “You can jump off a cliff, with all the damaging consequences, in a couple of weeks' time, or we could put it off for three months—which would you like?”, the sensible course of action to take, given the damage that it would do to the country, is to put it off. I accept that ultimately we need to find a way forward. I have my own views, as have other Members, about how that should be done, but that is not the purpose of the Bill. It would, though, provide for a framework within which the Government could decide what they are going to do.

Dr Sarah Wollaston (Totnes) (LD): Three independent and highly respected bodies—the Health Foundation, the Nuffield Trust and the King's Fund—have written an open letter to all MPs setting out in stark terms how there would be significant damage to health and care services from a no-deal Brexit and, more importantly, to the people who depend on them—the people we are supposed to be in the House to protect.

Hilary Benn: I agree with the hon. Lady. Other Members will have lots of other experience of the potential consequences. These are not risks that we should take with our economy, businesses, jobs, livelihoods and health. I hope these risks remind everyone in the House that, for all the focus on process, motions and procedure, this debate is about the impact that a no-deal Brexit would have on the lives of the people we represent.

Steve Brine (Winchester) (Ind): I understand that there is a political imperative to “get this done” and to “move on”, but is not the point that the practical

[*Steve Brine*]

imperative is that no deal will not allow us to move on? It will resolve nothing and will lead to many of the implications that the right hon. Gentleman has talked about. If we have no withdrawal agreement on 31 October, we will have to seek a withdrawal agreement on 1 November.

Hilary Benn: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. Throughout a lot of these debates we have not discussed anything like enough what will happen the other side of 31 October, if the Prime Minister is able to get his way. I shall come to that point in a moment.

Angus Brendan MacNeil (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): With this Bill, the Chairman of the Select Committee is trying to prolong no damage until as far as 31 January. Make UK is absolutely correct that anything else but the current deal we have will damage the economy. We all have to get our heads around the fact that the best way to stop any damage at all is to revoke article 50. I have tabled an amendment to that end; it would include a helpful letter in the schedule. It needs one signature—that of the Prime Minister—and this nightmare will be over in that length of time.

Hilary Benn: I respectfully disagree with the hon. Gentleman, because just as no deal is unacceptable, so revocation—which is basically saying, “Let’s cancel the whole result of the referendum”—is not acceptable either. I have expressed previously in the House my view about how we should resolve this matter by going back to the people. Other Members have different views, but that is not the issue today.

Anna Soubry (Broxtowe) (IGC): If I may say so, I am particularly grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for the way in which he chairs the Select Committee and takes vital evidence. Is that not really the point, over and above the Bill? That is precisely the sort of work that should be done. Questions should be asked of Ministers. This place should be making sure that we are ready for no deal, yet we are being closed down next week when we should be sitting and asking questions. The right hon. Gentleman’s Committee, and others, should be able to do their valuable work.

Hilary Benn: The right hon. Lady is absolutely right. One consequence of Prorogation is that our Select Committees cannot meet. We cannot scrutinise the Government and hold them to account. That is what we are missing.

Jack Dromey (Birmingham, Erdington) (Lab): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is surprising that there appear to be Members in this House who know more about making cars than those who make cars, more about building planes than those who build planes and more about engineering than the engineers? The simple truth is that the overwhelming and unmistakeable voice of the world of work and industry, and of all the employers’ organisations and trade unions, is that a no-deal Brexit would have catastrophic consequences, with tens of thousands of workers losing their jobs, making our country poorer in every sense of the word for years to come.

Hilary Benn: My hon. Friend makes a powerful point. Those industries and sectors, whose representatives we have all met and whose evidence we have heard, are troubled that the message that comes from their expertise and knowledge—after all, they are the people who create the wealth of the country—is not being heard by a Government who say, “We are prepared to leave with no deal on 31 October.”

Phil Wilson (Sedgefield) (Lab) *rose*—

Hilary Benn: My hon. Friend has a room next door to mine. Of course I will give way, and then I will make progress.

Phil Wilson: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way. This morning, I received a letter from North East England Chamber of Commerce, in which it says:

“Over the past three years we have been clear and consistent: preserving the trading conditions and relationship we currently enjoy with the EU ought to be the primary objective of any Brexit outcome. Sadly, the Government’s willingness to embrace No Deal as an acceptable end to the Brexit negotiations flies in the face of this.”

It goes on to say that it is a disastrous outcome for the north-east of England. Do these comments not go to prove that his Bill is an absolute necessity?

Hilary Benn: They absolutely do.

Having now, in a sense, concluded a discussion and reflection on the economic and other consequences of no deal, I want to turn to what the Bill actually does. It intends to stop this happening by seeking an extension to article 50 in certain very specific circumstances.

It is very important to understand that the Bill allows the Prime Minister the opportunity to reach a new agreement with the European Union at the European Council and to seek Parliament’s consent to any such agreement. That is condition No. 1. It also allows the Government to bring a motion to the House of Commons to seek our consent for leaving without a deal—for example, if discussions at the European Council prove unsuccessful. I think that the Government would find it rather difficult to get such a motion through the House of Commons, but the Bill allows them to seek to do that. Clause 1 specifically provides for both those eventualities, and if either of the conditions is met there can be no further extension. If, however, neither of those conditions has been met by 19 October, which was chosen very deliberately as it is the day after the conclusion of the European Council, the Prime Minister must ask the EU for a further extension until 31 January 2020 in the form of the letter set out in the schedule to the Bill.

Clause 3 deals with what happens next. If the European Council accedes to that request, the Prime Minister must agree to it. If, however, the Council proposes an extension to a different date, the Prime Minister must agree to that as well, unless the House of Commons decides not to pass a motion agreeing to it. That is what clause 3(3) does.

It has been wrongly claimed in some commentaries that the EU could propose an extension of any length—six months, 20 years, a millennium—and the Prime Minister would be required to accept it, but that is not so. In those circumstances, the House could decide.

Furthermore, if a deal is reached after the Prime Minister has asked for an extension, that would override any extension, so it also allows him, if he can, to reach a deal after the European Council concludes on 18 October.

Dr Caroline Johnson (Sleaford and North Hykeham) (Con) *rose—*

Sir Bernard Jenkin (Harwich and North Essex) (Con) *rose—*

Hilary Benn: I will give way in a moment.

In other words, the Bill gives the Prime Minister the flexibility that he wants and needs to get a deal if he can. It does not render further negotiation pointless—if the Prime Minister were here I would say this forcefully to him—but what does is the Prime Minister's apparent refusal to put any proposals to the EU if this Bill passes, which I can describe only as a very odd state of affairs.

Sir Bernard Jenkin: Clause 3(2) is very clear that the period of two days begins with

“the end of the day on which the European Council's decision is made.”

We were told very clearly during proceedings on the change of date, after the two previous occasions when the Government accepted an extension, that we were merely implementing a decision that was already made and binding in European Union law. The right hon. Gentleman's proposal depends on the European Union making a conditional offer that comes into force only if it chooses to make it conditional on subsequent approval by the House of Commons. He has no way of binding the European Union's procedures by domestic legislation.

Hilary Benn: If the Bill is passed, the House of Commons will pass it in the knowledge that it is seeking in the circumstances set out an extension to 31 January. If, however, the European Union proposes a different date, it seems to be only right and proper that the Prime Minister should be able to say, either, “Yes, that is fine by me,” or, “I will need to go back and check.” I agree with the hon Gentleman that, of course, we cannot bind the European Union in the way it seeks to work, but it is not at all unusual for member states to say, “Well, we will need to go back and check with our Parliament.” I am certain, given the importance of this issue, that the European Union would be able to find another procedure, which might not involve the European Council meeting again, to confirm the decision it made in making the offer in the first place.

The second point is that the two days is intended precisely to give the Prime Minister the chance to come back to the House in those circumstances.

Dr Johnson: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for giving way. My reading of this Bill is that it does not stop no deal—it postpones it potentially for three months—but it does make it virtually impossible for our Prime Minister to negotiate. Therefore, it is a political Bill, which, sadly, some on our Benches have supported. What it does is tell the European Union that, if it does not choose to negotiate and it does not choose to give us a better deal, it has the opportunity to offer us an extension of whatever it wants this House to take.

Hilary Benn: I have dealt with that last point—an extension of whatever length. There is a means by which the Government can ask the House not to approve that, and then the House would have to make a decision in the light of what had been offered by the European Union. I do not accept the hon. Lady's central premise that this somehow undermines the Prime Minister's negotiating ability.

Dr Johnson *rose—*

Hilary Benn: I am responding to the hon. Lady if she just bears with me. I do not regard the threat of a no-deal Brexit as part of a credible negotiating strategy.

Dr Johnson *rose—*

Hilary Benn: Will the hon. Lady bear with me? The previous Prime Minister spent nearly two years saying that no deal is better than a bad deal and it did not seem to work then, and I do not think it will work now.

Dr Johnson *rose—*

Hilary Benn: I will give way one more time.

Dr Johnson: If I am correct, it would mean that if the European Union offered us a 10-year extension, as the right hon. Gentleman has suggested, the choice for this House would be a 10-year extension or the no deal he so wishes to avoid.

Hilary Benn: No, that is not the case. In those circumstances, the House could decide to ask the Prime Minister to go back. The central point is that it gives the House of Commons the ability to express a view, but if the extension was to 31 January we would have already decided that we were prepared to accept that. Therefore, it is only if the Prime Minister does not get a deal that the Bill prevents him from taking us out of the EU without an agreement.

Sir Bernard Jenkin *rose—*

Hilary Benn: I will give way one more time to the hon. Gentleman.

Sir Bernard Jenkin: Article 50(3) of the treaty on European Union baldly states that we leave after two years

“unless the European Council, in agreement with the Member State concerned, unanimously decides to extend this period.”

There is no obligation on the European Union to decide to make a conditional offer—it can decide—yet the Bill requires the Prime Minister, in those circumstances, to accept the terms that are on offer, and that is it. The Bill hands the decision back to the European Union, rather than to this House.

Hilary Benn: I do not agree. Of course, we all recognise that with any of these provisions there is no guarantee that the European Union will grant a further request from the United Kingdom for another extension of article 50. It takes only one member state of the European

[Hilary Benn]

Union to say, “No, I’m not giving the United Kingdom a further extension” for us to be in even greater difficulty than we are already.

The provision seeks to require the Prime Minister to ask for and agree to an extension, because that is what is required to prevent the current Prime Minister from taking us out of the EU on 31 October without a deal. We did not have to put those provisions in the earlier Bill introduced by my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford because the former Prime Minister readily accepted the decision of the House of Commons, but we are now in different circumstances.

Clause 2 covers what happens if an extension is proposed and agreed. Members have asked, quite rightly, what the extension is for. The immediate answer is, of course, to avoid a no-deal Brexit on 31 October, but clause 2 provides a framework under which the Government will publish a report to the House on 30 November—this comes back to the point that my right hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Frank Field) raised with me earlier—and move a motion to the effect that the House has approved the report. That gives the Government a chance to say, “What are we going to do next?” It is also something that we can point to with the European Union. Members should remember that, last time, Mr Tusk said, “Use the time well,” and it is important that we in this House show that we are not just saying, “Right, we want a further extension, and then we are going to twiddle our thumbs for another three months.”

The Bill suggests a process. If the report is amended or rejected, there must be further reports from the Government on 10 January and every 28 days thereafter, either until an agreement is reached with the EU or until otherwise indicated by a resolution of the House. I think the framework in clause 2 will help to answer the question about what we intend to do with the additional time, and that will be a matter for Parliament.

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): Surely, one of the things that we would want to do during that time is to try to find a solution to the Irish question. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the EU Commission taskforce is reporting that the Prime Minister is reneging on his commitment to protect the all-Ireland economy and meaningful north-south co-operation? Clearly, the time should be used to ensure that there is decent co-operation.

Hilary Benn: I have read those reports and they are of concern to me, as I know they are to the right hon. Gentleman and many others in the House.

The aim of the clause is not, as I think the Leader of the House suggested yesterday, to create a “marionette Government” but, I would argue, to give the Government the time they need to do their job. I say that because it is not clear what is happening at the moment, as we discussed yesterday, and how much negotiation is taking place when no proposals have been made. It is very hard to understand that, because I would have thought that the Government had been working flat out since July. It is also important to make the point that even if agreement was reached, it is very hard to see how it would be possible to get the House’s approval and pass all the legislation between 18 October or so and 31 October.

My final point is this. What would happen if we left with no deal? The Prime Minister talks about getting it done and ending the uncertainty, but the truth is—the hon. Member for Winchester (Steve Brine) made this point powerfully—that no deal would not end anything. It would simply plunge us into greater uncertainty—uncertainty about the degree and length of disruption, uncertainty about the border arrangements in Northern Ireland, and uncertainty about our future trading relationship with our biggest, nearest and most important trading partners, the other members of the European Union.

Given that it has taken three years to get this far—in other words, not very far at all—and given that it took Canada seven years to negotiate a deal and the Prime Minister says he wants a super-Canada deal, it is going to take years to agree a new relationship. Every single EU member state, member state parliament and regional parliament will have to agree to any deal. No deal will not be the end of Brexit; it will only be the end of the beginning. In that time, faced with that degree of uncertainty, businesses will have countless decisions to make about where to invest, what to make and where, what to do about the sudden disappearance of all the arrangements that they have come to know and work within, and what to do about the sudden imposition of tariffs. It would be utterly irresponsible to allow that to happen. We have a duty to prevent it, and I hope the House will vote for this Bill tonight.

Mr Speaker: In an attempt to accommodate lots of Members who wish to take part, I am obliged to impose a five-minute limit on Back-Bench speeches with immediate effect.

3.44 pm

Alistair Burt (North East Bedfordshire) (Ind): I rise to speak as the proud but slightly bemused independent Member for North East Bedfordshire. I commend my friend, the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn), for his remarks and the way in which he went through the technicalities of the Bill. I have no wish to do the same and do not wish to detain the House on those matters. Let me make just three brief points in support of the Bill.

First, is the Bill a stumbling block to negotiations? No, it is not. The Bill does not prevent the Prime Minister or the Government from negotiating. The reason that we do not yet have a deal or might not get one is not this Bill. Ever since the referendum and the start of negotiations, a variety of reasons have been cited for not getting a deal. In no particular order, it has been: a remainder Parliament, a remainder Prime Minister, Olly Robbins, the EU, Michel Barnier, Martin Selmayr—always a different reason. We were told recently that all could be solved if only we elected a Prime Minister who was a Brexiteer with an absolute determination to leave, no questions asked, because the EU would then fold and we would have the deal that the UK always wanted. We have such a Prime Minister, whose determination is clear, and the EU has not folded, so this time we are being told that it is us—that it is me. That is nonsense.

There are two reasons why we have not had a deal. First, Members in this House have not voted for a deal. If they had looked at it hard two years ago, they would have bitten your hand off to accept all the provisions in

the withdrawal agreement and the transition period, which a Brexiteer will now be in charge of. The second reason is that many in the UK have failed to grasp that it is we who are leaving the EU. That means that it is a negotiation between us. We have never really understood the EU or its arguments, believing that a negotiation was a series of demands from the United Kingdom, not a negotiation. That and the language that we have used—built on 20-odd years of the drip, drip of poison about the EU—has made sure that we did not get a deal.

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey) (Lab): The right hon. Gentleman and I came to this House in the same year, so I am sad to hear his announcement that he is going. Does he agree that the kind of language being used from the Government Front Bench and in the media about those who are trying to prevent no deal, such as “traitors” and “collaborators”—all of that war-like language—is less than helpful?

Alistair Burt: Absolutely. In my conclusion, I shall talk a bit about that and how we have got to reset, but the hon. Lady makes a good point.

Secondly, why do we want to avoid no deal? I will not repeat all the things that the right hon. Member for Leeds Central said, which are obvious; the economics are clear. For me, there are three reasons. The first is the threat to the Union. I am a Scot, my mother and father are from Scotland. I am a proud Scot. I am also British through and through. I could not believe a recent poll of Conservative members that said they would abandon almost anything, including the Union, providing they left the EU. I regard that as a terrible threat. We should not risk it.

My second reason is Ireland, which is treated by some here as some sort of irrelevance and a place that has made up the border issue to prevent us from leaving the EU. With our history in relation to Ireland and everything that happened there, it became our best friend in the European Union. Our choice to leave—our Brexit—has put Ireland in the most catastrophic situation of any country, and we now expect it to accept another English demand that it should do something. Have we no understanding of what that relationship means and the damage done?

My third reason for wanting to avoid no deal is the damage to Europe and the relationship with Europe itself. I grew up as part of the first generation to avoid war in Europe for countless hundreds of years. I arrived in the House of Commons when there were giants here such as Denis Healey, Willie Whitelaw and Ted Heath—people for whom Europe was the place where they and their friends had fought and died—and they wanted something different. That has always motivated me in my sense of Europe. Whether we are in the European Union or not, that relationship with Europe is clouded by the sort of language that the hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) mentioned. I do not want to see that relationship threatened by a no deal.

Sir William Cash: Will he take a second intervention?

Alistair Burt: I have listened to the hon. Gentleman involuntarily for most of the years that I have been here—most, not all, because I went to campaign for him in his by-election of 1984. I have no wish to hear from him voluntarily. [*Laughter.*] Let me go on.

Thirdly, let me end where I began, as the Independent Member for North East Bedfordshire. I do not complain at the removal of the Whip—voting on an issue of confidence, I accept the rules—but I say to my colleagues: just think how this looks. Last week, the Conservative party lost Ruth Davidson, and George Young in the House of Lords resigned the Whip. This morning, we lost my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Runnymede and Weybridge (Mr Hammond)—who made the economy we were cheering just a few minutes ago. What are people going to think about what we have left and what we have lost? Some will have been very happy at the fact that some have been purged—purged. A few weeks ago, one of our colleagues retweeted an article in *The Daily Telegraph* that looked forward to the purging of remaners in the Conservative party. That was disgraceful. I say to my colleagues, if we are being purged now, who is next? Watch a film called “Good Night, and Good Luck”, and you will take my point.

This may be the last substantive speech I make here as I am not standing again—and who knows when the election will come? I will leave with the best of memories of this place, friends and colleagues on all sides. The obsession that my party has developed may have sought to devalue my past as a friend of the EU, of our sister centre-right parties, and of many friends, and it may have curtailed my future, but it will not rob me of what I believe. I will walk out of here looking up at the sky, not down at my shoes. [*Applause.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. I call Jane Dodds to make her maiden speech.

3.51 pm

Jane Dodds (Brecon and Radnorshire) (LD): Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is a pleasure to be speaking in this particular debate.

May I start by paying tribute to my predecessor, Mr Chris Davies? He worked hard for our local communities, raising awareness of the very difficult issue of mental health and suicide in farmers. I thank him for his service. Chris followed hard on the heels of the highly respected Liberal Democrat MP, Roger Williams. Roger’s are large boots to fill and, if I can even partly match his passion, service and commitment, I shall be very pleased.

It is a huge privilege to represent Brecon and Radnorshire, one of the most beautiful constituencies in the country. It is also the largest constituency in England and Wales—something that I am sure some Members here will have discovered during the recent by-election when searching for another elusive farmhouse up yet another long and scenic track. Brecon and Radnorshire is home to strong and resilient communities, some of which are Welsh-speaking. Sadly, many of our libraries, banks and post offices in these communities have closed in recent years. Despite this, there is a real joy for life in the old counties of Radnorshire and Brecknockshire, as well as a healthy rivalry between them, that makes sure that the mid-Wales spirit—yr ysbryd—is alive and well.

Many Members here will have had the luxury of making their maiden speeches in the weeks and months following a general election, looking forward to the many years of a full parliamentary term. My maiden speech could not be made in more different circumstances. [*Laughter.*]

[Jane Dodds]

On the night of the by-election, I promised the people of Brecon and Radnorshire that I would tell the Prime Minister exactly why a no-deal Brexit would be damaging for my constituents. Well, I am delighted that last night my very first vote as the Member of Parliament for Brecon and Radnorshire was to help Parliament take back control of the agenda and to do everything possible to prevent us leaving the EU without a deal, including speaking in this debate today. When it comes to a no-deal Brexit, we need to stop talking in terms of the hypothetical and the theoretical and start talking with candour about the real and damaging consequences it would bring.

A no-deal Brexit would be damaging for everyone in my constituency, but particularly for the people who are the lifeblood of Brecon and Radnorshire—the farmers. Welsh farmers, as we heard this morning, export 40% of their lamb, and over 90% of that goes to the EU. Currently, if farmers in Brecon and Radnorshire export to the EU, export tariffs are—let me have a think—zero. A no-deal Brexit would mean 40% tariffs on Welsh lamb exports. That would risk putting farmers in my constituency and right across Wales out of business.

I will be using my votes today to ensure that a no-deal Brexit is avoided, as it would be catastrophic for the people of Brecon and Radnorshire. Whether people voted remain or leave, they did not vote for a no-deal Brexit that would make them poorer. They did not vote for long waits for life-saving medicines and they did not vote for a decline in our country's environmental standards.

I am extremely privileged to be able to serve the wonderful people of Brecon and Radnorshire and I shall do my utmost to be an MP they are proud of. Diolch yn fawr iawn—thank you very much.

Mr Speaker: Thank you. I think the House greatly enjoyed listening to the hon. Lady, and we wish her well. I call Mr Philip Hammond.

3.55 pm

Mr Philip Hammond (Runnymede and Weybridge) (Ind): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I want us to leave the European Union with a deal and I voted three times to leave the European Union with a deal. I regret the fact that it has become necessary for this Bill to be brought forward now, and it is necessary now for two reasons: first, because Parliament stands prorogued, so we will not have time potentially to bring Parliament back after my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has had the 30 days that he asked for, to see whether he has been successful in getting a deal; and, secondly, because members of the Government have speculated openly that the Government may not comply with legislation even if it is passed and we therefore need to allow time for not merely legislation but litigation as well.

Paul Farrelly (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Lab): On that point, we have heard noises to that effect from certain members of the Government and Government sources. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that, if this Bill is passed, it is very important that the Prime Minister adheres to its terms, because it is a fundamental duty of Government to uphold the rule of law?

Mr Hammond: I absolutely agree, but we have heard clearly that we cannot rule out the possibility that the Government will dispute the interpretation of the Bill and that there will be a need for litigation in the courts, to ensure that its effect is delivered.

We need to act because there is no mandate for a no-deal Brexit, and a no-deal Brexit will be a catastrophe for the United Kingdom. I remind my hon. and right hon. Friends on the Front Bench that many of us who are now on the Back Benches have had the privilege of seeing the detailed analysis from within Government about the precise and damaging effects of such a no-deal Brexit.

We need to act for another reason. The Prime Minister repeats two statements. He says that he is sincerely trying to get a deal, and he says that we will leave on 31 October come what may, do or die. Regrettably, those two statements are incompatible. Even if the fantasy deal that the Prime Minister sets out, where the EU concedes to every demand of the United Kingdom and removes every one of its red lines, were agreed tomorrow, it would still not be possible to get through all the stages of process required, including passage through both Houses of this Parliament, by 31 October. So we had to act.

The right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) set out brilliantly the purposes of the Bill and how it works. Time is limited, so I do not intend to rehearse those arguments. I want simply to focus on two claims that are made against Conservative supporters of this Bill—or former Conservative supporters of this Bill—by the Government and seek to rebut them. Presumably these claims have been made as a justification for the mass purge that occurred last night.

The first claim is that, by removing the threat of no deal on 31 October, we are cutting the legs from under the Government in their negotiations with the EU. That is wrong. It is wrong because, actually, there is no negotiation going on with the EU. We have had confirmation from multiple sources across the European Union that nothing is happening, and confirmation from within Government that nothing is happening. The Government have declined to bring forward any proposals or serve any proposals on the European Union. It betrays a deep misunderstanding of the way European politics works. Yes, European politics is every bit as scrappy as British politics, but across the continent of Europe people who are sworn enemies and debate vigorously are used to having to make deals because, for the overwhelming majority of our colleagues in Europe, coalition Government is the norm. They have a different system from our adversarial system.

The EU has taken a remarkably consistent approach throughout these negotiations. On the format of the negotiations, on its mandate and on its commitment to transparency, it publishes everything openly. Nothing that we are doing here is going to undermine the Prime Minister's ability to negotiate with the EU. The thing that will undermine it is his unwillingness to pursue a realistic negotiating objective. If he tried to achieve significant changes to the way the backstop works, that would be a major concession by the EU, but I do think that my right hon. Friend—as a new Prime Minister, leading a new Government—would stand at least a reasonable chance of getting a hearing and maybe succeeding. However, by setting the bar, as he has, at the

total removal of the backstop, he has set the bar at a level that is impossible for the European Union to comply with.

The second claim that is made against us is that by supporting this Bill we are handing power to the Leader of the Opposition. I would sooner boil my head than hand power to the Leader of the Opposition. Most of us will have no truck with the concept of a vote of no confidence. The purpose of this Bill is to instruct this Government and this Administration how to conduct the UK's future arrangements with the European Union. It is not an attempt to remove this Government and it is certainly not an attempt to hand power to the Leader of the Opposition. It is not we who are heightening the risk of a Government led by the Leader of the Opposition. It is my right hon. Friend by pursuing a course of action that, if unchallenged, can only lead to a no-deal Brexit.

4.2 pm

Keir Starmer (Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab): I rise in support of the Bill. The Prime Minister has decided that the UK should leave the EU on 31 October with or without a deal. He says that he is making progress in talks with a view to getting a deal, but he is not. Chancellor Merkel says no proposals have been put forward by the Government. The Deputy Prime Minister of Ireland says no proposals have been put forward by the Government. Across the EU, everybody says no proposals have been put forward by the Government. Yesterday, the Government did not deny that they have not put forward proposals in these negotiations; they just dodged questions and refused to answer honest questions about whether there is any evidence of any progress in the talks.

The Government are convincing no one, and at Prime Minister's questions today the Prime Minister tied himself completely in knots in suggesting that he had not put forward any proposals because this Bill might pass later this week. So for the last six weeks, he has not done anything in case a Bill he had not heard of gets Royal Assent sometime soon. Ridiculous! There is no progress, and there is no workable alternative on the table to prevent a hard border in Northern Ireland. Indeed—this point has already been touched on—far from making progress on this crucial point, it was reported yesterday that the Government are seeking to backtrack, and to revisit the commitments to protect the all-Ireland economy, including the December joint report.

Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): My wife comes from County Armagh, and I was married some two miles from the border at the height of the troubles. Is it not arguable that the present border arrangements in the island of Ireland contribute massively to the present peace process that we enjoy?

Keir Starmer: Massively. They are the manifestation of peace in Northern Ireland. As I have said many times, they are more than a question of getting goods and people across a line; they are the manifestation of peace that allows different communities to live together in peace.

Lady Hermon (North Down) (Ind): I am enormously grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman for allowing me to intervene. Does he agree that it is very strange, to put it mildly—bearing in mind that the

Republic of Ireland is our nearest EU neighbour, shares a land frontier with part of the United Kingdom in Northern Ireland and is a co-guarantor of the Good Friday agreement—that if the Prime Minister has been so, so, so busy negotiating over this summer, as he claims, he has not actually found time to go to Dublin to meet the Irish Prime Minister, Leo Varadkar, and discuss any proposals that he might have? Is that not extraordinary?

Keir Starmer: Yes, it is extraordinary, but it sits with the other evidence that there are not any proposals being put forward and that there are not any negotiations actually taking place. Therefore, we are not closer to a deal now than we were when this Prime Minister took office; in truth, we are further away. That appears from leaks to be the Prime Minister's chief of staff's policy position, because he talks of negotiations, apparently, for domestic consumption, yet the talks are a sham.

Mr Ben Bradshaw (Exeter) (Lab): Will my right hon. and learned Friend reassure me that we will not fall into the trap being set by the Prime Minister, and that we will not support a general election before not only this Bill is enacted, but its provisions, including an extension, have been implemented?

Keir Starmer: I can confirm that we will not be voting with the Government tonight and that we will keep our focus on the task in hand, which is to ensure that we do not leave the EU without a deal, and that requires the passing and implementation of this Bill.

Ms Angela Eagle: Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way on that point?

Keir Starmer: I will make some progress and give way in a moment.

So the truth is that we are on course for a no-deal Brexit for which there is no mandate from the public or from this Parliament. We might think that in those circumstances this Parliament would be sitting every available day between now and 31 October, to avert this threat, to scrutinise the Prime Minister's plan—if there is one—and to find a way forward, if we can. We would all willingly sit on those days to find that way forward, but no: from next week the Prime Minister wants to shut this place down for five weeks in this crucial period. He thinks that we and the public will be fooled by the obvious untruth that Prorogation is merely for a Queen's Speech. The five-week Prorogation is to silence this House and frustrate attempts to prevent no deal, and any suggestion to the contrary from anyone, in my view, is disingenuous.

Ms Eagle: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the characterisation by Conservative central office, which is appearing on Twitter and on its other social media even now, as we debate this extremely important Bill—hashtagging this Bill the #SurrenderBill—is beneath contempt?

Keir Starmer: It is beneath contempt, and I can only imagine how businesses—the people who work in businesses and the management of businesses—will look on in horror, because they have repeatedly told me and many other Members of this House their deep concerns about no deal, and we are protecting this country against no deal.

Simon Hoare (North Dorset) (Con): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Keir Starmer: I will make some progress and then I will give way.

In circumstances in which there is no progress in the negotiations, we are hurtling towards no deal and the Prime Minister is closing down this place, we have no alternative but to pursue this Bill. We have to act with urgency and to pass binding legislation to rule out no deal by the time this House prorogues. That is what this Bill will achieve today.

I want to put on record my thanks to the right hon. and hon. Members who have worked over many weeks on this Bill, in particular the right hon. Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin), the right hon. and learned Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve), my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) and the right hon. Member for Runnymede and Weybridge (Mr Hammond), as well as the leaders of the Scottish National party, the Lib Dems, the Greens, Plaid and Change UK, because this has genuinely been a cross-party Bill. On behalf of all my colleagues, I acknowledge the courage of the 21 former Conservative MPs who voted as a matter of principle in the Standing Order No. 24 debate last night, putting their country before their career. We acknowledge their courage and what they did as a matter of principle.

Why has there been such concerted effort? It is not usual to find an alliance of all Opposition parties and cross-party MPs. The answer is that we all appreciate the appalling damage no deal would cause to jobs, to industry, to our NHS, to security, and to peace and prosperity in Northern Ireland. Therefore, we were all shocked, if not surprised, at the warnings contained in the leaked Yellowhammer documents: food and fuel shortages, delay to medicines, and chaos at ports and channel crossings, all affecting the poorest communities. What leapt out to me from the Yellowhammer documents was the honest advice to the Government that, try as they might, the civil servants could not find a way of avoiding the conclusion that if we leave without a deal there will have to be infrastructure in Northern Ireland.

Justine Greening (Putney) (Ind): Is it not ironic that in the very week the Government announce an advertising campaign called “Get ready for Brexit”, they simultaneously refuse to release any details about what we are meant to be getting ready for? Would Ministers not be better advised to be transparent about the impact of no deal, and, frankly, about the fact that it sounds to me like there was never a detailed plan on how to deliver Brexit? There has not been one in three years, and I really worry that it never existed in the first place.

Keir Starmer: Of course that information should be put in the public domain, so that everybody understands the impact of no deal. The fact that the Government do not want it in the public domain speaks volumes. The mantra is that they cannot put our proposals in public because they do not negotiate in public, but they can surely put them before the partners they are supposed to be negotiating with. They just are not there.

Jonathan Edwards: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way on that point?

Keir Starmer: I will give way.

Mr Speaker: Order. Could I just make the point that there are lots of people who want to speak? There is very little time, and if there are continual interventions very large numbers of colleagues who wish to speak will not do so—simple as that.

Jonathan Edwards: I am grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman for giving way. The Welsh Government have been provided with a copy of the original Yellowhammer document. Will he call on his colleagues to publish it?

Keir Starmer: I will, but I am not sure that my calling for that is enough in itself to get it published. We will see what else we can do. Mr Speaker, I will press on, because I do know there are other speakers to come.

This is a very simple Bill. It is deliberately constrained. It does not answer the question, “What else needs to happen?” It gives the Prime Minister the chance to get a deal and to get it through. It gives the Prime Minister the chance to have the courage to come to the Dispatch Box and say, “My policy is to leave without a deal. Do I have a majority for it?” If he did that, we would not need to go down this route. He will not do that, however, because he knows what the result will be. Only if there is a no deal and only if there is no approval for leaving without a deal do the provisions in the Bill requiring an extension kick in.

Mr Speaker, this is an extraordinary route, but these are extraordinary times. We have to act. We have to act now. Today is the last chance to prevent no deal, and we must seize it.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Speaker: With immediate effect, we now need a three-minute time limit. Otherwise, colleagues who want to speak will not have the chance to do so.

4.13 pm

Jeremy Wright (Kenilworth and Southam) (Con): Perhaps I can start by agreeing with something that others have said, which is that, regardless of one’s views on this subject, the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn), my right hon. Friend the Member for North East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt) and others who spoken in this debate are acting the national interest in bringing up these issues in the way that they do. They do not deserve to be name-called as a result. Having said that, however, I disagree with the Bill.

The Bill does three things: it sets out that the Government should get specific parliamentary authority for any deal they negotiate; it sets out that they should get specific authority for any exit from the EU without a deal; and it sets out that, failing either of those, they should enact a three-month further extension in our departure from the EU. I am afraid that my view is that the first two of those are unnecessary and the third is undesirable. In two and a half minutes, I will try to explain why.

On the first, it seems to me that our existing procedures allow for the Government to bring forward any deal that they negotiate, for us to approve it or not. It would be an international treaty, and the processes are already in place for us to do that.

Secondly, in relation to a no-deal outcome, what the right hon. Member for Leeds Central and colleagues have put forward is on the premise that there is no mandate for no deal. It is certainly true that the leave campaign in the 2016 referendum did not advocate no deal. That was not its preference and, as I understand it, that is still not the Government's preference, but nor was it put to the electorate that we would leave only if there was a deal with the EU. That could never have been guaranteed. There was no pattern to follow and no example for us to look at, and it could never have been certain that the EU would put forward a proposal that we found acceptable. Indeed, some of us who argued for remain in the referendum campaign said, "If you decide to leave, you take a leap in the dark. You cannot know what the future will look like and you cannot know what, if any, deal we will be offered by the EU or by anyone else." The electorate, as it was their absolute right to do, listened to those arguments, rejected them and decided to leave anyway. It was their decision to make and, in my view, they were perfectly entitled to make it.

Margot James (Stourbridge) (Ind): Even if I accepted my right hon. and learned Friend's main point about the way that the referendum campaign was conducted by leave, which I do not, does he not accept that in a democracy, minorities have rights? A minority as big as 48%, and a majority in Northern Ireland, in Scotland and in our northern cities, should not be so dismissed.

Jeremy Wright: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend that minorities should not be dismissed, and frankly, the way in which we conduct this debate should reflect the fact that 48% of the public voted in a different way from the prevailing outcome. I do not think that we have succeeded in that as a Parliament or in a broader national debate. The truth is that we—Parliament—set out the rules for this referendum in the European Union Referendum Act 2015. As she has just said, many of us participated in the referendum campaign on both sides of the argument, and we stressed that it was the public's decision to make. When they had made it, we—Parliament—decided to trigger article 50 of the EU treaty.

As someone who has spent more time than is good for anyone looking at article 50, I can tell the House that it does not require the leaving country to do so with a deal. When we—Parliament—decided to trigger the article 50 process, we knew, or we should have known, that one possible outcome was a no-deal outcome. It was not one that we wished to see and not one that we expected to see, but it was one that could have happened, so I am afraid that on this fundamental point, I cannot agree that we do not have a mandate for no deal and therefore that we must proceed as the right hon. Member for Leeds Central sets out in the Bill.

4.18 pm

Lisa Nandy (Wigan) (Lab): I very much welcome the Bill and the tone with which my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) introduced it. It reminded me of the famous book, "Profiles in Courage", by John F. Kennedy, in which he said that

"there are few if any issues where all the truth and all the right and all the angels are on one side."

We would do well to remember that in this House. Coherent, persuasive and passionate arguments and points have been made by people with every single type of view on Brexit, and we ought to respect one another and conduct the debate in that spirit.

This is not an easy thing for me to vote for, because I have spent the last few years arguing passionately that delay has consequences, that companies in my constituency need certainty and that the public cannot take much more of this. They want to see us come together, compromise and respect the 48% of people who came out and said that they wanted close ties with the EU.

Simon Hoare: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Lisa Nandy: I will not, because of time. They also want to see us respect the fact that 52% of those who voted wanted to leave the EU. We said it was their choice, and we have a duty to try to enact it.

But the truth is this Bill is the right thing to do. There are many people in my constituency—a third—who voted remain and want us to stop this process altogether. There are others—I would say the most significant group—who want to cut all ties and leave the EU altogether. They shout louder than the others and often drown out the voices calling for consensus, but it is my job to make sure they do not, because they do not have the right to put food manufacturing companies in my constituency out of business. We lived through the closure of the mines in Wigan and we live with the consequences still. It was a tragedy for many families from which some never recovered. I will not let those small and medium-sized employers in my constituency, which make up the bulk of employment, be put out of business because we cannot get our act together as a House, because we cannot stop this reckless Prime Minister, because we cannot work together to achieve the deal we have promised the people.

People do not have the right to say to the child in my constituency waiting for a potentially life-saving clinical trial, "You will not get it". A mum stopped me at the train station to say she was stockpiling medicine. They do not have the right to keep her up at night because she does not know if her child will survive. That is why this matters. After years of saying that no deal was a hoax, that it was a bluff, that it would not happen, we in this House have woken up to the reality of it, and now we have to make sure it does not happen. We have to go out and win that argument with the public, so that, as my right hon. Friend the Member for North East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt) so rightly and eloquently said, we can walk out of here looking at the sky, not at our shoes.

4.21 pm

Sir Nicholas Soames (Mid Sussex) (Ind): I rise to support this Bill, but before I do so, I want to make it clear that I have always believed that the referendum result must be honoured. Indeed, I voted for the withdrawal agreement on every occasion it was presented to the House, which is more than can be said for my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, the Leader of the House and other members of the Cabinet whose serial disloyalty has been such an inspiration to so many of us. I think that history will in due course favour the view articulated so clearly last night by my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) that a threat to

[Sir Nicholas Soames]

commit an act of self-harm if your counterparts in negotiations do not do exactly as you wish is not likely to be an effective or successful negotiating strategy.

The Bill is modest in its ambitions but powerful in its mandate. It merely seeks to avert the immediate risk of the disaster of a no-deal Brexit on 31 October and thereby seeks to give the Government and the House a further opportunity to achieve a resolution of this profoundly difficult issue. Contrary to the Prime Minister's assertion, the Bill does not deprive him of the ability or flexibility to achieve a negotiated settlement with the EU on 17 October, but it does ensure that if he should fail, as with his current demands I think he is likely to do, there will be time for him to rethink his remarks.

I will not be standing at the next election.

Sir Oliver Letwin (West Dorset) (Ind): Will my right hon. Friend accept it from me—I think this view is shared not just on the Conservative Benches but across the House—that that would be a great loss to our Parliament?

Sir Nicholas Soames: I am very grateful to my right hon. Friend, for whom I have such high regard.

I will not be standing at the next election, and I am thus approaching the end of 37 years' service to this House, of which I have been proud and honoured beyond words to be a Member. I am truly very sad that it should end in this way. It is my fervent hope that this House will rediscover the spirit of compromise, humility and understanding that will enable us finally to push ahead with the vital work in the interests of the whole country that has inevitably had to be so sadly neglected while we have devoted so much time to wrestling with Brexit. I urge the House to support the Bill.

4.24 pm

Stephen Gethins (North East Fife) (SNP): I congratulate the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnorshire (Jane Dodds) on her maiden speech. I warn her that, although it may not look like it or feel like it, in normal parliamentary times I would still be in my first term, and there are a number of twists and turns that we have seen and that she should continue to expect.

As the right hon. Member for Mid Sussex (Sir Nicholas Soames) has just illustrated so eloquently, there are very few positives to be taken from this process, but one of them has been the way in which those of us who disagree vociferously on many issues have been able to cross party lines and reach out. I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his speech and for his service as well, and I thank other colleagues with whom I have had the privilege of being able to deal.

Nick Boles (Grantham and Stamford) (Ind): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Stephen Gethins: I will give way once.

Nick Boles: I thank the hon. Gentleman for allowing me to intervene briefly. He has just paid tribute to the cross-party work to secure the Bill—hopefully—this evening. Does he agree that it is crucial—and I know that the hon. Member for Carmarthen East and Dinefwr (Jonathan Edwards), who is also part of our coalition,

has made plain his view—for us not only to secure the Bill in law, but to secure its implementation before any election is called or held, and not to allow the possibility of a re-elected Johnson Government who would then reintroduce a no-deal Brexit on 31 October?

Stephen Gethins: Yes. As usual, the hon. Gentleman has been a good colleague, and has made an excellent point. In a Parliament of minorities, we must work together. We want a general election, but we will not have a general election on the terms of this Government, because we do not trust them. None of us can trust them, and we should be absolutely clear about that.

Over the past few years—and I say this personally—it has often been humbling to see people give up careers and livelihoods for what they think is right, and we have seen the best of that over the past few days. There are Members opposite, and Members on these Benches who may not have started on these Benches, who know that a no-deal Brexit will damage their constituents. I never thought that I would be here proposing a Bill with the likes of the right hon. Member for Putney (Justine Greening), the hon. Member for Grantham and Stamford (Nick Boles) and the right hon. Member for Runnymede and Weybridge (Mr Hammond). To be fair to them, I do not think they thought that they would be here proposing a Bill—which might be passed—with a member of the Scottish National party. However, that is the position in which we have been left.

The Bill does not go as far as I might have liked. My SNP colleagues and I do not want to see Scotland taken out of the European Union against its will, and we want to stop Brexit. However, I know that others who have signed the Bill and will vote for it want to deliver Brexit. We disagree on that, which is fine, but we agree fundamentally that a no-deal Brexit is unacceptable and must be stopped at all costs.

This legislation is important, and I am sorry that we have a Government who cannot be trusted and who have tried every trick in the book to avoid scrutiny and democracy. Can Members imagine how we can be in a position whereby, over the weekend, the Government could be asked a legitimate question about whether or not they respect the rule of law? I hope that Members will reflect on that during the coming days. Unfortunately, it goes to the heart of the Prime Minister's approach. He is the least trustworthy resident of No. 10 Downing Street whom anyone can remember. We are in our present position because of a mess of his making. He had no plans before the referendum, and he has no plans now.

There is nothing new in the negotiations, and the Ministers have told us nothing new about them. Instead, we have a Government who are perfectly willing to let the rest of the population endure food price increases when too many people already depend on food banks, medical shortages that will hit the most needy and vulnerable, and damage to public services that have already been hit by a decade of austerity, depriving our young people of education and employment opportunities that my generation enjoyed and benefited from.

All of us in Parliament should be doing our utmost to support and protect those people. That is a basic tenet of our democracy. This slash-and-burn approach to politics will damage everyone across these islands and Europe for decades, but most of all it will damage

people in the United Kingdom. We can stop it now, and we can do so with legislation. We owe that to the most vulnerable, and to those who will be worst affected.

4.29 pm

Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con): I want to refer briefly to the remarks of the right hon. Member for North East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt). I simply want to explain very simply that I was going to intervene because he referred to the sacrifice that people had made in the last war and I want to put it on record that my father was killed in the last war, and I think I understand not only the issues involved in that, but also the fact that he fought for freedom, and I believe that that is our heritage, and that is what we should fight for—not to be governed by other people. I just leave that on the record.

I happen also to very much agree with my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Kenilworth and Southam (Jeremy Wright) on what is an extremely rare occasion when somebody has actually explained, as I have a number of times, that there is nothing in this arrangement that has been foisted upon us that would prevent us from leaving without a deal. We can do so if we wish to do so, and there is nothing in the referendum Act, or any question in the Act, which constrains us from that course of action.

Fundamentally, I simply want to make the following point. I would not call this the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill; I would call it the European Union (Subservience) Bill. We have only to look at the words in the Bill, and in the very short time that I have available I will simply refer to a few of its phrases. Clause 1 says:

“The Prime Minister must seek to obtain from the European Council an extension of the period”.

Clause 3 states:

“If the European Council decides to agree an extension...the Prime Minister must, immediately after such a decision is made, notify the President of the European Council that the United Kingdom agrees to the proposed extension”

and so on.

Clause 4 says, in relation to the withdrawal Act of 2018 that, where regulations are to be made, for the definition of exit day

“for ‘may’ substitute ‘must’.”

This is a disgraceful reversal of our constitutional arrangements. We operate in a free Parliament where we have elections that are taken periodically—every five years as a normal rule—and we make our decisions. We have a system of parliamentary Government, not government by Parliament; that is a fundamental constitutional principle. This Bill offends that principle, and that is why I am deeply opposed to its proposals.

4.32 pm

Joan Ryan (Enfield North) (IGC): I strongly support the Bill before the House and have long believed that a no-deal Brexit would be disastrous. Resolving this issue and stopping our country crashing out of the EU is of the utmost urgency, as I believe that the Prime Minister wants no deal. All the actions of the current Prime Minister support that view as does everything he has said since becoming Prime Minister. He is sending our country hurtling towards no deal. This is a prospect no

one voted for, or campaigned for, in 2016. It is simply wrong to be playing with people’s lives, jobs, businesses and wellbeing in this way.

At Brimsdown in Enfield we have the second largest industrial estate in London. It is a vital part of our local economy, with 8,000 people employed in 240 companies on site. Many of these companies trade throughout the EU. If we crash out with no deal and these companies get hit by tariffs on their exports, Brimsdown and Enfield will suffer.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster yesterday promised to help firms hit by no-deal tariffs but gave no full details on how that would work in practice, nor is he willing to publish estimates of the impact no-deal tariffs could have on various sectors. How much financial support would be made available to companies? How long would that support last for? Which businesses would and would not be covered by Government subsidy? There are so many questions and never any answers.

In Enfield we also have very high levels of deprivation that are growing apace. We have nearly 40,000 children living on or below the poverty line, but a no-deal Brexit or a general election are not going to stop this nightmare; they would exacerbate exponentially the problems my constituents are facing.

We hear much about the technicalities of all this every time it is debated, and particularly today. Those who want a no-deal Brexit or any kind of Brexit at any price want to talk all the time about technicalities. I want to see Members of this House take real responsibility for the impact that a no-deal Brexit would have on our constituents, particularly the most vulnerable of them. It is an abrogation of our responsibility as their representatives to go down this road, and let us be clear that a no deal will just be the start. I believe that the only way out of this mess is to go back to the people with a people’s vote on Brexit, but at the very least we must take the catastrophe of no deal off the table now. I urge all Members to support the Bill today.

4.35 pm

Antoinette Sandbach (Eddisbury) (Ind): I want to put on record what a pleasure it has been to serve my constituents in Eddisbury. I think they would be amazed to know that the purge of the Conservative party that took place yesterday led to their Member of Parliament being expelled from the party, together with eight Privy Counsellors, two former Chancellors, a former Lord Chancellor and my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke), who has been a political inspiration to me for years. The economic arguments are well known, but in my constituency, where the chemicals, car, pharmaceuticals, aerospace and nuclear industries and the food and drink sectors are all key sectors in the north-west, 80,000 jobs are at risk in a no-deal Brexit. I do not regret putting my job on the line to save my constituents’ jobs, but I do regret that the Prime Minister forced me to do it. I want to say to Conservative colleagues that no deal is not the end of Brexit. My hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr Seely) said yesterday that he wanted Brexit to be over, to focus on other issues that matter to his constituents. I agree; so do I. I voted for the deal three times. However, keeping the threat of no deal on the table does not achieve this.

[Antoinette Sandbach]

I say this to my Prime Minister: the reason that your negotiations are undermined is not because of a no-deal Brexit, but because the Europeans cannot see the steps that you are taking to build consensus in this House and get any concessions given to you through Parliament. That is what puts you in the weaker position, not a threat of no deal. Without the public and Europe being able to see how you are trying to build consensus in this House, and how this party, this Government, this House and this Parliament are trying to work together to get a solution, you will not get concessions from Europe. It is the people in this House who voted down the compromise—the withdrawal agreement—that have brought us to the brink of a no-deal precipice. I believe in the principle that Parliament should have a say in one of the biggest questions of our times, and tonight we should stand up.

Sir Oliver Letwin: My hon. Friend is on a point that has not been sufficiently emphasised. Does she agree that, at root, the horrors that those of us who find ourselves estranged from the party we love have gone through over the past 18 months derive from the inability of successive Governments to find a compromise?

Antoinette Sandbach: I completely agree. This is a result of the inability of successive Governments to work cross-party across the House to seek common ground, common agreement and common principles. I know many people in this place from all sides of the political divide, and I am certain that there is a will and a way to get through this, but I just have not seen the leadership from the Front Benches to argue for it. That has been my biggest shame in being a Member of this Parliament for the past three years: not seeing proper leadership out there to build our country back together again, to get people to work together and to explain in our constituencies why we should honour the referendum result but do so in a way that will maximise the chances of a positive relationship with Europe and give us the best foundations to build on for the future. That is why I say that Parliament should have a say in the biggest question of our time. If we cannot get that leadership on the Front Benches, Parliament needs to provide that leadership to the country.

4.39 pm

Caroline Flint (Don Valley) (Lab): May I extend my best wishes to the right hon. Member for Mid Sussex (Sir Nicholas Soames)? I will miss our occasional lift encounters in Portcullis House—[*Interruption.*] Hang on, do not use up all my three minutes on that, because it is not for today.

I have voted for a deal twice, and I would have voted for the withdrawal agreement Bill, so I have probably voted for a deal more times than some prominent members of the present Government. However, I have also opposed no deal more times than some of the ex-Cabinet members and Ministers who are supporting this Bill today. I have been trying to seek compromise, but the decision on the UK's departure from the European Union that we delegated to the British people has been dogged by a lack of compromise on both sides. Hard-line leavers and hard-line remainers have succeeded in turning a complicated decision into a crisis. Between them, they are eroding the trust and patience of the British people.

Today's debate is born of the understandable fear that the UK will leave with no deal and that that will cause avoidable damage to our economy. It is born of a fear that the Prime Minister—I hope I am not using unparliamentary language, Mr Speaker—is insincere in his stated intention of reaching a deal with the EU27. However, others in the House must also be self-critical. It is disingenuous for someone to tell the public that they are against no deal if they are really also against any deal and, indeed, against Brexit. If the EU27 can accept a deal, however revised, it must be better for the UK and the EU27 than no deal.

Therefore, if the amendments in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Aberavon (Stephen Kinnock) are selected today, I urge colleagues to support them, because they would tie an extension to securing a deal, which is the proper way forward.

Jeremy Wright: Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Caroline Flint: I will give way, but only once.

Jeremy Wright: I thank the right hon. Lady for giving way and pay tribute to her for the way in which she has sought compromise. Many of us have voted for deals of various kinds, and I agree with what she says about the approach set out by the hon. Member for Aberavon (Stephen Kinnock), which has considerable potential. Does she agree that one of the other reasons why we should seek to resolve this by way of a deal, and do so quickly, is that the longer the argument goes on, the more divided our society remains and the harder it will be to knit it back together? The danger of an approach that simply asks for a further extension, without any real idea of what we will use the extension for, is that that argument is perpetuated and the damage continues to be done.

Caroline Flint: I absolutely agree. One of my greatest concerns in all this is that, following a referendum that saw such a massive record turnout, there are many people who will never vote again if we continue to thwart a conclusion, and that will damage our democracy for decades to come. I am saddened that some in this House think that our only obligation is to the 48% and that others think we only need to consider the 52%. We need to respect the British people, whether they voted leave or remain and whichever party they support. We must show them that we can move forward and not simply block progress at every stage.

I want to look my leave voters in the eye and say, “Yes, I respected, as a remain voter, the decision to leave. We have now left. We will regain control of our laws and borders.” To remain supporters, whom I stood alongside in 2016, I want to say, “Yes, we respected the decision to leave, but we have successfully protected the things that you and I value most: open trade with the EU, workers' rights, high environmental standards, rights for Brits abroad, respect for EU citizens working here, student exchange programmes, joint research projects”—I could go on. All of that can be secured, but only with a deal.

No deal is a decision, but one that defers 100 decisions. I urge the Government to secure a deal before 31 October, and I am willing to work every day and every hour to make that happen. However, other colleagues must also

show some compromise as well. We must link an extension to securing a deal, because an extension with no purpose is not the way forward.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. I would like to call two more speakers, but I want the Secretary of State to be on his feet no later than 4.50 pm.

4.44 pm

Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Don Valley (Caroline Flint), and I agree with virtually everything she says.

It is a pleasure to have listened to my right hon. Friends the Members for North East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt) and for Mid Sussex (Sir Nicholas Soames), with whom I have served in this House for 36 years. I know they do not want to stand again, but if they were to stand, I would want to stand with them shoulder to shoulder as a Conservative candidate.

There are procedures for dealing with this sort of issue, but I very much hope that those like my right hon. Friend the Member for Runnymede and Weybridge (Mr Hammond) who voted for their conscience—I do not agree with him, but he did vote for his conscience—can find a way to stand again for our party. The trouble with purges is that if one group of people is purged, another group of people might have to be purged when we try to push a deal through Parliament, so I think we need compromise.

Indeed, that is the whole point of what I want to say today. I am a Brexiteer and my constituency voted 62:38 for Brexit, but I am in a bit of a minority here because I voted for the deal three times. We hear so much about how terrible a no deal is, but so many people in this place voted against the deal three times. We could have had Brexit by now. This whole thing could have been resolved, and I still want to resolve it. I still believe it is perfectly possible to make progress in these negotiations in the coming weeks.

So much ink has been wasted on the backstop, and there has been so much debate about something that will never happen. I do not believe, and I do not think anybody believes for a moment, that the backstop will ever happen. Nobody intends to impose a hard border, and there are so many ways to resolve this. We are this close to resolving the issue, and there has been so much talk about how we do not trust the Prime Minister and how he wants a no deal. I genuinely believe that he and the Cabinet want to achieve an orderly Brexit, but the problem they face is that the present deal simply cannot get through Parliament, so they have to make progress.

We had the Brady amendment, so we can win a vote in this place. I do not want to make a bore of myself by going on about devices such as the Vienna convention, which I have mentioned many times, but they are all possible. The trouble with this Bill is that if it is passed—I know this has been said many times, but it is an unanswerable point—there will be absolutely no incentive for the EU to make any progress, and therefore it drives a coach and horses through our negotiating tactics.

I end with an argument that might appeal to the Labour party. At the October 1957 Labour party conference, Aneurin Bevan said:

“if you carry this resolution”—

the resolution was on unilateral disarmament—

“you will send a Foreign Secretary...naked into the conference chamber.”

That is what we will be doing if we pass this Bill, so let us compromise, let us draw together and let us get a deal.

4.47 pm

Justin Madders (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): Vauxhall Motors in Ellesmere Port has been producing cars for over 50 years. It employs around 1,000 people, with many thousands more in the supply chain and associated businesses, but statements made by the parent group over the summer have made it crystal clear that the plant's very existence is dependent on the UK avoiding a no-deal Brexit.

We know the plant faces challenges, as every car manufacturer does, but in the past, with the help of the Government, management and unions, everyone has pulled together to make it work, but now we have the absurdity of the Government actively pursuing a policy that will destroy the industry. WTO terms mean a 10% tariff on all car exports, and around 80% of the vehicles built in Ellesmere Port are exported to the EU. We know the plant just will not be able to compete with other plants across Europe with a 10% albatross around its neck. It is as stark as that: no deal means no Vauxhall.

I have always said that I will abide by the outcome of the referendum, but that does not mean I will do so at any cost, and certainly not at the cost of my constituents' jobs, which is where we are now. The Government are effectively asking me to put my constituents on the dole queue, and I cannot in all conscience do that. I am astounded that any Government would choose that course of action, so let us be clear about where we are.

The Conservative party, which used to have a reputation as the party of business, has purged itself of 21 Members who voted against a policy that they know could knock 10% off the economy. If anyone had said a year ago that that is where we would find ourselves, I would not have believed them, but such is the reckless ideological madness we see from the Government. That is exactly where we are today.

The Prime Minister tells us that he cannot negotiate with the EU if a no deal is taken off the table, but given that he claims the primary change he wants to make is on the Irish backstop, which is a very specific issue, there seems to be no connection between the changes he says he wants to make and the need to keep the threat of no deal on the table.

I am, as many hon. Members are, at a loss to understand how the Prime Minister can reconcile his statement yesterday—that the first thing the EU asks in respect of any proposals made by the Government is whether they have the support of Parliament—with his refusal to share his proposals with Parliament. How can he say we would support his proposals if we do not even know what they are?

It is not only the automotive sector in my constituency that is under threat: aerospace, chemicals and petroleum, to name but three, employ thousands of people whose jobs are at risk from a no-deal Brexit. I have just come from a briefing by the Road Haulage Association, which has clearly said the sector is not ready for a no-deal

[Justin Madders]

Brexit on 31 October; it says that with just 42 working days left it still does not know what the customs documentation process will be or who it can go to for advice. It is doing what it can, but at the moment we face haulage businesses going bust and food rotting on lorries because it cannot be delivered on time, leaving aside the effect that will be had on medicine supplies.

So let us, as a country and as a Parliament, pull ourselves back from the edge at the eleventh hour. Let us have a moment of clarity. Let us have a moment of reason and of compromise, so that we do not force Brexit through by 31 October regardless of the consequences, because those consequences will be devastating and enduring, and they will do nothing to heal the deep divisions that have led us here in the first place.

4.50 pm

The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Stephen Barclay): May I begin by paying tribute to the new hon. Member for Brecon and Radnorshire (Jane Dodds), who spoke with great distinction on behalf of her constituency?

As they indicated that they may have been making their final speeches in the House, may I also pay tribute to my colleagues the right hon. Members for Mid Sussex (Sir Nicholas Soames) and for North East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt), who have served with great ability and courtesy throughout my time in the House?

The central issue before the House is whether the Government's negotiation is sincere and deliverable. The Opposition have continued to refuse to vote for a deal, while making it clear that they will rule out no deal. As the right hon. Member for Don Valley (Caroline Flint) pointed out, there is an inherent contradiction in that position.

The problem with this Bill is, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh) made clear, that there is no incentive for the EU to move, because it gives the EU complete control of the outcome of these talks. Let me remind the House that President Tusk, and others within the EU, have repeatedly said that they do not want the UK to leave. He has said:

"If a deal is impossible, and no-one wants no deal, then who will finally have the courage to say what the only positive solution is?"

So let us be in no doubt: those on the other side of the negotiation do not want the UK to leave. They do not want to lose the financial contribution of 12% of the EU budget that the UK pays or the £1 billion per month that this extension will mean. So there will be no incentive for the EU to move and this, in practice, will be legislation that will act as purgatory and endless delay.

Stephen Doughty: Of course it was the Government's own chief adviser who described the negotiations as "a sham", so we know what is really going on. I wish to ask the Secretary of State whether it is true that members of the Government Legal Service have been requested, in the past two days, to provide advice on all tactics possible to avoid this Bill receiving Royal Assent. Is that true—yes or no?

Stephen Barclay: The Prime Minister addressed the issue about Royal Assent during his statement yesterday and Ministers abide by the code. The hon. Gentleman says that the negotiation is a sham, yet one should look at what the Commission has said. At Strasbourg, it said that alternative arrangements had merit as an alternative to the backstop. Just last month, the Council pledged, in its official guidelines on Brexit negotiations, "flexible and imaginative solutions." Senior European figures claim the backstop will not be required. For example, a former German MEP and member of the European Parliament Brexit steering group said there was a "99% chance that the backstop would never be used."

Indeed, the issue arises because of the sequencing of talks, which was at the choice of the EU itself and left insufficient time for the negotiation. In fact, this issue should be addressed as part of the future economic relationship.

In addressing issues such as the claim made by those on the Opposition Benches, it is worth reflecting on the fact that the EU position has moved, from the language of "no change" to the withdrawal agreement to now saying that changes can be made if "legally operative text" on alternative arrangements can be found. It is worth contrasting Donald Tusk's comments in June that

"nothing has changed when it comes to our position",

with President Macron's comments last month that he was "very confident" that the UK and EU would be able to find a solution

"if there is a good will on both sides".

Jim McMahon (Oldham West and Royton) (Lab/Co-op): Is the truth not that Government Members just do not trust the Prime Minister any more than Opposition Members? When he went to Berlin on 21 August, the Prime Minister committed to presenting a deal within 30 days. We are now a third of the way through that timetable and the truth is that there is no deal. That is the problem.

Stephen Barclay: The hon. Gentleman says this is about trust in this Prime Minister, but he voted against the deal that the previous Prime Minister brought back three times. The trust is lacking in those who trusted the Labour manifesto that promised to respect the referendum result.

It is worth looking at the communiqué issued by the Commission at lunch time. I am sure Members will have read it and seen, first, very little detail on the Irish border, and, secondly, that the Commission's objective in a no-deal situation would be

"a more stable solution for the period thereafter."

So the Commission's own communiqué falls short of the demand for an all-weather, all-insurance, legally operative text, which is the condition it has set the United Kingdom. The legal text by 31 October will of course set out the detail, but the test needs to be one that involves creativity and flexibility on both sides. It also needs to reflect the fact that the operational detail will be shaped by the Joint Committee during the implementation period. An illustration of that point can be seen in the response to the detail presented by the previous Government. The right hon. Member for Runnymede and Weybridge (Mr Hammond) spoke about

his concerns about the detail, but he will remember that when the previous Government simply presented detail against that all-weather test, the Commission dismissed it as purely magical thinking.

Lady Hermon: My patience has been rewarded; I am enormously grateful to the Secretary of State for allowing me to intervene.

The Secretary of State will be well aware that the Prime Minister claimed in August that the backstop contravenes the consent principle in the Good Friday agreement. Will the right hon. Gentleman take this opportunity to correct the record? The backstop in no way compromises the consent principle in the Good Friday agreement. It is important to have that on the record.

Stephen Barclay: There are two issues in relation to that point. First, the Prime Minister has concerns about the rule-taking element of the backstop, under which those in Northern Ireland will continue to take rules on which they will not have a say. Secondly, there is the concern that the element of consent from both parts of the community in Northern Ireland is undermined.

To address the hon. Lady's earlier intervention in respect of contact with the Irish Government, the Prime Minister will discuss the issues around the alternative arrangements with the Taoiseach on Monday. That will build on considerable other interaction with the Irish Government—for example, I had a meeting with Simon Coveney in the Irish embassy in Paris last week, and the Foreign Secretary met him in the same week. There has been extensive contact with the Irish Government.

The Prime Minister's EU sherpa is in Brussels today. The last round of technical talks was last week and he will have further talks on Wednesday to explore much of this detail. But the detail needs to be in place at the end of the implementation period, which is the end of 2020—or even potentially, by mutual agreement, at the end of a further one or two years. The timescale, therefore, is realistic and negotiable—

Peter Kyle (Hove) (Lab): Are you talking about the Bill?

Stephen Barclay: The Bill? I am very happy to talk about the Bill. The issue for the hon. Gentleman is that he talks about voting against no deal, but he should come clean and admit that actually he is opposed to Brexit entirely. The public want Brexit delivered. The business community wants certainty. The Bill will leave our negotiations in purgatory, with a third extension after more than three years. Much has been made about parliamentary time—about the period between now and 14 October—but the EU itself says that a deal would not be struck until the eleventh hour, and that it would take until 17 October for the EU Council to reach a decision. The issue is not the time that is spent in September, but the time between 17 October and 31 October.

Over the summer, this new Government have narrowed their negotiating asks, as set out in the letter to President Tusk. They have targeted their request on the withdrawal agreement and a best-in-class free trade agreement. This is a Bill that is intended to stop Brexit. I urge colleagues to oppose it.

5 pm

The Speaker put the Question (Order, 3 September), That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The House divided: Ayes 329, Noes 300.

Division No. 440]

[5 pm

AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane	Creasy, Stella
Abrahams, Debbie	Cruddas, Jon
Ali, Rushanara	Cryer, John
Allen, Heidi	Cummins, Judith
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena	Cunningham, Alex
Amesbury, Mike	Cunningham, Mr Jim
Antoniazzi, Tonia	Daby, Janet
Ashworth, Jonathan	Dakin, Nic
Bailey, Mr Adrian	Davey, rh Sir Edward
Bardell, Hannah	David, Wayne
Bebb, Guto	Davies, Geraint
Beckett, rh Margaret	Day, Martyn
Benn, rh Hilary	De Cordova, Marsha
Benyon, rh Richard	De Piero, Gloria
Berger, Luciana	Debbonaire, Thangam
Betts, Mr Clive	Dent Coad, Emma
Black, Mhairi	Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Blackford, rh Ian	Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Blackman, Kirsty	Dodds, Anneliese
Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta	Dodds, Jane
Blomfield, Paul	Doughty, Stephen
Boles, Nick	Dowd, Peter
Brabin, Tracy	Drew, Dr David
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben	Dromey, Jack
Brake, rh Tom	Duffield, Rosie
Brennan, Kevin	Eagle, Ms Angela
Brine, Steve	Eagle, Maria
Brock, Deidre	Edwards, Jonathan
Brown, Alan	Efford, Clive
Brown, Lyn	Elliott, Julie
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas	Ellman, Dame Louise
Bryant, Chris	Elmore, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen	Esterson, Bill
Burden, Richard	Evans, Chris
Burgon, Richard	Farrelly, Paul
Burt, rh Alistair	Farron, Tim
Butler, Dawn	Fellows, Marion
Byrne, rh Liam	Field, rh Frank
Cable, rh Sir Vince	Fitzpatrick, Jim
Cadbury, Ruth	Fletcher, Colleen
Cameron, Dr Lisa	Flint, rh Caroline
Campbell, rh Sir Alan	Forbes, Lisa
Carden, Dan	Fovargue, Yvonne
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair	Foxcroft, Vicky
Champion, Sarah	Frith, James
Chapman, Douglas	Furniss, Gill
Chapman, Jenny	Gaffney, Hugh
Charalambous, Bambos	Gapes, Mike
Cherry, Joanna	Gardiner, Barry
Clark, rh Greg	Gauke, rh Mr David
Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth	George, Ruth
Clwyd, rh Ann	Gethins, Stephen
Coaker, Vernon	Gibson, Patricia
Coffey, Ann	Gill, Preet Kaur
Cooper, Julie	Glindon, Mary
Cooper, Rosie	Godsiff, Mr Roger
Cooper, rh Yvette	Goodman, Helen
Corbyn, rh Jeremy	Grady, Patrick
Cowan, Ronnie	Grant, Peter
Coyle, Neil	Gray, Neil
Crausby, Sir David	Green, Kate
Crawley, Angela	Greening, rh Justine
Creagh, Mary	Greenwood, Lilian

Greenwood, Margaret
Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
Griffith, Nia
Grogan, John
Gwynne, Andrew
Gyimah, Mr Sam
Haigh, Louise
Hamilton, Fabian
Hammond, rh Mr Philip
Hammond, Stephen
Hanson, rh David
Hardy, Emma
Harman, rh Ms Harriet
Harrington, Richard
Harris, Carolyn
Hayes, Helen
Hayman, Sue
Healey, rh John
Hendrick, Sir Mark
Hendry, Drew
Hepburn, Mr Stephen
Hermon, Lady
Hill, Mike
Hillier, Meg
Hobhouse, Wera
Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hollern, Kate
Hopkins, Kelvin
Hosie, Stewart
Howarth, rh Sir George
Huq, Dr Rupa
Hussain, Imran
James, Margot
Jardine, Christine
Jarvis, Dan
Johnson, Diana
Jones, Darren
Jones, Gerald
Jones, Graham P.
Jones, Helen
Jones, rh Mr Kevan
Jones, Ruth
Jones, Sarah
Jones, Susan Elan
Kane, Mike
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz
Khan, Afzal
Killen, Ged
Kinnock, Stephen
Kyle, Peter
Laird, Lesley
Lake, Ben
Lamb, rh Norman
Lammy, rh Mr David
Lavery, Ian
Law, Chris
Lee, Karen
Lee, Dr Phillip
Leslie, Mr Chris
Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Lewis, Clive
Linden, David
Lloyd, Stephen
Lloyd, Tony
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lucas, Caroline
Lucas, Ian C.
Lynch, Holly
MacNeil, Angus Brendan

Madders, Justin
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Mahmood, Shabana
Malhotra, Seema
Marsden, Gordon
Martin, Sandy
Maskell, Rachael
Matheson, Christian
Mc Nally, John
McCabe, Steve
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonagh, Siobhain
McDonald, Andy
McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
McDonald, Stuart C.
McDonnell, rh John
McFadden, rh Mr Pat
McGinn, Conor
McGovern, Alison
McInnes, Liz
McKinnell, Catherine
McMahon, Jim
McMorrin, Anna
Mearns, Ian
Miliband, rh Edward
Milton, rh Anne
Monaghan, Carol
Moon, Mrs Madeleine
Moran, Layla
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, Grahame
Murray, Ian
Nandy, Lisa
Newlands, Gavin
Norris, Alex
O'Hara, Brendan
Onn, Melanie
Onwurah, Chi
Osamor, Kate
Owen, Albert
Peacock, Stephanie
Pearce, Teresa
Pennycook, Matthew
Perkins, Toby
Phillips, Jess
Phillipson, Bridget
Pidcock, Laura
Platt, Jo
Pollard, Luke
Pound, Stephen
Powell, Lucy
Qureshi, Yasmin
Rashid, Faisal
Rayner, Angela
Reed, Mr Steve
Rees, Christina
Reeves, Ellie
Reeves, Rachel
Reynolds, Emma (*Proxy
vote cast by Mr Pat
McFadden*)
Reynolds, Jonathan
Rimmer, Ms Marie
Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
Rodda, Matt
Rowley, Danielle
Ruane, Chris
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Ryan, rh Joan
Sandbach, Antoinette
Saville Roberts, rh Liz

Shah, Naz
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheerman, Mr Barry
Sheppard, Tommy
Sherriff, Paula
Shuker, Mr Gavin
Siddiq, Tulip
Skinner, Mr Dennis
Slaughter, Andy
Smeeth, Ruth
Smith, Angela
Smith, Cat
Smith, Eleanor
Smith, Laura
Smith, Owen
Smyth, Karin
Snell, Gareth
Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
Sobel, Alex
Soubry, rh Anna
Spellar, rh John
Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
Starmer, rh Keir
Stephens, Chris
Stevens, Jo
Stewart, rh Rory
Stone, Jamie
Streeter, Wes
Stringer, Graham
Sweeney, Mr Paul
Swinson, Jo
Tami, rh Mark

Adams, Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Amess, Sir David
Argar, Edward
Atkins, Victoria
Austin, Ian
Bacon, Mr Richard
Badenoch, Mrs Kemi
Baker, Mr Steve
Baldwin, Harriett
Barclay, rh Stephen
Baron, Mr John
Bellingham, Sir Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Berry, rh Jake
Blackman, Bob
Blunt, Crispin
Bone, Mr Peter
Bottomley, Sir Peter
Bowie, Andrew
Bradley, Ben
Bradley, rh Karen
Brady, Sir Graham
Braverman, Suella (*Proxy
vote cast by Mr Steve
Baker*)
Brereton, Jack
Bridgen, Andrew
Brokenshire, rh James
Bruce, Fiona
Buckland, rh Robert
Burghart, Alex
Burns, Conor
Cairns, rh Alun

Thewliss, Alison
Thomas, Gareth
Thomas-Symonds, Nick
Thornberry, rh Emily
Timms, rh Stephen
Trickett, Jon
Turley, Anna
Turner, Karl
Twigg, Stephen
Twist, Liz
Umunna, Chuka
Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
Vaz, rh Keith
Vaz, Valerie
Walker, Thelma
Watson, Tom
West, Catherine
Western, Matt
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitfield, Martin
Whitford, Dr Philippa
Williams, Hywel
Williams, Dr Paul
Wilson, Phil
Wishart, Pete
Wollaston, Dr Sarah
Woodcock, John
Yasin, Mohammad
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:
**Jeff Smith and
Nick Smith**

NOES

Campbell, Mr Gregory
Cartledge, James
Cash, Sir William
Caulfield, Maria
Chalk, Alex
Chishti, Rehman
Chope, Sir Christopher
Churchill, Jo
Clark, Colin
Clarke, Mr Simon
Cleverly, rh James
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Coffey, Dr Thérèse
Collins, Damian
Costa, Alberto
Courts, Robert
Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey
Crabb, rh Stephen
Crouch, Tracey
Davies, David T. C.
Davies, Glyn
Davies, Mims
Davies, Philip
Davis, rh Mr David
Dinenage, Caroline
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Docherty, Leo
Dodds, rh Nigel
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
Donelan, Michelle
Dorries, Ms Nadine
Double, Steve
Dowden, rh Oliver
Doyle-Price, Jackie
Drax, Richard
Duddridge, James
Duguid, David

Duncan, rh Sir Alan
 Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
 Dunne, rh Mr Philip
 Ellis, Michael
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
 Elphicke, Charlie
 Eustice, George
 Evans, Mr Nigel
 Evennett, rh Sir David
 Fabricant, Michael
 Fallon, rh Sir Michael
 Field, rh Mark
 Ford, Vicky
 Foster, Kevin
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Frazer, Lucy
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Gale, rh Sir Roger
 Garnier, Mark
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
 Girvan, Paul
 Glen, John
 Goldsmith, Zac
 Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Luke
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Bill
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Gray, James
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Green, Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Hair, Kirstene
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hancock, rh Matt
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, Simon
 Hayes, rh Sir John
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Heappey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Heaton-Jones, Peter
 Henderson, Gordon
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Hoey, Kate
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Adam
 Howell, John
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Hurd, rh Mr Nick
 Jack, rh Mr Alister
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jenkins, Andrea
 Jenrick, rh Robert
 Johnson, rh Boris
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnson, rh Joseph
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Keegan, Gillian
 Kennedy, Seema
 Kerr, Stephen
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian
 Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
 Lamont, John
 Lancaster, rh Mark
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leadsom, rh Andrea
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, Mr Ivan
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Lidington, rh Mr David
 Little Pengelly, Emma
 Lopez, Julia
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Maclean, Rachel
 Main, Mrs Anne
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mann, John
 Mann, Scott
 Masterton, Paul
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Maynard, Paul
 McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
 McPartland, Stephen
 McVey, rh Ms Esther
 Menzies, Mark
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria

Milling, Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Moore, Damien
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Morton, Wendy
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
 Neill, Robert
 Newton, Sarah
 Norman, Jesse
 O'Brien, Neil
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Paisley, Ian
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Perry, rh Claire
 Philp, Chris
 Pincher, rh Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, Victoria
 Prisk, Mr Mark
 Pritchard, Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Raab, rh Dominic
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Gavin
 Robinson, Mary
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Ross, Douglas
 Rowley, Lee
 Rudd, rh Amber
 Rutley, David
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Mr Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shannon, Jim
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, rh Alok
 Shelbrooke, Alec

Simpson, David
 Simpson, rh Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Smith, Chloe (*Proxy vote
cast by Jo Churchill*)
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Spencer, rh Mark
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Bob
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunak, rh Rishi
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Swire, rh Sir Hugo
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Thomas, Derek
 Thomson, Ross
 Throup, Maggie
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Tredinnick, David
 Trevelyan, Anne-Marie
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Tugendhat, Tom
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Walker, Mr Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whittaker, Craig
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, Mr William
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
Stuart Andrew and
Iain Stewart

Question accordingly agreed to.

*Bill read a Second time; to stand committed to a
Committee of the whole House (Order, 3 September).*

European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 6) Bill

Considered in Committee (Order, 3 September)

[SIR LINDSAY HOYLE *in the Chair*]

Sir Mike Penning (Hemel Hempstead) (Con): On a point of order, Sir Lindsay. We are about to debate in Committee, under your chairmanship, amendments that are not available to Members. I have just been to the Vote Office to try to find the amendments. *[Interruption.]* They have become available now, but they were not available five minutes ago. How can we possibly debate such an important issue without the amendments being released earlier?

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Sir Lindsay Hoyle): The amendments have not yet been selected for voting. They were allowed to be tabled until 5 o'clock, so there had to be time for that. If you were to go now, they should be listed, but the amendments to be voted on have not been chosen yet. During the next two hours, I am sure that a man as competent as yourself will keep up with what changes may come.

Sir Mike Penning: Possibly.

The Chairman of Ways and Means: I am confident of that.

Clause 1

DUTIES IN CONNECTION WITH THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE
UK FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION

5.21 pm

Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con): I beg to move amendment 19, in clause 1, page 1, line 3, leave out subsections (1) to (3) and insert—

‘(1A) After this Act has been passed, but no later than 21 October 2019, the Prime Minister of State must make arrangements for—

(a) motion to the effect that the House of Commons has approved an agreement with the European Union under Article 50(2) of the Treaty on European Union, to be moved in the House of Commons by a Minister of the Crown; and

(b) a motion for the House of Lords to take note of the agreement, to be moved in the House of Lords by a Minister of the Crown.

(1B) If the House of Commons decides to approve the motion in paragraph (a), subsection (4) must be complied with.’

The intention of this Amendment is to ensure that debate takes place after the European Council meeting on 17/18 October 2019 on either the existing withdrawal agreement or any new withdrawal agreement that may have been agreed.

The Chairman of Ways and Means: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following:

Amendment 8, page 1, line 16, leave out subsection (2).

Amendment 9, page 2, line 8, leave out subsection (3) and insert—

‘(3) If the condition in subsection (1) is not satisfied, subsection (4) shall apply.’

Amendment 10, page 2, line 10, leave out subsection (4) and insert—

‘(4) The Prime Minister shall seek to discuss with the European Council a further short extension of the period under Article 50(3) of the Treaty on European Union ending at 11.00 pm on 31 October 2019

by sending to the President of the European Council a letter in the form set out in Schedule *[Form of letter from the Prime Minister to the President of the European Council (No. 2)]*.’

Amendment 20, page 2, line 12, leave out from “2019” to end of line 17.

The intention of this Amendment is to ensure that if the House of Commons approves a withdrawal agreement, the Prime Minister must seek an extension of the period under Article 50(3) TEU.

Amendment 6, page 2, line 14, at end, insert

‘in order to debate and pass a Bill to implement the agreement between the United Kingdom and the European Union under Article 50(2) of the Treaty on European Union, including provisions reflecting the outcome of inter-party talks as announced by the Prime Minister on 21 May 2019, and in particular the need for the United Kingdom to secure changes to the political declaration to reflect the outcome of those inter-party talks.’

This amendment would set out as the purpose of seeking an extension under Article 50(3) TEU the passage of a Withdrawal Agreement Bill based on the outcome of the inter-party talks which concluded in May 2019 – see NC1 for contents of the Bill and Amendment XX for text of the request letter to the European Council.

Amendment 11, page 2, line 15, leave out subsection (5).

Clause stand part.

Clause 2 stand part.

Amendment 22, in clause 3, page 2, line 43, leave out subsections (1) to (3).

The intention of this Amendment is to remove the requirement to accept whatever extension is decided on by the European Council while preserving the flexibility in subsection (4) to agree an extension otherwise than under this Act.

Amendment 25, page 3, line 3, leave out subsection (2).

Amendment 23, page 3, line 19, leave out “section” and insert “Act”.

The Amendment is consequential on Amendment 22 leaving out subsections 3(1) to 3(3).

Clauses 3 and 4 stand part.

Amendment 15, in clause 5, page 3, line 31, leave out subsection (3).

Amendment 16, page 3, line 35, leave out subsection (5) and insert—

‘(5) This section comes into force on the day on which this Act is passed.

(5A) The remaining provisions of this Act come into force on such day or days as the Secretary of State may by regulations made by statutory instrument appoint.

(5B) No regulations may be made under subsection (5A) unless a draft of the statutory instrument containing them has been laid before Parliament and approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament.’

Amendment 17, page 3, line 35, leave out from “force” to end and insert “on 22 October 2019.”

Clause 5 stand part.

New clause 1—*Publication of Withdrawal Agreement Bill*—

‘(1) The Prime Minister must within the period of five days, not including any Saturday, Sunday or bank holiday, beginning with the day on which this Act is passed publish a copy of a draft Bill to implement the Withdrawal Agreement between the United Kingdom and the European Union under Article 50(2) of the Treaty on European Union.

(2) The draft Bill must include provisions reflecting the outcome of inter-party talks as announced by the Prime Minister on 21 May 2019, and in particular—

- (a) provision for the Government to seek to conclude alternative arrangements to replace the backstop by December 2020;
- (b) a commitment that, should the backstop come into force, the Government will ensure that Great Britain will stay aligned with Northern Ireland and to incorporate in United Kingdom law paragraph 50 of the 2017 joint report from the negotiators of the European Union and the United Kingdom Government on progress during phase 1 of negotiations under Article 50 TEU on the United Kingdom's orderly withdrawal from the European Union (TF50 (2017) 19);
- (c) provision for the negotiating objectives and final treaties for the United Kingdom's future relationship with the European Union to be approved by the House of Commons;
- (d) legislation on workers' rights to guarantee workers' rights in the future in the United Kingdom will be no less favourable than comparable workers' rights in the European Union;
- (e) provisions ensuring that there will be no change in the level of environmental protection applicable in the United Kingdom after the United Kingdom leaves the European Union, and to establish an independent office of environmental protection, able to uphold standards and enforce compliance;
- (f) a requirement for the United Kingdom to seek as close to frictionless trade in goods with the European Union as possible, while outside the single market and ending free movement;
- (g) a requirement for the United Kingdom to keep up to date with European Union rules for goods and agri-food products that are relevant to checks at the border in order to protect employment that depends on just-in-time supply chains;
- (h) a customs compromise for the House of Commons to decide upon;
- (i) an opportunity for a decision to be made by the House of Commons whether the implementation of the withdrawal agreement should be subject to a referendum; and
- (j) a duty for Ministers of the Crown to secure changes to the political declaration to reflect the provisions in this subsection.'

This New Clause would require the publication of a Withdrawal Agreement Bill incorporating the ten headline points from the inter-party talks which concluded in May 2019.

Amendment 7, schedule, page 4, line 10, at end insert

'I wish to make clear to European Council colleagues that the purpose of this proposed extension is for the UK Parliament to debate and pass a Bill to implement the agreement between the United Kingdom and the European Union under Article 50(2) of the Treaty on European Union, including provisions reflecting the outcome of inter-party talks as announced by the Prime Minister on 21 May 2019, and in particular the need for the United Kingdom to secure changes to the political declaration to reflect the outcome of those inter-party talks.'

This amendment would require the Prime Minister to set out in the letter to the President of the European Council seeking an extension under Article 50(3) TEU that the reason for seeking an extension is to pass a Withdrawal Agreement Bill based on the outcome of the inter-party talks which concluded in May 2019 — see NC1 for contents of the Bill.

That the schedule be the schedule to the Bill.

New schedule 2—*Form of letter from the Prime Minister to the President of the European Council*—

'Dear Mr President

The UK Parliament has passed the European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 2) Act 2019. Its provisions now require Her Majesty's Government to seek to discuss an extension of the period provided

under Article 50(3) of the Treaty on European Union, including as applied by Article 106a of the Euratom Treaty, currently due to expire at 11.00pm GMT on 31 October 2019.

I am writing therefore to inform the European Council that the United Kingdom wishes to discuss a further short extension to the period provided under Article 50(3) of the Treaty on European Union, including as applied by Article 106a of the Euratom Treaty.

Yours sincerely,

Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.'

Richard Graham: I rise to seek colleagues' patience in proposing something that I believe is a compromise that many Members in this House have long sought and many people have expressed support for. The compromise goes like this. There are many of us on both sides of this House who do not want no deal and yet, as has been pointed out by many Members, including the right hon. Member for Don Valley (Caroline Flint), many colleagues have not supported a deal. My simple amendment to the Bill would require the Government to have a vote on Monday 21 October—the first sitting day after the EU Council—on a deal, whether it be a new deal or the previous deal. Should that vote be successful and approved by Members of this House, the Government would be required, if they needed more time, to ask for an extension from the European Union, purely in order to get the legislation through Parliament.

Whereas other amendments that will be debated today require the Government to ask for an extension and then set about trying to find the deal, mine does the opposite. It gives us all the chance to vote for either the existing deal previously negotiated by the last Government or whatever new deal is successfully negotiated by the new Government. That means that everyone in this House who wishes to prevent no deal would have the chance to do so by voting for that deal. I hope that many colleagues around this House who have been able to prevent making a decision between a deal and no deal would realise that that was the last chance to do that—merely a week before no deal became the default on 31 October.

I know there are some colleagues for whom the business of asking for an extension is part of the circuit of trying to prevent Brexit from happening at all, and I understand that. However, I believe there may be a majority in this House who have accepted the will of the people in the referendum, and who have said and told their constituents that they respect the referendum result, and a lot of us were elected on a manifesto pledge to do so. This would be the moment when we could put that to the test and vote for a deal.

Alex Sobel (Leeds North West) (Lab/Co-op): The hon. Gentleman's amendment mentions our having a motion of the House. The last time we had a withdrawal agreement motion, we had five days of debate. Is there sufficient time to have five days of debate before 31 October, if we pass his amendment?

Richard Graham: The short answer to that is almost certainly no. However, we have had not just five days of debate, but weeks and months and years of debate on these issues. The previous deal, which I regarded as a good deal, was debated ad infinitum in this House. I do not believe that we would need five more days of debate to be able to reach a decision about whether we wanted a deal or no deal.

Sandy Martin (Ipswich) (Lab): The hon. Gentleman says that he regarded that deal as a good deal. However, a very large number of Members in this House do not regard it as a good deal. His amendment, proposed in the way it is, seems to suggest that this is a binary choice. It is not a binary choice. We want a deal that actually satisfies the reasons why we think we need to get the best out of a Brexit deal or remain, and this does not enable us to do that.

Richard Graham: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point of view. There are 650 Members of this House, all of whom, if we designed the perfect deal ourselves individually, would have differences from each other. However, we are at the stage where I believe the vast majority of people in this country want this issue resolved. Therefore, if we are to decide whether we want to accept a default position of no deal because we cannot reach agreement on a deal, this would be the moment for all of us to ask ourselves what we really want: do we really want a deal at all, or are we prepared to go straight to a no deal?

My amendment does not call for the Government to have a vote on no deal. It accepts that, if the vote for a deal were lost, this Parliament would have had myriad opportunities to support a deal and would, in that situation, have failed. I believe this amendment is fair to almost every point of view in this House. It gives us all one last chance to vote for a deal if we do not want no deal.

Neil Gray (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): The hon. Gentleman's amendment is of course predicated on the Prime Minister actually negotiating a new deal. What evidence does he have, because I cannot see any, of there even being a negotiating team in place, as the 30 days evaporate like snow off a dyke? Can he show us that there is any evidence of a new deal coming back from this Prime Minister?

Richard Graham: In fact, the hon. Gentleman misreads part of the point of my amendment, which is not to prejudice whether or not the Prime Minister and this Government come back with a deal. I believe the Government are genuinely trying to get a deal, but it is perfectly possible either that they do not succeed, or—this would be the hon. Gentleman's view—that they are not really trying that hard. In either of those events, my amendment would allow this House to vote on the deal that was put before this House previously. It would give everybody one more chance—the hon. Gentleman's party says it is against no deal—a chance to vote for a deal. If, in that situation, the House were to say, “We don't like this deal: it's not good enough for us”, there could be no hiding from anyone in this country about why we had gone for no deal. It would be because this House failed the final opportunity to prevent that. I believe, in that situation, this is fair to everyone.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): Surely, the withdrawal agreement was rejected on the three times that it came to the House, and the backstop was a clear issue on each of those three times. If that continues to be the case, would the hon. Gentleman still insist on pushing for a withdrawal agreement that insists on the backstop? Clearly, for us, the backstop has to be removed, and that is the opinion of the Prime Minister, and, I understand, this Government.

5.30 pm

Richard Graham: My amendment suggests that there are three options for this House to vote for on Monday 21 October. The first is the withdrawal agreement as it was presented to the House previously. The second is the withdrawal agreement plus the cross-party agreement that was reached, but was never voted on in this House. The third is any new deal arrived at by the Government. In that situation, Members would have the chance to vote for a deal and prevent no deal, which many of us feel could have dire consequences.

Alex Chalk (Cheltenham) (Con): My hon. Friend is coming up with such sensible provisions. Does he agree that this would smoke out those who claim to want to avoid no deal but, truth be told, vote against every route to avoid it? This would smoke them out. If they vote for this, they will truly be avoiding no deal.

Richard Graham: My constituency neighbour is absolutely right, but my aim is not so much to smoke out—to use his phrase—the motives and underlying thoughts of colleagues across this House, but to give all of us the opportunity to say, ultimately, what we really prefer: is it a deal or is it no deal? In that sense, he is absolutely right.

Harriett Baldwin (West Worcestershire) (Con): I thank my hon. Friend for the thoughtful way in which he is setting out his case. He and I both just voted against the principle of this Bill on Second Reading, largely because we want the Prime Minister to have the strongest possible hand in his negotiations with the European Union. I shall listen carefully to the Minister's response, but does my hon. Friend think that by agreeing this amendment tonight the House would in any way weaken the Prime Minister's negotiating hand?

Richard Graham: My hon. Friend makes a very good point. One reason I drafted this very short amendment in the way that I did, with the help of the Clerks, was precisely not to take away the pads or gloves of the Government's batsmen when they go into negotiations with the European Union, because this way would not predetermine the result of their negotiations at all. It would allow them to seek the deal that I believe—contrary to what some colleagues from the Scottish National party are saying—they are sincere about. If they were unsuccessful, it would still give the rest of us a chance to have a vote on a deal before no deal became the default option, so she is absolutely correct. This is not designed to weaken the Government's stance in any way, but rather to allow their sincerity to give us the chance to express our view.

Neil O'Brien (Harborough) (Con): I thank my hon. Friend for his brilliant contribution in bringing forward this amendment. I voted for the withdrawal agreement. I was proud to do so, because the only way to stop no deal is to vote for a deal. I hope and expect that our new Prime Minister will get an even better deal than the last one, but my hon. Friend's amendment really would preserve the freedom of action of this House and give us a lifeboat if things went wrong. I will support it in the strongest possible terms.

Richard Graham: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend. That is the key point: when constituents ask us, “Will this House have the final say before we go to a no-deal exit from the European Union?”, my answer is that I believe we should have a chance to vote once more, and this amendment would provide that.

Angus Brendan MacNeil (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): Given what the hon. Gentleman is trying to do and what he is saying, some of us are concerned that the Prime Minister is talking of a cut-and-run general election before the calamity befalls him on Halloween. The hon. Gentleman, I take it, would never under any circumstances support a cut-and-run general election before the Halloween calamity of the Prime Minister's Brexit.

Richard Graham: It is a perfectly valid point that this short amendment does not allow for every conceivable possibility that might exist out there. It does not—unlike this Bill, tabled by the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn)—sketch out the precise wording of the letter that the Prime Minister should write to the European Union, for example. The Prime Minister said that Parliament would be prorogued until 14 October, after which the European Council meets. Monday 21 October is the first sitting day after that Council. It is to me—I may be naïve—inconceivable that the Government would not be here that day and would not allow that debate if Parliament had passed this amendment. I am, to some extent, taking on faith what I, and we, have been told about this Government's plans, but I believe that that is a reasonable position to take.

Angus Brendan MacNeil: On a point of order, Mr Hoyle. Before the next speaker, in these days of Twitter I would just like to correct the amendment paper. Some people might be surprised to find my name leading amendments with the hon. Members for Christchurch (Sir Christopher Chope) and for Wellingborough (Mr Bone), the right hon. Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh), the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Nigel Mills) and the right hon. Member for New Forest West (Sir Desmond Swayne), although probably not as surprised as those right hon. and hon. Members. [*Laughter.*] I would just like everybody to know that this is a drafting error. It can happen from time to time and I am not bothered in any sense, but I just wanted to make that clear.

The Chairman of Ways and Means: That is a great point of correction. I think the hon. Gentleman would be very dizzy if he went that far south.

Stephen Kinnock (Aberavon) (Lab): I rise to speak in favour of amendments 6 and 7 and new clause 1, which have been tabled in my name and those of my right hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Caroline Flint) and many other Members across the Committee. Before I do, however, I want to briefly say that I will be voting for the Bill this evening. That is because I have always been clear that the worst possible Brexit outcome would be a catastrophic no-deal crash-out that severely damages the security and economy of our country and our communities. This is why an extension of any kind is far superior to crashing out on 31 October.

I and other colleagues from across the Committee are, however, deeply concerned that it is nearly three years since MPs voted to trigger article 50 to leave the EU and

our nation is still stuck in limbo. We believe that if the UK does not specify the purpose of the extension, we will end up in exactly the same position on 4 January as we are in today on 4 September. The public are getting increasingly tired of this and, like Parliament, increasingly polarised. Finding compromise, or indeed any route forward, will only become more difficult as time goes on. A further extension to the timetable to leave the EU without a very good, clearly defined purpose will leave most of the country banging their heads against a brick wall. The public are fed up of talking and hearing about Brexit. Most people, regardless of what some campaigners may like to tell themselves, would like to see the referendum result honoured. Therefore, amendments 6 and 7, together with new clause 1, aim to set a purpose for the extension request until 31 January. The explicit purpose, we state, should be to pass a Brexit Bill, and, more specifically, to pass something similar to the withdrawal agreement Bill that was drafted in May 2019 as a result of cross-party talks.

Andrew Percy (Brigg and Goole) (Con): I have worked with the hon. Gentleman on a couple of issues over the past few years and I think he does want to make good on the referendum. The problem with his extension, of course, is that we have repeatedly heard from Members saying that they want to respect the will of the referendum, but every time we come to a vote on the matter there is always a reason why they cannot quite bring themselves to trot into the Lobby and vote for the withdrawal agreement. We have had three occasions on which we could have voted for the withdrawal agreement, and four other occasions on which to express an opinion in favour of Norway, the European Free Trade Association or the European economic area. Every single time, the same MPs trot up and say they support the referendum result but when it comes to the vote they vote to block Brexit, so what is going to be different this time?

Stephen Kinnock: I gently say to the hon. Gentleman that the meaningful votes that took place are a very different kettle of fish from what was produced by the cross-party talks. As I will say later in my speech, the cross-party talks contained a number of extremely important compromises and concessions from Labour Members. It is therefore a travesty that this Parliament never had the opportunity to debate or vote on the withdrawal agreement Bill. It is a different kettle of fish from what went before. For those with short memories, the withdrawal agreement Bill was very different from the former Prime Minister's initial so-called “blind Brexit”—which was rejected three times by this House—because it contained 10 major concessions that gave far more clarity on the UK-EU relationship. We were not prepared to give carte blanche to the Government.

The cross-party talks gave the detail that we need. That was a direct result of the hard work of Opposition and Government Front Benchers and negotiating teams over the course of six weeks of serious talks. The concessions included a customs union compromise, with a binding vote on post-Brexit customs arrangements; a workers' rights Bill that would guarantee that employment rights in the UK would not lag behind those of the EU; a pledge that the UK would see no change in the level of environmental protection after Brexit; a promise to seek as close to frictionless trade in goods with the EU as possible while being outside the single market and ending

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free movement; a commitment to having parliamentary time to allow for a vote at Committee stage on whether the deal should be put to a second referendum; an assurance to MPs that they must have the final say on the future UK's relationship with the EU; and a promise that Northern Ireland would stay aligned with the rest of the UK on regulations and customs, even if the backstop were to come into force.

Harriett Baldwin: I appreciate the spirit in which the hon. Gentleman is approaching this debate and his amendments. Will he clarify whether the 10 changes that he outlines would involve changing anything in the 585-page withdrawal agreement?

Stephen Kinnock: The 585-page withdrawal agreement would remain intact, because those are the separation issues. All these issues relate to the future relationship, which the EU has made clear it is open to amending. The future relationship is, of course, a political declaration. The reasons why Labour Members were opposed to previous deals were that there was so little detail on the future relationship, and frankly, that we had said repeatedly that the Government should, rather than going to the wrong extreme in this debate, reach out to Labour Members. Finally, the former Prime Minister agreed to do that. We had the cross-party talks, and it is a travesty that this House never had the opportunity to debate and vote on those issues.

Norman Lamb (North Norfolk) (LD): As someone who feels very strongly that the polarisation in this debate has been immensely damaging for our country and that there are not enough people finding ways of bringing our country back together again, may I ask the hon. Gentleman whether he shares my view that this is a route to achieving a compromise—an art that appears to have been lost in this place at present—and perhaps a way for someone such as me, who believes in a relationship that is akin to what Norway has, to find a way forward and achieve a compromise that not only meets the obligation of implementing the referendum outcome, but recognises the views of many people about the need to maintain a very close relationship with the EU?

Stephen Kinnock: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his intervention and for adding his name to our amendment. I agree with every word that he said. Let us not forget that a Parliament that is captured by its extremes is one that plays directly into the hands of the no-dealers, because the legal default position is that if there is no alternative, we leave without a deal. The failure to compromise has played directly into the hands of the no-dealers, who are a small minority in this House. The tail has been wagging the dog for too long. It is time for it to stop. The Committee stage of a withdrawal agreement Bill would provide ample opportunity for amendments such as a common market 2.0 type of arrangement, but that has to be debated in this House in Committee. Let us first get it over the line on Second Reading.

Luke Graham (Ochil and South Perthshire) (Con): The hon. Gentleman is proposing a compromise, which I appreciate—it is time that Members started to vote for things, rather than just against things—and he says he

wants greater detail. I served under my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr Lidington) in the Cabinet Office, and as we know there was no cross-party Front-Bench agreement on these measures. Even if we were to go forward with this compromise, he would not have his Front Benchers behind him, so how can we get behind it?

5.45 pm

Stephen Kinnock: I was not party to the decision taken not to support the withdrawal agreement Bill, which included the 10 concessions our negotiating team did such a great job in securing, and I regret it. It is a tragedy that the House has never had the opportunity to debate or vote on the withdrawal agreement Bill. I truly hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House will tonight join me and other colleagues in the Division Lobby to make it clear that it is time to vote for something, not just against things.

Jeremy Wright (Kenilworth and Southam) (Con): As the hon. Gentleman knows from the Second Reading debate, I have a good deal of sympathy with the approach he is setting out. I appreciate, too, that he is recommending to the House that we pass amendments 6 and 7 as well as new clause 1. If I were minded to support new clause 1 but not amendments 6 and 7, would I effectively be presenting an option that everyone in the House could choose to adopt, in preference to no deal and no Brexit, and that the Government could bring forward so that there was an option for us all to pursue, but then if the Government were to themselves negotiate a separate deal, nothing in new clause 1 would prevent them from proposing that option?

Stephen Kinnock: I can confirm that we are saying in the amendments that the vote should reflect the outcome of the cross-party talks, but clearly this is not about setting that in stone. The current Prime Minister is welcome—good luck to him—to go to Brussels and try to get a deal. I am sure that hon. Members will forgive me if I am sceptical about whether serious attempts are being made to do that, but if he is able to secure changes that he feels he can bring back, clearly they would still have to be based on that 585-page document, which is the basic building block for a deal. It will not be torn up by the EU.

Mr Kenneth Clarke (Rushcliffe) (Ind): As the hon. Gentleman says, the House has never voted on the proposal that so nearly came forward. I think I would have supported it had it got that far. Does he agree that had the whole House realised then what form subsequent events would take to lead us to today and what would happen to public opinion in the ever increasingly wild debate that followed—if the vote could have been taken with that foresight—it would have been carried by a large majority in this House, that the withdrawal deal, as amended, would now be in place, and that we would now be able to have civilised and sensible debates about the long-term arrangements to be agreed during the transition period?

Stephen Kinnock: I thank the Father of the House. Like many Members, I wish that crystal balls had been handed out when we first came to this place. Unfortunately,

that was not the case. It goes back to what he said earlier—Parliament and the debate have been captured by the extremes, and we have to move on from that. We have to break the deadlock and find a sustainable way of preventing no deal, and the way to do that is to leave with a deal.

Ian C. Lucas (Wrexham) (Lab): My hon. Friend and his colleagues have put forward a very interesting amendment indeed. Could he clarify what discussions he has had with the Opposition Front Benchers about the amendments and what response he has had from them?

Stephen Kinnock: I recognise my hon. Friend's point, but at present I have not had a conversation with our Front Benchers on this topic.

My party's Brexit spokesperson, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer), made it clear in an interview on last weekend's Marr show that Labour only withdrew from the talks due to the inability of the former Prime Minister to deliver her own party. He stated:

"We took a judgement call that some of the proposals that the Prime Minister put forward she would not be able to get through her own party".

I think this confirms that our side was ready to compromise on a deal if the Prime Minister could have delivered her own party. The good will was clearly there. Now all the focus should be on finding a way to put that deal back on the table, to study it, to debate it, to amend it, to vote on it, and ultimately to use it as the basic vehicle for sorting out the shambolic situation we find ourselves in.

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): I appreciate the tone of the hon. Gentleman's remarks, and I agreed with his opening remark that we want this to be over with and to move on, but my worry is this. Does not his idea require guarantees and statements from the European Union? What would they be, and how could we secure them?

Stephen Kinnock: At the heart of our amendment, and of the withdrawal agreement Bill, is a document that has absolutely been signed off by the EU27. It is there; it is ready to go; it is off the shelf. The changes—the 10 concessions—relate to the political declaration on the future relationship. So the answer to the right hon. Gentleman's question is that the European Union would, I think, bite our arms off if we were able to come forward and say, "This is the deal. It needs some tweaks, but, in essence, this is where we need to go." That is why I think it is so vital for us to use the extension period for a purpose.

Victoria Prentis (Banbury) (Con): The hon. Gentleman is being very generous in giving way. I am sorry that there are so many questions, but it is interesting to note that when there is a sensible suggestion the House is genuinely interested in trying to establish some consensus, and in that spirit I ask a slightly cheeky question. Were one to have committed oneself to "do or die" by 31 October, is there any way in which we could get this consensus—this new idea—through the House before that date without relying on the extension?

Stephen Kinnock: As my right hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Caroline Flint) said on Second Reading, we are ready to work every hour of every day, 24/7.

The 31 January date is named in the extension document, but if we can get this done before then, and indeed before 31 October, yes—and the huge advantage is that it is on the shelf and ready to go.

We would not have to accept the withdrawal agreement Bill as it stands in its entirety. We could add amendments in Committee; we could improve it, just as with any other legislation. Those who are campaigning for a second referendum can even try again to add a confirmatory vote in Committee, if that is the way they wish to go. As I said earlier, I myself would consider trying to introduce something nearer to a common market 2.0 approach. All those options would be open to us in Committee, but we have to get the Bill over the line on Second Reading. The reality is that whatever angle we are coming from in this deeply divided and fragmented House, the withdrawal agreement Bill is the only game in town if we want to make progress.

Our second substantive proposal calls on the Government to publish a copy of the draft Bill to implement the withdrawal agreement between the United Kingdom and the European Union within five working days. The draft Bill must include provisions reflecting the outcome of the inter-party talks. We know that that document exists, and we need to see it published so that we can give it the scrutiny that it requires.

For any Member who supports either a deal-based Brexit or even a second referendum, supporting our amendments is the most sensible and pragmatic approach, and the way forward. Let us get this done. Let us rediscover the lost art of compromise. Let us move our country forward, on to the issues that matter to people up and down the country.

Mr Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, because I suspect that he has reached his peroration, but may I ask him a simple question? Has he checked with his Front Benchers that they would support his amendment if he were to press it?

Stephen Kinnock: I understand that our position at the present time would be to abstain, but I am not 100% sure of that. I really hope that, having listened to the debate, colleagues throughout the House will consider supporting the amendment, because I think that given the amount of support that we are receiving from Members on both sides of the House, we have a real chance of getting this across the line.

Albert Owen (Ynys Môn) (Lab): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Stephen Kinnock: I will give way briefly, but then I must press on.

Albert Owen: In new clause 1(2)(b), my hon. Friend talks of alignment with Northern Ireland. Is he saying that the whole United Kingdom—all four nations—would be in a single market until such time as the Europeans reached an agreement during the transition period?

Stephen Kinnock: That is correct. The commitment in the clarifications of the withdrawal agreement Bill makes it clear that that will be the case until such time as alternative arrangements are found. I will be absolutely frank: the backstop is at the heart of the withdrawal agreement Bill, but if Members really boil it down, how

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many in this House are actually opposed to it? I am a big fan of the backstop because I believe the backstop protects peace in Northern Ireland. The vast majority of Conservative MPs voted for the withdrawal agreement, which has the backstop at its heart. There are a maximum of 50, or 60 maybe, Members of Parliament who are opposed to the backstop, and as a result we are in the mess we are in now; it is the definition of the cliché “the tail wagging the dog”, and it has to stop.

Let us move forward. Let us get back to the issues that people really care about on the doorstep: education, health, housing and cutting crime. Do we remember when we used to discuss those issues in politics—the vital bread-and-butter issues that really matter to our communities?

This House has been paralysed by its extremes; it is time to break the deadlock, and I hope that colleagues will join us in the Division Lobby later in that spirit.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Sir Lindsay Hoyle): Order. To help the situation for Members, nothing has been selected for votes as yet, so let's hope that people will be happy.

Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con): The question I raise in this series of amendments relates in particular, as I said in my brief speech just now, to the extent to which the United Kingdom is put under a duty—an obligation—to be subservient to the European Union. I find this Bill deeply offensive for that reason alone, and, as I said earlier, our whole parliamentary constitutional arrangement is based on the fact that we make decisions in general elections by the free will of the British people in a secret ballot. When those decisions are taken and the results come out in the respective constituencies and a majority or otherwise is arrived at to decide upon the composition of this House of Commons, that is a free Parliament based on a secret ballot and on the free choice of the British people.

I believe that we are heading for a general election, and I think that that will sort out a lot of the problems we are currently experiencing with this Bill and, indeed, in relation to the whole question of satisfying the decision taken by the British people in the referendum, and indeed by this House on frequent occasions with the referendum Act itself by six to one, the notification of withdrawal Act by 499 to 120, and then again the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018. Every single Conservative MP voted for that Act, which clearly stated that we would leave the European Union and repeal the European Communities Act 1972 on exit day, which is 31 October. That is categorically the law of the land, so the whole concept of our democracy, which is somehow or other being subverted by this Bill, is actually already in place; this has been decided and I see absolutely no justification whatsoever for seeking to reverse it. I also see no justification for reversing the votes that my hon. Friends have themselves already cast over and over again in favour of not only the referendum Act—it was also in the manifesto—but the notification of withdrawal Act, and the withdrawal Act itself?

So I can see no justification for the majority in this House, because although this measure scraped through by 29 votes, we know where the votes came from. There is no doubt about it; they came from former Conservative Members of Parliament, and some who are unfortunately—I think by their own choice—in a position where they have had the Whip taken away from them.

I regret that; I saw it happen on a previous occasion with the Maastricht treaty, although it did not happen to me personally, but I can only say that if you live by the sword, you die by the sword.

Sir Oliver Letwin (West Dorset) (Ind) *indicated assent.*

Sir William Cash: My right hon. Friend nods his head, because that is true, and that is how it goes.

John Redwood: But is not the fundamental unacceptable point about this piece of draft legislation the way in which it allows the EU to dictate to the United Kingdom and the Prime Minister any terms it likes and leaves us no bargaining position whatsoever?

6 pm

Sir William Cash: That is absolutely right, and that is why, in my short speech earlier, I said that this should be called not the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill but the European Union (Subservience) Bill. This is a subjugation, and we have experienced this. That is why I called on the previous Prime Minister to resign. We had a capitulation on 11 April; we had a flurry of points of order, then we had a statement that afternoon, at which point I asked her whether she would resign, because she had capitulated. This Bill is a mirror image of that, but in a way it is even worse, because it places a legal duty on the Prime Minister—enforceable by judicial review if it came to it—to carry out this act of political suicide. Members on the Opposition Benches really ought to reflect on the full extent and nature of the subservience, subjugation and vassalage that they are putting the United Kingdom in. It is a total and utter disgrace. It flies in the face not only of the referendum result itself but of section 1 of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, which specifically states:

“The European Communities Act 1972 is repealed on exit day.”
Exit day is prescribed as 31 October.

I want to add another point, which is about money. Does the self-indulgence of the people who voted for this bear in mind the fact that every single month that has gone by since the end of March, when we should have come out, is costing about £1.2 billion? Every time they go in for this self-flagellation and this unbelievable determination to extend the period of time—for no purpose whatsoever, because they will never come to an agreement—it is costing the British taxpayer, the people we represent. This is a denial of the democracy that they expressed in the referendum, which we in this House specifically gave to them to decide. We did not say, “Oh, we're giving you this right under the European Union Referendum Act 2015 to make a decision on whether we stay or leave, but actually when it comes to it, if we don't like the outcome, we are going to turn turtle on you and reverse that decision in Parliament.” Parliament, by a sovereign Act that is still on the statute book, gave the right to the British people undeniably and deliberately to make that decision of their own account, and not ourselves.

An astonishing illustration of what I am saying is to be found in clause 3(2) of the Bill, which states:

“If the European Council decides to agree an extension of the period in Article 50(3) of the Treaty on European Union ending at 11.00 pm on 31 October 2019, but to a date other than 11.00 pm on 31 January 2020, the Prime Minister must, within a period of two days beginning with the end of the day on which the European Council’s decision is made, or before the end of 30 October 2019, whichever is sooner, notify the President of the European Council that the United Kingdom agrees to the proposed extension.”

This is the enforceable duty. This is the insane provision that is being imposed on us in defiance of our constitutional arrangement that decisions are taken not by individual Members of Parliament in a private Member’s Bill but by the elected Government, in line with the referendum decision. So the Prime Minister would be under an obligation within a period of two days—beginning with the end of the day on which the Council’s decision is made, or before the end of 30 October 2019, whichever is sooner—to notify the President of the European Council that the United Kingdom agreed to the proposed extension. So, it is not just that we are going to be saddled with a decision on an extension to 31 January 2020 to the cost of something well over £3 billion, because if the Council agrees, we would then be under an obligation to accept whatever date it puts forward, being a date other than a period ending 11 pm on 31 January 2020. It is strange to say that I have not heard that point being explained by the proponents of this Bill. I heard the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) giving a description on Second Reading of what the Bill is about, but I did not hear him say what I have just said. I would like him to get up and deny it if what I have just read, which is in the text of the Bill, is wrong.

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): I did directly address that question in my speech on Second Reading, but the hon. Gentleman has not read clause 3(3), which explains the circumstances in which subsection (2), to which he has such objection, would not apply.

Sir William Cash: I do not think that that is really an excuse, because the reality is that this is the decision—*[Interruption.]* I will read out the subsection to which the right hon. Gentleman just referred. It states that

“subsection (2) does not apply if the House of Commons has decided not to pass a motion moved by a Minister of the Crown within a period of two calendar days beginning with the end of the day on which the European Council’s decision is made or before the end of 30 October 2019, whichever is sooner, in the following form—

“That this House has approved the extension to the period in Article 50(3) of the Treaty on European Union which the European Council has decided.”

However, the likelihood of that not happening is absurd. I really do think that this is just another example of the kind of obfuscation which this Bill provides in almost every clause. In fact, it is not just obfuscation, because it drives a coach and horses through the way in which we should be and have been governed.

Mr Duncan Smith: A valuable point was raised earlier that also explains how this Bill is problematic, which is that clause 3 assumes that the EU would in some way make a conditional offer. However, the EU is in control of whether it makes any kind of offer—conditional or

not—so the Bill hinges on the EU’s ability or desire to do that, which of course probably will not happen, and it is not meant to, anyway.

Sir William Cash: That is true. Indeed, we had all this back in April when, if one looks at the text of the decision and the manner in which it has taken, one can see that it was hedged with certain conditions. What is going on here is that this Bill is driving us to do something that is in complete contravention to the decision that has been taken already in section 1 of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, which itself implements the decision that was taken by the British people. This Bill undermines the referendum, it undermines the law of the land as expressed in section 1 of the 2018 Act, and the commencement order has already been made.

I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union for bringing in that commencement order, which makes things a done deal. We are now in a position whereby we have repealed the European Communities Act 1972, subject only to the fact that the law of the land says that that will have effect on 31 October. This Bill is a monstrous piece of legislation designed to turn inside out not only our constitutional arrangements, but the decision of the British people in the referendum and Government policy.

The Prime Minister established another important point in his leadership election result. He got two thirds of the parliamentary Conservative party to vote for him, and he got two thirds of the grassroots—the associations—to vote for him. If ever a Prime Minister had a mandate to make such decisions within the framework of the Conservative party, it is there, which is another reason why I take exception to the fact that this Bill is going through because a number of colleagues—I am sorry to have to say this, because it is a sad business—are flying in the face of the mandate that the Prime Minister got within the framework of the Conservative party.

There is no doubt whatsoever that, within the framework of our constitution—and I will conclude with these words—it is simply monstrous that we should be put in a position where a judicial duty is imposed on the Prime Minister to make a decision under the terms of this Bill. Frankly, I find it inconceivable that anyone could possibly vote for it.

Sir Christopher Chope (Christchurch) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Stone (Sir William Cash) who, as always, is on the side of the optimists rather than the defeatists.

Listening to the hon. Member for Aberavon (Stephen Kinnock), with whom I have had the pleasure of serving on the Brexit Committee, I fear he is a pessimist in this. He thinks we need a compromise, but he does not talk about the need for the European Union to compromise. He talks only about the need for the United Kingdom to compromise, in the face of a clear commitment by the British people to leave the European Union.

I will speak briefly to the amendments in my name and in the name of my right hon. and hon. Friends. Three years ago, the people of the United Kingdom instructed us, with the largest democratic mandate in our history, to obtain a divorce from the European Union and, in March 2017, Parliament accepted that instruction by giving notice under article 50 of the EU treaty.

[Sir Christopher Chope]

Article 50 makes provision for an amicable divorce or for a divorce without agreement. In a traditional divorce to dissolve a marriage, both parties accept the irretrievable breakdown and try to agree sensible future arrangements, but the EU has never accepted Brexit. The EU and its institutions do not want a divorce. If there was any doubt about that, it has been made clear to us on the Brexit Committee whenever we have visited the European institutions and their leaders that the EU is just hoping and praying that Brexit will go away and that we will remain in the European Union.

They do not want a divorce, so their motivation is to contest that divorce by putting forward unreasonable and unacceptable terms that offer us only a punishment deal. My right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May) anticipated that in her Lancaster House speech, in which she said she feared that that might be the approach of the European Union, that it would be intent on offering us a punishment deal.

That is exactly what the EU has done, and the only alternative to a punishment deal under article 50 is no deal. Unless amended, this Bill will remove even that option, which enables us to put pressure on the European Union to come to the negotiating table to talk about a better deal.

As my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House said yesterday, this is a dreadful deal that has already been rejected by the House on several occasions. With this Bill, are we really going to be left with the options of either no Brexit or Brexit in name only? That is essentially what we are talking about tonight.

The United Kingdom's freedom to divorce under article 50 is constrained by this Bill by being made subject to an EU veto that enables the EU to block Brexit, effectively indefinitely, unless or until the UK reneges on the decision of a referendum. The Bill removes any incentive for the EU to negotiate, which is why the Prime Minister is right. If this Bill passes tonight, we will take away from him any opportunity to negotiate. All he could do is be a supplicant at the table of the European Union. In effect, this would be an example of modern international slavery, where we are imprisoned by the EU with no reasonable way out.

6.15 pm

Sadly, the EU's collaborators in this House have become more strident and less cautious as time has elapsed. My right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) has said, in public, in this House and in private, that his objection to no deal is only because of the lack of preparation—

Lady Hermon (North Down) (Ind) *rose*—

Sir Christopher Chope: I will not give way. My right hon. Friend has now dropped that pretence, telling us yesterday that this Bill will show whether or not the House of Commons accepts a policy of a no-deal exit. He is saying that if this Bill carries on into law, we will be telling the EU, "Not to worry, in no circumstances will we be leaving without a deal." In other words, we will be throwing in the towel to the EU. Nothing in this Bill is related to the no-deal preparations or recognises that since the change of Government expenditure on no

deal has increased dramatically and that we are now in a position where we will be prepared for no deal—we should have been better prepared for it in the first place.

If the remoaners had the guts, they would have brought forward a Bill to revoke article 50, which is what they want in their hearts and what the EU wants, but they know that that would be resoundingly defeated if it were presented to this House. What we have instead is the revocation of article 50 in all but name—a device to deceive the public. This is a squalid little Bill. It is an affront to Parliament, to democracy and to the people, because it enslaves the UK to the EU. It relegates us to the status of a colony. It treats the UK as though we had been vanquished in war, by giving the EU the power to dictate the terms of our surrender. I despair at the defeatism of so many of my colleagues, and I hope that we will fight back and win in a general election, for which I cannot wait.

Jeremy Lefroy (Stafford) (Con): On a point of order, Dame Eleanor. Is it in order for my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Sir Christopher Chope), for whom I have great respect, to compare what we are talking about now with slavery, which, around the world, is a most terrible thing and—

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Eleanor Laing): Order. I appreciate the point the hon. Gentleman is making, and indeed his dedication to fighting that particular evil, but that is a debating point, not a point of order, and we do not have time this afternoon.

Mr Duncan Smith: I am going to be brief, as I know many others want to get in, Dame Eleanor. I wish to compare a couple of these amendments and say a few words as to why this Bill is a very bad one. First, let me say to the hon. Member for Aberavon (Stephen Kinnock), who is, sadly, no longer in his seat, that his is a genuine attempt to find a way forward. I have just been reading it, having just looked at it, and it is intriguing. He is specific in one of his amendments, saying that the purpose of the letter to extend would be to

"include provisions reflecting the outcome of inter-party talks as announced by the Prime Minister on 21 May 2019".

As I say, this is a genuine attempt being made by those who really do think that this House stands in serious danger of being perceived by the public more and more as having taken the position that nothing will satisfy it and that the only thing that it wants at the end of it all is to defy the decision taken at the time of the referendum. That is very much the opinion growing out there, and I was intrigued when the hon. Gentleman made the point that we in this place are now being perceived as a Parliament opposed to the people, not a Parliament to represent them. The people voted to leave, whether we liked it or not, and now this Parliament seems set on a course to obfuscate and delay that, with a view to overturning it eventually.

There is no question in my mind about the hon. Gentleman's legitimate observations—we get on very well and play football together, so I am slightly in favour of him anyway—but although he said the talks were good, the problem was that at no stage did his Front-Bench colleagues conduct them in a genuine sense. The truth was that they probably never intended to

agree anything with my right hon. and hon. Friends who were in government at the time. I had a whispered exchange with the Father of the House, and he made the point that one reason for that was probably that they were under attack by the second-referendum crowd, who were absolutely opposed to any idea that the Opposition could strike any kind of agreement with the Government that would do away with the idea of a second referendum and therefore the opportunity to vote down the original referendum result. That lies at the heart of it. There is a deceit in all this. As I said earlier, I genuinely believe that the hon. Gentleman was genuine in his view, as were many of those aligned alongside him in that regard, but I do not believe that to have been true of the Labour party Front-Bench team—in fact, throughout all this they have played fast and loose.

When I come to the proposition with which the Bill is concerned, I come back to why I think it is a bad Bill. For all the talk about not wanting to have no deal and wanting to have a deal, although some of those who propose this measure voted for the previous Prime Minister's deal, if every one of them really wanted any deal rather than no deal, they would have voted for that deal. Strangely, they found themselves voting against it at the time.

Richard Graham: My right hon. Friend is making an absolutely valid point. There is a huge amount of virtue signalling in the House from people who do not want no deal but will not vote for a deal. The amendment I have tabled would enable everyone to state clearly, on the record for their constituents, whether they will allow us all the chance to vote for a deal rather than for no deal, on Monday 21 October. Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is a sensible way of being absolutely straightforward about the issue?

Mr Duncan Smith: I was not going to come to my hon. Friend's amendment, because there was a fair amount of debate, but I would link him and the hon. Member for Aberavon, in the sense that both are trying genuinely to find a way through. My hon. Friend and I are old friends, and he has made a genuine effort to propose that idea. My hon. Friend and the hon. Gentleman are similar in one regard, except that the hon. Gentleman's proposal goes back to the final discussions that were taking place.

My problem is that in truth I just do not think enough Opposition Members really want to ensure that we leave. The truth is that the idea has grown, particularly among those on the Labour party Front Bench but also in some of the other parties, that if we delay this long enough, at some point there will be a way and the cry for a second referendum will get stronger and stronger, and then they will go to that. As we hear from the Labour party Front Benchers, their view now is that they support a second referendum, having originally said that they did not, and they now also support voting remain in that referendum, which before they said they did not, because they said at the 2017 election that they would implement the original referendum decision.

Ruth Smeeth (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Lab): Many Opposition Members wish to vote for a deal. In fact, I will vote for a deal when one comes back in front of the House. The issue now is to make sure that we have the

opportunity to vote for a deal so that we can ensure that we do not crash out of the European Union, thereby damaging the economy for my constituents.

Mr Duncan Smith: I encompassed the hon. Lady in my remarks about those lined up alongside the hon. Member for Aberavon with genuine intent, who want to do something about it.

All these issues are interesting, but the problem we face is that the position of those on the Labour party Front Bench has now completely shifted. It is clear to me that they do not want an agreement of almost any sort. Any obstacle will be placed in the way and a deal will never be achieved. They think that enough delay will produce a second referendum, and of course, they want to vote remain. This Bill is a vehicle to produce a route to a second referendum. That is what this is all about.

All I can say is that I did not want my colleagues to be taken out and to lose the party Whip—I have been a bit of a rebel in the past myself—but everybody knows what they do when the Government say there is a vote of confidence. The Government set a vote of confidence on this issue because it is at the very heart and soul of where the Government currently are, which is that they want to negotiate a deal. They want to get a deal, but they do not think we will ever get a deal if we are not able to say, "Ultimately, we will leave, whatever the case, so it is over to you to show some flexibility in the arrangements."

I simply say that I will continue to vote against the agreement notwithstanding the fact that some of my colleagues will not. I have to say that this Bill is a route to delay and that delay in turn is a route to a second referendum and that second referendum, the Opposition hope, is a way to overturn the view and belief of the British people, which would be quite undemocratic.

Andrew Percy: I have some sympathy with amendment 19 moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Richard Graham), and some sympathy with new clause 1 and also amendment 6, but I cannot vote for them, particularly new clause 1 and amendment 19, because people outside have figured out what is really going on here. As I said in my intervention earlier, we are in this position of not having left the European Union because there are people in here who were elected on a mandate and who stood up and said that they intended to deliver the result, but who have never had any intention of delivering our exit from the European Union. They are scared of their electorates, yes, and they now scared of their "selectorates", but they never had any intention of delivering on the result. What they have done is play for time, exactly as suggested a moment ago by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr Duncan Smith). They now want to play for time again, because they want to get us to 2020. When we get to 2020, it suddenly becomes, "Well, that referendum was in 2016. It is quite hard to implement a mandate from 2016 in 2020, which is roughly the length of an average Parliament." That is what is going on in here.

The people have figured it out. My constituents went to the polls in 2016 and voted to leave the European Union by a margin of 67% in the belief that the result would be implemented because both sides had told them that. They trotted along to the general election of 2017.

[Andrew Percy]

Some 93% of them voted for two political parties, which said that they were going to implement the result. They have figured it out. They believe that there are people in here who never had any intention of delivering on the result. If we have another extension and something else comes back, there will be another reason why they cannot quite bring themselves to vote for it. The particular niche thing that they select, perhaps never having mentioned it before, will suddenly be the block on why they cannot quite get themselves across the line. I am sick of it. The people are sick of it. They have figured it out. The reason why we are in this position is that, when people talk about compromise, we have had this perverse alliance—

Sandy Martin: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Andrew Percy: No.

We have had this perverse alliance—

Sandy Martin: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Andrew Percy: No.

We have had this perverse alliance of people who never wanted us to leave the European Union—remainers—voting with the minority of people on the Conservative Benches who actively want us to have a no-deal Brexit. They have trotted through the Lobby together, while people like me who came into this House in 2010 are absolutely determined to get us out of the European Union. We have done exactly what was asked of us and what is being demanded of us now. We have compromised. We have looked at that withdrawal agreement and said, “You know what, it is not perfect, but I respect the promise that I made to my constituents.” I respect the minority of my constituents who also voted remain and therefore expect me to represent them as well, which is why I have compromised and voted for that deal on three occasions. I have voted for a Norway option and an European Free Trade Association option on four other occasions, and the same people who lecture us repeatedly about how we need to compromise to get us across the line are the very same people—not all of them, but many of them—who trotted through the Lobby to kill that deal on three occasions and to kill the indicative votes on those four occasions.

I have to ask this question: when did it become the case that people who campaigned for remain could tell people who voted leave what it is that they voted for? When did it become acceptable for them to say, “No, no, no! These leave voters, whom I do not fully understand because I was on the wrong side of the debate and on the wrong side of my constituents, did not vote for no deal”?

Last night, I received an email from a constituent called Kirsty. She posted this question to me. She said, “Why do these people who got the referendum result wrong, were on the wrong side, get to say why I voted?” She said, “I know why I voted leave and I am prepared to have a no deal.” She signed off as Kirsty, under 40, not a racist and quite well educated. All we have heard throughout is that if someone wants a no-deal outcome then obviously they are just a stupid, thick, racist northerner. People have seen this, and we are sick of it. I will not support any amendment that allows a further extension,

because my constituents and I know what is going on here. Those colleagues are playing it long, playing for time and saying that they respect the result when they have no intention of doing so. They did not respect the result in March or April of this year, and they are not going to on 31 October. You can sure as damn tell it, Dame Eleanor, they ain’t going to on 31 January either.

John Redwood: I would like us to leave on 31 October, as agreed, with a free trade agreement, or with serious talks about a free trade agreement, so that new tariffs or barriers need not be imposed on our trade with the EU or its trade with us. I am quite sure that we have a chance of achieving that only if so-called no deal is left firmly on the table, and if the European Union knows that we will leave with no withdrawal agreement or free trade agreement if it does not agree to those talks or offer such an agreement. That is our only lever.

6.30 pm

I came to this debate against the Bill, because I think it tries to take away our only or best negotiating lever. I have looked carefully at amendment 6, new clause 1 and amendment 19, and I have listened to the debate on them. I am quite sure that the hon. Member for Aberavon (Stephen Kinnock) and my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Richard Graham) have very good intentions. I am sure that they are desperately trying to find compromise and a way forward at a time when the country is divided, as it was during the referendum campaign, and when this House remains extremely divided, or fragmented, into a series of different factions with different views on the best outcome.

Having listened to the debate, I share the view of my hon. Friends the Members for Brigg and Goole (Andrew Percy) and for Christchurch (Sir Christopher Chope). The amendments are on the side of thwarting the referendum result. They are designed to undermine Britain’s main negotiating card, which is our right to leave without having to make any more payments, accept any more laws or accept any instructions on our borders. The three things that the leave voters I met in large numbers during the referendum campaign wanted were to take control of our money, our borders and our laws. We have the right to do that on 31 October.

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): Take control of our laws!

John Redwood: Yes, take control of our laws. [Laughter.] That is what we are arguing about today. I am explaining the extreme irony that this Parliament, which claims to believe in democracy, is deliberately trying to thwart our democracy by denying the result of the democratic decision that was made by the people, and that we said was theirs to make; and that this Parliament is trying to overturn the promises that many candidates—on the Labour side, in particular—made in the general election of 2017, and that they seem to have forgotten now that they are Members of Parliament.

Sir William Cash: I noticed the laughter from the Scots Nats at what my right hon. Friend said. In view of the very good sense that he was speaking, I invite the House to consider this. Is it not the case that under the withdrawal agreement, during the transition period,

decisions will be taken by the Council of Ministers to impose obligations and laws on the United Kingdom without our even being there, without any transcript, without any *Hansard* and almost invariably by consensus? Is not the whole thing a massive racket, the object of which is to put us in a state of subjugation—

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Eleanor Laing): Order. Sir William, thank you, but we are running out of time.

John Redwood: My hon. Friend makes an extremely important point, which goes to the heart of the crucial issue about our democracy that the hon. Member for Glasgow North (Patrick Grady) raised from a sedentary position. One of the features that many of us found most objectionable about the withdrawal agreement was precisely that for a long and unspecified transition period that could have stretched on for many months—it was not clear what would end it—we would be under any new law that the European Union wished to impose on us, with no vote, voice or ability to influence that law.

At the moment, as a full member, we have some influence. We have a vote, and sometimes we manage to water down or delay something, but in the transition period we would have none of those rights. Any of the existing massive panoply of European law could be amended or changed by decisions of the European Court of Justice, and that would be binding on the United Kingdom. This is completely unacceptable for a democratic country—that, when a majority of people in a democratic referendum voted to take back control of their laws, their Parliament then says, “No; far too difficult a job for us. We don’t want to participate in this process. We don’t want to take control of your laws. We want to delegate most of them, in many fields, to the European Union and have a foreign court developing our law for us in ways that we might find completely objectionable.” None of the amendments that I have just been mentioning, in the names of my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Richard Graham), the hon. Member for Aberavon (Stephen Kinnock) and others, intending to find a compromise, tackles this fundamental obstacle to the withdrawal agreement and to the idea that we can somehow negotiate our way out of the European Union if it does not think we just intend to leave.

Lady Hermon: I am very grateful indeed to the right hon. Gentleman for taking an intervention. May I take him back to something that he said, because it is really very important? The right hon. Gentleman and many of his colleagues have claimed—in the referendum, subsequently and tonight—that they are going to take back control of the borders. May I just ask him how he intends to take back control of South Armagh, and would he like to come to Crossmaglen and explain why it is all right for us to go out without a deal?

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Eleanor Laing): Order. We are running out of time, and it would not be a proper debate if we did not hear from those on the Front Benches. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will understand that and bring his speech to a conclusion very quickly.

John Redwood: Well, of course, if we just leave, we take back control of our borders. We can then decide whether we wish to do anything about it. We may wish to leave in place exactly all the existing arrangements. I am not making any recommendations that would embarrass the hon. Lady or her friends in Northern Ireland. We are very sensitive about that border. Indeed, the British Government have made it very clear that they see no reason to impose new barriers or difficulties on our side of the Northern Ireland-Republic of Ireland border at all. I am sure that will be very welcome to all those in this House who are seriously worried about this issue. It makes one wonder why the backstop was ever invented or necessary. Why is it so difficult for the European Union just to strip it out given that the EU has a sincere promise—agreed, I think, by all parts of this House—that we do not wish to impose new barriers on that border in a way that could be an obstacle to good relations and the peace process?

Craig Mackinlay (South Thanet) (Con): I wonder whether my right hon. Friend has ever had the experience of having builders in and not having given them an end date. What happens? The building work goes on and on and on. Is it not time that we told the builders, “The end date is 31 October. You finish the job—no ifs, no buts, no compromise”?

The First Deputy Chairman: We all know that it is great for emphasis to repeat things, but we are running out of time.

John Redwood: I will accept your guidance, Dame Eleanor.

In conclusion, these amendments do not fix the Bill. This Bill is extremely damaging to our democracy, undermines our negotiating position and would therefore achieve the opposite of what many of its proposers say they are trying to achieve.

Stephen Gethins (North East Fife) (SNP): One thing that this Bill has done today is to show the progress that can be made when Members of Parliament work together and overcome our political divides. Something that is also clear is that nobody seems to be arguing that leaving the European Union is a good idea.

I am not sure how to follow the last contributions, or how to talk about issues such as democracy when we have a Government who want to ignore laws that get passed by this place, who already ignore motions on crucial issues such as pensions fairness for the WASPI women and who want to stuff the unelected House of Lords full of pro-Brexit peers. The idea that that is somehow democratic and bringing back control defies belief.

Worst of all is the prospect of a no-deal Brexit for which there is no mandate—no one voted for it. In fact, the Prime Minister told us that it would be the easiest deal in the world and there would be no chance that this would ever happen.

Many Members on the Government Benches understand that, and I pay particular tribute to the right hon. Member for North East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt), who made a fine contribution earlier today and who was a fine Minister, but for whom there is no space left in the Conservative party. But the hon. Member for Stone (Sir William Cash) told us everything we needed

[Stephen Gethins]

to know. When he talked of a mandate, he talked in terms of a Conservative party leadership election in which 0.1% of the population, if that, could vote. That is not a mandate; that is not democracy. Let me say to such Members—I have tried to say it gentle terms but I will do so in the strongest terms possible—that given the harm caused to everybody by the Government's no deal, Brexit is bigger than the Conservative party, and bigger than every single party in this place. When Members think about this tonight, they would do well to remember that.

Members such as the hon. Member for Gloucester (Richard Graham), among others, have had good intentions in what they try to do, but this is a Government who have no idea what they are doing, and we must—must—take no deal off the table. I thank the Members who have backed our Bill tonight for their contributions. We will not be backing any amendments because we need to get this Bill through and take no deal off the table.

Paul Blomfield (Sheffield Central) (Lab): I thank everybody who has contributed to this debate, because it has been largely thoughtful and reasoned, both in Committee and on Second Reading. It has been the sort of debate that we could usefully have had more often over the past couple of years. I recognise that the amendments, particularly those tabled by the hon. Member for Gloucester (Richard Graham) and my hon. Friend the Member for Aberavon (Stephen Kinnoch), are put forward with good intentions and to seek to assist the process. However, our view on all the amendments is determined by the objective of the Bill itself, as was made clear by my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) on Second Reading.

The Bill has one clear purpose, which is to prevent a disastrous no-deal Brexit on 31 October. An extraordinary coalition has been brought together over the past few weeks to put the Bill forward in the spirit of consensus. We know that no deal would be a disaster for jobs, for the NHS, for policing and for security. The Government's own papers from Operation Yellowhammer made that clear.

In addition, there is real anxiety about the lives of EU citizens in the UK and those who are too often forgotten, UK citizens in the EU, being thrown into uncertainty and potential legal jeopardy. Of course, as many have pointed out, no deal would not be the end of Brexit, quite the opposite: it would be the beginning of years of long negotiation over our future relationship in which we would start from a significantly disadvantaged position.

When we make the arguments against no deal, we are speaking not only on behalf of the coalition in this House but for many beyond. The CBI has called no deal “a tripwire into economic chaos”.

The TUC has said it would be “a disaster” for working people. This is our last chance to avoid no deal. The House has voted against it three times, but we need this legislation because the Prime Minister and his Government cannot be trusted to enact the will of the House without it. Parliament is sitting today only because of the amendments to the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc) Act 2019 tabled by the right hon. and learned

Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve). The Prime Minister made it clear that he saw this September sitting period as a nuisance, saying that the

“whole September session...is a rigmarole”.

The Prime Minister has told the House that he is pursuing a deal with the EU, but he has equally told the House that nothing has been proposed to it, and the EU has, in effect, confirmed that. We heard the devastating critique from the former Chancellor earlier today. European officials have told the press:

“There was literally nothing on the table, not even a sketch of what the solution could look like.”

The Prime Minister's closest adviser has apparently called the talks “a sham”—he got that right, at least. The Government's current working alternative to the backstop is simply taking the backstop out. Nothing new is being proposed. But if, by some miracle, there is some deal negotiated with the EU, then the Prime Minister can bring it back to the House for us to vote on; that is incorporated in the Bill. Let me turn to the amendments to the Bill.

6.45 pm

Stephanie Peacock (Barnsley East) (Lab): Does my hon. Friend agree that there is no mandate in this place for no deal, just as there is no mandate for remain? In that spirit, will he and those on the shadow Front Bench support our compromise amendment, which looks to bring Members across the House forward to get a compromise deal and get the House and the country out of this crisis?

Paul Blomfield: My hon. Friend pre-empted the point that I was about to make, as I was coming on to talk about the amendments. She is right to say that there is no mandate for no deal. All those who campaigned so vigorously for leaving the European Union in 2016 made it absolutely clear that they were doing so with the intention of securing a deal—a better deal, and a deal that would be available in months. The voters who cast their ballots back in 2016 were given the clear impression that that would involve a relationship described by the current deputy Prime Minister—if that is still the description that goes with his Cabinet Office post—as broadly similar to what we have at the moment. There is no mandate for no deal. Clearly, people voted to leave, but by a painfully—

Ian Austin (Dudley North) (Ind): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Paul Blomfield: I will.

Ian Austin: Like me, my hon. Friend stood on a manifesto that promised to respect the referendum and to implement the outcome of that referendum, yet it is absolutely clear that what those on the Labour Front Bench have done during this process is frustrate the entire exercise, create as much chaos as possible and prevent any prospect of a deal being implemented. If he wants people to believe that he is in favour of a deal, can he update the Committee on what work those on the Labour Front Bench are doing to put forward constructive proposals to uphold the mandate he was given at the last election, which was to find a way of leaving the EU?

Paul Blomfield: I am happy to do that. We stood at the last election on a commitment to respect the result of the referendum but to rip up the negotiating mandate that the Tory Government had, which we felt failed the British people. I said from this Dispatch Box on 4 December 2018, when winding up the debate that the Prime Minister opened on the withdrawal deal, that if only she had seized the opportunity to be straight with the British people that they had voted to leave but by a painfully close margin and that the mandate was that we would no longer be members of the European Union but that we could retain a close relationship—in a customs union, aligned with the single market and part of the agencies and partnerships that we had built together—then we could have secured a deal. We entered into the cross-party talks in that spirit.

Mr Duncan Smith: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Paul Blomfield: I am conscious of the need to give the Secretary of State time to speak and the Chair's beady eye, so I will not. I have taken a number of interventions. I will finish the point, which relates to the last intervention.

The point about the cross-party talks was that we entered into them in good spirit and with clear proposals. The Prime Minister refused to budge on her red lines, and those talks broke down. I listened carefully to the speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Aberavon, and I listened carefully to him on the radio this morning. The difficulty with the amendment he has tabled is not his intention, but some of the practicalities of it, because he is proposing an amendment for something that does not really exist—a withdrawal agreement plus points to which the Government did not agree.

Stephen Kinnock: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Paul Blomfield: Briefly, on that point.

Stephen Kinnock: I accept that we do not have an officially published withdrawal agreement Bill, but we do have a clear commitment from the Government based on the cross-party talks, which would be easily encapsulated in a Bill that was ready to be put forward to Parliament—I know, because the former Chief Whip showed it to me.

Paul Blomfield: I think my hon. Friend is talking about the Theresa May Government, which is a very different proposition from the one we face at the moment. We were not at that stage of agreement. If there had been the basis for an agreement, we would have seized that opportunity in the talks. Although I have sympathy with what he says, and those proposals could be part of the discussions that we need to have in the extended period that we will secure when this Bill is passed, as will the proposals that other Members across the Committee have made, we need the space to have those discussions, and we can only achieve that space by voting for the Bill.

This Bill has successfully brought Members across the House together around a single, clearly focused objective. We are united behind the need to avoid a no-deal Brexit. We need to keep our focus very narrowly on that when we vote and ensure that we achieve that

objective because we know—a clear majority know; a growing majority within this House know—that if we allow ourselves to stumble into a no-deal Brexit, it will be a disaster for the country.

The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Stephen Barclay): The principle of this Bill in seeking an extension is wrong. The Government opposed it on Second Reading and we will oppose it on Third Reading. Indeed, it is so flawed that we have not bothered to table amendments to it; we oppose it in all forms.

This Bill cannot be improved because it goes against the democratic wish of the British people, the vote of 17.4 million of our citizens and the strong desire of many up and down this land who want certainty and clarity and who want Brexit done so that we can get on to the wider domestic agenda, as set out by the Chancellor in the spending review earlier today: 20,000 more police officers, with recruitment starting in Yorkshire tomorrow; a record increase of £6,000 on starting salaries for teachers; levelling up opportunity for those who warrant it; and supporting the economy through the tough decisions we took in 2010, which allows the record investment in our NHS, with 20 new hospital upgrades.

The hon. Member for Aberavon (Stephen Kinnock) spoke with sincerity and I do not question the spirit in which he brings new clause 1 to the Committee this evening, but he also spoke of compromise. As my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Goole (Andrew Percy) correctly identified, the reality is that the hon. Member for Aberavon voted against the deal all three times—all three times.

Stephen Kinnock: Not the deal in the amendments.

Stephen Barclay: Now the hon. Gentleman says that he would vote for the deal as in the amendments. However, as he also said, the withdrawal agreement is unchanged. The vote on the third meaningful vote was not on the political declaration, which his new clause 1 speaks to. His vote in the third meaningful vote was against the withdrawal agreement alone; the extension was granted to 12 April and then 31 October. That would not have necessitated participation in the European parliamentary elections. I respect the spirit in which he brings new clause 1 to the Committee, but he seeks compromise on a withdrawal agreement text that he himself has voted against.

Luke Graham: My right hon. Friend will have greater knowledge of this than many in the House, so will he confirm that the cross-party talks were not actually able to agree a compromise? Furthermore, the Government did go out of their way to make assurances on workers' rights, environmental standards and domestic legislation that the Labour party demanded and subsequently rowed back on when it came to passing a vote, agreeing a deal and moving this country and this House forward.

Caroline Flint (Don Valley) (Lab) *rose*—

Stephen Barclay: I will come to the right hon. Lady in a moment, but I will just address my hon. Friend's intervention. It is the case that the talks with the official Opposition were done in good faith on both sides. There were areas of genuine misunderstanding, such as

[Stephen Barclay]

about the appetite of the Government through the political declaration to participate, for example, in EU agencies. Perhaps at the start of the talks there was some genuine misunderstanding about that. However, as I set out at the start of those talks, if the purpose of those talks was to seek a second referendum, one only needed to look at the Kyle-Wilson amendment to see that the talks were not necessary. If we look at the way the talks collapsed, it was on the basis that the position of my shadow and opposite number—he is someone of great integrity, and I respect his position—is one of seeking a second referendum. If that was genuinely the crux of his concern, surely that was self-evident at the start of those talks, and it was not necessary for those talks to progress in order to tease out that point.

Caroline Flint: Of course, I have voted for a deal a number of times. I say, with the greatest respect, we have to move on from talking about who did what and when, and we have to look forward. Many of my colleagues regret not voting for a deal and they are dealing with that right now. From the Back Benches, we are trying—maybe those on both Front Benches could listen to this—to identify and agree that there is much in the withdrawal agreement Bill where there is consensus across the House. It is not the only deal, and our amendment asks Members to reflect and build on it, but, for goodness' sake, we have to move on. There is an increasingly loud voice across the House wanting a consensus to move forward.

Stephen Barclay: I agree with the right hon. Lady in substance and form. She is right about the requirement for us to move forward and not to look back. In fact, I made a similar point to the Irish Government about how we can move forward constructively, rather than look back at some of the talks to date. She is also right that there is much in the withdrawal agreement on which we can move forward.

That is reflected, if one looks at—[*Interruption.*]. I am trying to address the right hon. Lady's point. There is much in the letter to President Tusk where the Prime Minister has narrowed down the issues in the withdrawal agreement. Many of my colleagues are concerned about lots of different aspects of the withdrawal agreement, whether on money, the European Court of Justice or geographical indicators, and the Prime Minister has narrowed those issues down. However, it is the case, as my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Goole reflected, that some of us have sought compromise and will continue to do so.

Mr Duncan Smith: This is not really about the hon. Member for Aberavon (Stephen Kinnock) and the others, who genuinely, I think, do want to do something. The truth is, it is about the Labour party's Front-Bench team, which is on a wrecking process. This is all about how to wreck the process of Brexit, have a second referendum—hopefully when everyone is so tired out that they will vote against it—and then overturn the referendum. If they have a genuine view, they should vote with us tonight to wreck this Bill.

Stephen Barclay: My right hon. Friend is absolutely correct. The Prime Minister has been crystal clear in setting an objective of 31 October. In being clear and in

turbocharging—through the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster—our preparation for a no-deal outcome we do not seek, we have seen movement, as I touched on in my remarks on Second Reading, from a starting point where not a word of the withdrawal agreement could be changed, to one in which creative and flexible solutions can be explored. Indeed, the Prime Minister's Europe adviser is in Brussels today making progress on that, yet his work is dismissed by some, because of media reports, as not being of the substance that I know it to be.

John Redwood: Will the Secretary of State confirm that the possibility of us leaving without signing a withdrawal agreement is our main pressure point on the European Union and that without that there is no reason it should give ground?

Stephen Barclay: My right hon. Friend is correct that the European Union, like the United Kingdom, wants a deal, and it is worth reminding the House why that is the case. While its position on money, citizen's rights and the Northern Ireland border has been unified, the impact of a no-deal outcome is asymmetric across the EU, particularly on issues such as fishing and geographical indicators that are not protected. It is worth reminding the House that there are over 3,000 European geographical indicators, but just 88 UK GIs, so when we hear that the EU is fully prepared for no deal—that my counterpart, Michel Barnier, says it is fully ready for no deal—there is a difference between legislation or regulations it may want to put in place and the reality of operational readiness, which is much more varied between member states.

This Bill is about delay. It is about legislative purgatory. It is about disguising the true intent—not of all colleagues, because there are some who have voted for a deal three times—of many who voted against a deal not once, not twice, but three times, yet then say that they are against no deal, as well. This is a Bill that is designed to stop Brexit and comes at a cost of £1 billion a month—£1 billion that we want to see invested in our frontline in the way the Chancellor set out. This is a Bill that is flawed. I urge colleagues across the House to oppose it on Third Reading.

7 pm

The Chair put forthwith the Question already proposed from the Chair (Order, 3 September), That the amendment be made.

The Committee proceeded to a Division.

The Chairman of Ways and Means: I ask the Serjeant at Arms to investigate the delay in the No Lobby.

The Committee havind divided: Ayes 65, Noes 495.

Division No. 441]

[7 pm

AYES

Afolami, Bim	Clark, Colin
Aldous, Peter	Cooper, Rosie
Andrew, Stuart	Crabb, rh Stephen
Badenoch, Mrs Kemi	Davies, Mims
Baldwin, Harriett	Dinenage, Caroline
Barron, rh Sir Kevin	Doyle-Price, Jackie
Bottomley, Sir Peter	Duguid, David
Bowie, Andrew	Dunne, rh Mr Philip
Bradley, rh Karen	Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Caulfield, Maria	Fitzpatrick, Jim
Chalk, Alex	Flint, rh Caroline
Champion, Sarah	Ford, Vicky

Freeman, George
Freer, Mike
Gale, rh Sir Roger
Graham, Luke
Graham, Richard
Grant, Bill
Green, rh Damian
Hair, Kirstene
Hinds, rh Damian
Hoare, Simon
Hollinrake, Kevin
Jack, rh Mr Alister
Keegan, Gillian
Kerr, Stephen
Lamont, John
Lefroy, Jeremy
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Lidington, rh Mr David
Mann, John
Masterton, Paul
May, rh Mrs Theresa
Miller, rh Mrs Maria

Morgan, rh Nicky
Newton, Sarah
O'Brien, Neil
Offord, Dr Matthew
Onn, Melanie
Opperman, Guy
Percy, Andrew
Poulter, Dr Dan
Prentis, Victoria
Quin, Jeremy
Ross, Douglas
Rudd, rh Amber
Selous, Andrew
Shelbrooke, Alec
Stewart, Iain
Syms, Sir Robert
Tugendhat, Tom
Walker, Mr Robin
Wright, rh Jeremy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mark Garnier and
George Hollingbery

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
Abrahams, Debbie
Adams, Nigel
Afriyie, Adam
Ali, Rushanara
Allan, Lucy
Allen, Heidi
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Amesbury, Mike
Amess, Sir David
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Ashworth, Jonathan
Bacon, Mr Richard
Bailey, Mr Adrian
Baker, Mr Steve
Barclay, rh Stephen
Bardell, Hannah
Baron, Mr John
Bebb, Guto
Beckett, rh Margaret
Bellingham, Sir Henry
Benn, rh Hilary
Benyon, rh Richard
Beresford, Sir Paul
Berger, Luciana
Berry, rh Jake
Betts, Mr Clive
Black, Mhairi
Blackford, rh Ian
Blackman, Bob
Blackman, Kirsty
Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta
Blomfield, Paul
Blunt, Crispin
Boles, Nick
Bone, Mr Peter
Brabin, Tracy
Bradley, Ben
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brady, Sir Graham
Brake, rh Tom
Braverman, Suella (*Proxy vote
cast by Mr Steve Baker*)
Brennan, Kevin
Brereton, Jack
Bridgen, Andrew
Brock, Deidre

Brown, Alan
Brown, Lyn
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Bruce, Fiona
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burden, Richard
Burghart, Alex
Burgon, Richard
Burt, rh Alistair
Butler, Dawn
Byrne, rh Liam
Cable, rh Sir Vince
Cadbury, Ruth
Cairns, rh Alun
Cameron, Dr Lisa
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Campbell, Mr Gregory
Carden, Dan
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Cash, Sir William
Chapman, Douglas
Chapman, Jenny
Charalambous, Bambos
Cherry, Joanna
Chope, Sir Christopher
Clark, rh Greg
Clarke, Mr Simon
Cleverly, rh James
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Clwyd, rh Ann
Coaker, Vernon
Coffey, Ann
Coffey, Dr Thérèse
Collins, Damian
Cooper, Julie
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Courts, Robert
Cowan, Ronnie
Coyle, Neil
Crausby, Sir David
Crawley, Angela
Creagh, Mary
Creasy, Stella
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John

Cummins, Judith
Cunningham, Alex
Cunningham, Mr Jim
Daby, Janet
Dakin, Nic
Davey, rh Sir Edward
David, Wayne
Davies, David T. C.
Davies, Geraint
Davies, Glyn
Davis, rh Mr David
Day, Martyn
De Cordova, Marsha
Debbonaire, Thangam
Dent Coad, Emma
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Dodds, Anneliese
Dodds, Jane
Dodds, rh Nigel
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
Donelan, Michelle
Dorries, Ms Nadine
Double, Steve
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Dowden, rh Oliver
Drax, Richard
Drew, Dr David
Dromey, Jack
Duddridge, James
Duffield, Rosie
Duncan, rh Sir Alan
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eagle, Maria
Edwards, Jonathan
Efford, Clive
Elliott, Julie
Ellis, Michael
Ellman, Dame Louise
Elmore, Chris
Elphicke, Charlie
Esterson, Bill
Eustice, George
Evans, Chris
Evans, Mr Nigel
Evennett, rh Sir David
Fabricant, Michael
Fallon, rh Sir Michael
Farrelly, Paul
Farron, Tim
Fellows, Marion
Fletcher, Colleen
Forbes, Lisa
Foster, Kevin
Fovargue, Yvonne
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Foxcroft, Vicky
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Frith, James
Furniss, Gill
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Gaffney, Hugh
Gapes, Mike
Gardiner, Barry
Gauke, rh Mr David
George, Ruth
Gethins, Stephen
Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Gibson, Patricia
Gill, Preet Kaur

Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
Girvan, Paul
Glen, John
Glindon, Mary
Godsiff, Mr Roger
Goldsmith, Zac
Goodman, Helen
Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
Grady, Patrick
Grant, Mrs Helen
Grant, Peter
Gray, Neil
Grayling, rh Chris
Green, Chris
Green, Kate
Greening, rh Justine
Greenwood, Lilian
Greenwood, Margaret
Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
Griffith, Nia
Griffiths, Andrew
Grogan, John
Gwynne, Andrew
Gyimah, Mr Sam
Haigh, Louise
Halfon, rh Robert
Hall, Luke
Hamilton, Fabian
Hammond, rh Mr Philip
Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, rh Matt
Hanson, rh David
Hardy, Emma
Harman, rh Ms Harriet
Harper, rh Mr Mark
Harrington, Richard
Harris, Carolyn
Harrison, Trudy
Hart, Simon
Hayes, Helen
Hayes, rh Sir John
Hayman, Sue
Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Healey, rh John
Heapey, James
Heaton-Harris, Chris
Hendrick, Sir Mark
Hendry, Drew
Hermon, Lady
Hill, Mike
Hillier, Meg
Hobhouse, Wera
Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hollern, Kate
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Holloway, Adam
Hosie, Stewart
Howarth, rh Sir George
Howell, John
Hughes, Eddie
Huq, Dr Rupa
Hussain, Imran
James, Margot
Jardine, Christine
Javid, rh Sajid
Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenkyins, Andrea
Jenrick, rh Robert
Johnson, rh Boris
Johnson, Dr Caroline

Johnson, Diana
Johnson, Gareth
Jones, Darren
Jones, rh Mr David
Jones, Gerald
Jones, Graham P.
Jones, Helen
Jones, rh Mr Kevan
Jones, Mr Marcus
Jones, Ruth
Jones, Sarah
Jones, Susan Elan
Kane, Mike
Kawczynski, Daniel
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz
Kennedy, Seema
Khan, Afzal
Killen, Ged
Kinnock, Stephen
Knight, rh Sir Greg
Knight, Julian
Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
Kyle, Peter
Laird, Lesley
Lake, Ben
Lamb, rh Norman
Lammy, rh Mr David
Lancaster, rh Mark
Latham, Mrs Pauline
Lavery, Ian
Law, Chris
Leadsom, rh Andrea
Lee, Karen
Lee, Dr Phillip
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Leslie, Mr Chris
Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
Lewer, Andrew
Lewis, rh Brandon
Lewis, Clive
Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Linden, David
Little Pengelly, Emma
Lloyd, Tony
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lopez, Julia
Lopresti, Jack
Lord, Mr Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Lucas, Caroline
Lucas, Ian C.
Lynch, Holly
Mackinlay, Craig
Maclean, Rachel
MacNeil, Angus Brendan
Madders, Justin
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Mahmood, Shabana
Main, Mrs Anne
Mak, Alan
Malhotra, Seema
Malthouse, Kit
Mann, Scott
Marsden, Gordon
Martin, Sandy
Maskell, Rachael
Matheson, Christian
Maynard, Paul
Mc Nally, John
McCabe, Steve

McCarthy, Kerry
McDonagh, Siobhain
McDonald, Andy
McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
McDonald, Stuart C.
McDonnell, rh John
McFadden, rh Mr Pat
McGinn, Conor
McGovern, Alison
McInnes, Liz
McKinnell, Catherine
McMahon, Jim
McMorrin, Anna
McPartland, Stephen
McVey, rh Ms Esther
Mearns, Ian
Menzies, Mark
Metcalfe, Stephen
Miliband, rh Edward
Milling, Amanda
Mills, Nigel
Milton, rh Anne
Monaghan, Carol
Moon, Mrs Madeleine
Moore, Damien
Moran, Layla
Mordaunt, rh Penny
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, Anne Marie
Morris, David
Morris, Grahame
Morris, James
Morton, Wendy
Murray, Ian
Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
Newlands, Gavin
Norris, Alex
Offord, Dr Matthew
O'Hara, Brendan
Onwurah, Chi
Osamor, Kate
Owen, Albert
Paisley, Ian
Parish, Neil
Patel, rh Priti
Paterson, rh Mr Owen
Pearce, Teresa
Penning, rh Sir Mike
Pennycook, Matthew
Perkins, Toby
Perry, rh Claire
Phillips, Jess
Phillipson, Bridget
Philp, Chris
Pidcock, Laura
Platt, Jo
Pollard, Luke
Pound, Stephen
Powell, Lucy
Pritchard, Mark
Pursglove, Tom
Quince, Will
Qureshi, Yasmin
Raab, rh Dominic
Rashid, Faisal
Rayner, Angela
Redwood, rh John
Reed, Mr Steve
Rees, Christina
Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob

Reeves, Ellie
Reeves, Rachel
Reynolds, Emma (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Pat McFadden*)
Reynolds, Jonathan
Rimmer, Ms Marie
Robertson, Mr Laurence
Robinson, Gavin
Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
Robinson, Mary
Rodda, Matt
Rosindell, Andrew
Rowley, Danielle
Rowley, Lee
Ruane, Chris
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Rutley, David
Ryan, rh Joan
Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Seely, Mr Bob
Shah, Naz
Shannon, Jim
Sharma, rh Alok
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheerman, Mr Barry
Sheppard, Tommy
Sherriff, Paula
Siddiq, Tulip
Simpson, David
Simpson, rh Mr Keith
Skidmore, Chris
Skinner, Mr Dennis
Slaughter, Andy
Smith, Angela
Smith, Cat
Smith, Eleanor
Smith, Henry
Smith, Owen
Smyth, Karin
Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
Sobel, Alex
Soubry, rh Anna
Spellar, rh John
Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
Spencer, rh Mark
Starmer, rh Keir
Stephens, Chris
Stephenson, Andrew
Stevens, Jo
Stewart, Bob
Stone, Jamie
Streeter, Sir Gary
Streeting, Wes
Stride, rh Mel
Stringer, Graham
Stuart, Graham
Sturdy, Julian
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Sweeney, Mr Paul
Swinson, Jo

Swire, rh Sir Hugo
Tami, rh Mark
Thewliss, Alison
Thomas, Derek
Thomas, Gareth
Thomas-Symonds, Nick
Thomson, Ross
Thornberry, rh Emily
Throup, Maggie
Timms, rh Stephen
Tolhurst, Kelly
Tomlinson, Justin
Tomlinson, Michael
Tracey, Craig
Tredinnick, David
Trevelyan, Anne-Marie
Trickett, Jon
Truss, rh Elizabeth
Turley, Anna
Turner, Karl
Twigg, Stephen
Twist, Liz
Umunna, Chuka
Vara, Mr Shailesh
Vaz, rh Keith
Vaz, Valerie
Vickers, Martin
Walker, Mr Charles
Walker, Thelma
Wallace, rh Mr Ben
Warman, Matt
Watling, Giles
Watson, Tom
West, Catherine
Western, Matt
Whately, Helen
Wheeler, Mrs Heather
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitfield, Martin
Whitford, Dr Philippa
Whittaker, Craig
Whittingdale, rh Mr John
Wiggin, Bill
Williams, Hywel
Williams, Dr Paul
Williamson, rh Gavin
Wilson, Phil
Wilson, rh Sammy
Wishart, Pete
Wollaston, Dr Sarah
Wood, Mike
Woodcock, John
Wragg, Mr William
Yasin, Mohammad
Zahawi, Nadhim
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Noes:
Jeff Smith and
Nick Smith

Question accordingly negated.

Amendment made: 6, in clause 1, page 2, line 14, at end, insert

“in order to debate and pass a Bill to implement the agreement between the United Kingdom and the European Union under Article 50(2) of the Treaty on European Union, including provisions reflecting the outcome of inter-party talks as announced by the Prime Minister on 21 May 2019, and in particular the need for the United Kingdom to secure changes to the political declaration to reflect the outcome of those inter-party talks.”—(*Stephen Kinnock.*)

This amendment would set out as the purpose of seeking an extension under Article 50(3) TEU the passage of a Withdrawal Agreement Bill based on the outcome of the inter-party talks which concluded in May 2019 – see NCI for contents of the Bill and Amendment XX for text of the request letter to the European Council.

Clause 1, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 2 to 5 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedule agreed to.

The Speaker resumed the Chair.

Bill, as amended, reported.

Question put forthwith (Order, 3 September), That the Bill be now read the Third time.

The House divided: Ayes 327, Noes 299.

Division No. 442]

[7.30 pm

AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane	Coaker, Vernon
Abrahams, Debbie	Coffey, Ann
Ali, Rushanara	Cooper, Julie
Allen, Heidi	Cooper, Rosie
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena	Cooper, rh Yvette
Amesbury, Mike	Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Antoniazzi, Tonia	Cowan, Ronnie
Ashworth, Jonathan	Coyle, Neil
Bailey, Mr Adrian	Crausby, Sir David
Bardell, Hannah	Crawley, Angela
Barron, rh Sir Kevin	Creagh, Mary
Bebb, Guto	Creasy, Stella
Beckett, rh Margaret	Cruddas, Jon
Benn, rh Hilary	Cryer, John
Benyon, rh Richard	Cummins, Judith
Berger, Luciana	Cunningham, Alex
Betts, Mr Clive	Cunningham, Mr Jim
Black, Mhairi	Daby, Janet
Blackford, rh Ian	Dakin, Nic
Blackman, Kirsty	Davey, rh Sir Edward
Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta	David, Wayne
Blomfield, Paul	Davies, Geraint
Boles, Nick	Day, Martyn
Brabin, Tracy	De Cordova, Marsha
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben	De Piero, Gloria
Brake, rh Tom	Debbonaire, Thangam
Brennan, Kevin	Dent Coad, Emma
Brine, Steve	Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Brock, Deidre	Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Brown, Alan	Dodds, Anneliese
Brown, Lyn	Dodds, Jane
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas	Doughty, Stephen
Bryant, Chris	Dowd, Peter
Buck, Ms Karen	Drew, Dr David
Burden, Richard	Dromey, Jack
Burgon, Richard	Duffield, Rosie
Burt, rh Alistair	Eagle, Ms Angela
Butler, Dawn	Eagle, Maria
Byrne, rh Liam	Edwards, Jonathan
Cable, rh Sir Vince	Efford, Clive
Cadbury, Ruth	Elliott, Julie
Cameron, Dr Lisa	Ellman, Dame Louise
Campbell, rh Sir Alan	Elmore, Chris
Carden, Dan	Esterson, Bill
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair	Evans, Chris
Champion, Sarah	Farrelly, Paul
Chapman, Douglas	Farron, Tim
Chapman, Jenny	Fellows, Marion
Charalambous, Bambos	Field, rh Frank
Cherry, Joanna	Fitzpatrick, Jim
Clark, rh Greg	Fletcher, Colleen
Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth	Flint, rh Caroline

Forbes, Lisa	Laird, Lesley
Fovargue, Yvonne	Lake, Ben
Foxcroft, Vicky	Lamb, rh Norman
Frith, James	Lammy, rh Mr David
Furniss, Gill	Lavery, Ian
Gaffney, Hugh	Law, Chris
Gapes, Mike	Lee, Karen
Gardiner, Barry	Lee, Dr Phillip
Gauke, rh Mr David	Leslie, Mr Chris
George, Ruth	Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
Gethins, Stephen	Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Gibson, Patricia	Lewis, Clive
Gill, Preet Kaur	Linden, David
Glindon, Mary	Lloyd, Stephen
Godsiff, Mr Roger	Lloyd, Tony
Goodman, Helen	Long Bailey, Rebecca
Grady, Patrick	Lucas, Caroline
Grant, Peter	Lucas, Ian C.
Gray, Neil	Lynch, Holly
Green, Kate	MacNeil, Angus Brendan
Greening, rh Justine	Madders, Justin
Greenwood, Lilian	Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Greenwood, Margaret	Mahmood, Shabana
Grieve, rh Mr Dominic	Malhotra, Seema
Griffith, Nia	Marsden, Gordon
Grogan, John	Martin, Sandy
Gwynne, Andrew	Maskell, Rachael
Gyimah, Mr Sam	Matheson, Christian
Haigh, Louise	Mc Nally, John
Hamilton, Fabian	McCabe, Steve
Hammond, rh Mr Philip	McCarthy, Kerry
Hammond, Stephen	McDonagh, Siobhain
Hanson, rh David	McDonald, Andy
Hardy, Emma	McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
Harman, rh Ms Harriet	McDonald, Stuart C.
Harrington, Richard	McDonnell, rh John
Harris, Carolyn	McFadden, rh Mr Pat
Hayes, Helen	McGinn, Conor
Hayman, Sue	McGovern, Alison
Healey, rh John	McInnes, Liz
Hendrick, Sir Mark	McKinnell, Catherine
Hendry, Drew	McMahon, Jim
Hermon, Lady	McMorris, Anna
Hill, Mike	Mearns, Ian
Hillier, Meg	Miliband, rh Edward
Hobhouse, Wera	Milton, rh Anne
Hodge, rh Dame Margaret	Monaghan, Carol
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon	Moon, Mrs Madeleine
Hollern, Kate	Moran, Layla
Hosie, Stewart	Morden, Jessica
Howarth, rh Sir George	Morgan, Stephen
Huq, Dr Rupa	Morris, Grahame
Hussain, Imran	Murray, Ian
James, Margot	Nandy, Lisa
Jardine, Christine	Newlands, Gavin
Jarvis, Dan	Norris, Alex
Johnson, Diana	O'Hara, Brendan
Jones, Darren	Onn, Melanie
Jones, Gerald	Onwurah, Chi
Jones, Graham P.	Osamor, Kate
Jones, Helen	Owen, Albert
Jones, rh Mr Kevan	Peacock, Stephanie
Jones, Ruth	Pearce, Teresa
Jones, Sarah	Pennycook, Matthew
Jones, Susan Elan	Perkins, Toby
Kane, Mike	Phillips, Jess
Keeley, Barbara	Phillipson, Bridget
Kendall, Liz	Pidcock, Laura
Khan, Afzal	Platt, Jo
Killen, Ged	Pollard, Luke
Kinnock, Stephen	Pound, Stephen
Kyle, Peter	Powell, Lucy

Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rashid, Faisal
 Rayner, Angela
 Reed, Mr Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, Rachel
 Reynolds, Emma (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Pat McFadden*)
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
 Rodda, Matt
 Rowley, Danielle
 Ruane, Chris
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Ryan, rh Joan
 Sandbach, Antoinette
 Saville Roberts, rh Liz
 Shah, Naz
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Sheppard, Tommy
 Sherriff, Paula
 Shuker, Mr Gavin
 Siddiq, Tulip
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smeeth, Ruth
 Smith, Angela
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Eleanor
 Smith, Laura
 Smith, Owen
 Smyth, Karin
 Snell, Gareth
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
 Sobel, Alex
 Soubry, rh Anna
 Spellar, rh John
 Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
 Starmer, rh Keir

Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo
 Stewart, rh Rory
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeting, Wes
 Stringer, Graham
 Sweeney, Mr Paul
 Swinson, Jo
 Tami, rh Mark
 Thewliss, Alison
 Thomas, Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turley, Anna
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Stephen
 Twist, Liz
 Umunna, Chuka
 Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
 Vaz, rh Keith
 Vaz, Valerie
 Walker, Thelma
 Watson, Tom
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitfield, Martin
 Whitford, Dr Philippa
 Williams, Hywel
 Williams, Dr Paul
 Wilson, Phil
 Wishart, Pete
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah
 Woodcock, John
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:
Jeff Smith and
Nick Smith

NOES

Adams, Nigel
 Afolami, Bim
 Afriyie, Adam
 Aldous, Peter
 Allan, Lucy
 Amess, Sir David
 Argar, Edward
 Atkins, Victoria
 Austin, Ian
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Badenoch, Mrs Kemi
 Baker, Mr Steve
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barclay, rh Stephen
 Baron, Mr John
 Bellingham, Sir Henry
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Berry, rh Jake
 Blackman, Bob
 Blunt, Crispin
 Bone, Mr Peter
 Bottomley, Sir Peter
 Bowie, Andrew
 Bradley, Ben
 Bradley, rh Karen
 Brady, Sir Graham

Braverman, Suella (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Steve Baker*)
 Brereton, Jack
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Brokenshire, rh James
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buckland, rh Robert
 Burghart, Alex
 Burns, Conor
 Cairns, rh Alun
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Cartlidge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, Alex
 Chishti, Rehman
 Chope, Sir Christopher
 Churchill, Jo
 Clark, Colin
 Clarke, Mr Simon
 Cleverly, rh James
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse
 Collins, Damian
 Costa, Alberto
 Courts, Robert
 Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey

Crabb, rh Stephen
 Crouch, Tracey
 Davies, David T. C.
 Davies, Glyn
 Davies, Mims
 Davies, Philip
 Davis, rh Mr David
 Dinenage, Caroline
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Docherty, Leo
 Dodds, rh Nigel
 Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
 Donelan, Michelle
 Dorries, Ms Nadine
 Double, Steve
 Dowden, rh Oliver
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Drax, Richard
 Duddridge, James
 Duguid, David
 Duncan, rh Sir Alan
 Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
 Dunne, rh Mr Philip
 Ellis, Michael
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
 Elphicke, Charlie
 Eustice, George
 Evans, Mr Nigel
 Evennett, rh Sir David
 Fabricant, Michael
 Fallon, rh Sir Michael
 Field, rh Mark
 Ford, Vicky
 Foster, Kevin
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Frazer, Lucy
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Gale, rh Sir Roger
 Garnier, Mark
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
 Girvan, Paul
 Glen, John
 Goldsmith, Zac
 Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Luke
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Bill
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Gray, James
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Green, Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Hair, Kirstene
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hancock, rh Matt
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, Simon
 Hayes, rh Sir John
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Heappey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris

Heaton-Jones, Peter
 Henderson, Gordon
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Hoey, Kate
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Adam
 Howell, John
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Hurd, rh Mr Nick
 Jack, rh Mr Alister
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jenkyns, Andrea
 Jenrick, rh Robert
 Johnson, rh Boris
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnson, rh Joseph
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Keegan, Gillian
 Kennedy, Seema
 Kerr, Stephen
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian
 Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
 Lamont, John
 Lancaster, rh Mark
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leadsom, rh Andrea
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, Mr Ivan
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Lidington, rh Mr David
 Little Pngelly, Emma
 Lopez, Julia
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Maclean, Rachel
 Main, Mrs Anne
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mann, Scott
 Masterton, Paul
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Maynard, Paul
 McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
 McPartland, Stephen
 McVey, rh Ms Esther
 Menzies, Mark
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew

Moore, Damien
Mordaunt, rh Penny
Morgan, rh Nicky
Morris, Anne Marie
Morris, David
Morris, James
Morton, Wendy
Mundell, rh David
Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
Neill, Robert
Newton, Sarah
Norman, Jesse
O'Brien, Neil
Offord, Dr Matthew
Opperman, Guy
Paisley, Ian
Parish, Neil
Patel, rh Priti
Paterson, rh Mr Owen
Pawsey, Mark
Penning, rh Sir Mike
Penrose, John
Percy, Andrew
Perry, rh Claire
Philp, Chris
Pincher, rh Christopher
Poulter, Dr Dan
Pow, Rebecca
Prentis, Victoria
Prisk, Mr Mark
Pritchard, Mark
Pursglove, Tom
Quin, Jeremy
Quince, Will
Raab, rh Dominic
Redwood, rh John
Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
Robertson, Mr Laurence
Robinson, Gavin
Robinson, Mary
Rosindell, Andrew
Ross, Douglas
Rowley, Lee
Rudd, rh Amber
Rutley, David
Scully, Paul
Seely, Mr Bob

Selous, Andrew
Shannon, Jim
Shapps, rh Grant
Sharma, rh Alok
Shelbrooke, Alec
Simpson, David
Simpson, rh Mr Keith
Skidmore, Chris
Smith, Chloe (*Proxy vote cast
by Jo Churchill*)
Smith, Henry
Smith, rh Julian
Smith, Royston
Spencer, rh Mark
Stephenson, Andrew
Stevenson, John
Stewart, Bob
Streeter, Sir Gary
Stride, rh Mel
Stuart, Graham
Sturdy, Julian
Sunak, rh Rishi
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Swire, rh Sir Hugo
Syms, Sir Robert
Thomas, Derek
Thomson, Ross
Throup, Maggie
Tolhurst, Kelly
Tomlinson, Justin
Tomlinson, Michael
Tracey, Craig
Tredinnick, David
Trevelyan, Anne-Marie
Truss, rh Elizabeth
Tugendhat, Tom
Vara, Mr Shailesh
Vickers, Martin
Villiers, rh Theresa
Walker, Mr Charles
Walker, Mr Robin
Wallace, rh Mr Ben
Warburton, David
Warman, Matt
Watling, Giles
Whately, Helen
Wheeler, Mrs Heather
Whittaker, Craig

Whittingdale, rh Mr John
Wiggin, Bill
Williamson, rh Gavin
Wilson, rh Sammy
Wood, Mike
Wragg, Mr William

Wright, rh Jeremy
Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
Stuart Andrew and
Iain Stewart

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read the Third time and passed.

Hilary Benn: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. The House has spoken this evening. I say to the Prime Minister that, if the other place passes the Bill, this House expects him to uphold the law and to fulfil the obligations that will be placed upon him by this Bill and prevent this country from leaving the European Union on 31 October without a deal.

May I thank the Clerks for their assistance, and the right hon. Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) and others for their great help? I also join my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer) in most warmly applauding the bravery and the courage of many on the Government Benches who have stood by their convictions in the national interest.

Stephen Kinnock: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Given that the House has now approved the Bill as amended, may I press the Government as rapidly as possible to publish the withdrawal agreement Bill, which really does require proper and robust discussion in this place?

Mr Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has made his own point in his own way, and it is on the record, and we are indebted to him.

Business without Debate

DEFERRED DIVISIONS

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, Standing Order No. 41A (Deferred divisions) shall not apply to the motion in the name of the Prime Minister relating to an early parliamentary general election.—
(*Jeremy Quin.*)

Early Parliamentary General Election

7.51 pm

The Prime Minister (Boris Johnson): I beg to move,
That there shall be an early parliamentary general election.

The House of Commons has passed a Bill devised by the Leader of the Opposition, who, I see, is not in his place. He is characteristically evasive, if not frit. It is a Bill that effectively ends the negotiations; a Bill that demands an extension at least until next year, and perhaps for many more years to come; and a Bill that insists that Britain acquiesces in the demands of Brussels and hands control to our partners. It is a Bill designed to overturn the biggest democratic vote in our history, the 2016 referendum. It is therefore a Bill without precedent in the history of this House, seeking as it does to force the Prime Minister, with a pre-drafted letter, to surrender in international negotiations. I refuse to do this. It is clear that there is therefore only one way forward for the country. The House has voted repeatedly to leave the EU, yet it has also voted repeatedly to delay actually leaving. It has voted for negotiations, and today, I am afraid, it has voted to stop—to scupper—any serious negotiations.

What this Bill means is that Parliament, or the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition, who is still not in his place—[*Interruption.*] I really do not know where he is. He refuses to give battle, or at least to engage in argument tonight. Perhaps that is a sign of how he intends to pursue things in the weeks ahead. [*Interruption.*] I am glad that he has now favoured the House with his presence. His Bill, among its other functions, will take away the right of this country to decide how long it must remain in the EU and hand that power to the EU. That is what it does, and I am afraid that it is time for this country to decide whether that is right.

The country must now decide whether the Leader of the Opposition or I go to those negotiations in Brussels on 17 October to sort this out. Everybody knows that if the right hon. Gentleman were the Prime Minister, he would beg for an extension and accept whatever Brussels demanded. We would then have years more dither and delay, yet more arguments over Brexit and no resolution to the uncertainty that currently bedevils this country and our economy. Everyone knows, by contrast, that if I am Prime Minister, I will go to Brussels and I will try to get a deal. Believe me, I know that I can get a deal. If they will not do a deal—I think it would be eminently sensible for them to do so, and I believe that they will—then, under any circumstances, this country will leave the EU on 31 October.

It is completely impossible for Government to function if the House of Commons refuses to pass anything that the Government propose. In my view, and in the view of this Government, there must be an election on Tuesday 15 October—I invite the Leader of the Opposition to respond—to decide which of us which goes as Prime Minister to that crucial Council on Thursday 17 October. I think it is very sad that MPs have voted like this—[*Interruption.*] I do; I think it is a great dereliction of their democratic duty. But if I am still Prime Minister after Tuesday 15 October, we will leave on 31 October with, I hope, a much better deal.

The Leader of the Opposition now has a question to answer. He has demanded an election for two years while blocking Brexit. He said only two days ago that he would support an election. Parliament having passed a Bill that destroys the ability of Government to negotiate, is he now going to say that the public cannot be allowed an election to decide which of us sorts out this mess? I do not want an election, the public do not want an election and the country does not want an election, but this House has left no option other than letting the public decide who they want as Prime Minister. I commend this motion to the House.

7.57 pm

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab): This is the second time I have replied to a Conservative Prime Minister who has sought to dissolve Parliament and call an election because they did not have a deliverable Brexit policy. Although I am not condemning the right hon. Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May) by comparing her to her successor, she at least made detailed speeches setting out her Brexit policy—even if we fundamentally disagreed with them. This Prime Minister claims he has a strategy, but he cannot tell us what it is. The bigger problem for him is that he has not told the EU what it is either.

At Prime Minister's Question Time today, as in the statement yesterday, the Prime Minister was unable even to say whether he has made any proposals whatsoever to the EU. Basically, the policy is cloaked in mystery because, like the emperor's new clothes, there really is absolutely nothing there. The naked truth is that the reality is deeply unpalatable: a disastrous no-deal Brexit to take us into the arms of a trade deal with Donald Trump that would put America first and Britain a distant second.

The Prime Minister knows there is no mandate for no deal, no majority support for it in the country and no majority for it in this House. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster—the co-convenor of the Vote Leave campaign—said in March this year that

“we didn't vote to leave without a deal.”

Even the leaders of the leave campaign are absolutely clear that the referendum conferred no mandate for no deal. No deal is opposed by every business group, every industry body and every trade union—and by this House, as today's vote and others have shown.

We want an election because we look forward to turfing this Government out.

Sir Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire Dales) (Con): Does the Leader of the Opposition want a general election? A yes or no will suffice.

Jeremy Corbyn: The right hon. Gentleman obviously did not hear what I just said. Before he gently interrupted me, I was about to point out that the offer of the election today is a bit like the offer of an apple to Snow White from the Wicked Queen, because what the Prime Minister is offering is not an apple or even an election, but the poison of a no deal. I repeat what I said last night. Let this Bill pass and gain Royal Assent, and then we will back an election—so we do not crash out of the European Union with a no-deal exit.

It is the anti-democratic instincts of this Government that cause us concern. Despite the expressed will of the House to support the Bill debated today, the Conservative peers—the Government's colleagues in the Lords—have tabled 92 amendments for debate. I really doubt that this is motivated by a desire to improve the legislation; not a bit of it. Instead, it is motivated by a desire to filibuster the Bill—an undemocratic cabal in Downing Street, aligned with an undemocratic and unelected House to override the democratic will of this House expressed in the Bill to which we have just given a Third Reading. If the Government cannot win the argument, they try to shut down debate.

We had the Prime Minister deciding to prorogue Parliament in August, and today he wants to dissolve Parliament to shut down scrutiny. He cannot handle dissent and debate in his own party, and has extraordinarily expelled 21 of his own MPs who voted against him last night. The hypocrisy of this process is phenomenal, from a Prime Minister who twice voted against the former Prime Minister's Brexit plans.

A general election is not a plaything for a Prime Minister to avoid his obligations, to dodge scrutiny or to renege on commitments. He has committed to renegotiate Brexit, but where is the plan and where are the proposals? If he has a Brexit plan, be it no deal or the new mystery proposal deal of which we have yet to see any information, he should put it before the public in a public vote—a referendum or a general election—and seek a mandate from them. Let the Prime Minister go to Brussels tomorrow and ask for an extension so that he can seek a mandate for his unknown Brexit plan and put it before the people.

The truth is that this motion from the Prime Minister is about playing a disingenuous game that is unworthy of his office. I look forward to the day when his Government and his party, with all the austerity and misery they have heaped on this country, are turfed out of office, and when we prevent this country from crashing out on 31 October, with all the damage—he knows, because he has already seen the documents—that it will do to people's lives and job prospects in this country. It is a cynical move from a cynical Prime Minister.

8.3 pm

Mr Kenneth Clarke (Rushcliffe) (Ind): I do not know whether the House wants a debate, so I will be very brief. I was going to join in if other people were going to debate. Thank you for encouraging me, Mr Speaker—no doubt to the deep distress of everybody else waiting to have an important vote.

I merely say that I have found these exchanges quite predictable; they had been well rehearsed before they took place today. With the greatest respect, I do think that the Prime Minister has a tremendous skill in keeping a straight face while he is being so disingenuous. The fact is that he is now desperate to have a general election in order to bring this House's proceedings to an end, and to have the election, clearly, before 31 October. He is obviously going to campaign before that on the basis that he has been thwarted in getting an amazing, beneficial deal for this country that is being blocked by wicked continental politicians and by MPs in the House of Commons who have no sense of the true national interest, which is to keep him in power.

It is wrong to say that those opposed to the Prime Minister are trying to reverse the referendum. A very large percentage of those who have been defeating him in the past two days are prepared to vote for Brexit. They voted for Brexit more often than he has. He caused delay in March and he caused delay in April when we wished to proceed on satisfactory, reasonable terms. We now have a Bill that is the beginning of a pathway to giving us more time for grown-up, sensible, diplomatic exchanges between each other.

The idea that those in the European Union are refusing us a deal because they think that they are going to trap us in it permanently is nonsense. They are desperate to get a deal—of course they are—but not so desperate that they are going to accept terms that will cause chaos in Northern Ireland, politically and economically, and will shatter the normal rules that hold together the single market and the customs union upon which they are based. The Prime Minister has thrown down dramatic conditions that he must know make any sensible negotiations pointless unless he changes his direction. He is now Prime Minister. He is now a responsible politician with huge responsibility. I urge him one last time to stop treating all this as a game and to use the time available to get a serious resolution of these impossible problems to look after the future good will of this country, to keep us in a proper—no doubt different—relationship with our partners on the continent, and, in particular, to keep our economic and trading relationships intact, because they are essential for the future of our children and grandchildren.

8.7 pm

Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): May I congratulate with all my heart the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke), who has spoken with great sense, as he has done on many occasions when I have followed him? I will give you a piece of friendly advice, Prime Minister: sack your adviser Dominic Cummings and bring in the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe, who might actually be able to give you some sensible advice.

We are having this debate tonight quite simply because the Prime Minister has been defeated. That is the reality. I say to the Prime Minister: as this House is supposed to be sovereign in your eyes, accept the will of this House, accept the Bill that Parliament has passed, accept your duty as Prime Minister, and go to the European Council on 17 October to negotiate the extension that you have now been told to deliver.

Yet again, this Government have been defeated by a majority in the House of Commons against a no-deal Brexit. The passage tonight of the Bill to block no deal is a victory not just for democracy but, yes, for common sense. I pay tribute to the Members of Parliament across these Benches who have worked tirelessly to build consensus for this legislation to pass and remove the cliff-edge catastrophe. The Prime Minister should not be talking about surrender—he should be congratulating Members of Parliament who have stood up for all our national interests. What a disgrace for a Prime Minister to accuse parliamentarians—decent parliamentarians—of surrender. It simply lacks dignity.

Now that Parliament has once again displayed its will, the Prime Minister must show respect for democracy and agree to abide by the will of Parliament and the Bill

[*Ian Blackford*]

blocking no deal. [*Interruption.*] If the Prime Minister wishes to intervene rather than shout at me, I will give him the courtesy that he did not afford me.

Mr Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con): I have been listening to the right hon. Gentleman with great care, but the one thing he does not say in all this is that the reason he has voted for the Bill tonight is that he and his party are adamantly opposed to ever delivering Brexit. Will he now admit that that is his purpose and the purpose of the Bill?

Ian Blackford: My heavens! I think it is quite clear, if anyone reads the Bill, what it is about—it is about removing the cliff edge of 31 October. We in the SNP have worked with colleagues right around the House in a spirit of consensus, but yes, of course I wish to stop Brexit and Scotland being dragged out. We will work collectively with everybody here, but my colleagues and I have a responsibility to stop this Government dragging Scotland out of Europe against its will. My message to the Prime Minister and the right hon. Gentleman is this: will you respect democracy in Scotland, and will you respect the fact that Scotland has voted to remain in the European Union?

It is the SNP's top priority to avoid no deal. We know the devastation that a no-deal Brexit would bring to people in Scotland and across these islands. That is why we have been working hard for the past two years to avoid no deal. SNP MPs have voted consistently against no deal. We supported the Letwin-Cooper process in March to avoid no deal, and we are now doing the same with the Benn Bill.

Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD): I welcome the right hon. Gentleman's confirmation tonight that he will, along with my party and the Labour party, vote against the Government. If the Government continue to pursue this reckless no-deal policy, will he continue to work with us to block any attempt to take us off the cliff edge against the will of Parliament?

Ian Blackford: The simple answer is yes. I commit myself to working with all others, because we have a responsibility to our constituents to stop the disaster of no deal. Indeed, I have been working with leaders of other parties to ensure that the Benn Bill passes tonight. We have come together to ensure that protecting the lives of people across the United Kingdom and their livelihoods is the absolute priority of this Parliament, and it is important that we keep working together.

No one voted for a no-deal Brexit. It was not on the ballot paper, and the Prime Minister needs to wake up to that reality—perhaps, Prime Minister, you might start listening to the debate, rather than chatting to the Chancellor, if you don't mind. It is important that no tricks are deployed to avert the course of democracy over the coming days. [*Interruption.*] Government Members can try to shout us down. They tried last night, and it will not work. The unelected House of Lords should not under any circumstances seek to damage or kill the protections in this legislation, and the Prime Minister should quit game-playing stunts. The SNP will not fall for them.

The Scottish National party is ready for an election. We stand ready to bring down the Tory Government and give Scotland a chance to stop Brexit and decide its own future. We signal our intent to work with all across this House to stop a no-deal Brexit. It is in all our interests to do so. We will do our duty to protect all of us from a no-deal Brexit, but at the same time, this House should respect the sovereignty of the Scottish people and our right to be able to determine our own future.

Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): I do not know whether my right hon. Friend noted last night the lack of enthusiasm from Scottish Conservatives for an early general election. That might have something to do with the fact that they are now at 20% in the polls and due to be decimated. If they vote for this tonight, would they not be turkeys voting for Christmas? If Ruth Davidson cannot stomach the Prime Minister, why should Scotland?

Ian Blackford: My hon. Friend is quite right. I look forward to SNP challengers standing in the Scottish Tory seats. We will take the fight to those constituents over the coming weeks and make sure that those constituents have the opportunity to return those seats to the Scottish National party.

Much of this debate has been about democracy. It is about the abuse of power by a Government seeking to shut down Parliament. This House must respect the Scottish Parliament, and in particular the mandate the Scottish Government have for a referendum on independence. It should be Scotland's right to choose its own future, not the right of this Prime Minister or any other in Westminster to tell Scotland that our votes do not matter and that we cannot determine when Scotland votes in an independence referendum.

An election is coming, and I invite Scotland to send a message to Westminster: it is Scotland's right to choose. *The Times* poll today shows that the SNP is set to win a majority of Westminster seats in any election. Make no mistake: we relish an election because we want to stop Brexit for good, stop the Tories and stop this Prime Minister; and, most importantly, we want to give the people a say—their choice to decide their own future. However, we will not be a party to the Prime Minister's games and allow the Prime Minister to use an election to force a no-deal Brexit through the back door.

Simply put, the SNP cannot support this motion tonight because we do not trust the Prime Minister, and who could blame us? With his tall tales, his contempt for democracy and his Government's broken promises to the people of Scotland, we cannot trust that he will allow this Bill to pass and remove the cliff edge before an election. I urge other opposition parties tonight not to give the Prime Minister the opportunity to bring in a no deal through the back door. We cannot allow a Government who have lost their majority, who do not command the House and who have treated this Parliament and this country with contempt to remain in office for one more day longer than is necessary.

The Prime Minister is going to shut this Parliament down so that he can spend four weeks running down the clock. We could instead use that time to run him out of office. Once a no deal has been blocked, MPs on the Opposition Benches should come together to bring

down this Government—not on the Prime Minister's terms, but on the right terms. Time is of the essence over the next few days in order to remove the cliff edge, and to remove this shambolic, irresponsible, incompetent Tory Government from office.

8.17 pm

Craig Mackinlay (South Thanet) (Con): I think that I have an apology to make, and that is to Brenda from Bristol. On a personal basis, I think I have only just got over the 2015 election. However, we need to ask ourselves: what can this Parliament now achieve? Can it deliver the bold new agenda that a new Prime Minister wishes to put in place for this country? Would this Parliament even approve a bold and ambitious Queen's Speech to put into statute in the future? Would it approve a Queen's Speech to put 20,000 new police on the streets and to strengthen our criminal justice system? The answer must be no, or at least rather doubtful. There could be an issue of confidence if a Queen's Speech is voted down, so possibly this place is only putting off the fateful day.

What we have seen this afternoon is more of the same from a moribund Parliament, while the public simply shake their head in dismay at what is going on in this place. It is bizarre, is it not? There are those in this House who will not countenance leaving the European Union without a deal.

Angus Brendan MacNeil (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): It is very clear that the Prime Minister wants a cut-and-run general election. Surely, if he loses the vote that he has called tonight, as he has lost many other votes, the Prime Minister should simply follow his convictions and resign: go—go! But no, we know he wants to cut and run before the disaster that is coming. He will be lashed to the tiller and lashed for the disaster, and he should know that.

Craig Mackinlay: I certainly hope that, after that intervention, the hon. Gentleman will support this motion, so that the people can make their decision as well.

Mr Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley) (Con): Has my hon. Friend ever heard so many Opposition Members crying out for an early general election, as they have done for the past two years? The Prime Minister is now giving them that opportunity, and they are running scared. They are not just running scared from the Prime Minister and the next general election, but running scared from the people of this country, who in 2016 said that they wanted to leave the European Union, and it is Opposition Members who are denying them that opportunity to leave the EU. Does my hon. Friend agree that if the British people get the chance to have an early general election, the Conservative party will win it?

Craig Mackinlay: I thank my hon. Friend for that powerful intervention. I could not agree with him more.

To get back on track, there are those in this place who will not countenance leaving without a deal. It is quite strange—is it not?—that they are the same people who go to their local market every week and will walk away from a trade if the price or quality is not right. If I said to the Leader of the Opposition, "I have a rusty old heap of a car. It's yours for £15,000," I am sure he would just take it without looking any further.

When this House was presented with a withdrawal agreement by the previous Administration, I obviously voted against it because I felt it was a lousy, rotten deal. I do not need to put those objections further tonight. There are many others—I am looking at them—who voted against that deal, the now-defunct withdrawal agreement, because of pure party politics.

Sandy Martin (Ipswich) (Lab) *rose*—

Craig Mackinlay: No. Let me make progress. They claim they wanted a deal. As we know, that withdrawal agreement gave the vassalage and perpetual homage to the EU that many of them now seem to crave. It is now clear that this House would not agree a deal even if it were gold-plated. This House no longer reflects the will of the people of this country, who gave that clear message to us—to this Parliament—that we should respect that vote in 2016. They want us to get on with the job. They want us to leave on 31 October. They have waited long enough.

This Parliament serves no further purpose. It is time for a general election. It is time for that people's vote that many are asking for. It is time to stop those critics who say that our Prime Minister is not properly elected. They can put that right by voting tonight for a general election, and I support that wholeheartedly.

8.23 pm

Jo Swinson (East Dunbartonshire) (LD): I want to say thank you to the MPs in different parts of the House who worked so hard on the Bill that we all passed tonight. It is that cross-party working—putting party interest to one side and putting the national interest first—that the country expects of us. In particular, those colleagues on the Conservative Benches who have stuck to their principles and done what they think is right should be commended for that. The way that they have been treated has been shameful.

I am intrigued that as a result of the House of Commons saying clearly that we will not countenance crashing out of the EU with no deal, the Prime Minister's response is that this somehow messes up his plan. It is as if it is news to him that the House of Commons does not want a no-deal exit. Was he not paying attention on the previous occasions that we voted to say that there should not be a no-deal exit? Is he seriously saying that the extent of his plan was to try to bully the EU and that he could get a good deal only by threatening that we would leave without a deal? Because if that is the extent of his plan, it is not very well thought through.

Maria Caulfield (Lewes) (Con): Will the hon. Lady confirm that if there was a general election, the Liberal Democrats would put in their manifesto a pledge to revoke article 50?

Jo Swinson: It should be no surprise to the hon. Lady that the Liberal Democrats want to stop Brexit. We have been crystal clear on stopping Brexit. For all our different views in different parts of the House about that, I do not think that anyone can accuse us of not being straightforward about where we stand.

On the negotiation, the Prime Minister—

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

Jo Swinson: I have already given way.

On the terms of the negotiation, the Prime Minister says that he now cannot do this negotiation because we are taking no deal off the table, but we know that there are no serious negotiations anyway. The word “disingenuous” was used by the Father of the House, and I think that that is accurate. The Prime Minister has wanted the job he has for so long it has been almost painful to watch. He has been prepared to say anything and do anything to get that job. He said—

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

Jo Swinson: I have given way.

The Prime Minister has said that we will get a great deal. Well, now he has the job. That is the job: go and get a great deal. But he knows that he was just saying whatever came into his head to get the job. He knows he cannot a great deal because there is no such thing as a great Brexit deal, and he is scared of being found out.

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

Jo Swinson: I have already given way to somebody on the Government Benches. I am going to say what I have to say.

The way I think that this is best resolved is by putting this issue to the people in a people’s vote to decide on a Brexit way forward. I do not believe there is a majority in this country for any specific type of Brexit deal. I am not even convinced there is a majority in the Conservative party for any type of Brexit deal.

We could have a general election. I say to the Prime Minister that such an election should be held in a responsible, calm and orderly way, and not with the threat of crashing out with no deal either during the campaign or in the immediate aftermath. If he wants an election, extend article 50 for the purposes of having a general election and bring it on. If he is not prepared to do that, do not be surprised when people are not fooled by his tactics and vote against him.

8.27 pm

Sir Desmond Swayne (New Forest West) (Con): There is one purpose in denying this motion. That is to ensure that the British people have no say whatever over what takes place at the European Council on 17 October, isn’t it?

8.28 pm

Anna Soubry (Broxtowe) (IGC): It is very important in this debate that we are all very mindful of the language we use. It has been concerning that right hon. and hon. Government Members, including our Prime Minister, have chosen to use the words “frit” and “frightened” of those of us who believe that the last thing this country needs is a general election. Given everything that has happened in the past few years, there are a number of people in this place who could not be accused of being frightened. In fact, it has taken a lot of courage for some people.

If Government Members are not familiar with courage, they might want to talk to some of those hon. Members they have just booted out of their own party—decent, long-serving and hugely loyal members of the Conservative

party who last night and again today chose to put their constituents and their country first. The price that they have paid is to see the end of their parliamentary career, and this House is right to commend each and every one of them for the considerable courage that it took.

I am in no doubt whatsoever that it is not just the people of Broxtowe, but the people of this country who are thoroughly fed up to the back teeth with Brexit, and that is why I have the very firm view that the matter of Brexit must be brought to a conclusion. There are people in this place who will know, from the many cross-party conversations that we have had—I am proud that we have worked together across parties, putting aside our normal differences, again, in the country’s interest—that my view is that any extension should not go beyond certainly January and maybe February next year, because of the profound need that we must bring this matter to a conclusion. That is one of the reasons why I do not believe that a general election is the answer at all, because it will not solve the Brexit crisis.

Julia Lopez (Hornchurch and Upminster) (Con): The second part of the Bill that the right hon. Lady just approved handed power to the EU to dictate whatever extension it wanted—[*Interruption.*] That is what this says.

Anna Soubry: I am so sorry to tell the hon. Lady, but she has obviously been reading something completely different from the rest of us because it most absolutely does not. The Bill has been carefully drafted, and properly so, to make sure that it is in the interests of our country that we take no deal off the table, because that is the best thing for this country. [*Interruption.*] I am quite happy to take an intervention, rather than have her just shouting at me. The Bill is all about not stopping Brexit, as many of us would like to, but stopping no deal for all the reasons that have been explained.

Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD): Does the right hon. Lady agree that a no-deal Brexit is no way out of this Brexit conundrum? Years and years of difficulties will follow and it is dishonest and not right to say that a no-deal Brexit will solve the Brexit issue.

Anna Soubry: The hon. Lady is right—she is right not only about no deal, but that the former Prime Minister’s withdrawal agreement would also not have ended the debate about Brexit, because it was a blindfolded Brexit that did not determine our future trading relationship with the European Union.

My views on this are well known: I believe that the only way out of the crisis is to have a people’s vote. Put the deal from the former Prime Minister—well, it was not a deal, but at least it was something—to the British people, with remain on the ballot paper, and let us get this matter over. I believe that the British people have also changed their minds. I think that they are now seeing Brexit for what it is and that, given the opportunity, they would vote for the best deal, which is the current deal that we have with the European Union. That is another good reason why this matter must now go back to the British people by way of a people’s vote.

8.33 pm

Mr Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con): I rise only briefly because I know we want to get through this.

The reality is that this is about a general election. We have heard speeches from a number of Opposition Members that are all about nothing to do with the general election, but are about recycling the debate that we had earlier.

The truth is that there is but a simple question in front of the Opposition parties. Only two days ago, they were crying out for an election. The shadow Chancellor said, “Bring it on. We’re ready for it.” The Leader of the Opposition, when he was not having his afternoon nap and was awake enough to be able to meet the media, said that he wanted to have an election. The Scottish nationalists were adamant that they were going to vote for an election.

Angus Brendan MacNeil: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr Duncan Smith: No, no, wait a minute. The hon. Gentleman has made a fool of himself already. He should stay put; I am doing him a favour. *[Interruption.]* I am really doing him a favour—he may not understand it.

If they do not vote for an election tonight—if they refuse to vote to have that election—they will be running away from their democratic responsibility. I say to Members such as the right hon. Member for Broxtowe (Anna Soubry), one time my right hon. Friend—

Angus Brendan MacNeil *rose*—

Mr Duncan Smith: No, honestly, the hon. Gentleman really does not want to do himself any disfavours.

The right hon. Lady talks about a people’s vote. The problem with a people’s vote, if she wants to put it to a referendum, as the new leader of the Liberal party does, is that she would never accept the result—

Anna Soubry *rose*—

Mr Duncan Smith: Wait a minute. If the result was to leave, they would not accept it.

Anna Soubry *rose*—

Mr Duncan Smith: Wait a minute. Let me finish, because this is important. Here is the fault line: without a different Parliament, a new referendum will change absolutely nothing if the people vote to leave again, because we would come back to this Parliament and they would stop, delay and try to defeat that motion.

The decision tonight is therefore the only decision that can be made in all reality. If we want to decide whether the British people were right, or wrong, to vote leave, we should put it to them in a general election and let them make that decision. *[Interruption.]* I see the hon. Gentleman opposite shaking his head. Only days ago, he and his colleague on the Front Bench—

Anna Soubry: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I am so sorry, Mr Speaker, but the right hon. Gentleman said something about me that is simply not accurate. I asked whether I could intervene, but he did not allow me to do so. I accept that that is his absolute right, but I think that the record should show that I have always said that if this matter goes back to the British people and they

vote for the former Prime Minister’s deal, or some new magical unicorn deal, as far as I am concerned, that is the end of it.

Mr Duncan Smith: I am going to conclude, Mr Speaker.

If the right hon. Lady wants a people’s vote, I say to her that the people’s vote is in front of us tonight in this debate. It is called a general election. I have never known an Opposition not want to take over. This is a bizarre affair. They are running away from trying to defeat a Government. Let us have that election, let us make that decision, and if the right hon. Gentleman who leads the Labour party right now genuinely believes in democracy, let him put up or shut up.

8.37 pm

Jess Phillips (Birmingham, Yardley) (Lab): I very much wish to talk about a general election—the right hon. Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr Duncan Smith) has criticised others for not doing so—and to speak plainly. Tonight I will absolutely vote against a general election. I would vote against pretty much anything the current Prime Minister put in front of me.

I warn you, Mr Speaker, that I am not cracking on the parliamentary protocols and everything, but I fear I may say some things that are unparliamentary. If I do, please feel free to alert me. I have absolutely no faith in anything the current Prime Minister says—literally none. I would not trust him—am I allowed to say that? Well, there is literally no distance I could trust him. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members say, “So stand in an election”. I have no fear—none whatsoever—that I would hold my seat in an election, but the Prime Minister is playing some bully-boy game from some bully-boy public school that I probably would never understand any more than I understand parliamentary procedures.

Daniel Kawczynski (Shrewsbury and Atcham) (Con): Student politics!

Jess Phillips: Sorry, would the hon. Gentleman like to make an intervention? Crack on!

Daniel Kawczynski: Student politics!

Mr Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady says she does not understand parliamentary procedure, but on the whole she does not shriek from a sedentary position. The hon. Gentleman has been in the House for 14 years. If he wishes to contribute, he can seek to catch my eye. He should not chunter from a sedentary position in evident disregard for the procedures of the House.

Jess Phillips: The reality is that what we have here is a game, and we are not being told what the rules are. The Prime Minister could bring a deal to the House. He could tell us what his plans are for Northern Ireland, and he could tell us what his plans are for trade. Yesterday, I watched Conservative colleagues begging him to tell them what he wanted—*[Interruption.]* Yeah, ta-ra a bit, bab. I saw colleagues, begging him, saying “Give us a deal to vote for.”

The Prime Minister has stood up and said, “I don’t want an election.” This is some game that three men in No. 10 Downing Street have come up with: they are trying to game the system so that they will win.

[*Jess Phillips*]

My democratic responsibility is to try to do my absolute best for the people in my constituency. At the moment things are not all that clear and we are all a little bit confused, but I am absolutely not going to use those people as a chitty in a game to enable the Prime Minister to achieve the ambition that he has only ever had for himself, and never for the country. I am not going to use my constituents as collateral damage.

Angus Brendan MacNeil: One of the things that people watching the debate should be aware of, and what we all know in here, is that the Government want a cut-and-run election. The election that they do not want is one that would take place on 14 or 21 November; that is the election in which we would take them out.

Jess Phillips: I absolutely agree. Personally, I will not vote for any election that would fall before 31 October.

Tulip Siddiq (Hampstead and Kilburn) (Lab): I, too, will not vote for a general election tonight. I do not want no deal, because it will harm not only my constituents but the 22,000 EU nationals who are living in my constituency. The Home Secretary has said that freedom of movement will end at midnight on 31 October.

Jess Phillips: I could not agree more. There are thousands of EU migrants in my constituency, and lots of them have absolutely no idea what their situation will be. I have to represent those people as much as I represent the people who would be allowed to vote in a general election or a referendum.

Maria Caulfield: Is not the truth that the hon. Lady and many of her colleagues do not want a general election because they are as scared as we are of the Leader of the Opposition becoming Prime Minister?

Jess Phillips: Let us make no bones about the suggestion that I am not able to be completely critical when I think that things are wrong, both in my party and in the governing party. It is just a shame that quite a lot of the people sitting in front of me know that what has happened over the last two days is wrong, but are too cowardly to say in the House, in public, what they are all saying in the Tea Room. They know what has happened here. It is as if we were kicking out my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman). That is what it feels like. I say to those people: the way your party has behaved is an abomination. You have all crowed and given sympathy to me about the problems that we have in the Labour party, but you have just sat by silently while your colleagues have been marched out.

Yasmin Qureshi (Bolton South East) (Lab): I agree with my hon. Friend about the way in which the Conservative party has treated loyal Members of Parliament. Whatever else might be said, I think it is unheard of in parliamentary history for the whip to be suspended from an MP who has voted against his party. That is a bully-boy tactic.

Jess Phillips: I entirely agree.

I am going to speak for Brenda in Bristol, although there are plenty of Brendas in Birmingham. I do not think that we should have a general election, and I will

not vote for one. I also think that we should not have a conference recess and we should not prorogue Parliament. We are currently involved in a national crisis. This is not a game. This is not some toy that we can play with.

Mr Bob Seely (Isle of Wight) (Con): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Jess Phillips: I am not going to give way any more. I apologise, but I have given way plenty of times already.

If we were to go out into the street and ask them, the British public would say that they think we should be in here doing our job. They think that we are away from here too often anyway. I am appalled by the Prorogation—and from now on let us call it the shutting down of Parliament, because I literally hate the word “Prorogation” and the people outside probably do not understand what we are talking about half the time. The shutting down of Parliament has essentially killed a Bill that I have worked on for two and a half years; it is something that people in this House have deeply held feelings on, and I am meant to believe that the Prime Minister is really doing this because he has a vision for the people in this country. He has a vision that comes to him every night, and it is his own face. I will vote against an election until the end of October—until this is sorted—because the British public want me here working for them, and that is what I will do.

8.45 pm

Mr Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley) (Con): I have no doubt that the constituents of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Jess Phillips) want her working here and representing them. She talked about this being a national crisis and it is a national crisis, but it is a crisis of trust: it is a crisis of trust in politicians, it is a crisis of trust in democracy, because it was this House that decided to give the British public the referendum in 2016. I know the expectation was that the British public would not vote to leave the European Union, but when they listened to all the arguments they decided that they wished to leave.

Following that, we had a general election. The Labour party and the Conservative party both stood on a similar platform on Brexit and that was that we were going to deliver the Brexit that people voted for. I remember the ballot paper. It said, “Do you want to remain in or leave the European Union?” It was a basic binary question. The fact is that 17.4 million people in this country decided that they wished to leave the European Union; the margin was about 1.4 million. And that was the expectation because of the pamphlet that David Cameron ensured got sent to all the households in the United Kingdom, which said on the back, “We will deliver what the British people have voted for.”

That was in 2016. Today we are in September 2019. We should have left on 29 March, but we did not. Then we should have left on 12 April, but we did not. Then the then Prime Minister said, “I cannot contemplate a date beyond 30 June for us leaving,” and we didn’t. Now it is 31 October and we have just given a Third Reading to a Bill that will extend that by another three months—unless of course the European Union decides it wants the period to be greater than three months, because that is something that we will then have to accept.

Clive Efford (Eltham) (Lab): The hon. Gentleman can have his beliefs, but he cannot have his own facts. The Bill that we have passed tonight does absolutely nothing unless the Prime Minister fails to come back from the European Council with a deal. If he comes back with a deal, we then vote on it on 19 October. If the House votes for that deal, we leave the European Union with that deal. If that deal does not pass this House, this House has to vote on no deal and, if the House does not agree with no deal, that is when we go for the extension. Those are the facts about what we have done. It does nothing to the negotiations of the Prime Minister. That is a complete fallacy. What is happening here is that this Government are being run by Nigel Farage—that is what is going on here.

Mr Evans: What this House did today clearly was to weaken the negotiating position of the Prime Minister. We all know that Michel Barnier and the European Union listen very carefully to this Parliament; in fact some MPs in this Parliament have a direct line to Michel Barnier and Juncker and Tusk. They are in fairly well daily contact with them sometimes—[*Interruption*]. There is one over there. And we know what they are saying: they are saying, “Don’t give in to the British Prime Minister because we can resist Brexit.” And that is what is going to happen.

We know that the British Prime Minister is already in discussions with people such as Angela Merkel and various others within the European Union to ensure that the problems that existed in the old deal are removed, but the Bill that was passed tonight gives the European Union no incentive whatever to come to the negotiating table and to have a proper negotiation.

The Liberal Democrats are at least honest, as are the Scottish nationalists, in saying that they do not wish to leave the European Union. However, given that we have had the referendum and the people have voted to leave, I just wonder which part of “Liberal Democrat” is actually “democrat”, because they clearly are not interested in what the British people voted for in 2016. They ask for a second vote, but what we are offering tonight is a general election, and that can be a second vote. The people will look at the policies of the Labour party under its current leader and at the policies of my party under its current leader, and they will decide whether the Prime Minister or the Leader of the Opposition should go to Brussels for that negotiation on 17 October.

Part of the problem, as we all know, is that during the 2016 referendum three quarters of the Members in this Chamber voted to remain in the European Union. They do not want to leave the European Union, and they will do anything that they possibly can to frustrate our leaving.

Sir Peter Bottomley (Worthing West) (Con): I think it would be more accurate, and kinder, to put a full stop and a pause after saying who voted which way in the referendum, before going on to suggest that those who voted one way have been voting the same way during the debate on leaving the European Union. I have voted three times to leave the European Union and I wish the same thing could be said about some of the zealots on my side.

Mr Evans: The fact is that we now have a Prime Minister who believes in the mission and who wants to negotiate honestly with the European Union and be

able to deliver the Brexit that people really voted for. They voted to leave the customs union and the single market; to not pay vast sums of money to the European Union as we currently do; to control our own immigration; to not be justiciable by the European courts; and certainly not to have a backstop that keeps us in the European Union without our permission and unable to leave. As I said, three quarters of Members of this Parliament voted to remain in the European Union, and the vast majority of those Members still do not wish us to leave. The fact is, however, that the British people have voted to leave the European Union and, if this Parliament decides that we are not going to leave the European Union, the British people ought to have the opportunity to change their Parliament. They can do that tonight.

8.52 pm

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): This attempt to dissolve Parliament is a desperate and utterly cynical move, and I am delighted that it has been made clear tonight by all the Opposition parties that we are not falling for it. The Prime Minister can own his own horrendous mess. He is trying to smuggle out this no-deal Brexit during an election campaign, and that is what makes it so vital that no election happens before there is an extension of article 50—before it is agreed and, crucially, before it is implemented as well.

I notice that the Prime Minister has scuttled off. He cannot even be bothered to listen to the debate on his own motion on something as important as a general election. There are numerous reasons why many of us want to get rid of this cruel and callous Government. Believe me, I am one of those who absolutely wants to do that, not least because this is a Government who are not only doing nowhere near enough to tackle the climate crisis but actively exacerbating it with fracking, fossil fuel subsidies and so on. This is also a Government who have the arrogance to claim that a no-deal Brexit will just be “bumps in the road”. How dare they? They might just be bumps in the road to those on the Front Bench who have the luxury to be insulated from the impacts of a disastrous no-deal Brexit, but for most of our constituents a no-deal Brexit spells real disaster, not bumps in the road. The mere fact that the Government could use that phrase suggests just out how out of touch they are with their own constituents.

A general election on the Prime Minister’s terms right now is a trap. It will not resolve the Brexit crisis. Elections are rarely fought on one issue alone, and first past the post is notoriously bad at reflecting the true views of the public in the seats that are won. If we are to break the Brexit deadlock in Parliament, the people must lead the way. The Prime Minister regularly asserts his commitment to the will of the people, so why is he not prepared to listen to what people want now, specifically on Brexit, and go back to them in a second referendum—a people’s vote? That is how we resolve Brexit, not by proroguing, dissolving, dodging and obfuscating.

I have one more important point about how the people of our country have been let down by successive Governments. The status quo is intolerable for a huge number of people. Brexit laid bare the extent to which our governance structures are derelict. The social contract is broken. The power game is rigged. The 17.4 million people who gave the establishment such a well-deserved kicking in 2016 were right and reasonable to be furious—we

[Caroline Lucas]

need a powerful commitment now not even to try to go back to the way things were before 2016—but that means tackling democratic failure as well as economic failure. It means redistributing power as well as wealth.

If the Government were genuine about being on the side of the people, they would be honest enough to own the complete chaos that they have managed to create. They would put country before party, back a citizens' convention to revitalise our democracy and explore proposals such as a codified written constitution and a fairer voting system, so that people's views are properly heard. Let us at last have a democracy that puts people at the heart of it. The Government would also finally provide a categorical assurance that they will respect this House and the democracy that we do have, and not seek to avoid it in any way or try to avoid implementing the Bill that we have just voted on tonight.

8.56 pm

Sir Bernard Jenkin (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): I think every Member in this House respects the passion and bravery of the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas), but will she at least recognise the irony that she is calling for the revitalisation of democracy at the same time as speaking against renewing the representative mandate of this House? I would invite the House to consider—[*Interruption.*] I am going to be very brief. The irony also extends to those crying for a people's vote who will vote against the people having a vote about the future of this House.

The British public have watched this House of Commons decline into almost a zombie Parliament—one that is incapable of deciding anything and is still dominated by remain thinking and remain attitudes even though the British people clearly voted leave in the referendum. Yesterday, I spoke about the problem of us having created conflicting representative and direct mandates. The legitimacy of this House was unquestionably as a House of representatives, but we qualified that as we introduced the concept of referendums into our constitution. The representative mandate is unalterably qualified by the fact that we had a referendum and said that we would implement the result.

However, this House has failed to implement that result. We therefore must ask ourselves: how is that going to be resolved? It will not be resolved by continuing to put off decisions, yet the Bill, which so many of the remain-supporting Members of this House are so pleased with, does no more than invite the European Union to put off its decisions. What is going to be gained by putting off decisions again? What kind of respect will this House gain by putting off decisions at the same time as avoiding a general election, which would make us accountable to our electors?

Mrs Anne Main (St Albans) (Con): Does my hon. Friend share my puzzlement? Opposition Members are looking at a Government who have lost their majority, cannot get their business through and are offering the chance of a general election. An election will be about more than just Brexit. There are other things that matter to my constituents and they will still want to renew the mandate and give a Government a mandate to deliver on those things. A Government without the

ability to deliver need to have a general election. I would have thought that any Opposition Member would have accepted that.

Sir Bernard Jenkin: I agree with much of what my hon. Friend says, but I return to the question: how is it going to be resolved? Supposing the Opposition are successful, the Bill goes through and the Prime Minister is obliged to go and seek an extension and to accept an extension to, say, 31 January, or whatever date the European Union decides to offer—

Graham P. Jones (Hyndburn) (Lab): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Bernard Jenkin: I am not going to give way.

What will happen after that? A definition of madness is to repeat the same thing again and again expecting a different outcome. The longer this goes on, the more that Members of Parliament will fear holding a general election because, out there, faith in the established political parties—

Graham P. Jones: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Bernard Jenkin: I am not going to give way.

The voters' faith in the established political parties is not being improved by what is going on; it is being further undermined. The last thing I want is for the whole of British politics to be realigned around the question of Brexit, but that is what will happen the longer we carry on putting off this decision.

Like so many of my voters and so many colleagues in this House, I long to move on to the questions beyond Brexit, but that requires us to respect the decision that has been taken. It requires respect for the fact that there is a Government in office with a responsibility to conduct the negotiations as they see fit, or it requires those who do not have confidence in the Government to table a motion of no confidence to resolve that question.

That brings me back to the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011, from which the motion we are debating this evening arises. It has turned out to be a recipe for this paralysis, which would never have arisen but for the Fixed-term Parliaments Act.

Mr Kevan Jones (North Durham) (Lab): You voted for it.

Sir Bernard Jenkin: I beg your pardon. The right hon. Gentleman says that accusingly, but I certainly did not vote for it. I remember walking through the No Lobby on Second Reading with remarkably few people, and I said to them, "Don't worry. This House will rue the day that it passed this piece of legislation." We should now be rueing the day, because that legislation has put this House in a position where it can endlessly wound a Government but avoid killing them.

If the Leader of the Opposition has so much contempt for how this Government are conducting their affairs, and this Government no longer have a majority, why does he not table a motion of no confidence? It is because there is fear in this House about facing the consequences of a general election because of how this House has conducted the whole Brexit affair for the past three years.

I asked how this will be resolved, and I can tell the House that putting it off again and again will not make the political outcome of the eventual general election any easier for a great many colleagues. The Prime Minister, in his inimitable style, is showing leadership and courage at last. He is trying to resolve this issue.

“Leave” and “remain” were the words on the ballot paper. There was no reference to deal or no deal, but the Prime Minister of the day made it quite clear that we would leave the European Union, and this House has conspired again and again to delay that happening.

People in the constituencies of Opposition Members, particularly in remain-voting constituencies, should ask themselves what mandate they have for putting off this decision again and again. It is democracy in our country that is paying the price, and it is the rise of far more extremist parties that will be the result if this House carries on putting off the decision.

9.4 pm

Thelma Walker (Colne Valley) (Lab): When I was elected as Member of Parliament for Colne Valley, one of the things I had to get used to was being addressed as “honourable Lady” and addressing male colleagues as “honourable Gentleman”; it seemed strange and arcane. Yet recently, I have been considering what it means to be honourable, and I have realised that it is indeed appropriate to consider what makes a person truly honourable. It is a pity the Prime Minister is not in his place. Would he be able to confirm that the people of this country consider the Government’s recent behaviour to be honourable? It is clear that many people outside Westminster think not.

Furthermore, I have been reflecting on my years as a teacher and headteacher, and considering how hard I worked, as do all teaching professionals, to instil the right values and ethos throughout a school—things such as respect, honesty and integrity.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Thelma Walker: I will make some progress.

I used to explain to younger children that integrity was doing the right thing even when someone is not watching. Well, we are watching the Prime Minister, and my fear is, if an attempt is being made to get away with no deal with no mandate and to gag Parliament while we are watching, what other horrors are going on behind closed doors? Will the Prime Minister tell me whether he believes his Cabinet has the integrity required to run our country, especially when some are lying flat out along the Front Bench?

I remember being invited to a meeting some time back with a Government Minister to discuss a local constituency matter. He said, “The Chamber is just theatre, and the real work goes on in meetings like this.” That stayed with me, as I know that this place is not theatre to me. When I speak it is from the heart, and I speak for my people in Colne Valley and those who are suffering under this Government’s cruel and callous austerity. Yes, I want a general election, so that we have a Government who act with both honour and integrity and respect the business in this Chamber. However, I want that election on the Opposition’s terms and when there is no possible chance of a no-deal Brexit. The history books will show that this current Government

acted with neither honour nor integrity, and made us the laughing stock of the world. Our country deserves far better.

9.7 pm

Mr John Baron (Basildon and Billericay) (Con): I stand briefly to raise one simple point, and it is an inconvenient truth for many in this Chamber: the overwhelming majority of Members here tonight voted to trigger article 50. What it said, very simply, was that we would leave the EU by 29 March, with or without a deal. Yet we have now seen two extensions to that deadline, and to many outside this place that is evident proof that there are too many remain MPs who will clasp on to any passing straw in order to delay and frustrate the EU referendum result. That is very wrong indeed. Not only does it make for a lack of trust, but it reinforces a scepticism in our politics that is not healthy at all.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Baron: I will give way in a moment, but I wish to finish this point. We have seen people clasp straws in the wind such as, “The people need another vote” and, “We need to support this motion.” The Opposition’s motion was ridiculous; anybody who has negotiated will understand that if one signals to those on the other side of the table that one is not prepared to walk away, it makes for a worse deal. That is a fact, but not to the many Members who will clasp at any straw to try to frustrate Brexit.

I will give one other example of how Brexit is being frustrated in this place. There is a near hysteria about no deal, despite the fact that the UK trades with the majority of the world’s GDP—with many countries outside the EU—on no-deal World Trade Organisation terms. Five of the EU’s top 10 trading partners trade on the basis of no-deal WTO terms. Since “Project Fear” in 2016 failed, we have had record low unemployment, record manufacturing output and record investment—in fact, last year we had more inward investment than France and Germany—all in the full knowledge that we could leave on no-deal WTO terms. Despite all that, Members in this place—too many remain MPs—have clasped at straws to frustrate Brexit and disregard the EU referendum result. That must now end. People have lost their patience with this place. The time has come to put forward actions instead of words.

David Hanson (Delyn) (Lab): I voted to trigger article 50, but the then Prime Minister called a general election, and I set down red lines to my constituents about what kind of deal I would vote for. The then Prime Minister in effect lost that election by losing 40-odd seats. My mandate comes from the 2017 election.

Mr Baron: That is not a fair point, for the simple reason that in that general election both the Labour manifesto and the Conservative manifesto promised to deliver Brexit. All we have seen since is utter delay and confusion, caused largely by remain MPs who will not honour the referendum result.

Graham P. Jones: The hon. Gentleman keeps saying that this is a remain Parliament with remain MPs—he keeps throwing that around—but the House of Commons Library confirmed that in excess of 575 MPs have voted

[Graham P. Jones]

for Brexit and voted for leave. How can he say that they are remain MPs when they vote to leave the European Union?

Mr Baron: For the simple reason that the House has consistently voted not to honour the triggering of article 50. We keep kicking it into the long grass. When the hon. Gentleman and I voted to trigger article 50, the Bill was simple and short: it said that we would leave by 29 March, with or without a deal.

Graham P. Jones *rose—*

Mr Baron: No, the hon. Gentleman has had his chance. It said that we would leave with or without a deal. Too many Members have continued to kick the can down the road—not once, not twice, but now three times, courtesy of the Bill passed earlier. It is absolutely ridiculous, and people are utterly fed up with it. A lot of remain MPs must look at themselves in the mirror and own up to the fact that all they want to do is stop Brexit. The people out there have had enough.

9.14 pm

Sandy Martin (Ipswich) (Lab): I am absolutely desperate to have a general election. I want to see a Government who will halt the privatisation of the national health service, who will properly fund our public services, who will stop the wealth of this country being squirreled away in tax havens in the Caribbean and who will care about the majority of people in this country and not just about the very wealthy, but that is not why the Prime Minister is calling for a general election. The Prime Minister is not calling for a general election so that we can have a Labour Government. The Prime Minister is calling for a general election so that, when and if we were to vote for it, he would be in sole control of what happened in this country, and there would be no Parliament here to hold him to account when we leave with a no-deal Brexit.

In my constituency of Ipswich, more than 50% of the people who voted in the referendum voted to leave. It was not much more than 50%, but it was more than 50%. I would not vote for a straight vote to revoke article 50, because that would be wrong. After there has been a referendum and people have voted to leave the European Union—albeit by a narrow margin—it would be entirely wrong for this House simply to go against those wishes.

Mr Robert Goodwill (Scarborough and Whitby) (Con) *rose—*

Sandy Martin: I am sorry, I will not give way.

I want to see this Parliament agree on a viable deal that will not destroy the economy of this country. When we have a second vote—a people's vote, a second referendum or whatever you want to call it—which I think we should have if we are to bring the country back together, I want there to be a viable choice. I do not believe that a no-deal Brexit is a viable choice. A no-deal Brexit is a suicide note. If anybody on the Government Benches thinks that, as passengers in a car speeding towards a cliff edge, we will take the option of jumping out just before we reach that cliff edge, they have another think coming. Yes, we will have a general election.

This Government will not survive for very much longer, because they do not have an overall majority, but we will not have that general election while there is the danger of a no-deal Brexit.

9.17 pm

Mr Bob Seely (Isle of Wight) (Con): I have to say that I find this a surreal debate in a zombie Parliament. I have tried pinching myself to make sure that I am awake. I asked my right hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Robert Halfon) whether this was a dream, and he assured me that it was not. I heard one of my colleagues saying, “Now, Bob, please make it go away.” All I can say is that people who organise a coup generally do not put that coup to the people in the form of a vote. We want a people's vote; it is called a general election. The Government are trying to get their agenda through, but, because of the nature of this Parliament, they are not succeeding. Therefore, we need an election to ask the people what they are for, rather than simply having their representatives endlessly voting on what they are against.

I want an election because I want a Government who deliver Brexit and then, frankly, get on and govern. The Scottish islands have the special islands needs allowance. I want something similar for my Isle of Wight. I was talking about it to the Prime Minister in the Tea Room today, and he is keen to give it to us. I want the Government to cover the NHS—an extra £10 million in revenue—local government, environment, food and rural affairs, and housing. We cannot get that. For six months, we have not had a domestic agenda because of our monomaniacal obsession with Brexit.

I do not know what the Opposition parties want. Three times they have been offered a Brexit deal, and three times they have refused it. Tonight, they are being offered a general election, and tonight they are refusing it. They cling to a zombie Parliament for fear of what will happen when they go to the people. We need a new Parliament, because we need a Government with a mandate and a Parliament that votes for something positive. From now on, a collection of Opposition MPs should, frankly, be known as a shambles. We offer leadership; what they offer, God knows.

9.19 pm

Lloyd Russell-Moyle (Brighton, Kemptown) (Lab/Co-op): What the Prime Minister has put to us is clearly a poisoned chalice. He is like the schoolroom clown, who thinks that he can offer us something while dancing around and blabbering from the Dispatch Box. But we know who he is. He is a man who has been twice sacked for lying. He clearly is a person we cannot trust, and we therefore—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is referring to parts of a Member's career. I do not think he is making any allegation, and I sincerely hope that he is not—[*Interruption.*] If you will let me finish, I hope he is not making any allegation about the conduct of a Member in this Chamber.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle *indicated dissent.*

Mr Speaker: He is not, and therefore he is not out of order—[*Interruption.*] He is not out of order. I know the rules, and I know how to interpret them. I do not

require any guidance from anybody on that matter. I am very clear about that. I say to him that there is much to be said for moderation in the use of parliamentary language. As somebody who likes the hon. Gentleman, I urge him to be a little more courteous.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: I will correct myself and say that the Prime Minister was allegedly sacked for lying twice, and the public—

9.21 pm

One and a half hours having elapsed since the commencement of proceedings on the motion, the Speaker put the Question (Standing Order No. 16(1)).

The House divided: Ayes 298, Noes 56.

Division No. 443]

[9.21 pm

AYES

Adams, Nigel	Crabb, rh Stephen
Afolami, Bim	Crouch, Tracey
Afriyie, Adam	Davies, David T. C.
Aldous, Peter	Davies, Glyn
Allan, Lucy	Davies, Mims
Amess, Sir David	Davies, Philip
Argar, Edward	Davis, rh Mr David
Atkins, Victoria	Dinenage, Caroline
Bacon, Mr Richard	Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Badenoch, Mrs Kemi	Docherty, Leo
Baker, Mr Steve	Dodds, rh Nigel
Baldwin, Harriett	Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
Barclay, rh Stephen	Donelan, Michelle
Baron, Mr John	Dorries, Ms Nadine
Bellingham, Sir Henry	Double, Steve
Beresford, Sir Paul	Dowden, rh Oliver
Berry, rh Jake	Doyle-Price, Jackie
Blackman, Bob	Drax, Richard
Blunt, Crispin	Duddridge, James
Bone, Mr Peter	Duguid, David
Bottomley, Sir Peter	Duncan, rh Sir Alan
Bowie, Andrew	Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
Bradley, Ben	Dunne, rh Mr Philip
Bradley, rh Karen	Ellis, Michael
Brady, Sir Graham	Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Braverman, Suella	Elphicke, Charlie
Brereton, Jack	Eustice, George
Bridgen, Andrew	Evans, Mr Nigel
Brokenshire, rh James	Evennett, rh Sir David
Bruce, Fiona	Fabricant, Michael
Buckland, rh Robert	Fallon, rh Sir Michael
Burnhart, Alex	Field, rh Mark
Burns, Conor	Ford, Vicky
Cairns, rh Alun	Foster, Kevin
Campbell, Mr Gregory	Fox, rh Dr Liam
Campbell, Mr Ronnie	Francois, rh Mr Mark
Cartledge, James	Frazer, Lucy
Cash, Sir William	Freeman, George
Caulfield, Maria	Freer, Mike
Chalk, Alex	Fysh, Mr Marcus
Chishti, Rehman	Gale, rh Sir Roger
Chope, Sir Christopher	Garnier, Mark
Churchill, Jo	Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Clark, Colin	Gibb, rh Nick
Clarke, Mr Simon	Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
Cleverly, rh James	Girvan, Paul
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey	Glen, John
Coffey, Dr Thérèse	Goldsmith, Zac
Collins, Damian	Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
Costa, Alberto	Gove, rh Michael
Courts, Robert	Graham, Luke
Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey	Graham, Richard

Grant, Bill	Mackinlay, Craig
Grant, Mrs Helen	Maclean, Rachel
Gray, James	Main, Mrs Anne
Grayling, rh Chris	Mak, Alan
Green, Chris	Malthouse, Kit
Green, rh Damian	Mann, Scott
Griffiths, Andrew	Masterton, Paul
Hair, Kirstene	May, rh Mrs Theresa
Halfon, rh Robert	Maynard, Paul
Hall, Luke	McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
Hancock, rh Matt	McPartland, Stephen
Hands, rh Greg	McVey, rh Ms Esther
Harper, rh Mr Mark	Menzies, Mark
Harris, Rebecca	Mercer, Johnny
Harrison, Trudy	Merriman, Huw
Hart, Simon	Metcalfe, Stephen
Hayes, rh Sir John	Miller, rh Mrs Maria
Heald, rh Sir Oliver	Milling, Amanda
Heapey, James	Mills, Nigel
Heaton-Harris, Chris	Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Heaton-Jones, Peter	Moore, Damien
Henderson, Gordon	Mordaunt, rh Penny
Hepburn, Mr Stephen	Morgan, rh Nicky
Herbert, rh Nick	Morris, Anne Marie
Hinds, rh Damian	Morris, David
Hoare, Simon	Morris, James
Hoey, Kate	Morton, Wendy
Hollingbery, George	Mundell, rh David
Hollinrake, Kevin	Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Hollobone, Mr Philip	Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
Holloway, Adam	Neill, Robert
Howell, John	Newton, Sarah
Huddleston, Nigel	Norman, Jesse
Hughes, Eddie	O'Brien, Neil
Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy	Offord, Dr Matthew
Hurd, rh Mr Nick	Opperman, Guy
Jack, rh Mr Alister	Paisley, Ian
Javid, rh Sajid	Parish, Neil
Jayawardena, Mr Ranil	Patel, rh Priti
Jenkin, Sir Bernard	Paterson, rh Mr Owen
Jenkyns, Andrea	Pawsey, Mark
Jenrick, rh Robert	Penning, rh Sir Mike
Johnson, rh Boris	Penrose, John
Johnson, Dr Caroline	Percy, Andrew
Johnson, Gareth	Perry, rh Claire
Johnson, rh Joseph	Philp, Chris
Jones, Andrew	Pincher, rh Christopher
Jones, rh Mr David	Poulter, Dr Dan
Jones, Mr Marcus	Pow, Rebecca
Kawczynski, Daniel	Prentis, Victoria
Keegan, Gillian	Prisk, Mr Mark
Kennedy, Seema	Pritchard, Mark
Kerr, Stephen	Pursglove, Tom
Knight, rh Sir Greg	Quin, Jeremy
Knight, Julian	Quince, Will
Kwarteng, rh Kwasi	Raab, rh Dominic
Lamont, John	Redwood, rh John
Lancaster, rh Mark	Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
Latham, Mrs Pauline	Robertson, Mr Laurence
Leadsom, rh Andrea	Robinson, Gavin
Lefroy, Jeremy	Robinson, Mary
Leigh, rh Sir Edward	Rosindell, Andrew
Lewer, Andrew	Ross, Douglas
Lewis, rh Brandon	Rowley, Lee
Lewis, rh Dr Julian	Rudd, rh Amber
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian	Rutley, David
Lidington, rh Mr David	Scully, Paul
Little Pengelly, Emma	Seely, Mr Bob
Lopez, Julia	Selous, Andrew
Lopresti, Jack	Shannon, Jim
Lord, Mr Jonathan	Shapps, rh Grant
Loughton, Tim	Sharma, rh Alok

Shelbrooke, Alec
 Simpson, David
 Skidmore, Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Spencer, rh Mark
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Bob
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunak, rh Rishi
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Swire, rh Sir Hugo
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Thomas, Derek
 Thomson, Ross
 Throup, Maggie
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Tredinnick, David

Trevelyan, Anne-Marie
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Tugendhat, Tom
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Walker, Mr Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whittaker, Craig
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, Mr William
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Ayes:

**Stuart Andrew and
 Iain Stewart**

NOES

Allen, Heidi
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Berger, Luciana
 Bryant, Chris
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Cable, rh Sir Vince
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
 Coffey, Ann
 Coyle, Neil
 Creasy, Stella
 Cunningham, Mr Jim
 Davey, rh Sir Edward
 Dodds, Jane
 Farrelly, Paul
 Farron, Tim
 Gapes, Mike
 Hayes, Helen
 Hermon, Lady
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Jardine, Christine
 Jones, Graham P.
 Jones, Helen
 Kyle, Peter
 Lake, Ben
 Lamb, rh Norman
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Leslie, Mr Chris
 Lloyd, Stephen
 Lynch, Holly

Martin, Sandy
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McInnes, Liz
 McKinnell, Catherine
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Moran, Layla
 Murray, Ian
 Owen, Albert
 Phillips, Jess
 Rodda, Matt
 Ryan, rh Joan
 Sandbach, Antoinette
 Saville Roberts, rh Liz
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Smith, Angela
 Smith, Owen
 Soubry, rh Anna
 Stevens, Jo
 Stone, Jamie
 Swinson, Jo
 Umunna, Chuka
 Whitfield, Martin
 Williams, Hywel
 Wilson, Phil
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Noes:

**Tom Brake and
 Jonathan Edwards**

Question accordingly agreed to, without the majority required under the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011.

Mr Speaker: The Ayes have it, but the House will be aware that the motion has not obtained the majority required under the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011.

The Prime Minister: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I note that the Leader of the Opposition is once again not in his place, in what I think is a slightly symbolic way.

Forty-eight hours ago, he was leading the chants of “Stop the coup and let the people vote,” and now he is saying, “Stop the election and stop the people from voting.” There is only one solution: he has become, to my knowledge, the first Leader of the Opposition in the democratic history of our country to refuse the invitation to an election. I can only speculate—[*Interruption.*] I can only speculate as to the reasons behind his hesitation. The obvious conclusion is, I am afraid, that he does not think he will win. I urge his colleagues to reflect on the unsustainability of this position overnight and in the course of the next few days.

Sir Bernard Jenkin: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Is there some way of tabling a motion “That this House has no confidence in Her Majesty’s Opposition”?

Mr Speaker: I note—

The Prime Minister *rose—*

Mr Speaker: No, I am dealing with one point at a time. One has to proceed in an orderly manner in these matters, I say to the Prime Minister. I am dealing with one point of order, and when I have dealt with it, I shall happily attend to another. It is evident from the smile on the face of the hon. Member for Harwich and North Essex (Sir Bernard Jenkin) that he is very pleased with the point he has made.

The Prime Minister: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. I was just going to elaborate by saying that this is the first time in history that the Opposition have voted to show confidence in Her Majesty’s Government.

Mr Speaker: Thank you.

ANIMAL WELFARE (SENTENCING) BILL

Bill to be considered tomorrow.

Business without Debate

SELECTION

Ordered,

That Christopher Pincher, Mark Spencer and Craig Whittaker be discharged from the Selection Committee and Rebecca Harris, Amanda Milling and Iain Stewart be nominated.—(*Jeremy Quin.*)

PETITIONS

Funding for Hollingwood Primary School

9.39 pm

Judith Cummins (Bradford South) (Lab): I rise to present this petition on behalf of the community of Hollingwood Primary School and the 343 parents, carers, staff and pupils who have signed it. They are seriously concerned about the impact that funding cuts are having on their school.

I would like to state, for the record, what an excellent school Hollingwood is. I know from visiting the school that the headteacher and his staff are continuing to

provide a quality education for all their pupils. However, they are doing so, like many schools, in increasingly difficult circumstances.

As the petition states, the school has seen a decline in funding per pupil of £297, and an overall reduction of £249,153 since 2019. This is having an impact on the ability of the school to provide a well-rounded education for all pupils. Several parents have written to me to say how much they value the extra support the school offers, and their fear that this may not continue given the funding reductions.

Many are concerned about the school's Busy Bees nurture programme, which supports the wellbeing of vulnerable children. The school's nurture practitioner has written to me to express her concern, and to tell me the value of the support that they provide. She recounted one young person returning to the school and recalling:

"I have my family at home, but Busy Bees was my family at school."

It is this sense of belonging and security that schemes such as nurture provide, and which we cannot afford to lose.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to increase per pupil funding and reverse the cuts made to school budgets.

Following is the full text of the petition:

[The petition of Parents, carers, staff and pupils of Hollingwood Primary School,

Declares that Hollingwood Primary School has seen a decline in funding per pupil of £297 and £249,143 overall in the sum allocated to the school between 2015 and 2019; further that the school is facing significant budget pressures as a result and is having to make changes to save money that impact directly on its ability to provide a well-rounded education for all pupils.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to increase per pupil funding and reverse the cuts made to school budgets.

And the petitioners remain, etc.]

[P002515]

Dispute in Kashmir

9.41 pm

Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP): First, I thank the many who managed to put this petition together and gather the signatures, particularly Abdul Majid, a stalwart campaigner in Glasgow, Dr Irfan Jahangir and Dr Javed Gill of the Scottish Human Rights Forum and their team of volunteers. They have put together a huge number of signatures, and I understand that more are still coming in to my office.

My constituents are deeply concerned for the welfare of their friends and relatives in Kashmir at the moment. They are concerned about the curfew and about the internet and media blackout that has been going on, despite the best efforts of organisations and journalists, including the BBC World Service, to bring some light on the situation. They seek the de-escalation of the conflict, time-limited talks and for the people of Kashmir to have the right to self-determination that they have long sought.

The petition reads:

The petition of Residents of the City of Glasgow,

Declares that the dispute in Kashmir should be resolved peacefully.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urge the UK Government to use its international standing to encourage India to engage in a comprehensive and sustained dialogue process with its neighbour Pakistan to resolve the Kashmir dispute, and urge the international community to play its role in securing a just and peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute in accordance with the aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

And the petitioners remain, etc.

[P002512]

Neil Gray (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): I rise to present a petition on the dispute in Kashmir. It is in similar terms to that of my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow Central (Alison Thewliss). I put on record my thanks, as she did, to those who collected the names for this petition from my constituents in Airdrie and Shotts.

The petition states:

The petition of Residents of Airdrie and its surrounding area

Declares that the dispute in Kashmir should be resolved peacefully.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urge the UK Government to use its international standing to encourage India to engage in a comprehensive and sustained dialogue process with its neighbour Pakistan to resolve the Kashmir dispute, and urge the international community to play its role in securing a just and peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute in accordance with the aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

And the petitioners remain, etc.

[P002516]

GCSEs and Dyslexia

9.44 pm

Sir Michael Fallon (Sevenoaks) (Con): I rise to present a petition on behalf of my constituent, Mrs Sonia Ash, which expresses concern about the current standards in marking GCSE English exams taken by students with dyslexia. This petition has been signed by over 10,200 people.

The petition states:

The petition of residents of Sevenoaks,

Declares concern over the current standards in marking GCSE English exams taken by students with dyslexia; further declares that many children with dyslexia are exceptionally gifted at English but struggle to pass their English GCSE due to how many marks are dedicated to spelling and punctuation; further notes that this is discrimination and can negatively affect children's futures, mental health and access to further education opportunities; and further notes a local petition started by Mrs Sonia Ash on this matter that has received over 10,200 signatures.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to review the current marking system in regard to students with dyslexia to make the system fairer and to remove marks for spelling, handwriting and punctuation on English GCSE exams for children with dyslexia, so they are not discriminated against.

And the petitioners remain, etc.

[P002513]

Funding for St John's CE Primary School

9.46 pm

Judith Cummins (Bradford South) (Lab): I rise to present this petition on behalf of the community of St John's CE Primary School, and the 366 parents and carers who have signed it. This petition highlights the

[Judith Cummins]

serious concerns that they have about the impact that school funding cuts are having on their school. St John's has seen a decline in funding per pupil of £306 and has lost £248,890 in total since 2015.

Every single school in my constituency has faced cuts such as these due to Government disregard for our children's future. These cuts mean fewer teachers, fewer support staff and schools cutting back on additional activities. They hit the most vulnerable children hardest and it is a disgrace.

Just this week, we have seen the Government's new funding announcement, and it is overwhelmingly targeted at schools in the south of England, bypassing schools with the most need in areas such as mine. I will always fight for proper funding for our schools, so that every child in Bradford South gets the start in life they deserve. I know that the hard-working teachers at St John's and all other schools simply want to provide well-rounded education to their pupils. It is time that we gave them the resources to do that.

The petition states:

The Petition of parents, carers, staff and pupils of St John's CE Primary School,

Declares that St John's CE Primary School has seen a decline in funding per pupil of £306 and £248,890 overall in the sum allocated to the school between 2015 and 2019; further that the school is facing significant budget pressures as a result and is having to make changes to save money that impact directly on its ability to provide a well-rounded education for all pupils.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to increase per pupil funding and reverse the cuts made to school budgets.

And the petitioners remain, etc.

[P002514]

Department of Health and Social Care: Treasury Funding

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

9.48 pm

Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con): It is a huge pleasure to see you, Madam Deputy Speaker, in the Chair this evening, not just because you are my constituency neighbour as the Member for Epping Forest, but because you have worked so hard alongside me to get a vital new hospital health campus in Harlow at the Princess Alexandra Hospital. I am hugely grateful to you for being here today. I am grateful to the Speaker for granting this debate, my fifth, on capital funding for the Health Department, particularly for new hospital projects. I strongly welcome the extra £34 billion that is going into the NHS over the next few years. The Government are rightly making the NHS a priority in their spending plan. In doing so, they are helping to create certainty for our hospitals, future-proofing them for the challenges ahead. However, this day-to-day funding does not account for bigger-scale capital funding projects, such as new hospitals. The *Health Service Journal* suggests that in the past two years NHS providers have requested about £8.7 billion of capital funding in more than 360 formal bids.

The Prime Minister's announcement of an £850 million cash boost for 20 new hospital upgrades is a step in the right direction, but we risk a healthcare crisis in this country if we do not act quickly. Many of our hospitals in England were built in the 1960s and 1970s and, while our model of care has modernised, the infrastructure has fallen behind. Many of our NHS hospitals are no longer fit for the 21st century, sadly none more so than the Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust in Harlow.

You will no doubt understand the frustration of our constituents, Madam Deputy Speaker, and those of our neighbours, particularly those who work at the Princess Alexandra, that our Harlow hospital was not included in the hospital upgrade programme announced by the Prime Minister. As well as the numerous letters and conversations with colleagues, I have raised on no fewer than 30 occasions during questions in the Chamber the need for a new hospital health campus to serve west Essex. I mentioned that this is my fifth debate. I have also tabled 11 Commons motions. I am pleased to see a number of right hon. and hon. Members here who have also championed the case for increased hospital funding. Six local MPs, including you, Madam Deputy Speaker, helped significantly in writing to the Health Secretary in May last year, pledging their support for a new hospital and acknowledging its importance to

"the vitality of community and also to the economy of the entire region."

Our passion and determination for a new health campus is founded in the desperate situation that we find ourselves in.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Robert Halfon: Of course. It is impossible not to give way to the hon. Gentleman—my hon. Friend, I should say.

Jim Shannon: I did seek the right hon. Gentleman's permission earlier today, before the Adjournment debate, to make an intervention. Does he not agree that it is tremendous to see the Government today, through the Chancellor's statement, listening to need and allocating additional funding for other things, such as policing, Northern Ireland and education, as well as some £1 billion, I understand, for health and social care? However, we do need a standard increase in the block budget under the Barnett formula for Northern Ireland. I suggest that that needs to be ring-fenced to provide frontline services that are also underfunded and on which there has to be a focus. I fully support his request to the Government, because across the whole of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland there are pressures on health and social care. It is important that everybody in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland sees the benefits.

Robert Halfon: I thank my hon. Friend. He has attended every debate I have secured on the Princess Alexandra Hospital in Harlow. That shows that there is not just support across Essex and Hertfordshire, but from as far afield as his constituency of Strangford and across Northern Ireland. His question, in essence, is about important funding for devolution and fair funding across the board. I completely agree with him and I thank him again for coming, on this fifth occasion, to support my campaign for a new hospital in Harlow.

We need a new hospital for four substantive reasons. First, and there are no two ways about it, the hospital estate is falling down. It is crumbling around staff, patients and visitors, so much so that it is inhibiting the work of our hardworking NHS staff who brought the hospital out of special measures in 2018. The Health Secretary himself, having visited the hospital at the start of this year, stated in this Chamber that:

"the basement of Harlow hospital is in a worse state of disrepair than the basement of this building."—[*Official Report*, 1 July 2019; Vol. 662, c. 941.]

That is saying something, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Given that the Palace of Westminster has been promised a £3 billion restoration, I ask the Minister: when will the Treasury prioritise the crumbling basement of our NHS hospital in Harlow? Whenever I visit Princess Alexandra Hospital—as a patient, visitor, or in my capacity as an MP—I am genuinely astounded by the quality of care and exceptional service that is delivered, as was the Health Secretary on his visit. Following a comprehensive tour, he said:

"I'm incredibly impressed with how much the staff are managing to do in the current facilities."

My inbox, however, is filled with the anxieties of constituents about the pressure on A&E and the condition of the estate. The doctors, nurses and specialists are working in extremely tight spaces, in an immensely pressurised environment. Staff simply cannot be expected to make service improvements, nor to meet NHS waiting time guidelines. I ask the Minister: how can we expect our NHS staff to deliver the high standards that we demand when they do not have the physical space, bed capacity or modern equipment to carry out their jobs?

In no other working environment would we expect as much in the 21st century. The remarkable hospital staff—everyone from the cleaners, porters, ancillary staff, nurses, doctors and consultants to the management

team, led by a very special chief executive, Lance McCarthy—have progressed in leaps and bounds. I am particularly grateful to the chief executive for his decision to keep domestic services in-house, protecting the jobs and livelihoods of many Harlow residents.

In July, I was delighted to welcome Kathy Gibbs into Westminster for the NHS parliamentary awards. She was a finalist for the lifetime achievement award after dedicating her entire career to Princess Alexandra Hospital in Harlow. The neonatal unit has received a number of accolades for its dedicated care and has recently been shortlisted as a finalist to receive the Bliss neonatal excellence team award. Should the Minister wish to see at first hand the brilliant work that is done in the busy maternity ward, I encourage him to catch up with the latest series of W Channel's documentary following TV personality Emma Willis as she joined our Harlow hospital team to train as a maternity care assistant.

All across the hospital, there is a collective effort to raise standards. The entire catering team at the hospital's restaurant were celebrating recently, having again been awarded a five-star food hygiene rating from environmental health officers. Despite the challenges that they face, Princess Alexandra NHS staff are making progress beyond expectations. In the light of their hard work and proven capabilities, does the Minister agree that our NHS staff are some of the most deserving of a new hospital and place of work that is fit for purpose? They have shown us what they can do in an outdated, difficult working environment—just imagine what they could achieve if they were given the tools to succeed.

Our population is growing at an extraordinary rate, placing enormous strain on local healthcare resources. Our hospital, and town, was built in the 1950s to serve a population of approximately 90,000. Since then, Harlow has seen considerable change, going from strength to strength. We have a thriving enterprise hub—Kao Park—which is home to a state-of-the-art data centre and international businesses such as Pearson and Raytheon, offering unparalleled employment opportunities to thousands of residents. Thousands of new housing developments are under construction to accommodate our fast-growing population and help first-time buyers to get on the ladder of opportunity.

Yet, with this extraordinary population growth, there is unbearable pressure on staff at the Princess Alexandra. Our hospital is struggling to cope with healthcare demands from around 350,000 people, exacerbated by the closure of nearby A&E units at Chase Farm Hospital and the Queen Elizabeth II Hospital. We have one of the busiest A&E units in the country and this trajectory of growth is only set to continue. Soon, Harlow will become home to Public Health England, and we have the chance to become the public health science capital of the world, offering employment to hundreds of people and bringing in many new residents. The near completion of junction 7A on the M11 will improve accessibility to our town, encouraging investment and prospects for business expansion. Given this faster-than-average population growth, does my hon. Friend the Minister agree that we cannot expect our NHS staff to bear the brunt of such demand without giving them the proper resource—a new health campus—to do so?

It is not only about numbers. The third challenge that Harlow faces has been caused by out-of-area placements into large-scale, commercial-to-residential conversions.

[Robert Halfon]

Permitted development rights legislation has been a disaster for our town. Many of the families placed in temporary accommodation in Harlow by London councils have additional healthcare needs and come to our hospital for medical support, yet neither our local council nor the Princess Alexandra Hospital are given any extra funding to provide this. We face unique pressures on our health and social care resources in Harlow. Does the Minister not agree that a healthcare campus would help to alleviate these pressures as well as offering space for further expansion?

Fourthly, as a champion of skills and the ladder of opportunity, which I know the Minister in his previous role cared deeply about, we need this health campus to create a hub for learning, skills, training, research and development in Essex. Already, the Princess Alexandra Hospital is winning awards for its high-quality training, mentoring and career progression. Fair Train, a national organisation championing work-based learning, awarded our Harlow hospital the gold rating—the top rating—for its workplace opportunities.

That said, the hospital faces immense challenges with recruiting and maintaining qualified professionals, in part due to the appeal of London hospitals and private practices just 40 minutes away. The new health campus would bring with it exciting opportunities for scientific research collaborations with Public Health England and local enterprises. Apprenticeships and unrivalled training courses with Harlow College would help to upskill our workforce and give Essex residents new opportunities to further their life chances.

The new healthcare campus in Harlow could lead the way in health science education and training. Does the Minister recognise the wider benefits that the new healthcare campus would have in upskilling people of all ages in Essex and Hertfordshire, creating employment and research opportunities and boosting our economic prospects? Will he help to make Harlow the health science capital of the world by granting the capital funding to make that a reality?

As the steady stream of investment into our Harlow hospital shows, the Government are aware of the unique pressures that the Princess Alexandra Hospital faces. At the start of this year, I was privileged to open the Charnley ward, a desperately needed £3.3 million development constructed in just four months. Last December, we received £9.5 million to provide additional bed capacity, and in the autumn there was a £2 million investment to make preparations for the busy winter period ahead. Does the Minister not agree, however, that it is the Conservative way to consider what is best value for money for the taxpayer and that, while short-term cash investment provides much-needed relief, it does not go to the heart of the problem?

Mr Jonathan Lord (Woking) (Con): My right hon. Friend is making a brilliant case for a new health campus in Harlow. Will he allow the Minister in response to dilate a bit on the need for money to follow where population growth has taken place, as it has in Surrey and Woking? He makes a very good case for that in terms of his constituency, but of course there are wider effects as well, particularly in terms of capital investment, as he rightly says.

Robert Halfon: My hon. Friend is a brilliant constituency MP. I talk to him a lot about these matters, and he has just hit the nail on the head. Population growth is crucial. The money should follow population growth, and I accept that this is a problem not only in Harlow but in his constituency, in Strangford and across the country.

The existence of these quick, cheap add-on structures can actually add to the problems. They were described by the former Health Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr Dunne), as “sub-optimal clinical adjacencies”. The convoluted layout of our hospital is making the job of our NHS hospital staff more and more challenging day by day. It is slowing down their work and costing the taxpayer more. The Princess Alexandra Hospital in Harlow faces costs of £153,000 per week just to maintain its current position.

The cost of eradicating the maintenance backlog nationally—in other words, carrying out repairs to meet a certain standard—has climbed year on year to about £6 billion, and the day-to-day running costs of NHS estates have risen to £8.8 billion. Outdated, deteriorating infrastructure is costing the taxpayer more and more each year. I welcome the Prime Minister’s commitment of an additional £1 billion to improve and maintain existing buildings, but we must recognise that Elastoplast solutions only generate a need for greater spending down the line. We need a capital injection that will cure the problem—a vaccine—and not a simple patch-up job.

Time and again, I have been informed that we have a real chance of securing the capital funding. Previous Health Ministers have visited the Princess Alexandra, and it has been visited by the current and previous Health Secretaries on a number of occasions. We have been told that we have a good case for the £400 million of capital funding required to build our new health campus and that the Government will

“look very seriously at the proposals”.

That was confirmed by a former health Minister, the hon. Member for Wimbledon (Stephen Hammond), during his visit to the hospital in May. However, nearly a year on, we still have not seen the major investment for which we have been collectively calling.

Does the Minister not recognise that the financially strategic way forward for both the taxpayer and the Government would be to grant the Princess Alexandra the capital funding that would enable it to commence its plans for a brand-new health campus? The trust’s board has worked incredibly hard to start planning for “a preferred way forward” that would provide the best value for money for the taxpayer. The final hurdle is the £400 million of capital funding, which would save money in the long run.

This scheme would have extraordinary benefits for our town and release land for more than 400 homes. We cannot sit by and let the building continue to deteriorate, pouring taxpayers’ money needlessly down the drain. We need drastic action. We need a new health campus for Harlow that is fit for the 21st century and will last for many years to come. We need it for Harlow, and we need it for the wider population of Essex and Hertfordshire.

10.7 pm

The Minister for Health (Chris Skidmore): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Robert Halfon) on securing this important debate. It is

the first debate to which I have been able to respond in my new role. I know that my right hon. Friend campaigns tirelessly on matters of healthcare in Essex and, in particular, on the issue of funding for the Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust. I also know that he met my predecessor to discuss issues, including the hospital's workforce and the services provided by the trust. This is the fifth debate that he has initiated on this issue, which may be a record in the House of Commons. We in the Department, and my officials who are sitting in the Box tonight, are fully aware of the concerns that he has raised. Let me explain why we continue to take them seriously and want to continue to work with him.

Both my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and my predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon (Stephen Hammond), have visited the trust over the past few months and seen at first hand the excellent work that is being done by NHS staff despite the challenges faced by the estate, which my right hon. Friend has described. I should be delighted if he welcomed a visit from me so I could see the estate and thank the staff for the excellent work that they have done in improving the hospital. My right hon. Friend described in his eloquent speech the commitment that the staff have given to the hospital, across the board, and I should be delighted to see that at first hand.

As my right hon. Friend knows, the Government have already made significant funding available for health capital investment, recognising that the NHS faces the challenges posed by poor infrastructure and ageing estates. Between 2016-17 and 2018-19, we increased capital funding by £1.3 billion, an increase of about 30%. As my right hon. Friend said, we have also announced a £1 billion funding boost for the NHS, along with 20 new hospital upgrades to help staff to deliver the best possible health services in their buildings. I have had the pleasure of touring some of these potential new upgrades, including in Luton and Dunstable, which is relatively near my right hon. Friend's patch, with a £99 million project, and Heartlands hospital in Birmingham, Barking, Stoke, Staffordshire and Croydon, to recognise that we do need to see upgrades—not just these 20 upgrades, but future additional upgrades.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care is committed to ensuring we make future investments in capital for the NHS. He recently set out that we will establish a new health infrastructure plan. This will be brought forward to deliver strategic major hospital rebuilding programmes, providing the necessary health infrastructure across the country. The shape of this will be confirmed in due course. I am not able to give specific details, but it will be similar to the road investment strategy process at the Department for Transport, with further long-term capital funding that we are discussing with our Treasury colleagues.

Delivering capital investment is a complex process and it takes time. I fully understand that my right hon. Friend has been very patient about the Princess Alexandra hospital, but this does need to be done thoroughly and professionally, alongside delivering the everyday healthcare services. There is a necessary process of assurance to ensure that services are transformed for the benefit of patients. This process is led by the trust, and includes a number of business case checkpoints and involves procurement, design, delivery and capability. Funding is provided when the full business case has been approved.

The 20 hospital upgrades announced in August were for hospitals that had just missed out on the sustainable transformation programme bid in December 2018, so were able to be progressed having followed the process.

I take the point raised on population growth. That is important in assessing future bids; they must be based on future patient demand, just as clinical commissioning group allocations are currently adjusted to population to take account of growth and movement. I take the point that the areas outside London in the home counties have increased population and population movement, and we are therefore constantly in a state of catch-up in local healthcare services.

I know that my right hon. Friend has also raised proposals to build a new hospital in Harlow with the Chancellor of the Exchequer; I know that because I saw a picture on his Twitter feed, and I am sure he will have listened closely to proposals to fund a new health campus in Harlow.

On 5 August the Government announced a £1.8 billion increase to NHS capital spending, on top of the additional £3.9 billion announced in the 2017 spring and autumn budgets. Some £1 billion of this increase will ensure existing upgrade programmes can proceed by tackling the most urgent projects, and £850 million of the funding will allow 20 new hospital upgrades. I am sure my right hon. Friend will welcome that Luton and Dunstable near his constituency will benefit from this. However, I know he will be understandably disappointed that the new health campus in Harlow scheme was not included on that list. However, the scheme has the support of the Secretary of State for Health and other Ministers, and I understand that the scheme is well developed. NHS Improvement and NHS England will continue to work with the trust to develop its options to tackle the challenges it faces and secure the best outcomes for patients.

In the wider Essex area, there have been several successful bids in the sustainability and transformation partnership tranche 4, which includes £4.2 million awarded to Luton and Dunstable renal dialysis unit relocation, £7.1 million awarded to the Hertfordshire and west Essex vascular surgery network, £11 million to the West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust emergency care transformation and in Suffolk and north-east Essex £18 million awarded to the East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust for infrastructure and capacity transformation.

I am sure that my right hon. Friend will agree that this affirms the Government's commitment to ensuring the region receives its share of NHS funding. We expect there to be further opportunities to access capital in future years, with the decision on what this looks like to be decided in due course. I am sure the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury will continue to listen to my right hon. Friend's appeals on this issue, and I will be happy to make representations on his behalf.

Earlier today, the Chancellor reaffirmed the Government's commitment to a £33.9 billion cash-terms increase in the NHS budget by 2023-24. This includes a £6.2 billion increase in NHS funding next year. This historic NHS settlement provides the largest cash increase in public services since the second world war. There is not time to go into the specific details of how this will be spent, but I would urge everyone, as part of their

[Chris Skidmore]

bedtime reading, to turn to page 9 of the Blue Book of spending round 2019 to see how some of that money is being spent. I am delighted that it will also include a £250 million funding boost for Health Education England next year, which is equivalent to 3.4% real-terms growth.¹ This will allow staff at the Princess Alexandra Hospital, particularly nurses, midwives and allied health professionals, to access a personal training budget of £1,000 for every member of staff of those professions. Staff at the hospital will be able to benefit from some of the announcements that have been made today.

As a former Universities Minister, I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend's work as Chairman of the Education Committee and to his statement about the importance of research in relation to the campus and the health hub. We recognise that, when it comes to training, there needs to be an holistic approach to funding. Yes, capital is important, but we must ensure that the individuals working in those new buildings feel that they have a place within their local NHS and that they want to stay there and continue to work there. That is why some of the announcements today on education and training are absolutely vital, and I am sure my right hon. Friend shares that commitment. Looking at some of the money that has been announced today, we also see that £250 million is to be invested in ground-breaking new AI technologies to help to solve some of healthcare's toughest challenges.

When we look at the Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust, we must also look at the Harlow science hub campus programme, which is incredibly exciting. I remember it being announced in the 2016 Budget, when I was the former Chancellor's Parliamentary Private Secretary. There was enormous excitement, and I would like to commend my right hon. Friend for his tireless campaigning relating to the public health campus, which would not have happened if it was not for him making the case in the first place and going to the former Chancellor and securing the funding. It will be the

largest centre of its kind in Europe, providing a new national centre for applied and public health science, as well as the headquarters of Public Health England. I know that this is still on schedule with the demolition work already under way, as is the preparation for the construction work, which starts early next year.

I know that Public Health England and the chief executive of the Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust have been in discussions over the last 12 months about what opportunities can arise as a result of the move to Harlow, and I hope to hear more about this soon. Indeed, I will be delighted to come up to Harlow as part of the visit to the hospital trust and to look at how we can explore developing the wider benefits that the scheme may have.

Robert Halfon: I thank my hon. Friend very much for what he has said and for his commitment to visit the Princess Alexandra Hospital. Just to be clear, will he confirm that there will be a capital fund from the Treasury for significant capital funding programmes for significant hospital upgrades and that the Princess Alexandra Hospital is very much on that list?

Chris Skidmore: This was announced today as part of the spending round document. Paragraph 2.4 states:

The Department for Health and Social Care will receive a new multi-year capital settlement at the next capital review. This will look to deliver a smarter, more strategic long-term approach to the country's health infrastructure, with investment focused on local areas where the need is greatest. The plan will include capital to build new hospitals".

I want to reassure my right hon. Friend that when it comes to the Princess Alexandra Hospital, it is under serious consideration in relation to ensuring that that refurbishment will be able to take place for the future.

Question put and agreed to.

10.18 pm

House adjourned.

1. [Official Report, 5 September 2019, Vol. 664, c. 3MC.]

Westminster Hall

Wednesday 4 September 2019

[JAMES GRAY *in the Chair*]

Artist Visas

9.30 am

Deidre Brock (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP): I beg to move,

That this House has considered artist visas.

As always, Mr Gray, it is a pleasure to serve under your chairship.

In Edinburgh, we have the best festivals in the world; not even Donald Trump could claim to have better festivals. They include the world's biggest arts festival, the Edinburgh festival fringe, and the wonderful book festival, which takes place in my own constituency of Edinburgh North and Leith, as well as the international festival, the film festival, the storytelling festival, the science festival, the jazz and blues festival, the art festival, the children's festival, the Hogmanay winter festival and, of course, the Edinburgh Tattoo. There is also the festival of politics, but that is not allowed to join the cool gang of festivals—not yet, anyway.

Those festivals grew out of a desire to rebuild international cultural co-operation after the second world war. Conceived in 1945 by Rudolf Bing, an Austrian who had fled the Nazis, the first festival was in 1947 and it reunited Bruno Walter with the Vienna Philharmonic. So much for the official festival. However, the spirit of rebellion that marks Edinburgh in August started in the same year, when six Scottish theatre companies and two English ones rocked up to stage their own shows and began what became the fringe. They were not alone. Forsyth Hardy and John Grierson added the film festival, too, showing 75 films from 18 countries in the Cameo cinema, which was not a bad result in 1947. All three festivals still run in Scotland's capital city and they have been joined by quite a few others, many of which I have already noted.

Figures for this year's festivals are not yet finalised, but the initial trawl suggests that the August festivals alone had more than 5,000 international participants. The actual number is closer to 5,500, according to figures provided by the festivals. Of course, that is only the performers. Many tens of thousands of international visitors also flock to Edinburgh every year. Of those international performers, 1,500—some 28%—were European economic area nationals, people who currently need no visa to travel to the UK. Just over half were non-EEA nationals who did not need visas. However, one in five were non-EEA nationals who required visas. Next year, we may have a whole different category of performers who will need visas and a whole set of hoops for the festivals to jump through to get them to Edinburgh to perform.

I have a fairly regular stream of immigration cases, as I know other Members do, but I also have an additional task every year, as the festivals find themselves struggling to get visas for their headline performers and ask for a bit of help. These are performers at the peak of their profession who are world-renowned and very successful.

They are being refused visas because they do not match up to a flowchart somewhere in the Home Office, or because some poor decision maker with a massive workload has to make very quick decisions on very complicated cases, which is one way to end up with poor decisions. Other Members representing Edinburgh and other areas that receive visiting artists may have similar stories.

I would like to take a moment to pay tribute to the civil servants in the UK Visas and Immigration team who answer the calls and emails from my office. They are professional and helpful, and they do what they can to help with these as well as many other cases. They are a credit to the service. However, they operate within a broken system and the fault for that lies with politicians.

The decisions made in Government create the systems that the civil servants have to work in and they are the decisions that create the ethos of the Departments. It is the political decisions that create the problems and it will be political decisions that can construct the solutions.

We need those solutions, because the damage done to the festivals and to our reputation is not limited to the individual performer thinking that it is a bit of a pain getting to Edinburgh in a particular year. The bigger damage comes from the impression being formed that it is a hassle getting to Edinburgh to appear in the festivals, and when performers start thinking that it might be too much hassle getting to Edinburgh. The damage comes when that consideration becomes part of the consideration that weighs in the balance against coming to Edinburgh, and when those considerations outweigh the considerations of benefits that might accrue from performing at the festivals.

When authors think, "The Edinburgh book festival would be good to appear at, but Cork would be okay, too, and there's less hassle getting to west Cork," we have a problem. The same would go for the Hay festival, the Cheltenham festival or the Beyond the Border festival. By the way, I have nothing against Cork. I could easily have mentioned instead Parisot or Charroux in France; the three festivals that take place in Barcelona; Fitzroy, Fremantle, Sydney, Alice Springs, Adelaide or several others in Australia; or Calgary, Vancouver or even New Westminster in Canada. There is no imperative for authors to come to the UK, and if we put barriers in their way we reduce the appeal of our festivals.

I would like Edinburgh to compete on a level playing field; it is the only way in which we will stay ahead of the competition. Of course, the same goes for arts festivals such as the international festival and the fringe. There are other festivals all around the world and the prestige of Edinburgh will not keep us ahead of them if the disincentives begin to outnumber the positives. That possible reluctance on the part of performers to come to Edinburgh might be mirrored by festival organisers deciding that the effort they have to put in to get performers to the stage is becoming burdensome. When they have so much to do to put the shows on in the first place, any extra burden becomes a serious consideration.

The statistics, too, seem to suggest there is a problem. Four years ago, more than one third of international performers at the fringe were visa nationals; this year, the figure was down to one quarter. In this year's book festival, four authors' events were put at risk by visa problems, and in the international festival a renowned choreographer and his dance troupe had major inconveniences. Some of Serge Aimé Coulibaly's dancers

[Deidre Brock]

had to travel from Burkina Faso to Ghana for their visa appointments—a 32-hour round trip—and then they had to pay for a courier service to get their passports back, to avoid having to repeat the journey. One of them, who is resident in Germany, had to return to Berlin from Burkina Faso to pick up his visa within the allotted timescale when it was granted more quickly than expected. The troupe had already performed at the Barbican in May and they will come back to the UK in November—if they get visas.

These people tour the world performing. Applying for visas through an appointment system, leaving their passports and returning to the visa centre to collect visas is, as we would say in Scotland, a right pain in the bahookey for them. From what I have heard from other areas around the world, these difficulties would appear to be easily surmountable with the right political will, and I imagine that they are difficulties faced by other would-be visitors as well.

I am grateful to Festivals Edinburgh for providing me with much of the information for this debate. It tells me that this dance troupe's difficulties are indicative of the kinds of problems faced by performers regularly; these are not exceptional circumstances. Freelance performers face problems in demonstrating income and reserves in cash terms, because the nature of their work means that their income comes in bursts. Then we have the slow decisions that endanger appearances; the refusals that are overturned on appeal, often with an MP's help; and the sheer uncertainty that the whole thing creates.

As I have said, these are political problems and political solutions can be found. I have to say that the festivals were cheered somewhat by the engagement of the previous Immigration Minister, the right hon. Member for Romsey and Southampton North (Caroline Nokes), and I am sure that the current Minister—the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, the hon. Member for South Ribble (Seema Kennedy)—has a record of that engagement. May I tell her, though, that the festivals are heartened by some of the actions taken, in particular the UKVI guidance for creative event managers, published in March, and the direct named contacts at UKVI and the Home Office? The festivals appear to be as impressed as I am with the civil servants.

That is a start, but we have to move far more quickly to get ahead of the game. In a couple of months, EEA citizens could be required to have visas to travel, adding a huge number of festival performers to the processes—if they still want to come. None of that takes account of the international visitors coming to watch events at the festivals or to see other things while they are here. There is also the parallel issue in the other direction, with the probability that the EU will require additional efforts from UK artists heading there.

Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab): I congratulate the hon. Lady on securing this important debate. Is it not the case that in the music industry, for example, many UK touring artists are not very wealthy? Often they are, in effect, a one-person band, travelling on budget airlines and taking their own instruments to their fan base around the European Union. Is there not a real danger that those people's livelihoods will be directly affected if we do not do something before Brexit?

Deidre Brock: I absolutely agree with the hon. Gentleman. As former performers, he and I know exactly how precarious that lifestyle can be. I met the chief executive officer of the Incorporated Society of Musicians yesterday. She indicated that she already knows of performers who have gigs in November and December in Europe that are already being called into question. They cannot get insurance to cover those gigs if they need to cancel. As the hon. Gentleman has pointed out, the probability that the EU will require additional efforts from UK artists heading there could limit our artists' ability to make a living.

Equity tells me that actors are regularly employed across the EU, often because they are English speakers, and that employment could be under threat after Brexit. Dancers are already seeing auditions for European companies drying up. These artists need freedom of movement so they can keep getting work. As the hon. Gentleman pointed out, musicians currently tour across the visa-free area in a way that will simply be impossible if freedom of movement ends without some sort of deal.

I will give the Minister a series of quotes that I have been given by a variety of organisations that deal with this matter. The Royal African Society—I know my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow North (Patrick Grady) will speak later about African visitor issues—has told me that it is

“increasingly coming across writers and filmmakers who have decided to boycott the UK, rather than go through the dehumanising process of applying for a visa”.

Literary Europe Live said that

“the time-consuming and humiliating visa application process damages UK's reputation and ultimately results in more and more artists turning down invitations to the UK”.

The Shambala festival said:

“If we do not change this system and make it more welcoming, Britain risks becoming increasingly culturally barren”.

English PEN said that writers have told it that

“they would not return to the UK with the current visa system”.

The Index on Censorship said that granting visas helps to address oppression and persecution. The British arts council said that problems with the visa process

“have the potential to have significant impact on our soft power standing and the ability to showcase a diverse range of international work in the UK”.

The Africa Centre said, rather pointedly:

“We grow as a society because of the development of culture and if we do not allow artists to share their stories with us, how do we grow?”

I pay tribute to the Shubbak festival, and to Nick Barley at the Edinburgh book festival and Julia Amour, the director of the Festivals Edinburgh group, for all their hard work. The Shubbak festival said:

“The Home Office's temporary visa application process is so administratively burdensome that it has become a deterrent, denying the British public access to some of the world's most compelling artists, performers, writers, musicians and thinkers.”

StAnza poetry festival spoke of poets missing festivals here and elsewhere in the EU because their passports had been lost by the Home Office or retained for far longer than expected. Tandem Collective and Oxford Contemporary Music said:

“Restrictions on artist visas undermine the efficacy of our work, severely reducing the diversity of cultures represented in our exchange programme, Ethno England.”

The Poetry Translation Centre team said that the visa system

“weakens the potential of the UK arts as artists here miss out on the opportunity to meet, experience, interact and collaborate with their counterparts around the world”.

Finally, the London international festival of theatre said:

“Countless artists are telling festivals and venues they are reluctant to accept invitations to come to the UK due to draconian visa process”.

I thank Parliament’s digital engagement team for gathering those opinions and the organisations for sharing their expertise and knowledge.

I am more than willing to share the full comments and quotations from those experts, and I certainly hope the Minister will listen to them. I will be following up on the issues with her, and the representatives of the artists and festivals have a range of things they want to talk about, but the visa system needs to be reviewed. In a digital information age, there should be far less necessity for applicants to travel hundreds of miles and surrender their passports for weeks or months at a time, especially when they are making repeated visits and have a record of obeying the conditions of their visas. We know that the passport pass-back service works in some centres, and it must be possible to roll that out. It must also be possible to extend the permit-free festivals route and the permitted paid engagement route. Surely we can reduce the costs, particularly for repeat travellers.

The festivals have a list of requests that they will be making of Ministers, and I am happy to speak to the Minister about any aspects. I would be delighted to facilitate a meeting for her with the festivals, Equity, UK Music and other interested parties that have been lobbying me, if that would be of help. I will do whatever I can to assist. I hope she will take me up on that. I urge her to act now and to act quickly. The damage may already be being done to Edinburgh’s festivals and to the reputation of our creatives around the world. Their prestige may be getting undermined through no fault of their own.

9.47 am

David Linden (Glasgow East) (SNP): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Gray. It is a particular delight to see an east end boy in the Chair.

James Gray (in the Chair): To clarify, that is the east end of Glasgow, not London.

David Linden: There is only one east end, Mr Gray. I start by paying tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh North and Leith (Deidre Brock), who secured this debate and has for quite some time been pursuing this issue, which is clearly significant for Edinburgh, where the festival has just finished.

On a cross-party note, I congratulate the Minister on taking up her new role. Since I came to this place in 2017, I have always found her to be incredibly helpful in my dealings with her. It is encouraging to have someone in the Home Office who we can hopefully work with, because for many Members, including those from Scotland,

immigration makes up a huge part of our case load. It is clear that there are ideological problems in the Home Office in how that policy is pursued, but a lot of it seems to be cock-ups. It is good to have the Minister in her role, and I look forward to hearing what she has to say.

Once again we find ourselves in the frustrating position of coming to Westminster Hall to discuss visas and how cumbersome they are. Only a couple of months ago I led a debate about religious worker visas, and during the recess I spoke to a lot of Catholic priests in my constituency who are incredibly frustrated by the UK Government’s approach to religious worker visas. I appreciate that that is another issue for another day, but I certainly hope that the Minister will be able to look at that again.

One of the things that is incredibly frustrating about the situation with artist visas is that it is just another manifestation of the hostile environment from the UK Government. That is particularly frustrating for us in Scotland, because we do not view immigration policy as somehow being a negative issue. Our problem has never been immigration; our problem has been emigration. I get incredibly frustrated that we have a UK Government who are pursuing this ideological policy of pulling up the drawbridge, shutting off the border and stopping people from coming here.

There is an economic problem with that, and my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh North and Leith outlined some of that. The Scottish Government in particular have problems with the policy. The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs, Fiona Hyslop, said:

“The Scottish Government has long-standing concerns about how easily artists and performers can come to Scotland for the Edinburgh international festivals, and about the problems that delayed visa processes...and refusals that are then overturned—

on appeal—

“can cause organisers of festivals of all sizes.”

My hon. Friend outlined the difficulty with the number of people who decide not to come, which is clearly distressing. As I would expect her to do, she talked about the situation in Edinburgh, which is of course Scotland’s lesser city. I will turn now to Glasgow.

Glasgow is already an innovative creative leader in Europe. With artists travelling on a visa, it allows art and talent to come and be shared with us in Glasgow. If anybody here has not taken part in or not come along to see Celtic Connections, I encourage them to do so. Celtic Connections is one of Scotland’s biggest creative events. It attracts and has hosted 2,000 artists from 25 countries taking part on 35 stages across the city. To give an idea of how economically significant that is, in Scotland we have more than 15,000 businesses employing more than 70,000 people, contributing more than £5 billion to the Scottish economy. I get frustrated because we clearly have initiatives to try to get people to come to Scotland—homecoming, Celtic Connections, the Edinburgh festival—but the Scottish Government have one hand tied behind their back because of the ridiculous visa problems that emanate from the UK Government.

There are two solutions. Unionists thinking slightly more longer term might say, “Let us have a form of regional immigration policy where aspects of the policy can be devolved and decided by the Scottish Government.

[David Linden]

We can tailor that to our needs”, as has been outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh North and Leith. If the UK Government are so intransigent and do not want to look at regional immigration policy and devolving certain immigration powers—for example, for visas—the only solution left is to go on our own path towards independence. It is telling that last night there was a poll in *The Times* that showed that if a general election takes place, which we in the SNP would certainly relish, we will find that not only do we have a hostile environment from the Home Office, but ultimately Scotland will be a hostile environment for Tory policies that have a negative and devastating impact on our economy. I very much look forward to the day when we can have that general election and indeed independence to sort out these issues for ourselves.

9.52 am

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Gray. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow East (David Linden) claims you as one of his own, but I believe we once had a conversation that established that your place of birth was in fact the west end of Glasgow, in the constituency of Glasgow North.

James Gray (in the Chair): Order. The hon. Gentleman might be at risk of misleading the House inadvertently. I was in fact born in Rottenrow, which is in Dennistoun in the east end of Glasgow.

Patrick Grady: I stand corrected, but was there not a connection to the west end? [Laughter.]

James Gray (in the Chair): This is not of direct relevance to the debate, but just for clarity I was born and brought up in Dennistoun in the east end of Glasgow. When I was four years old, I moved to Great Western Road in the west end of Glasgow. I went to school and university there.

Patrick Grady: There we are. It has been established. I apologise for inadvertently misleading the House, Mr Gray, but I am glad that I now have the privilege of representing an area where, once upon a time, you bestrode the streets of the west end of Glasgow, which is of course the site of much of Glasgow’s creative industry and vibrant cultural scene, which is why the issue of artists’ visas is so important.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh North and Leith (Deidre Brock) on securing the debate. This is not the first time that difficulties with the visa system have been raised in Westminster Hall, and it will not be the last. It might not be the last time that the Minister has to respond to debates on such topics, although we live in turbulent times. I welcome her to her post. She will have quite a heavy in-tray in the coming weeks and months, but the issue of visas will dominate it, and the speeches and contributions that we have heard from Members explain why.

I want to look briefly at the importance of the creative sector to the UK and Scotland’s economy. The reports that we have heard about illustrate a massive contradiction in Government policy. I want to dwell a

little on the specifics of artists travelling from Africa because I have a personal interest and some experience there, and it speaks to the broader policy issue in general. I also want to look at the question of Brexit and its consequences for travel across the European Union.

The creative sector is, as we have heard, hugely important to the economy of the UK as a whole. We are just coming to the end of the festival season. Great cultural festivals include the Edinburgh festival, which is hugely significant and well appreciated and enjoyed. I am happy to continue the rivalry between whether bigger is necessarily better when we consider what Glasgow has on offer compared with Edinburgh. There are other festivals across the UK such as Womad and the festivals that my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh North and Leith cited. I pay tribute to the digital engagement team for the way in which it reached out to other organisations and allowed their voices to be heard. I thoroughly recommend that all of the statements be made available to Members, perhaps through the Library, and that the Minister pays particular attention. My hon. Friend quoted from most of them, but I will draw the House’s attention to one or two comments from the various people who contributed.

The music director of the Shambala festival, an international festival of music and art, talked about the multi-faceted nature of the issues and the costs:

“We are often seeking performances from acts that may only have one or two shows in the UK. The costs for Visas for a large band are...spread over very few shows...Secondly, the application is a bureaucratic nightmare that takes a very long time to process and...includes the applicants having to hand over their passports for weeks”,

which, as was suggested in interventions, makes it difficult for the artists to do their jobs anywhere else. The artistic director of the Shubbak festival said:

“The current visa system is unsustainable for the artists we work with. Shubbak’s producers spent a significant amount of time, effort and costs to support artists in their process of visa applications. The forms are overlong and advice is often contradictory.”

Shubbak is one of the largest celebrations of Arab culture that takes place in the UK, particularly here in London.

It appears from the briefing that the quotes from the London international festival of theatre have been endorsed by a significant number of other people from the creative industries. As my hon. Friend said, countless artists are telling festivals and venues that they are reluctant even to accept invitations to come because of the draconian visa process, but they also suggest solutions:

“While we recognise the need for scrutiny...we suggest a number of key developments which...will help alleviate this situation.”

They include reducing the costs, faster processes, clearer information to applicants and opening more application centres. I will come back to that, but it is certainly true of the findings of the all-party groups on Africa, migration and Malawi.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow East spoke about Celtic Connections, a festival very close to my heart. I have taken part in its events for many years and I have good friends who perform in it almost every year. At this time last year, the director of the festival, Donald Shaw, a highly regarded musician and creative talent in Scotland and a real driving force behind the

festival, expressed his frustration about artists who are not even willing to consider coming to the festival now because they know of the barriers that will face them. He said:

“These are top-class musicians who have been travelling around the world for over 20 years. Britain now has a very solidly-locked gate, certainly in terms of African visas. The whole thing undermines us as a Scottish festival with an international outlook.”

That is the contradiction: the United Kingdom says it is open for business—that that is the great thing about Brexit, which will take us back on to the world stage. They spend millions, if not tens and hundreds of millions of pounds on “Britain is GREAT” posters, which we see all over the place. Whenever we go overseas and visit UK embassies or see adverts taken out in aircraft brochures, we see “Britain is GREAT”, “Britain is open for business”, but then as soon as somebody applies to come here they are told Britain is not open for business; it is closed. There is a massive contradiction in policy and it is a huge act of self-harm to the economy, society and culture.

Kevin Brennan: What the hon. Gentleman says is absolutely right. Is it not also the case that not only are the restrictions draconian, but the Home Office deliberately runs its visa programme as a money-making racket? That is what it is.

Patrick Grady: Absolutely. It is particularly important to the creative sector when the operating margin for visas is so small. Most people go into the creative sector out of a love for their art, and to contribute to society and culture as much as to the economy, but if they are successful the margins can have a positive economic input as well. Yet the visa policy is driving that down and making it more difficult for people to make that economic, as well as cultural and social, contribution.

I am reminded of testimony from a very senior official in the African Union—a trade commissioner who came to speak to us at an event in the House of Lords. He was invited by the Lord Mayor of London, yet had to jump through hoops. He was asked for his wedding licence and for proof of his income, despite being effectively a diplomat. To be fair, he got his visa and managed to get here, which is better than some. He says that every time he flies out of Addis, he sees business class sections of planes going into Brussels that are full and business class sections of planes going into London that are half empty. That is a pretty stark demonstration of the visa policy's impact.

I saw the impact myself recently, when I was in Malawi with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and we visited the UK high commission. The first thing that we saw when we came in was a great pop-up banner saying, “Come to the UK and study on the Chevening scholarship.” Yet the night before, when we had met with local stakeholders, campaign groups and so on, we had heard stories of people who had applied for—and been granted—Chevening scholarships but were not getting visas, were being made to jump through hoops, or found that the visas were far too expensive.

Such stories are borne out by the joint report from the all-party parliamentary group on Malawi, the APPG for Africa and the APPG on diasporas, development and migration, which found that

“September 2018 Home Office quarterly statistics show that while 12% of all visit visa applications made between September 2016 and September 2018 were refused, the refusal rate for African visitors was over double this, at 27% of applications.”

There is therefore a particular challenge regarding visas for African musicians, business people, religious ministers and so on, much of which is down to the system, to the creation of a hub and spoke model, and to the attempt to outsource the applications to private companies and then to drive the decision-making process on to some kind of online, algorithm-based system, often based here in the United Kingdom.

Another story emerged from the same visit. The Information Minister from the Malawian Government could not get his fast-track visa approved in time; he was supposed to be in the UK while we were in Malawi. His visit was cancelled in the end because his visa did not come through in time, even though presumably the Malawian Government and Malawian taxpayers—or, indeed, Department for International Development money that helps to support the Malawian Government—financed his fast-track visa application, which was no such thing. Such incidents cause nothing but embarrassment for officials in the high commissions and embassies, who cannot do anything because the left hand seemingly does not know what the right hand is doing, and all the decisions are outsourced to Pretoria. At the same time, I echo the comments that my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh North and Leith made about the incredibly hard-working staff both in the embassies and high commissions and in the visa inquiry teams, who are massively overburdened. That simply increases the expense, bureaucracy and contradiction.

Ultimately, if we want the visas, we have to make inquiries or get up and ask questions of Ministers, and the House of Commons Chamber becomes a kind of court of appeal for visas that should simply have been granted in the first place. None of these artists are coming here to abscond or so that they can live on the British welfare state or get jobs as Uber drivers. They are world-class musicians. They are travelling all around the world and are welcomed to other countries with open arms. Only in the United Kingdom—only in “Britain is GREAT” and “Britain is open for business”—are they told that they cannot come.

Deidre Brock: A number of us have been pursuing this matter for some time. It is interesting that every time we have asked Ministers to set out how many folk in the creative industries who have come to the UK have absconded, they cannot answer. I think the last time, they suggested that it would take too much time, and money perhaps, to find that information, but if the Government are so worried that people will abscond, why do they not know exactly how many people have absconded in the past?

Patrick Grady: Exactly—that is part of the issue. Perhaps the Minister can answer that question. People are counted into the country but very rarely counted out, so the statistics do not exist, but all the anecdotal evidence suggests that such people go back. It is pretty easy to tell whether a musician has absconded because if they do not turn up to their next gig in Germany, France or wherever they were going next on their tour, it is pretty obvious.

[Patrick Grady]

I suppose that brings us to the consequences of Brexit and the specific issue of visas for travel in Europe. At the moment, freedom of movement means that artists from anywhere in the European Union can travel to anywhere else in the EU without any hassle. That makes it cheaper, easier and better for reasons that we have already discussed, but if freedom of movement comes to an end—and especially if it comes crashing to an end on 31 October—everybody will be left in a state of chaos and cataclysm.

It is very important that the Government are working on that issue. A lot of organisations—we heard about the Musicians' Union and the Incorporated Society of Musicians—have done a significant amount of work on both identifying what the challenges will be and suggesting some solutions. The ISM, for example, said clearly that “the music workforce depends on EU27/EEA countries for professional work”.

It also said that

“the music workforce relies on UK-EU mechanisms to support and enable them to work”

and travel, and that already

“the impact of Brexit on musicians' work has been widespread and negative”.

It therefore made a series of recommendations about what can be done. One of the most significant is:

“If freedom of movement rights cease, the Government must introduce a two-year, cheap and admin-light, multi-entry touring visa”

so that musicians, and indeed their musical instruments, can get in and out of the country as freely as possible, and the creative industry's important contribution can continue.

As I said at the start, the Minister will have to get used to such debates. Many Members feel passionately about this matter, because our constituents and economies are affected, and in many cases we have personal connections to people who are affected as well. The visa policies and the experiences of artists, creatives and those in wider parts of society completely contradict the Government's rhetoric on global Britain. In fact, what we are seeing, as my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow East said, is a continuation of the hostile environment.

It is all well and good for the Government to say, “We've changed. The hostile environment is a thing of the past.” The lived daily experience of people who want to come to this country and share their creative talents and passions is that the hostile environment is still in place. That will change only when the policy starts to change and the administrative burdens are changed. That means easier processing, cheaper visas and a much more straightforward way of people applying and having their sponsors taken seriously. We hope the appointment of the new Minister will lead to some change, and we look forward to hearing what she has to say.

10.7 am

Afzal Khan (Manchester, Gorton) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Gray. I thank the hon. Member for Edinburgh North and Leith (Deidre Brock) for securing the debate and all those who have contributed to it.

There is no doubt that the UK's thriving creative sector is of huge economic and cultural importance. Taken together, the creative industries contribute more than £100 billion to the economy and account for one in 10 jobs across the UK. Last year, an estimated 29.1 million people attended festivals and concerts across the country. Beyond the statistics, the creative industry is also an essential part of our national identity and a crucial instrument of the UK's soft power on the world stage.

The temporary movement of talent across borders is crucial to the continued economic success of this world-leading sector. Within the music industry, 13% of the workforce are European nationals and, with a disastrous no-deal Brexit looming, they are understandably concerned for their future. This prosperous industry is able to flourish thanks to the diverse, global talent that contributes to all its sectors. It is therefore vital that that talent does not become yet another victim of the Government's shambolic handling of Brexit.

Back in 2017, Labour made it clear that we were committed to putting the needs of the creative sector at the heart of any Brexit negotiation, but instead of listening to our call the Government have run down the clock on our negotiating time and unashamedly ignored the needs of the creative sector. A large proportion of artists' income is reliant on their ability to freelance and tour cheaply and easily. Doing so also allows them to reach new audiences across borders and cultures. Does the Minister recognise that many artists will not meet the £30,000 income threshold due to the nature of their work, and that this will further limit access to new creative talent in the UK?

Today's debate has raised three interconnected problems. The first is that, as a result of this Government's chaotic Brexit strategy and the increasing likelihood of a no-deal Brexit, UK artists have an uncertain future in the EU. Movement across European borders is vital for the continued success of the UK's creative sector. Currently, artists from across the EU do not need permission to perform in venues across the UK, and vice-versa. That means that an artist can perform in Amsterdam one night and Manchester the next without incurring any associated costs or red tape. Changes to that ease of movement will affect all those involved in the music industry, from large orchestras to up-and-coming musicians touring on a bootstrap.

As we look set to leave the EU, European artists will also now have to consider their ability to travel and tour in the UK. European artists due to perform in the UK in the coming months are now facing grave uncertainty, thanks to the situation that this Government have created as we head towards exit day. What is the Minister doing to reassure British and European artists that they will be able to continue to contribute to the creative sector in a post-Brexit world?

I will put Brexit aside for a moment to touch on the issue of non-EEA artists who come and tour here in the UK. As it stands, those artists are eligible for tier 5 temporary creative worker visas, permitted paid engagement visas and standard visitor visas. Big festivals and events such as the Edinburgh international festival and the Manchester international festival use those routes to bring thousands of foreign artists to the UK each year. In Edinburgh alone, the participation of those artists

helps to attract an audience of 4.7 million to the city each year and generates over £300 million in cultural tourism.

Sadly, however, those artists are too often being turned away by the Home Office due to delays and poor decisions. Just last year, the prominent Palestinian writer Nayrouz Qarmout was refused entry three times before the Home Office eventually relented. In a similar case, the first showcase of Arab artists at the Edinburgh fringe festival was forced to cancel several of its productions after nearly a quarter of visas for performers were refused. From my own experience in Manchester, an internationally renowned artist who was due to perform at the festival was refused a visa and faced long delays in dealing with the Home Office. As a result of those issues, my team and I stepped in at the last minute and worked to ensure that artist was able to perform at the festival. Those artists are vital to the cultural enrichment of British society and should be welcomed by the Home Office, not turned away. Has the Minister considered the impact of the Government's hostile environment on the creative sector, and will she engage with the industry to consider reforming the tier 5 visa application?

As we are all too aware, the hostile environment policies pursued by the Government have had an untold effect on migrants travelling to, working in, and creating a home in the UK. It is high time that the Government put an end to those policies. Labour has committed to dismantling this Government's immigration regime and building a new system that is fair, open and welcoming.

I know I have touched on only a few of the issues raised in this debate, but I hope the Minister will provide answers to the questions I and colleagues have raised today. I will finish by saying this: if the Government continue to ignore the needs of the creative sector, they will wreak havoc on the UK's cultural exports, our international soft power and our economy. It is vital that the UK's creative sector does not continue to suffer under the Government's irresponsible Brexit strategy or their hostile environment. The Government need to act now.

10.14 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Seema Kennedy): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Gray. I congratulate the hon. Member for Edinburgh North and Leith (Deidre Brock) on having secured this important debate, and I am grateful to her and to all other hon. Members who have spoken, one of whom has left his place. I also pay tribute to my predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Southampton North (Caroline Nokes), for the work she has done on this issue. I have had a meeting with her and discussed it, and I know that she took it very seriously.

The hon. Lady has rightly praised the magnificent Edinburgh festivals; of course, there is a great range of them. I was very lucky to speak at one of the fringe events in 2018. It was an amazing atmosphere, and it is a world-leading festival. The creative sector is a hugely important part of the UK's economy; as the hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Afzal Khan) has touched on, it generates over £100 billion per annum, and those creative industries are growing.

Importantly, as I have said before in this Chamber when speaking from the Back Benches, this exchange of people and ideas is not just an economic issue, but very important socially and culturally. The Government are committed to that and recognise the role that international collaboration plays in our social, economic and cultural life. I am happy to meet with the hon. Member for Edinburgh North and Leith, the festival organisers or Equity to discuss these matters, and also to hear at more length the contributions that the hon. Member for Glasgow North (Patrick Grady) referred to in his letters. Perhaps he could expand on those.

Under the existing immigration system for non-EEA nationals, there are dedicated arrangements for creative individuals. Hon. Members have raised several points, which I will try to address. Artists, entertainers and musicians who come here as visitors to perform at events, take part in competitions or perhaps have auditions can come for up to six months. There is, of course, the permit-free festival list: several, although not all, of the festivals that have been referred to are on that list. It enables festivals to showcase international artists, entertainers and musicians such as the ones we have heard about. Exceptionally, those visiting performers can come to the UK for up to six months and be paid for their participation without needing formal sponsorship.

Celtic Connections, the Cheltenham festivals, the Edinburgh fringe festival, the Edinburgh international festival, the Edinburgh jazz and blues festival, the Hay festival, the Edinburgh tattoo, and WOMAD are all part of the permit-free festival list, which shows that the Government have listened and things have changed.

Deidre Brock: I appreciate that many of those festivals are part of that group, but does the Minister acknowledge that the list disadvantages much smaller festivals that do not have the capacity or funds to participate to the same extent as larger ones?

Seema Kennedy: Of course, in all areas of life smaller organisations are always disadvantaged. However, because I am quite new to this role, I am not entirely sure whether an artist going to, for example, Celtic Connections could then go to a smaller festival in the ambit of those six months. Because I am not entirely sure, I will not give an answer; I will clarify by writing to the hon. Lady.

The current tier 5 creative and sporting route can be used by musicians, actors or artists. Some of those nationals can benefit from visa-free travel to the UK for up to three months if they get a certificate of sponsorship, and a 12-month working visa is also available. However, that generous offer must be balanced against the need to keep the country safe and secure.

We have visas for a reason: so that we can see who is coming in and out of the country. Last year, more than 2.3 million visitor visas were granted, which is an 8% increase on the previous year. People came for leisure, study or business visits. The service standard for processing a visit visa is 15 working days, and last year UK Visas and Immigration processed 97% within that target. Over the recess, I had the great pleasure of visiting UKVI and speaking to several colleagues who work there. I, too, pay tribute to them for their work.

The onus of a system of this scale is on the applicant to demonstrate that they satisfy the rules, but we want to carry on working as closely as we can with stakeholders

[Seema Kennedy]

to make sure that we are delivering an excellent service. This debate and the subsequent meetings that we will have are part of that. We need to preserve the integrity of our immigration controls.

David Linden: The Minister talks about 2.3 million visas having been granted. On protecting the integrity of the system, does the Home Office have statistics on how many people have absconded? Is it willing to put that into the public domain?

Seema Kennedy: I will come to that point later.

Last year, we published new guidance for UK creative event managers that provided an overview of what to consider in terms of planning for visas. We now have dedicated points of UKVI contact for those UK organisations organising UK events, which the hon. Member for Edinburgh North and Leith referred to. I am sure that people organising major creative events or international conferences will be able to take advantage of that. I bear in mind her point about smaller groups.

Afzal Khan: The Minister talked about achieving 97% in 15 working days. Is she willing to give us a breakdown of the different countries?

Seema Kennedy: I am not entirely sure, but I imagine that such things are in the public domain. I am almost positive that they are available, because of our great transparency, but I will not say from the Dispatch Box where they are when I do not actually know. I would never want to mislead the House.

We are working closely with other Government Departments, particularly the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. Officials have met sector representatives to understand the requirements of the creative sector. We have listened to stakeholders to ensure that our systems strike the right balance in terms of customer use and the integrity of our controls.

We want people to apply for their visas as early as possible. We published guidance for UK event managers that provides an overview of what to consider in terms of planning for visas and we also now have dedicated events. On what the Home Office and UKVI are doing, in May we published new guidance for our decision makers, including escalation procedures, to ensure that when they are assessing and making decisions on visitor visa cases, they consider all the evidence in the round, particularly UK sponsorship.

The hon. Member for Cardiff West, who is no longer in his place, referred to fees. I wholeheartedly disagree that they are a racket. The Immigration Act 2014 set out the governing factors that must be given regard to when fee levels are set: they include the cost of administering the service, the benefits likely to accrue to the applicant on a successful outcome, the costs of operating other parts of the immigration system, the promotion of economic growth, the fees charged by or on behalf of the Governments of other countries for comparable functions, and any international agreement. Having said that, we keep all visa, immigration and nationality fees under review.

Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab): I apologise for not having been able to be present at the start of the debate.

On the point about fees, I have many cases where people's visa applications are rejected for minor points, because a document has gone missing or they did not provide something with the right date. If it is rejected, they have no right of appeal, so they have to start all over again, not quite knowing what they did wrong. Would it not be easier if officials could just phone people up and say, "You haven't sent in a copy of your landlord's agreement", or whatever is required? It would save so much money.

Seema Kennedy: Due to the nature and the great volume of visa applications, there are obviously cases where documents go missing at either end or where there is not clarity. If the hon. Lady has specific examples—

Kerry McCarthy: I have lots!

Seema Kennedy: My pile of letters is like the magic porridge pot—it never gets to the bottom. I am very happy to look at them.

I am aware of some of the problems experienced by international artists coming to the UK, to which we have heard reference today. There have been some refusals. I realise that delays or errors can have serious personal consequences for the individual, and reputational and economic consequences for the UK organisers of events. As I have said on several occasions, however, I am committed to making the visitor system as simple and straightforward as possible, and to ensuring that decisions are right first time. That is important. We want to continue to deliver an excellent service for our customers.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh North and Leith referred to passports being lost. Everybody has the option to use the "Keep My Passport When Applying" service, but if she writes to me with a specific example of a lost passport, I will happily look into it.

The hon. Member for Glasgow North is a great champion of issues relating to Africa in this place. My predecessor met the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne Central (Chi Onwurah), who is the chair of the all-party parliamentary group for Africa. We are keen to look at that issue. Visa applications from African nationals are at their highest level since 2013. The percentage of African nationals whose applications were granted is up by 4% on 10 years ago. The average issue rate for non-settlement visa applications submitted in the Africa region is consistent with the average issue rate for the last three years, which is 75%. There are problems in some cases, however; the hon. Gentleman referred to the difficulties that some of the people with whom he is engaged in Malawi have encountered with the new hub-and-spoke configuration of the system. I will keep that under review.

The hon. Member for Glasgow East (David Linden) talked about an immigration system with regional variations. We are clear that our future immigration system must work for every nation, region and community in the UK. We remain invested in fully engaging with the devolved Administrations. A regional immigration system is clearly problematic because we do not have internal controls. The Department considers that, given the complexity and scale of the effort, distortions or unintended

consequences could result from divergent approaches in the nations of the UK. The Migration Advisory Committee has noted that it does

“not consider that there is a strong economic case for regional differentiation in migration policy”.

On the hon. Gentleman's point about people who have absconded, I am afraid that we cannot reveal numbers. If an individual claims asylum, we cannot reveal it, because it could have an impact on his or her case. It is also difficult to quantify the number of people who are here illegally and have not brought themselves to the attention of Immigration Enforcement.

I turn to the future. The Prime Minister has been clear that we are leaving the European Union on 31 October, which will mean that freedom of movement as it stands will end when the UK leaves the EU. EU citizens will still be able to come to the UK on holiday and for short trips, but the arrangements for people coming to the UK for longer periods of time and for work and study will change. Details of other changes immediately after 31 October, and improvements for the new immigration system, are being developed.

I finish by paying tribute to all hon. Members who have spoken today. They take the issue of our cultural life, the free exchange of ideas and the contribution of artists to our economy very seriously, as do the Government. In the Home Office, on visas, we have to balance that against keeping our borders safe and secure. I look forward to engaging with hon. Members on this issue in the future.

10.29 am

Deidre Brock: This has been an excellent debate. I really appreciate everyone's contributions, including those of my hon. Friends the Members for Glasgow East

(David Linden) and for Glasgow North (Patrick Grady). They gave excellent SNP support for the issue, although we will leave to one side their fantastical belief in the superiority of Scotland's second city.

I also commend the hon. Members for Bristol West (Thangam Debbonaire), for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy), for Cardiff West (Kevin Brennan) and for Manchester, Gorton (Afzal Khan) for their contributions. I welcome the Minister to her place. Her appointment is a relief, as there was a bit of delay between the previous Minister leaving and the present Minister arriving, to the dismay of a number of organisations that are anxiously waiting for developments in the brief. I welcome her offer of a meeting, and I will immediately set about co-ordinating that with a variety of the many interested parties straightaway.

As the Minister has heard from hon. Members, and from the many comments I mentioned from a wide range of organisations, despite the small amount of movement that we have seen, which is to be welcomed, numerous bodies are continuing to experience considerable difficulties. There must be improvement as soon as possible. I look forward to that meeting. I also very much hope that the Minister will take up the invitation from the Cabinet Secretary for Culture in the Scottish Government to the forthcoming summit on the issue, and particularly on visas for festival performers. I hope she will look out for the invitation in her mailbox. I thank all hon. Members for their contributions; this has been a very useful debate.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered artist visas.

10.31 am

Sitting suspended.

Vessel Emissions: River Thames

11 am

Matthew Pennycook (Greenwich and Woolwich) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered emissions from vessels on the River Thames.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship once again, Mr Gray, and I am pleased that amid the current political turmoil time has been found to debate this important issue, which is of real concern to large numbers of my constituents. I have been seeking the debate for some time, and I am grateful to the Minister who will respond to it on what has been short notice.

The Minister is well aware, not least because of the numerous times I have raised this in the main Chamber, of the historical proposal to construct a cruise liner terminal at Enderby Wharf in east Greenwich, in my constituency. That proposal was extremely contentious locally, not because large numbers of my constituents were implacably opposed to the siting of a terminal in the area or did not recognise that it had the potential to make a positive contribution to Greenwich in tourism, jobs and revenue for local business, but because residents would not accept—I count myself as one of them—the negative impact that the terminal as proposed would have had on local amenities and, in particular, on the quality of the air we breathe.

For that reason, I fought alongside local community and amenity groups to secure a clean, green terminal at Enderby Wharf—one that would have met the highest, not just the most basic, environmental and air quality standards—or, if one could not be secured, for the proposal to be scrapped altogether. In the end, after a sustained effort over several years to bring home to the developer the reputational cost of seeking to proceed with plans for a terminal that was not environmentally sustainable, we won: the then owner, investment bank Morgan Stanley, announced that it was scrapping its plans. On Friday 5 July, Criterion Capital, a property company that I understand owns and manages a £2 billion portfolio across London and the south-east of England and that has acquired the Enderby Wharf site from Morgan Stanley, confirmed that it would not revive plans for a cruise liner terminal on the site.

Jim Fitzpatrick (Poplar and Limehouse) (Lab): I commend my hon. Friend for securing this debate and congratulate him on his campaign to protect his residents against emissions from the Thames. My constituency is right across the Thames from his, and I was happy and proud to support his campaign. He has used the words “we won”, but is it not a shame that we were not able to secure the investment, jobs and all the rest of it to support London, the Thames and tourism because of the inability to agree a sustainably environmental project, which everyone would have welcomed had it been achieved?

Matthew Pennycook: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It was a great frustration to him, as it was to me, that the developer would not listen and commit to plans for a clean, green terminal and shore-to-ship power.

Nevertheless, it was right that the proposals as set out were scrapped, and residents very much welcomed that. I also welcomed Criterion Capital's confirmation that

the proposals had been scrapped. However, the final demise of the terminal does not mean that the problem of toxic emissions relating to activity on the River Thames has been solved for those living in my constituency. The issue remains of emissions from other vessels using the river and, in particular for my constituents who live in west Greenwich, the emissions from the large number of cruise liners that dock at Greenwich pier each year.

In the time available I will argue that the Government must do more to address that problem and that the best means of doing so is by overhauling the fragmented arrangements in place for regulating the Thames and by establishing a coherent and effective emissions control framework for the river that will improve air quality for those communities that live beside it.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): The problem of emissions in London and on the Thames in particular is clear, but emissions throughout the United Kingdom are an important issue as well. Does the hon. Gentleman feel that it is important for the Lord Mayor of London, the Port of London Authority, and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency to come together to set emission reduction targets and to ensure that they are achieved?

Matthew Pennycook: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right that a huge number of organisations have some regulatory role or other with regards to the river. As I will come on to argue, we need to bring some coherence and simplification to that by means of a single regulator for the Thames.

I do not need to spend much time outlining why air pollution is such a serious problem. There is growing awareness among the public about the fact that the toxic and illegal levels of air pollution across our country are an invisible hazard that contributes to the ill health and premature deaths of tens of thousands of people each year, including thousands of Londoners. There is a growing realisation that air pollution constitutes a public health crisis. The public are perhaps less aware of the fact that shipping emissions, in the form of nitrogen oxide and dioxide, as well as sulphur, are a major source of that pollution. Indeed, if concerted action is not taken, by 2020 shipping will be the biggest single emitter of air pollution in Europe.

As things stand, emissions from vessels on the River Thames are not the most significant contributor to air pollution in London, but their contribution is still significant. In the absence of concerted action, as road and other emissions sources are steadily reduced—for a variety of reasons—emissions from the river will account for a steadily higher proportion of London's total. Crucially, emissions from the River Thames are necessarily concentrated in riparian parts of London such as Greenwich and Woolwich, which already suffer from incredibly poor air quality, in particular in hotspots such as east Greenwich or Charlton in the vicinity of the A102. That is why more must be done to bear down on emissions generated by vessels using the river, a huge variety of which do so, each and every day.

I have already mentioned that the primary concern in the corner of south-east London that I represent is the extremely large cruise liners that berth at Greenwich ship pier. According to the Port of London Authority, the body responsible for vessels mooring at the pier, 12 cruise liners berthed at Greenwich last year and a total of 14 are set to do so this year. The Minister

probably has some sense of the size of vessel in question. They are huge. When berthed, such liners are, in essence, floating hotels and are required—in the absence of the shore-to-ship power for which my hon. Friend the Member for Poplar and Limehouse (Jim Fitzpatrick) and I were campaigning—to run their engines in order to serve their onboard guests.

I am no shipping expert, but my understanding is that an average cruise liner running its auxiliary engines while berthed burns approximately 700 litres of diesel fuel an hour, the equivalent of 688 idling heavy goods vehicles. By any account, the emissions they generate are considerable.

All such ships must of course comply with international emissions standards. Those are complex, with different standards for nitrogen oxides and sulphur, as well as with greenhouse gases at different tiers, but in general terms they require emissions from vessels to be equivalent to burning 0.1% sulphur fuel or less. That sounds stringent, but those standards need to be set in context. A limit of 0.1% sulphur fuel or less is more than 100 times the amount of sulphur permitted in road diesel.

It is true that river vessels are subject to progressively tightening emissions standards internationally, but it is also the case that new or forthcoming regulatory measures, such as the introduction of the North sea emissions control area from 1 January 2021, are not particularly ambitious. They will not apply to onboard generators used when a vessel is berthed; to vessels built before the date that the area comes into force; or to existing vessels that replace their engines with non-identical ones or that install additional ones. Given that vessels tend to have significantly longer lifespans than road vehicles, the impact of such measures on fleet renewal is likely to be minimal.

Personally, I do not believe that the solution to this problem is to ban all cruise liners from entering London. However, I am convinced that we require more stringent emissions standards for vessels using the River Thames, including cruise liners of the kind that berth at Greenwich Pier, than what is required now or will be required in future years by way of international shipping standards, so that the problem does not exacerbate already poor local air quality and adversely impact on the health of Londoners, in particular those living in developments close to the shoreline.

The barrier to more effective emission standards for vessels on the Thames is the fact that responsibility for regulation of the river is utterly fragmented—that was alluded to by the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon)—and no existing regulator has a clear responsibility for improving air quality or reducing emissions overall. At present, a wide range of organisations either have responsibility for regulating different classes and uses of vessels on the Thames or have commercial influence on them through ownership or tendering. They include the Port of London Authority, the Environment Agency, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, riparian boroughs with boundaries that lie in the river itself, such as Greenwich, and Transport for London. By my calculation, there are more than 20 such organisations with some type of regulatory function.

The inherent conflicts of interest further complicate the problem of regulatory fragmentation. The Port of London Authority, for example, is under pressure to

play its part in improving air quality in London and has developed a groundbreaking air quality strategy to that end. It is investing in a comprehensive air quality monitoring programme around Greenwich ship tier and is looking into the practicalities, costs and benefits that shore power might bring to its London moorings. Yet it receives income for the duration of each vessel's stay at its moorings, including the large cruise liners that berth at Greenwich pier, and it has no formal responsibility to regulate the emissions generated by the vessels to which it issues licences.

That is not a criticism of the PLA or any other organisation with some form of regulatory role on the Thames or commercial influence. In fact, I am confident that each of them is doing as much as it feasibly can within the current framework. For example, Transport for London is developing a pier strategy that could incentivise the use of vessels with high emissions standards, and has led by example by ensuring that the Woolwich ferry service now has upgraded stage V, hybrid vessels, fitted with additional post-exhaust treatment to reduce emissions and an innovative docking system whereby new vehicles do not have to run their engines at berth.

Another example is the Mayor of London, who has allocated £500,000 from his air quality fund to retrofit 11 vessels, and commits in his transport strategy to support proposals to ensure that new and refurbished wharves, piers and canal moorings generate renewable power onsite.

The efforts undertaken by individual organisations, however, are necessarily piecemeal. They are not enough to adequately bear down on harmful emissions generated by vessels across the river as a whole, and they are not an adequate response to the issue of the most concern to those I represent: emissions from cruise liners berthing at Greenwich pier.

Two things are needed to tackle air pollution on the River Thames, alongside the Government's wider measures for the UK as a whole. I hope the Minister, her officials and her colleagues in other Departments will give them serious consideration. The first is the establishment of a single overarching regulator for the Thames and London waterways, to replace the present fragmented regime. The second is the introduction of a coherent and effective London-wide emissions control framework on the river, to replace the patchwork of diffuse and overlapping responsibilities currently in place.

The current regulatory set-up for vessels on the river is not only complex and opaque but simply inadequate to reduce shipping emissions at the scale and pace required. Let me give a practical example of why that is the case. The various organisations that have responsibility for regulating different classes and uses of vessels on the river must accept each other's licences in certain circumstances. That means that any positive action by one organisation with regulatory responsibility can easily be undermined by another. It is a classic collective action problem. The PLA's green tariff, which has been moderately successful at places such as Tilbury, will never work as effectively as a coherent London-wide framework for emissions standards on the river, because its impact can easily be undermined by the behaviour of less proactive organisations.

The situation cries out for a coherent and consistent approach. Replacing the current multi-regulator system with a single overarching one, either by creating a new

[Matthew Pennycook]

regulator or by empowering an existing one such as the Port of London Authority, would increase transparency and accountability. It would ensure the consistent application of standards that we do not have at present and, for that reason, it would increase investment in emissions reductions technologies and infrastructure, and in cleaner vessels by operators. It would also reduce bureaucracy as it would necessarily entail a reduction in the number of enforcement and licensing authorities. That new system would require primary legislation but, assuming that the Government are still committed to introducing an environment Bill in the next Session of Parliament, it could easily be achieved by means of that proposed legislation.

I do not pretend to have a detailed blueprint of precisely what powers such a regulator would have; it might simply be authorised to set minimum emissions limits for the Thames that differ from those set internationally by the International Maritime Organisation. It could oversee and enforce a system much like the ultra low emission zone, where standards are set and non-complaint vessels are not banned but simply deterred from using the Thames or incentivised to upgrade by means of appropriate charging structures.

It is important that the Government recognise the case for reform and act. It is right that plans for a polluting Enderby Wharf cruise liner terminal have been scrapped for good. However, the demise of the terminal proposal does not mean that the problem of toxic emissions generated by vessels on the Thames has been solved. In the current situation, Londoners who live near, travel on, or work on or close to the river are not adequately protected. My constituents are not protected from air pollution generated by vessels on the Thames, particularly those living in west Greenwich, who must live with emissions from the scores of cruise liners that berth at Greenwich pier each year.

I recognise that the Government's focus to date has been on tackling shipping emissions at an international level. However, I urge the Minister to work in partnership with the Mayor of London and the Greater London Assembly to give London the means to solve this problem by overhauling the fragmented regulatory arrangements that are currently in place, and by working to introduce a single regulator for the Thames that can oversee and enforce stringent emissions standards. Improving the air quality on and around our capital's river is an essential part of addressing the public health crisis we face. When it comes to tackling air pollution in London, the River Thames cannot be an afterthought.

11.16 am

The Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Dr Thérèse Coffey): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Gray. I congratulate the hon. Member for Greenwich and Woolwich (Matthew Pennycook) on his perseverance in securing this debate. I read on his blog that he had been putting in for it for some time, and I congratulate him on his tenacity. I welcomed the interventions from the hon. Member for Poplar and Limehouse (Jim Fitzpatrick) and our very good friend from Northern Ireland, the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon), who is

right to suggest that, although this debate is about the Thames, there may be similar issues in other parts of the United Kingdom.

Improving air quality and reducing emissions is a top priority for the Government. I assure hon. Members that we are committed to reducing emissions from ships and river transport, to reduce their impact on the environment and subsequently improve public health. While it is important that we continue to improve air quality on the Thames, it is also important to remember that the river has contemporary importance as a transport route and plays a role in reducing congestion and pollution on London roads. For example, the Battersea power station project is using the Thames to transport materials, avoiding road transport, and hon. Members will have seen the barges going past the House of Commons that take a lot of waste out towards east London and beyond.

Unusually, I am assisted today by officials from another Department, as a lot of the issues raised by the hon. Member for Greenwich and Woolwich relate to the Department for Transport. Although it is for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to respond to this debate, given the mention of emissions and vessels, I emphasise that our Departments are working together on this issue. I am pleased to be supported by high-level officials from the Department for Transport, who have supplied some helpful notes—and may need to supply a few more if there are further interventions.

Air quality is improving nationally. We published our clean air strategy earlier this year, which the World Health Organisation welcomed as an “example for the rest of the world to follow”.

I am proud that it is the most ambitious air quality strategy in a generation, which aims to cut air pollution and save lives. It sets out how we will work towards some ambitious targets, working closely across all parts of Government and society to meet those goals. The broad scope of actions outlined in the strategy reflects the fact that if we are to fully address poor air quality, we need to look beyond roadside emissions to the full range of pollution sources that contribute to the problem in a systemic way.

We have new and ambitious goals, intended legislation, investment and policies to help us to clean up our air faster and more effectively. In line with that approach, the clean air strategy identifies shipping and river transport as a potentially significant source of local public exposure to harmful pollutants that we must address. When preparing with officials for the debate, I was under the impression that approximately 1% of London's emissions are considered to come from the river, and I have more to say on the further work we intend to undertake on that.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the complexity of the regulation of vessels on the River Thames, and the impact on air quality. It is true that there are multiple agencies and authorities with responsibility for regulating the different classes and uses of vessels, including those on the Thames, and for driving efforts to improve air quality in London. He suggests that the system is fragmented. I recognise that it has complexity, which is due to the need to appropriately regulate a diverse group of international, inland and domestic vessels. The intricacy is a barrier to understanding emissions

from vessels, and it is increasingly a barrier to identifying where further supportive or regulatory action could be necessary.

The Government recognise that, to tackle emissions from shipping effectively, we need first to have a better understanding of the emissions, and then to review the technical, operational and regulatory options that are available. In July, the Government launched a wide-ranging call for evidence, seeking to close this evidence gap. The call is open until 11 January 2020. The time provided for the call is deliberately lengthy, so that we can maximise participation from groups such as operators of smaller vessels, which tend to be busiest in the warmer summer months.

Let me set out the action that the Government have already taken, and are planning to take in the future, to control emissions from vessels in UK waters and on our waterways. The Government are keen to ensure that air pollution from ships is reduced, with a long-term goal set out in the clean maritime plan to achieve a zero-emissions domestic shipping sector by 2050. Significant action has already been taken to tackle this important issue in a number of key areas.

At UN level, with the International Maritime Organisation, we have consistently pressed for the most stringent international controls in high-risk areas such as the North sea and the English channel, with the result that they are internationally recognised as sulphur emission control areas. In 2015, a sulphur cap of 0.1% was introduced in the North sea emission control area, including the Thames, entailing a tenfold reduction from the previous sulphur limit of 1%. The IMO has further agreed a 0.5% sulphur limit for global shipping outside emission control areas from 1 January 2020—a reduction of 3 percentage points from the current limit.

Importantly for the UK and the Thames region, the IMO has also agreed to the introduction of a NOx emission control area for the North sea from 1 January 2021. As the hon. Gentleman identified, this will reduce NOx emissions from new ships operating in this area by around three quarters. I asked exactly the same question that he did: why does this apply only to new ships? It is because this is the agreed approach on IMO rules. They are applied to new ships only and do not apply retrospectively.

Furthermore, the UK has been at the forefront of pushing for an ambitious strategy at the IMO to reduce greenhouse gases from shipping. Member states have committed to phasing out greenhouse gas emissions from shipping as soon as possible in this century, and by at least 50% by 2050. As part of this work, we have secured mandatory energy efficiency requirements for new ships entering the fleet, with a resulting reduction in fuel consumption and associated air pollution from such vessels.

All these controls have delivered and will continue to deliver major emissions reductions and benefits to air quality. They have also stimulated the development and uptake of alternative fuels, innovative green technologies and new ship designs that offer a long-term route to zero-emissions shipping. The Government intend to introduce the Environment Bill when parliamentary time allows. The principal aim of the air quality provisions in the Bill is to enable stronger, more effective action to be taken on addressing the health impacts associated with poor air quality.

More specifically for shipping, the clean maritime plan that was launched in July establishes the Government's environmental route map for shipping and builds on the vision found in our "Maritime 2050: navigating the future" publication, which aims to shape up the future of the maritime sector and includes a long-term vision of zero-emissions shipping. The core commitments in the clean maritime plan include a call in 2020 for evidence on non-tax incentives to support the transition to zero-emissions shipping, a consultation on how the renewable transport fuel obligation could be used to encourage the uptake of low-carbon fuels in the maritime sector, and a green finance initiative that will be launched next week during London international shipping week. As the DFT has written this part of the speech, I hope I have not done an unscheduled release of that information—I am sure the Department is being careful.

We have set up a working group and study to identify and support potential UK zero-emissions shipping clusters, which could include the Thames. There is also Government support for clean maritime innovation in the United Kingdom, including funding of £1.3 million to support clean maritime innovation through Maritime Research and Innovation UK—MarRI-UK. There is grant support for early-stage research projects related to clean maritime, and a Clean Maritime Award to celebrate leaders in the field of emissions reduction. A maritime emissions regulation advisory service—MERAS—will be in place by 2020 to provide dedicated support to innovators using zero-emissions propulsion technologies. The clean maritime plan also contains a number of zero-emissions shipping ambitions and outlines the Government's vision for the future of zero-emissions shipping and the milestones that will need to be achieved to reach it.

The clean maritime plan was launched on the Thames, with the port of London's first hybrid tug alongside, and it is intended to be the first step in a journey to deliver zero-emissions shipping in the UK. The Government welcome and encourage Thames stakeholders to engage with the MarRI-UK innovation fund, and to consider how our plans for green finance could support emissions reductions on the river. As I highlighted at the start of my response, the call for evidence is currently open and seeks to gather information on emissions from vessels operating domestically in UK waters, including inland waterways such as the Thames. The outcome will play a key role in formulating future policies.

The hon. Gentleman specifically asked about what could be done to have a London-wide framework for emissions standards. It is interesting to consider how we can make that work together—particularly with the Mayor for London, but also with the Department for Transport. My understanding is that, with all the different bodies to which the hon. Gentleman has referred, the Government do not deem it appropriate to have a single body undertake such work in the future. I appreciate that it might appear complex, but once we have the information to understand the source of emissions, it will allow the bodies that already work together rather effectively to do that even more, with the evidence to support that work.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to existing cruise liners. I recognise that the proposals for Enderby wharf have been dropped, but it is important to stress that we need to make changes at the IMO, which is an international

[Dr Thérèse Coffey]

organisation, and to the international nature of shipping, so that, as an island nation, we can continue to make sensible progress as we go forward.

By sharing some of the detail of the clean maritime plan—the hon. Gentleman referred to aspects of technology that he hopes will come along further—I hope I have addressed many of the points that he raised. I can assure him that the Government are committed to addressing emissions from shipping, including both our international and domestic fleets.

Matthew Pennycook: Before the Minister brings her remarks to a close—I appreciate the complexity and cross-departmental nature of this issue, so I am happy for her to write to me—it would be good to have some idea about what dialogue is happening between her Department, DFT, the Mayor of London and the Deputy Mayor on the issue of a single regulator. I note what she says about the Government's position, but they are convinced that this is the way forward.

Dr Coffey: Well, I will not commit to write to the hon. Gentleman personally, but I will share his request with the Maritime Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Ms Ghani). I know she is a responsive Minister and will do her best to work on that.

We have taken concerted action internationally to tackle emissions from ships. We are working actively to better understand the domestic issues in order to inform future policy decisions. I invite the hon. Gentleman and his constituents, and indeed all hon. Members who represent constituencies along the Thames, to participate in the call for evidence that will shape our next steps.

Question put and agreed to.

11.28 am

Sitting suspended.

LGBT Community and Acceptance Teaching

[SIR ROGER GALE *in the Chair*]

2.30 pm

Daniel Kawczynski (Shrewsbury and Atcham) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered teaching on LGBT community and acceptance in schools.

It is a great pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Roger. I am glad to be able to highlight lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender tolerance and education and acceptance in schools. I called for the debate for two main reasons. The first is the protests at schools in Birmingham that I have seen on television recently. My constituency is in that region, and in the past few months an increasing number of protests have been held outside Birmingham schools, with parents protesting vociferously against any form of LGBT teaching. The second is that my House of Commons researcher came to see me the other day to highlight a situation in which a friend of his had come out to him, crying, very upset and vulnerable. He did not know how he was going to broach the subject with his family. It is clearly worrying that even in 2019 there are still young people who are fearful of broaching with their most intimate and closest friends and family members the subject of who they are falling in love with and their sexuality.

I was born in communist Poland. I believe I am the only Conservative Member of Parliament to have been born in a communist country—[*Interruption.*] I am; I have checked it out. I assure you, Sir Roger, that the society of communist Poland was highly intolerant of LGBT people. The Catholic Church in Poland—and I speak as a Roman Catholic—was at the forefront of teaching young people and society at large that being gay was a sin, that it should be punished and that people who had the temerity to fall in love with a same-sex partner would ultimately go to hell. They would be condemned to purgatory and hell because they happened to be gay.

That had a huge impact on a generation of children in communist Poland as they evaluated their self-worth and how they felt about themselves, given that the Church and state were so homophobic. The irony—again, I speak as a Roman Catholic—is that we have subsequently come across so many cases and prosecutions of Catholic priests, whether in Ireland, America or many other countries around the world. Catholic priests have been informing us from the pulpit what a sin homosexuality is, but in their spare time, when mass is over, they have been going out and sexually abusing young boys on an industrial scale. I do not believe that the Roman Catholic Church has apologised enough, either in this country or around the world, for the appalling abuses that Roman Catholic priests carried out over decades against young, vulnerable and innocent boys. Many will inevitably suffer mental angst and torture as a consequence of those vile acts of abuse against young children.

We face different situations. I think that because I was brought up in such a homophobic society, as a young person I was inevitably conditioned—I used that word in an interview with Radio Shropshire today—to

think that homosexuality was bad and a sin, and that you should feel ashamed of being gay. What do you do? Some young people have the confidence and conviction to set that aside. They will say, from a very young age, “No, I am gay and I am proud.” Other people do not have that confidence, so they hide what and who they are. They will hide under rocks or under stones and not peek out because they are fearful of the consequences for them and their families of showing that they are proud in being gay.

I have to say that when I was a young person, I actually went as far as to try to trick my own brain into thinking I was straight. You do it over and over again. You pray to God, “Please, could I be a heterosexual and be interested only in women?” so that he will change you somehow and you will not have these strange feelings. You try to trick the brain. The most important thing I have learned in my 47 years is that you cannot trick the brain. You can do almost anything, but you cannot reprogramme your mind and your brain to be something sexually that you are not.

When it was time to come out, I had to go back to Shrewsbury to inform the Shrewsbury Conservative association that, having been married to a lady for 10 years, I was now in a same-sex relationship. I was so fearful, given the conditioning I had gone through as a child, that I had to go and talk to the House of Commons health and wellbeing service. They are, as you know, Sir Roger, great people who help Members of Parliament through periods of stress and strain and mental problems. I pay tribute to the wonderful men and women who work in the health and wellbeing service who helped me so much to have the confidence and courage to go back to Shrewsbury to announce to my local association that I was now in a same-sex partnership. I have to say that, although they had coaxed me into it, when I was on the train from London to Shrewsbury, I prayed on, I think, three separate occasions for the train to break down. I still could not quite face it. I hoped that there would be some sort of godly intervention—something would happen and a tree would fall on the track—or the train would be delayed and I would miss my connection and not have to deal with it. The train arrived at Shrewsbury train station on time, unusually, and I went to see my local association.

I gave my monthly report to the 50 most senior members of Shrewsbury Conservative association, who were sitting in front of me in the room. I went through what was happening here in the House of Commons, politics and some of our achievements in securing investment for Shrewsbury in the last quarter. I looked at the 50 faces in front of me. As I am sure everyone will agree, members of political parties—Conservatives and Labour—are marvellous men and women. They are the hard workers who go out there in the rain, delivering leaflets, organising campaigns and taking abuse on the doorstep. We get paid, but they do it for free. I always say that these men and women are the salt of the earth. They believe in their nation, whatever their politics, whether they be Labour or Conservative. As you know, Sir Roger, a Member of Parliament relies on members of the executive council and senior members of the association. We could not do the job that we do if it were not for those people.

When I announced to them that I was in a same-sex partnership, I looked at the 50 faces. A gentleman in the front row who was a traditional Conservative party

member—he was wearing a striped jacket and was a brigadier-general-type figure—immediately stood up straight, like a military man, and said, “Well, I think that’s marvellous. Well done.” He started to clap, and then it was as if a sea of people in front of me all stood up and started to clap. They were coming up to me and giving me hugs. We were in the bar area and they wanted to buy me whisky. Rather than a double whisky, I went away with a tumbler of whisky because all the men were trying to buy me double Scotches.

That will stay with me forever. It is in those moments in life when you throw yourself into a situation where you do not know what is going to happen or how people are going to react, that you see raw humanity in operation. The love, kindness and sincerity with which my Shrewsbury Conservative association treated me will stay with me forever, and it will also empower me for the rest of my life.

I want to mention a lovely gentleman from Shrewsbury Conservatives called Ray Mitchell, who has now passed away. He ran election campaigns as if they were the battle of Tobruk, with hardcore military precision. He knew every road and ensured that people had the correct number of bundled leaflets for every person in every street. He ran a military operation to get my campaign literature across the whole constituency every time a general election was called. He came up to me at the end of my speech, when everyone was hugging and cheering, and said, “I would like a word with you alone, outside, please.” I thought, “Oh no. Here we go. Somebody is really upset with what I’ve said and now I’m going to get it with both barrels.” He said, “Just come outside for a minute. I want a private word with you.” As you know, Sir Roger, an association is divided into different wards. He said, “I hear that you have given one of the other wards a bottle of House of Commons Scotch from the Prime Minister. Can we have one?” He said, “I couldn’t give a monkeys about your sexuality. I’m upset that you’ve given them a bottle of House of Commons Scotch but you haven’t got one for us. Would you mind terribly getting us one?” I wanted to share that story because it meant so much to me at the time.

In 2017 I went to 10 Downing Street for the premiere of an LGBT film marking the 50th anniversary of the rescinding of jail sentences for LGBT people. In the audience there were many senior citizens who had faced prison sentences in the 1950s and whose friends had been incarcerated. They themselves had had to live their whole lives in fear and worry about being exposed as gay and, ultimately, being sent to prison. Seeing those people at that film was an important event in my life.

I pay tribute to Mr Geoffrey Hardy, who has campaigned for LGBT issues in Shrewsbury for many decades. In 2005, thanks to the Labour Administration, he was able to undertake a civil partnership. He and his partner Peter had been together for 25 years, and were the first couple in Shropshire to have a civil partnership. He wrote to me to say:

“BBC Radio Shropshire broadcast the cheer from the Registry Office and the Shropshire Star put it on the front page. The reaction we had when driving through Shrewsbury, pink ribbons on the front of a vintage Bentley, was overwhelmingly positive, an emotional time for us. Civil Partnerships were a huge step change in acceptance of our lives and relationships.”

I pay tribute to the Labour Government for introducing civil partnerships and reiterate this sentence:

[Daniel Kawczynski]

“Civil Partnerships were a huge step change in acceptance of our lives and relationships.”

Of course, the subsequent Conservative Government introduced equal marriage; I will come to that later.

Mr Hardy has been at the forefront of creating the Shropshire Rainbow Film Festival, which started in 2006 and has gone from strength to strength. He writes:

“In 2011, we advertised with banners across the streets—a huge step forward. Year upon year, the Festival has become very successful and more heterosexual people have attended, realising that our lives and experiences are not separate.”

He has written the words “banners across the streets” in bold and underlined them. This is about being proud to be gay and proud that there is a film festival promoting LGBT rights and experiences. This is not in metropolitan London, but in quiet, sleepy Shrewsbury. The huge enthusiasm for LGBT rights in Shrewsbury comes to the fore in everything that Mr Hardy has been telling me over the years. He is a staunch socialist and a strong Jeremy Corbyn supporter, so Members can imagine how little he and I have in common when it comes to politics, but we are kindred spirits when it comes to promoting LGBT rights and sharing our experiences.

Mr Hardy goes on to talk about the campaign for equal marriage. The Roman Catholic bishop was often on the front page of the *Shropshire Star* opposing it. He says:

“We distributed fliers, wristbands and encouraged people to write to their local Members of Parliament.”

That is an important issue to highlight. I remember the debate we had on equal marriage. It was a difficult issue for me: at that stage, I had not come out and many constituents wrote to me, angry and furious that we could even be contemplating equal marriage. Same-sex partnerships were one thing and civil partnerships were another, but hon. Members will remember the anger, antagonism and frustration about equal marriage. People felt it was a step too far—that marriage was only between men and women, and that we should not be pursuing it. It was difficult for me at that time, but I voted for equal marriage and I am proud to have done so. I am even more proud that a Conservative Government put it on the statute book.

A very religious couple from the village of Condover—I will not mention their names—spent the day with me on the day we were passing the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013. They and their two children had lunch with me in the House of Commons. Their son had been at Shrewsbury School and was now a doctor in Manchester. The mother, who was a strong Protestant, turned to me and said something that will stay with me forever. She said, “You have to vote for equal marriage because I don’t want my son living in sin.” Just remember that for a moment: it came from a devout Protestant lady.

Lastly from Mr Hardy, there is Shrewsbury carnival Pride. LGBT Shrewsbury has joined with the Shrewsbury town carnival; we have a wonderful town carnival that goes through the whole of Shrewsbury and the Quarry every year, and we have massive floats. We are not quite Rio de Janeiro in Shrewsbury, but we do our best. We have all these floats going through the town, and for many years now we have had an LGBT float. I stood there watching one year, with my partner of eight years,

and to see the applause and cheering from all young people in Shrewsbury for that float was something very powerful for me. I am very grateful for that. Of course, the LGBT float has received many prizes over the years.

Getting back to specifically the schools element on this, I wanted to read out something that Stonewall sent me. It is a quote from Joshua, 19, from Scotland. He says:

“I think there needs to be a fundamental rethink about how we teach young people about sex, love and relationships. LGBT issues need to be an important part of our curriculum in order for us to truly feel we are part of an equal society.”

Stonewall sent me a lot of evidence, and another quote that struck me was this—I would like hon. Members to really listen and remember it:

“A growing number of faith schools—

not ordinary schools, but faith schools—

“are delivering LGBT-inclusive teaching. They are doing this not in spite of their faith ethos, but because of it—by recognising the values of love, tolerance and acceptance that lie at the heart of their faith.”

That is such an important quote because—I have said this from my own experiences of Roman Catholicism, but it also applies to certain Muslim groups and others—the intolerance toward homosexuality, I would argue, goes squarely against the teachings of those religions, especially my religion of Catholicism, which seeks to promote love, tolerance and acceptance. That is very important to remember.

Ahead of this debate, the House of Commons decided to post on Facebook to ask for people’s views and experiences of teaching on LGBT community and acceptance in schools. There are two quotes that I think are relevant and that I wanted to share. One is from somebody at *Lacuna* magazine, a magazine that promotes human rights. This person writes:

“When I think of how the knot in my teenage heart could have been loosened if I had even one lesson at school telling me I wasn’t broken or put together wrong...I realise that this isn’t a religious or even spiritual debate. It’s a matter of human rights.”

There was also a quote from the National Secular Society:

“We agree wholeheartedly with Daniel Kawczynski MP that it is important to make sure all children, from an early age, are taught that there is nothing wrong with being gay. We also agree that doing so would help to improve mental health and reduce bullying and abuse. We fully support efforts to make education in the UK inclusive for all. We urge the government to ensure every child, regardless of their religious background, leaves school in the knowledge that LGBT+ people are equal and that it’s perfectly OK to be gay.”

I am going to wrap up shortly, but I want to ask the Minister about the LGBT action plan that the Government have put in place. Of course, it has not received sufficient attention because of the merry-go-round that is Brexit and the focus on that, but I ask the Minister about one thing that particularly appals me: conversion therapy. I think of conversion therapy as some sort of Frankenstein’s monster of abuse—not only physical abuse, but mental torture. I could not imagine anybody possibly wanting to send their child to have it.

As I have said, it is impossible to recalibrate the mind. It is impossible to trick the mind. It is impossible to turn somebody from being gay to being straight. The mental angst and torture that children would go through in conversion therapy deeply troubles me. I call on the

Minister to explain to us when the practice will be outlawed in the United Kingdom and to give me an update on the matter.

On the one hand, I respect the rights of the parents outside schools in Birmingham to demonstrate. Nobody wants our children to have overtly sexual things in schools at an inappropriately young age. This is a delicate matter and it must be treated with a huge amount of sensitivity. However, I appeal to those protestors: what sort of a message does it send out to young LGBT people when we see the anger, the rage and the vitriol emanating from them on LGBT issues?

By all means, if they have concerns about LGBT acceptance and education in schools, they ought to be coming to see the Minister, lobbying Government and questioning and probing all the time about how it will be implemented and what the sensitivities are, but I appeal to them to show some tolerance and some civility, given how vulnerable young people are at that stage, and not to do anything that sets young people thinking that they are not worthy and somehow unequal. I went through that as a young person, and I do not want young people to go through that again.

Ms Harriet Harman (Camberwell and Peckham) (Lab): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Daniel Kawczynski: I will take an intervention from the right hon. and learned Lady, somebody from the Labour Benches whom I respect enormously—that has probably done her career no good whatever, but she is.

Ms Harman: I was finding it difficult to know when to intervene on the hon. Gentleman's speech, because it has been so powerful and heartfelt that I have no words, except to say how much I applaud absolutely everything he has said. I want him to know that I think his words here today will mean that the knot in many teenage hearts will have been loosened. I feel so proud that he is a Member of our House and that he has used his own personal experience, as well as his analysis, to make this speech. It has been very important and I thank him for doing it.

Daniel Kawczynski: I thank the right hon. and learned Lady and I pay tribute to her. She has been a stalwart of campaigning for equality on LGBT issues—and not just today, when it is easier so to do; she was at the forefront of campaigning on LGBT issues back in the '70s, '80s and '90s, when it was not so easy. She is not part of the LGBT community herself, so her empathy on this issue just shows how pioneering and visionary she is, and the integrity and honour that she has always displayed as a Member of the House of Commons.

I end on this point. I am not really a football fan so I do not follow football, but recently a famous footballer was apparently going to come out, but he decided not to. It was all over the radio that he was going to announce that he was out and start raising LGBT issues, and then he decided to back off. I say to him, publicly and on television, and to anyone who has a position of responsibility or a public profile, whether they are footballers, play for England's rugby team, are television presenters or are a Member of Parliament, if someone is gay and they have come out, it is extremely important to do what I am doing today—to carry on

talking and giving assurance to young people that, if they go through this process, 99 out of every 100 people will show them love, tolerance and understanding.

I took my beloved mother on holiday to our favourite Polish seaside resort with my partner, Fernando, and I would like to inform hon. Members that after eight years of being together, Fernando and I are going to have a civil partnership ceremony in the House of Commons on 9 November. It is on a Saturday and even if we have an election I will abandon campaigning to come back for my civil partnership; I am not going to leave my hubby at the altar just because of the general election—I can tell you that for nothing!

We have a duty and a responsibility to carry on talking and to give people confidence in the extraordinary, positive experiences that we have had with our fellow men and women in society and to demonstrate how loving and tolerant they are to us.

I took my mother on holiday and she gave me one example of prejudice. My mother lives in Gloucestershire, but every election time, she comes to Shrewsbury. Nobody works harder than my mum when it comes to handing out leaflets on doorsteps and canvassing. I was talking to her about this debate, and she told me a story. Two men in Shrewsbury—I will not mention where—looked at her in horror when she told them that she was campaigning for Daniel Kawczynski and that she was his mum. They looked at her with disgust and said to her, "Of course we are not going to vote for that deviant." It is a shame, is it not, that we can never reason with prejudice? There are always going to be prejudiced people in our society. She was upset, of course, that they would say that to her. I would hope that they would assess me and any other gay Member of Parliament on our politics and what party we stand for, rather than on whom we love and want to be with.

I remember watching Margaret Thatcher in 1979, when she was asked on television how she could be Prime Minister when she was a woman. In 1979, many people were fearful and questioned the ability of a woman to be Prime Minister. I will never forget that Margaret Thatcher said that it was as well that those people did not live in the period of Elizabeth I. What would have happened to our great nation if it was not for great women such as Elizabeth I and what they did for our country? Margaret Thatcher fought against prejudice when it came to women standing in politics and achieving the highest office. Today, in a different way, we are standing against the prejudice that still exists in our country.

I have been to more than 90 countries in the world through business and politics. This is one of the most, if not the most, tolerant and welcoming of societies that I have come across in any country in the world. Sometimes, I think because we are British, we tend to hide our light under a bushel. We ought to be extraordinarily proud, despite our huge political differences over Brexit and other issues, of the beacon of tolerance that this country is, compared with other countries around the world—16 of which still have the death penalty for someone who happens to love a person of the same sex. We need to promote and celebrate tolerance, not only in our own country, but as a beacon for other countries around the world that are on the path towards where we are today.

3.4 pm

Sarah Champion (Rotherham) (Lab): As ever, it is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Roger. I particularly want to thank the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Daniel Kawczynski) for securing this debate. His personal reflections bring so much to the debate. It is genuinely inspiring. I know that young LGBT children and adults will be listening, and to see that someone is able to speak out in this place and be proud to speak out is so inspiring.

I want to reflect on the hon. Gentleman's opening remarks about young people internalising the perceived shame of being gay, and his closing remarks about the intolerance in society and how that can impact on young LGBT children's lives. For me, relationship education is about keeping all children safe. We have to be aware that four in five young trans children and three in five young LGB children self-harm, and that two in five trans children and one in five LGB children contemplate taking their own lives because of the pressure put on them by an intolerant society. That is why, along with colleagues and charities, I campaigned so hard for relationship education, particularly at primary school age. I firmly believe that its introduction will have a transformational effect on the next generation, supporting them to form healthy relationships, be tolerant, recognise harms and have safe sex.

We know that LGBT young people are often more vulnerable, face greater risks and have lower levels of wellbeing than their peers. Robust, age-appropriate relationships and sex education that is inclusive of LGBT young people and integrates them fully into the curriculum can help to reduce those risks. Research has shown that LGB young people are more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviour, including unprotected sex. Sex education at secondary school will give pupils information about safe sex and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS. Young people need to be aware of the facts. They need to appreciate the importance of condoms and know how to use them properly. They need to be aware of post-exposure prophylaxis, pre-exposure prophylaxis—anti-HIV medications—and where they can find out more information.

LGB young people are also at risk online, being more likely than non-LGB peers to experience online victimisation and have online sexual conversations with people five years older or more. Studies have shown that gay and bisexual boys are particularly vulnerable to exploitation by those of the same sex. RSE will support young people to recognise the dangers of grooming and educate them to spot dangers online. RSE can support all young people to make sensible decisions about meeting up with strangers and using relationship apps intended for adults such as Tinder or Grindr, and, importantly, can teach them about consent, particularly informed consent.

RSE is not a silver bullet, but my hope is that it will help to address some of the wider issues LGBT young people also face, such as mental health issues and bullying. The evidence tells us that adolescence is the most difficult period for people who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual. While attitudes have improved in the UK, it is still very difficult for young people to come out and access information from support services. LGBT pupils and their families will see their existence validated by RSE lessons. Young people will see LGBT people represented alongside non-LGBT people in educational

materials. They will hear that in modern Britain, our families come in all shapes and sizes—single parents, adoptive parents, same-sex parents. They will learn, alongside their peers, of the joys of relationships as well as how to avoid the harms. Slowly and surely, we may begin to see some of the differences in outcomes that I mentioned shrink, and—hopefully in the not too distant future—disappear entirely.

I ask the Minister to ensure that teachers have the training and resources needed to deliver high quality LGBT-inclusive education. I urge the Government to hold firm and continue to publicly encourage primary schools to deliver LGBT-inclusive education.

I want to mention some of the myths and the excitement brewing around relationships education in primary schools. The main message in relation to children in primary schools being taught relationships education is that it is up to the parent to teach it; it is the parent's choice to teach it. Of course it is, and we are looking at the parent doing that teaching every evening and every weekend. However, I campaigned for relationships education because I want to prevent harm to children. We must acknowledge that 90% of child abuse happens within the extended family. With the best will in the world, if a child has an abusive parent or close family member, how exactly are they meant to know that what is happening to them is wrong unless they get that one lesson where a teacher explains to them what abuse is and how to report it? It does not undermine the parents teaching whatever they want to teach in the other hours of the day, but that one lesson could save a child from harm and the lifelong impact of abuse.

Relationships education and sex and relationships education are about safeguarding and preventing abuse. I congratulate the Minister on all his work. He worked extensively to listen to all parties and all sides of the debate, and he has come up with a solution that is genuinely focused on preventing harm to the child, but, more importantly, creating a more tolerant and accepting society, which we all want.

3.11 pm

Nick Herbert (Arundel and South Downs) (Con): I join hon. Members in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Daniel Kawczynski) on initiating this debate and on his moving and inspiring speech in which he explained the importance of the subject.

I am pleased to be able to take part in the debate both as an ordinary Member of this House and as chair of the all-party group on global LGBT rights—one of the largest APPGs in this Parliament. Much of our work focuses on the need to ensure that the terrible abuses of LGBT+ people around the world do not happen and on pressing for action to deal with it. In doing that, we have to ensure that we uphold the highest standards in our own country. After the conclusion of equal marriage legislation in England and Wales, which was followed rapidly by Scotland, it was easy to think that the legislative journey was largely complete in most of the United Kingdom and that we could lift our sights and look at what was happening globally. Of course, there is unfinished business in our own country: equal marriage in Northern Ireland, for a start.

There are also continuing concerns about the bullying of young people and discrimination in the workplace, and particular concerns about the lack of role models in certain sports and the need to ensure that young people and their heroes fully reflect the diversity of today's society. So much work still needs to be done, particularly in schools.

We know from Stonewall's school survey that there has been an absence of the kind of sex and relationships education that children need to ensure that they can be safe and that they understand that relationships can be different but are just as valid, and that if they themselves are different it is nothing to worry about. All that is immensely important, so I welcome the guidance that the Government issued this year. It was intended to strengthen sex and relationships education guidance in secondary schools and relationships education in primary schools.

However, there are issues that we need to consider. The first has been brought into sharp relief by the protests outside Birmingham schools. I attended a meeting of representatives of Parkfield school in Birmingham that was organised in this House a month or two ago.

I had already been pretty horrified by the film that we all watched on the news of the protests that took place outside the schools. I was even more alarmed when I listened to the evidence of the leaders of the schools and heard about the pressures that they felt they had been put under by the parents. They raised an issue that I want to put to the Minister; I do this in as neutral a way as I can, but I want to understand what the Government's view is. Although relationships education has effectively been made discretionary for primary schools, the view of the headteachers was that it should not be. They felt that the fact that it was discretionary placed a huge burden of responsibility on them and made them the targets of parental protest.

It would be easier for those leaders if it was very clear to every school what it was required to teach. There might be good reasons why the policy was framed in such a way by the Government, so I am not criticising them, but I want to understand what the rationale is, and I question whether the guidance offered to schools needs to be more explicit or whether more effort needs to be made to ensure that the guidance can be implemented by schools without their fearing any kind of repercussion.

The second issue concerns protests outside schools. My hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham said much that I agreed with, but I did not agree when he said that he respected the right to demonstrate outside schools. I question whether it is ever right to have protests, particularly of the kind that we have seen, outside school gates. I note that the new Secretary of State for Education, my right hon. Friend the Member for South Staffordshire (Gavin Williamson), said that there was no place for protests outside schools, and I agree—particularly when it comes to primary schools.

When the protests are vociferous and bullying, they must be intimidating to parents, and if they are intimidating to parents, what can their children—their young children—be thinking? Most of us who saw the film and the way in which the parents conducted themselves outside the schools—the manner in which they hector—found it disturbing. We are, of course, all proud of living in a country where peaceful protest is permitted. The fundamental nature of our democracy allows that,

but we have always understood that where protest spills over into harassment, it is not acceptable. It becomes criminal. Good policing relies on the ability to exercise a judgment about where the line has been crossed. There is a real question about whether such protests should be allowed right outside the school gate because they are harassing, so it is important that that issue is looked at.

The third issue I want to raise concerns resources. The new guidance is, as I said, welcome, but a question has been raised by Stonewall, which does excellent work in this and other areas, about whether there is sufficient resource to ensure that schools can receive the training and information that they need to implement the new guidance. The Government's estimate of the amount of money needed was a sum considerably in excess of the £6 million being made available. Today the Chancellor has made the immensely welcome announcement of a spending uplift for our schools. I wonder whether my right hon. Friend the Minister will be able to say whether he thinks more resource will be available to schools, to ensure that that important new guidance can be implemented effectively.

I was heartened by the statement of the new Education Secretary that headteachers should be “able to teach about Britain as it is today.”

I think that headteachers, school governors, chairs of governors and teachers need to know that the strongest possible lead is being given by Ministers and this place about the importance of same-sex relationships education. I question the extent to which we should license any suggestion that it is right to prevent teaching that same-sex relationships are valid. We have, I think, got past the point where we believe it is acceptable to sell goods on a discriminatory basis. We have outlawed that.

We have outlawed discriminating against people in the workplace. In many areas of public life now, we are absolutely clear that discrimination on the grounds of sexuality is simply unacceptable, so I question why it might be acceptable to prevent a school from teaching children even of a relatively young age that same-sex relationships are valid. I am not sure that we should be tolerant about those who try to prevent that, if we are going to uphold the values that we hold dear in this country. To allow the importance of that kind of teaching to be swept aside seems to me potentially to be subjecting young children to understanding the wrong thing at a formative age.

We should be resolute about universal values of equality, right from the top, and transmit those values to every school. I am afraid that if there are those who say they do not want that validity to be taught, we have to face that down, just as we do if people say they would like to be able to exclude gay couples from their bed and breakfasts, or to be able not to employ a gay person, or to be able not to offer a service to gay couples. We do not tolerate that any more. Why should we tolerate what I have described? We have to be clear about that precisely because the age in question is such an important one, at which children should be taught about our common values.

My hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham mentioned the Catholic Church. A few months ago, I attended a meeting in the Vatican with my hon. Friend the Member for Reigate (Crispin Blunt), who is

[Nick Herbert]

the secretary of the all-party parliamentary group on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rights. It was intended to be a meeting with the Pope but in the end it was with the Cardinal Secretary of State. It was to discuss with Baroness Helena Kennedy, the International Bar Council and others the Catholic Church's stance on homosexuality.

Our proposal was that the Church could and should at least condemn violence against LGBT people. It has immense influence and importance in many regions of the world—particularly south America and southern Africa. It is a shame that there is not a stronger stance on the part of leaders of the Catholic Church against something that, whatever our views on homosexuality and the validity of homosexual relationships, we should all be able to agree on: that violence against anyone is wrong. The Catholic Church should be able to say that, and it would be immensely powerful if it could.

In my work as chair of the new Global Equality Caucus, tying up parliamentarians from across the world to promote LGBT+ rights, I go to many different countries to talk to parliamentarians about those issues. Next week I will be talking to Czech parliamentarians about same-sex marriage. The following week I will be in Tokyo talking to Japanese politicians and others from the Asia-Pacific region about equality issues. We have to be able to hold our heads up high in doing that, and I think for the most part we can, but this is unfinished business in our schools. I am grateful for the robust stance that the Government have taken, but they must see it through with the clearest possible guidance, leadership and support for the teachers who are being oppressed in Birmingham and elsewhere, and with the resources to match.

3.25 pm

Luke Pollard (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Lab/Co-op): I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Daniel Kawczynski), who spoke with such passion, honesty and authenticity. In these debates we often talk about what happens to LGBT young people and tell their coming out stories. Sometimes we neglect those who come out a little later in life and their difficulties with the norms that have been built around them, especially if they come from a more overtly heterosexual relationship into discovering who they are and being honest about it. It is harder, and the courage of the hon. Gentleman's speech today is to his credit. I thank him for tabling the debate.

I am pleased to see that the Minister is still in his place after the reshuffle. He and I have spent much time talking about schools in Plymouth, and I shall try to include some relevant experiences in my remarks today.

It is right that every child in our schools should know about the world—both about the difficulties in the world, and about the things that are amazing in it. They should be taught about families, communities and about right and wrong. That is not exclusively the role of teachers and teaching assistants. Parents, communities, grandparents and friends have a role as well, but we must make sure that every child knows that they have worth and are loved, and that they have rights. They have the right not to be abused and the right to make

decisions about what happens to their own bodies. That type of education must be provided universally—to all our children—which is why teaching sex and relationships education is so important.

The Minister and I have spoken about that a few times. I should be grateful if he would talk about how we are to make such provision for children who are home-schooled. In Plymouth there has been a great rise in the number of home-schooled children, and sometimes that is because they have been excluded. I am concerned about the increase in the number of exclusions, in relation to Government policy, and what it will mean for kids, particularly those with special educational needs and disabilities or mental health problems, who are unable to cope and get the support they need in mainstream education, and who are taught outside those environments. How are we making sure that all the home-schooled kids get the understanding that kids in more traditional education settings get?

It is right that we say there is nothing wrong with being LGBT. The right hon. Member for Arundel and South Downs (Nick Herbert) said that we should not tolerate anyone who discriminates. That is right, but the key to not tolerating things is the recognition that the hate has not gone away. That is important because there is a belief, now that we have legislative barriers to prevent discrimination, that we have crossed the Rubicon and are suddenly in an age of equality with no discrimination. However, those legislative barriers do not mean that hostility to equality—that uncomfortableness based on traditional values, religious views or misapprehensions or misunderstandings—has not gone away; people have just felt unable to voice it.

That is the type of anger that was sometimes articulated in the Brexit debates—people had views that they did not feel they could express. The key to dealing with discrimination in the matters in question is not just to call out hate and bigotry—although we must do that. It is also about education. It is about helping people understand what their neighbours are like and why it matters that we celebrate our diversity in all our communication. That is why education is key and why the debate about SRE in schools has been so powerful. Instead of being a debate about negatives, it has been about positives. It is about saying, “Look what can be achieved if we show every single child that they have value and worth and that diversity matters.” It is something positive.

There are fantastic spokespeople. The right hon. Member for Arundel and South Downs mentioned Stonewall, which has fantastic advocates, but they are not the only ones. There are many more besides. I want in particular to pay tribute to one of my heroes, whom I met recently, Olly Pike, the LGBT author. Writing LGBT children's books can have a profound effect on young people.

I gave my young nephew the book “And Tango Makes Three”, which I have spoken about in the main Chamber. It is about a pair of gay penguins who adopt a baby penguin, and it is a wonderful, beautiful story that fits well on his little bookshelf. The thing that makes it so perfect is that it makes no difference to my nephew whether they are two boy penguins or a man and a woman—it is just normal. We teach discrimination into children; if we do not do that, they will not have it.

I am proud of that, and people such as Olly Pike and the authors of “And Tango Makes Three” make such a big contribution.

When speaking about LGBT education, it is important not to say “LGBT” as if it is one word that covers one type of person. As someone who is proud to be gay, I fit into the “G” bit, which frequently dominates much of the debate because much of it is made up of white men, who tend to dominate lots of discussions—they just do. That frequently means that the “L” voices—the lesbian community—get drowned out and do not have that self-worth. Certainly—this is discrimination even within the gay community—if someone is a “B”, or bisexual, there is still no validity in that. There is still a concern—“Oh, they haven’t made their mind up yet.” We have heard it time and again, including in our LGBT culture, and it reduces the validity of people who are bisexual.

Then we have trans people, and especially young trans people, which is where, to borrow the phrase of the right hon. Member for Arundel and South Downs, we have huge unfinished business to deal with. The stats presented by my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Sarah Champion) show that far too many of our young trans kids are harming themselves. According to figures from Stonewall, 27% of our trans kids have attempted suicide, nine in 10 have thought about it, 72% have attempted self-harm, and four in five say that they have been verbally abused because of who they are. That is not good enough. As a culture, society and country we must set an objective to eliminate that type of abuse, and we can do that only if we put effort into educating not just our children but society as a whole. It is amazing what powerful teachers children can be when teaching friends and family about what they learned in school that day, or teaching others that something is not right.

Pride events are a powerful form of teaching. This year, sadly, Plymouth Pride was called off due to high winds, and because the 60 mph gusts could have lifted the rather fabulous stage into the crowd. That was probably a good reason for the organisers to cancel it. The passion generated by such events, however, has refocused people’s dedication to make Plymouth Pride 2020 even bigger, and hopefully it will involve more of our armed forces. Next year is the 20th anniversary of members of the armed forces being able to serve openly as LGBT members. We should celebrate that, and I hope the Government and Defence Ministers will provide a steer. We should be proud of everyone who serves in uniform, whether they are straight, gay, bisexual, lesbian or trans. At a time when our biggest ally, America, is not pursuing such policies towards trans members of its own military, we should be proud to make a distinction and say that trans members are welcome and valued in our military.

Hate is on the rise, and education in our schools is one way of challenging that. I spoke to some young kids about an incident that happened during a match between Northampton Town and Plymouth Argyle at the weekend. A young person was concerned by what they had read in the local paper about homophobic abuse that was shouted by a member of the green army—Plymouth Argyle’s travelling fans—at a Northampton Town home fan. They described the initial chants of, “Who’s the queer in the pink?”, which was aimed at a fan, and

shouts of “faggot”. This young person was disturbed by that, because they did not want that hate in their game. That was really powerful.

In the past, as a gay football supporter, I have not always felt that football has done enough to promote equality. However, for young people in Plymouth who are growing up gay, or who recognise that they live in a diverse society, this statement from Plymouth Argyle is immensely warming:

“Plymouth Argyle Football Club is a community-focused, values-driven organisation...It is our legal duty to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the basis of age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; marriage and civil partnership; ethnicity; religion and belief; gender; and sexual orientation.”

How many times have we heard a football club state so clearly the values that we all hold dear? The club should be praised for its quick and speedy response, as should the Argyle fans’ trust, and particularly its chair, Andy Symons, for saying that we will not accept hate in our game. It needs to be kicked out, just as we attempt to kick out racism. The rainbow laces promoted by the Football Association and Stonewall should contribute to kicking out from our game discrimination against LGBT people.

As a football fan, growing up with an entire set of straight models, without a single gay role model in football, affected my idea that I was associated with it. Young people growing up at the moment need role models from different societies. In the 1980s, if someone was out in the media, they were a flamboyant queen; that was how they protected themselves against discrimination and they made it part of their act. They were colourful, loud and brash, which is how they coped with people calling them “queer” or “faggot”. That is great for a small part of the LGBTQ community, but the vast majority of us need a range of role models from different workplaces and walks of life, and that can directly contribute to teaching diversity in our schools.

There is rising hate in society. After the “defend democracy” protest, someone came up to me and asked why I spoke about there not being enough diversity in our politics. I said that in politics there are far too many straight, white, round, middle-aged men. He said, “Why did you mention the straight bit?”, which for me was an interesting learning experience to reflect on. There are a lot of straight, middle-aged, white, round men in politics, both here in Parliament and in local government. There is something uncomfortable in talking about sexuality that I think we need to address, because if we are truly to deal with discrimination, we must empower all young people to feel that they have a value. We must empower parents and communities to recognise that diversity is a good thing, not a threat.

Sometimes the debate about sex and relationships education in our schools has been flipped. We trust a teacher to teach our children maths or history every day, and we do not suddenly think that by teaching history, teachers will turn every child into a murderous dictator from the past, or a bloodthirsty pirate. We think that our children are learning, and that is what age-appropriate SRE means. Children are being taught something age appropriate for who they are, so that they can value it and recognise it in their friends and family and in who they are. Whether those kids are

[*Luke Pollard*]

straight, gay, bi or trans, that message is important. We must recognise the rising hate in our society and do our best to invest in education.

I am glad that the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham spoke about conversion therapy, because there are prominent political figures who say words in and around that, and who suggest that science may “yet produce an answer” to homosexuality at some stage. Conversion therapy is cruel and wrong, and it starts from a place that does not value every individual for who they are. We must not accept that in our society, just as Plymouth Argyle said that there is no place for bigotry, racism, discrimination or homophobia. And it is not homo “phobia”—people are not scared of gays; they are just bigots. We must be clear that we must value every person in every walk of life. I am grateful that the Government have listened to cross-party concerns about SRE in schools and done something about it.

What happens when we do not teach SRE? If people are not taught about who they are, where do they find that information? As a young gay man I wanted to know what these feelings were and what was going on in my head. Like the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham, I had conversations with myself—perhaps with a bit less God, but similar conversations none the less. If someone is not taught SRE, where do they get information about healthy relationships and safe sex and who people sleep with? Is it from their mates, parents and teachers? No, it is from pornography, and that creates a skewed impression of what a healthy relationship is and of what someone’s role is in any sexual relationship. It creates a skewed impression about safe sex, and about the propensity of bareback sex, abuse, violence or intimidation, which is not healthy for anyone.

In particular I am concerned about the rise of the instafamous culture that is recognised by our young people—about people who are famous for nothing other than being attractive on Instagram. I have seen, and parents have told me about, the progression from being instafamous to self-publishing pornography. Young people increasingly feel that they must post pictures of themselves without their tops on, or wearing low-cut dresses, or with perfect abs and six packs, or provocative images of other parts.

Rather than be abused by a publishing house elsewhere, some young people use platforms such as OnlyFans as an avenue to transition from being instafamous to publishing their own pornography. In some cases those kids create a business model when they turn 18—being young is attractive, so good on them—but in other cases there is a risk that they will be pushed into doing something that they might not otherwise do. We can get out of that with decent, age-appropriate education in our schools.

Like comrades and colleagues from across the House, I support Stonewall’s call for greater funding for teaching, and the training of our teachers, in this space. We have achieved a lot, but there is still a lot of unfinished business. I will be grateful if the Minister will reflect particularly on how we deal with instafame and the self-publishing of pornography.

3.40 pm

Mike Kane (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Roger, and to follow that inspirational speech from my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport (Luke Pollard), who spoke with real passion about how hate in society is rising, rather than decreasing. As a fellow football fan, I pay tribute to my football team, Manchester City—I seem to be mentioning them quite a lot this week—for all they do for the LGBT community in Manchester through getting rid of discrimination on the football terraces and promoting proper integration. My hon. Friend gave a really powerful speech.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Daniel Kawczynski) on securing this important debate and on such powerful testimony. I am sure every Member here wishes his researcher and his researcher’s friend well. We should all echo the thanks he gave to the health and wellbeing team here in the House, which helped him and which help other Members through a variety of issues.

Before I get into the bones of the debate, I have to say that, based on the hon. Gentleman’s inspirational speech, I will have to come out here as well: I am a Roman Catholic, which a gay friend of mine teased me about not so long ago. Honestly, we do not need collars to tell us that someone cannot partake in liturgy or sacrament, or believe in solidarity, subsidiarity, the preferential option for the poor or the universal destination of goods if they do not believe in the heart of the faith, which is human dignity. Someone who does not believe in the heart of the faith should not be able to partake in the rest of it.

We have seen much better direction under the new Pontiff, for he asked: “who are we to judge” anybody who is gay? For the record, I am the convenor of the Catholic Legislators’ network here in Westminster. The pontiff went on to say that a homosexual man or woman has the right to a family—to a father, to a mother, to a son—and their parents have the right to a son or daughter, and that no son or daughter should be cast out because of their sexuality. I think he was right to say that.

As a Mancunian, I had the great honour of delaying my departure to down here a few weeks ago, just before the recess, because the Governor of the Bank of England was launching the new £50 note at the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester. It has Alan Turing on it, who was obviously professor of mathematics at Manchester University, which is why that location was chosen. He is one of the greatest heroes in this country’s history. He cracked the enigma code at Bletchley, which led to the defeat of Nazi tyranny and ended the war early, saving countless millions of lives. How did we, as a society, go on to treat him—when he was living in Manchester and elsewhere—absolutely appallingly?

The hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham mentioned what we did to gay people in the ’40s and ’50s and way before that. I think we were all proud—I was not a Member at the time—when the then Prime Minister Brown offered a posthumous pardon to Alan Turing. If anybody has a chance and a few minutes to spare, they should read the speech of Mark Carney, the Governor of the Bank of England, at the launch of that note. It was a powerful, moving testimony.

There is cross-party consensus on the need for inclusive RSE. This will not do my career any good, but I have to concur with my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Sarah Champion) that the Minister has shown some incredible personal and political leadership on this. That is the last time I will say anything like that around the Minister. I think he has probably felt the love from some of us on the Opposition Benches, including the shadow Secretary of State—my boss—my hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Angela Rayner), because of this. I have said that now, so I will move on. There will be some criticisms later.

Figures from the “School Report 2017” show that 40% of LGBT pupils are never taught anything about the issue at school. We must provide comprehensive support for our teachers. Compulsory RSE was championed by my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham, who is sat behind me, and was included in the Children and Social Work Act 2017 following her amendment. A huge debt of honour goes to her. I have issues with the Minister about how we get things on the curriculum in this country, and I am not sure my hon. Friend’s way is the best, but it is through her personal endeavour and tenaciousness over a long time that we are in the place that we are. It was also reflected in the proposals of the then Secretary of State for Education—the right hon. Member for Putney (Justine Greening), who also worked very well on this—to make elements of personal, social, health and economic education mandatory in schools.

High-quality RSE will help to create safe communities—that is essentially what we are saying. Inadequate RSE leaves pupils vulnerable, particularly to abuse. I take up what the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham said about the Church and the priests. A famous Catholic theologian, Karl Rahner, said that power is a gift from God. Abuse of minors has absolutely nothing to do with homosexuality, as some people have said. It is an abuse of power. There are two types of power in our land—relational and coercive. That was all about coercive power. That point needs making strenuously.

The Government’s draft guidance clearly sets out the rights of parents and carers to withdraw children from sex education, but not relationships education. It also notes the role of parents in the development of their children’s understanding of relationships. For primary schools, the draft guidance states that headteachers will automatically grant a request to withdraw a pupil from any sex education, other than when in parts of the science curriculum. In secondary schools, parents will still have a right to request withdrawal from some or all sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE, which will be granted in all but exceptional circumstances. This will apply up until three terms before the child turns 16, at which point the child would be able to opt into sex education if they so chose.

Sarah Champion: This might seem like a small point, but I never got clarification on it—*[Interruption.]* Sorry; I was confused by the Minister. Will parents be told if their child decides to have that education in those last terms?

Sir Roger Gale (in the Chair): Order. The Minister’s intervention was to indicate that we are running out of time.

Mike Kane: Okay. I taught RSE to year 5 in primary school for many years, and we had stringent policies. People withdrawing their children would be automatically put on our safeguarding alerts. We need to think about that really seriously.

There is a danger that, without a clear steer from Government, there will be big variations between schools. We need resources going into those schools. This new framework has to be adequately funded, and it is on that that we will hold the Minister’s feet to the fire, now that he has survived another regime change and is one of the longest-serving Ministers ever. I made a Bee Gees joke yesterday; I will not repeat it today.

Children must know their rights if they are to exercise them throughout their lives. Relationships and sex education is effective when it sits as part of a whole-school approach, is embedded across the curriculum and is delivered by well trained staff. The Government must now ensure that schools have the resources to deliver that.

3.49 pm

The Minister for School Standards (Nick Gibb): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Roger. Let me start by welcoming my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Daniel Kawczynski) and congratulating him on a very passionate and moving speech. We are all very grateful to him for organising and securing the debate and for the way he introduced it today. We are also grateful for the very moving and powerful speeches from the hon. Member for Rotherham (Sarah Champion), my right hon. Friend the Member for Arundel and South Downs (Nick Herbert) and the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport (Luke Pollard).

My hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham said that he was the first Conservative MP, the only Conservative MP, to have been born in a communist country—it was in Poland, in 1972. Let us hope that the forthcoming general election does not lead to a Corbyn-led Labour Government, lest in 20 years’ time we have many more MPs who have been born in a communist country.

My hon. Friend asked about conversion therapy. He is right to point out that in the Government’s 2018 “LGBT Action Plan”, we committed to bringing forward proposals to end the unacceptable and abusive practice of conversion therapy in the UK. We are currently engaging with stakeholders and will set out further steps in due course, but my hon. Friend can rest assured that we take that issue very seriously and will be taking action.

Schools play a critical role in promoting integration and widening opportunities for all communities, including LGBT young people. Many schools already do that successfully, creating inclusive environments in which children are able to learn the values that underpin our society. Through education, we can ensure that the next generation learns about those values of fairness, tolerance and respect.

The Government are clear that every pupil, regardless of their sexuality, deserves the opportunity to progress and fulfil their potential and to do so in an environment free from prejudice and discrimination. I am personally committed and determined to stop, for example, the use of the word “gay” as a pejorative term in our schools, as

[Nick Gibb]

that can often cause anxiety to LGBT pupils—in fact, to all pupils. The Department for Education is providing more than £2.8 million of funding, between September 2016 and March 2020, to four anti-bullying organisations to support schools to tackle bullying effectively. The Government Equalities Office is also providing £3 million, between 2016 and 2019, to help to prevent and respond to homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying, and has invested a further £1 million to extend that funding to March of next year.

Respect for all is fundamental to the reforms that we have made to the curriculum. We are making relationships and health education compulsory in all primary schools and relationships, sex and health education compulsory in all secondary schools. We are encouraging as many schools as possible to start teaching the new subjects from September 2019; they will be required to do so from September 2020. I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Rotherham for the huge part that she played in campaigning for relationships education and in helping the Government to develop and then implement their policy so successfully.

Let us remember what these subjects actually address and why their introduction gained the overwhelming support of the House. At the heart of relationships and health education in primary schools is a focus on putting in place the key building blocks of healthy, respectful relationships, focusing on family and friendships, in all contexts, including online. At secondary level, teaching will build on the knowledge acquired at primary level and further develop pupils' understanding of health, with an increased focus on risk areas such as drugs and alcohol, as well as introducing knowledge about intimate relationships and sex.

These subjects also represent a significant step forward in terms of equality by ensuring that young LGBT people will receive teaching relevant to their lives, preparing them for the adult world and supporting them to form positive, healthy, nurturing relationships. In the statutory guidance, we are clear that all pupils should receive during their school years teaching on LGBT relationships. Secondary schools should include LGBT content in their teaching, and primary schools are strongly encouraged and enabled, when teaching about different types of families, to include families with same-sex parents. Of course, the reality of that will be reflected at the school gates of many primary schools, with some children being dropped off and picked up by two mums or two dads. It is right that pupils understand that these families in which their classmates are growing up are characterised by love and care, just like any other family, and are equally deserving of respect.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Arundel and South Downs asked about the discretion that we have given primary schools for teaching about LGBT. We think that it is right for schools to decide their curriculum, based on the needs of their particular cohort of pupils. We have been clear that, for the majority of primary schools, teaching about LGBT people and relationships will be age-appropriate for their pupils and we strongly encourage them to do that. But we have been at pains to ensure that this groundbreaking policy carries as much support as possible and achieves a broad consensus. That has been generally achieved.

We have applied the requirement to teach RSE not only to the schools in the state sector; we have applied that requirement also to schools in the independent sector, including independent orthodox faith schools. The law applies to those schools as well, and we have managed to achieve consensus with many of the religious organisations. That is why we have had that discretion in relation to teaching.

The hon. Member for Rotherham asked about training material to enable teachers to teach RSE, and my right hon. Friend the Member for Arundel and South Downs raised the same issue. The Department is committed to supporting schools to deliver high-quality teaching of relationships education. To support schools, we are investing up to £6 million, in this financial year, for the Department to develop a programme of support for schools. The funding will not be distributed to schools; it is about preparing the materials.

Further funding, beyond the next financial year, is, of course, a matter for the spending review that has just been announced. The programme of support will focus on tools that improve schools' practice, such as the implementation guide that my right hon. Friend referred to, easy access to high-quality resources and support for staff training. The Department is currently working with schools and teachers to develop a programme of support suited to their needs. To support that, we are also setting up a new working group, and it will provide insight into how the guidance is working in practice. That is chaired by Ian Bauckham CBE, who is our education adviser and a senior headteacher.

We are very clear that parents from all faiths and none do not want their children to feel bullied or excluded at school or to feel that their family is not equally valued. Through our call for evidence and the consultation on the content for these subjects, there was an absolute consensus that all pupils should be taught, as a minimum, about respect for themselves and for others.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham for his passionate speech. I hope we can all agree that children are never too young to learn about love, kindness, tolerance, difference, compassion and empathy, as part of creating a cohesive school community and in building a tolerant society. We need to do all we can to loosen the knot in the hearts of LGBT young people with relationships lessons and with role models, such as some of the hon. Members who have spoken in this important debate with such eloquence, passion and honesty.

3.58 pm

Daniel Kawczynski: I thank the hon. Members for Rotherham (Sarah Champion) and for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport (Luke Pollard) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Arundel and South Downs (Nick Herbert), who all spoke so eloquently and with such great passion. I must admit that my interaction with the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport has been relatively limited since he joined the House. I will certainly look forward to getting to know him better and working together in the coming years on promoting LGBT rights across our country.

We did not see as many Members as expected attending this debate because of the Brexit debate in the main Chamber, but I am sure that a lot of young people

around the country have been listening to what we have had to say today and have heard how we support them being supported over LGBT issues in schools.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Arundel and South Downs mentioned that he felt that parents protesting outside schools on these sorts of issues was something that the Government ought to be looking at. I could not agree with him more. I was trying to be a little bit more circumspect in my comments, but he has given me the courage and conviction to think about this issue more and I would strongly reiterate to the Minister the sentiment that has been conveyed.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered teaching on LGBT community and acceptance in schools.

Suicide Risk Assessment Tools in the NHS

[SIR CHRISTOPHER CHOPE *in the Chair*]

4 pm

Kevin Hollinrake (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the use of suicide risk assessment tools in the NHS.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Christopher.

According to a detailed study carried out by Manchester University, in one year alone 636 people who were deemed by clinicians to be at low or no immediate risk of suicide went on to take their lives within the next three months. Of course, 636 is just a fleeting fact, one of myriad statistics about the NHS that we can cite every minute of the day, but every one of those 636 deaths is a tragedy—it is a brother, a friend, a partner, a child. One of those 636 people whose lives were lost in that year was the son of two of my constituents, a young man called Andrew Bellerby.

It may break the heart of any parent in this Chamber to see this photograph of young Andrew in his blazer as he went to school some years earlier. As one who proudly took my own children to their new school only this week, it is shocking to think that at some point one might lose one's child in such circumstances. On 10 July 2015, many years after the photograph was taken, and in the same year as the study that I just mentioned, Andrew took his own life. The loss of Andrew's life and the devastating impact that it had on his loved ones was, in all likelihood, totally needless. According to an expert witness who represented the Bellerby family, on a balance of probabilities Andrew would be alive today had the NHS trust that was entrusted with his care looked after him properly.

At this point, I would like to play tribute to Andrew's family, particularly his father, Richard Bellerby. I understand that Richard's brother is with us today in the Public Gallery; Richard could not be here himself, but I think that he is watching this debate via a parliamentary link. It was only due to his tireless efforts, his determination and his commitment to make sure that others do not suffer the same fate that we are debating this issue today.

Not only did the Bellerby family have to cope with unimaginable grief and loss, but they then had to fight a two-year battle with the Sheffield Health and Social Care NHS Foundation Trust to establish the truth. The truth, which the trust finally and begrudgingly apologised for, was that there had been a simple but fatal series of errors. Andrew's state of mind was assessed by untrained nurses using an assessment tool—a checklist, for want of a better word—that was not fit for purpose. As a direct consequence, they made an incorrect diagnosis, without even taking into account his past behaviour.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): First of all, I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on bringing this matter forward. In Northern Ireland, the figure for suicide is 20% higher than for the rest of the United Kingdom. Does he agree that it has come to the point that all frontline medical staff, from pharmacists to treatment room nurses, should be trained in appropriate suicide

[Jim Shannon]

risk assessment, especially taking into consideration the high rate of suicide across the whole of the United Kingdom, and in particular in Northern Ireland?

Kevin Hollinrake: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. That is one key component of three: training nurses; using a proper, validated tool; and taking into account the past behaviour of the individual and the context of the situation. None of those three things was in place for Andrew. As a consequence, 48 hours after being admitted to hospital in an ambulance, Andrew took his own life.

Liz Twist (Blaydon) (Lab): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Kevin Hollinrake: I am happy to give way to the chair of the all-party parliamentary group on suicide and self-harm prevention.

Liz Twist: The hon. Gentleman is raising a very serious issue. I am grateful to Samaritans for a briefing on it ahead of this debate. It is absolutely clear that these risk assessment tools are not in themselves complete. They must be supported by consideration of the context, including previous history, and by a professional assessment of what is happening. Does he agree that it is absolutely essential that all trusts ensure that that happens?

Kevin Hollinrake: I entirely agree with the hon. Lady. I know that the Bellerby family would very much like to meet the Minister here today—the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, my hon. Friend the Member for Mid Bedfordshire (Ms Dorries)—to see what can be done to make sure these situations do not happen again, and I think they would be very pleased to meet the hon. Lady, too, because I know that she does tremendous work in the all-party parliamentary group.

Hugh Gaffney (Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill) (Lab): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Kevin Hollinrake: I am happy to give way again and then I will make some progress.

Hugh Gaffney: I will just add my point, from Scotland. In emergency departments, the staff have not been trained up to the level that we are hearing about today. Suicide is a big risk, especially among young people, and all we are asking for is that people look at this situation and give emergency staff the proper tools and training. If that had happened before, Andrew would be with us today.

Kevin Hollinrake: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right and I am grateful to him for his very kind contribution. I know that Andrew's family will also be grateful to him.

The fact is that the Sheffield trust had been treating Andrew for many years; it knew him well and knew that he was a serious suicide risk, yet none of this was taken into account when he was admitted to hospital for that fateful final time. The untrained nurses carried out the assessment using a crisis triage rating scale, CTRS, and deemed Andrew fit to be discharged. They rated Andrew 14 on a scale of zero to 15, where 15 means that there is no serious or immediate risk of suicide, despite the fact

that Andrew had a history of suicide attempts and also threatened to jump out of a fifth floor window while he was being assessed.

The insult to fatal injury in this case is that Mr Richard Bellerby has had to fight for justice and answers for years. He describes the trust's role in this process as a campaign of dirty tricks—dirty tricks, denial and deceit. In February 2018, the trust finally admitted its wrongdoing, apologised and agreed to settle out of court, but before doing so it had persistently and gratuitously maintained that it was not at fault. For instance, the trust had said that it had an expert witness whose opinion was that whatever the trust would or could have done, Andrew would still have taken his own life. However, the trust refused to supply that expert witness's evidence and it appears that such an expert never even existed.

The inquest established that the trust was guilty of missing numerous opportunities to provide help. The trust's own internal investigation revealed that the nurses who had seen Andrew had no training in this area, which directly contravenes national guidelines. At the inquest, there was an embarrassing blame game between Andrew's GP and the trust, with each pointing the finger at the other. As Mr Bellerby has said, it was like musicians in an orchestra playing from a different sheet of music, with no conductor.

There appears to be a complete lack of accountability; nobody has been properly held to account for these errors. The trust admitted in its internal investigation that it had failed to carry out adequate risk assessments. In Richard Bellerby's profession, which is construction, failure to carry out proper risk assessment or failure to train people properly can lead to a charge of criminal responsibility for manslaughter in the event of a fatality.

Instead of being open and honest about the circumstances surrounding Andrew's death, the trust only corresponded when it was forced to do so. There were no responses to Mr Bellerby's letters unless they were sent by recorded delivery, and even then the only responses came from corporate affairs managers rather than from clinicians, and they still failed to provide answers. The trust has not even responded to my letters, other than to send a holding response. I wrote to the trust on 28 January asking for answers to questions and I chased things up on 6 March, but there was still no full response. When the trust finally agreed to meet Andrew's father, Mr Bellerby, it was of course a meeting with the corporate affairs director. When Mr Bellerby insisted on a clinician being present, the meeting was cancelled.

The trust refused simple requests for information, such as how long the nurses who saw Andrew had worked at the trust and what their qualifications were. The two-year battle cost the NHS around £40,000 just to reimburse the Bellerby family's legal costs, in addition to any costs that the trust itself and NHS Resolution would have incurred. The total bill is likely to be in excess of £100,000—all for £9,000 in compensation. Critically, there was no compassion, no condolences and no remorse. Instead, there was contempt, denial and disregard.

To say the Bellerby family won is a travesty. They lost their son, a grandson, a brother, but they did defeat the trust. With the help of their solicitors, Irwin Mitchell, whose efforts were instrumental to their success, they won their case, they received their grudging apology and the trust has now stopped using the CTRS. All the

family wanted was recognition of the failures and an apology. Given that, everything could have been sorted on day one. Instead the family had to fight against our own bureaucracy. It beggars belief that we tolerate a system that behaves in this manner.

Surprisingly, given the facts of the case and its role in the two-year cover-up of the truth, NHS Resolutions agrees with having a position of openness. In its 2018 report, "Learning from suicide-related claims", it states:

"Where compensation is due it should be given willingly and in a timely manner to prevent further distress and suffering to distraught families."

It is time we lived up to those fine words.

The Bellerby family have worked closely with Manchester University on the inquiry I mentioned earlier, which is called, "The assessment of clinical risk in mental health services". It has helped to establish the extent of the problem of inappropriate use of suicide risk assessment tools in the NHS and the figure of 636 deaths per annum. It has also established that today, 33 out of 85 trusts use a tool that has not been independently validated and 29% of trusts use it with untrained staff. The national inquiry into safety in mental health recently raised issues of the

"inconsistency across mental health trusts in the length and content of risk assessment tools"

and a

"variation in how tools are used and examples of use contrary to national guidelines".

Everyone seems to agree that the incorrect use of such tools is wholly wrong. Mental health charity Mind is clear that the Government should standardise tools across the service, improve training and support in their usage and follow-up within 48 hours with those who have received assessments. The Royal College of Psychiatrists said that we should

"move away from a risk assessment model to a risk reduction model".

I know the Minister will be appalled by the full details of the case and will be determined to help drive change in the system, and I have some questions for her. What has changed since Andrew's death? Specifically, what action will she take to ensure that mental health trusts are only using risk assessment tools that have been independently validated as safe? What action is she taking to ensure that staff in mental health services receive training in risk assessment? What action is being taken to support staff to be able to talk to people about suicidal thoughts? Will she implement a process so that the Care Quality Commission or another body can check that best practice is adopted? Will she commit to an ambition for zero suicides among all those under the care of mental health services? Will she look at the behaviour of the trust and drive through a new policy of openness and honesty in our health services? Finally, will she meet me and my constituents to hear Andrew's story and possible solutions at first hand, to ensure that Andrew did not die in vain?

4.14 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Ms Nadine Dorries): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Christopher. After 10 years of being a Chair myself, I hope I do not incur your wrath today.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Thirsk and Malton (Kevin Hollinrake) for securing this important debate. It is an honour for me to take up the position as Minister with responsibility for suicide prevention. My predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Jackie Doyle-Price), did a commendable job when she held this position and I am determined that we continue to do whatever we can to reduce the devastating impact of suicide.

I offer my sincere and heartfelt condolences to the family of my hon. Friend's constituent. I welcome Robert Bellerby to Westminster Hall and thank him for coming today. These will continue to be difficult times for the Bellerby family. I know from personal experience how devastating it is to lose someone you love and someone who is close to you through suicide. It is inspirational for me to see the courage and determination of those, such as Mr Bellerby, who manage to bring about positive action from such tragic circumstances. By their actions, Mr Bellerby and others like him will help to prevent others from going through the same deep and lasting loss.

I will now turn to the specifics raised by my hon. Friend about the use of risk assessment tools for patients at risk of suicide. He raised the specific case of Andrew Bellerby, who sadly died in 2015. I understand that at the time of Andrew's attendance at hospital, it was practice at the Sheffield Health and Social Care NHS Foundation Trust to use a crisis triage rating scale tool. It was used to assess Andrew before he was discharged. Sadly, he took his own life shortly after. The trust conducted a serious incident review to learn the lessons from this tragic case.

It is clear that the care Andrew received leading up to his death was not satisfactory, and I understand that a comprehensive action plan was developed and fully implemented by the trust following the serious incident review. I have also been reassured that the trust has stopped using the crisis triage rating scale tool, following a report published by the national confidential inquiry into suicide and safety in mental health in 2018, which recommended that the risk assessment tools should not be used as a way of predicting future suicidal behaviour.

I recognise and share my hon. Friend's concerns about the use of risk assessment tools across the wider NHS. He is right that guidelines published by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence make clear recommendations that NHS professionals should not use risk assessment tools and scales to predict future suicide or repetition of self-harm, or to determine who should be offered treatment and who should be discharged. Each NHS trust is responsible for the care it delivers and the safety of its patients, but NICE guidelines are clear on the use of risk assessment tools, and we expect the NHS to implement the guidelines. Clinical guidelines represent best practice and should be taken fully into account by clinicians.

The national confidential inquiry into suicide and safety in mental health has published "Safer services: a toolkit for specialist mental health services and primary care", which presents 10 ways to improve safety. NHS England has supported all mental health trusts to access the toolkit, which includes guidance for trusts on the use of risk assessment tools and highlights NICE guidance. The toolkit specifically states:

[*Ms Nadine Dorries*]

“All patients’ management plans should be based on the assessment of individual risk and not on the completion of a checklist.”

The hon. Member for Blaydon (*Liz Twist*) was absolutely right that the situation should be put in its context as it presents at that moment. Everything, including the history of physical and mental health, should be considered when assessing and evaluating a patient when they present with a potential suicide.

Liz Twist: I am pleased to hear that the Minister is focused on ensuring that NHS trusts apply the guidance. What steps will she take to ensure that that happens across the board?

Ms Dorries: I am delighted to inform the hon. Lady that just this week, NHS England has written to all mental health trusts to make clear that they should be adhering to NICE guidelines on the use of risk assessment tools. My hon. Friend the Member for Thirsk and Malton mentioned a trust that is still using the old method. As a result of this debate, we have ensured that the letter is going out to tell NHS trusts that they should not be using the tools any longer and should be implementing the NHS guidelines.

Jim Shannon: I congratulate the Minister on her appointment. When intervening on the hon. Member for Thirsk and Malton (*Kevin Hollinrake*), I referred to the 20% increase in suicides in Northern Ireland. I did so because it is factually correct, and because in Northern Ireland we have a policy and strategy in place to address those issues. Has the Minister, in her short time in her role, had the opportunity to discuss those matters with, for instance, the Northern Ireland Department of Health?

Ms Dorries: I am afraid I must disappoint the hon. Gentleman. This is my third day in, and I have not yet had a chance to discuss Northern Ireland in detail, but as a result of his intervention I will ensure that we do that, and it will be on tomorrow’s agenda.

The letter that NHS England sent out highlights the report from the University of Manchester on “The assessment of clinical risk in mental health services”, and asks trusts to ensure that their risk assessment policies reflect the latest evidence from the university, as well as best practice. I am pleased that NHS England and NHS Improvement have committed to working with trusts to improve risk assessment and safety planning as part of future quality and safety work on crisis care and suicide prevention.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thirsk and Malton asked specifically about the role of the Care Quality Commission in ensuring that trusts are adopting best practice in respect of risk management processes. The CQC has assured me that risk management processes are a key feature of every CQC inspection. I hope that that assurance from the CQC, along with the letter that NHS England sent out this week, will go some way to reassure my hon. Friend.

Kevin Hollinrake: I am sure that the work that the Minister has already done to raise the issue with trusts is very positive news for the family. On the basis that people do not do what is expected but what is inspected,

it is good to hear that some processes are already in place in the CQC. Will new processes be added? Presumably checks were happening when the situation occurred, so we need something else to ensure that best practice is properly adopted.

Ms Dorries: If I may continue my speech, I hope that I can reassure my hon. Friend on that point.

The Government are committed to a culture of openness, honesty and transparency in the NHS. The legal duty of candour means that trusts need to be open and transparent with patients or their families when something appears to have caused, or could lead to, significant harm. Trusts could face action from the CQC if they are seen to be failing to comply with that duty. I think that some good news will come out later in the year that will hopefully reassure my hon. Friend regarding a new culture that will develop within the NHS to encourage staff and clinicians to be more open about incidents as they happen, so that they share information and we can learn from such incidents.

Our national learning from deaths policy has introduced a more standardised approach to the way that trusts review, investigate and learn from deaths. The national guidance on learning from deaths, published in 2017, is about supporting trusts to become more willing to admit to and learn from mistakes, so that they reduce risks to future patients and prevent tragedies from happening in the first place. The guidance is clear that trusts must engage meaningfully and sensitively with bereaved families and carers as part of that process. I hope that, as a result of those measures, what the Bellerby family went through in 2015 will never be experienced by another family. To support our national policy, the CQC has strengthened its assessment of learning from deaths by trusts.

I will talk about what we are doing to reduce suicides across the NHS more widely. People in contact with mental health services account for around a third of all suicides in England, and arguably some of the more preventable ones. The overall suicide rate among people in contact with mental health services has reduced significantly over the last decade, but numbers remain too high. We must not lose sight of the fact that nobody under the care of NHS services should ever lose their life as a result of suicide. At the start of 2018, we therefore launched a zero suicide ambition, starting with mental health in-patients, but asking the NHS to be more ambitious and look to expand it to include all mental health patients.

Andrew Griffiths (Burton) (Con): I know it is only the Minister’s third day, but the thing that we ask for more than anything else in a Minister is for somebody who cares about their portfolio. It is clear that my hon. Friend really cares about this issue. I am not unique in this, but as one of the few Members who has used NHS mental health services, I can attest to the real value and life-saving contribution that they make. I commend her decision to have that aspiration for zero deaths from suicide in the NHS.

In my constituency, there were 10 suicides last year. That is 10 families ripped apart and hundreds of lives broken as a result of those tragic decisions. Key to a brilliant service is the number of NHS nurses out in the community. Will the Minister, as she develops in her

role, look at the numbers on the ground, so that we can be sure that everybody in our constituencies has access to mental health nurses, who can save lives?

Ms Dorries: I hope that I can reassure my hon. Friend on some of those points as I whizz forward. We have asked all mental health trusts to put zero suicide ambition plans in place. As already outlined, NHS England is providing funding for suicide prevention to every local area, which includes investment in a national quality improvement programme to improve safety and suicide prevention in mental health services across the NHS.

We are also investing £2 million in the Zero Suicide Alliance, which aims to deliver an NHS with zero suicides across the system and in local communities. It is doing that through improved suicide awareness and prevention training, and developing a better culture of learning from deaths by suicide across the NHS. In June, the then Prime Minister announced that we would encourage all NHS staff to undertake the Zero Suicide Alliance training, which makes all NHS staff more aware and gives them a basic understanding of how to recognise when somebody may be in the space of wanting to take their own life.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thirsk and Malton may be aware that yesterday the Office for National Statistics published the final suicide registrations data for 2018. Concerningly, there were substantial increases in the suicide rate amongst the general population, following three consecutive years of decreases. The latest figures are disappointing, but reinforce why suicide prevention continues to be a priority for the Government and for me personally.

Experts are clear that we need more data to draw firm conclusions from the latest data, and we will continue to work closely with academics and other experts to consider the data in more detail. There has also been an issue over the past two accounting periods surrounding

coroners and the way the reporting of suicides takes place. We continue to take action to reduce the devastating impact of suicide. Every local area has a suicide prevention plan in place, and we are working with the local government sector to ensure the effectiveness of those plans. NHS England is also continuing to roll out funding to every local area to support suicide prevention planning.

We are continuing to improve mental health services. Under the NHS long-term plan published in January, there will be a comprehensive expansion of mental health services, with an additional £2.3 billion in real terms by 2023-24. Crisis care is a key element of the plan, which commits to ensuring that by 2023-24 anyone experiencing a mental health crisis can call NHS 111 and have 24/7 access to the mental health support that they need in their community.

We will set clear standards for access to urgent and emergency specialist mental health care. That will be supported by further mental health crisis care services by 2023-24, including 100% coverage of 24/7 crisis provision for children and young people, 100% coverage of 24/7 crisis resolution, and home treatment teams operating with best practice by 2021 and maintaining coverage to 2023-24. We are also investing £249 million to roll out liaison mental health teams in every acute hospital by 2020, which I hope addresses the question my hon. Friend the Member for Thirsk and Malton asked earlier, to ensure that people who present at hospital with mental health needs get the appropriate care and treatment that they need.

To conclude, I again extend my sincere and heartfelt sympathies to the Bellerby family and friends. I assure them that we are doing everything that we can to prevent further suicides, as we understand their devastating impact on families and the communities affected. I thank my hon. Friend again for raising this very important issue. I would be happy to meet him, and Mr Bellerby and his family, to discuss their concerns in more detail.

Question put and agreed to.

Policing: Staffordshire

4.30 pm

Ruth Smeeth (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered policing in Staffordshire.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Christopher. Given the nature of the debate we are about to have, I want to make it clear to everybody listening, especially my constituents, that I believe Stoke-on-Trent North and Kidsgrove is a wonderful place to live. In spite of all the crime that I am about to touch on, nobody should be scared or worried about where we live. We are safe and secure; my issue is quite how safe and secure we are.

Before I move on to the debate, I will take a moment to touch on the life of PC Andrew Harper, and pay the respects of everybody in the House to someone who was so brave and who gave his life in defending his community. We all have police officers in our constituencies who, every day, stand up for us and protect our community. He was a brave man, and my thoughts and prayers go to his young wife, as I am sure do everyone else's.

I am blessed—I think we are all blessed—by some of our local police officers. I have been lucky to work with three chief inspectors since I got elected—Ade Roberts, John Owen and Mark Barlow—all of whom have served my community well. I could not have asked more of their professionalism and support, especially when I was a brand new Member. They exposed me to different parts of my constituency and made sure that when I was dealing with terror arrests or more complicated, not straightforward crime, they were there to support me as a local politician, to ensure that I did not make things worse but helped to make things better. Their professionalism is reflected every day by their staff, and last month I had the privilege of spending a day with my local officers on shift.

This is where we start talking about some of the challenges in our community. I was briefed on how we are working on local gang crime, meaning gang crime involving young people as well as organised crime. I spent time with the police when they were helping run a food kitchen as part of an initiative to help the homeless and get them off the streets, because one of our local churches does not work in August and there had been a spike in the number of homeless people on our streets. I was then taken around the local hotspots, working with the police and seeing how they engage with some of the most challenged members of my community.

What made it so difficult for me, and for them, is that one of the roles that police officers have to play all too regularly is that of social work. Their job is becoming more and more about tackling mental health issues and working with those who are struggling most. To be candid, they are not resourced to do so. They do it with such passion and provide so much support because they care about the local community, but my concern is that they just do not have enough resources.

Although crime across my constituency is down by 6% over the past 12 months, serious and violent crime is increasing, and people are scared. Some of that is because of a lack of tolerance of crime; some parts of my constituency have never experienced knife crime before, and it causes concern when they do. Other parts

have experienced some very difficult crime. None of this is the fault of the police, but last year we were the centre of the country for Monkey Dust, which led to huge spates of crime. People who were high on drugs were trying to get into older people's houses or turning up at community events, with the police having to act as security guards rather than as police officers, which they are not resourced to do. This summer, there was a spike in antisocial behaviour in Clough Hall Park. It became clear that there is only one warranted police officer and one police community support officer per shift for one third of my constituency. Across the borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme, we have 10 police officers and 10 PCSOs per shift. It is not enough for the population.

Gareth Snell (Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Lab/Co-op): My hon. Friend has touched on an interesting point. Does she agree that one of the most disappointing things, not just in Staffordshire but across the country, is that although the Government claim to have protected neighbourhood policing, they have actually made neighbourhood policing areas much larger? Although some places have the same number of PCSOs and police constables, they now cover such a great terrain that the impact felt in certain parts of the community is virtually nil.

Ruth Smeeth: I absolutely agree, and will touch on that later in my speech.

In my constituency, especially in Kidsgrove, we have never seen this level of crime before. One of my concerns is that a lot of the burden is falling on the police, when in fact it is cuts to local government budgets that have led to Clough Hall Park becoming a hotspot. Maintenance has not been done, so as soon as the first example of graffiti happened—as soon as investment in the park was lacking—that park became a crime hotspot, because young people did not think anyone cared about it. We have seen that time after time because of cuts to our local government.

There has also been a spike in knife crime in our wonderful, great city. One of our concerns about that—I think I speak on behalf of the three Members from the great city of Stoke-on-Trent—is that we had been blessed by not having previously experienced very much knife crime. We were lucky that it was not normal on our streets, yet it is now becoming a factor. I thank the Minister's colleague, the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, the hon. Member for Louth and Horncastle (Victoria Atkins), for working with our police and crime commissioner and, more importantly, some of our local teachers, as well as for providing additional support to the three Members of Parliament from Stoke-on-Trent on how to tackle knife crime.

The reality, however, is that our police force is struggling. The demands on it are higher, and the briefings we have received from the Staffordshire Police Federation and Unison have made it clear quite how difficult things are within our force. We are told that morale is at rock bottom, especially among the support staff; our dialogue in this place is always about police officers, not police staff, but the ongoing rationalisation programme means that people are working more hours at a less senior level, doing the same job and getting paid less for it. The 101 waiting times in our city have regularly gone up to

more than 20 minutes, and according to a freedom of information request from the *Daily Mirror*, a 999 call took eight minutes to be answered by Staffordshire police force. That is not the fault of the police; it is the fault of a lack of resourcing.

At its peak, Staffordshire had nearly 2,400 police officers. Now, we are told that the figure is somewhere in the region of 1,600. Since 2010, we are down 468 warranted police officers plus dozens of PCSOs. Kidsgrove police station has been closed, as has Tunstall police station. Burslem police station is no longer open to the public. In fact, if any of my constituents actively want to speak to a police officer, they have to get on two buses for an hour in order to walk into a police station, because we no longer have access. That police station is in the constituency of the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent South (Jack Brereton), and as delightful as I am sure it is, it is not convenient for any of my constituents. We are the 13th biggest city in England, but we have no 24/7 police station access. I say this as someone who wishes I were still a young woman: if I were out and about at the weekend, there is no safe sanctuary in my city. If I felt vulnerable, the only safe place would be the hospital, which would require a taxi. That is a cut too far.

I have already touched on the issue of council cuts, but I think this gives the Minister an opportunity. There have been cuts not only to maintenance—which is wooden dollars, in my opinion, because cutting local government grants does not help the police budget when it then costs the police more money to make interventions—but to youth provision. There has also been no clear guidance on ensuring that local authorities work together to provide CCTV infrastructure, which would save them money and help Staffordshire police force.

I will now ask my questions to the Minister so that everybody else may participate in this debate; I am delighted to see colleagues present from across the House. How much of today's announcement of £700 million is going to come to Staffordshire police force? Will there be any new police officers for Staffordshire police? When will we get them, given that we are so short now? What can the Minister do to encourage partnership working from other statutory agencies, not the third sector, to ensure that everybody is not leaning on the police budget? Our police serve us day in, day out. They put themselves at risk. They ensure that we, especially in this place, are safe and secure. At the moment, however, it does not feel like we have their backs.

4.40 pm

Jack Brereton (Stoke-on-Trent South) (Con): I am delighted to add my voice to this important debate. I congratulate the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent North (Ruth Smeeth) on securing it. Stoke-on-Trent is a city on the up, but it has its challenges that must be met. It is a city of six towns and many communities, each with its own character and policing challenges. It is the authentic urban heart of an historic county and is very much distinct, as a unitary authority of considerable urban density, from the more rural nature of the rest of the county. That is reflected in the types of policing and challenges often faced by our police officers.

I applaud our local police and crime commissioner, Matthew Ellis, for recognising the importance of localised policing within a county-wide force. We experienced

that together on his recent working visit to Longton police station and the walkabout with local officers in Stoke-on-Trent South over the summer. After a decade of hard work, the public finances have successfully been pulled back from the brink of disaster, so we can confidently step up the funding available to the police. I greatly support the new Prime Minister's commitment to an extra 20,000 new officers and an increase in the visibility of police patrols over the next three years.

Sadly, what has been all too visible to my constituents recently is antisocial behaviour, particularly linked to gangs and drugs. I spoke previously in this Chamber in a debate tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Ben Bradley) about the impact of drugs, especially Monkey Dust, which has been a significant challenge in Stoke-on-Trent, as mentioned by the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent North. I am pleased to say that the huge efforts of Staffordshire police have cut off the supply of that horrific drug and have resulted in a significant decline in reported cases.

Last week, I was impressed to witness officers conduct a raid on a property in my constituency suspected of being connected to drugs-related crimes. It was part of a day of action under Operation Disrupt, during which about 25 properties suspected of being connected to drugs, organised crime and violence across the south of the city were raided. Of course, the root causes of gangs and drugs are many and complex. Drugs and gang behaviour are the blight of some working-class communities.

Andrew Griffiths (Burton) (Con): I thank the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent North (Ruth Smeeth) for organising the debate. Like my hon. Friend, I joined my local police on Operation Disrupt a few weeks ago. It was fantastic to see the force bringing together resources from across the county to put the criminal on the back foot. As the police went in with their chainsaw, called "Nige the Chainsaw", which destroyed the door of the house where drug dealing was going on, the neighbours who came out cheered, and they cheered again as the criminals were led away. Does my hon. Friend agree that that kind of proactive policing not only puts the criminal on the back foot but gives great confidence to the general public that we take such things seriously and are prepared to take action as a police force and a Government?

Jack Brereton: I absolutely agree. I witnessed the same thing. In seconds, the door was ripped off. As my hon. Friend suggests, those communities—people who have been terrorised by those activities for a long time—are relieved by the police's actions.

As I was saying, drugs and gang behaviour are the blight of some working-class communities but they are not the preserve of those communities by any means. In fact, all too often it is the demand for drugs from metropolitan middle-class gangs—dinner parties and social circles, as they prefer to call them—that fuels and sustains the horror of drug and gang-related behaviour in working-class areas.

There is huge concern and anguish in areas such as Meir and Fenton in my constituency that drugs gangs, and gangs that have nothing to do with drugs, have been seen to get away with criminal behaviour, unchallenged by, and unafraid of, the police. The police do not enforce the law by consent; they enforce the law by the

[Jack Brereton]

force of the rule of law as decided by this House. My constituents have a deep sense that justice is served when the law is enforced without fear or favour.

I was grateful to be involved, with law enforcement, in securing eight civil injunctions against local individuals who have time and again, provocatively and shamelessly, broken the law and made life a misery for the law-abiding majority of decent people who just want to secure a peaceful life, get on with their jobs or enjoy a well-earned retirement after years of hard work. I congratulate the authorities, the police, the council and everybody else who has contributed to ensuring that we have secured those injunctions.

In Stoke-on-Trent South, the local police have ramped up their efforts over the past 12 months by more than doubling the number of stop-and-searches. Only a year ago, Meir had the highest number of antisocial behaviour incidents in Staffordshire, but thankfully those actions have massively reduced that number. We must do all we can to help to reform those offenders, but the overriding priority must always be to protect the law-abiding majority against the criminal few.

Of course, a very small number of young people enter a life of crime. Most importantly, we must do much more preventative work locally to stop young people being led into antisocial behaviour and crime. I pay warm tribute to the Staffordshire police cadets. I have met the active local group in Longton and was delighted to welcome it to the Palace of Westminster recently. It has focused on giving public service and community spirit back to our local area in a scheme initiated by Commissioner Ellis. It is a great legacy of his years in office.

As the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent North has mentioned, Home Office Ministers have been extremely supportive, for which I thank them. I am especially delighted by the £612,000 being invested by the Government, which will be shared between the city council and Staffordshire police to help to deliver more preventative work to reduce youth violence and gangs. I have also been working with local schools, Ormiston Meridian Academy and Trentham Academy, to deliver new 3G sports pitches at both sites to help to improve facilities for young people. In addition, I have supported the YMCA to set up new youth groups across the south of the city. Those actions will help to ensure that young people have the facilities they deserve and are not drawn into ASB and a life of crime.

I welcome the Home Secretary's assurance that stop-and-search will be part of a reassuring visible policing solution. The police know that they must conduct searches with professionalism and courtesy and make it clear that, for those with nothing to hide, there is really nothing to fear. I trust them to do just that and I respect their judgment. As I have said, I saw only last week the brave work that our outstanding Staffordshire police officers are undertaking in Operation Disrupt, and I am hugely proud to represent many of those officers in this House. I am delighted by the increase in the number of police officers, for which I thank the Government and the Prime Minister. I back them wholeheartedly in their fight against the misery of crime.

4.48 pm

Gareth Snell (Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Lab/Co-op): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Christopher, and to follow two excellent speeches from my neighbours, my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent North (Ruth Smeeth) and the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent South (Jack Brereton). I do not intend to repeat much of what has been said, because the stark numbers speak for themselves.

The number of officers that we have lost across Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire demonstrates that the police force is stretched. It has told us publicly that it feels that it is not giving our constituents the service that it would like to. It worries about being able to respond to crimes in a timely fashion or to do the important preventative work and high-visibility policing that reduces fear of crime and makes people feel safer, even though there may not have been anything to fear in the first place. My hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent North referred to the number of police officers lost.

Ruth Smeeth: I misspoke. In fact, we have lost 568 or 571 police officers—it depends on reports—not 468. I was being far too generous to the Government.

Gareth Snell: As my hon. Friend points out, we have lost 571 police officers across the county. We have also lost a number of auxiliary support staff in forensics, criminal investigation and the detective arenas.

In fact, the figures provided by my friends in the Unison branch at Staffordshire police show that the number of forensic investigators is being cut from 24 to 12, which they have said will mean they will be unable to provide the level of support to the frontline police officers needed to gather the evidence to provide for CPS considerations on whether prosecutions are available. Those 12 places are being replaced with nine lower-skilled, lower-paid and lower-graded roles that do not have the necessary technical qualifications to provide support. The forensic investigators have made it quite clear that they want to be able to do their job, to help keep people safe. It is not just about frontline policing, but about the policy family and the public sector family around the police force that can allow for crime to be detected and criminals to be prosecuted.

My hon. Friend has also mentioned the current closure of police stations across Staffordshire. Chief inspectors and assistant chief constables have said to me that the demand for face-to-face interaction with the police is going down, and I fully accept that that is the case. Younger generations now wish to interact digitally through electronics, the telephone system and social media. That is a perfectly reasonable way to interact with the police force, but it should not be an either/or. It should not be that elderly people in my constituency living in Bentilee or Sneyd Green have to, as my hon. Friend pointed out, travel on two buses to the other end of the city to see a police officer.

Although I am grateful that we still have one open police station in Stoke-on-Trent, it is open only between 9 and 5—office hours. If people simply need to interact with the police for a non-crime or non-emergency-related issue, they cannot access the station at the weekend or in the evening. To me, that seems a perverse arrangement

that does not make policing feel accessible, even though it might well be. Across the county of Staffordshire, with somewhere between 950,000 and 1 million people, only three police stations remain publicly open between the hours of 9 and 5. I do not care what people's politics are—I cannot believe that anybody would justify to me that that is, for accessible policing, an appropriate access level for that many people dispersed across a county that is geographically quite different, depending on where one goes.

I represent arguably the most urban part of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. I have the city centre of Stoke-on-Trent and the council estate. If one travels down to the rural villages in the constituency of the hon. Member for Burton (Andrew Griffiths), which has no public transport infrastructure and where there is little ability to travel, suddenly there is no access to policing. Yes, there are PCSOs who do their best, but they are now stretched so thin. The PCSO who regularly visits my office to talk to me about the activity happening in the area will tell me that she will have to walk miles in the course of a day to respond to jobs. On several occasions, she has simply been told, "Don't respond to that—it is not a priority," because there are not enough people to respond to crimes.

Over the last couple of months, I have seen a change in the crime that we are dealing with in my constituency. As my hon. Friend pointed out, there has been an increase in knife crime in Stoke-on-Trent. Five years ago, knife crime there was so rare that I doubt whether we had even one or two instances. I have had three stabbings in my constituency in the last six weeks.

I know the Government take this issue seriously—as my hon. Friend pointed out, the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, the hon. Member for Louth and Horncastle (Victoria Atkins), has met us and is acutely aware of our problems—but those leading on this in our constituencies are not the police, but the colleges, the schools and the third-sector groups that interact with young people. That is not because the police are not interested, but because the resource available to the police, and the capacity within the force, is simply not there to deal with something else on top of all the other parts that they are asked to do.

Although I am grateful that people such as Claire Gagan at Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College are taking such an active interest in the safety of our young people, that is not her job—her job is not to ensure that gang violence is dealt with on the streets of Stoke-on-Trent. She is not there to ensure that parents take responsibility for what their children bring into colleges on a day-to-day basis or to regulate gang activity across Stoke-on-Trent. She is doing it because she knows it has to be done, and the police are supporting that, but it is something that an old-fashioned police service should do.

The story of Stoke-on-Trent is that we are actually a safe place. I know that the testimony that has come out of this debate might suggest that we have problems, but, like all cities, we have our bad places and good places. I have been fortunate enough to work with some wonderful police officers, including Karen Stevenson, who looks after the southern part of my constituency, and Mark Barlow and John Owen, who look after the northern part with Superintendent Geoff Moore. They are wonderful people who are genuinely committed to neighbour policing in Stoke-on-Trent in Staffordshire, but they make it

clear to us that there is so much more that they want to do. They can just about manage with what they are doing now, but they know there are things that they are simply not doing, and that—with the right resource, support and impetus from Government—they could do to make Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire a much safer place.

It is clear that part of this is about money. Some £38 million has been taken out of the Staffordshire police budget since 2010. The police and crime commissioner has tried to recoup some of that by raising the precept, but the precept goes only so far. When we have mainly band A council tax payers having to fund the 2% levy for adult social care and the 2.9% increase in council tax, and also having to try to pay for policing, the available pool of money to fund all this in Staffordshire simply does not exist, because of the demography and house type that we have in our city.

The Government will have to ask themselves: what more can they directly do? I know the Minister will respond by talking about the extra investment going into policing. More money for the police is welcome, but I ask the Minister to bear in mind that it is not just about more money for more police. One of the problems raised with me when I was out with the police on Operation Disrupt with the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent South—we very much enjoyed the chainsaw—was the question of where we would put more police officers coming into Stoke-on-Trent.

The police stations are no longer functioning and the police have moved into fire stations, so the fire stations are now at capacity. The community spaces in private finance initiative fire stations have been taken over. The chief inspector mentioned that she does not have the money to buy lockers for police to put their equipment in. It is all well and good having police officers, but we are not dealing with the long-term problems around police numbers if we cannot give them the resources, locker space, equipment, uniform and the training that they need to develop in their own careers.

It is not just the police numbers. Perhaps the Minister could explain how much of this new money will go into extra forensic investigators, extra detective support activity, digital crime prevention and the people who go out and tidy up crime scenes in homes after police have had to do raids. I recently had an incident in which, after one of the stabbings, the police had to follow a suspect into a private residence by kicking the back door down. The police had to pick up the bill for fixing that door and find the resources to replace it. These sorts of things have an impact on policing budgets and activity but are not simply sorted by having more police officers.

Of course, there is also the age-old problem of the magistrates and court system, which I know is outside the Minister's immediate responsibility—I am sure he will be given that responsibility one day, as he demonstrates his brilliance in his Department. More police arresting more criminals means we need bigger custody suites, more custody sergeants and more space at magistrates courts to process those individuals who have been caught in crime.

I was told by a custody visitor only last week that police now spend more time waiting at the custody suite in Etruria in my constituency, because there are not enough custody sergeants to process all the people whom the police are rightly picking up for the crimes

[Gareth Snell]

they commit. It means that they are not out on the street picking up the next lag who has done something wrong or providing the security that my older and vulnerable residents, and my communities, feel that they need.

I wonder whether I can tempt the Minister to comment on the fact that, out of every police and crime commissioner in the country, Matthew Ellis has the largest percentage office cost of them all—bigger than the West Midlands, Northumbria or South Yorkshire? It is a huge police force, and bigger than the Met. He spends £1.4 million, which, as a percentage of the money available to him, is almost 10% of his total. I wish the Minister would take that up.

I know the commissioner has said he is retiring at the next election, and I wish him well. I assume he is trying to get into this place—again, I wish him well—but surely every penny should be spent on trying to get more police, more frontline support and more officers out on the street, and not on public relations people sitting in a commissioner's office.

4.59 pm

Louise Haigh (Sheffield, Heeley) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Christopher. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent North (Ruth Smeeth) on securing this incredibly important debate in the first week back after the recess, and on her exceptional speech.

I welcome the Minister to his place and look forward to, as his predecessor said, keeping him on his toes with the new funding promised. It is good to see that the Government finally recognise that police funding should be a priority, and that they should abandon the dangerous delusion of police funding and crime being completely separate. I add to the remarks expressed by my hon. Friends by offering my condolences to the family and loved ones of PC Andrew Harper, who tragically lost his life over the summer. I also offer our best wishes for a speedy recovery to PC Stuart Outten, who was stabbed in Leyton, and PC Gareth Phillips, who was run over in Birmingham—tragic reminders of the dangers that our police officers face every day they put on their uniforms.

We have heard the consequences of the cuts to police funding and to our public sector over the past nine years across the city of Stoke-on-Trent. We heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent North about the impacts that gang crime, organised crime, serious crime and violent crime has had on her constituency—[*Interruption.*]

Sir Christopher Chope (in the Chair): Order. There is a Division in the House, so the sitting is suspended for 15 minutes until a quarter past 5 o'clock.

5 pm

Sitting suspended for a Division in the House.

5.15 pm

On resuming—

[Mr PETER BONE *in the Chair*]

Louise Haigh: It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship as well, Mr Bone.

As I was saying before the Division, my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent North spoke about the changing nature of policing and about how demand on policing has changed so much in the past several years—the police now do what we would expect social workers, mental health professionals and care organisations to do. She made the point that the police are insufficiently resourced to undertake those roles, nor are they the correct agency to do so. It is completely unacceptable that in our society, someone having a mental health crisis could receive a police response—someone turning up with handcuffs and, potentially, a Taser—rather than a health response.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Gareth Snell) mentioned that the police are really struggling to provide the proactive and preventive policing that forms the basis of our country's policing model and enables our police officers to police by consent. The police are not there simply to respond to crime, but to be out in communities, developing relationships, gathering intelligence and preventing crime from happening in the first place. He made an important point about the wider police family and staff.

It is shocking to hear that the Staffordshire police have lost half of their forensic investigators when crime is becoming more complex and particularly when so much crime has a digital footprint. Investment in digital forensics is nowhere near sufficient to bear down on crime. That is exactly why there has been a rise in certain types of crime and a disastrous number of prosecutions and convictions. We know that crime is one of the public's biggest concerns and, sadly, we know exactly why that is. Some 285 people were stabbed to death last year—the highest ever rate in figures dating back to 1977. Charges for crimes are now at a record low and police recorded violent crime has more than doubled to a record level in recent years.

The police cannot solve everything, but it is common sense that if police numbers are cut, crime will rise. The current Chancellor of the Exchequer, who was until recently Home Secretary, said so himself during the Tory leadership campaign this summer. He said:

"More police on the beat means less crime on our streets. Not exactly rocket science is it?"

No, it is not exactly rocket science, and it is what the Labour party, the Police Federation, the Superintendents' Association, police staff unions and the public have told the Government for the last nine years. Yet the Government cut 21,000 police officers, 16,000 police staff—those who keep the police service functioning, go to the scene to help with investigations and put the evidence in a fit state for trial—and nearly 7,000 police community support officers, who are the eyes and ears of community policing.

The consequence of those decisions is rising crime across Stoke-on-Trent and nationwide. The damage caused by those broken promises cannot be reversed, and the know-how that experienced police officers and staff brought to the job is gone for good, harming the fight against serious crime. Demand is soaring and continues to rise exponentially.

That brings us neatly to the Prime Minister's pledge to recruit 20,000 police officers. He clearly thinks, perhaps sincerely, that in one month-long pre-election blitz he can try to reverse the damage that his party has done

over the last 10 years. The chief constable of West Midlands Police—a force on the frontline of the fight against violent crime—recently said that that force

“accounts for six per cent of the grant Government allocated to policing. If that was the means to allocate the officers it would be a lift of 1,200 officers over three years.”

However, according to the most recent Home Office figures, West Midlands Police has lost over 2,000 officers since 2010, so the chief constable expects to receive 931 short of the total number of officers that he has lost.

What is more, we understand from leaked letters that the National Crime Agency is reportedly set to receive approximately 6,000 of the 20,000 officers pledged. That is much needed, but it cannot be at the expense of local forces that need to bolster their response. Will the Minister confirm that the allocation of officers to local forces is actually about 14,000—far below the number lost since 2010? The lofty promises made on the steps of Downing Street come apart when exposed to scrutiny. Perhaps that will be the mark of the Prime Minister's premiership.

For Staffordshire, what would it mean to apply the funding formula? Staffordshire has lost 27% of its police officers since 2010—nearly 600 officers. If the formula assumed by the chief of West Midlands police is applied, 320 officers would return—little over half what has been lost. That is if we assume that all 20,000 go to local forces, which is far from confirmed. I would appreciate if the Minister confirmed whether that is how the numbers of police officers in each force will be determined, based on the funding formula that determines the central grant in each force. How many will that mean for Staffordshire? How much of the additional money announced today by the Home Office will come from central Government funding, and how much will be raised by the local precept? How is the 20,000 being allocated between territorial, counter-terror and national security policing? Will all the officers recruited be fully warranted? Is there any commitment to the uplift to police staff? Does the Minister plan to review the funding formula to ensure that funding is genuinely allocated according to need?

Proroguing Parliament next week means that now is likely the only opportunity that we will have to scrutinise the important promises made to the British people by the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary. We absolutely must have answers to those questions.

5.21 pm

The Minister for Crime, Policing and the Fire Service (Kit Malthouse): It is a great pleasure to speak with you in the chair, Mr Bone. I congratulate the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent North (Ruth Smeeth) on securing this important and timely debate. Before I begin my response, I thank her and other hon. Members for their comments about PC Andrew Harper and the other officers who have been injured recently. The death of PC Harper in the first couple of weeks of my tenure in this job was a shocking reminder of something that I learned in my four years as deputy mayor for policing in London: police officers go to work each day not knowing what they will face. It takes extraordinary courage for them to do so, and causes incredible worry and anxiety to their families, who often are not taken into account. That was thrown into very sad relief by the death of PC Harper, who left behind his new wife. Our condolences

are with his family and friends. I take this opportunity to thank police officers across the country for their tireless work fighting crime and keeping us all safe, not least in Staffordshire.

The role of Government is first and foremost to protect the public, but the demands on the police are changing and becoming more complex, as hon. Members outlined. We recognise that the police are under pressure from that change, which is why this Government have acted quickly to rectify that. Policing was the subject of one of our Prime Minister's first announcements on his first day in the job, and it is at the heart of what this Government will deliver. That is why we have announced plans for the recruitment of 20,000 additional officers over the course of the next three years. That is an unprecedented increase, and probably the largest expansion in policing ever. I am pleased to say that the recruitment campaign for those additional officers will be launched tomorrow morning, following the announcement made by the Chancellor this afternoon setting out the funding envelope for 2021, including £750 million extra for policing budgets to support the delivery of this commitment and associated costs.

That is just the first step in delivering on the Prime Minister's commitment to put more officers back on our streets. It builds on the 2019-20 police funding settlement, which provided the largest increase in police funding since 2010. Police funding has increased by more than £1 billion this year, including the precept, extra funding for pension costs and the serious violence fund, allowing PCCs to start filling gaps in capacity this year as well. For Staffordshire police, this year that meant total funding of £196 million—an increase of £13.3 million on 2018-19, including council tax.

I understand that when the previous Policing Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner (Mr Hurd), spoke to the police and crime commissioner for Staffordshire, he was determined to use this year's settlement to move 100 more people into neighbourhood policing by year end, and to get behind proactive policing to disrupt crime, including drug dealing in hotspots. I am sure that following the excellent outcome of the spending round for policing, we will now go on to even greater achievements, delivering on the Government's pledge of 20,000 extra police officers, with 6,000 for territorial policing in the first year alone. I hope hon. Members will welcome this plan.

I turn to some specifics mentioned by hon. Members. I acknowledge that too often, police officers step in where other organisations should shoulder their share of the responsibility, and a key area is mental health. The police deal with a very high number of mental health incidents, but we are working with our health and social care partners to relieve the burden on officers and to ensure that people receive the support they need. The Government recently announced an additional £2.3 billion to enhance mental health services by 2023-24 to relieve exactly this sort of pressure. I recently visited Hertfordshire and Northamptonshire police, and both emphasised the amount of capacity absorbed by hunting for missing people, who are often suffering from mental health problems. That is one of the areas on which I hope to focus in the months to come.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent North rightly raised the issue of violence, much of it drug-related. I was appalled to learn of the recent incident in her

[*Kit Malthouse*]

constituency in which a taxi driver was attacked at knifepoint and the incidents in Clough Hall park. We are clear that we have to bear down on the scourge of violent crime, in particular knife crime, which is afflicting communities up and down the country. At the spring statement earlier this year, the then Home Secretary, now the Chancellor, secured £100 million for the serious violence fund. Since taking up this post, I have announced further detail of the split of that funding: £65 million has been allocated to surge funding for police activity and £35 million will support the establishment of violence reduction units and other preventive activity across the country. The Government are determined to see an end to these horrific cases; that is why the Chancellor committed today to extend that funding for serious violence next year so those newly established VRUs have certainty over the coming year. This is about prevention as well as enforcement.

The hon. Lady also mentioned the closure of police stations in her constituency and across the country. Although, obviously, that is a matter for PCCs, it is clear that the effectiveness of a force cannot and should not be measured by the total number of buildings it owns or staff it employs, how many police stations it has, or when front counters are open. Rather, a force's effectiveness depends very much on how well the PCC and chief constable use their available resources to protect the local community.

I am reminded of an incident when I was London Assembly Member for West Central. We had a particularly horrible street murder in Shepherd's Bush, and the then borough commander, the famous—well, possibly infamous—Kevin Hurley, who went on to be PCC in Surrey, held a community meeting. The one thing people all complained about was the fact that Shepherd's Bush police station was not open 24 hours a day. Chief Inspector Hurley said, "That's fine. I will open it 24 hours a day if you tell me which police officers you'd like me to pull off patrol to man the front desk during the night." They all said, "No, no, no, we don't want that." He then said, "Well I'll tell you what. Why don't I leave the lights on overnight so it looks like it's open?" They all said, "Oh yes, that's a terribly good idea!"

That illustrated to me that police stations very often are a proxy for presence. People do not necessarily want to visit them. Very few people ever visit their police station, and we know from footfall counts that their use is decreasing, as the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Gareth Snell) mentioned, but they nevertheless speak to something about presence. We hope that the increase in the number of police officers—in particular the first-year increase of 6,000, which will all be territorial uniformed policing—will increase the sense of presence and decrease anxiety about bricks and mortar, very much of which is often inefficient.

Ruth Smeeth: I appreciate the Minister's comments about the role of police stations in communities even if they are not open, although I wish they were. One of the issues that compounds this, though, is that more than 20% of my constituents have not accessed the internet in the past six months, so they cannot use the online service. They wait on hold for more than 20 minutes, and in some cases up to two hours—in the longest case,

I think someone held on for eight hours—trying to get through to 101, and for eight minutes trying to reach 999. Accessing the police is becoming increasingly difficult for my constituents.

Kit Malthouse: The hon. Lady raises a good point. In many ways, the police, like lots of other organisations, need to modernise the way we contact them. If there are issues with 101 and 999 in her area, I am more than happy to look at the performance data. Lots of PCCs assess their local force on those kinds of performance metrics, and it is fundamentally for the PCC to decide. I was technically the first PCC in the country when I was deputy mayor for policing in London, and we were very hot on those kinds of performance metrics. As well as presence, people want a sense of responsiveness from the police—they want to know that they are going to get some kind of efficient response that makes them feel they are in good hands—so I am more than happy to look at that.

Gareth Snell: I accept the Minister's point that bricks and mortar do not make a police force, but how many publicly accessible police stations does he have in his constituency? I have zero in mine. Would he be happy to have zero in his?

Kit Malthouse: I have one police station in my constituency, but the difference is that my constituency is 230 square miles. I am happy to have one, in the town of Andover. Most of my constituents would have to travel quite some distance to get to it, although they could travel across the border into Basingstoke, where there are others. My custody suite is in Basingstoke—I do not have one in my constituency—but my area has relatively low crime. We have our issues, in particular with rural crime, but I have to say that I have no complaints from my constituents about access to the police, albeit people are naturally concerned about a sense of presence, and that is what I am trying to illustrate: we need to work on presence overall.

In the old days, presence was often reflected in the "Doctor Who" police box. A police box was in effect a mini police station. When we were going through the inevitable station closures in London during the eight years when the now Prime Minister was Mayor of London, one of the issues that we looked at was whether we could produce that sense of presence by having the modern equivalent of a police box. Is there some way to have access to the police on the street? I do not know whether people have seen the screens and little pods on Victoria Street for accessing all sorts of information, but is there some way for the police to use those as a way for people to contact them? Technology can assist in access in lots of modern ways used by many other organisations, and the police will want to think about them.

Moving on to Members' specific questions, the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent North asked how much of today's announcement was in Staffordshire, whether there would be new offices and when, and whether we could encourage partnership working. The allocation of the £750 million will be agreed over the next few weeks. Obviously, we have the police funding formula announcement to make—normally that is in early December—and there will a conversation with the policing family about what the allocation looks like over the

period. One of today's announcements is that we secured £45 million for in-year funding, to allow recruitment to begin immediately. Some of that will go into the bricks and mortar, if you like, of the campaign itself—advertising and building capacity—but it should result in about an extra 2,000 police officers being recruited across the country, on top of the 3,500 baked in as a result of the settlement last year. Over the next couple of weeks, we will agree with PCCs and forces what the allocation looks like, but it will allow us to get going straight away and means that there will be new officers for Staffordshire. Subject to the force's capacity to recruit, I hope that that will be pretty immediate.

I am keen to encourage partnership working. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent Central—Stoke is a lovely place, I have been a couple of times—also mentioned that other organisations were happy to take responsibility for gang violence. In truth, the solution to the problem of youth violence in particular relies on everyone sitting around the table to solve it together, and that includes schools and colleges as well as the police. An element of information sharing and a shared sense of mission, especially with local authorities, are needed in particular areas to map the gang activities taking place and then to take steps—hard and soft—to solve the problem. I will look at how I can work with PCCs to stimulate them to be more assertive about bringing organisations together to do exactly that. That might be through local criminal justice boards, some of which perform extremely well—others do not—but we will look at exactly that.

Louise Haigh: The Minister laid out that the allocation of the 6,000 territorial officers will be decided over the coming weeks and that the funding formula, which we expect to be announced in December, will be how we decide further recruitment. Will he confirm that the amount allocated for further recruitment will not necessarily all come from central Government, but might yet come from an increase in the precept?

Kit Malthouse: I was coming on to the hon. Lady's questions, but no, the money is exclusive of precept—it is on top of the precept. However, I cannot yet confirm the method of allocation. That will be subject to discussion and to announcement in the normal course for next year. We will try to reach an early agreement on the allocation of the £45 million so that people can get going straight away, on top of the recruitment that they are already putting into place.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent South (Jack Brereton) interestingly mentioned police cadets. I am a great fan of the police cadets. I remember that when I was doing the job in London, the police cadets would actively go and try to recruit young people who had been through the justice system, who had been in trouble. They had a 100% success rate; not a single police cadet would reoffend. Something about the discipline and self-respect found through being part of an organisation like that helps. That is the kind of theme we need to look at in much of the long-term work that we need to do with young people.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent Central mentioned space for police officers. He is absolutely right. When I did the first media round after the initial 20,000 announcement, there was much hilarity at the mention on the radio that one constraint might be locker space.

Police officers carry a lot of kit, and 20,000 lockers is quite a lot of space. Where are we going to put them all? Interestingly, immediately after that, I had calls from a couple of local authority leaders saying that they would like to help. Local authorities have an estate and spare space, and there are lots of ways that we can get the public sector to work together to try to find accommodation. One thing included in the £750 million for next year is that ancillary costs—for training, equipment, space and all that kind of stuff—are essentially factored in as well.

The hon. Gentleman is quite right that 20,000 more police officers might, one would hope, be more productive in arresting people, which means that there will be criminal justice on-costs. He will today have seen the announcement in the spending round of another £80 million for the Crown Prosecution Service and more money for the Ministry of Justice to look at prisons and their capacity. We are looking at the whole system.

The hon. Gentleman also raised the central costs of the PCC in Staffordshire. I gently point out to him that the PCC is also the fire commissioner, and one would therefore expect the central costs to be a little higher, because he is handling two organisations rather than just one.

Gareth Snell: For clarity, the figure I quoted was from before Commissioner Ellis took on fire responsibility. I understand that, since he has taken on that responsibility, that figure has grown, but I do not have the up-to-date figure.

Kit Malthouse: Obviously, a police and crime commissioner has to face the electorate every four years, just as we do every now and again, and will have to justify that central cost. As I understand it, the Staffordshire PCC has done a pretty good job and has been pretty well praised, certainly by colleagues on this side of the House, for the work he has done over his two terms. It sounds to me like he no doubt has a pretty productive relationship with the hon. Gentleman as well, which is good to see. Finally, I think I have answered most questions from the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Louise Haigh) on allocation exclusive of precept; finally, yes, those 20,000 officers will all be fully warranted.

Before I conclude, I will address the constant challenge about the number of police officers being related to the amount of crime. The hon. Lady may remember that, back in 2008, when I started my job as deputy mayor for policing in London, we faced exactly the same kind of spike in violent youth crime that we face now. That was at a time when police officer numbers were at an all-time high and money was being spent liberally on policing, so it is not necessarily the case that the link is direct. The causes of crime are significant and complex, and they change. It is key that the Government, and the police, which the Government fund, assist and support, remain agile in the face of changing crime. We heard about exactly that today, with the advent of “monkey dust”, which seems to have bubbled up and become a problem in just a matter of weeks. Giving the police the ability to be agile, through both technology and capacity, is a key part of our plans in the weeks to come.

Louise Haigh: As a special constable for the Metropolitan police in the borough of Lambeth in the immediate aftermath of that serious violent crime spike, I was part

[*Louise Haigh*]

of the response to that spike. The then Mayor of London was able to respond and bear down on that spike because he had record numbers of police available to him. That has not been the case for police forces up and down the country over the last nine years. I will push the Minister on one question he has not been able to answer so far, on the division in the expected 20,000 officers between territorial, counter-terror and national security policing.

Kit Malthouse: As I say, that is also yet to be decided. Thus far, for the first year—that is where we have got to in the spending round—we have agreed that the first 6,000 will be all territorial. I think the profile is then for 8,000 and a further 6,000, and we will be in discussion with the policing family about the allocation for that across the board. Part of the announcement today is a serious and organised crime review, and its conclusions will obviously inform the work we do in the future, not least because I am keen that the NCA and serious and organised crime work dovetails as much as possible with the work we will do with neighbourhood forces on county lines and other cross-border issues, where the NCA can bring its expertise to bear.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent North for raising these important issues. As I said, the policing landscape is ever changing. The Chancellor's announcement this afternoon clearly demonstrates the Government's commitment to providing police forces with extra resources to protect the public and tackle crime head on. I look forward to working with the

policing sector in the coming months and years to deliver this unprecedented uplift in officers and support what I believe to be the best police service in the world.

5.41 pm

Ruth Smeeth: It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Bone. I thank everyone who contributed to the debate, and in particular the two Members who are still here—my hon. Friends the Members for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Gareth Snell) and for Sheffield, Heeley (Louise Haigh). I understand that other business in the House is occupying everyone else.

It is clear that policing will be an ongoing issue for the Government and this Parliament. This has been a good opportunity to air some of the issues and our concerns about our own police force, not least about the number of police officers we have lost and the rationalisation of the estate and its effect on community faith in policing. My concern, which is the one thing I want to leave with the Minister, is that we have lost nearly 600 police officers. Based on the proposed investment and assuming that all 20,000 go into territorial policing, that will give my force 96 officers in the first year and 320 over the three years, so police numbers will still be down by 15% on 2010. Minister, my police force is struggling. It needs more support and double the investment that is currently being promised.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered policing in Staffordshire.

5.42 pm

Sitting adjourned.

Written Statements

Wednesday 4 September 2019

TREASURY

Loans to Ireland Act: Bilateral Loan

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen): I would like to update Parliament on the loan to Ireland.

In December 2010, the UK agreed to provide a bilateral loan of £3.2 billion as part of a €67.5 billion international assistance package for Ireland. The loan was disbursed in 8 tranches. The final tranche was drawn down on 26 September 2013. Ireland has made interest payments on the loan every six months since the first disbursement.

On 30 July, in line with the agreed repayment schedule, HM Treasury received a total payment of £404,642,604.73 from Ireland. This comprises the repayment of £403,370,000 in principal and £1,272,604.73 in accrued interest.

As required under the Loans to Ireland Act 2010, HM Treasury laid a statutory report to Parliament on 1 April 2019 covering the period from 1 October to 31 March 2019. The report set out details of future payments up to the final repayment on 26 March 2021. The Government continue to expect the loan to be repaid in full and on time.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/791132/Ireland_loan_statutory_report_April_2019_web.pdf

The next statutory report will cover the period from 1 April to 30 September 2019. HM Treasury will report fully on all repayments received during this period in the report.

[HCWS1812]

Counter-terrorist Asset Freezing Regime: January-March 2019

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen): Under the Terrorist Asset-Freezing etc. Act 2010 (TAF 2010), the Treasury is required to prepare a quarterly report regarding its exercise of the powers conferred on it by part 1 of TAF 2010. This written statement satisfies that requirement for the period 1 January 2019 to 31 March 2019.

This report also covers the UK's implementation of the UN's ISIL (Daesh) and al-Qaeda asset-freezing regime (ISIL-AQ), and the operation of the EU's asset-freezing regime under EU regulation (EC) 2580/2001 concerning external terrorist threats to the EU (also referred to as the CP 931 regime).

Under the ISIL-AQ asset-freezing regime, the UN has responsibility for designations and the Treasury, through the office of financial sanctions implementation (OFSI), has responsibility for licensing and compliance with the regime in the UK under the ISIL (Daesh) and al-Qaeda (Asset-Freezing) Regulations 2011.

Under EU regulation 2580/2001, the EU has responsibility for designations and OFSI has responsibility for licensing and compliance with the regime in the UK under part 1 of TAF 2010.

EU regulation (2016/1686) was implemented on 22 September 2016. This permits the EU to make autonomous al-Qaeda and ISIL (Daesh) listings.

The annexed tables set out the key asset-freezing activity in the UK during the quarter.

The attachment can be viewed online at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2019-09-04/HCWS1813/>.

[HCWS1813]

Counter-terrorist Asset Freezing Regime: April-June 2019

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen): Under the Terrorist Asset-Freezing etc. Act 2010 (TAF 2010), the Treasury is required to prepare a quarterly report regarding its exercise of the powers conferred on it by part 1 of TAF 2010. This written statement satisfies that requirement for the period 1 April 2019 to 30 June 2019.

This report also covers the UK's implementation of the UN's ISIL (Daesh) and al-Qaeda asset-freezing regime (ISIL-AQ), and the operation of the EU's asset-freezing regime under EU regulation (EC) 2580/2001 concerning external terrorist threats to the EU (also referred to as the CP 931 regime).

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[HCWS1814]

HOME DEPARTMENT

Leaving the EU: Immigration System

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel): After Brexit, the Government will take back control by introducing a new, fairer immigration system that prioritises skills and what people can contribute to the UK, rather than where they come from. Yesterday we commissioned the independent migration advisory committee to review the benefits of a points-based system and what best practice can be learnt from other international comparators, including the Australian immigration system.

In a no-deal scenario, free movement as it currently stands will end at 11pm on 31 October. The UK will no longer be under the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice. EU citizens will be subject to stricter criminality checks and further changes will be introduced to show that the UK has left the EU. I am today publishing a policy statement setting out these changes, and further information will be published in due course.

The Government recognise the need to provide EU citizens, employers and others with certainty about the arrangements that will be in place after Brexit. Border crossing arrangements will not change. However, we do not believe it is right to allow people moving to the UK after Brexit to have the same rights as the EU residents who have lived here, in some cases for decades.

After careful consideration, myself, the Prime Minister and Cabinet have therefore agreed that EU citizens moving here after a no-deal Brexit will be able to access a temporary immigration status, until the new skills-based immigration system goes live at the start of 2021.

To this effect, the Home Office will open a new European temporary leave to remain scheme for EU citizens and their close family members moving to the UK after Brexit, in a no-deal scenario. When the scheme opens it will be voluntary, and we will not charge a fee. It will be open until the end of 2020 and EU citizens who apply will be able to secure a 36 month temporary immigration status which will extend beyond the launch of the UK's future immigration system. Once the future system opens at the start of 2021, anyone without European temporary leave to remain will have to qualify under the provisions in the future system if they wish to stay in the UK. In contrast, those who have applied for the bespoke interim scheme will have more time to transition into the future system and will not need to qualify until their temporary leave expires.

The same arrangements will apply to nationals of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

The 3.4 million EU citizens already resident here, and their family members, deserve a privileged position. They are our family, friends and neighbours and we want them to stay. We have set up the EU settlement scheme to enable them to secure their status under UK law and—in a no-deal scenario—they have until at least 31 December 2020 to apply. Already over 1 million people have successfully been granted status.

Until the future immigration system is introduced, all EU citizens will be able to prove their rights to take up employment and rent property, as now, by using a passport or national identity card. Their rights to claim benefits and access services in the UK will remain unchanged.

Irish citizens will continue to be able to enter, live and work in the UK without requiring permission. The UK and Irish Governments have made firm commitments to protect common travel area arrangements, including the associated rights of British and Irish citizens in each other's state.

For EU citizens and their family members moving to the UK after Brexit, freedom of movement in its current form will end on 31 October. EU citizens who still want to make a contribution to the UK will soon have a route by which they can secure the certainty of status they need in advance of the future system going live in 2021.

[HCWS1817]

NORTHERN IRELAND

NI (Executive Formation etc) Act: Reports

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Julian Smith): I am today formally laying in the House, under section 3 of the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc) Act 2019, reports on progress towards forming an Executive and other matters.

Northern Ireland has been without a sitting Assembly and Executive since January 2017. Since becoming Secretary of State for Northern Ireland I have made working to restore the devolved institutions my absolute priority.

Whilst significant gaps remain on rights, identity and culture, the Government's assessment is that the range of outstanding issues in the cross-party talks is relatively narrow.

This means it should prove possible—with intensive engagement—to resolve the strands of talks on the programme for government, transparency and sustainability relatively swiftly. There has been good engagement too on the petition of concern.

While the parties remain engaged and are demonstrating a willingness to find solutions to the remaining critical issues, a renewed determination to find agreement will be needed if the process is to conclude in the coming weeks.

Northern Ireland needs a restored Executive and the political leadership that would bring. The UK Government, working closely with the Irish Government in accordance with the three-stranded approach, will now intensify our efforts to put forward compromise solutions to the parties. If that does not succeed, then my next update to the House will set out next steps to ensure adequate governance in Northern Ireland and the protection of the Belfast (Good Friday) agreement.

The reports I have laid in the House today also address other critical issues for Northern Ireland. These include a report on the progress of implementing the recommendations made by the report of the inquiry into historical institutional abuse in Northern Ireland. I want to pay particular tribute to the survivors I have met, who waited so long for acknowledgment and accountability for the appalling abuse that they suffered. Good progress has been made on drafting legislation to deliver redress for the survivors, and I will continue to press for a slot to introduce the legislation at Westminster as soon as possible.

I have also laid a report setting out next steps on abortion in Northern Ireland. The Government acknowledge that this is a highly sensitive subject, and I continue to believe it would be better in principle if it could be addressed by the democratic institutions in Northern Ireland.

Given the very long and drawn-out cross-party talks process, the House spoke clearly in July this year. There are now legal obligations for the Government to deliver change to the law on abortion in Northern Ireland in the event that the Executive is not restored. The Government will update the House and the public regularly on the steps it is taking, mindful that the legal obligation will be triggered from 21 October in the absence of an Executive. This will result in the repeal of the relevant criminal law in Northern Ireland [sections 58 and 59 of

the Offences against the Person Act 1861], and a moratorium will also come into effect on that date, meaning that no criminal investigation may be carried out, and no criminal proceedings may be brought or continued after this time.

By no later than 31 March 2020, a new legal regime allowing for lawful access to abortion services, implementing the recommendations of the 2018 Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) Report, will be in place.

The full list of reports is as follows:

Gambling

Human trafficking

Victims' payment

Historical institutional abuse

A single report covering:

Executive formation

Transparency of political donations

Higher education and a Derry university

Presumption of non-prosecution

Troubles related guidance

Abortion law review

Armed forces covenant

Definition of a victim

Both Houses will debate the motions on the first reports relating to the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc) Act 2019.

[HCWS1815]

NI (Executive Formation and Exercise of Functions Act): Report

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Julian Smith): This statement is issued in accordance with section 4 of the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation and Exercise of Functions) Act 2018 ("the Act"). Section 4 of the Act requires that I, as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, report on a quarterly basis on guidance issued under that section of the Act, and report on how I plan to address the impact of the absence of Northern Ireland Ministers on human rights obligations within three months of the day the Act was passed.

The Act received Royal Assent on 1 November 2018. Following careful consideration of the sensitive issues

section 4 deals with, and in consultation with the Northern Ireland civil service, guidance under section 4 was published on 17 December 2018.

The guidance notes that it does not, and cannot be used to, change the current law on abortion or same-sex marriage in Northern Ireland. Both issues remain devolved matters in Northern Ireland. The guidance provides that all relevant Northern Ireland Departments should continue to have regard to all of their legal obligations, including the Human Rights Act 1998 and sections 24 and 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, in exercising any relevant functions in relation to abortion and same-sex marriage.

Two reports required under section 4 have been published as written ministerial statements on 30 January 2019 and 1 May 2019.

I have consulted the head of the Northern Ireland civil service in the preparation of this report. He has reaffirmed the continuing commitment of the NICS to have regard to their legal obligations when exercising any relevant functions in relation to abortion and same-sex marriage.

The Government's preference remains that any change to law on either of these sensitive devolved issues is taken forward by a restored Executive and functioning Assembly. It remains the hope that devolved government can be restored at the earliest opportunity through the current talks process.

However, we recognise the strength of feeling on same-sex marriage and abortion law reform demonstrated by a majority of MPs supporting the addition of sections 8 and 9 to the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc) Act 2019. These sections require the Government to regulate in order to provide access to abortion services and same-sex marriage (and opposite-sex civil partnerships) in Northern Ireland, if there is no restored Executive by 21 October 2019.

There are a range of sensitive policy issues that need to be carefully addressed on both issues. We will work with relevant Whitehall Departments and the Northern Ireland civil service to take all necessary steps between now and 21 October 2019 to ensure that, if the Executive has not been restored by that date, relevant regulations can come into force in accordance with the timescales specified in the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc) Act 2019.

[HCWS1816]

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**not later than
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