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**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

Thursday 24 October 2019

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The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

The Secretary of State was asked—

Transport Sustainability

1. **Deidre Brock** (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP): What steps he is taking to improve transport sustainability. [900108]

9. **Stuart C. McDonald** (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP): What steps he is taking to improve transport sustainability. [900116]

The Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps): I want to echo the sentiments expressed yesterday by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister regarding the awful events in Grays, Essex. Inquiries are ongoing, but, having worked with the haulage industry over the past few months, I feel keenly the tragedy that has taken place, and the Department stands ready to assist in any way we can.

On 15 October, I announced that the Government would develop a world-leading transport decarbonisation plan. That will bring together the bold and ambitious programme of action across transport that is needed to achieve our net zero target by 2050.

Deidre Brock: I associate myself with the remarks of the Secretary of State about the terrible tragedy yesterday. The Scottish National party and Members across the House have been deeply shocked by it, and we hope that matters will be investigated thoroughly so that those who are guilty of this terrible crime are brought to justice as quickly as possible.

The Government's electric car strategy is obviously not working, with sales still only at approximately 2%. Transport for London figures confirm that any successful scrappage scheme requires central Government support. The SNP has been calling for such support for years. When will the UK Government invest in a proper diesel scrappage scheme?

Grant Shapps: The figure is 2.6% for low emission and electric cars, and the hon. Lady will be aware that there has been an 122% increase in sales of electric cars this year compared with last year—indeed, I am proud to make up one small percentage of that percentage by

owning one. Electric cars are fantastic, and for that reason we are about to see a big increase in the number of them on the road. There are already more public charging locations than there are petrol stations, and we will be doing a whole host of things—40 or 50 different measures—that I will describe in the decarbonisation plan. I think the hon. Lady will be pleased with a lot of the things that she sees coming along.

Stuart C. McDonald: On aircraft emissions, will the Government agree to incentivise the use of aviation biofuels? Does the Secretary of State have ambitions similar to those of the Scottish Government, who are seeking to introduce electric aircraft in the highlands and islands?

Grant Shapps: The hon. Gentleman will be interested to know that just the other day I went to see the aircraft that is being developed at Cranfield University by Britten-Norman for electric flights in the highlands and islands. The day before yesterday I had a meeting about biofuels, which are very important for meeting our commitment to net zero emissions by 2050 in aviation.

Derek Thomas (St Ives) (Con): Road improvements are a key part of making transport sustainable for the future. The A30 goes all the way from London to my home town of Penzance, and part of it runs through villages and has traffic lights. Will the Minister meet me to ensure that improvements to the A30 are included in road investment strategy 2?

Grant Shapps: My hon. Friend has been fighting hard on this issue, and I would be more than happy to meet him, with the Minister of State, Department for Transport, my hon. Friend the Member for Mid Norfolk (George Freeman), who has responsibility for roads.

Dr Matthew Offord (Hendon) (Con): Sustainability also includes safety. Last November, my constituent Priscilla Tropp suffered a fatal fall at Mill Hill Broadway station. Staff did not follow the emergency plans, and people walked over her as she lay dying. At her inquest, Govia Thameslink said it would introduce a new local incident response plan, but that has not been introduced. Can the Secretary of State advise whether that is the responsibility of the Office of Rail and Road, or some other organisation, because sustainability and safety at stations is not happening?

Grant Shapps: I am very concerned to hear about my hon. Friend's constituent Priscilla and the way that that incident unfolded. Rail safety, in all its forms, is clearly a big concern to Members across the House, and I propose a meeting between my hon. Friend and the Minister of State, Department for Transport, my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Chris Heaton-Harris), on this issue.

Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): More than half of total carbon emissions in the UK come from cars on our roads, yet so far the UK Government have refused to introduce mandatory E10 fuel, which would reduce emissions. Unlike in Scotland, the UK Government remain wedded to cars that use fossil fuels until 2040. Will the Secretary of State heed the assertion

by the Committee on Climate Change that action is required if the UK is to meet its targets for 2025 and 2030, let alone have zero emissions by 2050? What corrective measures will he take, and will he tell us about the exiting new measures that he spoke about earlier?

Grant Shapps: For the record, let me correct the figures given inadvertently by the hon. Gentleman. About a third of emissions come from transport, and about 90% of those are from vehicles. On the specifics, and E10 in particular, yes, I intend to move on the issue very soon.

Alan Brown: Norway has the highest per capita sales of electric vehicles in the world, and an average of 50% of new cars sold there in the first half of this year were electric vehicles. Second and third in the world are Iceland and Sweden. The UK still hovers at an average of about 2%, although the Secretary of State said 2.6% earlier. Is it not the case that Scotland could fulfil its ambitions and commitments like those Scandinavian countries if it was only independent?

Grant Shapps: The interesting thing about the countries the hon. Gentleman cites is that largely they do not produce cars. It is very, very easy if you are not a car manufacturer to introduce all sorts of measures that essentially mean that only electric cars will be favoured and sold. In this country, we have a big car manufacturing sector and we export 80% of the cars we produce. I am very anxious to move the sector to a faster timetable, but to protect jobs as well as the environment it is a question of doing that at a programmed pace. We have managed to do that so far.

Andy McDonald (Middlesbrough) (Lab): May I associate myself with the Secretary of State's remarks concerning the terrible tragedy in Essex? The nation is reeling from that abject horror. We send our sympathies to all the families of the deceased, wherever they may be across the world. I reassure the Secretary of State that Her Majesty's loyal Opposition will want to co-operate and work with him to take whatever steps are necessary, legislative or otherwise, to reduce the likelihood of this terrible event ever happening again.

We are in a climate crisis. Transport is the most emitting sector of the economy and the only sector where emissions have risen in recent years. Given that the Government have slashed subsidies for electric vehicles and failed to invest money promised for charging points over two years ago, does the Transport Secretary seriously believe his announcement earlier this week for a consultation on whether to introduce green number plates for electric cars is really going to save the planet?

Grant Shapps: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his comments about the events in Grays, Essex yesterday. We will work together on that.

Green number plates are just one very small part of a very, very large package that includes £1.5 billion to subsidise the take-up of electric cars; £400 million on a charging infrastructure investment fund, which I announced earlier in the summer, to help to supercharge the number of charge points; and many, many other activities. As I say every time I stand at the Dispatch Box, electric

cars are fantastic. They are available new and on the second-hand market. The cost of ownership overall, because it costs £5 or £6 to drive from here to Manchester and refuelling with those charge stations is much easier, is something that everybody can invest in now.

Andy McDonald: I am afraid the Transport Secretary ignores my warnings, but will he listen to the Government's own advisers when they say the UK is way off track to meet their climate targets? Labour would invest £3.6 billion in charging networks, introduce 2.5 million interest-free loans for the purchase of electric vehicles, and target a 2030 phase-out for the sale of new diesel and petrol cars. The Government are attempting to disguise their lack of action on the climate crisis with a lick of green paint. Is the Secretary of State not embarrassed at his poverty of ambition?

Grant Shapps: As I have already said, I passionately believe in bringing this forward. I have already said that I am going to investigate moving forward from 2040 to 2035 a commitment given before the 2050 net zero, and I have a package of measures, which I was referring to before, that will be in the decarbonisation plan to ensure we meet all those targets.

Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency: Industrial Action

2. **Alex Norris** (Nottingham North) (Lab/Co-op): What recent discussions he has had with the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency on industrial action by its staff. [900109]

The Minister of State, Department for Transport (George Freeman): May I say, Mr Speaker, what a pleasure it is to be back under your chairmanship in this new role as Minister of State for the future of transport?

On 7 October, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency entered into talks with the Public and Commercial Services Union. They have met three times. The DVSA is expecting to continue the talks, which are supported by ACAS, at the start of November.

Alex Norris: On 30 August, I met DVSA employees in Nottingham who are taking industrial action, as they want to work in an environment free from bullying and where they are listened to and valued. My hon. Friends the Members for Gedling (Vernon Coaker) and for Nottingham South (Lilian Greenwood) and I wrote to Baroness Vere of Norbiton requesting a meeting to make these representations. She declined. Will the Minister or the Secretary of State take that meeting instead, so that they can hear important feedback from critical members of staff?

George Freeman: For the benefit of the House, I should say we are talking about the modernised employment contract for DVSA staff. This is a matter between the DVSA and staff. The impact will be two hours extra a week for training, which increases the working hours from 35 to 37. Lunch breaks are being protected. We very much hope that the union returns to the negotiations with the DVSA. I might perhaps gently ask the Labour party, which is reliant on the unions, to exercise its good influence on behalf of the travelling public.

HS2

3. **Michael Fabricant** (Lichfield) (Con): What recent discussions he has had with Douglas Oakervee on potential alternative routes for High Speed 2 phases 1 and 2a; and if he will make a statement. [900110]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Paul Maynard): I understand the intense interest that there will be across the House in this issue. The Oakervee review is ongoing and will consider all three phases of the project. I met Douglas Oakervee last week for an administrative discussion about the review, and once the review is finalised the Department has committed to making it public.

Michael Fabricant: It is not just the cost of HS2, but the route: it does not even connect with Birmingham New Street or Heathrow, or meet its original intention of connecting with the channel tunnel. It does none of those. Doug Oakervee has told me that the amount of time they have to consider all this is very limited—it is very challenging indeed—and there is not enough time to consider alternative routes, so will the Minister consider giving them more time to do just that?

Paul Maynard: As I say, we have not put any time limit on Mr Oakervee's findings, and he will report when he is ready to do so. As my hon. Friend will know, the current plans for phase 1 would see passengers connecting to Heathrow via Old Oak Common, and services would also call at Euston where passengers can make onward travel plans, including to Eurostar at King's Cross St Pancras.

Graham Stringer (Blackley and Broughton) (Lab): Any change to the route of HS2 is likely to lead to further delays and extra cost. Is not the solution to HS2 to put competent people in charge of delivering it, and not to mess about with it and give an advantage to those who are opposed to it?

Paul Maynard: I have no doubt that Mr Oakervee is watching proceedings here carefully this morning to hear what colleagues have to say. That will be one of the issues that comes within his terms of reference and he will be reporting on.

Dame Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham) (Con): It is reported in *New Civil Engineer* this morning that the advisory panel to the so-called independent Oakervee review has been asked to sign non-disclosure agreements in an attempt to stop leaks. How can it be right that a publicly funded project is again trying to conceal information about its viability by gagging the very people who have in-depth and up-to-date knowledge of this dreadful project?

Paul Maynard: Mr Oakervee is trying to ensure that he works consensually with the panel to ensure that they reach a single report. The management of the panel and the individuals on it, who cover a wide range of views, is a matter for Mr Oakervee.

Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): HS2 is an investment for the north of England, but it would be a lot more popular in the north of England if the

trains actually stopped somewhere in the far north of England. At present, there are no plans whatsoever for HS2 trains to stop in Cumbria, even though the Lake District is the biggest visitor destination in the country after London. Will the Minister fix this immediately?

Paul Maynard: The hon. Gentleman is perhaps tempting me to go a little too far in presuming that everything is going ahead. I do not want to pre-empt Mr Oakervee's report, but he will be aware that under the previous plans, classic-compatible trains will run north of Wigan and will therefore be able to stop at a range of stations, including Kendal, Oxenholme in the Lake District and Carlisle. That is part of what the West Coast Partnership will be able to consider.

Mr Speaker: I congratulate the right hon. Member for Aylesbury (Sir David Lidington) on his moderately demonstrative tie.

Sir David Lidington (Aylesbury) (Con): From you, Mr Speaker, I take that as a compliment.

Will my hon. Friend instruct HS2 Ltd that it and its contractors should follow its own construction code and give local residents along phase 1 due and proper advance notice of the enabling works that it intends to carry out, instead of the high-handed, peremptory and arrogant approach that HS2 Ltd is currently taking?

Paul Maynard: I am disappointed to hear what my right hon. Friend has to say and I am more than happy to meet him to obtain further details. It is very important that HS2 Ltd continues to work with local communities rather than acting upon them when it carries out these works. I look forward to hearing further details.

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): Not only has the Williams review yet to see the light of day, but the Oakervee report is ready. His team has pulled out all the stops to get this to the Minister next week, so why is the Secretary of State saying that he will not publish it until after the general election? Is it because he intends to cut off the economic opportunities of the north, or is he worried that it will upset voters in the south?

Paul Maynard: I will take no lectures from the hon. Lady on how to support the north economically, or indeed, in transport terms. I am delighted that she lives in a world of alternate reality—neither the Secretary of State nor I have received Mr Oakervee's report. She clearly knows more than I do, or maybe she is making it up. [Interruption.]

Rail Performance

4. **Robert Courts** (Witney) (Con): What steps he is taking to improve rail performance. [900111]

6. **Sir Henry Bellingham** (North West Norfolk) (Con): What steps he is taking to improve rail performance. [900113]

12. **Sir David Evennett** (Bexleyheath and Crayford) (Con): What steps he is taking to improve rail punctuality. [900119]

23. **Andrew Lewer** (Northampton South) (Con): What steps he is taking to improve rail performance. [900131]

The Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps): I take the performance of the railway very seriously and think that trains should run on time, which is why I have changed the industry's performance standard from trains being five or even 10 minutes late to their being on time to the minute.

Robert Courts: Commuters in west Oxfordshire have long been frustrated by reliability problems on the Cotswold line. What support can Ministers offer me and the Cotswold line promotion group? The group is campaigning for further redoubling on the line, which will not only improve reliability but will give us scope to increase the services available.

Grant Shapps: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his tireless campaigning for improvements on the Cotswold line. The line will benefit very soon from the Great Western Railway timetable change in December, which will offer shorter journey times and more frequent services to key locations. Moreover, services from North Cotswold via Oxford and London will be restructured to deliver more, and more consistent, services. So I feel that my hon. Friend's campaign is making progress.

Sir Henry Bellingham: Will the Secretary of State give us an update on the investment in Ely north junction, which is pivotal to the introduction of a half-hourly service from London to King's Lynn as well as improving services from Cambridge to Norwich? Will he work alongside Network Rail and local authorities to ensure that this vital scheme is delivered?

Grant Shapps: I certainly will. The project is currently being scoped, and I should be happy to work on it with my hon. Friend and Network Rail.

Sir David Evennett: As my right hon. Friend is well aware, in my borough of Bexley we suffer from a very poor rail service operated by Southeastern. We experience regular cancellations—including the cancellation of my train this morning—and persistent short delays. What more can my right hon. Friend do to get our train company to improve punctuality and reliability?

Hon. Members: Nationalise!

Grant Shapps: I know that my right hon. Friend recently met the rail Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Chris Heaton-Harris). He is absolutely right: poor services are unacceptable, which is why the Williams review is so important. I do not agree that nationalisation is the answer, not least because railway numbers have doubled since privatisation. *[Interruption.]* It has a lot to do with the £6 billion invested by the private companies. However, there is much, much more to be done, and we will be doing more in time.

Andrew Lewer: Will the Minister elaborate on the plans to open the proposed Market Harborough line as part of the Oxford to Cambridge expressway and the benefits that it will bring to the local economy, especially around Northampton?

Grant Shapps: I understand that the reopening is at a formative stage, but I am very supportive of it. Indeed, I support the reopening of many of the smaller lines that were closed as a result of the Beeching cuts under a Labour Government, and I should like to see as many reopened as possible.

Clive Efford (Eltham) (Lab): I, too, would like to meet the rail Minister, to talk about the Southeastern franchise, the tender for which has been postponed. I should like to see trains from Victoria on the new Eltham to Mottingham line; I should like to see them retained on the Eltham and Falconwood line; and I should like to see extra capacity, so may I have a meeting with the Minister to discuss how we are going to do that?

Grant Shapps: My hon. Friend the rail Minister has informed me that he has met many of the hon. Gentleman's colleagues and will be happy to meet him as well, as will I.

20. [900128] **Ruth George** (High Peak) (Lab): I am pleased to hear that the Secretary of State is keen to reopen railway lines, but a short section of dual track is needed between Manchester and Sheffield, two of the least connected cities in the north. That has now been put on hold again, and my constituents are very disappointed. They have written to the Secretary of State, but have yet to receive a reply.

Grant Shapps: I think that the hon. Lady may be referring to the Hope Valley line. I should be very happy to speak to her about it in more detail and look forward to our meeting up.

Kate Green (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): Confidence in Northern Rail has collapsed among commuters in my constituency as a result of delays, cancellations and poor-quality rolling stock over a number of years. Just how bad does the service have to get before Ministers take action and take the franchise away from this failing company?

Grant Shapps: Perhaps the hon. Lady missed it, but I mentioned to the Transport Committee last week that I had already issued a request for the proposal, which, as she will know, is the first stage towards either a direct award or a last-resort operation. I agree that poor service is unacceptable, and the financial problems are well documented.

Nick Smith (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab): The Ebbw Vale to Cardiff line is critical to Blaenau Gwent's economy, but with growing demand we urgently need physical improvements in the line. There is a complicated UK Government, Welsh Government and Network Rail problem here. Will the Secretary of State, or one of his Ministers, meet me, Welsh Government Ministers and transport officials to discuss this important issue?

Grant Shapps: Yes, and the hon. Gentleman will be interested to know that I had a conversation yesterday about setting up exactly such a meeting for those purposes. So the answer is yes.

Buses

5. **Liz Twist** (Blaydon) (Lab): What steps he is taking to increase bus patronage. [900112]

7. **Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab): What steps he is taking to increase bus patronage. [900114]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Ms Nusrat Ghani): Bus patronage varies across the country, and as a bus champion I am pleased to say that catching a bus is the most popular form of public transport. Hon. Members will want to know that we continue to invest in our bus services with further additional funding of £220 million through the better deal for bus users package, which will also include £30 million paid directly to local authorities to improve current or new services.

Liz Twist: For many people, including those in my constituency, bus routes are a lifeline, but Tory cuts to bus funding have meant over 3,000 routes have been cut or withdrawn in England alone. Does the Minister think it is right that people and communities are cut off from work, leisure and healthcare facilities by the withdrawal of routes, and what is her plan, beyond what she has already mentioned, to ensure she restores lost connectivity?

Ms Ghani: I thank the hon. Lady for her question which enables me to elaborate on the further funding that is available, but of course we know the importance of bus services; not only do they get people to work, but they ensure connectivity across our communities. As well as the £220 million of additional funding, we have the £1 billion for concessionary fares, but also the transformative £2.5 billion for the transforming cities fund, which also looks at reducing congestion. The hon. Lady talked about the reduction in services in England, but she may want to know that the highest number of bus services cut in the United Kingdom are of course in Labour-led Wales.

Kerry McCarthy: Bristol has bucked the trend of declining bus use, and under the Bristol bus deal we are investing in bus prioritisation measures and infrastructure, and in return the bus operators are investing in new commuter services, but we remain the only core city without a mass transit system; what can the Government do to help us realise our ambitions on that front?

Ms Ghani: I was pleased to visit Bristol and jump on a bus there, and it does indeed have a fantastic service. Patronage has gone up by 50%—[*Interruption.*] Well, it is getting better and better, and the numbers are indeed going up. One reason why the numbers are going up is that bus service operators are open to working with the local authority and making data available. One thing that we are doing, because of our Bus Services Act 2017, is ensuring the bus open data digital service is available for even more people. We know what people want, especially younger people: absolutely accurate detail on when their bus is arriving, how along the journey will take, and how much it will cost.

24. [900132] **Scott Mann** (North Cornwall) (Con): With no rail links in North Cornwall, the public are pushed on to rural buses, and they welcome the new One public

transport system, which specifically allocates money for things like the £1 around town initiative, which will be really beneficial for many of my rural constituents. Can the Minister confirm the benefits of the One public transport system, and is it possible to get direct buses to the general hospital from my major towns?

Ms Ghani: My hon. Friend is a good champion for North Cornwall, and of course the fantastic £1 around town initiative will be hugely successful. Rural buses are absolutely key for rural constituencies, including mine in Wealden, and from 2020 the One public transport proposals for Cornwall will integrate buses with rail services to provide passengers with better public transport solutions, low fares and higher frequency buses.

Stephen Crabb (Preseli Pembrokeshire) (Con): When pensioners in my constituency go to visit friends and family in England, they find that their concessionary bus pass does not work, so will the Minister please speak to the Welsh Transport Minister about making the bus passes in Wales and England compatible? It surely cannot be a difficult problem to fix and it is regularly raised with me as a source of frustration among pensioners.

Ms Ghani: That is indeed not a difficult problem to fix and I am more than willing to sit down with my Welsh counterparts to ensure that that is done. We have made more than £1 billion available for concessionary bus passes, and it is absolutely key that older people and those with disabilities can use our public transport system.

Matt Rodda (Reading East) (Lab): There is no doubt that our bus services are in crisis. Funding has been slashed by £645 million a year in real terms since 2010; over 3,000 routes have been cut, as we heard earlier; and fares have soared by two and a half times the increase in wages. It is hardly surprising that passenger numbers have fallen by 10%. Millions of pensioners, young people and commuters who rely on buses deserve an apology, so will the Minister now apologise for her Government's complete and utter failure in this area?

Ms Ghani: It is remarkable that the hon. Gentleman, who represents a Reading constituency, will not even recognise the progress that has been made with local bus services in Reading, where numbers are going up. Even in places such as Liverpool, where better packages have been put together for younger people, numbers are definitely going up. I am more than happy to come to the Dispatch Box and talk about the new £220 million fund that is being made available. The hon. Gentleman talks about bus fares. They are indeed an issue for local authorities and train operating companies to take up, but unfortunately, Opposition Front Benchers have forgotten their history; when they were in office, bus fares went up twice as fast as they have under this Government.

No-deal Brexit: Airports

8. **Dr Philippa Whitford** (Central Ayrshire) (SNP): What recent assessment he has made of the potential effect on airports of the UK leaving the EU without a deal. [900115]

The Minister of State, Department for Transport (Chris Heaton-Harris): Flights between the UK and the EU will continue whatever the outcome of our EU exit. We are working with airports to ensure that freight can continue to flow and that any disruption to passengers is kept to a minimum. Aviation security in the UK will remain among the best in the world and passengers will not notice any change to airport security screening at UK airports as a result of EU exit.

Dr Whitford: Maintenance, repair and overhaul of aircraft is a major and growing industry at Prestwick airport in my constituency. With the Prime Minister's preferred Brexit deal just one week away, what has already been put in place to provide the engineering licences and aircraft safety certificates currently provided by the European Union Aviation Safety Agency?

Chris Heaton-Harris: The first obvious point is that if the hon. Lady voted for the deal, we would go into the revised political declaration, which commits both the parties to uphold high safety and security standards and make arrangements to maintain close co-operation between the CAA and EASA. However, the Commission has already published proposals to extend its contingency measures for aviation until October 2020, were we to leave without a deal.

Sir Vince Cable (Twickenham) (LD): Whatever happens to Brexit, some of us have been greatly encouraged by the comments of the Secretary of State, of the Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the right hon. Member for Richmond Park (Zac Goldsmith), and yesterday of the Prime Minister in their lukewarm response to Heathrow expansion. Can the hon. Gentleman help resolve the contradiction between the official Government policy of encouraging airport expansion at Heathrow and their unofficial policy of opposing it?

Chris Heaton-Harris: I believe those arguments are entirely sustainable, and I am happy for the right hon. Gentleman to continue that conversation with the Prime Minister.

Transport Infrastructure: London Region

10. **Andrew Rosindell (Romford) (Con):** What plans his Department has to construct new transport infrastructure to serve growing towns on the outskirts of London. [900117]

The Minister of State, Department for Transport (George Freeman): Transport in the Greater London area is devolved to the Mayor and delivered on his behalf by TfL. The Department continues to fund investment in major transport projects benefiting London, such as Crossrail and the Thameslink upgrade. The Department is also working with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to plan transport infrastructure as part of sustainable house building, particularly through the housing infrastructure fund and the garden communities programme.

Andrew Rosindell: I thank the Minister for his response, but has he looked into the possibility of expanding his investment programme to the Gallows Corner area of my constituency—a major hub from Essex into London?

Its 50-year-old structure now needs to be replaced. Is it not time that the Government stepped in to make sure that this happens?

George Freeman: I am delighted to confirm that we are indeed stepping in. My hon. Friend is a dogged advocate of the needs of Romford and, along with his companion Buster, has done more than anyone to put this subject on the map. I know that as well as Brexit he wants “Hexit”—he wants control of Havering taken back into Essex. However, I can confirm that we are looking at this scheme with TfL to develop a series of major structural renewals at Gallows Corner, as announced by the Government in October 2018.

Janet Daby (Lewisham East) (Lab): I am pleased that last week, TfL launched its new consultation on the Bakerloo line extension. Will the Minister commit to exploring funding options for that scheme with HM Treasury and TfL?

George Freeman: Those conversations are ongoing, and I am aware that the hon. Lady met the rail Minister last week.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Speaker: On the grounds that Thurrock is somewhat more geographically deserving than Truro and Falmouth in respect of this question, I call Jackie Doyle-Price.

Jackie Doyle-Price (Thurrock) (Con): Plans to deliver 3,000 new homes in Purfleet in my constituency have ground to a halt following Highways England's decision to reject any planning application for more than 250 houses due to pressure on the A13. I find it difficult to explain to my constituents why Highways England is putting a new motorway through Thurrock while preventing us from planning and delivering new homes. Will the Minister meet me to discuss the matter?

George Freeman: Yes, I would be delighted to meet my hon. Friend. She will be pleased to know that the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Department for Transport are working on the much closer integration of housing and transport.

Damian Green (Ashford) (Con): High Speed 1 is one of the most successful pieces of infrastructure at enabling commuting into London. Indeed, it is so successful and reliable that many services, particularly at peak hours, are massively overcrowded. In the Department's radical look at the future of the rail network, will Ministers consider the provision of extra rolling stock on HS1, so that my constituents in Ashford and people in other places along the lines can have more comfortable journeys to and from work?

George Freeman: My right hon. Friend makes a typically excellent point, and I am delighted to confirm that the rail Minister met the relevant decision makers yesterday to discuss that proposal.

Road Vehicles Lighting Regulations 1989

11. **Tracey Crouch (Chatham and Aylesford) (Con):** Whether he plans to review the Road Vehicles Lighting Regulations 1989. [900118]

The Minister of State, Department for Transport (George Freeman): On 23 July 2019, the Government announced a review of the available evidence to see whether a more flexible approach to the regulations permitting the use of red flashing lights by road recovery operators may be appropriate. The Department is in the process of commissioning the study, and a decision to review the regulations will be taken once the study has reported.

Tracey Crouch: I am grateful for that response. The partner of my constituent Sam was killed while recovering a vehicle on the M25. Since then, she and others have been campaigning for the roadside recovery industry to be able to use red lights, rather than amber, during recoveries. The police and others have now dropped their objections, and the science shows a difference in reactions to amber light and red light, so will the Minister now give the green light to the change?

George Freeman: I congratulate my hon. Friend on her campaign, and the whole House sends its condolences to her constituent. Our motorways are actually the safest roads, but she raises an important point. If the public feel that the use of red lights will help them feel safer, we will be minded, after looking at the evidence, to approve the change.

Sarah Champion (Rotherham) (Lab): My constituent Jason Mercer is dead because of the Government's ill-conceived all-lane-running scheme on the M1. Will the Minister please meet me and Claire Mercer, Jason's widow, to discuss the safety implications of the scheme and the stopping of next year's roll-out?

George Freeman: Yes, I would be delighted to meet the hon. Lady, as will the Roads Minister, Baroness Vere. I am also delighted to confirm that the Secretary of State will be announcing a short review so that we can deal with that problem quickly.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): Many of my constituents have told me about car headlights that seem undipped or exceptionally bright. This is a slightly different issue from the one we are discussing, but will there be regulations to ensure that headlights do not have an impact upon vehicles coming the other way? These lights can cause accidents.

George Freeman: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point. We are going to take a quick look at the evidence and introduce a framework to ensure that people are safe on the edges of our motorways and that drivers know that the right regulations have been put in place for them.

Transport Infrastructure

13. **Craig Tracey (North Warwickshire) (Con):** What steps he is taking to ensure that all regions have sufficient transport infrastructure to support economic growth. [900120]

14. **Fiona Bruce (Congleton) (Con):** What steps he is taking to ensure that all regions have sufficient transport infrastructure to support economic growth. [900121]

17. **Kevin Hollinrake (Thirsk and Malton) (Con):** What steps he is taking to ensure that all regions have sufficient transport infrastructure to support economic growth. [900125]

The Minister of State, Department for Transport (George Freeman): Since 2015, we have doubled our capital investment in the transport system, and we are investing over £72 billion in transport infrastructure in the five years to 2020-21. The Prime Minister has set out his commitment to enhancing and levelling up connectivity across the country, and we are investing an average of £248 per person in the north, compared with £236 per person in the south.

Craig Tracey: One of the main projects that has been identified as essential for future economic growth in the midlands is the A5 upgrade in north Warwickshire. Will the Minister commit to working with me, the A5 partnership and Midlands Connect to help deliver these vital improvements?

George Freeman: Yes. My hon. Friend makes an excellent point, and we are in discussions right now on that important golden triangle. We will shortly be announcing our plans for the A5 in the road investment strategy.

Fiona Bruce: Middlewich is clearly on the Government's map for both road and rail investment, with £50 million for a bypass and funding for the business case for reopening the railway station. Will the Minister assure me that both projects are continuing at pace, and will he meet me to discuss it?

George Freeman: Yes, I am delighted to reassure my hon. Friend that we will make sure the pace is kept up and that the change in political control does not slow it down. We will make a decision on the final funding once a business case has been properly considered.

On the reinstatement of passenger rail services via Middlewich, my officials are now working with local partners on the development of that business case, which we will consider with Transport for the North.

Kevin Hollinrake: The A64, which runs through my constituency and the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough and Whitby (Mr Goodwill), is desperately in need of dualling. Will the Minister answer the calls of all MPs, businesses, local authorities, residents and hundreds of thousands of tourists and commit to this very important project?

George Freeman: My hon. Friend has been a tireless campaigner for the A64, and I can assure him that his message, both today and in his various correspondence and meetings, has been heard loud and clear. We will shortly be announcing the second road investment strategy, as promised in the first. We have plans for the A64, so I urge him just to wait for a few weeks and months.

Thangam Debbonaire (Bristol West) (Lab): For economic growth to be properly supported, transport infrastructure needs to be properly accessible, so will the Minister and the Government commit to making sure that every local railway station, such as Lawrence Hill and Stapleton Road in my constituency, is fully accessible?

George Freeman: The hon. Lady makes an excellent point—I have a railway station in my constituency that is in desperate need of disability access—and that is why we have launched the Access for All programme. We will be looking to make sure that all those stations with the most urgent access challenges are sorted in the right order.

Bill Esterson (Sefton Central) (Lab): Buses are a very important part of transport infrastructure, and my constituents will benefit enormously from the announcement by the metro Mayor of the Liverpool city region, Steve Rotherham, of a new metrocard. When will we improve bus service integration across the country by ensuring that we have a single smartcard, not different cards in different parts of the country?

George Freeman: I note the omission of thanks for the major package of investment in bus infrastructure, and I simply make the point that the Mayor has those powers. I am leading the Department's work on smart ticketing, and we are keen to see Transport for the North and the Mayor lead that programme so people in that area can have integrated ticketing.

Dan Jarvis (Barnsley Central) (Lab): I am sure the Minister shares my frustration that rail passengers in the north will have to continue enduring the use of Pacer trains well into 2020, despite assurances from Northern that they would be taken out of service by the end of this year. Does he believe that passengers should be compensated as a result?

George Freeman: The Department shares the disappointment that the new rolling stock has been delayed. Pacer trains are not fit for purpose for the 21st century. Northern retired the first of its 102 Pacers in August, and it plans to remove two thirds by December 2019. Northern advises that, subject to receiving appropriate dispensation, up to 34 Pacers will remain in the fleet, but I assure the hon. Gentleman that we are determined to make sure the fleet is properly modernised.

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): Labour knows the true value of connecting towns and cities across the north. Our integrated transport plan will invest in public transport, in public ownership, to work for the passengers not the shareholders. We will start by investing £39 billion in the whole Crossrail for the north project. How much will the Minister commit to the project today—only £15 billion?

George Freeman: I think the nation will be interested to hear the Opposition Front Bench team announcing major plans for investment, given that their economic plans will see a massive loss of investment in this country and massive economic damage. We can fund good transport infrastructure and a good NHS only when we have economic growth. The truth is that this Government are proceeding with the biggest investment package in road, rail and infrastructure in this country since the Victorians—£72 billion—and we are spending more per head on passengers in the north than in the south. This Government have the interests of the north at their heart.

Heathrow Airport: Third Runway

15. **Adam Afriyie** (Windsor) (Con): What recent assessment he has made of the financial viability of the proposed Heathrow third runway. [900122]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Paul Maynard): My Department and the Civil Aviation Authority have conducted assurance work on the financing and affordability of expansion proposals. This has concluded that, so far as can be assessed at this stage and assuming current market conditions, Heathrow is in principle able to privately finance expansion, but we will continue to monitor this as plans mature.

Adam Afriyie: Given the compounding costs and constraints on a third runway at Heathrow, it seems unlikely that it will ever be built. What Heathrow has succeeded in doing is blocking its more competitive rivals from building extra capacity. In that light, when will the Government review their decision?

Paul Maynard: The airports national policy includes a requirement that any developers should demonstrate that their scheme is cost-efficient and sustainable, and that it seeks to minimise costs over its lifetime. It is a responsibility of scheme developers to follow the process set out in the Planning Act 2008 and to submit proposals to the Planning Inspectorate. We will consider the merits of potential schemes before referring them to the decision-making Minister with the recommendation.

Andy Slaughter (Hammersmith) (Lab): The Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the right hon. Member for Richmond Park (Zac Goldsmith) says it is “bonkers”, the Transport Secretary doubts that it stacks up financially and yesterday the Prime Minister told me that he has “lively doubts” about it. When will the Government stop playing with the lives of millions of people in the west of London and cancel this disastrous project?

Paul Maynard: The prudent thing for the relevant Minister to do is stick within the airports national policy, which was endorsed by this House with a large majority, and the decision by the House to back a third runway at Heathrow, which was also endorsed by an overwhelming majority.

Justine Greening (Putney) (Ind): Does the Minister at least agree that it is important to give people and local communities the information they need to understand the decision that has been taken? Notwithstanding the Prime Minister's words in Prime Minister's questions yesterday, the Department is still pressing ahead with this very unpopular transport project and neither reviewing, nor reversing it.

Paul Maynard: In an attempt to seek some degree of agreement with the right hon. Lady, since I came into this role I have made a point of meeting community groups across the south-east, as well as the airports, to understand their concerns and how we can try to resolve some of the trust deficit that clearly exists between the two sides.

Mr Gregory Campbell (East Londonderry) (DUP): Given the direct air connectivity between Northern Ireland and Heathrow, and indeed the Greater London airports, will the Minister ensure that he discusses with the Treasury the ongoing issue of air passenger duty, where our airports are at a significant disadvantage to those in the Irish Republic?

Paul Maynard: I am always cautious at the Dispatch Box not to trespass on the territory of APD, which is a matter for the Treasury, but I am sure the hon. Gentleman would welcome the renewal of the public service obligation to service the City of Derry airport.

Thomas Cook

16. **Peter Grant** (Glenrothes) (SNP): What assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the collapse of Thomas Cook. [900123]

The Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps): Now that the repatriation of those Thomas Cook passengers is complete, my focus is on the next steps, including the announcement in the Queen's Speech that the airline insolvency review will be turned into an Act of Parliament.

Peter Grant: May I first pay tribute to the staff of Thomas Cook in Glenrothes, who for a great many years have provided my constituents, and indeed myself, with a very professional and courteous service? Last week, the Government finally admitted that no Minister had spoken to Thomas Cook directly before the company collapsed. The Secretary of State claimed that the company could not be saved, but then some parts of the company in other countries were indeed saved. Will he now accept that if the Government had engaged sooner with Thomas Cook, they could have mitigated the impact of this failure, fewer people would have lost their jobs, the cost to the taxpayer would have been less and fewer people would have seen their holidays ruined?

Grant Shapps: That is simply not correct. I met the chief executive of the company on 9 September, and I have checked my closing words to him at that meeting, which were—[*Interruption.*] The hon. Gentleman might want to listen. My closing words to that company and to the chief executive were: "If there is anything that Her Majesty's Government could do then please get in touch." The response was: "There is nothing that can be done at this time." Later, on 18 September, he wrote to the Government asking for not the £200 million that has been reported, but up to £250 million. That decision would have required accounting officer sign-off for a company with debt of perhaps £1.7 billion or, we now hear, perhaps even £3 billion. It simply would not have stacked up. We would have spent all the money that has been spent on repatriation in any case, as well as money to bail out a company that had enormous debts.

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): The travel industry has a proud record of pulling together when a company goes under, and that happened in the Thomas Cook case. Thomas Cook would have had an air travel organisers' licence, so the money that was used to repatriate people from abroad should be recovered from that fund, which is levied on the travel industry. The net cost to the Government should therefore be very small.

Grant Shapps: My hon. Friend is right, at least in part. The ATOL coverage will cover a large proportion of the cost. However, the company was an airline as well as a travel company and, as my hon. Friend will be aware, airlines are not currently covered under ATOL—that is part of the review. In any case, we will ensure that laws are in place to make sure that the fleet can be used regardless.

Karl Turner (Kingston upon Hull East) (Lab): The truth is that it is shocking that this Government let down Thomas Cook staff. They lost their livelihoods while the gaffers got rich off their bonuses. The subsidiaries Condor in Germany, Thomas Cook in Spain and Thomas Cook in Sweden are still flying. The Government have stood by and let the business in the UK fail. When the Secretary of State gets to his feet, will he just say sorry for letting down all those hard-working staff and the British taxpayer?

Grant Shapps: The whole House and, indeed, the whole country is aware that those on the Opposition Front Bench do not understand how an economy functions.

Karl Turner: Say sorry! It's easy.

Grant Shapps: If there was any possible way to ensure the survival of a company whose directors were allegedly being paid millions of pounds—it is interesting to hear that the Opposition want us to have backed those millions of pounds of bonuses with yet more money from the public purse—we would have done it, but, as I said, it would have required accounting officer direction, because it simply did not stack up. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the reality is that Hays Travel has come in and rescued many of those jobs, because well-run companies survive. Poorly run companies cannot survive.

Mr Speaker: Observers of our proceedings will doubtless have heard the sedentary exclamations of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull East (Karl Turner), who is further validating the assertion that I make to audiences around the world, which is that he is the loudest Member of the House.

Topical Questions

T1. [900133] **Daniel Zeichner** (Cambridge) (Lab): If he will make a statement on his departmental responsibilities.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps): Mr Speaker, this is my first topical questions session and my last opportunity with you in the Chair. I have been in post for 93 days and, with your permission, will give a couple of quick updates.

I know the House is concerned about smart motorways. I have heard those concerns being raised today and previously, and I have asked my Department to carry out, at pace, an evidence stocktake to gather the facts quickly and make recommendations.

As we have heard, my Department was involved in Operation Matterhorn, which successfully repatriated the most people to this country since the second world war. We are also getting ready for Brexit and, of course, decarbonising transport.

Daniel Zeichner: There was widespread disappointment across the taxi and private hire sector last week when the Secretary of State indicated to the Transport Committee that he would not be bringing forward legislation to tackle some of the safety issues relating to licensing. He will know that councils can introduce high standards but cannot enforce them against drivers who are licensed elsewhere. Will he think about that again?

Grant Shapps: The hon. Gentleman pressed me hard on this matter in the Select Committee sitting, and I have done some work on it before and since. We intend to go down the statutory taxi and private hire vehicle standards approach, with standardised checks and a national database. I have spoken to Professor Mohammed Abdel-Haq, who is present in the Gallery and who chaired the task and finish group. I invite the hon. Gentleman, along with others in the House, to join us in that programme, and I thank him.

T4. [900136] **Sir John Hayes** (South Holland and The Deepings) (Con): It may have been Dr Johnson who said that it is better to travel hopefully than to arrive, but there can be no hope without safety. Professor Mohammed Abdel-Haq's report, which I commissioned, had public safety at its heart. Will the Secretary of State do all he can through secondary legislation and statutory guidance to make people safer when they travel in taxis, and meet me and the hon. Members for Cambridge (Daniel Zeichner) and for Coventry South (Mr Cunningham) to discuss how he will go about that?

Grant Shapps: I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend for his work on this matter, and particularly for action in commissioning that task and finish group. I absolutely look forward to working with him, other Members across the House and the maritime Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Ms Ghani), who deals with this issue as well.

T2. [900134] **Mr Jim Cunningham** (Coventry South) (Lab): Following on from previous speakers on the taxi issue, we have been raising it now for well over 12 months, probably nearer two years. We have had Adjournment debates and questions on it. It is not good enough for the Secretary of State now to say that we are going out to consultation on some minor parts of it. We should have the full report and it should be debated in this House and amended if necessary.

Grant Shapps: I should just clarify for the hon. Gentleman that we are not going out to consultation; we are in fact acting on statutory taxi and private hire vehicle standards.

T6. [900138] **Andrew Rosindell** (Romford) (Con): The Minister will be aware that transport affects the whole Greater London area, but beyond that, is it not time that this was reviewed so that places such as Essex, Kent, Surrey and Hertfordshire have a say about transport policy in the Greater London area?

Grant Shapps: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, of course, that Transport for London has a big impact on constituencies outside, including mine in Welwyn Hatfield. I do note, however, that there are widely differing views, including in my area, for example, where people would welcome more Transport for London involvement. In his

area, perhaps the opposite is the case. I do think that it is a case of making sure that whatever we do fits in with the Williams review and the White Paper, which is to be published shortly.

T3. [900135] **Vicky Foxcroft** (Lewisham, Deptford) (Lab): My hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham East (Janet Daby) mentioned that Transport for London had launched its new consultation on the Bakerloo line extension. There is a growing risk that this vital piece of infrastructure could be prevented by premature development coming forward on key sites along the routes. Will the Secretary of State commit today to issuing safeguarding directions to the proposed route as soon as possible?

The Minister of State, Department for Transport (Chris Heaton-Harris): I thank the hon. Lady for her question. I actually met her about this and other subjects only a couple of weeks ago. My officials, along with Ministry of Housing officials, are currently working with TfL to understand the case for the Bakerloo line extension and how it interacts with housing proposals, and I expect to be able to report more very shortly.

T8. [900140] **Dame Cheryl Gillan** (Chesham and Amersham) (Con): On 3 September, the Secretary of State said that he would discuss with the Chancellor the case for updating the costs and benefits of HS2 to current prices to ensure transparency, but he also said that

"there is no future for a project like this without being transparent and open, so we will be candid when challenges emerge."

Has he met the Chancellor? Does he have the updated costs, and how does asking the independent panel to sign non-disclosure agreements fit with his statement about being transparent?

Grant Shapps: My right hon Friend has campaigned on this issue, quite rightly, for a very long time, and she gives me the opportunity to correct something that was suggested from the Front Bench earlier, which is that I somehow have a copy of the report, which I absolutely do not. I have not seen any of it, not even its emerging conclusions. When Oakervee is ready, he will present that report. I stick with everything I said. This is very important. As soon as we have this information, I will make it available to the House. As for non-disclosures, there are, of course, sensitive commercial matters involved in these things, and it is important that all members of the panel work together without releasing those inadvertently in a manner that would be commercially problematic. None the less, I do agree with the basic principle that, as soon as the information is available, this House will have it.

T5. [900137] **Dr Philippa Whitford** (Central Ayrshire) (SNP): It is two and a half years since the Bus Services Act 2017 was passed, yet we are still waiting for secondary legislation to make talking buses a reality for blind and visually impaired passengers. When will this finally happen?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Ms Nusrat Ghani): We have put together a £2 million fund to help smaller bus companies make audio-visual information available, and that should come into place next year. It is a part of our inclusive transport strategy

and I believe that we are the first country to have such a strategy: to align ourselves with UN goals to enable people with disabilities to access public transport as easily as those who do not have disabilities.

T9. [900141] **Vicky Ford** (Chelmsford) (Con): The permanent closure of the Army and Navy flyover has created a transport emergency across Chelmsford and mid-Essex. Can the Minister confirm that officials from the Department for Transport are working at pace with Essex County Council and focusing every effort on developing, funding and delivering a long-term solution to this junction?

The Minister of State, Department for Transport (George Freeman): I am delighted to say that the noble Baroness Vere who deals with these issues and I met yesterday, and we both commend my hon. Friend for her leadership on this issue. This has been a very serious emergency situation, causing huge congestion in her part of the world, and we are determined to ensure that we get the solution right. That means not necessarily rebuilding what was there before, but getting a proper state-of-the-art solution.

T7. [900139] **Mary Glendon** (North Tyneside) (Lab): At Highways England, a Government-owned company of which the Secretary of State is the sole shareholder, over 60 executives—mostly men—now enjoy six-figure salaries, while the vast majority of staff have been told to expect their pay increases to remain capped at 1% until 2025. When will the new shareholder be challenging company directors to address these pay disparities?

Grant Shapps: The hon. Lady may be surprised to hear that I agree with her. Some of these salaries—in both road and rail—have gone off the scale, and I am already addressing the issue.

Philip Davies (Shipley) (Con): Many of my constituents think that, as far as the Government are concerned, “northern powerhouse” only means Leeds and Manchester, so will the Secretary of State prove my constituents wrong by unequivocally committing to a station stop in Bradford for Northern Powerhouse Rail, which is vital for the local economy?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Paul Maynard): I am sure that my hon. Friend has heard what the Prime Minister has had to say on this matter. He will also know that Transport for the North is looking at options including Bradford for trans-Pennine links. I am immensely sympathetic to his argument.

T10. [900142] **John Grogan** (Keighley) (Lab): What progress has been made with the Department’s feasibility study regarding the reopening of the Skipton-Colne line for both passengers and freight?

Chris Heaton-Harris: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will recognise the work that has been done on this issue by other Members of Parliament, including my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Andrew Stephenson) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Julian Smith). The feasibility work is still in progress, and we are pressing further to assess whether the proposed scheme can be made affordable, will attract

sufficient traffic and is part of the right long-term solution for all trans-Pennine rail traffic. The hon. Gentleman will have seen that the issue featured in the rail network enhancements pipeline publication earlier this week.

Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con): Constituents across Gloucestershire will be delighted with the additional 5,000 seats a day of rail capacity between Gloucester and Paddington. Can the Minister tell me when we might also expect additional capacity on the important and very popular Gloucester to Bristol line, which would be welcomed by the Mayor of the West of England, my hon. Friend the Member for Thornbury and Yate (Luke Hall) and our excellent candidate in Stroud, Siobhan Baillie?

Chris Heaton-Harris: My hon. Friend has been campaigning on this issue, possibly since the day he was born; he is certainly in my ear about it all the time. Increasing frequency on local Great Western Railway trains is the best way in which to provide additional frequency and seats on the route, and this is likely to be provided as an extension of MetroWest additional services for Bristol to Yate, with the Department funding Yate to Gloucester. MetroWest proposals are under development by GWR as part of the next franchise, which will start in April 2020.

Mr Speaker: Transport without a brake would be like a car without a driver—Tom Brake.

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): In relation to Operation Yellowhammer, may I ask the Secretary of State what role the 300 troops and 180 police officers who are to be put on standby will play in policing the transport network in and around the port of Portsmouth, and how many other troops and police may be deployed at other ports?

Chris Heaton-Harris: It is always a pleasure to respond to the happy-go-lucky Member for Carshalton and Wallington, especially on the matter of Brexit because I was reading his website last night, on which he says, “clearly this was a democratic vote and we must abide by this decision”

—something that he has forgotten, I believe. My Department is operationalising Yellowhammer, and I will happily write to the right hon. Gentleman with the details he requires.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Ah, let us call a Member who used to have responsibility for buses and various other forms of transport at different times—Mr Andrew Jones.

Andrew Jones (Harrogate and Knaresborough) (Con): After a widely supported and successful campaign against a relief road in Harrogate, the transport authority is now looking at a package of sustainable measures to take transport forward in the area. What support will the Government provide to North Yorkshire County Council and other such councils developing sustainable transport packages?

George Freeman: My hon. Friend raises an excellent point. We are currently in the midst of talking to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local

Government about a much more fundamental integration of housing and transport through the housing infrastructure fund. I will happily meet my hon. Friend to talk this through to make sure that it works for local places so that housing comes with proper transport.

Lilian Greenwood (Nottingham South) (Lab): Further to the Secretary of State's earlier comments on the intention to carry out a review of the safety of smart motorways and all-lane running, he will know that the Transport Committee questioned Highways England on this yesterday. Is that review being carried out in the Department or by someone independent? I would be grateful if he clarified that.

Grant Shapps: I watched with great interest the evidence from Highways England in front of the Committee yesterday and noted the comments of the chief exec. I will ensure that the Department is making decisions on this, because some of the statistics have been difficult to understand. We know that people are dying on smart motorways. We also know that 70 or 80 people a year die on full motorways. Understanding whether smart motorways are less safe, the same or safer turns out not to be as straightforward as Members might imagine. I want all the facts and I want recommendations that could be put in place to ensure that all our motorways are as safe as they possibly can be. I will get this done in a matter of weeks.

Sarah Newton (Truro and Falmouth) (Con): Growing towns and villages in my constituency need investment in cycle and walking infrastructure. Will the Secretary of State join my representations to the Treasury at the forthcoming Budget to make sure that there is dedicated funding for villages and towns to expand this infrastructure?

Chris Heaton-Harris: Yes, we are working with cycling groups up and down the country to do exactly that.

Jonathan Reynolds (Stalybridge and Hyde) (Lab/Co-op): TransPennine rail services between Leeds and Manchester through Stalybridge and Mossley are clearly vital to this country. The previous Government changed their mind quite a lot on improvements, including on full electrification. What is this Secretary of State's policy on TransPennine rail upgrades, and will he meet me to hear some sensible suggestions on the way forward?

Paul Maynard: I am happy to meet the hon. Gentleman. I am very interested and cannot wait.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Ah, another habitué of Transport questions—**Martin Vickers**.

Martin Vickers (Cleethorpes) (Con): Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Secretary of State will have heard my exchange with the Prime Minister yesterday when he agreed with me on submitting proposals for free port status for the Humber ports, an upgrade to the A15, and improved east-west rail freight capacity. Will the Secretary of State indicate his support, and will he agree to meet me and a delegation to discuss the matter?

Ms Ghani: It is good to see my hon. Friend back on his feet promoting everything in his constituency, including free ports. I will of course be more than happy to sit down and meet a delegation, although I am a bit concerned about how large it will be. I am pleased to be working with the Department for International Trade and the Treasury to ensure that the ports that want it get the free port status that they require.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: I am sorry, but we must move on.

Andy McDonald: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: Well, very briefly.

Andy McDonald: I am grateful, Mr Speaker. In our exchanges on Question 3, my hon. Friend the Member for York Central (Rachael Maskell) raised her concerns about the delayed publication of the Oakervee report. The Minister responded by saying that she was making it up. I can assure you, Mr Speaker, that when my hon. Friend comes to the Dispatch Box she does not make things up—she tells the truth. If the Minister has inadvertently used language that he ought not to, perhaps he could come to the Dispatch Box right now and withdraw the slur that he has laid against her immediately, without any qualification.

Mr Speaker: It is incumbent upon a Minister to own up if he or she considers an error to have been made. I would simply say that as a matter of fact Members must be assumed to speak what they believe to be true. It all happened very quickly, and I did mutter at the time that a Member will say only what he or she believes. So it was, I think, infelicitous, at the very least, and a gracious withdrawal would be appreciated.

Paul Maynard: I have not received the said report, but I am happy to clarify the point and I withdraw the exact comment.

Mr Speaker: I am extremely grateful to the Minister. I thank him for that and we will leave it there.

Checks on Goods: Northern Ireland and Great Britain

10.39 am

Tony Lloyd (Rochdale) (Lab) (*Urgent Question*): To ask the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union if he will make a statement regarding checks on goods moving from Northern Ireland to Great Britain and Great Britain to Northern Ireland under the current withdrawal agreement.

The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Stephen Barclay): On 17 October, the United Kingdom and the European Union reached political agreement on a new withdrawal agreement and political declaration for the future relationship. That includes a revised protocol for Northern Ireland, which has been extensively debated in this House. The agreement is clear that Great Britain and Northern Ireland are one customs territory. Goods that are not at risk of moving to the European Union will attract no tariffs. These arrangements mean that Northern Ireland would remain in the UK's customs territory and could benefit from the UK's new trade deals with third countries. Goods moving from Great Britain to Northern Ireland that are destined for the European Union will have to comply with European Union rules. To ensure that the correct tariffs are applied and that goods comply with the rules of the single regulatory zone, some information will be needed on goods moving from Great Britain to Northern Ireland.

The deal also explicitly allows the United Kingdom to ensure unfettered market access for goods moving from Northern Ireland to Great Britain. There will be minimal targeted interventions designed to prevent, for example, trade in endangered species, which I would have thought the House agreed on. We will work with the European Union to eliminate those limited processes as soon as possible after Brexit. The most important point is that the arrangements automatically dissolve after four years unless a majority of the Northern Ireland Assembly in Stormont votes to keep them.

Tony Lloyd: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for granting this urgent question, which really does matter.

There is confusion at the very heart of government. Yesterday, the Prime Minister told the House there would be “no checks” and “no tariffs” between Northern Ireland and Great Britain; that is in direct contradiction to what the Secretary of State just told the House. It is in contradiction with the steadily progressing views expressed in different statements from the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Justice Secretary, who said last night on “Newsnight” that there will be checks in both directions—from GB to Northern Ireland, and Northern Ireland to GB. The manifest confusion at the heart of government is compounded by the confusion for businesses in Northern Ireland—particularly small businesses—and the Northern Ireland civil service in planning for the long term. That is simply unacceptable. The Government were trying to ram the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill through the House in three days, but they themselves do not properly understand what they are doing. That is problematic, and we need absolute clarity.

While this is outside the Secretary of State's immediate brief, there are other consequences. The House spent a long time arguing that there should be no hard border

across the island of Ireland to prevent an impact on the nationalist community; we did not think we would now be talking about the impact on the Unionist community and political Unionism. The new Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland said:

“whatever ends up as a Brexit deal, if there is one that could be perceived in a way that sort of threatens the security of the loyalist community...our concern is also the loyalist community has at times shown it can mobilise quickly, bring large numbers of people on to the streets and engage in public disorder in support of their cause.”

I hope that every Member takes that warning very seriously, because it is a profound warning from a senior and experienced police officer.

I have a number of specific questions for the Secretary of State. First, what overall impact assessment have the Government made for the Northern Ireland economy? What assessment have they made for trading ports and airports in Scotland, Wales and England? Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs estimates that each declaration for shipments from Great Britain to Northern Ireland will cost between £15 and £56, and Border Force says that a “minimum amount” of electronic information will be required for movements from west to east. When will the Secretary of State be able to give certainty to businesses about what the checks will be and how they will be undertaken? If the Justice Secretary was right when he told “Newsnight” that there would be checks from Northern Ireland to Great Britain, when will we know the detail of what those checks will be, rather than their being superficially dismissed as of no importance?

In the end, the Government have to put an end to this confusion. Will the Secretary of State guarantee that he will make an early statement to the House about the full impact of the checks in both directions? Does he accept the warning of the Chief Constable about the potential impact and do the Government take that seriously? If so, what is their assessment? Finally, I have to ask about a political point, although it is an important one: does the Secretary of State believe that the Prime Minister himself at last understands the impact of his deal on Northern Ireland and on the relationship between Northern Ireland and the rest of our country?

Stephen Barclay: I know that the House and the hon. Gentleman take these issues very seriously. He raises some very legitimate points, which I will seek to address.

First and foremost was the hon. Gentleman's concern about any hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland. I am happy to give him assurances on that; it is a key part of what the Government have agreed. If he looks at the preamble to the Northern Ireland protocol, he will see clear commitments from the EU and the UK to the Belfast/Good Friday agreement. It states that

“nothing in this Protocol prevents the United Kingdom from ensuring unfettered market access for goods moving from Northern Ireland to the rest of the United Kingdom”.

The hon. Gentleman also raised a legitimate concern about the statement from the Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland. The Government take it incredibly seriously, and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland liaises closely with the Chief Constable and other senior officers. This is one reason why it is important to get the Executive back up and running, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman agrees. Part of the reason why the Government extended article 50, for which they

[*Stephen Barclay*]

were criticised at the time, was precisely that the previous Prime Minister took those concerns very seriously, and we have continued to work with the PSNI to address them. However, I remind the hon. Gentleman that one of the central concerns is the potential impact of no deal on the border, which is another reason it is important that the House comes together and agrees a deal, because that is the best way of safeguarding the Belfast/Good Friday agreement and addressing those concerns.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the comments of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister was distinguishing between the paperwork required, which will be done digitally and is a single form, and the introduction of physical checks. In the coming months, we will work within the United Kingdom and with the European Union to discuss how to eliminate the limited administrative processes that there are. The hon. Gentleman will know that article 6 of the protocol requires further work through the Joint Committee to minimise any impact. That is an ongoing commitment.

The hon. Gentleman made a valid point about certainty for business. It is something we hear about in our engagement with businesses in Northern Ireland. It is important to reassure businesses that this is an administrative process—an electronic form—and something as part of bookings that will be done with the haulier as an aspect of the shipment of goods. It will involve fairly straightforward data about who is exporting, who is importing and the nature of the goods. That said, I am happy to have further discussions with him, because he does reflect concerns among businesses, particularly the small and medium-sized enterprises sector in Northern Ireland, about these arrangements.

The hon. Gentleman also asked when we would come back to the House with further updates. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is keen to continue to update the House, following his discussions on this issue and, more widely, about the restoration of the Executive. I will speak to my right hon. Friend about how we keep the House updated.

The issue is that these are administrative processes pertaining in particular to international obligations on things such as Kimberley diamonds and endangered species and to things that hauliers will be able to prepopulate in their IT systems. However, it is the case—the hon. Gentleman is right—that concerns have been expressed in Northern Ireland. Indeed, concerns have been expressed, which I very much respect, by our confidence and supply partners. Again, I very much offer to work with colleagues across the House on how we address the real concerns—the very real concerns—that I know they have to minimise any disruption that they are concerned about.

Simon Hoare (North Dorset) (Con): The why is very clear—why a deal is important for the island of Ireland, and for Northern Ireland specifically—but may I say to the Secretary of State that that is not the case with the how and the what? Given the lack of absolute clarity from Ministers and indeed from HMRC, if the Government are serious about trying to sell this proposal to the communities of Northern Ireland, they are doomed to failure. May I urge that the Secretary of State, the Northern Ireland Secretary, the Prime Minister and the head of HMRC get together pretty quickly? In oral evidence yesterday, the Secretary of State for Northern

Ireland referred to clauses of the Bill being brought forward. The communities need to see those in a timely fashion. We actually need to see draft documents about what these requirements would be. They are causing huge concern in Northern Ireland, and the Secretary of State will not be able to sell the deal unless within the next few days we have the clarity that will assuage very legitimate concerns.

Mr Speaker: Order. I accorded the hon. Gentleman some latitude in the light of his notable celebrity as the Chair of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, but a similar latitude cannot be widely extended. At this rate, lots of people will not get in, and it will be no good their whingeing about it—that is the reality.

Stephen Barclay: My hon. Friend, as the Chair of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, raises an important point about what reassurance can be given through the withdrawal agreement Bill to colleagues across the House to address some of these issues. I stand ready to discuss that with him, as I have offered to do with the shadow spokesman and others in the House, subject to the withdrawal agreement Bill proceeding, during its passage.

I remind the Chair of the Select Committee—of course he is very aware of this—that operationally these are issues that apply at the end of the implementation period, not when the withdrawal agreement is ratified, so there will be time for much more consultation with businesses in Northern Ireland to address the very legitimate questions that have been raised. Although it sometimes feels a bit longer, it was only last Thursday that the agreement was reached with the EU, and of course there are questions about what are often quite complex and technical arrangements pertaining to customs. Those are legitimate questions, and I stand ready to discuss them with businesses in Northern Ireland and also with my hon. Friend.

Peter Grant (Glenrothes) (SNP): The Prime Minister had one job—to sort the Northern Ireland backstop—and he has made a pig's ear of it. He has taken the parts of the backstop that many of his own colleagues and many in the Unionist community in Northern Ireland found unacceptable and put them centre stage, and he claims that to be a success. I and my SNP colleagues welcome anything that gives Northern Ireland businesses free access to markets in the Republic of Ireland. What is not acceptable is that our businesses in Scotland are then put deliberately at a competitive disadvantage.

What is worse is that the Prime Minister has attempted to do this not only without the consent of Northern Ireland but, as is now clear, against the almost unanimous opposition of all the communities of Northern Ireland, without any prior consultation even with the businesses that will have to live with the consequences of what he has done. Can the Secretary of State confirm reports that he has said that even people in Northern Ireland selling stuff on eBay to Great Britain will have to complete customs declarations? Did he say that or was he wrongly quoted in the Irish press?

Can the Secretary of State explain why it is a good idea for Northern Ireland to have closer customs links and trade links with the Republic of Ireland, but it is a bad idea for Scotland, Wales and England to have the same links? Can he tell us what assessment he or anyone

in government has made about the economic impact on businesses in other parts of the United Kingdom, which will be left at a disadvantage compared with those in Northern Ireland? Finally, given that, in the view of Unionist politicians on both sides of the House, the deal potentially undermines the long-term future of Northern Ireland in the United Kingdom, if the Prime Minister is prepared to play fast and loose with one of the founding principles of his party, why should anyone trust the reassurances he gives us on an NHS about which he quite clearly could not care less?

Stephen Barclay: The hon. Gentleman asks some legitimate questions, but I think he finished with an unfair suggestion. The Prime Minister was always told that he would not be able to renegotiate a deal or replace the backstop and that he could not change a word of the withdrawal agreement, but he achieved those things and deserves to be commended for doing so.

The hon. Gentleman started by saying that the Prime Minister had one job, but when Members passed the Benn legislation, many of them were saying that the Prime Minister's job was avoiding no deal. By voting against the withdrawal agreement and the programme motion, the hon. Gentleman has made no deal much more likely.

The clear message that I get from businesses in Scotland—certainly those that I speak to, alongside my hon. Friends—is that they want the clarity and certainty of a deal, and to move forward. They want one step of changes through the implementation period, not two. That is why so many businesses across Scotland want us to get on with this. Fishing communities in particular want us to take control of our independent coastal waters once again.

When the hon. Gentleman referred to eBay, I was not sure whether he was talking about my comments or those of another Secretary of State, but if he was asking whether I have commented on that issue, no, I have not. Another Cabinet member might have made such comments, and I will be happy to clarify that. The impact of no deal, and the ongoing uncertainty of not resolving this issue, is clearly having a negative impact on business. Even business leaders who supported the remain campaign, such as Sir Stuart Rose, are now saying, “Let’s get this done. Let’s get Brexit done. Let’s get on to the future trade agreement and move the country forward.” I hope that the hon. Gentleman will think again and enable the programme motion to go through.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Speaker: Order. I call the author of the brevity textbook, Sir Desmond Swayne.

Sir Desmond Swayne (New Forest West) (Con): What proportion of goods from non-EU countries are currently subject to physical checks on entering the UK and the Republic of Ireland?

Stephen Barclay: It is 1% from the rest of the world.

Nigel Dodds (Belfast North) (DUP): Let us get this into perspective: Northern Ireland to Great Britain trade is worth £14 billion a year; trade from Northern Ireland to the European Union, including the Irish Republic, is £4.8 billion; and those figures are replicated

the other way. Our trade with the rest of the UK is absolutely the most important by a long way. We need to avoid checks, and there will be checks, because we are going to have export declarations for trade from Northern Ireland to Great Britain. The Secretary of State now calls them “administrative processes”, but they are exit declarations that have to be checked. From Great Britain to Northern Ireland, there will be customs declarations, physical checks, tariffs on goods going to the European Union and entry summary declarations.

The Government's own impact assessment states that there is the potential of

“reduced trade, business investment and consumer spending”

in Northern Ireland and that small businesses will be hit disproportionately. Let us have a bit of clarity and honesty in this House! The fact of the matter is that this will adversely affect the most important trade that we have in Northern Ireland—that is the point we have always made. No checks along the Irish land border, yes, but we cannot then have those checks in the Irish sea.

Please will the Secretary of State take seriously the point that the shadow Secretary of State made and the Chief Constable made today? You are in danger of causing real problems with the Belfast agreement, the St Andrews agreement, and the political institutions and political stability in Northern Ireland by what you are doing to the Unionist community. Please wake up and realise what is happening here. We need to get our heads together and look at a way forward that can solve this problem. Don't plough ahead regardless, I urge you.

Stephen Barclay: I do take seriously the concerns raised by the right hon. Gentleman. Like the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and indeed my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, I stand ready to work with him to address those concerns. We are absolutely explicit in standing by the commitments of this Government, and there is a cross-party commitment to the Belfast/Good Friday agreement. The Northern Ireland protocol makes that explicit within the terms of the international agreement.

I absolutely accept the right hon. Gentleman's point: the flow of trade from Northern Ireland to GB is three or four times more than the flow from Northern Ireland to Ireland. That is why the text makes it clear that there will be unfettered access. We need to work with him, where there are concerns, as reflected by the Chair of the Select Committee, to allay those concerns. Indeed, the text enables us to do so. Again, these are not issues that start on 1 November; these are issues that apply at the end of the application period. Even before we get into the actual articles, the preamble says:

“the application of the protocol should impact as little as possible on the everyday life of communities both in Ireland and Northern Ireland”.

So that is a commitment on both sides. We will work with him and with the Joint Committee on that. He well knows of our unique circumstances and that is why a unique solution is required, but I stand ready, as does the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State, to work with him to address the concerns he raises.

Mr Mark Harper (Forest of Dean) (Con): I have listened very carefully to these exchanges. May I perhaps suggest to the Secretary of State that there is a solution here that requires Ministers getting a grip of officials? The starting point is that we want unfettered access. We only have to

[Mr Mark Harper]

apply controls in strictly limited circumstances, so why do we not start with not having any businesses having to fill in forms and only having a requirement on businesses that present a risk of not complying with those strictly limited international obligations? That might well go some way to allaying the fears of our confidence and supply partners. I remind him—he does not need reminding as an experienced former Whip—that, if we had them with us, today we would be completing consideration of the Bill and be on track to leave the European Union next Thursday, and we are not.

Stephen Barclay: My right hon. Friend is right; as a former Whip, I do not need reminding of the importance of that, not least as he was my Government Chief Whip during my time in the Whips Office. Let me be clear. Officials across Whitehall, in getting the deal against a very tight timescale, worked phenomenally hard; they got it through by last Thursday. I wish to be clear and express the Government's gratitude for the work that many officials did against very tight timescales, working with Taskforce 50 to get that deal through.

My right hon. Friend is right that we need to be clear about the impact of the administrative processes. In my response a moment ago, I alluded to the commitment that applies to the Joint Committee to mitigate those impacts. He will be aware that there are already processes around the transportation of goods—with ferries, dangerous goods obviously go on top of the deck—but we will work with hauliers to minimise any administrative processes. As I say, we will work with Members to do so.

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): Under the agreement, if a Northern Ireland fishing vessel leaves a Northern Ireland port and returns to a Northern Ireland port with its catch, could tariffs apply at that point to the fish the vessel has caught if there is a risk that some of the catch might enter the European Union?

Stephen Barclay: It will be for the Joint Committee to determine to what extent there is a material risk of any leakage to the integrity of the single market. I think the example the right hon. Gentleman raises is not the sort of size of trade that I would expect to be a risk to the integrity of the single market. The rules say that no VAT would apply if that catch from the vessel was for use by consumers in Northern Ireland. His question, quite rightly, related to some of that catch then going into the EU and going into the EU single market. As is the norm, if goods go into the EU single market then VAT would apply—[*Interruption.*] But not automatically. It would be for the Joint Committee to determine to what extent it is a significant issue. Perhaps another example would be where food goes to Northern Ireland but goes into ready meals. Then it would be within scope. If it goes to Northern Ireland and is consumed in a restaurant in Northern Ireland, it would not. That is the sort of issue the Joint Committee will get into.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: We have had only five Back Benchers, even though the urgent question has been running for 26 minutes. I say gently to the Secretary of State that nobody could accuse him of excluding from his answers

any consideration that he thinks might be material in any century, but it would be helpful if we expedited progress on this important matter.

Mr Laurence Robertson (Tewkesbury) (Con): In no way dispelling the fears of the Unionist community, of which I would consider myself one, may I quote what the Library says on this matter:

“there are currently checks on animal products entering Northern Ireland from Great Britain including physical checks on livestock”?

While there is the potential for those to increase under this agreement, the agreement is not establishing a principle in that respect—that principle is already established.

Stephen Barclay: My hon. Friend speaks with great experience, and I know that he takes a very close interest in matters pertaining to Northern Ireland. He is absolutely right in respect of the single epidemiological zone that is the island of Ireland, pertaining to animal and plant health, but at the same time, I accept that there are concerns from a number of Members about what additional requirements will be needed. Those are valid concerns and we stand ready to work with them on those issues.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): Fish landed by Northern Ireland and UK fishing boats going east to west and west to east will be subject to landing tariffs that will be paid before landing. That is the information in the paperwork that I have seen. The Secretary of State stated yesterday at the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee that the Government will ensure that tariffs will be covered. I remind the Minister gently, but firmly, that there is nothing whatsoever in the small details that I have seen—the same papers that he has—that refers to that. This will cost Northern Ireland fishermen from Portavogie, Ardglass and Kilkeel, and indeed, all fishing boats in the UK. This withdrawal deal is absolutely rubbish. I used the word “codswallop” before—that is what it is.

Stephen Barclay: A moment ago, the right hon. Member for Belfast North (Nigel Dodds) raised the very correct point about the importance of the trade from Northern Ireland into GB, and how much more of that there was compared with trade from Northern Ireland into Ireland and the EU. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that, for those fishing vessels, as for other goods, there are no tariffs applied in terms of NI into GB, nor will there be any tariffs in terms of those who land their catch back into NI. We are dealing with a subset, which is where it goes into the EU.

Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con): Does the Secretary of State acknowledge that the matters that are being discussed are a symptom of a very serious problem that we need to resolve by good will and negotiation and with regard to the constitutional status of Northern Ireland? In that context, I urge him to listen carefully to the arguments not only from those in the Democratic Unionist party, but from our Back Benchers who realise that this is a matter of such importance that it absolutely requires 100% attention from the Government.

Stephen Barclay: My hon. Friend rightly raises the point about the constitutional status of Northern Ireland. He will know that the text specifically says that there must be regard to

“maintaining the integral place of Northern Ireland in the United Kingdom's internal market”,

and there is specific reference to its “constitutional status”, so he is absolutely right about that. He is also right in his recognition that these issues need to be addressed in the context of the future trading relationship that will be reached between the UK and the EU, and we have set out our ambitions for that. We are trying to address the period ahead of that, but we have the implementation period and we are confident that we can get a free trade agreement in place on the timescale that applies—to December 2020. That, as he rightly identifies, then addresses the points in his question.

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): The head of Border Force told the Home Affairs Committee yesterday that there would be checks and said that it is yet to be worked out in detail who would do them between Britain and Northern Ireland. A memorandum from the Home Secretary that we have published this morning rules out checks from Northern Ireland to Great Britain, but accepts that there is going to be a process from Great Britain to Northern Ireland. However, does the Secretary of State not accept that fudging the language on this is a serious problem when trust is needed? Will he clarify that enforcement will be needed if there is a process and, therefore, when he says “minimal targeted interventions”, that includes physical checks?

Stephen Barclay: The right hon. Lady has referred to the Home Secretary’s evidence to the Committee that she chairs. I understand that the Home Secretary wrote to her Committee this morning to clarify her comments. The right hon. Lady has indicated that she has had a chance to see that. I just put that on the record. As was referred to earlier, checks already apply in terms of rest of the world goods and the single epidemiological unit. Those are quite right. But underpinning all the detail that Members quite properly want to probe is the principle of consent. Any issues that apply will be subject to Northern Ireland. The key issue on that is that that aligns with the EU and the UK wanting to minimise any impact, because both sides know that the arrangements will be subject to a consent mechanism in the Northern Ireland Assembly in a way that did not apply to the backstop.

Mr Marcus Fysh (Yeovil) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend commit himself to the use of maximum leverage in our future negotiations with the EU to ensure that this scenario does not come about in the first place and to maximum use of the simplifications available in the Union customs code to ensure that we do not have to have controls at the border itself?

Stephen Barclay: My hon. Friend is right. In some ways I can go further and better than that, in that the text actually requires both sides to work to minimise the concern to which he has referred. So I would not see it so much as requiring to put leverage on the EU. I think there is a common interest in minimising this, because the text requires it and because, as I said in my response to the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper), the EU is incentivised to minimise the impact to ensure that the arrangements gain the consent of the Assembly in Northern Ireland.

Mr Speaker: Alistair Carmichael.

Mr Alistair Carmichael (Orkney and Shetland) (LD): Thank you, Mr Speaker.

“We could not support any deal that creates a border of any kind in the Irish Sea and undermines the Union or leads to Northern Ireland having a different relationship with the EU than the rest of the UK, beyond what currently exists.”

Those are not my words, but the words of the former Secretary of State for Scotland and Ruth Davidson, the recently resigned leader of the Scottish Conservative party—an intervention that was described at the time by an unnamed Scottish Conservative spokesperson as “an article of faith” for the Scottish Conservatives. Can the Secretary of State tell the House: when did the Scottish Conservative and Unionist party lose its faith?

Stephen Barclay: I think that what has shaped these arrangements is something on which I hope the right hon. Gentleman and I can agree. There are unique circumstances in Northern Ireland. That does require a unique solution. There are already unique circumstances pertaining to the Belfast/Good Friday agreement. That is what the solution has put in place. He would, I think, be the first to criticise the Government if we proposed a solution that in any way compromised or involved infrastructure on the border between north and south. Therefore, that does require a degree of flexibility and creativity on all sides; that is part of a negotiation. It is to the credit of Taskforce 50 that, having for a long time said that the backstop was all-weather and all-insurance—having said that it could not be changed, that not a word could be amended—the taskforce did apply creativity and flexibility, and perhaps he should do so as well.

Nigel Mills (Amber Valley) (Con): The Secretary of State has referred to electronic declarations for goods going from west to east. Is he planning to build a new system in the next 14 months, or is he planning to use an existing system such as CHIEF, the customs handling of import and export freight?

Stephen Barclay: My hon. Friend is right that this is a straightforward process. In terms of documentation, hauliers and the transportation of goods, often, a firm will be making the same journey to their supplier, which is why any impact of the administrative procedures will be mitigated over time and the systems will ease them. However, we will work with the Joint Committee to reduce the impact of those. That is exactly what the implementation period is for.

David Simpson (Upper Bann) (DUP): I hope the Secretary of State will realise the difficulties that this will make for the agrifood industry in Northern Ireland; they will be massive. But I want to ask him a very straight question and I would appreciate a straight answer. My constituents are asking me this question, especially this week, when we have been inundated: why is it that the Conservative and Unionist party has done this in Northern Ireland? Are we the sacrificial lamb that was required in order to get the deal over the line?

Stephen Barclay: I know the hon. Gentleman reflects the very legitimate concerns in his constituency about some of the details, but I do not accept his characterisation of this. The strong representations we have had in government were on the need to safeguard the Belfast/Good Friday agreement, to ensure there was no infrastructure at the border in Northern Ireland, and to mitigate. Indeed, our commitment to Northern Ireland to address specifically the concerns he raises is reflected in another

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part of this package that has not been mentioned at all this morning, which is the new deal for Northern Ireland that the Secretary of State has been discussing with parties in the wider context of getting the Executive back up and running. It would be an odd position to suggest that the Conservative and Unionist party is not committed to Northern Ireland when indeed part of this package is a new deal which addresses the levelling up that the Prime Minister has committed to, in Northern Ireland and across the United Kingdom.

Kevin Hollinrake (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): It is quite understandable that hon. Members who represent Northern Ireland raise concerns about this issue, but is not the key point that these arrangements will be superseded by a future free trade agreement and that there are compelling reasons to think we can strike a deal that suits both sides, not least because of the impact on Ireland if we did not? Its GDP growth rate is currently 5%, but it will go into recession if we do not agree a UK-wide free trade agreement.

Stephen Barclay: As a senior business figure in his previous career, my hon. Friend understands both the dynamic impact from an economic point of view and also the terms of the agreement, which are exactly as he says: the free trade agreement will supersede these arrangements. These arrangements can be part of this, but the free trade agreement is where we will then take it forward.

Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): The Secretary of State has a very interesting definition of “unfettered”, because what we are talking about here are checks, charges and confusing processes on trade within our own country—within the United Kingdom—and that of course has huge implications not only for Northern Ireland, and for Scotland and England, but also for Wales. Can the Secretary of State answer the question that the Home Secretary did not answer yesterday in the Home Affairs Committee and the officials did not answer either: will UK Border Force officials be involved at any stage in the checks and processes that both he and the Home Secretary have referred to?

Stephen Barclay: The hon. Gentleman talked about this being within Great Britain. There are no requirements in the protocol pertaining to Great Britain. We will have control, and this is part of it being unfettered; we will have sole control as to how we wish to address this. [Interruption.] With respect, the hon. Gentleman asked the question, and I have been trying to give full answers—perhaps slightly too full in the view of the Chair. The simple answer is that there are no requirements in terms of Great Britain: we will have sovereign control, as a sovereign country.

Richard Drax (South Dorset) (Con): As I understand it, a majority vote is required for Northern Ireland to escape the existing deal, which of course is a change from the cross-community agreement, and this has, I know, upset our friends and colleagues representing Northern Ireland. Can this be looked at, so that at least in December 2020 when we leave the EU Northern Ireland comes with us in whole?

Stephen Barclay: First, Northern Ireland will come with us: it will be part of the customs union, it will benefit from our trade deals, and we are absolutely committed to leaving, as the Prime Minister repeatedly says, whole and entire. My hon. Friend does raise a concern that has been raised on the Benches opposite in terms of the consent mechanism, but the concern is about giving one community a power of veto, not least because these are reserved matters pertaining to international relations that fall outside the scope of the Good Friday agreement. It is important to understand what the consent mechanism is applying to, and it is for that reason that it is by simple majority.

Mr Gregory Campbell (East Londonderry) (DUP): The Secretary of State noted the comments of the Chief Constable, and we all want to avoid any descent into community disorder. He also acknowledged the scale of east-west commerce and business. Does he now acknowledge that what we need are not warm words or reassurances on what will follow, but to ensure that the text reflects the potential to grow the east-west business, and not to risk jeopardising it for the sake of north-south business?

Stephen Barclay: The hon. Gentleman and I would agree on the desire to grow that business, because economic ties underpin the democratic relationship that we have, and we both share a common desire to have a strong Union with Northern Ireland as a central component of that. There will be scope, both during the passage of the withdrawal agreement Bill and then in the implementation period, to look at the things that can be done to strengthen that. I would draw his attention, for example, to what we secured on state aid in Northern Ireland, where there is scope to look at the UK economy as a whole, which again enables us to ensure that Northern Ireland's place in the United Kingdom is central to the decision making of this and any future Government.

Sir Bernard Jenkin (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): I welcome the tone of these exchanges, which seem to me very calm and very sensible and do recognise the concerns being expressed from Northern Ireland. I suggest that we need to separate two things—the symbolism of a process of compliance required between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom, and the substance of the effect of that policy. It seems to me that all the questions are about the substance of compliance and that those are fears that possibly can be assuaged, and that we should seek to assuage, while recognising that there will still be deep concerns in the loyalist community in Northern Ireland about having any kind of agreement that requires that compliance.

Stephen Barclay: My hon. Friend absolutely captures a key point in terms of that distinction, and I very much agree with him. I would expect most firms to get intermediaries to complete the administrative process required for moving goods, so he is absolutely right in the distinction that he draws. Indeed, that is exactly what the implementation period would be used for—to address that distinction.

Mr Clive Betts (Sheffield South East) (Lab): On exiting the EU, trade between the port of Rotterdam and England will be subject to checks. If the same goods go from other EU countries to England through

the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, will they be subject to the same checks, and if so, where will those checks take place?

Stephen Barclay: I visited the port of Rotterdam to discuss the arrangements that it is making. For goods coming from Rotterdam to, say, Northern Ireland and then on to Great Britain, any requirements are within the control of Great Britain and the UK; there are no requirements on that in the protocol. The hon. Gentleman knows that most of the time—this is what I was discussing with the port of Rotterdam—these issues are intelligence-led in any event. That is the case now and that will be the case in the future.

Mark Pawsey (Rugby) (Con): On a very practical level, PTI Express Ltd is a haulage company based in my constituency, transporting goods to and from both Northern Ireland and the Republic, and it was very concerned about the threat to its business—about the prospect of no deal. Of course, that threat to its business has now been abated as a consequence of the vote in the House earlier in the week, but what arrangements should it put in place for future circumstances?

Stephen Barclay: I agree with my hon. Friend in part, in that I think the central concern of many businesses, as with those in his constituency, has been around no deal; but because of the decision that the House took on the programme motion, I would not say that has been abated. That is why my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has had to step up our no-deal preparation, Yellowhammer. The sooner we can reach a deal, the sooner we can address fully the concerns of my hon. Friend's constituents, because he is quite right: many members of the business community are concerned about no deal. That is why they want this deal done and they want us to move forward.

Gavin Robinson (Belfast East) (DUP): May I say that it is frustrating, to put it mildly, to hear that black is white and to hear contradictory comments that do not reflect the text in the withdrawal agreement or its outworkings? Can I say to the Secretary of State—I hope he takes this seriously—that this is fundamental for us? The sixth article of the Act of Union (Ireland) 1800 states that there will be

“No duty or bounty on exportation of produce of one country to the other.

All articles the produce of either country shall be imported free from duty.”

That is an article of the Act of Union between Great Britain and Ireland. That is how fundamental this is.

Stephen Barclay: What article 6 makes clear is that there will be unfettered access—[*Interruption.*] That is article 4, sorry—[*Interruption.*] I had actually lifted out the page from my folder. What is made clear is that there will be unfettered access and that the UK has sovereign control—[*Interruption.*] I was actually quoting it correctly, because article 6.1 of the withdrawal agreement states:

“Nothing in this Protocol shall prevent the United Kingdom from ensuring unfettered market access”.

My point is that article 6 allows for unfettered access, and that is exactly what the text says.

Paul Masterton (East Renfrewshire) (Con): The UK Government have an unequivocal obligation to ensure unfettered access for Northern Ireland into the GB market. It is not good enough to say, “We will wait six months until the Joint Committee to try to sort this out,” because the trust is not there. There is nothing to stop the UK Government setting out now how they intend to achieve unfettered access, both through the future relationship that they want with the EU and a package of unilateral domestic measures that they could take to prevent any of these provisions from coming into force. When will we see those measures?

Stephen Barclay: Such issues can quite rightly be discussed in more detail during the passage of the withdrawal agreement Bill.

Just to correct things, I slightly misheard the hon. Member for Belfast East (Gavin Robinson), but I am happy to pick up his specific point following this discussion.

Owen Smith (Pontypridd) (Lab): Peace and prosperity in Northern Ireland are far too important to be treated with the cavalier obfuscation that we have heard from the Secretary of State this morning. Can I take him back to the document that the Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, the hon. Member for Rochford and Southend East (James Duddridge), published on Tuesday night? Will he confirm that it says, between paragraphs 294 and 319, that £7.5 billion-worth of trade involving 20,000 businesses is in jeopardy as a result of checks and other issues at the border and that there is a risk that prices will go up for consumers in Northern Ireland? Will he confirm whether that is true and whether he thinks it is a good thing for his Government to do?

Stephen Barclay: It is misrepresenting the issue to say that such things are in jeopardy from a simple form—I have it here—that will need to be filled out. There are legitimate questions about administrative processes that we have been exploring in the House, and I stand ready to discuss them further, as does the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. However, it does not help the debate to describe a fairly simple form pertaining to what goods are moving from whom to whom and what is contained in the cargo as putting our future trade with Northern Ireland in jeopardy.

Adam Afriyie (Windsor) (Con): In addition to the symbolism of the issue, there is also a matter of practicality, given the limited number of businesses and transactions that may require declarations. Are the Government able to provide financial support or fiscal support to the limited number of affected businesses in Northern Ireland?

Stephen Barclay: My hon. Friend raises an important point. He will fully understand that as a Minister of the Crown it is not for me, on behalf of the Chancellor, to make fiscal commitments of that sort at this stage. However, my hon. Friend is opening up a wider discussion. As part of the new deal for Northern Ireland, as part of restoring the Executive and as part of the Joint Committee looking at how we can reduce the impact of any administrative processes, it is important to understand what the concerns are and what the Government can do to mitigate them.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Speaker: Order. We must move on at 11.30 am.

Catherine McKinnell (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab): The raft of contradictory statements by senior members of the Government has caused nothing but confusion and anxiety for businesses over the past 24 hours. Given that the Prime Minister does not even seem to understand or be able to be straight about the impact of the Brexit proposals on the future of £18 billion-worth of trade within our own country, why on earth would anyone trust him to negotiate our future trading relationships with the EU or the rest of the world?

Stephen Barclay: The hon. Lady has previously raised a similar issue, saying that she did not trust the Prime Minister to get a deal. He has got a deal, and that deal includes unfettered access for those goods, which is why it will not be a threat to that trade. Quite rightly, where there are issues of concern—and particularly given the concern of the Chief Constable—we stand ready, both with the shadow Secretary of State and with others, to ensure that we work together to mitigate those concerns.

Luke Graham (Ochil and South Perthshire) (Con): We have heard this morning that the impact on trade with the rest of the world will be around 1%. The Government are in danger of losing and turning what was a practicality point into a political point unless they provide clarity. Will they release a list of indicative goods to which the EU customs code is likely to apply, to provide that clarity for DUP and Conservative colleagues?

Stephen Barclay: I am happy to write to my hon. Friend to see what further clarity can be provided, but I refer to the answer I gave a moment ago. These issues will apply at the end of the implementation period, as opposed to when the withdrawal agreement is ratified.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Speaker: I am very sorry to disappoint colleagues, but we are constrained for time and a very large number of Members want to speak in the Queen's Speech debate.

Business of the House

11.31 am

Valerie Vaz (Walsall South) (Lab): Will the Leader of the House please give us the forthcoming business?

The Leader of the House of Commons (Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg): The business for next week will be:

MONDAY 28 OCTOBER—Second reading of the Environment Bill followed by, debate on a motion under section 3(2) of the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc) Act 2019.

TUESDAY 29 OCTOBER—Second reading of the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill.

WEDNESDAY 30 OCTOBER—General debate on Grenfell.

THURSDAY 31 OCTOBER—Tributes to the Speaker's Chaplain followed by, general debate on spending on children's services.

FRIDAY 1 NOVEMBER—The House will not be sitting.

Valerie Vaz: I thank the Leader of the House for the forthcoming business. He is certainly getting his feet under the table. This is his third business statement of the week, or his fourth if we count his point of order on Saturday, which was a quasi-business statement.

The Leader of the House has previously mentioned that his godfather was Norman St John-Stevs, that architect of Select Committees and parliamentary scrutiny, and I am sure he will be guided by that as the Opposition seek more parliamentary scrutiny. I hope he will withdraw this comment:

"Those who voted for the Benn Act and the Cooper-Boles Act are on pretty thin ice when they complain about rushing Acts through".—[*Official Report*, 21 October 2019; Vol. 666, c. 739-40.]

The Benn Act has three sections and the Cooper-Boles Act has five sections, but the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill has 40 clauses and six schedules. Was he wrong to say that, and will he correct it?

I do not know whether you have seen it, Mr Speaker, but there is an outrageous tweet going round. I would like the Leader of the House to confirm that the tweet, from the official Conservative party account, claims the deal has been passed by Parliament and it calls for donations, presumably from those who have made money betting on the fall of the pound. He will have to explain this, because the tweet includes a letter signed by the Prime Minister. The deal has not been passed by the House; it has passed its Second Reading.

Opposition Members stand ready to provide consensus on a programme motion that provides for proper scrutiny. The Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 states that the House should be given 21 days to consider a new international treaty before we vote on it. Why did the Government suspend this requirement?

The hon. Member for Aberdeen North (Kirsty Blackman) asked the Leader of the House on Monday whether an impact assessment has been carried out on the deal, and he flippantly said:

"If you ask an economist anything, you get the answer you want".—[*Official Report*, 21 October 2019; Vol. 666, c. 742.]

I think the saying is, "If you lay all the economists end to end, they will not reach a conclusion." The idea is that the Government weigh the evidence and give the reasons for their decision.

The Chancellor is at it as well. He does not want to publish an economic assessment of the deal, claiming it is “self-evidently” in our economic interests. If Somerset Capital Management wants to open funds in Ireland, as it has done, presumably it will look at reports and analysis before it does that. More importantly, may we have a statement from the Chancellor, ahead of the Budget, on whether he will publish an economic assessment of the deal?

The Leader of the House has announced the Second Reading of the Environment Bill next week. The Queen’s Speech committed the UK to “protecting and improving” the environment, with targets among the most ambitious in the world, but the Bill has failed to deliver; in its 244 pages, not a single target has been mentioned. Aviation accounts for 6% of greenhouse gas emissions, but it is not mentioned in the Bill, even though this is the cheapest and fastest way to decrease one’s carbon footprint. He did not respond last week when I asked him whether the Government will rule out fracking once and for all in the Environment Bill. We need a debate on that National Audit Office report. It must not be down to my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mary Creagh) and her Committee to produce a report—we get only 10 minutes for that. The NAO report says the Government do not even know who has ultimate responsibility to pay for the decommissioning of fracking sites, and the Government’s plans for making sites safe after they have been used are unclear and untested.

We resolved and we asked questions to get access to the sectoral analysis, and I wish to draw the Leader of the House’s attention to two important sectors. The first figures have emerged showing the impact that Brexit uncertainty has had on UK research. The Royal Society’s analysis shows that the UK’s annual share of EU research funding has fallen by nearly a third since 2015, and the Royal Society’s president, Venki Ramakrishnan, has said:

“UK science has also missed out on around”—
£440 million—

“a year because of the uncertainty around Brexit.”

May we have an impact assessment on this important sector? The UK is the second largest legal services market in the world and the largest legal services sector in the EU. It contributes £27.9 billion to the UK economy and £4.4 billion in net exports. It relies, in part, on uniform market access the EU and the European economic area. What are the Government doing to protect this vital sector?

I am pleased that the Leader of the House has scheduled a debate on the tribute to the Speaker’s Chaplain; the Reverend Rose Hudson-Wilkin will become the first black woman bishop. Anyone who was in Speaker’s House on Tuesday will have heard Father Pat Browne sing “The Impossible Dream”. They have worked closely together and they have shown us that we are much more than the petty jealousies and rivalries as we work together and they support us in our work for the common good. I wonder whether the Leader of the House will consider expanding the tributes to include you, Mr Speaker, because everyone who was there yesterday in Speaker’s House will have heard the former leader of the Labour party and former Leader of the House, my right hon. Friend the Member for Derby South (Margaret Beckett), lay out your record dispassionately, and that must be read into *Hansard*. I am sure the Leader of the House will be aware of Guy Verhofstadt’s tweet saying

that he would rather be John Bercow than Jacob Rees-Mogg. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Paula Sherriff) and other hon. Members would like to seek a “flex extension” for you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Rees-Mogg: With regard to thin ice, supporters of the Cooper-Boles and Benn Acts know that it is the thinnest of thin ice for people to complain, having abused the constitution, in my view, to push those Bills through. The Benn Act, in particular, was a fundamental change of approach to our understanding of how the constitution works between the Executive and the legislature, so I am grateful to the right hon. Lady for giving me the opportunity to reiterate my comments: people should be consistent in the way they look at our constitutional processes, and not find that one thing suits them one day and the next day it does not.

The question of the Conservative party website probably falls outside my formal remit, but the deal has passed its Second Reading. That is a passage through Parliament and an indication of Parliament’s assent; it is not, however, an indication of the complete legislative programme. I do not think that is an unduly difficult concept, but if people reading and paying attention are now aware of that and wish to make donations, they will of course be very welcome. I am grateful to the right hon. Lady for raising that point so that I can give further publicity to the marvellous work that the Conservative party is doing. The point of it is that the deadline is the 31st, which we are all working towards. That deadline was set by the European Union, not by the British Government; the British Government accepted the European Union’s offer.

The right hon. Lady again raises the question of the CRAG Act. The issue with that Act is that it allows a treaty to be laid on the Table for 21 days, but it is then subject to no vote or legislative procedure. The agreement with the EU is being brought into legislation, which provides much more scrutiny than the minimum provided by the CRAG Act—really and truly. Under the CRAG Act, the Government do not have to provide any time for debating a treaty; they just have to lay it on the Table. Under this procedure, there would have been time, had the programme motion been carried, for debate on the issue.

The right hon. Lady questions the economic analysis that it is self-evidently in our interests to leave the European Union. This is a matter of routine economic debate. I think it is enormously in our interests to have the opportunity to be in charge of our own future—to allow the wisdom of this House to decide economic policy, rather than delegating it to tiresome bureaucrats, seems to me self-evidently to be in our interest. That is sufficient economic analysis. If Members think that poking through economic models to come out with gloomy forecasts will convince anybody, they have another think coming.

The right hon. Lady then went on to Monday’s business, the Environment Bill, which is indeed a very ambitious statement of environmental improvement. I should point out that the reason why the target is not in the Bill is that the target has already been brought into law—that was one of the last acts of the previous Government.

The right hon. Lady was concerned about Brexit uncertainty; we would not have any Brexit uncertainty if the Labour party had voted for the programme motion.

[*Mr Rees-Mogg*]

Brexit uncertainty would have vanished—it would have disappeared and gone into the ether—as the Bill would have become an Act, we would have left on 31 October, and we would have gone on to the broad, sunlit uplands that await us. Even as we enter November, there will be broad, sunlit uplands. If only the right hon. Lady had led her troops in favour of the programme motion. But now, because of the Opposition, there may be some uncertainty.

I am much looking forward to making tributes to the Speaker's Chaplain. I will not pre-empt them now, but your Chaplain, Mr Speaker, has been an absolute model of public service. I agree with the right hon. Lady that the ecumenism we have in the House is extraordinarily welcome. As a Catholic, I much enjoy the fact that we are allowed to use St Mary Undercroft for our services, as well as it being used for the services of the established Church. It is an enormous generosity on the part of the established Church to allow us to do that.

The reason why we are not having tributes to you, Mr Speaker, is that the matter was discussed and Mr Speaker modestly said that he felt that the tributes made on points of order were sufficient. However, I can give the House notice that in my statement next week I shall begin by making a tribute to Mr Speaker, so that we may do it in that context. I notice that right hon. and hon. Gentlemen are looking thoughtful and thinking about how they will incorporate into their questions a suitable tribute to Mr Speaker.

Finally, on Mr Verhofstadt—well, Mr Speaker, you are the lucky one.

Mr Speaker: I thank the Leader of the House for what he said, which is entirely accurate. I am not making the slightest representation on my own account and I would not dream of doing so—I am extremely satisfied—but I do want to thank the Leader of the House for what he said about the Speaker's Chaplain. I look forward to those tributes. I hope I can be forgiven for saying in respect of my appointment—Rose Hudson-Wilkin was my appointment—that there were plenty of snobs, bigots and racists who were against Rose being appointed at the time. I was right; they were wrong, and I am glad that she is now universally celebrated in this House, as she absolutely deserves to be. I warmly thank the Leader of the House for what he has said.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Now, a very serious parliamentarian—who shall we have? I call Sir William Cash.

Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con): On Tuesday, the vast majority of the Labour party, the Lib Dems and the SNP all voted against the Bill and therefore against sovereignty and the clause to protect UK vital national interests, on which the Prime Minister rightly insisted. Those clauses would protect the whole United Kingdom and voters from every political party from destructive European legislation, such as that on taxation and state aid, undermining UK enterprises, businesses, jobs and global trading. Will the Leader of the House join me in urging the entire House to support not only the Bill, but clauses 29 and 36, which will protect the sovereignty of the United Kingdom and voters from all political parties?

Mr Rees-Mogg: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that point and for the remarkable work that he has done over many decades to ensure that our sovereignty is protected. It is only a pity that the Bill did not manage to go into Committee, and therefore we were not able to debate the clauses that he thinks—and I agree with him—are so important to maintaining the national interest.

Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): We also look forward to joining in the tributes to you next week, Mr Speaker, and, if it is all right with the Leader of the House, perhaps the right hon. and hon. Ladies will be able to get a few words in, too.

I thank the Leader of the House for announcing the business for next week. Of course, it is much more notable for what is not included than for what is included, because, of course, there is no Committee stage of the withdrawal agreement Bill, which is now in some sort of Johnsonian purgatory. We are supposed to be leaving the European Union a week today, but we will be debating—probably appropriately—children's services. We were supposed to be leaving next Thursday—no ifs, no buts—but we are not. This date was “do or die” and “die in a ditch”. It was the very basis of the Prime Minister's Conservative leadership campaign. Of course, we will not be leaving next Thursday, and it will be somebody else's fault. Perhaps it is just me, but I cannot remember this ridiculous pledge being dependent on: “If only this pernicious remoaner Parliament lets us do it,” and, “If only these Nats were more reasonable.” It was an unconditional pledge, without caveats.

I know that the Leader of the House likes his surrender rhetoric; we have heard a lot about that in the past few weeks. Will he now say that this date is dead in a ditch and that it will not be met? The white flag will be raised. Halloween will go back to being the preserve—the exclusive preserve—of the ghouls and the spectres. This date is a dead parrot, Mr Speaker.

May I say ever so gently to my friends in the Labour party that if they get round the table to draw up another programme motion with the Tories—if they have a timetable for a Tory Brexit—their current precarious opinion poll ratings will be as nothing compared with what is about to come?

Can we have a debate about the responsibilities of the devolved institutions, perhaps just to outline to the Prime Minister exactly what they are? In referring to the withdrawal agreement yesterday, he said that

“the Scottish Parliament has no role in approving this deal.”—[*Official Report*, 23 October 2019; Vol. 666, c. 963.]

The only thing is that it has, and I know that the Leader of the House knows that because he has been looking at the withdrawal agreement. Annex A of the explanatory notes contains countless instances where legislative consent is required. For the first time ever, the Scottish and Welsh Parliaments will refuse to give that consent to a Bill. Will the Government care a whit? Probably not because they never do. What was all that rhetoric about—lead, not leave, the UK, and a partnership of equals? Is it not the case that if we are to secure the rights of our Parliament, we will have to become an independent nation?

Mr Rees-Mogg: During his comments, the hon. Gentleman made the remark, “If only the Nats were more reasonable.” Well, that is something to be looked

forward to, but I think it may be in the next world rather than in this that it finally comes. But the Nats in their unreasonableness are at least very straightforward; they want to stop Brexit and have always been very clear about that. Although I disagree with them, I respect their position. There is no false pretence in what they say. It is a position they hold. They are not using procedural mechanisms to try to frustrate what 17.4 million people voted for. They are absolutely upright and straightforward in their opposition. I disagree, but I respect the honesty of that position. And they are certainly not on thin ice because they have opposed Brexit the whole way through.

The responsibility of the devolved Administrations is a very important issue. This Government respect the rights and responsibilities of the devolved Administrations, but the devolved Administrations ought also to respect the rights of the United Kingdom Government. The conduct of treaties and the agreement of treaties is a matter for the United Kingdom Government. Some of the detailed implementing legislation may require legislative consent motions, but the two are different and separate concepts. Therefore, what the Prime Minister said was absolutely right.

The hon. Gentleman asked if 31 October is still the date on which we will leave. That is still the date set in law. We do not yet know what the European Union will do. The European Union knows that the request for an extension is not the Prime Minister's request. It is the request of the Benn Act. Her Majesty's Government do not want an extension. Let me say it again: Her Majesty's Government do not want an extension and are making every preparation to leave on 31 October.

Finally, the hon. Gentleman wondered what had happened to the withdrawal agreement Bill. I think the answer lies with Sir Percy Blakeney:

“They seek it here, they seek it there

Those parliamentarians seek it everywhere

Is it in heaven, or is it in hell?

That demmed, elusive Brexit Bill”.

Mr Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con): Whether Sir Percy Blakeney is searching for it or not, for all the consideration about, and requests for, extra time—some of which were quite reasonable about hours—when I listened to the radio this morning, I discovered the Labour party spokesperson saying that what Labour really wanted was weeks and weeks of further debate. Surely that can only be with one purpose: to stop Brexit altogether. I therefore wondered if we might have a debate in the coming week about the rationale and motivation of those who seek extra debate.

Mr Rees-Mogg: My right hon. Friend makes an extraordinarily good and valid point, which relates to what I was saying about the Scottish National party—that it is very straightforward about its position, which is that it does not want Brexit. The Labour party is in a more difficult position because some of its voters want Brexit, particularly in the midlands and the north of England, and some of its voters, especially in Islington, do not want Brexit. Labour Members are torn between the two and are therefore using all sorts of formulations to try to persuade us that they want that which they do not want. What they want is to frustrate Brexit, and that is what they are trying to do.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: It might be helpful to the House if I explain that I want to move on at 12.30 pm, so there is a premium on brevity from Back and Front Benchers alike.

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey) (Lab): It is a bit rich being lectured about abuse of the constitution by the Leader of the House, who was found to have illegally prorogued Parliament. Given that we have a Prime Minister who has a tortuous and difficult relationship with veracity, can we have a debate about standards in public life, one of which demands that the Prime Minister tell the truth?

Mr Rees-Mogg: The Prime Minister always tells the truth.

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): The British people voted to leave the European Union in a referendum and this House has given a Second Reading to the withdrawal agreement Bill. That cannot be changed; people either accept that or they do not, but it is going to be a treaty. May I ask my right hon. Friend why the Prime Minister does not just go to Brussels and sign the treaty—because it is endorsed by the British people and by our Second Reading—and why we cannot then have ratification by this House and the European Parliament at length? Could we then have a statement immediately after the Prime Minister has signed the treaty, saying that he has signed it?

Mr Rees-Mogg: My hon. Friend makes a very intriguing point. As far as I understand it, the problem—why it would not work—is that the treaty needs to be given effect in UK law for it to have effect from 1 November, or, strictly speaking, from 11 o'clock on 31 October. Therefore, although what he suggests is intriguing, I do not think it would achieve its intended objective.

Ian Mearns (Gateshead) (Lab): Will the machinery in the Government and main Opposition parties please quickly organise their nominations for the membership of the Backbench Business Committee so that we can get about our business? We have a number of applications with the Clerks that are, as yet, unrepresented to the Committee. We also, in the previous Session of Parliament, wrote to the Leader of House with some suggested topics for debates until the Committee was reconstituted, one of which I am glad to see will be on the Order Paper for next Thursday.

Mr Rees-Mogg: The hon. Gentleman, as always, makes an important point. I have already congratulated him on his unopposed re-election, but there are now more Members present than there were last time, when it was rather late, so I reiterate those congratulations. I will take up his point with the Government Chief Whip, and I am sure that the shadow Leader of the House will take it up with her equivalent.

Valerie Vaz *indicated assent*.

Dame Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham) (Con): This week I had the pleasure of having a meeting with the restoration and renewal team, particularly those who are writing the specification to ensure that we include facilities that are friendly to people with autism. May we have a debate on autism-friendly facilities? Perhaps we could also have an experiment in this House

[*Dame Cheryl Gillan*]

that would create a more relaxing environment for autistic visitors, including returning to waving our Order Papers in the air rather than clapping, which often causes distress to people with autism.

Mr Rees-Mogg: My right hon. Friend has probably been the leading politician in raising awareness of autism in this country. I must confess that as a Back-Bench MP, as I became more aware of it and the effect it had on my constituents, the more grateful I became for the work she has done. I will certainly take up her suggestion with the House's diversity and inclusion team, and indeed the restoration and renewal project, to see whether there is more that we can do to make autistic visitors feel more welcome. Orderly matters are for you, Mr Speaker, but I think that the feeling that clapping is not welcome is widely shared—although it may simply be, on my part, the sadness that nobody has ever bothered to clap me. [*Laughter.*]

Mr Speaker: I must say for the record that I did not think I would ever hear it from the lips of the right hon. Gentleman, but I am delighted to hear that he is signed up to the merits of diversity and inclusion. This is a very encouraging development indeed.

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): The Leader of the House talks of sunny uplands. He may not know this, but I came into politics hoping to bring sunny uplands to the people of this country and the people of my constituency. Actually, that did not include a Government and a country run by old Etonians, but that is just my personal prejudice.

In terms of next week's business, could the Leader of the House leverage in something that really does concern my constituents and constituents up and down the country—the safety of town centres? There is something wrong when people are now afraid to go into town centres at night. Could we look at how, through the police, more co-ordination or the revival of youth services, something could be done to make sure that ordinary people in this country going about their business enjoying themselves on a Friday or Saturday night do not go in fear?

Mr Rees-Mogg: I might quibble on the hon. Gentleman's general sunniness: it does not come across enormously to this side of the Chamber, but I may be missing something. He is absolutely right on town centres. Government policy is doing a great deal about this through the extra 20,000 police but also the £3.6 billion fund to help town centres. We all want to feel that town centres are places that people can go to safely and enjoy. If they were to visit North East Somerset, there are lots of town centres—I think of Keynsham, Radstock and Midsomer Norton—where they will have a very enjoyable and safe time.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: In pursuit of philosophy, poetry or prose, I call Sir John Hayes.

Sir John Hayes (South Holland and The Deepings) (Con): In far off times, in far away places, young men were sent to islands in the sun to witness the first

nuclear tests. A former Defence Secretary promised me—I take him at his word—that the Government would look again at the health condition and wellbeing of those nuclear test veterans, as well as a medal to celebrate and thank them for their service. Will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement to be brought to the House saying how the Veterans Agency that the Government have established will deal with those matters? Perhaps at the same time, we might hear whether that agency will be able to commission services from the NHS and elsewhere. It is time we gave to those who gave so much.

Mr Rees-Mogg: My right hon. Friend is right to raise that issue. I note that he had a commitment from a previous Secretary of State for Defence. If he is concerned that that commitment has not been fully delivered upon, I would be grateful if he brought it to my attention, so that it may be followed up. His points are good ones, and I will ensure that they are passed on.

Liz Saville Roberts (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC): The report of the Commission on Justice in Wales, chaired by former Lord Chief Justice Thomas, is published today. The Commission unanimously concludes that the people of Wales are let down by the present justice system and calls for a separate judiciary and control over legal aid, policing, prisons and probation. Can the Leader of the House find time for this House to debate how Westminster fails to serve Wales with justice?

Mr Rees-Mogg: I am a great believer in the United Kingdom, and Wales gets enormous benefits from being a part of the United Kingdom—a very significant part of it. The first half of my surname gives away an element of Welsh antecedence, which is one of the reasons I am so much in favour of the Welsh connection. For a specific debate of that kind, a suitable route is the Backbench Business Committee, but the right hon. Lady and I disagree fundamentally on the place of Wales in the United Kingdom, which is probably more at the heart of this than anything else.

Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con): Yesterday, the Education Committee published a report on children with special educational needs and found that parents face a titanic struggle to get the right support for their children and a postcode lottery. Can we have an urgent debate on the report's recommendations, which include a neutral role to help parents wade through the bureaucratic treacle?

Mr Rees-Mogg: The Government are doing a great deal on special educational needs, with an extra £780 million allocated specifically for it. As a constituency MP, I absolutely understand the reference to wading through treacle. One of the things we all do as constituency MPs is be a point of contact for people who have children with special educational needs. We somehow cut through the treacle to help them, and that is a role we all take very seriously. In terms of a debate, Chairmen of Select Committees are often allowed to make statements on Thursdays as part of Backbench Business.

Ian Mearns *indicated assent.*

Mr Rees-Mogg: I see the Chairman of the Backbench Business Committee nodding, and he will have heard my right hon. Friend's request for a debate.

Mr Jim Cunningham (Coventry South) (Lab): I know that the Leader of the House is quite well up on history. Will he talk to the Secretary of State for Defence about the names of the five new frigates? Since 1658, there has always been an HMS Coventry. Indeed, HMS Coventry was sunk in the Falklands war, with the loss of 19 crewmen and 30-odd injuries. Will he have a word with his right hon. Friend, to get one of those new frigates named HMS Coventry?

Mr Rees-Mogg: That is not formally within my remit, but I tend to think that if there has been a ship in the Royal Navy with the name of Coventry for such an extended period of our naval history, it would be a great pity if that tradition were not continued, so I will certainly take up the hon. Gentleman's point with my right hon. Friend.

Anne Milton (Guildford) (Ind): The long-term outlook for children who need mental health services is directly correlated to the time it takes for them to access that care. In response to the question from my right hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Robert Halfon) about special educational needs, the Leader of the House said that there was a lot of treacle to wade through. I applaud the Government for putting in extra money, but can we have a debate about what the Government can do to get rid of the treacle that those families who desperately need timely support have to wade through?

Mr Rees-Mogg: My right hon. Friend raises a concern that we all will have seen in our constituency surgeries, which is people trying to access mental health services in a timely manner. Funding for mental health services is increasing, which is important because it is more than treacle in this instance; it is a question of ensuring that the supply is there to meet the demand, and that is being tackled. It cannot be answered overnight, but it has universal support across the House.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: If everyone asks a single-sentence question, most colleagues will get in. If they don't, they won't.

Norman Lamb (North Norfolk) (LD): Will the Home Secretary make a statement on immigration policy, specifically in relation to scientists, and particularly the case of Furaha Asani, a young academic who came to this country with a full scholarship to do a PhD on infection and immunity and who has since done cardiovascular research at Leicester University? She is now being told that she will be deported to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where she has never even visited, let alone lived. This is surely scandalous, outrageous and inhumane, and is the last thing we should do if we are to invite and encourage scientists to this country.

Mr Rees-Mogg: In the interests of getting everybody in, it suffices to say that Home Office questions are on Monday.

David T. C. Davies (Monmouth) (Con): Can we have a debate please on access to emollients for people suffering from chronic skin diseases and conditions and about the fact that the NHS and the powers that be are not always aware of just how distressing these conditions can be when they set the rules?

Mr Rees-Mogg: That might be most suitable for an Adjournment debate, but it is obviously an issue that will be important to people suffering.

Martin Whitfield (East Lothian) (Lab): Will the Leader of the House join me in congratulating Grace Warnock, from Prestonpans Primary School, where tomorrow her "any disability" sign will be unveiled—her very first "Grace's Sign"? In the light of the many questions today, can we have a debate in Government time on people with invisible disabilities and the need to have a heart for the whole of our community?

Mr Rees-Mogg: That is one of the most charming points that has been raised in this House. We all have a responsibility to those with visible or invisible disabilities. I am not sure that Government time will allow, but I agree with the hon. Gentleman about raising that point more generally and about the need to lift that point in our general behaviour.

Sir Greg Knight (East Yorkshire) (Con): Can we have a debate on my Parking (Code of Practice) Act 2019, which became law in March, to find out why the Government are dragging their feet in introducing the code of practice mandated by that Act?

Mr Rees-Mogg: I have a feeling I supported my right hon. Friend in bringing that Act forward, so I will most certainly take this up with the relevant Secretary of State to find out why on earth there is any foot dragging, which is most uncharacteristic of this Government.

Mr Speaker: Single-sentence questions.

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): The Government expect and want to leave the EU at 11 o'clock next Thursday. Is the Leader of the House making provision for the House to sit on the Friday to deal with the inevitable disastrous consequences?

Mr Rees-Mogg: It would be more suitable to make provision for a celebrational party.

Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con): May we have, in the run-up to Armistice Day, a statement from the Government on the unconditional restoration of war widows pensions so that 265 of them who lost their pensions on remarriage will not have to divorce and remarry their spouses in order to get them reinstated?

Mr Rees-Mogg: My right hon. Friend raises a troubling point. There will be time for a debate. This is not a formal announcement, but the Treasury has announced, though not to the House, that the Budget will be on 6 November, in which case there would be time to debate it.

Bambos Charalambous (Enfield, Southgate) (Lab): Crime and antisocial behaviour in my constituency is on the rise, but community policing has been cut since 2010. Can we have a debate in Government time about the benefits of community policing and its funding?

Mr Rees-Mogg: I can reiterate the point that 20,000 police officers are being employed, and I hope that some of them will end in the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

Steve Brine (Winchester) (Ind): The armed forces covenant is incredibly important. I know the Prime Minister agrees with that and wants to bring forward legislation, but I notice that it was not in the Queen's Speech that we will be voting on tonight. Will the Leader of the House update us?

Mr Rees-Mogg: The Gracious Speech is brought to a conclusion by the statement that other measures will be laid before the House, and it is no secret that one of these other measures will relate to the armed forces covenant.

Thangam Debbonaire (Bristol West) (Lab): May we have a debate in Government time about our role in responding to the global crisis of forced migration, which the tragic events of this week have, sadly, highlighted once more?

Mr Rees-Mogg: The hon. Lady is right to raise the tragic events of yesterday. The thing that struck me so much was actually what the Leader of the Opposition said about how awful it must have been for the emergency services to come across that sight and how, one would have thought, that must affect them for the rest of their lives. This is indeed the most tragic event. The Home Secretary has made a commitment to keeping the House up to date. There was a statement yesterday, and I am sure there will be further statements. I think that the whole House sympathises with the hon. Lady in raising that point.

Eddie Hughes (Walsall North) (Con): Will the Leader of the House confirm, subject to the outcome of any general election, that he will time find after that general election to place before this House precisely the same deal that we have now?

Mr Rees-Mogg: My hon. Friend asks me a very difficult question. It is impossible to guarantee what might happen after a general election, because we do not know what will be in the various manifestos and we do not know what a new Parliament will decide to do. The deal, as it currently stands, has had its Second Reading. If there were to be an election, any Bills that had not completed their passage would, of course, fall, so there can be no guarantees of that kind.

Tracy Brabin (Batley and Spen) (Lab/Co-op): My constituent, Kay Wadsworth, and her husband became homeless because they sold their home to pay off their daughter's gambling debts. Kay tells me she believes that the stress contributed to her husband's untimely death. Sadly, their only daughter took her own life because of the pressure of gambling debts. May we have a debate in Government time about gambling and its impact on family life, including with reference to advertising directed at women?

Mr Rees-Mogg: Again, many of us have seen in constituency surgeries the most appalling cases of gambling addiction and also the very limited help that bookmakers sometimes give to people with gambling problems. I cannot promise a debate in Government time, although I am very sympathetic to the suggestion, but I am looking at the Chairman of the Backbench Business Committee—[*Interruption.*] He is nodding—ish—but I do not think he is promising anything.

Mr Marcus Fysh (Yeovil) (Con): Two residents of my local hospice were sent home from it this week because of the trustees' decision to close it, and the situation has really upset the whole community. May we have a debate on how trustees must observe strict codes of transparency, accountability and professionalism so that we can get this decision reversed?

Mr Rees-Mogg: That is exactly the sort of issue that should be brought to an Adjournment debate, with reference to the specific trustees and to the trust concerned. Trustees have fiduciary duties that they must follow.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): Recently there has been a very serious escalation in the Algerian Government's crackdown on churches. Middle East Concern has reported that four churches, including the 700-member Full Gospel Church of Tizi Ouzou and a 500-member Protestant church in Makouda, were given orders to close. The churches are all members of the Protestant Church of Algeria, which received official recognition in 2011 and is entitled to register its congregations. Will the Leader of the House agree to a statement or a debate on this matter?

Mr Rees-Mogg: The Government are gravely concerned by reports of church closures in Algeria, including the recent closures to which the hon. Gentleman refers. The Government have been active in raising cases with the Algerian authorities, including at senior levels, underlining the importance of freedom of religion or belief, as set out in Algeria's own constitution, and the need for Algeria to ensure that its laws and practices are consistent with the constitution. The promotion and protection of religious freedom is a high priority for the UK in all its international engagement.

Mr Mark Harper (Forest of Dean) (Con): The Leader of the House has set out his wish that the deal we have secured does not get bogged down for weeks and months. The Prime Minister has also said that—and I agree. If, as a result of the European Union's decision, when it arrives, about the length of an extension, an opportunity presents itself to get that excellent deal ratified more swiftly, will the Leader of the House ensure that a Minister, if not the Prime Minister, can come to the House at an early opportunity to update the House about the Government's plans?

Mr Rees-Mogg: The Government will, of course, keep the House updated on any developments, measures or happenings that take place at any time in relation to the European Union. The Prime Minister has spent almost 15 hours at the Dispatch Box, and he has therefore been most assiduous in answering right hon. and hon. Members' questions.

Ged Killen (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (Lab/Co-op): I know that the Government are not minded to change the laws on firework sales, but as it is this time of year, may we have a debate on the possibility of devolving to the Scottish Government the necessary powers to ban the sale of fireworks?

Mr Rees-Mogg: As I have said before, we need to have a balance. People enjoy fireworks and we do not want to be po-faced enders of fun for one and all.

We want to allow our constituents to do things that they enjoy, so I am not in favour of extending regulations at every opportunity.

Philip Davies (Shipley) (Con): Alopecia UK is based in my constituency. May we have a debate on wig provision in the NHS, which I have to say is completely and utterly inadequate and causes a great deal of distress to victims of hair loss?

Mr Rees-Mogg: Mr Speaker, I understand that some candidates to take over your role are concerned about wig provision, albeit I believe of a different kind.

My hon. Friend makes a serious point. Having raised it in the Chamber, I would encourage him to press for further debates, and particularly to ask a question of the Health Secretary when he is next at the Dispatch Box.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. I call Sir Bernard Jenkin. *[Interruption.]* That is very gracious of the hon. Gentleman. I was trying to do two things at once, and not very successfully. I call Ruth Smeeth.

Ruth Smeeth (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Lab): Stoke-on-Trent City Council signed a 25-year deal with Solarplicity for a community energy scheme and thousands signed up, but in August Solarplicity went into administration. The customers were transferred to Toto Energy, but Toto went into administration last night. May we have a debate in Government time on community energy schemes because, good as they are, local authorities have obligations to carry out due diligence before they sign up?

Mr Rees-Mogg: Fortunately, the hon. Lady has made that point at exactly the right time, because the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy was in the Chamber to hear it, so it has already been raised at the right level. The hon. Lady is absolutely right to say that local authorities have an obligation to carry out due diligence and it would be absolutely remiss of them not to do so.

Sir Bernard Jenkin (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): May I invite my right hon. Friend to urge the Prime Minister to bring forward a motion under the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011 for a general election? Not only is it usual, if the Government cannot obtain their business, for Parliament to be dissolved and to let the people decide on the matter, but this would allow those who profess their faith and belief in representative democracy to demonstrate it, or to demonstrate that they do not actually believe in representative democracy at all.

Mr Rees-Mogg: My hon. Friend's constitutional expertise is second to none in this House, and he sets out the constitutional norms completely correctly.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab) *indicated dissent*.

Mr Rees-Mogg: I think that the hon. Gentleman wants my hon. Friend's vote, so he ought not to shake his head like that.

My hon. Friend's point about the Fixed-term Parliaments Act is absolutely spot on. We have had such a vote twice, and it is absolutely fascinating how many people

say they would like an election, but disappear when they are offered the opportunity for one—they do not go for it. I am absolutely delighted that the shadow Chancellor has just taken his seat, because I have some quite helpful quotations from him on this matter.

Steve McCabe (Birmingham, Selly Oak) (Lab): It has been reported that after years of campaigning, the drug Orkambi will now be available to people, such as my young constituent Jemima Bennett, which is wonderful news. I am sure that hon. Members would like the chance to congratulate the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, so will he be making a statement on that?

Mr Rees-Mogg: This is the most wonderful news. As someone who has campaigned for a different drug for a constituent, I know how pleased MPs are when their constituents get what they need. Health questions will be next Tuesday, and I hope that there will be praise for the Secretary of State on that occasion, given the work he has done that has led to this happening.

Sir Hugo Swire (East Devon) (Con): The ever-closer relationship between Russia and Turkey should be of concern to us all, not least because of our commitment to mutual defence under article 5 of the NATO treaty. Given that London is due to host a NATO summit on the first weekend of December, will there be the opportunity for a debate on NATO and the implications of the ever-closer relationship between Russia and Turkey?

Mr Rees-Mogg: Yesterday, I was at a memorial service for the late Professor Norman Stone, who was one of the first people to suggest that Russia and Turkey may have a closer relationship post the Soviet Union—his prediction showed great foresight. This is obviously an important matter. My right hon. Friend asks for a debate at the time of the NATO summit. I do not want to promise anything at this stage, but there are normally statements or debates around events of such significance.

Mr Paul Sweeney (Glasgow North East) (Lab/Co-op): As next week's business is extraordinarily light, will the Leader of the House consider asking the Transport Secretary to make a statement on the forthcoming sale of First Bus across the UK? What provisions can be made with the Treasury to finance local authorities that are purchasing the assets of FirstGroup across the UK to create a municipal bus service?

Mr Rees-Mogg: I must disagree with the hon. Gentleman's principal point—the business next week is extremely heavy.

Andrew Jones (Harrogate and Knaresborough) (Con): Many councils across the north of England, including mine in Harrogate, are supporting the northern forest with their own tree-planting programmes. May we have a debate to explore what the Government can do to support and accelerate that programme and all the environmental benefits that will flow from it?

Mr Rees-Mogg: My hon. Friend is a great champion of Harrogate, which is one of the most beautiful spa towns in the country. We could have that debate on Second Reading of the Environment Bill, which makes up a major part of next Monday's business.

Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger (Bridgwater and West Somerset) (Con): May we have a debate in Government time about smart motorways? Nobody understands whether those things are safe or good value for money—or, indeed, whether they work. Is it now time to discuss their future?

Mr Rees-Mogg: My hon. Friend and near neighbour tempts me because I suffer from delays on the M4 every week when going down to Somerset due to preparations for a smart motorway. This issue has been pretty well discussed, and we have literally just had Transport questions, which might have been the time to have raised it.

Jeff Smith (Manchester, Withington) (Lab): This week, the Health and Social Care Committee published a good report on drugs policy. May we have a full debate in Government time on the welcome recommendation that we move to a health-focused and harm-reduction approach to drug policy?

Mr Rees-Mogg: As I said to the Chair of the Education Committee, my right hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Robert Halfon), there is the opportunity for Chairs of Committees to make statements or to apply to the Backbench Business Committee for a debate.

Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley) (Lab): What is the point of smart motorways? We should have a statement or explanation in the House from the Transport Secretary, because even the head of Highways England has said that smart motorways are dangerous and confusing—they certainly are; I use the M4 twice a week. The Leader of the House should take the request from the hon. Member for Bridgwater and West Somerset (Mr Liddell-Grainger) a lot more seriously.

Mr Rees-Mogg: I saw the comments from Highways England that were reported in the newspaper today, and I am aware of the concerns. I merely point out that Transport questions were held earlier, and this is a matter for the Transport Secretary.

Jeremy Lefroy (Stafford) (Con): May we have a debate on support from the UK for the people of Burundi, where not only is there the highest level of malnutrition in the world, but people face the potential threat of Ebola coming across the border?

Mr Rees-Mogg: My hon. Friend is right to raise that pressing issue. Malnutrition is a major cause of preventable deaths, and the underlying cause behind 45% of child deaths and 20% of maternal deaths. The UK has been a leader on nutrition since it hosted the first Nutrition for Growth summit in 2013. Since 2015, the Department for International Development has reached 60.3 million people with nutrition services in 25 countries, including Bangladesh, Somalia, Burma, Ethiopia and Yemen. The next Nutrition for Growth summit is set for 2020. Ebola has caused devastation across Africa, and the bravery of frontline responders is to be celebrated. They are working tirelessly to help to save the lives of others. The UK has been a major supporter of the response to the outbreak since it began, and it has provided significant funding, technical expertise and political support. We are pleased to note that 10 African countries, including Burundi, have this week endorsed a cross-border

collaboration framework for Ebola preparation and response, and we will continue to support them in their efforts to contain the outbreak.

John Cryer (Leyton and Wanstead) (Lab): Knife crime in England has now reached its highest level for decades, and many Members spend a lot of time dealing with its terrible consequences. May we have a regular update on the issue from the Home Secretary or the Minister for Security?

Mr Rees-Mogg: The hon. Gentleman makes a serious point. All Members are concerned by the rise in knife crime, hence the need for extra police. I suggest that regular questions to the Home Secretary, both written and oral, are put down in the normal way to ensure that the House is frequently updated on this issue.

Ross Thomson (Aberdeen South) (Con): I recently visited the ARCHIE Foundation at the Royal Aberdeen Children's Hospital. It does amazing work to help my constituents and parents who are going through difficult and distressing times by offering emotional support, accommodation and other facilities. Will my right hon. Friend agree to a debate on what more we can do to support amazing charities such as the ARCHIE Foundation?

Mr Rees-Mogg: We are fortunate in this country to have an extraordinary range of charities that ensure that almost every aspect of life is considered, with some help and protection offered. This sounds like the type of general debate that would be suitable for consideration by the Backbench Business Committee, rather than Government business.

Nic Dakin (Scunthorpe) (Lab): My Small Business Saturday awards are an opportunity to celebrate the range and diversity of local small businesses. May we have a debate on the contribution that small businesses make to local communities and the economy?

Mr Rees-Mogg: I agree that the contribution made by small businesses to the economy is fundamental, and our economy grows because of the work of entrepreneurs. If the hon. Gentleman stays in the Chamber a little longer, we will come to the Queen's Speech debate on the economy, in which I am sure his contribution would be enormously welcome and valued.

Dr Matthew Offord (Hendon) (Con): May we have a debate in Government time on the Treasury's plan to extend the off-payroll working rules in the private sector? Many freelance and contract workers in the public sector have had those rules foisted upon them, resulting in higher taxes, even though they do not receive benefits such as employment benefit.

Mr Rees-Mogg: People have come to many of us, as constituency MPs, with concerns about the off-payroll working rules. I think we must assume that most people are honest, and there must be a balance between ensuring that tax is collected correctly and not making life impossibly bureaucratic.

Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP): A constituent told me that at around 4.40 on Sunday afternoon a firework was fired sideways into a park in Pollockshields. It landed and exploded within 5 metres of a group of

children and a toddler with its mother. Does the Leader of the House understand how upset my constituents are with his flippant response to concerns about fireworks? By way of recompense, will he secure a debate in Government time to discuss the matter further?

Mr Rees-Mogg: No, I do not understand—there is a balance. We could ban absolutely everything and have no fun, which is basically what socialists always want to do.

Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con): Following my question to the Prime Minister about the pro-Pakistani groups marching on the Indian High Commission on Sunday, will the Home Secretary make a statement about policing arrangements? There are all sorts of rumours about bans, rerouting the march and so on. While I am on my feet, may I wish Shubh Deepavali to everyone celebrating Diwali on Sunday?

Mr Rees-Mogg: The Home Secretary will be answering Home Office questions on Monday, when there will be the opportunity to question her.

Ian Murray (Edinburgh South) (Lab): May we have a statement on why the Government are refusing to produce an economic impact assessment on the withdrawal agreement Bill? If it is the case, as the Leader of the House said, that there are broad sunny uplands to Brexit, why is he so reluctant to prove it?

Mr Rees-Mogg: The idea that economic models prove anything is for the birds.

Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab): According to Wikipedia, the Leader of the House has an unusually shaped seat, but like many of our seats, it contains a good music festival. The pipeline to good music festivals are good-quality grassroots music venues, so may we have a debate about why the Government are specifically not allowing rate relief for grassroots music venues when they are for institutions such as pubs and high street businesses?

Mr Rees-Mogg: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will, I think, be here fairly shortly, and he is the right person to answer on rates—[*Interruption.*] He is in the Chamber already—how could I have missed my right hon. Friend? He is sitting quietly at the end of

the Treasury Bench and will have heard that question. He may well include a response in his all-encompassing speech.

Gareth Snell (Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Lab/Co-op): Given that, all too often, international humanitarian tragedies suffer from “out of sight, out of mind”, will the Leader of the House arrange for the Foreign Secretary to update the House on the ongoing issues in Kashmir, and specifically what actions we are taking as a permanent member of the UN Security Council? Warm words and solidarity are not having the effect that is needed in that part of the world.

Mr Rees-Mogg: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to raise such an issue in the House. He is also right that “out of sight, out of mind” is a problem, and using all the available mechanisms within this House—no doubt you, Mr Speaker, will help him to do so—is the right way to go about addressing it. I urge him to use them all and to appeal for urgent questions, and for Adjournment and Backbench Business debates. That will ensure that the matter is in sight and in mind.

Mrs Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab): The winner of the South Wales police and crime commissioner partnership award was a multi-agency suicide review and response group made up of South Wales police, Public Health Wales and Bridgend County Borough Council, which came together to look at early intervention for those at risk of suicide. May we have a debate on the importance of such partnerships and early interventions in preventing suicide, particularly among the male population, which is particularly vulnerable.

Mr Rees-Mogg: It is not open to me just to say yes to requests that come through, but that is the type of request that deserves the most earnest consideration. The success in reducing suicide is of great importance and it is about multi-agency working. We remember the problems that there were in the hon. Lady's constituency not that long ago. This improvement ought to receive wider publicity so that other councils can follow the same path.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. I am sorry to disappoint remaining colleagues, but as I indicated earlier, the debate is very heavily subscribed and we must now proceed with it.

Point of Order

Mr Sam Gyimah (East Surrey) (LD): On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: Oh, very well. Very briefly.

Mr Gyimah: Record numbers of people are watching the Parliament channel these days, because they are taking an interest in the proceedings of this House. Could you explain to us, Mr Speaker, the difference between a Bill passing Second Reading in the House of Commons and a Bill passing Parliament? It has come to my attention that the Government are presenting the Second Reading of the withdrawal agreement Bill as having passed Parliament. Some would describe that as fake news.

Mr Speaker: The difference is simple. A Bill can get a Second Reading, but that does not make it law. It simply means that it has approval for its general principles. Approval, in the ultimate sense, means the passage of a Bill on to the statute book, which requires it to go through Committee, Report stage and to secure a Third Reading. That is the difference and I hope that that satisfies the palate of the hon. Gentleman.

Debate on the Address

[6TH DAY]

Debate resumed (Order, 23 October)

Question again proposed,

That an Humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, as follows:

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.

The Economy

Mr Speaker: I inform the House that I have selected amendment (g) in the name of the Leader of the Opposition, which will be moved by the shadow Chancellor at the start of the debate, and amendment (h) in the name of the leader of the Scottish National party, which will be moved formally at the end of the debate.

12.34 pm

John McDonnell (Hayes and Harlington) (Lab): I beg to move amendment (g), at end add

'but respectfully regret that the Gracious Speech fails to rebuild the UK economy, tackle the housing crisis, further pushes public services into crisis and contains no vision to bring this divided country back together; call on the Government to bring forward a plan to rebuild the economy so that it works in the interest of the many, not just handing out rewards to those at the top; and further call on the Government to address the climate emergency by bringing forward a green industrial revolution to decarbonise the economy and boost economic growth.'

Mr Speaker, may I just say this? This is the last time that you will be chairing a day of the Queen's Speech debate, and I may not get the opportunity in other tribute debates to say this. It has been a privilege to serve in this House while you have been Speaker. Thank you.

I listened to the Prime Minister introducing the Queen's Speech. What I always find most startling about the Prime Minister is his ability to create his own truth and, when confronted with any reality that contradicts his truth, to bluster his way through. I believe he believes that, with a combination of bluster and the occasional pretentious use of Latin, he can always avoid confronting reality or answering for it. So, if we can achieve anything in today's debate, let us at least try to confront the reality of what some of our people face and assess whether the announcements in the Queen's Speech in any way meet those challenges.

On the economy, the Prime Minister referred in his speech to "economic success" and "free market success". He also said:

"in important respects this country is the greatest place to live and to be—the greatest place on earth."—[*Official Report*, 14 October 2019; Vol. 666, c. 19.]

I think many of us feel that way, but I just wish it was the same for everyone. For so many of our people, tragically, it is not at the moment. There is a multitude of statistics evidencing just how far the Prime Minister is out of touch and how he appears to have no understanding of what our people have gone through over nearly a decade. Let me start with three stark

examples of what the austerity the Conservative party has inflicted on our people has meant and continues to mean, and which I deeply regret were not addressed in the Queen's Speech.

First, on infant mortality and child poverty, earlier this month, the *British Medical Journal* published a research project into infant mortality. Declines in infant mortality have been reversed for the first time in 100 years. The research found that, between 2014 and 2017, there were 570 excess infant deaths. The research concluded that 172 of those infant deaths were associated with the increase in child poverty. Out there, there are nearly 200 families who are grieving as a result of the Government's austerity policies. There is nothing in the Queen's Speech—nothing—that will tackle the poverty affecting 14 million of our people, and nothing that will tackle the poverty that 4.5 million of our children are being brought up in, or help the 125,000 children who are forced to live in temporary accommodation. There is nothing to address the £3 billion funding gap local councils face in trying to provide the services needed to support those very families. I will not forget, and many Labour Members will not forget, that this is a Government who have closed over 500 Sure Start centres, the very institutions we founded to support those families and to prevent infant mortality and morbidity on the scale we have seen.

Let me take the second example of what the Tories have done to our people. Earlier this month, the Office for National Statistics reported a record number of deaths of homeless people in England and Wales in 2018. Last year, 726 homeless people died. That represents the highest year-to-year increase since data was first collected. The Government have cut £1 billion from support to the homeless since 2010, so it is hardly surprising that rough sleeping has risen by almost 165%. In London, rough sleeping has more than tripled since 2010. Again, there is nothing—nothing—in the Queen's Speech to tackle the scourge of homelessness.

My third example is the distance between what the Government claim and what employment and wages are like in this country. The Prime Minister claimed that “we have unemployment at its lowest level since 1974”.—[*Official Report*, 14 October 2019; Vol. 666, c. 22.]

The reality is this: more than 3 million people are missing from the unemployment rate because they report themselves as “economically inactive,” we have over 2.5 million people counted as employed even though they work fewer than 15 hours a week and there are 3.7 million people in insecure work.

Nick Smith (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab): The Government have received over £4 billion from the mineworkers' pension scheme, despite not having paid a penny in. With retired miners getting by on a pension of, on average, £84 a week, does my right hon. Friend agree that it is time for the Government to listen? This Queen's Speech should announce a review of the scheme so that miners and their widows get a fair deal.

John McDonnell: Madam Deputy Speaker, I know that large numbers of Members are seeking to make speeches—I will take a number of interventions, but I will protect the time as best I can for others to speak.

Let me give my hon. Friend this assurance on that critical point: in our last Labour party manifesto, we promised that we would review the mineworkers' pensions

scheme—it is dear to my heart, because I was one of the administrators of the scheme soon after I left university, when I worked for the RMT—and we will review it because we want to lift miners and many miners' widows out of the poverty that they now live in. We give that commitment.

I mentioned insecure work. There are now about 900,000 people on zero-hour contracts—up by 100,000 from a year ago—and real wages are still below pre-crisis levels. The Government like to talk about wage rises and wages rising at their fastest rate in a decade. It is a bizarre claim, because the Government have been in charge of the economy for the last decade, suppressing wages all through that period. According to the *Financial Times*, the UK was the only major economy where growth returned but wages fell. According to TUC calculations, since 2010, average pay has also fallen for 7.7 million low to middle-income earners, and 11.5 million middle to high-income earners. It is extraordinary that that was not even acknowledged in the Queen's Speech—that we now have a low-pay, insecure-job economy that this Government have created over the last decade.

Ian Murray (Edinburgh South) (Lab): What my right hon. Friend's wonderful speech is proving is that Government priorities make a difference. The previous Labour Government lifted millions and millions of children out of poverty, and the Government's priorities since 2010 have plunged them all back in again.

John McDonnell: Let me put on record that we pay tribute to Gordon Brown for the work that he did during that period. He committed himself to lifting children out of poverty and, my God, he delivered it.

David T. C. Davies (Monmouth) (Con): I am listening with great interest to what the right hon. Gentleman is saying. I do not share his perception of the economy and I am wondering whether he still believes that Venezuela offers a better economic model than that of my hon. Friends on the Front Bench.

John McDonnell: I said that I would limit interventions, but I accept that they can often be a job application, so I do not want to limit this job creation scheme that we are creating here—I wish the hon. Gentleman well in his future career.

The scale of human suffering and hardship inflicted on our people over the last nine years is never mentioned by the Government. The reason is that they would have to explain why our people have endured so much. They would have to admit that austerity was never—as we have said, and let us repeat it—an economic necessity; it was always a political choice. The choice the Tories took was that the bankers—their friends, many now populating the Government Front Bench—would never have to pay for the crisis that they had caused through their speculation. Instead, they determined—[*Interruption.*] The Chancellor of the Exchequer says, “You caused it”—this is the man who was selling the CDOs through Deutsche Bank. Deutsche Bank was a major contributor to the economic crisis that we faced—they have a nerve coming here blaming others, when they caused it. They determined that they would not pay for the crisis, but that the rest of our society would. They also took the view that they would never let a crisis go to waste,

[John McDonnell]

so they used it as the excuse to cut the taxes of the corporations and the rich. They have made £47 billion in cuts to our public services and, on their plans, they will have given away £110 billion in tax cuts to the corporations by 2022.

Kevin Hollinrake (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): The right hon. Gentleman pointed to the fact that it was this Government who bailed out the banks when, actually, the Asset Protection Agency was set up by the Labour Government.

John McDonnell: I say to the hon. Gentleman, who I have a lot of time for: it is best to listen to what I have said before he intervenes, because he did not, I think, accurately report what I said.

Ben Bradley (Mansfield) (Con): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

John McDonnell: No, I will press on. The hon. Gentleman will have the opportunity to speak.

The Government have made £47 billion in cuts to our public services, they are giving away £110 billion, and to ramp up the profits of these corporations, they have sold out our public services to them: £9 billion-worth of contracts in health and social care were handed over to private companies this year. Outsourcing under this Government has been exposed this week for the racket it is. A report by the think tank Reform showed that outsourcing contracts wasted £14.3 billion of taxpayers' money in the last three years. Nothing in this Queen's Speech even acknowledges these rip-offs, let alone promises action to reverse them.

I found nothing either in the Queen's Speech that addresses the scandal of the industrial scale of tax avoidance and money laundering that is staining the reputation of our country. Today, Transparency International published its report "At Your Service", which shows how "UK service providers have been involved in some of the most egregious cases of corruption in our time."

From the looks of this Queen's Speech, the Government will continue to do nothing about it. The registration of overseas entities Bill, which will create a register of controlling owners of overseas legal entities that own UK land, is nowhere to be seen in the Queen's Speech, three and a half years after the Government first committed to it.

We are at the tail end of what has been nearly a lost decade for our country—a near decade of the grotesque mismanagement of our economy by successive Conservative Chancellors; I am on my third in three years. The New Economics Foundation has shown that austerity has suppressed growth by almost £100 billion—that is more than £3,600 per household. After nine years of stuttering growth, GDP even went backwards in the last quarter. Public debt was meant to peak at 70% of GDP in 2013-14, only for it to rise to 86% of GDP in 2018-19. For all their stale claims of reducing the deficit, the reality is that the Conservatives have simply shifted that burden on to the shoulders of headteachers, councillors, NHS managers and police chiefs. These are the people who have had to make the tough decisions, not Ministers, and who have had to face up to the undermining of their services by these cuts.

Part of the testament to the Government's failed fiscal strategy has been the litany of fiscal rules, invented, published, broadcast widely and then quietly and embarrassingly dropped. Within weeks, we hear that a new fiscal rule—probably largely stolen from us—will be announced in the Budget. I should say that we may have a new fiscal rule because we cannot be sure: only yesterday, despite the Chancellor announcing the Budget and its date, other Government sources were briefing that it was off. We have a Chancellor whose staff are sacked and escorted by armed guard out of their office, without his being told, and now Cummings is possibly cancelling his Budget. I give a word of advice to the Chancellor and his colleagues: get a grip on Cummings before he does any more damage to our country.

Apart from Budget making, one of the vitally important responsibilities of the Chancellor is to ensure that the Government and this House have the fullest information before them when considering legislation or issues impacting our economy. It is therefore extraordinary, and I think a dereliction of the Chancellor's duties, that he—unlike his predecessors—has refused to publish a detailed economic impact assessment of the Government's Brexit proposals. Studies of similar proposals have indicated a hit to the growth of our economy of between 3.4% and 8.1%. Even the lower range of that hit will have a severe impact on our people's jobs and living standards, and on the economy overall. Surely it is only reasonable for Members to have a degree of information and analysis from the Chancellor's Department before they make this momentous decision.

In their most recent manifestos, both the main parties committed themselves to respecting the outcome of the referendum. We do and we will, but, as we made clear on Tuesday, the House will not be bounced into an unrealistic and unfeasible timetable for considering and scrutinising such a critically important piece of legislation. That is why the Leader of the Opposition and Labour's Chief Whip met the Prime Minister yesterday to offer a genuine compromise and to agree on a proper timetable that will allow, in the normal manner, proper scrutiny of the Bill and the opportunity to promote, debate and determine amendments. The Opposition have set out their views on the parts of the Bill that it wishes to amend, but of course we accept that it will be the House that decides. As always, we must accept the will of the House, even if, on many occasions, we disagree with it. It is a pity that the Prime Minister does not adopt that attitude.

There is an opportunity here for us to demonstrate to our people that Parliament can and does work. If we can demonstrate civility and a rational process in the House, we may be able to help to overcome some of the division and, indeed, bitterness that have set in within our own society.

Maria Caulfield (Lewes) (Con): I thank the shadow Chancellor for giving way. It is very generous of him.

The Labour party's policy of a four-day week will reduce the earnings of the poorest workers in the country. Those are not my words, but the words of a Labour peer, Lord Skidelsky.

John McDonnell: Lord Skidelsky's report suggests a 32-hour week—not a four-day week—but one without loss of pay, which will be achieved over a decade as a result of our investment in the economy to increase productivity.

Lilian Greenwood (Nottingham South) (Lab): My right hon. Friend is making an excellent speech. Does he agree that perhaps one of the reasons why the Government are so anxious not to publish an economic impact assessment of their Brexit proposals is that it would show that our economy will suffer under their hard Brexit, that our public finances will suffer under their hard Brexit and that the promises that they have made about investment in our police, our schools and our health service could not possibly be met under those Brexit proposals?

John McDonnell: Although the Government will not publish their economic impact assessment, others have made such assessments and have concluded that a hard Brexit could cripple our economy in the short and long term. We need to have a proper debate in the House to consider the consequences and discuss what amendments can be made to protect our economy.

Albert Owen (Ynys Môn) (Lab): My hon. right Friend is absolutely right about those economic impact studies. Has he had any conversations with the Welsh and Scottish Governments about the huge impact that a border in the Irish sea will have on Welsh and Scottish communities? It appears that the Government have not done so.

John McDonnell: Is it not interesting that virtually every Government apart from this one are willing to undertake an impact assessment of some sort? What does that display? I am not usually a suspicious person, but I think we have our suspicions.

Let me say to the Chancellor that he has a role to play in shouldering his responsibility to provide us all with the fullest possible information on the basis of which we can make our decisions. That means publishing a full economic impact assessment and doing it fast, so that we can have a proper debate.

As the Government have a working majority of minus 45, it is obvious that the Queen's Speech is little more than a pretty crude election stunt. In all their various comments in the House and the media, the Prime Minister and the Chancellor have depicted their programme as "the people's priorities". As a political artisan, I can admire a good turn of phrase—

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen): Apprentice. [*Laughter.*]

John McDonnell: I have been here for 22 years. That is a long apprenticeship—and sometimes the apprentice can point out the truth as well.

As I say, I admire a good turn of phrase, and I congratulate the creatives in whatever PR agency the Conservative Party now uses for coming up with that one—it must have tested very well in the focus groups—but that is all it is: a slogan, a turn of phrase. The reality, as demonstrated in the Queen's Speech, is that after something approaching a decade of harsh and brutal austerity, a few cynical publicity stunt commitments to paper over the massive cuts in our NHS, schools, policing and care will go nowhere near what is needed. A slogan will not suffice.

People know—and this is relevant to the Brexit debate—that if the economy hits the buffers again, as a result of Brexit, economic mismanagement by the Tories or both,

and when a choice must be made by the Tories about who will pay, they will always protect their own: the corporations and the rich.

Chris Ruane (Vale of Clwyd) (Lab): Before he ends his speech, will my right hon. Friend say something about the impact of future cuts on women? Over the past 10 years, 80% of austerity has fallen on their backs.

John McDonnell: I met members of the Women's Budget Group again yesterday, and they said that 86% of cuts were falling on women. Our society remains patriarchal, and many caring responsibilities still fall to them. Cuts in social care undermine the basis of support for many elderly people in particular, and that falls on the shoulders of women. This is what austerity has done over the last nine years. We are committed to providing free personal care for everyone, and that is what we will do.

Tom Tugendhat (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con): The right hon. Gentleman has said that the Conservatives look after their own, and I agree with him. That is why we have cut the taxes of 32 million working people. That is why we are cutting taxes on businesses that are generating growth and employment for the people of this country.

John McDonnell: Tragically for so many at the lower levels, all those tax cuts have been cancelled out by cuts in benefits and the introduction of universal credit. Some of the most vulnerable, particularly disabled people, have been forced to the wall as a result of the brutal implementation of the work capability assessment and the scrapping of the independent living fund. There is a litany of attacks on ordinary working people that Labour Members should consider a disgrace.

Ben Bradley: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Kevin Hollinrake: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

John McDonnell: No, I will press on. I understand that we are short of time.

The Tories will indeed protect their own. Under them, it will always be the people who are burdened with cuts in services and pay and benefit freezes. What people need now is real change. They need real change in our economy, so that we can face up to the existential threat of climate change through Labour's green industrial revolution; real change to provide the scale of resources that our NHS, our schools and our police services need, funded by a fair taxation system in which we will tackle tax evasion and avoidance; real change to bring forward the scale of investment that our infrastructure needs to compete in the global economy and meet the challenges of the fourth industrial revolution; and real change to ensure that our people share in the prosperity that we will create through decent wages, ownership and an end to the rip-off of privatisation.

Only a Labour Government can bring about the real change that our country needs after a lost decade under the Tories. What does that say? It says that it is time for a Labour Government.

12.59 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Sajid Javid): I have been sitting here for the last 30 minutes or so listening to the shadow Chancellor, and I have to say, “The brass neck of the shadow Chancellor!” No mention of the jobs boom and rising wages; no mention of bringing the deficit down by four fifths; no mention of our huge investment in public services; and no support at all for this Queen’s Speech, which delivers on the people’s priorities and moves this country forward from a decade of recovery to a decade of renewal. It is a Queen’s Speech that backs our NHS with £34 billion a year of new investment by 2024, that backs law and order with 20,000 new police officers, that backs the next generation with £14 billion more funding so that every school has more money for every child, that takes great strides towards decarbonising our economy and that boosts our economic infrastructure, increasing investment in roads, railways and energy.

Sir Edward Davey (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD): Will the Chancellor publish today an economic impact assessment—an assessment of the public finance impacts—of the Prime Minister’s hard-deal Brexit, and if he won’t, why not?

Sajid Javid: If the right hon. Gentleman bears with me, I will come on to that issue in just a moment.

We can only do all these things that I have just mentioned because of the strength of our economy and our commitment to fiscal responsibility, and because of the hard work of the British people over the last decade. We will not throw that away.

One of the most important measures in the Queen’s Speech is of course the withdrawal agreement Bill. Passing this Bill will allow us to get Brexit done, to focus on the people’s priorities and to move forward as a country.

And let me be clear about one thing: people said that we could not do it—they said that we would not be able to reopen the withdrawal agreement—and we did; they said that we would not be able to get rid of a backstop, and we did; they said that we would not be able to negotiate a better deal, and we did. And then they said that we would not get Parliament to support that deal, and, guess what, we did that too. They were wrong, wrong and wrong again, as they always are.

Let me address the issue raised by the right hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton (Sir Edward Davey) and the shadow Chancellor about concerns expressed in this House about the impact assessment of the deal. What Parliament is being asked to vote on is the withdrawal agreement, which covers the deal on the budget, citizens’ rights and Northern Ireland. The Government have already provided and published a full impact assessment; it is a shame that the shadow Chancellor has not even bothered to look at it yet. The political declaration lays the groundwork for our future relationship, and with those final details still to be negotiated the only thing blocking us from getting on with Brexit is the Labour party and its disposition to dither and delay. Once we leave the EU we will start those talks, and of course we will keep Parliament fully informed at every stage of the process.

Susan Elan Jones (Clwyd South) (Lab): I knew I had a sense of déjà vu when I heard the Chancellor speak, and I remember from when: it was from when I was a child listening to “Jackanory.” This is exactly the same: story time. The previous Prime Minister published a proper economic assessment of her Brexit deal; why will this current Prime Minister not do the same? For heaven’s sake, just answer the question.

Sajid Javid: The hon. Lady was a fan of “Jackanory”; now I know why she joined the Labour party. It is all fitting into place.

On that point, some Members may point to the economic analysis, as the hon. Lady has, that was published by the Government in November of last year, but that document looks at the possible economic impact of a generic average free trade agreement; it does not represent the ambitious free trade agreement that we have agreed. We have agreed with the EU that both parties will have a deep, best-in-class free trade agreement that is far more ambitious on things like data exchange, tariffs, energy and financial services, and none of those benefits are captured in the Government’s previous modelling. So it is clear that what we need to do is this: end the dither and delay and move forward as a country.

Ruth George (High Peak) (Lab): The Chancellor said that the economic prosperity has been delivered by the hard work of the British people. Does he agree that that is the 14 million people who are now in poverty and the 4.5 million children who are living in poverty, and why is his Queen’s Speech silent on how to lift those people out of poverty and end what he calls their hard work?

Sajid Javid: I would think that, being a member of a party that is called the Labour party, the hon. Lady would understand that the best way out of poverty for anyone is a growing economy that creates jobs. Since 2010, there are over 1 million fewer workless households—a record low—there are 730,000 fewer children living in workless households, also a record low, and there are 50,000 fewer households where no member has ever worked.

Harriett Baldwin (West Worcestershire) (Con): Will the Chancellor in his excellent speech also tell the House how much better off someone on low pay is, because, with the increases in the living wage and the increases in the tax-free threshold, households are taking home much more, particularly the lowest paid?

Sajid Javid: I am pleased that my hon. Friend has raised that, because it allows me to remind the House that since 2010, because of the actions that we have taken, including the rise in the minimum wage and tax cuts, the average person working full-time on the minimum wage is around £3,500 better off a year—that is because of actions we have taken.

Our relationship with the EU is a critically important factor affecting the UK economy, but it is of course not the only one. Unlike the Labour party, we will never talk down Britain’s economy. The shadow Chancellor has predicted a recession almost every year since we came into office, as he was doing just a moment ago—he does it all the time—but the underlying fundamentals of our economy are incredibly strong: nine years of growth;

a healthy labour market with the lowest unemployment rate this country has seen in 45 years; low and stable inflation; and an attractive environment for foreign investment.

So I am optimistic about the future, but I am not complacent. We need to prepare our economy to seize the opportunities of leaving the EU, and that is why we are putting to the House the programme in this Queen's Speech.

Tom Tugendhat: My right hon. Friend has already addressed one issue in looking at the impact assessments of various plans. Has he done an impact assessment of what the implications of borrowing £200 billion would be on the British economy—what it would do to future investment and future pensions, and what it would actually do to the working people of this country and how it would destroy their futures?

Sajid Javid: Even my nine-year-old daughter could do that impact assessment; she would not even need a calculator. It would crash the economy, like every Labour Government do.

Ben Bradley: My hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Tom Tugendhat) has somewhat stolen my thunder. There is a lot of talk about economic impact assessments, but what about rising income tax, rising corporation tax, death duties, taxes on flights and holidays, and voting against nearly £10,000 of tax cuts in this place under this Government? That is the shadow Chancellor's Policy. What is my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's economic impact assessment of what that would do to the pockets of my constituents?

Sajid Javid: I will come on to just that, and I thank my hon. Friend for reminding us; we know the impact of that would be again to crash our economy.

Jonathan Edwards (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (PC): The Chancellor knows that under the British Government's Brexit plans, the no-deal cliff-edge would only move to the end of phase 2. So if we do get to his Budget statement on 6 November, can we ask the Office for Budget Responsibility to give us some analysis of what that would mean for the British economy?

Sajid Javid: First, there is no no-deal cliff-edge. If the hon. Gentleman wants to have a smooth exit from the EU, he knows what to do—vote for the deal and support the Government's programme motion.

Albert Owen *rose*—

Geraint Davies (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op) *rose*—

Sajid Javid: Sound public finances are the foundation of economic prosperity and strong public services, and we have come a long way since 2010. We inherited a deficit of 10% of GDP. At that time, that was the biggest Budget deficit of any advanced economy. It was equivalent to borrowing £5,000 every single second.

Peter Dowd (Bootle) (Lab): You caused it.

Sajid Javid: The hon. Gentleman says we caused it. That was what was in place when Labour were in office—£5,000 every second. Let us address that point. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): Order.

Sajid Javid: I think what the hon. Gentleman wants to hear is the point I am going to make next, because I think he wants to be reminded that the whole economy was scarred by Labour's great recession. It gave us the biggest banking crash, not just in British history, but in global history. *[Interruption.]* The shadow Minister, the hon. Member for Oxford East (Anneliese Dodds), from a sedentary position, asks why; let me tell her why. The shadow Chancellor—*[Interruption.]* Let me explain. The shadow Chancellor referred to the work of Gordon Brown as though Gordon Brown did some good things. Gordon Brown was the Labour Chancellor that deregulated the banking and financial sector, and—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. It is a very important debate, but I do not want the Chancellor of the Exchequer to be shouted down.

Sajid Javid: As I was saying, Gordon Brown, as Chancellor in 1997, boasted about deregulating the banks and the financial sector. At the time, he was warned by the then shadow Chancellor—the Conservative shadow Chancellor—Peter Lilley, that deregulation would

“cause regulators to take their eye off the ball”—*[Official Report, 1 November 1997; Vol. 300, c. 731-2]*—

and that it would be a field day for spivs and crooks everywhere. That is what he said, in this House, and during Labour's term in office, bank leverage rocketed from an average of 20 before they came to office to an average of 50 times during their entire time in office. Labour was responsible for the biggest banking crash in global history, and they had better get used to it.

Clive Efford (Eltham) (Lab) *rose*—

Geraint Davies *rose*—

Matt Rodda (Reading East) (Lab) *rose*—

Sajid Javid: I will give way when I have made some progress.

We have turned the economy and the public finances around, and I am not prepared at all to throw away that hard work. The Queen's Speech puts fiscal responsibility at the heart of our plans, with a clear commitment to ensuring that we keep control of borrowing and debt. I will set out our detailed plans in the Budget.

Rushanara Ali (Bethnal Green and Bow) (Lab): I just want to highlight the brass neck of the Chancellor, having worked in the banking sector, not to accept that it is the banking crisis—the clue is in the name. He then came into Parliament and presided over dreadful, drastic cuts on our constituents—police cuts, school cuts; the list goes on. Now he has the brass neck to say that it is all going to be fine—that we can have our cake and eat it. Having damaged people's lives, he should take responsibility before he starts attacking the Labour party.

Sajid Javid: Now, I know the hon. Lady has to say those things, because I think she is applying for a job as well, but she knows that when she became an MP, in the same year as I did, the deficit that the new Government inherited was 10% of GDP. She talks again about the banking crisis. She has to ask herself: why did Britain have the biggest banking crisis in global history? The answer is, because of the Labour Government.

Rushanara Ali *rose—*

Kevin Hollinrake *rose—*

Sajid Javid: I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Thirsk and Malton (Kevin Hollinrake).

Kevin Hollinrake: One of the worst effects of the banking crisis was the impact that it had on many thousands of small and medium-sized enterprises in this country, who lost their livelihoods and sometimes their homes. The Business Banking Resolution Service, which has been set up to deal with historic complaints, is excluding many people on very tight eligibility criteria, which I regard as unfair, as someone who sits on that steering group. I believe it requires the intervention of the Chancellor to get UK Finance to come to the table, to be fairer about those eligibility criteria. Will he commit to do that?

Sajid Javid: Look, first I commend my hon. Friend for all the work that he has done, and continues to do, to support small businesses throughout the country. He has raised an important issue. He knows that work is ongoing to address that, but I would be happy to meet him and discuss it further.

Kirstene Hair (Angus) (Con): Is it not because of the hard work of this UK Government to balance the economy that we are spending more in the devolved nations, with an extra £1.2 billion for Scotland in the latest spending review? Does he agree that that is in stark contrast to the shadow Chancellor, who would enable a second independence referendum in Scotland on a whim, despite the will of the Scottish people, who do not want that referendum, despite the economic damage that that would cause, and despite the fact that he used to belong to a Unionist party?

Sajid Javid: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. In fact, the SNP's obsession with another damaging referendum on independence is already hitting growth in Scotland, and that is why Scotland is lagging behind in growth terms compared with any other part of the UK.

Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD) *rose—*

Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD) *rose—*

Sajid Javid: I will make some progress and then I will give way.

I want to contrast our approach with that of Labour Front Benchers, who have demanded higher borrowing and higher taxes at every Budget and Queen's Speech for the past 40-odd years. Their tax rises would hit hard-working families, and they will not be clear on that. Their tax avoidance plans contain a £2.5 billion

mistake, and that is according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies. Their spending promises would cost far more than they say. Their manifesto contained £1 trillion of spending commitments. For the shadow Chancellor's benefit, let me say that that is £1,000 billion of spending commitments. They have not costed expensive promises such as renationalisation, and they have made dozens of unfunded promises since the last election. And you know what is even worse than that? The shadow Chancellor has admitted that the huge borrowing plans that he has are just "the first step"—he means the first step back to the road of ruin.

Matt Rodda: I wonder whether the Chancellor remembers the following statement, which is from his own website; it is still there today:

"The only thing leaving the EU guarantees is a lost decade for British business".

Perhaps he would like to comment on that.

Sajid Javid: I will comment on that because, probably like the hon. Gentleman, I campaigned for remain, and I lost the argument; but I am a democrat, unlike the hon. Gentleman.

Mark Pritchard (The Wrekin) (Con): I am glad to report that Shropshire has the lowest unemployment in its history. In fact nationally, as the Chancellor knows, there are over 1 million vacancies, which in itself raises a challenge for the Government as a result of their own success. As we discuss the points-based migration system with colleagues across government, given that many vacancies in Shropshire need to be filled in agriculture, in the NHS and in manufacturing, can we ensure that we still secure the very best and brightest for our jobs market not only domestically, but from the international community—Commonwealth, non-Commonwealth and the EU?

Sajid Javid: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend. When I address amendment (h), I will say a bit more about that.

Jamie Stone: Will the Chancellor give way?

Sajid Javid: I will make some progress.

There are some who would have us abandon fiscal responsibility altogether, and to those people I say this: it is only because of the hard work of the British people that we can now afford to invest more, and that is what we are doing when we kick-start a decade of renewal in this country. Our top priority is economic infrastructure. High-quality and reliable infrastructure is essential to how we live, work and travel. The UK is the fifth-largest economy in the world, and it is not good enough that we have fallen so far behind other nations on infrastructure, so we are going to fix that. I can therefore confirm today that our national infrastructure strategy will be published at the Budget. That strategy will deliver better transport, faster broadband and wider mobile coverage. It will level up every region and nation of this great United Kingdom and deliver an infrastructure revolution. The strategy will take great strides for the decarbonisation of our economy, which is one of this country's most important challenges, by building on our record as the first major economy in the world to legislate for net zero by 2050.

Eddie Hughes (Walsall North) (Con): I thank the Chancellor for responding so positively to a joint campaign by me and Andy Street, the Mayor of the West Midlands, for funding to open two additional train stations in Walsall, including one in Willenhall in my constituency. I thank the Chancellor for that money.

Sajid Javid: That is exactly what I mean when I talk about levelling up the economy and ensuring that all parts of our great nation are benefiting from the infrastructure revolution.

Tim Farron: The Chancellor is being generous in giving way. As taxpayers, the British people collectively bailed out the banks a decade ago, and the banks have repaid taxpayers by closing down branches on every high street and in every village in the country. Just in the past two weeks, we have seen Barclays withdraw from the scheme that underpinned the Post Office, which now does its work for it. Will he stand up to Barclays and demand that it remains part of that Post Office scheme?

Sajid Javid: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the banks should think carefully about their responsibilities to all communities, and the Economic Secretary to the Treasury met the chief executive of Barclays just today to discuss that very issue.

Luke Graham (Ochil and South Perthshire) (Con): I welcome my right hon. Friend's announcements on infrastructure and broadband, which will also apply to Scotland. Will he also confirm that we were spending around £20 billion more on interest payments when the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats came into government? Those interest payments were going to international bondholders, so the friends of the international bankers and financiers are, in fact, in the Labour party, not the Conservatives.

Sajid Javid: My hon. Friend is right. A Labour Chancellor deregulated banking and created a light-touch system, and we all paid the price.

I want to compare my approach to infrastructure with Labour's. I am going to invest in new infrastructure that will grow the economy. Labour would borrow hundreds of billions to renationalise productive assets and then run them into the ground. I want to unleash all the talent and expertise of the private sector. Labour says—I quote the shadow Chancellor here—that business is the “enemy” and would tax it into submission. I will do all my work within a careful and credible fiscal framework; Labour would simply waste the money just like last time.

Clive Efford: There is a real credibility gap in what the Chancellor is saying, because if austerity was the right thing to do in 2010, why is it not still the right thing to do now, given that debt has doubled to £1.8 trillion or 80% of GDP? How can we believe that the Government intend to go on this huge spending spree when they have been doing quite the opposite to try to tackle the problem? The Chancellor is keen on quoting the Institute for Fiscal Studies, but it predicts that we will need another dose of austerity if he carries on. This economy needs investment, not the austerity that the Government are planning.

Sajid Javid: First, the IFS does not predict that at all, so the Gentleman should check his facts. Secondly, I gently point out to him that debt is brought under control by controlling borrowing. Borrowing is the deficit, and the deficit was what the Labour party left at 10% of GDP, but it is now four fifths less than that. Controlling borrowing is how we bring debt under control.

Better infrastructure and fiscal responsibility will enable our future economic growth, but so will trade. Ninety per cent. of future global economic growth is estimated to be outside Europe, with more than a quarter coming from China alone. Britain has always been an open country that believes in free trade. British businesses have strong trading relationships around the world. The new deal that we have agreed with the EU will allow us to have an independent trade policy and to strike new trade agreements with countries around the world, and the new trade Bill will put that into practice. Let me compare that with Labour's position on trade. Labour would lock us into the EU customs union, ending any chance of an independent trade policy. How did Labour's head of trade policy describe Labour's views? He said:

“We reject the whole principle of free trade.”

Our support for free trade is not the only thing that marks Britain out on the global stage. Our remarkable financial services sector, which is now back to good health, does so, too. It is not just the City of London; our financial services sector involves the entire UK. All our financial and professional services firms truly are a national asset, employing more than a million people and contributing more than £130 billion to our economy every year. The financial services legislation that we brought forward in the Queen's Speech will maintain and enhance our position as a world-leading financial centre after we leave the EU.

This Queen's Speech gets Brexit done, invests more to grow the economy and delivers on the people's priorities: action on infrastructure, trade and financial services, and a new economic plan for a new decade of renewal.

Catherine McKinnell (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab): I am sure that the Chancellor is correct that some parts of the economy will benefit from a number of the changes, but other parts of the economy, particularly in the north-east, will be heavily damaged by the plans that he is outlining and that are outlined in the deal. The north-east exports over 60% of its goods to the EU, and hurting that relationship will be hugely damaging to our region. He does not seem to be taking any account of the disparate regional impacts around the country.

Sajid Javid: I do not accept the hon. Lady's analysis. Once we leave the EU with the close economic partnership that is set out in the political declaration, our economy will continue to be one of the strongest in the world, unleashing many new opportunities for all parts of our country, including the north-east.

Turning to the amendment tabled by the right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford), let me be clear about one thing: Britain will always be an open, global, outward-looking country. I am proud of living in a country as diverse as this one. We have dropped arbitrary immigration targets and recently announced new highly flexible fast-track visas for scientists; none of that will change as we leave the EU. We will

[Sajid Javid]

continue to welcome the best and the brightest from across the world. I therefore urge all hon. Members to vote against amendment (h) because it is important that we end free movement as we regain control of our borders.

I turn now to the shadow Chancellor's amendment. There are no mainstream parties in the developed world with an economic agenda as extreme as the one now proposed by Labour. There is no tax that the Labour party would not hike, there is no business that it would not nationalise, and there is no strike that it would not support. Instead of embracing the future, the shadow Chancellor demands that we turn back the clock on progress. He claims that 95% of people would face no income tax hikes under Labour, but then proposes more than 20 new tax hikes. He claims that he would protect pensioners, but tell that to the millions whose pensions will be smashed by Labour's threats to renationalise vast swathes of the economy without any proper compensation. He told businesses he had nothing up his sleeve, but then he announced plans to confiscate £300 billion of shares from private investors in the biggest state raid this country will ever see.

The shadow Chancellor has never worked in a business. He does not get business. He even refuses to name a single business that he admires. And guess what? He calls business the real enemy. Given his threats to hike taxes, to renationalise businesses and to load them up with new bills and regulations, I am pretty sure the feeling is mutual.

We have even heard Labour officials suggesting—I am not making this up—the nationalisation of travel agents. It will be free trips to Havana for Labour Front Benchers, and perhaps a ticket to Siberia for the hon. Member for West Bromwich East (Tom Watson). The simple truth is that Labour is not fit to govern. It would wreck the economy and hard-working families would pay the price, just like last time.

These are the fundamental dividing lines in British politics today. We will raise wages; Labour will raise taxes. We will back business; it will smash business. We will get Brexit done; it will dither and delay. A Conservative party that believes in free enterprise and that will get Brexit done and deliver the change people want; or an anti-aspiration, anti-business Labour party led by a pair who would wreck the economy, cancel the referendum and leave Britain less secure and less safe.

I know the shadow Chancellor is a fan of the little red book, but these days he is less Chairman Mao and more Colonel Sanders—too chicken to face an election. Let us back this deal; let us back this Queen's Speech; and let us have a general election. I commend the Queen's Speech to the House.

Catherine McKinnell: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): It had better be good.

Catherine McKinnell: Out of respect I did not want to interrupt the Chancellor's speech, but is it in order for him to impugn the motives of my hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Bow (Rushanara Ali) in raising concerns on behalf of her constituents? Is it

not unparliamentary for somebody holding his high office to do that, especially when he refuses to appear before the Treasury Committee to answer directly for his plans?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I sort of thank the hon. Lady for her point of order. I really do not want to see the debate interrupted by points of order that are, frankly, matters of debate. It is a matter of debate whether people think what the Chancellor said is appropriate. I want to get on with the debate.

1.33 pm

Kirsty Blackman (Aberdeen North) (SNP): I am not standing up to make a job application, as some people have suggested. In fact, we are trying to work ourselves out of a job by securing an independent Scotland, not one that has to send representatives to this place.

I take this opportunity to introduce amendment (h), in the names of my right hon. Friend the Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford), the right hon. Member for Dwyfor Meirionnydd (Liz Saville Roberts)—the leader of Plaid Cymru in the House of Commons—and many other SNP Members.

This place has been nothing short of chaotic over the past few weeks and, in fact, over the past three years. If Members are looking on in horror at the childish behaviour of the UK Government, I can only imagine how people out there are feeling as they watch the utter chaos created by the actions of this Tory Government.

This year's Queen's Speech comes in the most turbulent and uncertain times these isles have seen in decades. In the pursuit of a hard Tory Brexit that rips us out of the single market, the Scottish economy is already £3 billion smaller than if none of this had been foisted upon us by this Government. UK in a Changing Europe estimates that GDP per capita will be some 6.4% lower in the long run compared with the UK remaining in the EU. That represents, on average, every person in these isles missing out on £2,000 of income each year.

This deal proposes the loss of the single market. The world's largest economic bloc gives businesses in Britain access to 500 million customers, with no barriers, no tariffs and no local legislation to worry about. It is no surprise that nearly half our exports go to other EU nations. Those exports are linked to 3 million jobs in the UK. Today, almost 80% of British jobs are in the services sector, a sector with £226 billion of exports, nearly half of which go to Europe.

"I can see why some people want to leave the EU. Arguments about national identity and sovereignty pack an emotional punch. But for anyone who cares about British jobs, it comes down to one key question. Do businesses want the benefits and security of continued access to the Single Market, or the instability and uncertainty of a lost decade?"

Those are not my words but the words of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who is now willing to tip businesses into that lost decade in pursuit of this hard Tory Brexit.

Luke Graham: The hon. Lady talks about childish behaviour, but it was, of course, the SNP that walked out of proceedings in this House rather than participate in debate.

On her point about tipping over the economy, I would say that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer understands the irony of a nationalist

standing up in this House to talk about leaving an internal market, costing billions of pounds, when that is the SNP's reason for existence.

Kirsty Blackman: The SNP only walked out of this place because our leader was chucked out. We followed him out because we were standing up for the rights of the Scottish Parliament to stand up against the power grab this place was foisting on us.

A Panelbase poll came out a couple of weeks ago showing that more people in Scotland believe they would be better off in an independent Scotland within the EU than in broken Brexit Britain. We are winning the economic argument, and the Conservatives are losing it.

The Conservatives know they are losing the economic argument, which is why they are unwilling to publish an economic impact assessment of this deal. They are unwilling to allow the Office for Budget Responsibility to publish the figures on what will happen to the economy as a result of the Prime Minister's Brexit deal. That is why they are wavering about the date of the Budget. If the Chancellor would confirm that the Budget will be on 6 November and that the OBR's figures will be published, that would be welcome news, but he does not seem keen to see those figures come forward.

Jamie Stone: A vibrant Scottish economy, whether independent or within the UK, relies on a viable banking network. I will shortly have only one bank branch left in the whole county of Sutherland. Every time I have raised this, the Treasury has given me comforting words about 99% of the population having access to a local post office. Many of my constituents live 20, 30 or 40 miles, or even further, from the nearest post office or bank branch. Surely now it is time to take action on this serious issue, which fundamentally undermines the economy not only of Scotland but of the UK.

Kirsty Blackman: I agree. In fact, the SNP has been at the forefront of fighting rural bank closures, saying that post office services are inadequate and unable to take on the role being foisted upon them by the closure of banks. We will continue to do everything we can to support our communities and to ensure they have access to free local banking services, local to them, that they can get to by public transport, if at all possible. We will keep doing what we can.

Hannah Bardell (Livingston) (SNP): My hon. Friend, as ever, is making a fantastic speech. Does she agree that this Tory Government are the biggest threat in a generation to Scotland and its economy? The tourism sector, in particular, benefits all our constituencies. Scotland is rightly recognised as one of the most beautiful countries in the world, and 70% of businesses in the tourism sector are worried about the end of free movement of people, the loss of access to the vital member states of the European Union and the loss of labour for their businesses.

Kirsty Blackman: I absolutely agree. I was about to come on to the details in our amendment about the loss of freedom of movement and the problems it will cause. As our amendment sets out, we believe

"that freedom of movement has brought immeasurable social, cultural and economic benefits to the people of Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland and the European Union as a whole".

I wish to focus for a moment on the economic benefits of immigration and the significant problems that will be caused by the implementation of the immigration Bill that the Government intend to bring forward.

Each EU citizen who comes to Scotland adds £34,400 to GDP each year. That is not an insignificant number. Those people who choose to come to live and work in Scotland are largely young and working, they have relatively few healthcare needs and are contributing economically to our country's wealth. Reducing the number of EU migrants by setting arbitrary salary levels and reducing our ability to attract both long-term and seasonal migrants will hit our economy even harder than some of the other things associated with Brexit. We do not want this future. We want our country to continue to be the welcoming, inclusive, outward-looking country that it is and we absolutely reject the Tories' proposals on immigration.

Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): Is it not the case that, over the last 100 years, Scotland has faced a unique challenge in growing its population and it is only since being in the EU, with the benefit of EU migrants, that Scotland's population has begun to grow? What right-minded person would put that rising population—that rising workforce—at risk by ending free movement?

Kirsty Blackman: One of the first political moments I remember came when Jack McConnell was talking about Scotland's population dipping and about the massive concerns there were around the millennium about its population going below 5 million; I think that was the number at the time. I recall hearing that and thinking, even as a 14-year-old in 2000, how devastating it was. I am so pleased that we have had the freedom of movement that has come as part of the EU.

My kids go to school with so many children from so many countries around the world, and a huge number of them are from the EU. They are living in Aberdeen. Outside London, Aberdeen has the highest percentage of non-UK-born people in the UK, which is amazing for a place that people think is quite far away. Actually, we are pretty good at attracting people. But we struggle with the immigration rules. Every week people come to my office and sit around my table crying because the UK Government are saying that, despite the fact that they have jumped through every possible hoop that has been put in front of them, they are not able to stay and they must return to Nigeria, Poland or whichever country it is that they originate from. This UK Government are attempting to make that situation worse, not better.

I wish to look at the economic impact of failing to support technologies that help to meet our climate change targets. In Scotland, we have the skills, ability, capacity and geography to become world leaders in these technologies, but we need the UK Government to stop messing around and to take their responsibilities seriously. We must have immediate action to support and invest in carbon capture and storage technologies. We are uniquely placed, with our geology, to capitalise on this and to become world leaders in this space, and we cannot have the situation that happened when George Osborne was in the Treasury: he pulled funding at the last moment for these vital future technologies for our country.

[Kirsty Blackman]

We also need the UK Government to take their responsibilities seriously on this. They cannot just set a target of 2050 and then refuse to set out a plan for how they are going to get there. They should look at what the Scottish Government have done on the green new deal, which sets our targets and makes clear how we are going to reach our target of 2045, rather than just having an arbitrary, pie-in-the-sky target. As my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh North and Leith (Deidre Brock) said, the UK Government are doing lots of talk, but no actual action. So we would like them actually to take action through the environment Bill.

Albert Owen: The hon. Lady makes an important point about different devolved Administrations going at different paces, but we have actually seen cuts to energy-efficiency measures in England, whereas Scotland spends four times more on energy efficiency, Wales spends twice as much, and Northern Ireland, which does not even have a Government, spends one and a half times more than the UK.

Kirsty Blackman: This is a hugely concerning direction of travel and it comes despite climate change and things potentially warming up. We need to have energy-efficiency measures. For example, if we want to decarbonise our gas networks, we need to do things such as adding hydrogen and biomethane into the mix. We also need to do things such as ensuring that we have incredibly energy-efficient homes, be that in new homes or through retrofitting older homes. Aberdeen has a campaign to put insulation in granite tenements, which are particularly difficult to insulate and particularly common in Aberdeen. That has made a massive improvement not just in terms of energy efficiency and climate change targets, but in terms of the wealth of those people, who no longer have to pay those immensely high heating bills.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Kirsty Blackman: You are looking at me, Madam Deputy Speaker, so I will make some progress.

I am going now to focus on tackling inequality. This Queen's Speech offers no rays of sunshine. In Scotland, we are bringing forward all our spending review plans, our programme for government and our national performance framework and looking at the plans on the basis of the wellbeing of people who live in Scotland. Scotland and New Zealand are leading the way in the world in this space. The UK Government are not taking account of wellbeing, as we can see by the fact that every time Conservative Members stand up they talk about how great it is that we have such low unemployment, how rich everybody is, how well everybody is going and how much higher their wages are. If we ask people in the streets and people at our surgeries whether they feel as though they are richer than they were before a decade of austerity, we find that they all say that they are not richer and that this Tory Government have catapulted them into poverty. We are seeing increasing numbers of children in poverty. In Scotland, we are doing everything we can to combat that, through things such as the baby box and the Scottish child payment. Our Government are doing everything they can but they cannot mitigate every one

of the excesses of Tory austerity, no matter how hard we try, because we do not have all the levers that would be available with independence.

Martin Whitfield (East Lothian) (Lab): Does the hon. Lady share my disappointment that in opening this debate the Government were unable to give us a date when they are going to close food banks?

Kirsty Blackman: I agree. I am incredibly concerned about the increase in food bank use that there has been, particularly among people who are working. The Government talk about the fact that so many more people are at work, but so many more of those people who are at work are having to go to food banks. People are having to make the choice between heating their homes and feeding their children. Half of families have less than £100 in savings and, if their washing machine breaks down and their kid needs a new pair of shoes, they are into debt. That situation cannot continue. We need this UK Government to step up to ensure that people are paid a living wage that they can actually live on. It does not matter what age they are, be it 19, 29 or 59, they should be paid a living wage that they can live on.

Hannah Bardell: I share my hon. Friend's sentiments. Our SNP-led Scottish Government are fed up with filling in the black holes of this Westminster Government, who are destroying the fabric of our society. Does she agree that it is time they got their house in order? This week, I have had contact from constituents who are waiting for their maternity allowance and have been told by the Department for Work and Pensions that there is a backlog to June. Families and women who are due to have babies are going to be left in poverty because of this Government's mismanagement. Does she agree that that cannot continue?

Kirsty Blackman: That is genuinely shocking. Maternity allowance is something that people absolutely need to get if they are entitled to it, and this UK Government need to step up to the plate and ensure that the women who are entitled to it get it, without months of backlog.

The Government keep talking about "Getting Brexit done." But the reality, as set out in the piece the Chancellor wrote in 2016, is that, whether a deal is passed this week or not, there will be years, if not decades, of negotiations with the EU. This Government need to be honest with people about that. The Government are not going to be able to get Brexit done in the next week, whatever happens. We need that extension to happen and we need to ensure that there is no cliff edge.

Liz Saville Roberts (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC): Does my hon. Friend share my concern at reports that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, addressing a Committee in the Senedd in Cardiff, has just told us that there are no impact assessments for Holyhead?

Kirsty Blackman: I am shocked that the UK Government would try to convince us to vote for anything that they refused to do an impact assessment on. I take this opportunity to throw down the gauntlet to all MPs who represent Scottish or Welsh constituencies: they should all walk through the Lobby with us to support amendment (h). If they do not support the rights and desires of the

people of Scotland and of Wales, they will be doing a disservice to their constituents, their constituencies and their countries. The amendment must be agreed tonight, because we must recognise the importance of freedom of movement and the negative impacts in respect of inequality that the Government are having, and we must do everything we can to recognise that there is a climate emergency and to ensure that solid action is taken to step up to the plate and become world leaders.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): Order. It is obvious that this debate is very well subscribed, so after the next speaker I shall impose a five-minute time limit. It may then have to come down, but after the next speaker it will be five minutes.

1.50 pm

Sir Michael Fallon (Sevenoaks) (Con): I remind the House of the interests recorded in my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests.

In supporting the excellent Queen's Speech, I wish to touch briefly on just three areas: expenditure, the new borrowing framework, and what more we can do to make our capitalism inclusive.

On expenditure, the new money for the NHS and for schools is extremely welcome. With regard to the NHS, I hope it will help to relieve the pressure on our general practitioners, to get more resources into mental health and to start to fill the gap between health and social care. I hope it can do all that without involving us in yet another bureaucratic reorganisation, at any level.

The extra money for schools is particularly welcome in Kent. At long last, it addresses the inequality of funding between some of our shires and the metropolitan areas. It will mean more for primary schools in my constituency, which have been historically underfunded. As that money comes through, I hope the Secretary of State for Education will also look into how we can better protect the main schools block, which authorities such as Kent are currently having to raid to cope with the increasing demands for special needs provision.

Having welcomed the extra expenditure, given that the previous fiscal framework is clearly under some stress, I also welcome the Chancellor's ambition to set out in his Budget a new fiscal framework for the future. I hope the framework will be clear and credible for the markets, and I also hope he will avoid some of the fudgeable targets and fuzzy definitions and classifications that we saw in the later years of Gordon Brown's chancellorship.

I hope that, as Conservatives, we will continue to look at how we defend and refresh our capitalism and make it more inclusive for all our country. Back in the 1980s, we developed popular capitalism: 11 million people in this country held shares and had a stake in the privatised industries. Thirty years on, too many of those private industries are too poorly regulated, and we have seen share ownership in decline. Let me give an example of two of those industries.

The first industry is rail. Last year, we Members of Parliament—my hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Tom Tugendhat) was with me—had to intervene in the timetable chaos and persuade one rail

operator that shared a line with another to pick up passengers who had been stranded by that other operator. Both rail operators were subsidiaries of the same group, so why did Members of Parliament have to intervene? Where was the rail regulator to sort it out? I welcome the proposals in the Queen's Speech to look again at the structure of the industry and ensure that it is more accountable and better regulated.

The second industry is water. Thames Water has been privatised for 30 years. It pays hundreds of millions over to its shareholders and to its parent company, yet it is behind on its leakage targets and behind other water companies on the installation of smarter meters. Because it is behind, it is bleeding the chalk streams around London, including the River Darent, with the extraction of water that it needs to top up its supplies in the centre of London.

Tom Tugendhat: My right hon. Friend has been an example in helping to bring together the various companies to realise their duties. Does he agree that there are also good examples? Greggs has done an enormous amount by pushing share ownership to employees and has massively improved the equity stake that individuals have in the product of their own labour.

Sir Michael Fallon: I certainly understand that, and my hon. Friend takes me to the point with which I wish to conclude, which is what more we can do to encourage share ownership. Some of the employee share schemes we have—I have written to the Chancellor on this—are still very complicated. The qualifying periods are still very long and do not reflect the mobility of the modern workforce. I am afraid some of the lower-paid staff simply cannot afford to participate in them. I hope that when it comes to his Budget, the Chancellor will keep looking at how we can do more to promote employee share ownership in particular, by reducing the qualifying periods and giving people a real incentive to save.

Craig Mackinlay (South Thanet) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Sir Michael Fallon: I am sorry but I will not; I am just finishing.

One of my heroes of the year—there may be many other candidates—is an entrepreneur called Julian Richer, who is now coming up to retirement and is handing over 40% of his company, Richer Sounds, to the employees, ensuring that they have a stake in the future. We need more incentives like that to promote loyalty and give people a real stake in their future. I thoroughly support the Queen's Speech.

1.56 pm

Lilian Greenwood (Nottingham South) (Lab): It is hard to take the Queen's Speech seriously as a statement of intent from a Government who have no majority and are hellbent on taking us down a reckless route out of the European Union. I am sure my constituents wanted to believe it when the Government promised to address violent crime, measures to support and strengthen the national health service and investment in education, but I am afraid they will be disappointed. If the Government press ahead with their plans for a hard Brexit, there is a good chance that not only will there be no extra money for our police, health service and schools, but there will

[*Lilian Greenwood*]

be less money for all our public services. My constituents will have less money in their pockets, and the future opportunities for their children and grandchildren will be diminished.

The Government have refused to publish any economic impact analysis of their great new deal, but fortunately others have. Professor Anand Menon, director of the UK in a Changing Europe, published a report last week that models the economic impact of the Prime Minister's proposals. The report suggests that income per capita in the UK would be significantly lower under his deal and that the Government finances would suffer, too. Even in the most optimistic scenario, the report suggests that the Prime Minister's deal would leave the public finances £16 billion worse off. In the most pessimistic scenario, the forecast is of a much greater hit to the public purse of around £49 billion. Economic modelling is inherently uncertain, but my constituents need to know that the promises in the Queen's Speech about investment in vital public services are hollow and cannot be relied on.

People in Nottingham need assurances about the future of the services they rely on, because after nine and a half years of deep and damaging cuts, our local police, schools and health services are under extreme pressure. Last week, I was out with the street offences team in Radford. I saw at first hand some of the challenges that our police officers face and heard about the rise in serious violence, often related to illegal drugs. We have fewer police officers in Nottingham than we had nine years ago; our youth services have been decimated; and many families are struggling to get by, working multiple jobs but still in poverty. It is no coincidence that too many young people are falling prey to gangs and criminal behaviour.

My constituents regularly tell me that they cannot get an appointment to see their GP and that they cannot get the help they need with their mental health. When people cannot access the services and support that they need in their local community, sooner or later the problem becomes acute, and they go to the place where the lights are always on: A&E. The emergency department at the Queen's medical centre has seen a 9% increase in attendances in the past year alone. Our hospitals provide excellent care, but that level of pressure takes its toll, and, I am afraid, that is reflected in sickness absence, staff turnover and poor retention rates.

Many Nottingham hospital staff are also working in inadequate conditions, because the trust, which is one of the biggest and busiest in the country, has the highest critical infrastructure risk in the entire NHS outside London. There have been 11 major incidents in the past three years, including power failures and water leaks. Urgent fire safety works are needed, including £24 million to replace highly polluting 40-year-old coal-fired boilers. Where is that £30 million a week extra for the NHS when we need it?

If there were time, I would raise the crisis in social care that is particularly acute in cities such as mine, serving deprived communities with higher need and lower resources. That is impacting older people, disabled people and carers. I would highlight how the lack of affordable housing, cruel benefit cuts and the loss of support services have resulted in a homelessness crisis. I would talk about the impact on students, teachers and

support staff doing exceptional work in our schools and colleges in Nottingham South despite every single one of them suffering real-terms budget cuts under this Government.

I do not trust this Government with our economy, and I do not trust them with our public services. My constituents deserve so much better, and only Labour will deliver it.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Lindsay Hoyle): Order. I am under pressure to reduce the time limit, but I do not want to do that. If we can all shave off a few seconds, that will hopefully hold the time limit.

2.1 pm

Mel Stride (Central Devon) (Con): May I start by saying what an honour it is to have been elected as the Chair of the Treasury Committee? I pay tribute to my predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Nicky Morgan), who did such sterling work on the Committee, particularly with women in finance, the gender pay gap and other such important issues, all of which I intend to press forward with.

It is very early days. I was elected only yesterday and I have not even had a proper chance to sit down with the other members of the Committee to consider what we will be looking at in detail over the coming period. However, as this is an opportunity to bend the Chancellor's ear, I thought that I would raise one or two extremely important points, which have been reflected in the debate so far this afternoon.

The first is Brexit. It seems to me that there is plenty of sound and fury around the issue, but what we need is some illumination and light. We will never all collectively agree in this House or indeed in the Treasury Committee on exactly where we want to end with Brexit, or indeed how we are going to get there. None the less, what we can all agree on is that information is important and that we need to know the data. I accept the Chancellor's point that the political declaration is not the same thing as what is going through in the Bill at the moment; none the less, an assessment was made of the previous set of deals—on a broad range of circumstances, admittedly—and I think and fully expect that the Committee will be pressing at as early a stage as possible for some kind of assessment to be made of the likely outcomes of the deal that is under consideration.

The second point is about the Budget. A Budget will be coming very soon, which we will be scrutinising very closely. My message to the Chancellor is that after hearing from colleagues, we want to look at the regional distribution of the Budget. The Committee has already done some very good work on regional imbalances across the UK economy, and we will want to look at that closely. We will also want to look at how rural communities—

Alberto Costa (South Leicestershire) (Con): May I add my congratulations to my right hon. Friend on his election to what is one of the most important Select Committees of this House? Does he agree that in addition to the comments he has just made, another very important area for the Treasury to consider is the way in which fairer funding for local councils—for example, for Leicestershire County Council—has to operate?

Mel Stride: I agree with my hon. Friend entirely. In fact, one of the prisms through which we should view this Budget is also how well-funded rural communities are compared to urban communities. That is a very important point. Moreover, we need to look at the tax impacts of the measures that come forward in the Budget, not least on those who are the least well-off. Those on the Opposition Front Bench will have heard me tirelessly repeat the mantra that 28% of all income tax is paid by the wealthiest 1%. However, although that is true, it is not the same thing as saying that we should not keep an eagle eye on the bottom quintile and make sure that they are fairly treated.

I also want to consider the issues that my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Fiona Bruce) has often raised with me about the interaction of the universal credit taper and the income tax regime, and the fact that, for some lower-income families with children, that leads to marginal tax rates of 70% or more. That is unjust and something on which the Committee may wish to focus.

My final point on the Budget is that, as a global economy, we are facing a slowdown. Most projections now have gone from growth of 4% to about 3%. There are corporate debt issues in China, which are weighing down investment globally, and we have a trade war between the United States and China. With regard to our own fiscal numbers, we have had a reclassification of the student loan debt such that some £12 billion has been taken out of the so-called headroom between what we can spend and the meeting of our fiscal mandate in 2020-21. Given all the expenditure commitments that are being made at the moment, the Committee will be looking very carefully at the issue of fiscal prudence and making sure that the new fiscal targets that the Chancellor may come forward with are, first, appropriate and, secondly, actually achievable.

There are some other important issues that I wish to raise. The Chancellor used the expression, I think, that he wants to come forward on the people's priorities. I call that the "Dog and Duck" test. What is it that people, when they are down the local pub—if they still have a local pub—talk about and care about? I wish to raise two priorities. One is access to local finance. That was raised very eloquently by the hon. Member for Aberdeen North (Kirsty Blackman) and also by way of intervention by the hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross (Jamie Stone). I call on Barclays to reconsider its decision in relation to the availability of cash over the counter at post offices. I know that my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary had a meeting with the chief executive of Barclays just yesterday and that he is working very hard on this issue. None the less, in many communities, including those in my constituency, where the last bank has gone, it is the Post Office to which we turn. I pay tribute briefly to Stuart Rogers, the postmaster at Ashburton post office and a leading member of the National Federation of SubPostmasters, who has done such brilliant work in this area. I know, in fact, that he is known to many Members in the Chamber for his work up here in Westminster.

In my final 20 seconds, let me say that we need to get fairer taxation internationally for those online businesses, which create value through internet platforms such as search engines in social media and marketplaces. People

expect them to be taxed fairly. It is a matter not of avoidance, but of having a tax regime that is fit for the 21st century.

2.7 pm

Mr Pat McFadden (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab): Every month, Ministers stand at that Dispatch Box and boast about the unemployment figures—we heard some of it from the Chancellor today. They pat themselves on the back and tell themselves how well they are doing, but there are parts of the country where this boasting sounds like something from another planet. Figures from the House of Commons Library show that, last month in my constituency, there were 4,020 people unemployed. That is higher than a year ago, and higher than July of this year. This is the figure that takes account of the roll-out of universal credit. Although unemployment may be stable or falling in some parts of the country, in my constituency and others like it the figures have been going up month on month for a long time. Unemployment at these levels gives my constituency a jobless rate of around 9%—more than double the national average. Of those 4,000 people, we have more than 700 unemployed young people. This is a criminal waste of talent and an appalling denial of opportunity for those affected and their families.

For those who are in work, pay is much lower than average. Full-time workers in my constituency earn around £100 a week less than the national average. People are working hard and trying to do the right thing, but they are not getting the rewards that they deserve. No wonder people feel that the system is not working for them when their chances of getting a job are lower than average, and the pay they get when they do get a job is also lower than average. We need an economy that works for every part of the country, not just some of it, but right now we do not have that.

The pattern of low pay and high unemployment is reinforced by the number of adults of working age with no formal qualifications. But look at what is happening with skills funding. According to the Education Policy Institute, real-terms spending per student in the further education sector has fallen by 18% in the last nine years. The IFS estimates that there was a cut of £3.3 billion in real terms across the whole further education and skills budget between 2010 and last year. In my region, apprenticeship starts have fallen by 9,000 in the past year. Instead of funding a platform for opportunity at the very moment that people need help, the Government have kicked the ladder away. How can we give people the best possible chance in life if the funding for the organisations that equip them for the jobs of today and tomorrow is being cut? Yet that is precisely what this Government have done.

On top of all that, the Government are now committed to cuts in corporation tax, which will cost the Exchequer billions of pounds a year. That money could be used to support working-class communities across the country. My constituency has already suffered from benefit freezes and tax credit cuts, which hurt low-income families. We have also faced cuts to police numbers, and schools—which can barely make ends meet—are doing their best and struggling heroically to help local children. If we really want to help working-class communities, we need a proper long-term plan for the smaller cities and towns, which for too long have been left out of economic

[Mr Pat McFadden]

prosperity. We need something that really tackles the long-term legacy of industrial closures in years gone by, and gives those areas a new and prosperous future.

A couple of months ago, I published a proposal with the think-tank Global Future to take the money that the Government are proposing to give away through the planned cuts in corporation tax, and instead to use that money to create a long-term fund for smaller cities and towns. Not going ahead with these proposed tax cuts—without raising a penny in tax anywhere else—would give us a fund of £4 billion to £5 billion a year; just think what we could do with that over a 10-year period. We could really invest in the childcare essential to help young parents take up jobs and boost their incomes. We could reclaim the land that is still derelict as a result of industrial closures and get it fit for housing again. We could give those adults who do not have enough qualifications the chance to succeed in the labour market of today. We could build a platform where we did something about the two-speed nature of our economy—a bridge between the areas already doing well and those struggling with the legacy of high unemployment, low income and low skills. That is the kind of plan we need for the future, and it is sadly missing from this Queen's Speech.

2.12 pm

Jeremy Wright (Kenilworth and Southam) (Con): It is a great pleasure to contribute to this debate about the economy. It is an economy that is changing, and I want to use my few minutes to speak about that change.

Technology has already transformed many of our businesses and much of our economic activity is now happening online, but of course some things have not changed. The Government still need businesses to create wealth to tax and spend on public services, and businesses still need the Government to provide the environment in which wealth can be created. But in the new digital economy, Government policy making needs to be quicker and more imaginative, and it needs to do several things at once.

Policy making needs to provide for necessary infrastructure, including broadband. It also needs to deliver the increased investment in science and research referred to in the Gracious Speech, and an immigration system designed to allow the brightest minds to contribute to our ongoing prosperity. But there is something else that policy has to do. It needs to create the ethical and regulatory frameworks within which technology advances. Now, some fear that innovation is stifled by ethical safeguards, but I think it is the opposite; I think that it can be the absence of ethical safeguards that holds innovation back.

Let us take artificial intelligence as a good example. The real potential for AI is in the intelligent utilisation of data, and lots of it. It cannot bring truly transformative improvement without that data, and much of the data it needs—some of it very sensitive—it is in the hands of individuals who understandably worry about what may be done with it. They will not make their data available if they are not persuaded that there are ethical safeguards in place to protect it. The Government need to design and implement those safeguards.

Stephen Metcalfe (South Basildon and East Thurrock) (Con): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Jeremy Wright: I will.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Lindsay Hoyle): Order. May I suggest that if there are lots of interventions, people who wish to make speeches are going to end up with a reduced time limit?

Stephen Metcalfe: I just want to make a comment in the light of what my right hon. and learned Friend was saying about ethics in the use of data. Does he agree that the UK has historically led the field in the creation of ethical frameworks, and that we are well placed to do so again when it comes to AI?

Jeremy Wright: I agree with my hon. Friend. In the interest of saving time, he takes me directly to my next point, which is that we in the UK are well placed to do the work to which he refers. We are respected not just for our scientific expertise, but also for our regulatory expertise. I hope very much that the Government will engage fully in that task.

Finally, I urge the Government to maintain their commitment to internet safety and the reduction of online harms. I was very proud to bring forward the online harms White Paper in conjunction with a number of ministerial colleagues, including my right hon. Friend the Chancellor when he was Home Secretary. That White Paper sets out a response to online harms in social media and other user-generated content that seeks to balance freedom of speech with protection of the vulnerable in a fast-moving landscape where, frankly, hardly any rules have been applied so far. I believe that the approach it sets out strikes that balance well, but we certainly heard arguments that said, "Hold back. Let someone else regulate first, in case all the investment coming into the UK now from Google, Facebook and all the rest goes somewhere else instead." Well, I rejected those arguments then and I reject them now—not least because, as these companies generally accept, if social media and other online spaces are not seen as safe spaces, people will increasingly choose not to be there, and if people are not there, they cannot be sold anything there, so it is good business as well as good policy to make them safer. I am therefore pleased to see in the Gracious Speech a commitment to continue to develop proposals to improve internet safety, but I am disappointed not yet to see a commitment to legislate to do so. I understand Ministers' preference to pursue pre-legislative scrutiny first, and it is important to get this right, but I urge them not to lose momentum.

At this crucial moment in the development of the digital economy, we should not just act to protect the vulnerable in our own communities; with that well-deserved reputation for both innovating and regulating effectively, we should also be proud to lead the world in making the internet a safer place.

2.18 pm

Vernon Coaker (Gedling) (Lab): This debate about the economy gives us an opportunity that the shadow Chancellor tried to take and the Chancellor missed, although the right hon. Member for Sevenoaks (Sir Michael Fallon) started to get to where I think this debate on the economy should be taking us. Let me explain what I mean.

My constituents in all parts of Gedling—in Carlton, Arnold, Netherfield, Colwick and Burton Joyce—say exactly the same as is being said by many people in the country: that the system, as it is currently, does not work for them. They do not believe that the way the system operates is fair and they want something done about it. And what they want from this Parliament is a vision of an economy that is different from the way it functions now.

It is such a big issue that the *Financial Times*—the doyen of the City of London—recently ran an editorial that itself asks the question,

“How to build a more responsible...capitalism”.

It talks about how that can be done. I hope that the new Chair of the Treasury Committee will consider whether his Committee should look at how we are going to deliver a market system that regulates itself in a way that does not allow the excesses that we have seen. This is a quote from a *Guardian* report on the Panama papers:

“Twitter and Facebook received hundreds of millions of dollars in investments that can be traced back to Russian state financial institutions...Aggressive tax avoidance by multinational corporations, including Nike and Apple...billions in tax refunds by the Isle of Man and Malta to the owners of private jets and luxury yachts.”

None of us, whether we are Labour, Liberal, Scottish nationalist or Conservative—whoever we are—can believe that is right. Where in the Chancellor’s speech did it say that whoever was in government they would tackle that?

It cannot be right that multinational companies are shifting a growing share of profits offshore—£600 billion in the past year alone. Then we turn to the people who HMRC pursues for a few pounds that they owe, or the Benefits Agency pursues for a few pounds that they owe. That is not the sort of society that people want. That is not the sort of society that people think is fair. *The Sunday Telegraph*, on page 5, laid into the way in which investment funds work. Nigel Woodford—I have never heard of him—

Kevin Hollinrake: Neil Woodford.

Vernon Coaker: Well, there you go—Neil Woodford. I have still never heard of him. We read about Terry Smith, Nick Train and Anthony Bolton, and millions of pounds of investors’ money. The money that we—hon. Members on both sides of the House—pay into savings, trust funds and pensions is put together and invested on our behalf by a system that has short-term interests and profit at its heart rather than the long-term benefit of communities. It cannot go on.

It cannot be right that my own brilliant BEIS Committee reported that the average FTSE 100 chief executive is on £4 million a year compared with the average worker on £30,000. It cannot carry on. All I wanted to hear was a Chancellor of the Exchequer who put at the heart of his Queen’s Speech contribution equality, a responsible capitalism, a change to the fast buck and a change to those people who seek to make money rather than putting people first. That is what I wanted to hear and it was seriously lacking.

2.23 pm

Harriett Baldwin (West Worcestershire) (Con): It is an honour to follow the hon. Member for Gedling (Vernon Coaker), who made a very powerful speech. I am proud to have been part of a Government who helped to bring in changes to tax rules and the living

wage that have meant that, as the Resolution Foundation has said, we have had the biggest fall in the number of those on low pay in our economy in 40 years.

That is not what I was planning to talk about, however; I plan to talk about an industry that has not had a lot of focus over the past three and a half years. I welcome the fact that there is a financial services Bill in the Queen’s Speech. Over the past three and a half years, we have talked a lot about some very important industries. We have talked about dairy farmers and fishermen, and about the importance of car manufacturing and manufacturing generally, but we have not spent a great deal of time talking about our biggest export sector: the financial services sector. I think all of us on both sides of the House can agree that when that sector works well, it is the driver and the engine of our economy. It employs about one in 14 of all our constituents—2.3 million people, two thirds of whom are outside the M25. It pays a lot of taxes—£75 billion last year. About £1 in every £10 of public spending is funded by the financial services sector. Let me give some concrete examples. Instead of 20,000 extra police, we would be able to pay for only 18,000 extra police if those tax revenues were not there. Instead of 40 hospital expansions, we would be able to pay for only 36 if those tax revenues were not there. It is therefore a very, very important sector.

I am keen to hear from Ministers exactly what is going to be in the financial services Bill. After all, it is a sector where we have made substantial progress in terms of sound regulation. I want to know whether this Bill will be similar to the one that fell at Prorogation. I want to hear what the Government’s vision will be for regulation in this sector after we leave the EU. I see from the political declaration on the future partnership that the vision is a great deal of equivalence between the UK and EU sectors. I would be interested to hear from the Government what their vision is for how that equivalence might work. In the third declaration, only three paragraphs—paragraphs 35 to 37—cover that vision so far, so it would therefore be good to hear Ministers elaborate on how the equivalence mechanisms might work. How will there be arbitration in terms of those equivalence mechanisms? How will there be a process of notice if one sector does not meet the equivalence criteria? How will things change when the in-flight files that currently exist in the EU in this sector have to be incorporated into UK law? What degree of manoeuvre will this place have in relation to this sector when we have left the EU? These are very important questions that we have not had enough time to debate over the past three and a half years. This sector has already seen a change in export earnings—down to £60 billion last year compared with £69 billion in 2015. It would be very valuable if, when she winds up, the BEIS Secretary could talk about how she would view this mechanism working.

The financial services sector is vital to our economy. It is vital to every single one of our constituencies and every single person who relies on financial services for their business to grow, right across the country. It would be good to hear the Government’s plan for the sector in terms of that future partnership.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Lindsay Hoyle): Order. Just to let people know, after the next speech I will have to go down to four minutes to get everybody in.

2.27 pm

Sir Edward Davey (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for West Worcestershire (Harriett Baldwin), who I voted for yesterday.

Rarely before in our history have a Government presented a Queen's Speech that will do so much damage to our economy. By placing Brexit at its heart, the Prime Minister is delivering on one promise: his crude, four-letter pledge to business. This hardest of hard Brexits is as bad as it could get, save for a no-deal Brexit. The Conservatives once claimed to be the party of business, but they can never make that claim again. Let us just go through the basic economics. Reducing access to our closest international markets is highly damaging. Tearing up our membership of the EU's customs union and single market, the best trade deal this country has ever had, is very destructive. Exiting our country from the multiple external trade deals that the EU has achieved is simply dreadful. Then we add the red tape that our exporters will be tied up in, at a cost to the private sector of at least a whopping £7.5 billion a year.

The Conservative's central policy of the Queen's Speech not only harms our economy, but will plunge our public finances into crisis. Regrettably, we do not yet have an official estimate of the red ink that this hard Brexit deal will pour over Britain's finances but, as the hon. Member for Nottingham South (Lilian Greenwood) said earlier, a report by UK in a Changing Europe estimates a cost to the Exchequer of between £16 billion and £48 billion a year, and a cumulative hit to borrowing of nearly £100 billion. This Government are sowing the seeds of a new austerity—a Brexit austerity, and a totally avoidable austerity.

If this Conservative Government are economically illiterate and fiscally incontinent, Labour's shadow Chancellor is doing his best to give them cover. Take Labour's plans to renationalise water, railways, energy and the Royal Mail. What is the cost—£100 billion, or perhaps £150 billion? Whatever the cost, it would be a calamitous waste of money. Of course there are problems with aspects of how our utilities have been operating, but there are positives, too. Just as we can fix the problems in Europe without the cost of the Conservatives' ideological Brexit, we can fix the problems in these utilities without Labour's costly ideology.

Take energy, for example. With the climate emergency, we must accelerate the pace of decarbonising energy, but instead Labour wants to spend years legislating for energy renationalisation—what a climate catastrophe! Liberal Democrats showed in government that if we intervene intelligently, we can harness the market to tackle climate change. Thanks to our decisions, Britain is now the global leader in offshore wind. Offshore wind farms now have much greater UK content than people ever imagined possible, and future offshore wind farms will no longer need a subsidy to be built. So if you want to go green, don't go red, go yellow—and don't destroy capitalism; decarbonise it.

It is this practical, business-like approach that goes through all Liberal Democrat economic policies. We start with a positive belief in markets, trade and competition, and we believe that responsible capitalism is possible. Liberal Democrats want to celebrate responsible business, and our policy of remaining in the EU is phenomenally popular with responsible business. It gives

us a remain bonus to invest in our public services and our economy, to make them fairer and to equip them for the future.

On the likely eve of a general election, the voters are faced with a choice between two visions of the past and one vision of the future. In the blue corner, we have a return to the 1870s, in a colonial-style global Britain so well personified by the laid-back Leader of the House. In the red corner, we have a return to the 1970s, stoking up old class divisions when our country so desperately needs to come together. Fortunately, there is a yellow corner, from where we can go forward to the 2070s, full of hope and optimism that our country can survive this current nightmare, invest in our children and tackle climate change. As we vote against this damaging Queen's Speech tonight and prepare to face the electorate—preferably in a referendum but, if not, in a general election—the voters can be in no doubt: the Liberal Democrats are the party for Britain's future.

2.32 pm

Kevin Hollinrake (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): I listened carefully to the speeches made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer. The shadow Chancellor said that there is too much inequality in the UK—I absolutely agree. As a one nation Conservative, I believe in equal opportunity for all, but I guess that the method of getting there is where we differ. In my view, we get there through a balance between free markets and capitalism, and a sensible amount of state intervention, to ensure that the free markets work for everybody, not just the privileged few. The difficulty is that, if we look at future challenges for the taxpayer, our scope for intervention will be very limited. Our current debt-to-GDP ratio is 80% of GDP. That is forecast to grow to 280% of GDP by 2060 unless we change our tax system. There are huge challenges ahead and huge burdens for the taxpayer, particularly in the areas of pensions, social care and healthcare. Free market opportunities will be more important than ever.

I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Sir Michael Fallon) about the reduction in the number of capitalists in this country for various reasons. G. K. Chesterton once wrote:

“Too much capitalism does not mean too many capitalists, but too few capitalists.”

If we look at where we normally get capitalists from in our society, we see that it is SMEs—young businesses starting up and building—and people getting into either the stock market or the housing market. Of those two cohorts, SMEs in particular face bigger challenges than ever in today's economy because of the imbalances and unfairness. As other Members have said, larger companies—the Amazons, Tescos and Starbucks of this world—are able to take competitive advantage of the tax system, and as a consequence, the growth rate of SME start-ups has started to falter. Their growth rate today is lower than it has been for the last 10 years.

We know how important SMEs are. There are 5.7 million of them in the UK, and 99% of all businesses in the UK are SMEs. They employ 60% of the private sector workforce, and they are more productive in their start-up years than the rest of the economy. It is hugely important that we support the dynamic creation of new businesses.

With limited room for intervention, we have to ensure that the playing field is fair and level for all businesses. As I said in my earlier intervention, one of the imbalances

is between SMEs and banks, which are so important to them, when things go wrong. We need a proper resolution process. We have seen disgraceful treatment of SMEs by banks. Where do they go when things go wrong? The new Business Banking Resolution Service is promising, and I am working with the steering group, but it unfairly excludes 85% of businesses that could apply for resolution of historical complaints. That cannot be fair.

Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con): Does my hon. Friend accept that, during the transition period, it is essential that we protect ourselves from legislation from the European Union on tax and business, which could do enormous damage to our vital national interests?

Kevin Hollinrake: My focus in this speech is SMEs, and I will stick to that, but my hon. Friend raises an interesting point.

If we are to have a fair and level playing field, we must ensure that our investment is spread more fairly across the regions. It is wrong that this country is firing on one cylinder when it could be firing on three or four. This is not about the north-south divide; it is London versus the rest of the country. For every £3 spent per capita in London, only £1 is spent in the regions. We need a fairer deal to help to level up our economy in the UK.

Finally, it is a shame on this country that we do not do more about tax avoidance. New rules are coming in to try to level the playing field, such as the diverted profits tax, but we must do more to ensure that everybody in the business environment pays their fair share of tax. That is how we build a fair and level playing field, encourage more SMEs to start up and scale up, and become a more productive economy. That is how we get a bit less capitalism, but a lot more capitalists.

2.37 pm

Catherine McKinnell (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab): This Queen's Speech is nothing but a wish list, setting out a programme for government that completely ignores the new reality that looms large over our economy: the big unknown that is the post-Brexit world. The Government's withdrawal agreement marks the most profound peacetime transformation of the economy in our country's history. That is why, in my brief but timely tenure as interim Chair of the Treasury Committee—I welcome and congratulate the newly elected Chair, the right hon. Member for Central Devon (Mel Stride)—I wrote to the Chancellor last week to ask the obvious question: what is the Treasury's analysis of the economic impact? Unfortunately, the Chancellor's reply flatly declined to provide any such analysis. He ended his letter by saying:

“trust in democracy and bringing an end to the division that has characterised this debate over the past three years is something that cannot be measured solely through spreadsheets or impact assessments, important though they”.

What patronising drive! This Government think they can take us for fools.

The Chancellor does not think there is any need for an economic assessment. He tells us that the previous assessments do not apply, but he will not produce a new one. He says that the new deal is

“self-evidently in our economic interest”,

but it is not at all self-evident. The overwhelming evidence is that any Brexit would lead to a weaker economy compared with staying in the EU. If the Government had

evidence to the contrary, they would produce it. The Chancellor is basically telling us to ignore the economics. How can the Government have any credibility when they announce their Budget next month? If the Treasury is not interested in the economics, who in government is? Economic analysis matters. It affects our constituents' jobs, taxes, spending, prices, interest rates, wages, and imports and exports. Surely we should have the latest and best economic evidence as we make a decision of this magnitude. We must make this decision with our eyes wide open. It is the least the public deserve from us.

As founder and co-chair of the all-party group on the east coast main line, I want to highlight the pressing need for investment in my region. The details of the Government's proposals on rail reform are still to be finalised, but simply changing the way train operating companies work will not improve our railways in the way we need. The east coast main line is a critical piece of national rail infrastructure. It is one of the country's most strategically important transport routes, linking the north-east to London, the east of England, the east midlands, Yorkshire, the Humber, and the east and north of Scotland, but the line cannot cope with the demands upon it. Instead of being an asset, it is now holding back the communities and economies it serves. It does not have enough capacity for today's growth in passenger and freight, let alone for the future. Figures from the Library show a 73% rise in delay minutes on the London North Eastern Railway route connecting Newcastle and London, and around 60% of that is due to Network Rail. The Government must commit additional funding for Network Rail as a matter of urgency so it can invest in the east coast main line and improve reliability.

That is not enough though: we also need HS2 to go ahead. If we want to run more regional and local services, we need the capacity that HS2 will free up, and I am pleased to have had much support from business communities and stakeholders on this. I can understand why fellow northerners might look at the cost of HS2 and think that this money might be better spent elsewhere, but I have never seen this as an either/or choice. London has multiple infrastructure projects at any one time. Do we ever suggest it should only have one? There are worrying rumours that the Government are planning to scrap HS2. It would make a mockery of the Prime Minister's pledge to empower the north and do nothing to solve the problems on our network. If they scrap the investment in the north, will we really get it back in another form? I do not think so.

2.41 pm

Ross Thomson (Aberdeen South) (Con): It is an honour to follow the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne North (Catherine McKinnell).

The Government's Queen's Speech sets out a bold and ambitious domestic agenda, focusing on the priorities of the people: sorting Brexit, investing in public services, tackling crime, boosting productivity and attracting investment. The Government are committed to creating new jobs and helping individuals and families with the cost of living. In fact, they already have a clear record of action on delivering jobs. The latest jobs figures confirm this, with over 3.6 million more people in work since 2010, meaning more people with the financial security to serve themselves and their families the length and breadth of Britain.

[Ross Thomson]

Further, projections from the IMF show that our economy will grow faster than those in France, Germany and Japan. Once the House finally gets its act together and delivers on the instruction of the British people in 2016 to leave the EU—an instruction that this House asked the British people to make—we will be able to realise the full benefits of Brexit and build a brighter future for our country.

We all know that no-deal Nicola and the SNP are utterly obsessed with independence, but voters across Scotland are all too acutely aware of what an absolute catastrophe independence would be for their jobs, living standards, public services, their families and the Scottish economy. Beyond the recent announcements from the Prime Minister on supporting our farmers and protecting defence jobs, let us never forget that each man, woman and child in Scotland is more prosperous and secure within the Union and the United Kingdom internal market.

This United Kingdom is the most successful union of nations the world has ever seen, and this Government are working day and night to strengthen the bonds that tie us together as one United Kingdom as we leave the European Union. As our economy transitions into a new dynamic age, spurred on by developments in artificial intelligence, precision medicine and new energy technologies, this programme for government lights the way for us to move with confidence and to reap the full benefits of the future.

As we leave the EU, we will regain control of our independent trade policy, which will allow us to discard the protectionist shell of the EU and turn our attention towards the growing markets around the globe. The siren voices of protectionism will never be silenced, but free trade is good for all, and by becoming the torch bearers of free trade, we can show the world that we are open for business and that we want to be more outward looking than ever. As part of that, I will continue to campaign for a free port for Aberdeen. I know that energy companies and subsea manufacturers in my constituency are increasingly looking for markets in Asia, Africa and the Americas. This programme will not only allow them to do so more easily, but support them to do so. This will be good for the national economy, the local economy and the financial security of my constituents.

In representing Aberdeen South, the core of the UK's oil and gas industry, I am acutely aware of the impact of the loan charge. I have been campaigning on this and urge the Government to act and to bring something forward with immediate effect, because there are people in dire circumstances who need our support and help. I believe, however, that the Government recognise the need for a healthy and robust private enterprise economy in order to properly fund the public services that people rely on every day, which is why I welcome this Queen's Speech. It is a Unionist programme from top to bottom, and one that will provide the stability and certainty our economy needs. That is why, without hesitation, I will vote for it tonight.

2.45 pm

Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield) (Lab): Last week, union representatives from Rolls-Royce came to see my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Jack Dromey) and me. Rolls-Royce is one of the main

anchors of the UK's aerospace sector and has operations in no less than nine EU member states. They came to tell us about their worries, the most direct and immediate being the disastrous impact that a no-deal Brexit would have on their sector. They were also clear that avoiding a no-deal Brexit was not enough, and they left us in no doubt about the importance to the long-term health of their company and their sector of preserving the frictionless trade that is key to their sector's success and that prevents the dislocation of the integrated operations of that company and its supply chains across the EU. In short, they echoed the very issues that the aerospace, food and drink, pharmaceuticals and automotive sectors had put to the Government in a letter just the week before.

Together those sectors employ more than 1 million people in this country and contribute £98 billion to the UK economy every year. They are very concerned about the downgrade that the Prime Minister's political declaration will mean for the economic relationship between the UK and the EU—a downgrade not only from the close alignment we already have with the EU, but even from that envisaged in the political declaration brought forward by the right hon. Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May). That downgrade was forensically exposed by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer) in Saturday's debate.

I will give a few examples. The first is aerospace. Post Brexit, the UK will either be part of the European Union Aviation Safety Agency or it will not. EASA is a mechanism for aligning standards that ADS, the aerospace industry body, describes as “vital” for the sector. But we still have no clarity at all about whether the UK will remain a member.

Chemicals is not only a key industry in its own right, but an essential part of the aerospace supply chain. Sixty per cent. of UK chemical exports go to the EU and 75% of the UK's chemical imports come from the EU. Chemicals or products containing them are bought, developed and sold backwards and forwards repeatedly between the EU and the UK. That can only happen without checks and delays and because they are governed by a common set of regulatory standards held in place by the UK's being part of the EU's REACH—registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals—safety programme. Will we stay part of that after Brexit? We simply do not know and the political declaration leaves us none the wiser.

The automotive sector is the UK's biggest single exporter of goods. We know that WTO tariffs, which would immediately kick in in the event of a no-deal Brexit, would be a hammer blow for the industry. However, it is not just avoiding no deal that is important; it is also about having a common rulebook of regulatory standards that remove the need for checks on goods that move over national borders.

I say to Ministers that constantly repeating the mantra that they are looking to have a “best in class”—their words—free trade agreement just will not cut it. That will not cut it, unless they provide the real and specific answers that are needed to the real and specific questions that UK industry has put to them. Unless they do that, either we will be back to the disaster that a no-deal Brexit would mean for our economy, or we will end up with something so half-baked that UK competitiveness will end up in a not very slow-motion car crash.

2.50 pm

Jack Brereton (Stoke-on-Trent South) (Con): Nothing matters more to families and communities than creating good jobs and improving the cost of living. We have witnessed incredible economic success for our country, thanks to the careful economic management of Conservatives, and it is with confidence and positivity that I can tell the House that Stoke-on-Trent is on the up. The city's population, economy and house prices are experiencing among the very highest growth in the country. Although we still have our challenges to overcome to reach our full potential, our local economy is now stronger and more diverse than ever before. We have a whole range of sectors calling Stoke-on-Trent their home, with companies from highest-end manufacturing to the most advanced digital industries flourishing.

Tragically, under Blair and Brown, we lost many of Stoke-on-Trent's biggest pottery names and factories and this has left us with brownfield sites that need to be redeveloped. The Conservative-led city council is working constructively with the Conservative Government to ensure that redevelopment takes place, and the ceramics industry has experienced a revival. For example, the historic Duchess China works in Longton, which I visited recently, has been taken over by Heraldic Pottery of Newstead, with fantastic plans to increase production at this iconic site. Staffs Fitness Ltd, a supplier of gym equipment, has just moved into buildings that were once part of the Fenton Glebe colliery site. Last week, I was delighted to visit and open what is a fantastic new home for this business, demonstrating what can be achieved.

However, while we are seeing new private investment in the city, many sites remain challenging, needing remediation due to former industrial uses. It is essential that we do more to address viability constraints that hold back brownfield sites from being developed. Especially, we must build on the huge success of the Ceramic Valley enterprise zone. As I discussed with the Secretary of State for Business recently, I hope that enterprise zone can continue and can expand to cover additional sites, particularly brownfield sites in Fenton, so that we can continue to see these sites redeveloped to create good-quality jobs.

It is vital that we do more to revive our high streets, incentivising the conversion of empty properties for new businesses and residential uses, and improving our town centre infrastructure. Stoke-on-Trent is made up of six historic market towns, and Longton and Fenton are within my constituency. I am pleased to have secured a heritage action zone that is focused on Longton town centre, which I hope will address this, but to be truly transformational and to maximise the heritage action zone's potential, we need some additional investment. I am deeply disappointed that we have so far missed out on future high streets funding, stronger towns funding and access for all funding for Longton station. The time to address the decline of our high streets in Stoke-on-Trent is now, and I know from discussions that I have had with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government that he is well aware of the importance of overcoming these challenges.

On transport infrastructure, I hope that the transforming cities fund will help to address this and it is essential that Stoke-on-Trent receives the full ask of Government in the second phase. I also hope that we are successful in our bid for a fair share of the £200 million bus fund.

Bus services in Stoke-on-Trent are currently dire, having been reduced beyond recognition. My constituents are regularly raising the fact that they no longer have services at all, or that services finish too early to get them home from work. The city council's intentions are nothing short of revolutionary, and increasing the number of fast, direct, reliable, affordable and popular bus services is an absolute must.

We must also improve traffic flows. As I have long advocated, junction 15 of the M6 needs to improve and we need additional work on the A50 and the A500 to address traffic hotspots. I am delighted by the work of Midlands Connect in its strategy to address that. I also welcome its work to address rail services on the North Staffordshire-Crewe-Derby line. I am delighted my efforts have already helped to secure improvements that will soon see longer trains to address overcrowding, more services in the evenings and at weekends, and most services extending to Nottingham.

2.54 pm

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): The theatre of calling on Her Majesty to read the Government's manifesto; the drama of Parliament being called to sit on a Saturday, when all the Prime Minister had to do was write a letter; the cost to the taxpayer—all that is nothing to the elites running their show, but to my constituents it was pounds and pence that they desperately need. They are paying a far heavier price, however, for a decade of failure, which was emphasised again in the Queen's Speech.

The Queen's Speech exposed two things. First, the list of Bills demonstrated that Brexit will not be "done", and that this is the start of at least a decade of Brexit talks, pushing out legislative space to deal with our national crises. Housing—not mentioned; poverty—not considered; jobs—not offered; inequality, which is stifling talent and opportunity—not even on the agenda. We should be in no doubt about the stark contrast between this Tory programme and a Government who will say anything to retain power, and a Labour programme that seeks to do everything, in a fiscally responsible way, to address people's very real needs. Labour has a robust programme to end poverty, sort out Brexit, fix our public services, tackle climate injustice, and grow the economy through the creation of good-quality jobs.

The pursuit of Brexit, deal or no deal, will make my constituents poorer. Indeed, York will be the eighth worst hit place in the country should we leave with no deal. A deal will increase inequality in one of the UK's most inequitable cities, yet the Government's programme does not address how my constituents will survive this economic shock. That is why we need an economic impact assessment.

Secondly, I must draw attention to the sheer number of criminal justice Bills that are proposed, as they are symbolic in exposing how a failed decade of cuts has put my community at risk. More prison places is a sign of failure; more draconian policing is a sign of being out of control. This Queen's Speech may result in more law, but it exposes no order.

When the wrong interests shape the economic priorities, society breaks down, and this Queen's Speech was not the antidote. Labour has long understood that, and just as when Keir Hardie set out Labour's first programme of policies, or when Clement Attlee rebuilt our nation

[*Rachael Maskell*]

after the war, today Labour's programme will fix the broken economy. The values are the same, the priorities are the same: building the housing that families need, fixing the services they use, and creating the jobs on which they depend.

Let us not pretend that the economy is working for all—it is not. In York, the boom in luxury housing means that my constituents cannot afford to live in their city, and they have to pay more than 10 times their annual wage for a home. Waiting lists in the NHS mean that my primary care mental health service is not just being cut but is being scrapped, despite the fact that we have some of the highest levels of self-harm, eating disorders, suicide and deaths from substance misuse in the country. We hear that millions and billions are being spent on the NHS, but that is not saving lives in my constituency. I know the fixes that York needs to function, and Labour's programme will address them. When the pursuit of power is the only objective, the cornerstones to rebuilding our communities get lost.

Behind the boisterous bluster, there is a chilling, calculated populist pursuit for power. We have seen it before; I know the story. I have read the history books, and it does not end well. This nation must wake up and recognise the signs; and in this place, from these Benches, Opposition Members have a duty to call them out. Populism does not work; it does not build houses, it does not put money into schools, it does not create jobs and it does not tackle inequality. Populism will not save my health service, but Labour will, and that is why I am proud to speak from these Benches.

2.58 pm

Scott Mann (North Cornwall) (Con): I am proud that this Government have set an ambitious agenda that focuses on our priorities, not only in the short term but for once we have got Brexit done, setting out a clear vision for Britain on the issues that matter to people, such as tackling crime, boosting our NHS and dealing with the cost of living. I pay tribute to the former Prime Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May). Her leadership of the country over the previous three years, and her stewardship of the economy, allowed this Government to inherit a booming UK plc and push forward on all the fronts.

In my constituency, the NHS is often raised with me on the doorstep, and I look forward to new proposals to fix the crisis in adult social care and give people the dignity and security that they rightly deserve. My constituents will also appreciate efforts to reform the Mental Health Act 1983 and ensure that people get the support they need. I am pleased to have on my patch the first in-patient adolescent mental health facility in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly for young people aged between 13 and 18. I joined Phil Confue, chief executive of Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, for a tour of the recently opened Sowenna unit, and it is great to see the funding that the Government have allocated to the NHS being spent on the ground to do the things that people want. NHS England describes the facility as the best young person's mental health facility in the country and it is right on our doorstep, in Bodmin. Children in Cornwall will no longer have to access services way out of county. This type of facility is the kind of blueprint that other rural constituencies need.

The Government are committed to tackling violent crime, strengthening the criminal justice system and ensuring that victims receive the support they need and quite rightly deserve. A new sentencing Bill will change the automatic release point from half sentences to two-thirds sentences for adult offenders serving sentences for four years or more for serious violence and sexual offences. Thanks to the fantastic work of the Blue Collar Conservative movement in this House, a police protection Bill will support the police by establishing a police covenant that recognises the bravery, commitment and sacrifice of our police officers.

Once we leave the EU, we will have an agriculture policy that will reform UK agriculture. Rather than tell my farmers in North Cornwall how their industry should be run, we have listened to them and are working with them so that they can run the land, rear their livestock and harvest their fields. It is clear from my farmers that they want better standards and increases in protections. The fisheries Bill will enable us to reclaim control over our waters, righting a historical injustice that has existed in this industry for a long, long time.

A financial services Bill will provide certainty and stability to maintain our world-leading regulatory standards and keep the UK open to international markets after Brexit.

As part of the greenest Government ever, we have an Environment Bill to protect our planet for future generations, with measures including a new office for environmental protection, more local powers to tackle air pollution and charges for single-use plastics. We do not just talk about climate change; we deal with climate change.

Finally, some have raised this issue previously, but on the doorsteps in North Cornwall at the moment the biggest issue outside Brexit relates to Barclays bank and the post office. I implore the Treasury to apply as much pressure as it can for my constituents to ensure that they are able to access cash. Many of my constituents do not want to use cashpoints or online banking; they want to have access to cash, and the post office is the last port of call in many of my villages. Please, Minister, put all the pressure on Barclays you can, because my constituents are rooting for you.

3.2 pm

Mr Adrian Bailey (West Bromwich West) (Lab/Co-op): I would like to use the short time I have to focus on the issues of fiscal responsibility, public spending and public debt, which have been much debated in the Queen's Speech, including by the Prime Minister and the Chancellor. I make it clear that I welcome the Government's public spending commitments, which are long overdue. As they stand they are inadequate, but they are a step forward. However, what is significantly absent from the Queen's Speech, and from any other pronouncement I have heard from either the Prime Minister or the Chancellor, is how they will be funded.

Will the Government's public spending commitments be funded through economic growth? I doubt it. Last quarter, debatably, we were in recession. Even the most optimistic estimates reckon that we will be flatlining for months to come. Indeed, if we look at current investment in our manufacturing, which is so crucial to economic growth, the idea that we will fund them through economic growth is, quite frankly, fantasy.

What about taxes? The Government are placed to reduce taxes; they are not demonstrating how they are going to increase them, so no information there. The fact is that the only alternative has to be borrowing and that is already looking pretty dicey. Even the current level of borrowing is an increase of 20% on the previous year. The deficit is currently projected to be in the region of £40 billion this year. That is expected to rise to a deficit of £50 billion-plus, with the £13 billion we are committed to spend next year.

In a moment, I will come on to talk about the impact of no deal and even the Government's withdrawal agreement. This is incredibly worrying, because the Government have not indicated how we are going to fund all this. I welcome it, but it is potentially very damaging indeed.

The Government have not given any economic impact assessment of the withdrawal agreement. On the one hand, they tell us we have to decide within two days of debating, because we have had three and a half years of debate, but on the other hand they say, "We haven't enough time to do an economic assessment." Perhaps someone can square those particular arguments; I cannot. Happily, a number of organisations have done an assessment, and they have made it clear that under the withdrawal agreement, we will potentially be £50 billion a year out of pocket—£20 billion more than the Office for Budget Responsibility estimates. We are heading towards the sort of debt levels that were portrayed under Labour as a prelude to economic apocalypse. Indeed, this argument was rehearsed again by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I would like to know why something that was portrayed 10 years ago in such a light should suddenly have morphed miraculously into a springboard for some sort of economic growth in the halcyon years that will come post Brexit. That does not make sense. The fact is that the Government were wrong in 2010 and they are wrong now. That is why I will vote against the Queen's Speech.

3.6 pm

Craig Mackinlay (South Thanet) (Con): I refer Members to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests.

Let us contrast where we are today with the background we inherited in 2010. We have unemployment down by 1.3 million—a 50% reduction from 2010. We have halved the number of young people who are out of work. We have made progressive increases to the national living wage. We have had a tax cut for 32 million through much bigger than inflation increases to the personal allowance, meaning that a basic rate taxpayer—the lower-paid—are paying £1,205 less in tax. Add that to increases in the national living wage, and the take-home pay—what lands in people's bank accounts—is £4,000 more for the lower-paid, and that really matters.

We have reinforced our position as a world leader in financial services. That industry provides £127 billion of value added to our economy, paying £29 billion in tax and with a trade surplus of £61 billion. We have seen corporation tax reduced from artificially high levels of 28% to 19% today, and that will come down to 17%. That is a key driver in making sure that Britain remains a place to do international business and in keeping businesses that might consider going abroad in this country earning money for us. We have an infrastructure plan of the kind that we have never seen before to

increase services on our roads and rail, and, of course, superfast broadband, on which we have been lagging behind for some time.

In the limited time left to me, I want to concentrate on our tax system. We need a debate about liberating our tax system to make sure that risk versus reward is properly in place and we do not penalise those who are willing to take risks and employ people to earn the money in the future. We have done very good work with the personal allowance, increasing it from the 2010 rate of £6,475 to £12,500 today. If we had had an inflation rate of 27%—on the figures during that period—we would have had a personal allowance of only £8,230, so we have got rid of the fiscal drag in that system. I am asking the Chancellor of the Exchequer, as he progresses towards his Budget, to consider the other aspects of fiscal drag that we have seen over the years.

For instance, on inheritance tax, the £325,000 limit has remained unchanged since 2009, whereas the house price index shows that house prices have increased quite substantially. We have had the main residence nil-rate band, but it has its complications, so this is a plea that we address fiscal drag across the system. We should treat tax not as though it is one move at a time; we need to play it strategically. We have done lots to improve the stamp duty system by getting rid of the rather hated slab system some years ago, but we are now seeing the additional 3% second property surcharge and, with the rates that exist at higher levels, a reduction in the tax take. We saw an increase in the tax take when we reduced the higher rate of income tax from 50p to 45p, and I propose that we can do the same with stamp duty.

I have advanced many of my proposals on capital gains tax to the Treasury, because I perceive there to be hundreds of thousands of properties stuck in second ownership owing to the application of penal CGT rates to those who own second properties but do not rent them out. We have a great opportunity to put our tax system back on the right footing—and please, please, let us not return to those old times when we penalised such people; let us support them.

3.10 pm

Martin Docherty-Hughes (West Dunbartonshire) (SNP): Let me begin by informing the House that I am a vice-chair of the all-party parliamentary group on blockchain.

At a time of great change, politically, economically and socially, we should be mindful of the technological change that is taking place in these momentous days. From the challenges posed to liberal democracy through the industry of fake news—mentioned by the hon. Member for Gedling (Vernon Coaker)—to the unbridled and unregulated sphere of social media, the economy of today in no way reflects the economy of yesterday. It is, indeed, an economy about to be further brutalised by a Government who are wedded to the worst types of mercantilism. This is a world in which we must challenge that economic vision with a simple word: trust.

How is it possible, in the 21st century, for the Government of the UK to fail to recognise the simple fact that trustworthy economies are more stable and have more positive economic and social outcomes that benefit their citizens? What is trustworthy about a Government who place one part of the Union at a competitive advantage at the expense of the rest? How is it possible

[*Martin Docherty-Hughes*]

that the Government have thrown the Democratic Unionist party under the Brexit bus, and also seek to remove Scotland from the largest liberal democratic single market and customs union in the world? The simple fact is that this Government cannot be trusted with Scotland's economy.

It would be easy to list the Government's failures, but I am sure that that litany of despair requires a debate of its own, so instead I shall mention some of the innovative and dynamic opportunities that are available to nations that are willing to participate in a trustworthy fashion. We need to look at new technologies such as blockchain, which, although not in itself a panacea, can be a valued asset in the delivery of public services by a range of public and private agents. According to the recently published European Commission report "Blockchain now and tomorrow", this technology can assist the delivery of transparency, security and increased trust across a range of fields including medicine, asset transaction, finance, education and the energy sector, and, critically, it can assist the resilience of the economic infrastructure. Only last April, the United States Department of Energy announced, through its National Energy Technology Laboratory, phase 2 of its blockchain-based electricity grid security pilot. Meanwhile, the UK thought that it might be good to give Huawei the 5G network and allow the People's Republic of China to build our nuclear power stations.

The last thing that Scotland needs at this critical point is removal from the largest coherent customs union and single market in the world, so let us look to its closest allies and EU partners to see how we can combat that narrative. One of those partners is none other than Estonia, a nation of 1.5 million with a rather large domineering neighbour in a state of flux, and a nation whose only contact with the outside world at the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union was a single secret mobile phone held by the then Prime Minister. Cut to 2019, and it is a digital society like no other, sitting at the top table of the European Union and named as the most advanced digital society in the world. Yet in 2007 the impact of a cyber-attack closed down its Parliament and major public services. That attack had a profound and, indeed, practical outcome for Estonia.

Even before Satoshi—of whom most people in the Chamber will never have heard—released their blockchain paper, the Estonians were ahead of the game. They called it "hash-linked time stamping". Since 2012, blockchain has been at the centre of its national economic infrastructure, in its health service, its judiciary, its legislature and its national security, as well as across a whole raft of commercial fields.

I am heartened by the fact that at least the Scottish Government, even with their limited powers, are pushing ahead. We need only read their report entitled "Distributed Ledger Technologies in Public Services" to see that blockchain represents a new opportunity for the creation of natively digital public services, building on the substantial policy framework of the Christie report on public service reform.

I hope the Minister recognises that the future is already here. If the Government are unable to commit themselves to achieving trust in the digital age by ensuring

honesty, consideration and accountability, they should get out of the way and let Scotland set its own economic destiny.

3.14 pm

Luke Graham (Ochil and South Perthshire) (Con): It is a pleasure to speak in this debate. I obviously want to praise the Government for their Queen's Speech. Some of today's announcements on infrastructure and broadband will bring real benefits to Scotland, actually delivering where the devolved authorities have failed on so many measures—failing on their R100 targets, failing on their landfill targets, failing on their education targets, failing on their mental health targets. Even in areas that are exclusively devolved, the SNP continues to underperform, and that is why it is so important that the UK Government make it clear that they are there for every constituent in Scotland, as they are for those in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and anywhere else in our United Kingdom and overseas territories.

Unsurprisingly, we will talk about Scotland, and we have been talking about Scotland today, but I shall focus on some aspects in the Queen's Speech that will improve our infrastructure and help boost our productivity. The broadband investment and the increase that, hopefully, will be coming through the shared rural network will help increase mobile connectivity in the most hard-to-reach parts of my constituency and also further north up into the islands. It will also give us the opportunity for further investment in our local communities, which I will come on to in just a minute.

Labour Members were taking issue with the economic literacy and performance of the United Kingdom Government. I would just like to say that, even in spite of some of the issues and challenges that are exposed through Brexit—let us face it, GDP growth has slowed since the referendum was announced in 2015—the UK is still performing pretty strongly in a European context. Its performance is still stronger than that of Germany, which is not facing Brexit and is a well-known advanced economy. So I do not think Brexit is the cause of all our ills. It is also not right to blame any of our European partners for some of the structural weaknesses in our country, such as our productivity and labour market capacity, which, of course, we need to increase.

The Queen's Speech is important and the Budget will be even more important in showing my constituents why the UK Government actually work for them. Yes, over the past two years, we delivered the VAT changes to get £35 million back for our police and fire services; yes, we corrected the historical injustice of 2013 to make sure that our farmers got the right amount of convergence funding, and got £50 million on top of that to put us on a fair footing looking forward, so our agricultural and rural communities get the funding they deserve; and yes, in this last spending review alone, we got £1.2 billion more put to the Scottish block fund, which is more than we received in EU structural funding between 2010 and 2016. That shows the value of the United Kingdom and the performance of this United Kingdom Government.

Meanwhile, back in Edinburgh, we have a Government who continuously underperform. Business confidence has been trailing behind that in the rest of the UK since before 2014, and we have a £1 billion tax gap that was exposed just in the last year. So the SNP consistently asks for more powers, but every time it gets them it

underperforms. On economics, we have that £1 billion tax gap and, as I have said, business confidence is way behind the rest of the UK. On welfare, we were told that a welfare agency could be established within 18 months, yet it has been deferred for over seven years. So the SNP is completely underperforming for our constituents.

It is vital for my constituents to understand that the UK Government are there for them. Whether in our rural towns such as Crieff or in former industrial areas such as Alloa and other towns in Clackmannanshire, it is clear the Government mean to deliver. I hope that in the Budget they will expand the stronger towns fund to Scotland, and I also hope they will continue to look at the Budget references and proposals from the Scottish Conservative and Unionist group, which will support our whisky industry, help our rural towns and communities and give us the opportunity to show that, actually, when our Government work together—central, devolved and local—we can perform for all our constituents and be proud to be Scottish and British together.

3.18 pm

John Grogan (Keighley) (Lab): I have always thought that the operation of democracy in a marginal seat is rather like the operation of capitalism: red in tooth and claw. Defending a majority of, say, 249 is rather like trying to run a company in a market that is very competitive; I have done both and what it teaches me is that we must concentrate on what is important in life. Therefore, following the passionate speech about Scotland made by the hon. Member for Ochil and South Perthshire (Luke Graham), I intend to speak about a region that has just a slightly larger population: Yorkshire and the Humber.

I welcome in the Queen's Speech the reference to a White Paper on English devolution; this is unfinished business for us all. Some 18 councils from all parties in Yorkshire have come up with a scheme for One Yorkshire devolution. Economic analysis of that suggests it could add £30 billion to the Yorkshire economy, using the Yorkshire identity and the Yorkshire brand to promote and get inward investment to improve transport and skills.

It is a welcome sign that the Prime Minister has said that he is "mad keen" on the principle of a One Yorkshire deal, but is that going to go the same way as his belief that there should not be a border in the Irish sea? There is a degree of worry in Yorkshire: how much does this promise mean? The Yorkshire councils have all said that they would move to a situation where they would agree to limited deals—not involving the whole county—until 2022, when the term of my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley Central (Dan Jarvis), the Mayor of South Yorkshire, ends, if the principle of One Yorkshire devolution is accepted.

But there is the problem of the Yorkshire backstop. The Government are saying that they will not agree to these interim deals unless there is agreement to balkanise Yorkshire in 2022 if no further agreement is reached. There would be four Mayors across the whole of Yorkshire, all competing with one another. We must stop that waste of public money and this balkanisation. The good news is that the Archbishop of York came down to this House and the Labour party, the Liberals and the Greens all agreed to support One Yorkshire in their next manifestos. It is to be hoped that the Government will, too.

Moving on rapidly to transport, I was in Transport questions this morning, and there does now seem to be doubt about whether HS2 will come to Yorkshire. If it does come to Yorkshire, it looks like it will go via Manchester, for some reason. It is always good to go to Manchester, but it is not the most obvious route for a train from London to Leeds. I call upon Transport for the North. John Cridland, who is the current chair has got a big job. He is also on the HS2 review committee. Which side is he going to be on—Transport for the North or that review committee? He must make that decision because we need Transport for the North to bat for the north.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Vernon Coaker) made a passionate speech. He spoke about the inequalities in our society, as did the hon. Member for Thirsk and Malton (Kevin Hollinrake). I suggest just two texts that we should look at in that regard. The other day, the Employee Ownership Association published a report calling for a national strategy on employee ownership. Seven per cent. of firms, including John Lewis, are employee-owned. The report suggested giving tax advantages, and making funds available when there are succession problems and so on, to create employee-owned funds. That could transform our economy, because such firms tend to be firms where there is higher productivity.

Finally, let us not forget the Asda workers. Next week, many of them will have to sign on the dotted line to sign away their rights in favour of so-called flexible working. The sooner we get a right at least to request a more stable employment contract, the better our society will be.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Lindsay Hoyle): I take the opportunity to welcome His Excellency Antonio Jose Ardila, the ambassador of Colombia, to our proceedings today.

3.22 pm

Mary Robinson (Cheadle) (Con): I welcome the Queen's Speech. It is wide-ranging and relevant and it has ambition for the country and the regions.

As a Greater Manchester MP, I understand the importance of ensuring that the benefits of a prospering economy reach every corner of the UK. For decades, the north of England has lagged behind the rest of the UK, especially London, economically, but the devolution agenda, in the guise of the northern powerhouse, set in motion by the Conservatives in government, has changed and empowered the ambition of the northern city regions and Greater Manchester has been at the forefront. The plans for a national infrastructure strategy are timely and I welcome its two key aims.

Investment in vital infrastructure and improving living standards are principal drivers of change, and the ability to deliver better jobs and opportunities is the foundation of a healthy and productive local economy. Opportunity begins with education. Because of the historically low levels of funding in Stockport, our schools have received significantly less per pupil than other areas, so I welcome the recent increase in funding, with all but three of the schools in Cheadle benefiting, in some cases by almost £500 extra per pupil.

When we properly fund our children's education we are investing in their future and expanding their opportunities in employment. Low unemployment in Cheadle indicates

[Mary Robinson]

a strong economy, but the ambition across our region is also for greater employment opportunities, particularly in developing a high-tech, digital and biotech business environment that will see the Cheshire-Manchester science corridor rival that of Cambridge. The first industrial revolution began in Manchester, and this national infrastructure strategy heralds the emergence of the fourth industrial revolution in the north.

Delivering higher-quality, better-paid jobs is not simply an end in itself, but links to a healthier population and a more productive workforce and economy. We can close the productivity gap between London and the north more easily with a healthier workforce. Health is a driver of a strong economy. Recently, the Northern Health Science Alliance highlighted the link between increased health spending in the north and productivity. Its "Health for Wealth" report indicated a strong link between health spending and the boost in productivity that we can expect. That is why the increased funding package for the NHS and the £30.6 million for Stepping Hill Hospital in my constituency are most welcome.

Transport is also devolved in Greater Manchester, and while I await the Mayor's plans for the implementation of measures made possible through the Bus Services Act 2017, I ask the Government to consider how they can support any changes that may be implemented. My constituents should not have to endure an undue financial burden to accommodate the Mayor's franchising proposals.

A national infrastructure strategy needs a national infrastructure project. I was initially pleased to hear the Prime Minister's commitment to Northern Powerhouse Rail between Manchester and Leeds, and I, along with other northern MPs, will continue to press for its full completion. Delivering on the Northern Powerhouse Rail proposals would mean that businesses and commuters will be within 90 minutes by train of four or more of our largest cities. I have also made representations to the Oakervee review, stressing the importance of HS2 to the north and to my constituents. Rail projects between north and south and east and west should be delivered from the north and delivered as one national infrastructure project.

The second key strand to the strategy is addressing the critical challenges posed by climate change, building on the UK's world-leading commitment to achieve net zero emissions. I therefore welcome the Environment Bill. However, I urge the Government to consider what more can be done about flooding, because homes and livelihoods in my constituency have been put at risk. Repeated flooding has caused many people to be out of their homes for some time, yet they are unable to access resilience funding, so I ask the Government to consider a permanent resilience fund.

3.26 pm

Yvonne Fovargue (Makerfield) (Lab): The Queen's Speech had nothing to say about debt but, unfortunately, debt continues to blight millions of our citizens, and the situation is getting worse. Nearly a third of people expect their finances to worsen in the next year, with only 14% expecting their situation to improve. The number of people saving is dropping, with a quarter of British adults having no savings at all. I am pleased that the Government have committed to breathing space,

even though it will only come in in 2021, but what about the other plank in that strategy: statutory debt repayment plans? They will need primary legislation, and I was surprised to see no plan for that in the Queen's Speech.

In the meantime, the Government can do much more to help those who have fallen into problem debt. We need increased funding for debt advice. I am not just talking about public money; I am talking about initiatives such as the Financial Conduct Authority's levy on lenders and the "fair share" scheme. The banks are simply not paying enough, and the utility companies are not stepping up to the plate by joining the scheme. It is great to have policies for vulnerable customers and to try to prevent debt, but people will fall into debt because they lose their job or become sick. If organisations will not act voluntarily, there is a strong case to compel them, and Her Majesty's Treasury should take note.

The Government also have an important role to play in reducing debt by overhauling their own debt collection practices, particularly the use of bailiffs. At the very least, we need an independent regulator of bailiffs and a commitment to use a fairer and more enlightened form of debt collection that puts the ability to pay first. The Government should also look at the policies that are helping to create debt in the first place, such as the freezing of benefits since April 2016 and the five-week wait for universal credit claims. Some 49% of benefit claimants affected by the freeze have struggled to meet essential costs, and many are using food banks. The Government should end the freeze and reduce the five-week wait by bringing forward the first non-repayable payment to no later than two weeks into a universal credit claim.

Another struggling group are the 1950s-born women. They did the right thing. They worked; they brought up their children, and many looked after elderly relatives, but they have been hit by successive rises to the pension age. The women who had just 18 months' notice under the Pensions Act 2011 were particularly hard hit, so it is of no surprise that many of them tell me that they are falling into debt or using food banks. They are angry, and rightly so, that their great contribution has been of so little value to this Government.

I commend St John Rigby College, Winstanley College and Wigan and Leigh College, which take students from across my constituency. They have struggled with underfunding for many years, but they continue to provide an excellent education for young people. It is time to raise the rate.

Older people, families and young people are all struggling. Few have any confidence that their finances will improve. There is much this Government could have done not just to improve the safety net when people need a little help but to ensure that the safety net is needed less and less.

3.30 pm

Chris Green (Bolton West) (Con): It is always a pleasure to follow my neighbour, the hon. Member for Makerfield (Yvonne Fovargue). What she says about debt and the issues around debt needs to be addressed.

On this final day of debate on the Queen's Speech, it is right that we focus on the economy, which underlies and funds all the vital public services on which we depend. Without a strong economy, we would not be able to invest in law and order to recruit 20,000 extra police officers. I agree with the Prime Minister's focus

on reforming sentencing, and we also need the 10,000 additional prison places. That is a key part of what we can do with a stronger, more robust economy.

There is more money for education, with £14 billion to level up standards and to level up investment in education right across the country.

A stronger economy delivers for our local communities, too. The Mayor of Greater Manchester created the town centre challenge fund a couple of years ago, and I wanted Atherton in my constituency to receive money to improve our town centre. Unfortunately, Wigan Council, which has been running the show so badly for such a long time, said that Atherton town centre needs so much more work than the fund can afford that it had decided not even to put Atherton forward for the funding. The contrast between the leadership of Wigan Council and the leadership of Bolton Council is profound.

I am pleased the Government are championing the cause of our towns. For so many years, we have heard about the north-south divide, and we are increasingly hearing about the divide between our cities and our towns. I am pleased the Government are supporting Bolton with £25 million from the stronger towns fund, which is incredibly important. The future high streets fund is also investing up to £150,000 in the town centres of Bolton and Farnworth. Such rebalancing between our cities and towns is important.

The leadership of Bolton Council is looking after the smaller towns and villages in the Borough of Bolton, as well as looking to secure £1.2 billion of investment in Bolton. As the centre of our borough, it is important that we get investment in Bolton. The council is also investing £4 million each in four of our smaller towns and local centres to make sure our local towns get the investment they need. It is about rebalancing the north and south and rebalancing our cities and towns, but it also about rebalancing between the larger towns and smaller towns in boroughs such as Bolton.

I am pleased the Government have a strong focus on health, which is incredibly important. I am particularly pleased to see the investment to create a medical training college in Bolton. Bolton College, Bolton University, the local clinical commissioning group and Bolton Council have a vision for investment in health, which is so important to the country.

3.34 pm

Stephen Kinnock (Aberavon) (Lab): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Bolton West (Chris Green). This Queen's Speech shows an incredible level of ambition, with 26 Bills and no Government majority to deliver them. High hopes indeed this Government have for our nation. Or could it be, just possibly, that the Government have no ambition at all to deliver this programme and it is nothing more than a naked pre-election stunt? Please do not call a Division on that, Mr Deputy Speaker.

The Prime Minister claims to be turning on the spending taps, but the truth is that the trickle of money from the Government goes nowhere near reversing the level of cuts the Conservatives have introduced since 2010. For the Welsh Government, that has meant a decade of diminishing budgets; even with the Chancellor's extra £600 million for Wales, the Welsh Government's budget for 2021 will be £300 million lower in real terms than it was in 2010-11. My Neath Port Talbot Council has had to remove more than £80 million from its

budget since 2010 and it is expected to find a further £42 million of cuts between now and 2023. Some 28,000 local government jobs in Wales have been lost since 2010.

As budget cuts have gone deeper and deeper, it has become impossible to sustain local services. Dedicated residents have volunteered to run libraries in Taibach, Briton Ferry and Cymmer, as well as the Noddfa community hall, the Gwynfi miners hall and the Afan Valley swimming pool. While the Government have stood by, our communities have stood up, but they should not have to; community action should be in addition to the state, not in place of it.

Fair funding also means replacing EU funding post-Brexit. Regional development funding has been crucial in boosting less prosperous areas all over the UK. My constituency is one of those areas that has benefited. Last year, I set up the all-party group on post-Brexit funding for nations, regions and local areas, which I chair. We have a real fear that the promised UK shared prosperity fund, which will replace EU funds, will be not only a financial grab, but a power grab by a UK Tory Government clawing back powers that sit naturally with the devolved Administrations. The great advantage of the current EU system is that it is data-driven and evidence-based, thus guarding against pork barrel politics. There is a real worry that the SPF will become a politicised slush fund, with a Conservative Government using it to buy votes in marginal seats. There is still no news on the SPF from Ministers. It has already been delayed and time is now running out for organisations on the ground, which need to plan for the future.

The Welsh are a proud, resilient people. We are not looking for special treatment. We are looking for a fair deal, and that is true of people across Britain. The Government like to cite headline employment figures, but when we scratch below the surface, we see insecure work and low pay, and, as a result, low productivity. In the UK economy, all that glitters is not gold. The Chancellor offers warm words on an infrastructure plan, but does this really cut the mustard, after 40 years of an economy built on the agglomeration of wealth, power and opportunity in our major cities, at the expense of industrial, rural and coastal areas? We need real change; a national investment bank with regional divisions; a green jobs revolution, underpinned by a 21st-century steel industry; and a proper alternative to post-16 academic education. This is the whole-nation politics that Britain, Wales and the people of Aberavon need and deserve. This is the vision, and the Queen's Speech will fail miserably to deliver on it.

3.38 pm

Nigel Mills (Amber Valley) (Con): Thank you for drawing me out first in the ballot this morning, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am not sure how long we will have to get the Bill through, but perhaps I should be less keen on an election now than I was first thing this morning.

This Queen's Speech offers a plethora of things that will be warmly welcomed in my constituency: getting Brexit sorted; £34 billion for the NHS; £14 billion for schools; 20,000 more police officers; longer prison sentences; a world-leading Environment Bill; faster broadband; and investment in infrastructure. With a list like that, what's not to like? It is almost churlish to think of some ideas that the Government have not included, but I have three and a half minutes left, so I ought to have a go.

[Nigel Mills]

First, may I urge the Government that we need a bit of a focus on what we need to do to improve things in the harder-to-reach parts of the country? I would include in that the smaller towns in constituencies such as mine, where investment has not come at the rate it has into cities or other parts of the country and where investment in schools has lagged behind. The rise to £5,000 from next year gives my local schools a 6% increase overall and is greatly welcome, but we have not got school standards in the white working-class areas of the country, especially for boys, anything like as good as we would need them to be. Perhaps it is now time for a targeted focus on how we get standards in areas that are behind up to the national average.

Another issue is how local economies retain the skills of people when they have perhaps been to university or elsewhere, rather than having brain drain when they move elsewhere. I support an idea from local employer David Nieper Ltd, which would like to have some extra support so that small and medium employers can sponsor young people from the area through university courses that their businesses need, in return for those young people working in the businesses afterwards. Perhaps a version of the R&D tax credit for a skills tax credit could help in that situation. It would keep people in the local area and they would end up with less debt. It would be a win all round.

Let me touch on what else we could do to boost the regional economy once we have left the EU and have much more freedom for our tax regime. One thing we should look into is what tax-varying powers we could use for the regions of England, rather than thinking that that can be done only for the devolved nations. I cannot see any reason why we could not have a lower corporation tax rate in the midlands and the north, to encourage business investment in those areas rather than just in the south-east. Why could we not have a different business rates regime? Why could we not have lower air passenger duty to boost connectivity into regional airports, rather than the crowded south-east? All these things would boost the regional economy, and they would not need to be applied in London so would not cost quite so much money.

Finally, I should mention the very welcome Pension Schemes Bill that was announced in the Queen's Speech. It has not been the subject of much excitement today. The really important measure in it is the one on the pension dashboard, which will mean our constituents will all be able to find out exactly how much pension they have saved. There is a real risk, though, that they will find out that they do not have enough. We need to do more to boost saving, for both pensions and other things. I urge the Government to think about that.

We have successfully escalated auto-enrolment levels without the opt-out levels that were feared. Is it not now time to try to increase savings levels a bit earlier than the mid-2020s, so that we can try to get people to save the amount that we know they really need? Is there any way that we can add some flexibility into the system, so that perhaps people in their early 20s are not faced with a choice between saving for a pension and saving for a deposit on a house? Is there a way they could use their pension to get on the housing ladder? That would be a huge asset in their retirement and save them paying housing costs.

Overall, I am more than happy to support the Queen's Speech. It delivers on most of my constituents' priorities, and I commend it to the House.

3.42 pm

Anna Turley (Redcar) (Lab/Co-op): This is a Queen's Speech for a parallel universe. It was called to set out an electioneering position for a Tory party that had planned that, by now, we would be about to launch into a general election. I am afraid it has all the hallmarks of a hollow, shallow, arrogant Government who seek to put party before country, with a hard Brexit that will hit my area and the people I am so proud to represent harder than anywhere else in the country.

We have already had decades of being left behind in this unequal, loaded economy. Through no fault of their own, the people of Teesside and Redcar are struggling more than most. Unemployment in our area currently stands at 4.8%, as opposed to 3.1% nationally. Some 43% of our households have no adult in work and a third have at least one person with a long-term health problem or disability. The number of young people not in education, training or employment is two and a half times the national average. Why should the young people of Redcar and Cleveland not have the same opportunity as those elsewhere in the country to live, work, flourish and prosper?

One in 10 people in my area have no qualifications at all. There are seven secondary schools and a college in my constituency, yet only one of those institutions offers A-levels. Out of our total of 54 schools, 53 have had funding cuts—that is £27.8 million taken out of our local schools, or £349 taken from every single one of Redcar's children.

There is a wider crisis in respect of the children in our borough and the challenges for the families who look after them. A quarter of our children live in poverty and, since 2012, Redcar and Cleveland has seen a 73% increase in the number of children going into care. This is a crisis, and all while £90 million has been cut from Redcar and Cleveland's budget by the Tories and their coalition with the Lib Dems. It is not sustainable.

It is upsetting for me to have to say all this—I do not want to have to stand here and plead our poverty. We should not be in this situation, with the use of food banks surging as universal credit has left people in debt and desperation, and as crime rises out of control because we have lost 500 officers and £40 million has been cut from our local police force. Drug dependency and suicides are on the increase as people feel bereft of hope and opportunity. This is a failure of Tory policy. It is a failure of our economy and our society to ensure that towns such as Redcar and the people I represent can fulfil their potential. That is why I will not take one single step towards a Brexit policy that, as its own architects admit, will make our people poorer. We have so much potential to flourish and succeed. Just as we were once the old smoggy engine of the industrial revolution, so we can be the new, clean, environmentally friendly engine of the green, low-carbon industrial renaissance.

We need a Government who will invest in us. Where is the money for the reclamation of the SSI steelworks site that the Chancellor himself closed four years ago, costing us 3,000 jobs and ending 175 years of steelmaking on Teesside? The Government have turned their back

on us and are leaving the reclamation to be funded by potential future business rates, robbing our local authorities of even more money and threatening that dangerous and even deadly work could be done on the cheap.

Where is our investment for carbon capture and storage that could create 1 million jobs in the chemical industry? Where is the support for great institutions such as TTE Technical Institute and Redcar College to give young people the skills and apprenticeships they need? Where is the support for Teesside's hydrogen economy to produce heat, to green our transport and to help us to hit our net-zero targets? Where is the Government's backing for the huge Sirius Minerals project that is now at risk, along with 1,000 jobs? Three hundred jobs are already gone because the Treasury pulled the plug on its support. British Steel still sits on a knife edge. The people of Redcar and Teesside stand ready to get back on their feet. They are desperate to work, but they cannot do it alone. There is nothing in this Queen's Speech for them.

3.46 pm

Stephen Metcalfe (South Basildon and East Thurrock) (Con): I am pleased to be able to make a short contribution in response to the Gracious Speech. There is much to be welcomed in this Queen's Speech, and it is a testament to the Government's stewardship of the economy that we are able to put some of these actions forward.

I had wanted to remind the House a little bit about the toxic economic inheritance that we received back in 2010 and then how, over the past decade, we have transformed the UK economy, which has allowed us to invest in our important public services, but I fear that I do not have the time. We have come a long way, but there is always more to do. This Queen's Speech, I believe, starts that process and builds on the progress.

We are putting more money into hospitals. We have heard about the £14 billion that is going into schools, and we are funding 20,000 extra police officers, 135 of whom I will see in my Essex constituency. There is therefore much to welcome, but I cannot make a contribution to this debate without talking about the first and foremost Bill in the Queen's Speech—the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill.

I was very pleased when, earlier this week, the Second Reading of the Bill received approval, but I was disappointed when the programme motion failed. Had it passed, there would have been a huge sigh of national relief, and it is a shame that we have a Bill that has passed but can go no further. Some 73% of my constituents voted to leave the EU and, three and a half years on, they cannot understand why we have not left. Just pushing the can further down the road will not solve this problem. Everything that can be said about Brexit has been said twice already. No vote will change because of words spoken in this Chamber. We just need to get on with it. If we cannot get on with it, we will need to have a general election.

There are other things to which I want to refer. I particularly welcomed the announcement of the proposal to introduce the Prisoners (Disclosure of Information About Victims) Bill. I am sure that the hon. Member for St Helens North (Conor McGinn) also welcomes that Bill. It is of particular importance not only to me, but to my constituent Linda Jones. Her daughter, Danielle, was murdered by her uncle, who has continually refused

to disclose the location of her body. The Bill is also important to numerous other families affected by this tragic and cruel crime, including Marie McCourt, whose daughter, Helen—after whom Helen's law is named—was murdered. Although the announcement is welcome, the Government need to ensure that all relevant parole hearings that are in process are paused until the Bill is enacted so that no one is disadvantaged by the timing.

While there are all the other Bills that I welcome, I want to focus on the science aspect of the Queen's Speech for the last 45 seconds of my contribution. As a former Chair of the Select Committee on Science and Technology, chair of the all-party parliamentary group on artificial intelligence and the Government's envoy for engineering, I recognise that this Government have done a huge amount for science over the last 10 years and have promised to do more, including by investing £7 billion in our research and development base over the next five years. We are a global science power. We punch well above our weight; pound for pound, we create more citations internationally than any other country. This Government are doing all they can to protect and nurture that base. I ask Ministers to please continue to make scientists from around the world welcome in the UK so that the best and brightest always base themselves here.

3.50 pm

Albert Owen (Ynys Môn) (Lab): This will be my last Queen's Speech after 18 years in this place, as I have announced that I will not be standing at the next general election. I will miss some things, but not jumping up and down for hours to get the opportunity to speak—I have to say that I have not enjoyed that at all.

Let me begin with the withdrawal agreement and Brexit itself, because it will have a huge impact on my constituency and the port of Holyhead, which is the fastest growing port in the whole United Kingdom in terms of trade with Europe. It is massive. A border down the Irish sea will mean tariffs and added costs for Welsh communities and businesses, and checks that will take time and delay cargoes. For the Chancellor of the Exchequer to say in his opening remarks that no economic impact assessment is necessary shows his lack of understanding of the policy that his Government are pushing through. The Brexit Secretary does not understand the implications of tariffs and customs checks either, and of course the Prime Minister said that there would never be a border down the Irish sea. It is not a border; it is an economic iron curtain for many of us in Wales, and it is really disappointing that the Government have done this.

We have no impact studies, but the Welsh Government reckon there will be a 7% reduction in the Welsh economy over the next 15 years. That is probably why the Chancellor of the Exchequer does not want to produce the figures—because he knows that there will be a negative impact.

I want to try to be as positive as I can about the Queen's Speech, although it will be difficult. I welcome the Environment Bill because we need to build consensus on the challenge of climate change and a low-carbon economy. I want to see a UK Government working with the devolved Administrations on this. There are good practices in other parts of the United Kingdom that we need to adapt into Bills here, including on a low-carbon infrastructure.

[*Albert Owen*]

If we are serious about climate change, we need a revolution in renewables, but we also need to invest in carbon capture and storage—and, yes, in new nuclear. If we are to reach our target of net zero carbon emissions by 2050, we need to double our low-carbon infrastructure. We have an infrastructure plan, but it is not ambitious enough. We need to work together on this now. We need a low-carbon revolution—not just in energy generation, but in our homes and the built environment. We need to do it street by street and community by community, with gas fitters being replaced by solar and underground storage engineers. It has to be done now and it can be done. Mr Deputy Speaker, you and I are old enough to remember North sea gas coming online. That revolution employed thousands of well-paid engineers and fitters, and that is what we should be talking about now.

This Queen's Speech lacks content, because it should mention how we will make a material change to the lives of the people we are sent here to represent. In that respect, it has failed on all scores and I will not be supporting it tonight. I will, however, work with the Government if they want to improve people's lives through a green revolution and ensuring that there are high-quality green jobs in this country. My constituency has a proud record and we have the ability to move forward, but there are new projects that lack a funding mechanism—another missed opportunity. Tidal and marine energy does not have the necessary funding for it to become a mature and much-needed technology for the future. The Government have missed that opportunity. We need lagoons—not just in Swansea bay, but in Colwyn bay and in Cemaes bay in my constituency.

3.54 pm

Trudy Harrison (Copeland) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (*Albert Owen*), because he and I share so much in our love for the nuclear industry. I refer Members to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests.

I welcome the Government's national infrastructure strategy that is set out in the Queen's Speech because of its long-term vision to improve our digital, transport and energy infrastructure. Such a vision, and the action taken through Government policy and in financial terms, will transform the lives and livelihoods of communities such as mine in Copeland. The first ever national infrastructure assessment has informed the strategy, which will close the productivity gap between London and other parts of the country.

It is important to recognise the incredible, proven ability of producing clean nuclear energy over many decades in countries around the world. Nuclear is tried, tested and trusted. It is a vital component in reducing our carbon emissions and hitting the net zero carbon commitment. The renewables sector has been well supported by this Government. They have quadrupled our renewables capacity since 2010 and reduced carbon emissions by 42% compared with 1990, while growing the economy by two thirds. That is brilliant progress, but renewables alone are not the answer, because when the sun does not shine and the wind does not blow, we still need electricity, heating, cooling, power and transportation every hour of the day, and every day of the year. That must be consistent and controllable, working with renewable energy.

The benefits of nuclear go beyond one industry or a local community near a reactor. A long-term commitment will bring huge benefits to research and development, science and industry, manufacturing, construction, apprenticeships, and the UK's export potential. One aspect I would really like the Treasury to look at, however, is the cost-benefit analysis that is deployed through the Green Book, because that will never prioritise the population. It does not encourage a realisation of the true potential of communities such as mine that are northern, coastal and rural.

The benefits that come from our nuclear industry will be played out tomorrow when I visit the Sellafield graduation event, where I will see more than 130 apprentices, over 40% of whom are young women, graduating to follow their dreams in the nuclear industry. I must add to my declaration of interests, as my youngest daughter has now joined the nuclear industry as an apprentice in the sector.

As a region, the north-west has lagged behind London and the south-east. The national infrastructure strategy recognises and tackles that. The investment in local skills and industries that the Queen's Speech promises will rebalance the economy, empower communities and decarbonise the world. That is why I shall vote for it tonight.

3.58 pm

Mr Sam Gyimah (East Surrey) (LD): This Queen's Speech is a pre-election stunt, as many have acknowledged today. As such, it is long on spending promises—what some would call pork barrel politics—and short on a real plan for the economy. This Queen's Speech has 25 words devoted to the economy, whereas the 2017 Queen's Speech had five paragraphs and in the 2016 Queen's Speech the economy was the main priority. This would be fine if our economy was going gangbusters, but let's us all face it: 1.5% economic growth is not much to sing about, not to mention the problems of low productivity and wage growth that has been relatively low.

The reason for this is that the party of which I was a member, the Conservative party, has moved away from being the party of economic competence. There was a time when rising stars in that party were credited with coming up with ingenious ideas to create prosperity and growth, but now the minimum requirement to become a Minister is to support no deal. In other words, they are willing to throw the economic cards up in the air, and that is why the Conservative party is not emphasising the economy as much in this Queen's Speech.

I was surprised when the Chancellor said that he was not going to produce an economic impact assessment for the Government's Brexit plans. We can argue that we do not trust economic evaluations because they underestimate how great Brexit will be, or we can say that people care more about GDP, so economic evaluations of Brexit are irrelevant—but we cannot argue both, or we risk mimicking the 10 leaky buckets.

My main concern with the Queen's Speech is that at the heart of it is a deceit, which Conservative Members know very well. Every election comes down to two things: it is either more of the same or time for change. The Conservatives are arguing that our country can have more of the same on the economy—to give them credit, they have done a lot of good work to rescue it from the financial crash, helped by the party that I am

currently a member of—while at the same time taking the biggest gamble on our economy. They are effectively saying that people can still have all the benefits of leaving while retaining the benefits of remaining. That is what this Queen's Speech suggests is possible, and we know that it is not, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston and Surbiton (Sir Edward Davey) said.

When we come to the big economic divide in our country, between the north and the south, all the economic analysis shows that the recovery from the last recession has been unbalanced. Left-behind towns, post-industrial towns and seaside communities are all struggling, but they will not benefit from this Queen's Speech. Yet the electoral strategy of the Conservative party is to win those people's votes, to get an increased majority.

This Government have deprioritised the economy and are taking a huge gamble on it. Every assessment says that our growth will be lower. The Government will not be able to deliver these spending plans, and they will be going back to those same people who are crying out for change to ask for an increased majority. That is a serious deceit, and those of us on the Opposition Benches who stand for remain know that we can give the country what it needs to invest and grow.

4.2 pm

Susan Elan Jones (Clwyd South) (Lab): It is a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for East Surrey (Mr Gyimah), who manages to expose both the extremism and the opportunism of the current Government. There was a time in history when some parliamentarians were given four hours to speak in the Chamber. Today we get four minutes, so I am sure Members will forgive me if I concentrate on one of the many issues that is missing from this Queen's Speech—or, should I say, the phantom Queen's Speech, since we know it will not really be enacted.

I want to touch on a subject that is of great concern to my constituents and without which I do not believe we will have any economic justice, which is the need for the total overhaul of universal credit. I am cautious about calling for things to be scrapped, but the current set-up is so irredeemable that that is probably the only remedy. The ridiculous waits of five, six or more weeks were always going to lead to debt and inhumane food bank usage. The creation of a system where housing payments did not go to landlords was always likely to create a nonsensical set-up, which my grandmother would probably have referred to as money down the drain. Tied in with that is the random, ineffective and, in some cases, downright inhumane ways in which people with terminal conditions are assessed.

My constituent Jenny puts it rather better than I can, and this is a metaphor of what has gone wrong. She writes:

"In June I was told I needed to apply for universal credit, moving my existing housing benefit claim and child tax credits over from the Council and HMRC to Universal Credit. I was told that there was a 5 week assessment period, followed by a 1 week payment verification period so 6 weeks. My Child tax credit was stopped completely leaving me with no income for 6 weeks. When I complained, they said I could loan the money but needed to repay it. I was initially advised by the Job Centre to apply for Job Seekers Allowance even though they didn't think I was eligible and they were vague. I ended up complaining. Then I was advised to apply for both Jobseekers Allowance and Universal Credit. They said it would be back dated to June and corrected if wrong."

On and on this continues:

"Weeks passed and my Universal Credit was calculated. They are taking £120 per month from me for the 'loan' of money so I get this instead of receiving child tax credit. Technically I have lost out on 6 weeks of child tax credits. It's a lot of money to lose, people are still eligible for it, yet it's been stopped for 6 weeks. Now I'm expected to pay back this loan that I was forced to take to feed my children while they take their time assessing what they already have on record."

So this continues. She now says:

"I'm just going through a few tests at the moment as I've been immobile and in severe pain with my spine. I have to provide proof of medical appointments, private Osteopath receipts and NHS reports which are private. A sick note from a qualified GP won't do. I've also had to deliver my GP sick note in person as they will not allow me to email it to them. I live in a village and it can be difficult to get to town when I'm in debilitating pain and on strong medication. Susan, I hope you can raise these points in the House of Commons as in this day and age, no families with young children should be forced into debt by Universal Credit and the Government. There are families left in debt depending on food banks etc once their Universal Credit loans are deducted. All this has a terrible effect on people's mental health and I feel the system is just trying to trip people over with sanctions."

The Government may have warm words, the Prime Minister may even have words in Latin—well, I have a few in English and Welsh that I could give back to him. *[Interruption.]* No, no, I don't swear, but I will tell you this: it is about time we had a Government who listened to people such as Jenny and who combined prosperity and social justice in this country.

4.6 pm

Faisal Rashid (Warrington South) (Lab): Hunger is becoming normal in modern Britain. Is that not the most scathing indictment of today's broken economy? In my town of Warrington, our local food bank has just had to open a new distribution centre to cope with rising demand. It was set up in 2012, just two years after the Tories came to power with the help of Liberal Democrats, and now it distributes about 46,000 meals, 35% of which go to children.

The Prime Minister has previously said he thinks that food banks are fantastic and boasted about setting up loads during his time as London Mayor. Just think about that—an Eton-educated man born into extreme wealth and privilege celebrating the fact that more and more people in our society cannot feed themselves and their children. There can be no doubt that he is ruling over an economy run in the interests of a privileged few: more people in this country going hungry, homelessness at a record high, millions of children in poverty, the nightmare of zero-hours contracts.

Our NHS used to be the envy of the world. Its hard-working staff still are, but it is being run into the ground after almost a decade of Tory rule. People in our country today work the longest average full-time hours in Europe, apart from Greece and Austria. Has this translated into a rise in wealth and living standards for the average worker? Absolutely not. According to analysis from the Institute for Fiscal Studies, annual wages were £760 lower last year than they were a decade ago. Productivity also continues to decline. The average employee today works more, earns less and produces less than a decade ago. Families are forced to borrow to cover basic expenses. An estimated 8.3 million people cannot keep up with debts or bills. The housing market is in crisis, with young people set to be poorer than their parents.

[Faisal Rashid]

These are the symptoms of a deeply broken economy that requires a radical overhaul. Yesterday, the Prime Minister boasted of his party's sound management of the economy. I find that remarkable. Despite the Tories' bogus claims about getting the deficit down, Government debt is now 10% higher as a proportion of GDP than it was in 2010. They have presided over a lost decade of economic stagnation, with ordinary workers paying the price. It is clear that the UK's failing economic model demands bold ideas and leadership. These are clearly in short supply on the Government Benches. In government, Labour would rewrite the rules of the UK economy, fundamentally redistributing wealth and power and putting it in the hands of ordinary working people. We would not see food banks expanding under Labour; we would see them shut down for good.

This Government are intent on tearing the country apart over Brexit. Labour would rebuild it with properly funded public services, investment in local businesses, a comprehensive green industrial strategy and a plan to revive communities and businesses that have been cast aside and left to rot under Tory rule. The truth is that we do not need a Government on the side of remain or on the side of leave—we need a Government on the side of the many, not the few.

4.10 pm

David Linden (Glasgow East) (SNP): I rise to speak in favour of the amendment in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford). Ordinarily, the Queen's Speech is the set-piece occasion for the British Government. It normally outlines the Government's domestic priorities and legislative proposals for the year ahead. Instead, this Queen's Speech is a total charade. In fact, it is nothing more than a fantasy wish list from a Government who have lost their majority and are now completely out of control.

To be frank, even if the Government did have a majority with which to plough ahead with the proposals in the Queen's Speech, the legislative programme is still bereft of ideas and ambition for Scotland. All of us who undertake weekly surgeries know the priorities of the people whom we seek to represent in this place. Those priorities should be reflected in the Government's legislative programme, but they are not. In Glasgow, people tell me that they want to see justice for the WASPI women, and this Queen's Speech has failed to deliver that. In Glasgow, people want to see universal credit fixed and the most punitive measures removed from it, and this Queen's Speech has failed to sort that out. Put simply, this Queen's Speech fails Scotland and it demonstrates why we need to be a normal independent state.

Let us look at the proposed initiatives in the Government's legislative programme that will have an impact in Scotland. The Government's immigration Bill will end free movement, which has been critical to growing a strong and diverse economy in Scotland. Put simply, ending freedom of movement could cost Scotland £2 billion in tax revenues. That is why, since December 2018, the Scottish Government have been making the case for permanent membership of the single market and customs union. That has been deemed to be fine for Northern Ireland, but not for Scotland, which is a pretty peculiar approach for a supposed Union of equals.

We know that Scotland's population growth over the next 25 years is predicted to come from migration. This makes the case for continuing freedom of movement, which, sadly, the immigration Bill will put an end to. That comes at an economic cost. When we do an analysis of the tax taken from EU citizens in Scotland, it shows that there will be a 4.7% reduction in Scotland's revenue by 2040 if EU migration falls by 50%, as is projected following Brexit. So there is a hit to the economy from the immigration Bill, which will be bad for Scotland.

I want to turn to the consequences of Brexit, which continues to cast a dark shadow over these islands and our economy in particular. This week we have seen the introduction of the withdrawal agreement Bill, which, among other things, makes provision for Northern Ireland continuing to have access to the single market and customs union. It is an inescapable fact that this puts Scotland at a competitive disadvantage, which is bad for jobs and bad for our economy. But Brexit does not just pose a future threat to our economic prosperity, because Scotland's economy is already £3 billion smaller than it would have been had the Government not pushed ahead with a damaging Tory Brexit.

If this Queen's Speech and the Brexit process have done one thing, it has been to crystallise things for people in Scotland who are beginning to consider an alternative future and pathway. Throughout the Brexit negotiations, we have seen a tale of two Unions. In the European one, the small, independent Republic of Ireland has been shown immense solidarity from the European Union, which treats it as an equal member state and listens to its needs and sensitivities. In this British Union, Scotland and its people have been shut out and ignored by an intransigent Westminster Government, who are obsessed by the politics of little England. This Queen's Speech simply makes the case that Britain has nothing more to offer Scotland. It makes the case that we must have the right to choose our own future and take our own path away from Brexit Britain and failed Tory economics.

4.13 pm

Mr Paul Sweeney (Glasgow North East) (Lab/Co-op): It is a pleasure to follow my constituency neighbour, the hon. Member for Glasgow East (David Linden), in this debate on the Queen's Speech.

Surveying what was said earlier in the debate by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to me it felt like a speech made from a parallel universe, to be quite frank, with no resemblance to what I see happening on the streets of my city and my constituency. Looking at the pain and the hurt visited on this country by this Government, we see an act of deliberate and calculated economic sabotage. In fact, it is an act of economic and social vandalism by this Government.

There have been 10 lost years in which wages have stagnated, or are lower than they were 10 years ago. That fed into a recent report by Menu for Change—an alliance between Oxfam Scotland, the Poverty Alliance, the Child Poverty Action Group Scotland and Nourish Scotland—which showed that people are facing severe despair. I see such despair in my constituency surgeries week after week. People are emaciated, starving, and struggling to feed their children. They feel humiliated and suffer from poor mental health as a result of the anguish they face and the problems visited on them by this Government.

This is not a joke or something that can be theorised; this is experienced week in, week out. I have seen it in the cuts to disability allowance. My constituency is the worst affected in Scotland, and the change from disability allowance to the personal independence payment is affecting my constituents who lose £1.9 million in disability benefits every year as a result. In some constituencies that are already on the breadline, the effects of that lost income is causing a mini-recession.

The report by Menu for Change highlighted that hunger is increasingly a feature of our communities in a way that it has not been since the creation of the welfare state 70 years ago, and people are increasingly becoming suicidal with despair because of the impact it is having. The solution is not food banks or more food—a lack of food is not the problem; the source of the problem is a lack of income. We must get more money into people's pockets to solve the problem, and the Government have fundamentally failed to address that issue. Child poverty and the impact of universal credit are related. The biggest achievement of the previous Labour Government was to reduce child poverty by record levels, from 3 million children living in poverty in 1998 to 1.6 million in 2010. This Government's austerity policies have reversed that achievement, and child poverty now stands at 4.1 million. That shameful epitaph hangs over this Conservative Government in their dying days, and they should feel the shame of that as they try to make their case for forming the next Government.

The Government's policies on the future of the European Union are an act of economic sabotage. In my constituency, the largest single employer, Allied Vehicles, is a fantastic example of industry and entrepreneurialism. It was created in a community that had suffered significant deindustrialisation, and the business grew from having just a few employees in the 1990s to now employing 700 people in skilled, well-paid jobs. It is the largest importer of Peugeot, Citroen, Ford, Volkswagen and Mercedes vehicles in the UK. It converts them into wheelchair accessible vehicles, and it has the largest market share of wheelchair accessible car production in Europe. It is scared that in a no-deal scenario, or if the transition period ends before a customs union or free trade deal is agreed, under World Trade Organisation terms its products will face a 10% levy on exports from the UK to the EU. That is more than the total margin on its sales, and it will stop that export business dead in its tracks. That business is projected to create another 200 jobs in my constituency by 2025, and to increase vehicle production from 500 to 3,800 per year.

That is the economic vandalism I speak of when I look at this Government's policies on the European Union, and it is directly related to my constituency. Such vandalism is utterly shameful, and when we try to get clarity, there is none. This Government are not fit to hold office—they must go, and go quickly.

4.17 pm

Matt Western (Warwick and Leamington) (Lab): Having sat through much of the debate over the past five days, I am reminded of Shakespeare's "Much Ado About Nothing". This debate seems to have been entirely fatuous, other than to highlight the failings of this Government, and the previous coalition Government, of which I am afraid there are many. Even Her Majesty looked understandably disinterested as she delivered

her Gracious Speech—a lot of pomp and much circumspect. It all seemed farcical, and so it proved—the debate was pulled after three days to make way for a Brexit debate. A suspension after a suspension: anyone would think the Government were playing for time and actively seeking to undermine our parliamentary democracy.

The Gracious Speech was full of warm words, but they bear little correlation to the reality on our streets, especially in Warwick and Leamington. When I talk to people on the streets or in my surgeries, or visit businesses and schools, those people—the teachers, the business leaders, the nurses—tell me that they are frustrated and angered by this Government. They see a Government who do not truly care about homelessness and rough sleeping, and who have no vision for the future. The Government's ambition is to eliminate rough sleeping by 2027—that is eight years away—and the good people of Warwick and Leamington find that unacceptable. We want that issue to be addressed urgently.

People see an economy stacked against them. They are working longer hours, and driven to zero-hours or flexible contracts. People such as those working at Asda, down the road from where I live, have to accept what they view as a Martini contract: they have to work anytime, anyplace, anywhere. It is totally unacceptable. Many women work in retail, so they are the ones who are affected. They are the ones who are so hard hit.

I therefore take issue with people I hear talk about a great jobs miracle. It is not a miracle; it is an utter jobs mirage and we have to understand what is really behind it. A few decades ago, people had 40-hour-a-week contracts. Now, perhaps two people may fill that role, but they are on zero hours and are deemed to be employed. The reality, of course, is quite different. It is the uncertainty of those contracts, the underemployment in our society and the penalising process of universal credit that hurts so much and has led to a rise in homelessness and child poverty.

In Warwick and Leamington, 16% of all children live in poverty, while 10% of all households live in energy poverty. In 2018, 2,500 people had three-day emergency food supplies handed to them. Our homelessness is a scandal. The big six housebuilders are making billions, despite the supposed viability issues of delivering housing. They are building the wrong homes in the wrong places. We need social rent homes, and I will campaign hard to deliver the ones that we need. They should also be zero carbon. What a great opportunity. That is the great vision that Labour has: to deliver real, good-quality housing under its green new deal. That is what we will be pushing for when in government.

Businesses are not impressed by what the Government are doing. They are frustrated and angered. They want greater ambition on the transition to a cleaner future. They want investment in infrastructure. They want to see the vision. They want to know that they should be investing now. But they are not prepared to, because they see what France does. France has invested so much more in electric vehicle charging points—four times as much as the UK—so, of course, more investment and more development goes into France from our automotive sector. Education has been frustrated, and likewise healthcare, by a lack of investment. These are the things that the economy should be delivering. That is what I will be pushing for.

4.21 pm

James Frith (Bury North) (Lab): This is a Government who are working for themselves and no one else. Their economy fails as many as they seek. Underemployment is rife and underfed families a way of life. Away from the cities and the shires, overlooked towns miss out. This is a Government for the market, not the market stall.

Local businesses cannot access new talent. They are hampered by poor public transport. Entrepreneurs, the real wealth creators, are unable to secure funding without putting the family home on the line, and they are paying over the odds for business loans. Food banks and homeless charities have seen a rise in the destitute seeking help, with 30% of all children in east Bury in absolute poverty. Denise—there are many like her—got in touch with me last week. Despite working full time, some days she is unable to feed herself and sits at home in a cold house. There is an overriding sense that decisions taken by the few impact the everyday lives of the many.

Voters put their faith in me in 2017, making history in a seat that always went the way of the Government. They finally have a voice refusing to sponsor the cuts to our town, instead defending and championing improvements to everyday life: saving Bury walk-in centre after local Tories supported its closure; demanding the protection of more green-belt land; convincing bus companies to put on new bus routes; and changing the fortunes of our most vulnerable by seeking access to their entitlements, whether helping children to access their special educational needs and disability support from a depleted education budget or demanding benefits for the terminally ill who have worked all their life and are told by this Government that they are not near enough to death to qualify for their entitlement. I am also delighted today to welcome the news about the campaign for cystic fibrosis sufferers to be able to access Orkambi. This was an issue from my first constituency surgery. I welcome the NHS deal announced today.

However, so much of what is done in Bury is despite the Tory Government, not because of them. In Bury, we keep the faith in each other and we carry on. We keep going, with innovators and enterprising spirits. We are top of the league in Greater Manchester for start-up businesses. Tech companies with investment from California are developing “Silicon Rammy”. Barclays is in partnership with Bury’s schools via Labour’s Bury Council.

However, Bury’s sunlit uplands will not come with a Tory hard Brexit, just as they have not come with the Tory Government who sponsored the hardship for Bury and Britain this last decade. Change will not come from a Government who serve the stock market short-sellers, but short-change Bury and Britain. A £37-million black hole remains in Bury’s NHS funding, with in-year cuts of £12.5 million still to come. Our nurseries, schools and colleges face dire budget straits, and jam tomorrow will not tend to our children’s needs today.

Our beloved football club, Bury FC, faces ruin. It is a town grieving. With 135 years of history in the English football league, it is one of the oldest clubs in English football. Dale, Day, the EFL—culpable. It was bought for £1 and sold down the river. The whole mess confirms a feeling across the country; we value everyday life but it is changing for the worse. Traditions have been lost, with social, economic and cultural capital torn from our town. We now face an identity crisis, but I say: the

Shakers will rise again if we keep going. Whenever the general election comes, Bury knows that we have unfinished work to do together. I will ask that they keep their faith in me, as I keep my faith in the work that we will do together—and we will keep going.

4.24 pm

Jo Platt (Leigh) (Lab/Co-op): It is an honour to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Bury North (James Frith); his passion and resolve to highlight the injustice of what happened to his town’s football club must be commended by us all in this House.

Our country is more divided than ever, but beyond the current inflamed debates in this place, the root of the division is fundamentally about inequality in this country—inequality between the north and south, inequality between towns and cities, inequality that this Tory Government have shamefully widened under their rule. Their shambolic, reckless and cruel handling of the economy over the last decade, in partnership with the Lib Dems, has ripped the soul from towns such as Leigh, the one I represent. Decades of under-investment left us reeling and in desperate need of a Government on our side to help us to thrive.

In 2010, we were promised by the Government that we were all in this together. How wrong they were. Instead, we have seen 3,500 bankers earning incomes of almost £10 billion between them, with grotesque bonuses on top. These are the same people who crashed our economy, leading to the vicious austerity that has been inflicted on the hard-working grafters in Leigh. The Conservative party even had the audacity to lower the tax rate for millionaires and billionaires while introducing a bedroom tax, cutting welfare benefits and starving our NHS. Meanwhile, in our towns such as Leigh we have seen a rise of almost 20% in food bank usage last year. Disgustingly, last year we issued over 5,000 emergency food parcels, 2,000 of which went to children. After housing costs, one in four children live in poverty.

Locally, we have seen a rise in drug and alcohol issues and more homeless on our streets, so when the Conservatives parade statistics about GDP and sound economic records, they do not realise how out of touch they are. Their trickle-down system of economics fails working people. The rich have got richer and the rest of us—the hard-working many, the working classes—are left struggling to make ends meet. Their priorities will always be about their entitled chums who bankroll their party, while Labour stands up and fights for the hard-working many and our proud trade union movement.

If the Conservative party was really on the side of constituencies like mine, maybe it could answer these questions. Where is the Bill to abolish universal credit and personal independence payment assessments? Where is the Bill to abolish food poverty? Where is the Bill to abolish child poverty? Where is the Bill to give proud former mining constituencies such as Leigh our fair share of investment to rebuild our towns? Where is the Bill to put power back into the hands of our community and out of those of the establishment, which has run this country for decades?

This Queen’s Speech is nothing other than a pre-election broadcast—read out by Her Majesty—that fails our communities and our economy, and it should thoroughly shame the Government. Towns like Leigh will never be fooled by their bluff and bluster. Their actions speak

louder than their words in our communities, and I will have no hesitation in voting down this Queen's Speech later today.

4.29 pm

Ruth Jones (Newport West) (Lab): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in this debate on the minority Government's Queen's Speech. There are so many different issues that could be covered in a debate on the economy, and that is because without an economy that works for everyone, we are not able to address or solve the problems that affect anyone.

The new Brexit deal that was debated on Saturday is significantly worse than the one proposed by the previous Prime Minister. It is, in short, a sell-out when it comes to our vital workers' rights, our economy, our manufacturing base—including the Orb steelworks in Newport—and, most important, people's jobs, in Newport West, across Wales, and in Northern Ireland, Scotland and England, too. My community in Newport West want and need a Government in Westminster who are on their side. They deserve a Government who ensure that those who earn the most pay the most, that tax evaders and avoiders are brought in line and that our vital public services are funded, defended and invested in.

So much was lacking from the Queen's Speech. There was nothing about reducing poverty for our children and young people or pensioners, and there was nothing about reversing the proposal to take away the television licence for the over-75s. Let us not forget that the TV is a vital lifeline for many of our senior citizens. It is their only link with the outside world for, sometimes, hours or days on end. It is well documented that social isolation leads to loneliness and depression for many. That could be avoided if the Government would only change their decision and return to their manifesto promise of 2017 to keep TV licences free for all those aged 75 and over. The 4,000 people in my constituency who are affected will not let the Prime Minister get away with this. Indeed, I have received many letters from constituents expressing anger or sorrow about the Government's rash decision.

The Government talk about improving the financial situation for the people of the UK, but we know the reality. We know that wages have still not returned to the levels at which they were before the Tories took office in 2010. In reality, people are worse off now than they were before the Tories took office. This Government talk the talk, but they do not walk the walk.

As we have already heard today, another side-effect of the worsening economic picture is the increase in the use of food banks and the number of people sleeping on our streets. I appreciate the efforts of the thousands of volunteers, and the donations of food from thousands more. When I visited a food bank at the King's Church in my constituency a few weeks ago, I was struck by the amazing love and warmth of those volunteers for people less fortunate than themselves. However, in 2019, we should not need food banks, and we should not see people rough-sleeping. We are the fifth richest economy in the world, and we have enough resources; they just need to be apportioned fairly.

Last week, along with many other Members from both sides of the House, I had the pleasure of meeting a number of WASPI women. They came to Parliament

once again with their campaign for justice and fairness, but once again the Government failed to act, and let the opportunity to sort out this injustice once and for all go by. I know that those strong, articulate women will be back to fight for justice, and I am proud to line up with them and be counted as they continue on their journey towards fair compensation.

The Government could also have delivered a fair tax for motor homes. New motor homes registered after 1 September 2019 are no longer subject to a commercial vehicle tax band in the United Kingdom; for the purposes of vehicle excise duty, they are now taxed as cars, and the tax payable on first registration has been increased by 705%.

Our country finds itself at a hugely important junction. It saddens me that we have a Government with no agenda and no real understanding of the many issues that are being experienced by my constituents in Newport West and throughout the UK. This Queen's speech was a wasted opportunity, and it confirms that we need a Labour Government now more than ever.

4.33 pm

Hugh Gaffney (Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill) (Lab): It is a pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Newport West (Ruth Jones).

It is a new Session of Parliament, but we are still hearing the same old ideas from the Government. This was not a Queen's Speech offering a serious programme for government; it was a pre-election stunt by a Prime Minister who promises everything but can deliver nothing. He has no majority, no mandate and no policies to tackle the real issues facing this country.

We have a poverty crisis in the UK. There are 14 million people living in poverty, one fifth of our entire population, and 4 million of them are children. It was once said that the best route out of poverty was to secure employment, but the growth of insecure employment—for instance, zero-hours contracts—has led to rising levels of in-work poverty. Sixty per cent. of those living in relative poverty reside in working households. The UK's poverty crisis is real and the Government continue to ignore it at their peril. Sixty per cent. of the public believe that the Government have caused poverty through their austerity policies. When will we see action from this Government? When will they tackle low pay with a real living wage of £10 per hour for all workers, starting from the age of 16? When will they scrap failed welfare reforms like universal credit, which are directly responsible for the rise in food bank use, and when will they end insecure employment by abolishing the exploitation of zero-hours contracts? The public are demanding action, and if the Government are not prepared to act, I say to them: stand aside because Labour is ready.

There are clear examples of workers' rights under attack, which the Government have chosen to ignore in the Queen's Speech. The Queen's Speech contained no proposals to scrap the undemocratic Trade Union Act 2016, which undermines the right to strike. There are no proposals to support the Asda workers, who face a disgraceful choice between accepting cuts to their terms and conditions or losing their jobs, and there are no proposals to support the postal workers who face threats to both their jobs and their terms and conditions despite agreements.

[Hugh Gaffney]

I congratulate the postal workers and the Communications Workers Union for a fantastic ballot result, which saw an overwhelming 97% vote in favour of strike action. I say today to Royal Mail, “Honour the agreement that was made and we can avoid any industrial action.”

The Government have chosen to impose austerity on our communities for the last 10 years, despite the clear damage that has done. Only Labour are committed to investing in our public services and our communities and ending austerity. The real tragedy of austerity has been the impact upon the lives of ordinary people, people like the 75-year-olds who have seen a broken promise on their TV licences. That is why I tabled amendment (b), and I thank all those Members who supported it. There is a simple answer, and I hope the Government will listen and think again: let us get the free TV licences back for those 75-year-olds.

We have seen rising levels of poverty, attacks on workers’ rights and austerity imposed upon our communities under this Government. When I stood for election in 2017, I asked the good people of Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill to send a working man to Parliament. I am here to fight for my constituents and to fight for the workers; that is why I will be opposing this Queen’s Speech tonight.

4.37 pm

Ged Killen (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (Lab/Co-op): It is a pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill (Hugh Gaffney).

It does seem rather bizarre to be talking about a Queen’s Speech that the Government have no intention or any ability to implement, and I would not exactly describe myself as a monarchist but I do think the way the Prime Minister has treated Her Majesty through all this is shameful.

First, I want to touch on the implications for the UK. The Government say:

“The integrity and prosperity of the union that binds the four nations of the United Kingdom is of the utmost importance to my Government”

and Scotland will see a £1.2 billion cash bonus as a result of the latest spending round, but this Queen’s Speech ends freedom of movement, which will have a disproportionate impact on Scottish sectors, and even by the least damaging Brexit that would mean a reduction in Scottish GDP of 2.7%, and we know that a disastrous no-deal exit could mean a loss of economic output for Scotland of as much as £12.7 billion by 2030.

And it is not just prosperity in Scotland that is under threat from the Government; so too is the very existence of the United Kingdom itself. We have seen over a decade of austerity that Scotland did not vote for; we had David Cameron’s English votes for English laws speech on the steps of Downing Street on 19 September 2014; of course we had the Brexit referendum in 2016; and now we have this Government’s reckless deal, which tears up workers’ rights and simply delays a no-deal Brexit until the end of next year. The Conservative party, in truth, has done almost as much as the Scottish National party to undermine the United Kingdom. It is no longer the Conservative and Unionist party; it is the Conservative and Brexit party.

I was deeply disappointed, once again, to see nothing for 1950s-born women who are being denied a pension. That is a huge missed opportunity. Just as we are seeing with PPI repayments, we could have seen a boost for the economy had those women been paid what is rightfully theirs. As one of the leading members of the local WASPI branch in my area put it,

“these women are not going to be squirrelling this money away in offshore accounts.”

It will be spent in our local towns and on our high streets. However, the campaign will go on and I can assure them of my continued support.

Lastly, I want to touch on the lack of any new measures to protect free access to cash. I have been campaigning on that issue since my election. It has become increasingly clear, from the work of consumer rights groups, from international examples, from what is happening in many of our constituencies and from reports like the Access to Cash review, that this issue will not simply resolve itself. The banks have made a conscious decision to shift responsibility for running ATMs to private companies, and now they have decided that they really do not want to have to pay for that either. So the pressure they have put on LINK means that the fee being paid to the operators has been cut, and we are now seeing free-to-use ATMs closing, or turning fee-charging. That is having a particularly difficult impact in rural communities and in small towns such as those in my constituency, where businesses on the high street are already struggling and do not need any new additional barriers, such as a lack of availability of cash.

The Joint Authorities Cash Strategy Group, which the Government have set up to look at this issue, is no more than a talking shop.

John Glen indicated dissent.

Ged Killen: The Minister shakes his head, but what has that actually done since it was set up? The Government have to get real, or millions of people—some of the most vulnerable in society—will be left behind in a so-called cashless society.

In conclusion, this is a completely unnecessary Queen’s Speech, which has wasted everyone’s time and will do nothing at all for my constituents in Rutherglen and Hamilton West.

4.41 pm

Peter Dowd (Bootle) (Lab): There were around 39 speeches today, so obviously I cannot go through them all, but I would like to thank the right hon. Member for Sevenoaks (Sir Michael Fallon)—although, given all the cuts we have had under the Tory Government, I am surprised it is not “Sixoaks”—for his support for Labour’s policy on share ownership. I also offer my congratulations to the right hon. Member for Central Devon (Mel Stride) on his appointment to the Treasury Committee, and commiserations to the hon. Member for Thirsk and Malton (Kevin Hollinrake).

The right hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton (Sir Edward Davey) said that the Liberal Democrats were the yellow party. They certainly were the yellow party, in that they did not stand up to the Tories when they were in coalition with them. That is the sort of yellow party they actually are. So I will not be taking any sermonising whatever from that shower at the back of me—none whatsoever.

May I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Albert Owen), thank you for all the work that you have done, given that this is your last Queen's Speech—and yours was an excellent speech, too.

The Chancellor's performance was excruciating. Judging by the faces of the Members sitting on his side of the House after he had made it, I thought I had walked into an embalmers' and morticians' conference. Thinking of the global banking crisis, does he not remember collateralised debt obligations—otherwise known as financial weapons of mass destruction? Has he forgotten that he had a great part in promoting them? That is the cause of the global financial crisis—reckless speculation, dependence on credit and grossly unequal distribution of income. It applies to this day. *[Interruption.]* Members on his side of the House may mutter all they want; that is the fact. They and their friends were the cause of the global crisis, not this side of the House—*[Interruption.]* Not this side of the House.

The topic today is the economy—an economy that the Tories are in the process of systematically wrecking. As many have pointed out today, after nine years in charge of the economy, their strategy has proven to be a total failure. Nine years of austerity, combined with Tory infighting over who can deliver the worst Brexit for our economy, has made us all poorer. Wages have stagnated. The queues at food banks have grown almost as long as the incoherent responses of the Prime Minister at PMQs.

Albert Owen: My hon. Friend is talking about the Chancellor's opening speech in which he tried to mock Labour's nationalisation plans, saying that we would even go as far as nationalising travel agents. I remind him that Thomas Cook made a profit when it was in public ownership between 1948 and 1972, but it went bankrupt under this Government, with people losing their jobs and their holidays.

Peter Dowd: My hon. Friend refers to just some of the many thousands of workers who have been let down by this Tory Government. We all walk past people sleeping rough on the streets every day, but what have the Government done about that? Nothing. Despite endless promises of jam tomorrow, there looks to be little respite ahead under this Government. Their approach to this is writ large by the smirks on the faces of the members of the Government Front Bench.

Manufacturing output in August dropped at the fastest pace in seven years, with EU-based customers rerouting supply chains away from the UK in anticipation of 31 October. Consumer and business confidence is tumbling. Anecdotally, we know that a worrying proportion of businesses are moving their operations and investment elsewhere.

My right hon. Friend the shadow Chancellor said:

“We have heard the Prime Minister's previous crude dismissal of British business. Now we are seeing his words become Government policy.”—*[Official Report, 8 October 2019; Vol. 664, c. 1650.]*

Businesses are responding in droves. The Centre for European Reform says that the economy is already £69 billion smaller as a result of Tory turmoil and uncertainty since the Brexit vote. That is their responsibility on their watch—nobody else's. Time and again, they put party over country while the economy suffers. The Government's false dichotomy of no deal versus a bad deal amounts to an attack on the economic wellbeing of

our citizens. Our economy needs cast-iron guarantees of frictionless free trade and strong regulatory alignment with the European Union. It needs a targeted industrial strategy to turn the biggest threat of our time into an economic opportunity, but not with the Tories.

The only threat we face that is equal to the continuation of this Government is the climate emergency. We need a green industrial revolution: a rapid and far-reaching transformation of the UK's infrastructure, from our homes to our transport and energy systems. That requires investment on a scale that makes the Government's programme pale into insignificance. Labour is offering—

Kevin Hollinrake: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Peter Dowd: I am sorry, but I will not at this stage.

Labour is offering a national transformation fund and a national investment bank that would invest £500 billion of lending and spending over 10 years, with tackling climate change as a central mission—a concept alien to that lot over there. It will include targeted investment to develop and commercialise new technologies so that they are designed here, assembled here, installed by a well-paid unionised workforce here, and then exported to the rest of the world. It is a far-reaching programme of economic revival that will create the industries of the future here. This is a Government of yesterday. We are the Government of tomorrow.

With its wind and marine resources, the UK has some of the best potential in the world for renewable energy. Renewable energy should be to the UK what tech has been to California, but the Government's failure to support these nascent industries has held us back. We should be building on our existing strengths, such as the automotive sector, which could, with the right support, lead the world in electric vehicle and battery production. At the Labour party conference, my hon. Friend the Member for Salford and Eccles (Rebecca Long Bailey), the shadow Business Secretary, announced a multibillion-pound package of investment to kick-start the electric revolution. That is the scale of targeted support that our automotive industry needs—not just green number plates. Today, she announced plans to create a carbon-neutral energy system by the 2030s, including insulation upgrades for every home in the UK and enough new solar panels to cover 22,000 thousand football pitches, including Anfield.

This is not just about avoiding a climate catastrophe. The green industrial revolution is about building the world we deserve, not the world that the Tories think we deserve. We will ensure that nothing is too good for the working people of this country. We can tackle climate change while transforming our economy so that it works for the many, not just the privileged few.

As my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition has said, this is not the time for despair; it is the time for action. I hope the Chancellor—hope does spring eternal—will act by accepting amendment (g) so we can begin to rebuild our economy in the interests of the many, not the few. Under this Government of yesterday, I will not hold my breath.

4.50 pm

The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Andrea Leadsom): This has been an interesting debate, in which strong views have been expressed by 41 Back Benchers.

[*Andrea Leadsom*]

Let us look at the UK economy. This year, we have seen more people in work than ever before, with more women in work than ever before. The number of workless households is down by more than 1 million since 2010, and there are 200,000 more businesses than last year. Wages have grown at their fastest rate in 11 years, and there has been the biggest ever increase in the national living wage. We are investing in the skills of the future, with more than 800,000 people participating in an apprenticeship in England in the last full academic year.

We have every reason to believe in our ability to succeed. We are the world's fifth biggest economy and the ninth biggest manufacturer. We speak the world's international business language. We have the best contract law and one of the most trusted judicial systems in the world. We have the most creative and innovative financial services sector anywhere, and three of the top 10 universities in the world. For the seventh year in a row, we have the most powerful capital city on earth.

But let us look at what Labour has on offer. Labour has proposed a punitive new tax every two months since Corbyn took office. Jeremy Corbyn's party—

Mr Speaker: Order. Resume your seat. I very gently say that, when names are put into these speeches, it is the responsibility of the Secretary of State to delete those names. We do not name people in the Chamber but refer to them by their title. That is a pretty obvious point.

Andrea Leadsom: Thank you so much, Mr Speaker.

The Leader of the Opposition has voted against £7,800-worth of tax cuts for hard-working people, and the British Chambers of Commerce has warned that Labour's plans for our economy would send an "icy chill" up the spines of business owners and investors.

There have been too many contributions for me to mention them all, but I have picked out some that were particularly interesting. The hon. Members for Aberdeen North (Kirsty Blackman) and for Glasgow East (David Linden) both talked about the importance of immigration to Scotland, and I am delighted to mention at the Dispatch Box the amazing contribution that EU citizens have made to our country. That is why I am so pleased that over 1 million people have already been granted settled or pre-settled status under the EU settlement scheme, enshrining their rights in law.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Central Devon (Mel Stride) on being elected as the new Chair of the Treasury Committee, and I commend his call for Barclays to reconsider pulling out of the new UK banking framework, which was agreed with 28 UK banks. He is right to look into that issue.

The hon. Member for Gedling (Vernon Coaker) talked about the tax gap. He should be reassured that, since coming into office, this Government have secured and protected more than £200 billion that would otherwise have gone unpaid. Our tax gap is at a near record low.

My hon. Friend the Member for West Worcestershire (Harriett Baldwin) talked about the financial services Bill. I can assure her that that Bill will maintain the UK's world-leading regulatory standards and ensure that the UK remains fully open to international markets after we leave the European Union.

The right hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton (Sir Edward Davey) was right to welcome the United Kingdom's amazing efforts on offshore wind. I commend him for the part he played in ensuring that the UK is a world leader in the deployment of offshore wind.

My hon. Friends the Members for Aberdeen South (Ross Thomson) and for Ochil and South Perthshire (Luke Graham) spoke as true Unionists and supporters of the Union. They highlighted how no-deal Nicola is not acting in the interests of Scotland.

My hon. Friend the Member for North Cornwall (Scott Mann) talked about how this Government are dealing with climate change, not just talking about it. Labour, however, has promised something that it cannot deliver and does not understand. Several unions have voiced their concern about the damage of a 2030 target for decarbonisation. The GMB dismissed it as threatening "whole communities" and "jobs", as well as being "utterly unachievable". The "30 by 2030" report put out by Labour today shows plans to hike up stamp duty on millions of homes, with home owners forced to spend tens of thousands to move home and local communities losing any say on onshore wind. However, this Government have a positive record on decarbonisation. We are the first major economy to legislate for net zero. Since 1990, we have reduced carbon emissions by 42% while growing our economy by nearly three quarters. We have shown that decarbonising can create jobs and prosperity. It has already produced 400,000 jobs in the low-carbon sector, and we hope that the number will reach 2 million by 2030. Our path to reaching net zero is realistic. It is based on science and has been supported by the Committee on Climate Change. We care too much about this issue to make pointless political promises that are just not deliverable.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolton West (Chris Green) welcomed the Government's investment in towns and cities, with the £3.6 billion new towns fund, which will support our high streets. I also wish to mention the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Albert Owen), who highlighted the fact that this would be his last Queen's Speech. I wish him well and thank him for his contribution in this place. My hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Trudy Harrison) talked movingly about her daughter's new apprenticeship in the nuclear sector—we wish her well with that. My hon. Friend is rightly a great champion for new nuclear.

The hon. Member for Bury North (James Frith) raised the issue of Orkambi. All of us across the House are delighted by the achievement of my right hon. Friend the Health Secretary on Orkambi, which can be a vital drug for many cystic fibrosis sufferers. I also wish to mention the hon. Member for Newport West (Ruth Jones), who is calling again for the BBC to honour the right of the over-75s to get their free TV licences. I completely agree with her about that.

Finally, may I say that it is very refreshing to have spent a whole six days—albeit with a brief interval—debating the exciting positive future that awaits this country? As the Prime Minister said, this is "a new age of opportunity for the whole country."—[*Official Report*, 14 October 2019; Vol. 666, c. 19.]

As MPs, we should never lose sight of whom we serve, and this Queen's Speech is about the people's priorities. It is about the things that really matter to people in their everyday lives: more police; better schools; a stronger NHS; more support for those in need; and a United Kingdom

that rewards hard work today, that protects the environment for tomorrow, that spreads opportunity right across our shores and that flies the flag for global free trade.

Instead of self-doubt, we need self-belief in ourselves and in our abilities as a country to build the low-carbon, high-tech, business-backing United Kingdom we all want to see, spreading opportunity right across our shores. From our universities to our creative industries, from offshore wind to outer space, we have so much to shout about in this great country, and this Queen's Speech will help us to do even more. From attracting the best minds in the world to exporting the best products to the world, we can make the United Kingdom the greatest place on earth. I commend this Queen's Speech to the House.

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The House divided: Ayes 293, Noes 311.

Division No. 10]

[4.59 pm

AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane	Cowan, Ronnie
Abrahams, Debbie	Coyle, Neil
Ali, Rushanara	Crausby, Sir David
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena	Crawley, Angela
Amesbury, Mike	Creagh, Mary
Antoniazzi, Tonia	Creasy, Stella
Ashworth, Jonathan	Cruddas, Jon
Austin, Ian	Cryer, John
Bailey, Mr Adrian	Cummins, Judith
Bardell, Hannah	Cunningham, Alex
Barron, rh Sir Kevin	Cunningham, Mr Jim
Beckett, rh Margaret	Daby, Janet
Benn, rh Hilary	Davey, rh Sir Edward
Berger, Luciana	David, Wayne
Betts, Mr Clive	Davies, Geraint
Black, Mhairi	Day, Martyn
Blackford, rh Ian	De Cordova, Marsha
Blackman, Kirsty	De Piero, Gloria
Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta	Dent Coad, Emma
Blomfield, Paul	Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Brabin, Tracy	Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben	Dodds, Anneliese
Brake, rh Tom	Dodds, Jane
Brennan, Kevin	Doughty, Stephen
Brock, Deidre	Dowd, Peter
Brown, Alan	Dromey, Jack
Brown, Lyn	Duffield, Rosie
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas	Eagle, Ms Angela
Bryant, Chris	Eagle, Maria
Buck, Ms Karen	Edwards, Jonathan
Burden, Richard	Efford, Clive
Burgon, Richard	Elliott, Julie
Butler, Dawn	Ellman, Dame Louise
Byrne, rh Liam	Elmore, Chris
Cable, rh Sir Vince	Esterson, Bill
Cadbury, Ruth	Evans, Chris (<i>Proxy vote cast</i>
Cameron, Dr Lisa	<i>by Mark Tami</i>)
Campbell, rh Sir Alan	Farrelly, Paul
Carden, Dan	Farron, Tim
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair	Fellows, Marion
Champion, Sarah	Field, rh Frank
Chapman, Douglas	Fitzpatrick, Jim
Charalambous, Bambos	Fletcher, Colleen
Cherry, Joanna	Flint, rh Caroline
Ciwyd, rh Ann	Forbes, Lisa
Coaker, Vernon	Fovargue, Yvonne
Cooper, Rosie	Foxcroft, Vicky
Cooper, rh Yvette	Frith, James
Corbyn, rh Jeremy	Furniss, Gill

Gaffney, Hugh	Lucas, Caroline
Gardiner, Barry	Lucas, Ian C.
George, Ruth	Lynch, Holly
Gethins, Stephen	MacNeil, Angus Brendan
Gibson, Patricia	Madders, Justin
Gill, Preet Kaur	Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Glindon, Mary	Mahmood, Shabana
Godsiff, Mr Roger	Malhotra, Seema
Grady, Patrick	Mann, John
Grant, Peter	Marsden, Gordon
Gray, Neil (<i>Proxy vote cast by</i>	Martin, Sandy
<i>Patrick Grady</i>)	Maskell, Rachael
Green, Kate	Matheson, Christian
Greenwood, Lilian	Mc Nally, John
Greenwood, Margaret	McCabe, Steve
Griffith, Nia	McCarthy, Kerry
Grogan, John	McDonagh, Siobhain
Gwynne, Andrew	McDonald, Andy
Gyimah, Mr Sam	McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
Haigh, Louise	McDonald, Stuart C.
Hamilton, Fabian	McDonnell, rh John
Hanson, rh David	McFadden, rh Mr Pat
Hardy, Emma	McGinn, Conor
Harman, rh Ms Harriet	McGovern, Alison
Harris, Carolyn	McInnes, Liz
Hayes, Helen	McKinnell, Catherine
Hayman, Sue	McMahon, Jim
Healey, rh John	McMorris, Anna
Hendrick, Sir Mark	Mearns, Ian
Hendry, Drew	Miliband, rh Edward
Hepburn, Mr Stephen	Monaghan, Carol
Hill, Mike	Moon, Mrs Madeleine
Hillier, Meg	Moran, Layla
Hobhouse, Wera	Morden, Jessica
Hodge, rh Dame Margaret	Morgan, Stephen
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon	Morris, Grahame
Hollern, Kate	Murray, Ian
Hopkins, Kelvin	Nandy, Lisa
Hosie, Stewart	Newlands, Gavin
Howarth, rh Sir George	Norris, Alex
Huq, Dr Rupa	O'Hara, Brendan
Hussain, Imran	Onn, Melanie
Jardine, Christine	Onwurah, Chi
Jarvis, Dan	Osamor, Kate
Jones, Darren	Owen, Albert
Jones, Gerald	Peacock, Stephanie
Jones, Graham P.	Pearce, Teresa
Jones, Helen	Pennycook, Matthew
Jones, rh Mr Kevan	Perkins, Toby
Jones, Ruth	Phillips, Jess
Jones, Sarah	Phillipson, Bridget
Jones, Susan Elan	Pidcock, Laura
Kane, Mike	Platt, Jo
Keeley, Barbara	Pollard, Luke
Kendall, Liz	Pound, Stephen
Khan, Afzal	Powell, Lucy
Killen, Ged	Qureshi, Yasmin
Kinnock, Stephen	Rashid, Faisal
Kyle, Peter	Reed, Mr Steve
Laird, Lesley	Rees, Christina
Lake, Ben	Reeves, Ellie
Lammy, rh Mr David	Reeves, Rachel
Lavery, Ian	Reynolds, Emma (<i>Proxy vote</i>
Law, Chris	<i>cast by Mr Pat McFadden</i>)
Lee, Karen	Reynolds, Jonathan
Lee, Dr Phillip	Rimmer, Ms Marie
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma	Rodda, Matt
Lewis, Clive	Rowley, Danielle
Linden, David	Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Lloyd, Stephen	Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Lloyd, Tony	Shah, Naz
Long Bailey, Rebecca	Sharma, Mr Virendra

Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Sheppard, Tommy
 Sherriff, Paula
 Siddiq, Tulip
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smeeth, Ruth
 Smith, Angela
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Eleanor
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, Laura
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Owen
 Smyth, Karin
 Snell, Gareth
 Sobel, Alex
 Starmer, rh Keir
 Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo
 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
 Vaz, rh Keith
 Vaz, rh 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
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:
Thangam Debbonaire and
Nic Dakin

NOES

Adams, Nigel
 Afolami, Bim
 Afriyie, Adam
 Aldous, Peter
 Allan, Lucy
 Amess, Sir David
 Andrew, Stuart
 Argar, Edward
 Atkins, Victoria
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Badenoch, Mrs Kemi (*Proxy vote cast by Leo Docherty*)
 Baker, Mr Steve
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barclay, rh Stephen
 Baron, Mr John
 Bellingham, Sir Henry
 Benyon, rh Richard
 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
 Brine, Steve
 Brokenshire, rh James
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buckland, rh Robert
 Burghart, Alex
 Burns, rh Conor
 Burt, rh Alistair
 Cairns, rh Alun
 Campbell, Mr Gregory

Cartlidge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, Alex
 Chishti, Rehman
 Chope, Sir Christopher
 Churchill, Jo
 Clark, Colin
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clarke, Mr Simon
 Cleverly, rh James
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Coffey, rh 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
 Dinanage, 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, rh 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
 Gauke, rh Mr David
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
 Girvan, Paul
 Glen, John
 Goldsmith, rh Zac
 Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Luke
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Bill
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Gray, James
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Green, Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Greening, rh Justine
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Hair, Kirstene
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hammond, rh Mr Philip
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matt
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, Simon
 Hayes, rh Sir John
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Heapey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Heaton-Jones, Peter
 Henderson, Gordon
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Hollingbery, Sir 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
 James, Margot
 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
 Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Lidington, rh Sir David
 Little Pngelly, Emma
 Lopez, Julia (*Proxy vote cast by Lee Rowley*)
 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
 Menzies, Mark
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, rh Anne
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Moore, Damien
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morton, Wendy
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Mrs Sheryl
 Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
 Neill, Robert
 Newton, Sarah
 Norman, Jesse
 O'Brien, Neil
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 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
 Sandbach, Antoinette
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Mr Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shannon, Jim
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, rh Alok
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec
 Simpson, David
 Simpson, rh Mr Keith
 Skidmore, rh Chris
 Smith, Chloe (*Proxy vote cast by Jo Churchill*)
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
 Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
 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
 Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Walker, Sir Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 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:
James Morris and
Iain Stewart

Question accordingly negated.

Amendment proposed: (h), at end add:

“but particularly regret the UK Government’s intention to use the Immigration Bill to end freedom of movement within Europe, and believe that freedom of movement has brought immeasurable social, cultural and economic benefits to the people of Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland and the European Union as a whole; further believe that freedom of movement should be maintained irrespective of the UK’s future membership status of the European Union; believe that any provisions of the Environment Bill must match the ambition shown by the Scottish Government to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045, and should provide for immediate action to invest in carbon capture and storage technologies and introduce funding for a green new deal; further regret that the Gracious Speech does not contain provision to end the freeze of social security benefits or scrap the two-child limit and so-called rape clause attached to child tax credits; reject the UK Government’s proposals for leaving the European Union; and believe the European Union Withdrawal Agreement Bill must not become law unless and until it has received legislative consent from the Senedd and the Scottish Parliament.”—(*Ian Blackford*).

Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 33), That the amendment be made.

The House divided: Ayes 64, Noes 310.

Division No. 11]

[5.16 pm

AYES

Bardell, Hannah
 Berger, Luciana
 Black, Mhairi
 Blackford, rh Ian
 Blackman, Kirsty
 Brake, rh Tom
 Brock, Deidre
 Brown, Alan
 Cable, rh Sir Vince
 Cameron, Dr Lisa
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Chapman, Douglas
 Cherry, Joanna
 Cowan, Ronnie
 Crawley, Angela
 Davey, rh Sir Edward
 Day, Martyn
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin
 Dodds, Jane
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Farron, Tim
 Gaffney, Hugh
 Gethins, Stephen
 Gibson, Patricia
 Grady, Patrick
 Grant, Peter
 Gray, Neil (*Proxy vote cast by Patrick Grady*)
 Gyimah, Mr Sam
 Hendry, Drew
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hosie, Stewart
 Jardine, Christine
 Killen, Ged
 Laird, Lesley

Lake, Ben
 Law, Chris
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Lloyd, Stephen
 Lucas, Caroline
 MacNeil, Angus Brendan
 Mc Nally, John
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 Monaghan, Carol
 Moran, Layla
 Murray, Ian
 Newlands, Gavin
 O'Hara, Brendan
 Owen, Albert
 Rowley, Danielle
 Saville Roberts, rh Liz
 Sheppard, Tommy
 Smith, Angela
 Stephens, Chris
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeting, Wes
 Sweeney, Mr Paul
 Swinson, Jo
 Thewliss, Alison
 Umunna, Chuka
 Whitfield, Martin
 Whitford, Dr Philippa
 Williams, Hywel
 Wishart, Pete
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah

Tellers for the Ayes:
Marion Fellows and
David Linden

NOES

Adams, Nigel
 Afolami, Bim
 Afriyie, Adam
 Aldous, Peter
 Allan, Lucy
 Amess, Sir David
 Andrew, Stuart
 Argar, Edward
 Atkins, Victoria
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Badenoch, Mrs Kemi (*Proxy vote cast by Leo Docherty*)
 Baker, Mr Steve
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barclay, rh Stephen
 Baron, Mr John
 Bellingham, Sir Henry
 Benyon, rh Richard
 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
 Brine, Steve
 Brokenshire, rh James
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buckland, rh Robert
 Burghart, Alex
 Burns, rh Conor
 Burt, rh Alistair
 Cairns, rh Alun
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Cartledge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, Alex
 Chishti, Rehman
 Chope, Sir Christopher
 Churchill, Jo
 Clark, Colin
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clarke, Mr Simon
 Cleverly, rh James
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Coffey, rh 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
 Dineneage, 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, rh 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
 Gauke, rh Mr David
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
 Girvan, Paul
 Glen, John
 Goldsmith, rh Zac
 Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Luke
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Bill
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Gray, James
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Green, Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Greening, rh Justine
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Hair, Kirstene
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hammond, rh Mr Philip
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matt
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, Simon
 Hayes, rh Sir John
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Heappey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Heaton-Jones, Peter
 Henderson, Gordon
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Hollingbery, Sir 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
 James, Margot
 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
 Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Lidington, rh Sir David
 Little Pngelly, Emma
 Lopez, Julia (*Proxy vote cast by Lee Rowley*)
 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
 Menzies, Mark
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, Amanda

Mills, Nigel
 Milton, rh Anne
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Moore, Damien
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 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
 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
 Purslove, 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
 Sandbach, Antoinette
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Mr Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shannon, Jim
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, rh Alok
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec
 Simpson, David

Simpson, rh Mr Keith
 Skidmore, rh Chris
 Smith, Chloe (*Proxy vote cast by Jo Churchill*)
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
 Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
 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
 Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Walker, Sir Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 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:
James Morris and
Iain Stewart

Question accordingly negated.

Main question put.

The House divided: Ayes 310, Noes 294.

Division No. 12]

[5.28 pm

AYES

Adams, Nigel
 Afolami, Bim
 Afriyie, Adam
 Aldous, Peter
 Allan, Lucy
 Amess, Sir David
 Argar, Edward

Atkins, Victoria
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Badenoch, Mrs Kemi (*Proxy vote cast by Leo Docherty*)
 Baker, Mr Steve
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barclay, rh Stephen

Baron, Mr John
 Bellingham, Sir Henry
 Benyon, rh Richard
 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
 Brine, Steve
 Brokenshire, rh James
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buckland, rh Robert
 Burghart, Alex
 Burns, rh Conor
 Burt, rh Alistair
 Cairns, rh Alun
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Cartlidge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, Alex
 Chishti, Rehman
 Chope, Sir Christopher
 Churchill, Jo
 Clark, Colin
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clarke, Mr Simon
 Cleverly, rh James
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Coffey, rh 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
 Dinéage, 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, rh 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
 Gauke, rh Mr David
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
 Girvan, Paul
 Glen, John
 Goldsmith, rh Zac
 Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Luke
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Bill
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Gray, James
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Green, Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Greening, rh Justine
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Hair, Kirstene
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hammond, rh Mr Philip
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matt
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, Simon
 Hayes, rh Sir John
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Heappey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Heaton-Jones, Peter
 Henderson, Gordon
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Hollingbery, Sir 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
 James, Margot
 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
 Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Lidington, rh Sir David
 Little Pengelly, Emma
 Lopez, Julia (*Proxy vote cast by Lee Rowley*)
 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
 Menzies, Mark
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, rh Anne
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Moore, Damien
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Morton, Wendy
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
 Neill, Robert
 Newton, Sarah
 Norman, Jesse
 O'Brien, Neil
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 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
 Sandbach, Antoinette
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Mr Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shannon, Jim
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, rh Alok
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec
 Simpson, David
 Simpson, rh Mr Keith
 Skidmore, rh Chris
 Smith, Chloe (*Proxy vote cast by Jo Churchill*)
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
 Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
 Spencer, rh Mark
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 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
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Tredinnick, David
 Trevelyan, Anne-Marie
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Tugendhat, Tom
 Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Walker, Sir Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 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:
Maggie Throup and
Stuart Andrew

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
 Abrahams, Debbie
 Ali, Rushanara
 Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
 Amesbury, Mike
 Antoniazzi, Tonia
 Ashworth, Jonathan
 Austin, Ian
 Bailey, Mr Adrian
 Bardell, Hannah
 Barron, rh Sir Kevin
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Berger, Luciana
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Black, Mhairi
 Blackford, rh Ian
 Blackman, Kirsty
 Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta
 Blomfield, Paul
 Brabin, Tracy
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
 Brake, rh Tom
 Brennan, Kevin
 Brock, Deidre
 Brown, Alan
 Brown, Lyn
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Bryant, Chris
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Burden, Richard
 Burgon, Richard
 Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cable, rh Sir Vince
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Cameron, Dr Lisa
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan
 Carden, Dan
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Champion, Sarah
 Chapman, Douglas
 Charalambous, Bambos
 Cherry, Joanna
 Clwyd, rh Ann
 Coaker, Vernon
 Cooper, Rosie
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Cowan, Ronnie
 Coyle, Neil
 Crausby, Sir David
 Crawley, Angela
 Creagh, Mary
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cryer, John
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Cunningham, Mr Jim
 Daby, Janet

Davey, rh Sir Edward
 David, Wayne
 Davies, Geraint
 Day, Martyn
 De Cordova, Marsha
 De Piero, Gloria
 Dent Coad, Emma
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin
 Dodds, Anneliese
 Dodds, Jane
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Dromey, Jack
 Duffield, Rosie
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Ellman, Dame Louise
 Elmore, Chris
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris (*Proxy vote cast by Mark Tami*)
 Farrelly, Paul
 Farron, Tim
 Fellows, Marion
 Field, rh Frank
 Fitzpatrick, Jim
 Fletcher, Colleen
 Flint, rh Caroline
 Forbes, Lisa
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Frith, James
 Furniss, Gill
 Gaffney, Hugh
 Gardiner, Barry
 George, Ruth
 Gethins, Stephen
 Gibson, Patricia
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Glindon, Mary
 Godsiff, Mr Roger
 Grady, Patrick
 Grant, Peter
 Gray, Neil (*Proxy vote cast by Patrick Grady*)
 Green, Kate
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Griffith, Nia
 Grogan, John
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Gyimah, Mr Sam
 Haigh, Louise
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hanson, rh David
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet

Harris, Carolyn
 Hayes, Helen
 Hayman, Sue
 Healey, rh John
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hendry, Drew
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen
 Hill, Mike
 Hillier, Meg
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hopkins, Kelvin
 Hosie, Stewart
 Howarth, rh Sir George
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Jardine, Christine
 Jarvis, Dan
 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
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Chris
 Lee, Karen
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 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
 Mann, John
 Marsden, Gordon
 Martin, Sandy
 Maskell, Rachael
 Matheson, Christian
 Mc Nally, John
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison

McInnes, Liz
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McMahon, Jim
 McMorris, Anna
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Monaghan, Carol
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Moran, Layla
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Murray, Ian
 Nandy, Lisa
 Newlands, Gavin
 Norris, Alex
 O'Hara, Brendan
 Onn, Melanie
 Onwurah, Chi
 Osamor, Kate
 Owen, Albert
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pearce, Teresa
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Toby
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pidcock, Laura
 Platt, Jo
 Pollard, Luke
 Pound, Stephen
 Powell, Lucy
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rashid, Faisal
 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
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 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, Jeff
 Smith, Laura
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Owen
 Smyth, Karin
 Snell, Gareth
 Sobel, Alex
 Starmer, rh Keir
 Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo
 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
 Vaz, rh Keith
 Vaz, rh 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
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Noes:
Thangam Debbonaire and
Nic Dakin

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, as follows:
 Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.

Address to be presented to Her Majesty by Members of the House who are Privy Counsellors or Members of Her Majesty's Household.

Business of the House

Mr Speaker: We will take a business statement now from the Leader of the House and Lord President of the Council, Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg.

5.43 pm

The Leader of the House of Commons (Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg): Having made one earlier, I knew that the House could not wait for another statement from me. I should like to make a very short statement this evening regarding Monday's business. Before the House considers the Second Reading of the Environment Bill, Members will have an opportunity to debate and approve a motion relating to an early parliamentary general election. The business for the rest of next week remains as I announced earlier.

5.44 pm

Valerie Vaz (Walsall South) (Lab): I thank the Leader of the House for making this business statement. Tomorrow, we will find out what extension has been granted. We opposed the Prime Minister's withdrawal agreement Bill but it passed Second Reading. Several of my Labour colleagues have voted for that Bill, not because they support the Prime Minister's deal, but because they wanted to scrutinise it, amend it and debate it—[*Interruption.*]*]*—as is the normal process in this House. We offered the Prime Minister our support for a proper timetable to enable the withdrawal agreement Bill to be dealt with properly, but the Prime Minister has rejected our offer in his letter to the Leader of the Opposition because he does not want that scrutiny.

I want to make it clear that Her Majesty's Opposition, the Labour party, will back an election once no deal is ruled out, and—wait for it—if the extension allows.

Mr Rees-Mogg: The right hon. Lady says that the Prime Minister has not made sufficient time. In his letter to the Leader of the Opposition, my right hon. Friend says: "we will make available all possible time between now and 6 November".

We are willing to start work tomorrow, Mr Speaker, if you are willing to recall Parliament. We are willing to work 24 hours a day between now and 6 November. What are the words of that hymn?

"e'en eternity's too short
 to extol thee."

It seems to me that eternity is too short for the Opposition, because their opposition is fantasy opposition. They do not want Brexit, and, however much time we give them, they will come up with some foolish objection.

Sir Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire Dales) (Con): This will be the third time that the House will have voted on a general election. Can the Leader of the House recall any other occasion on which the Opposition have been offered an election three times and rejected it?

Mr Rees-Mogg: Earlier today, I was actually praising the Leader of the Opposition, and now I am able to quote him. His words are words of wisdom. On 24 September 2019, exactly one month ago, he said:

"This crisis can only be settled with a general election. That election needs to take place as soon as this government's threat of a disastrous No Deal is taken off the table".

[*Mr Rees-Mogg*]

We have met the condition that he set. The Prime Minister has got a deal; no deal is off the table. And yet, for some reason, the Opposition still do not want a general election. We know why that is: we know why they will not have an election. It is because they are afraid of the voters. So alienated are the voters—so disenfranchised do they feel by their socialist friends—that the socialists are running away from an election.

Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): What an extraordinary business statement, once again, from the Leader of the House.

This simply confirms that the Queen's Speech has been nothing but a charade, a simple electioneering stunt. For us the priority remains the same: we need to see an extension secured, and that extension must be long enough to protect us from the cliff edge of a no-deal Brexit. We have seen the Prime Minister's letter to the Leader of the Opposition, and we need to know that this Tory Government cannot play any games or tricks to use an election period to engineer a their way to secure their no-deal Brexit. The Scottish National party is clear: we want the opportunity to stop this Prime Minister, and to stop this toxic Tory Brexit that Scotland did not vote for. If there is to be an election, that election should be a chance for people to deliver their verdict on the deal and for the House to reflect it. That should come first.

Tomorrow the EU will make a decision on an extension, and we patiently await confirmation from Brussels and the terms that the Prime Minister proposes. We will not be pushed today by this Prime Minister. He may be hoping that the electorate will fall for his con tricks, but the SNP certainly will not.

Mr Rees-Mogg: Is it not saddening that “Scotland the brave” used to be the call but now it is “Scotland the runaway,” “Scotland the let's not have an election”? The SNP, who wish to challenge the Government, actually want us to stay in office; I never thought that the broad coalition of the United Kingdom would have the Scottish National party supporting a Tory Government remaining in office. I look forward to that appearing on our election leaflets. It occurs to me that tomorrow is St Crispin's day, the anniversary of Agincourt; what a good day it might be for us to meet and show our independence of spirit.

Sir Bernard Jenkin (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): I thank my right hon. Friend for his statement, and may I just remind him that people in this House are blocking Brexit in the name of the sovereignty of Parliament, but whose is this sovereignty? What sovereignty do we hold that does not come from the British people? And should the British people not now be allowed to decide who represents them in this House?

Mr Rees-Mogg: As so often, I bow to my hon. Friend's constitutional expertise. It is quite clear that the sovereignty of this House did not fall upon us like a comet from heaven; it comes to us from the British people. It is the people's sovereignty delegated to Parliament. We need, as we are incapable of using it, to return it to them and ask them to have another election and decide how their sovereignty should be used.

Mr Speaker: This is absolutely fascinating, but we are not going to embark upon a philosophical discussion on the matter of sovereignty. This treats of the business of the House for Monday, nothing more, nothing less; brevity is required.

David Hanson (Delyn) (Lab): I just want to be clear: is the Leader of the House's motion on Monday under the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011?

Mr Rees-Mogg: Yes.

Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con): Irrespective of whether people are Brexiteers, remainers or reversers, does my right hon. Friend agree that the fundamental question before the House on Monday regarding an early general election is about their democratic decision to be governed by themselves through their representatives in Parliament?

Mr Rees-Mogg: I agree entirely.

Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD): This House had 41 days for Maastricht and 25 for Lisbon, and now the Prime Minister expects us to rush through this legislation in less than a dozen days, and he expects us to do that because he has failed. He tried to prorogue Parliament to rush this through and get us off the cliff without a deal; he has failed. The Liberal Democrats will not support this until we can be sure that this country will not be crashed out of Brexit and the electorate has the choice.

Mr Rees-Mogg: It is always exciting to discover what the position of the Liberal Democrats is, because it changes like a weather vane.

Crispin Blunt (Reigate) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that if the President of France stands firm and declines us the extension, there is still plenty of time next week to get the withdrawal Bill passed in this House and the other place, given the position taken by all on the Opposition Benches on the unacceptability of no deal? Then the general election itself can decide who is negotiating the future relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union.

Mr Rees-Mogg: If there were a will to get the Bill through, it could of course be done. Yes, my hon. Friend is absolutely right, and it would satisfy the European Union. It would get the deal done; we would have left; and we could do it by 31 October, and that is what we should aim to do.

Mr Chris Leslie (Nottingham East) (IGC): I wonder if the Leader of the House is familiar with what is known as the wash-up between when an election or a Dissolution is announced and when Parliament then stops. It is normally a time when, through the usual channels, Bills that remain are carved up because they are not controversial. But his attempt to use that period to basically seek a carve-up of the momentous future of generations to come with this Brexit settlement—which, by the way, should never have got a Second Reading but did—is an abuse of the procedures of this place.

Mr Rees-Mogg: I am sufficiently familiar with the wash-up to understand what it actually means and what it is for. At the end of a Session, normally of a year or

more, Bills that have completed a lot of their passage are concluded. This Session has only begun. There is no washing-up to be done; the cupboards are full of clean crockery.

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): Could the Leader of the House enlighten the House? If we vote for a general election on Monday, what will happen in relation to the Speaker election scheduled for the following Monday? Would Mr Speaker be invited to stay on until the Parliament ceases?

Mr Rees-Mogg: The rules on this are absolutely clear. Mr Speaker has set out the timetable for his leaving office, and we will still have tributes to him on Thursday, during my statement. People can draft away—they have a few days in which to do it—and I expect they may be allowed a little latitude in the length of their questions on that occasion. However, once this House has no Speaker, and is sitting without the Speaker—I am looking at the Clerks for some help—the priority of this House will be to get a Speaker, whatever else is happening. I am getting lots of nods from very distinguished personages.

Geraint Davies (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op): Many Opposition Members may allow a deal through this House holding their nose, but if, and only if, the public are given the final say in a people's referendum before an election. Can the Leader of the House undertake to say that it is, and will be, possible to negotiate a situation where his deal can be put to the people before we have a general election?

Mr Rees-Mogg: Leaving the European Union was put to the British people on 23 June 2016, and a general election surely is consulting the people, if nothing else.

Mr John Baron (Basildon and Billericay) (Con): Can the Leader of the House confirm that 95% of the Prime Minister's deal essentially remains unchanged from the deal that preceded it, and we had three and a half years to scrutinise that, so this should not take too long?

Mr Rees-Mogg: My hon. Friend is correct, but the Prime Minister got rid of the undemocratic backstop, which made the deal acceptable.

Gareth Snell (Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Lab/Co-op): Can the Leader of the House confirm that if the House decides on Monday not to hold a general election, he will still bring forward a programme motion at some point thereafter?

Mr Rees-Mogg: We hope that the House will vote for a general election on Monday, because we need to clear this up. We cannot go on endlessly, not making any decisions, and that seems to be the situation this House is in. It won't say yes and it won't say no; it won't say stay and it won't say go. We need to bring this to a conclusion and the hard stop of a general election may help focus minds, because nothing else seems to.

Andrew Bridgen (North West Leicestershire) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that for those who do not want Brexit there will never be enough time to debate it, and for those who do not want a general

election there will always be an excuse to avoid it, and it would appear that those two positions are not mutually exclusive?

Mr Rees-Mogg: My hon. Friend is right. I think there may be a developing desire in some quarters in this House to suspend the quinquennial Act.

Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab): This is a handy way of distracting from the reality that the Prime Minister has not succeeded in delivering Brexit by 31 October. Those of us who have been here longer than the Leader of the House know the fun and games, the jiggery-pokery, that he specialises in. When he does not get his election, perhaps he could then consider putting the Bill down with a proper timetable, so that we can debate it.

Mr Rees-Mogg: We have just offered all the time that is available between now and the 6th. We could sit 24 hours around the clock. The hours that are available are equivalent to over 20 sitting days. But it is rejected, and the rejection is phoney because the people who reject it do not want Brexit.

Mike Wood (Dudley South) (Con): Can the Leader of the House confirm that if Opposition Members wish a referendum to overturn the decision of the last referendum, they are perfectly at liberty to stand on that basis in the general election—put it in their manifesto—and if they win that election they can legislate for one?

Mr Rees-Mogg: My hon. Friend's point is brilliant, and an incisive explanation of how democracy works. Is it not extraordinary, Mr Speaker, that though they stand up and call for a referendum, they do not wish to put that to voters? If it were in their manifesto and if—heaven help us—they won, then they could do it, but they are so worried that they cannot win, and that they would not win their referendum, that they just try to use legislative legerdemain to try and frustrate the will of the British people.

Mr Speaker: Well, whatever the merits, I do like the word legerdemain. It is a splendid word. It has been resuscitated by the Leader of the House.

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): The Leader of the House wants a general election on 12 December. Can he explain to the House what the purpose of the Queen's Speech was?

Mr Rees-Mogg: The purpose of the Queen's Speech—the Gracious Speech—was to set out the legislative programme, and what a triumph it has been already. The Queen's Speech has been adopted by this House with a comfortable majority and a flagship piece of legislation has already passed its Second Reading. Who would have thought that we could have succeeded so much in so short a time? It is hard to think of a greater political success in modern history.

Tommy Sheppard (Edinburgh East) (SNP): Just for clarity, can I be sure that the position of Her Majesty's Government is that they will agree to an early election only if this Parliament is prepared to railroad through

[Tommy Sheppard]

their terrible deal? If that is the case, they know that they will be defeated, so is it not the truth that it is the Government who are running scared of an election?

Mr Rees-Mogg: No. I must confess that the logic of that point defeats me, and it seems that it defeats most Members of this House. This will be the third time that the Government have offered a general election, so we are clearly willing to have one. We are willing to take our case to the British people. Why? Because we are confident that our case is strong, just and right. The reason why the Opposition are so afraid of an election is that their case is weak, wobbly and futile.

Angus Brendan MacNeil (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): Is it not a fact that, halfway through a parliamentary term, Parliament has got a dangerous Prime Minister in a cage and that Parliament would be wise to keep that dangerous Prime Minister in a cage at least until we remove some of his teeth, if not all of them?

Mr Rees-Mogg: I am afraid that that reminds me of the joke about the time that one should go to visit the dentist, which is, of course, at two thirty. But the hon. Gentleman—[*Interruption.*] Somebody laughed. Thank you so much. These sort of jokes amuse my children. We cannot possibly want to remove the teeth of Prime Ministers unless they are rotten, but the Prime Minister has a fine set of gnashers with which to bite through these difficult problems.

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): I hope that hon. Members will oppose this dangerous and cynical manoeuvre, not least because no deal remains a real possibility until the trapdoor is closed in the withdrawal Bill that currently allows us to crash out if no future relationship is agreed at the end of the implementation period at the end of December next year. That is dangerous.

Mr Rees-Mogg: That tells you all need to know, Mr Speaker. The leader figure of the Green party says that an election is dangerous and cynical—dangerous and cynical to trust the people, dangerous and cynical to go back to our voters, dangerous and cynical to report to our employers. That is contempt for democracy.

Mr Philip Dunne (Ludlow) (Con): For greater clarity, will the Leader of the House please confirm that he referred in his business statement just now only to a

motion on Monday in relation to holding a general election? In the event that the European Commission comes back offering a further extension, would it be reasonable for the House to assume that the Leader of the House will make a further business statement at the start of business on Monday to allow for debate and a programme motion on the withdrawal agreement?

Mr Rees-Mogg: I have currently been averaging a business statement a day, and I am unsure whether that is a habit that will be unduly encouraged by you or by others, Mr Speaker. However, in the normal course of events, if there were some major development in our relationship with the European Union, a statement would be made by the appropriate person: either the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union or the Prime Minister himself.

Mike Gapes (Ilford South) (IGC): It is now clear that, instead of dying in a ditch, the Prime Minister has ditched the ditch. Is the Leader of the House aware of the problems will be caused in many communities by having an election as late as 12 December in terms of dark evenings and short hours—

Mr Speaker: Order. I do not wish to be unkind or discourteous to the hon. Gentleman in any way but, with the very greatest of respect, that is a matter to be treated of in the debate on the motion on Monday, upon which I feel confident that the hon. Gentleman will wish to expatiate to convey those concerns to the House. Would he mind that? I actually think it is best for Monday. I genuinely do.

Mike Gapes *indicated assent.*

Mr Speaker: If the Leader of the House wants to respond, he can do so briefly.

Mr Rees-Mogg: I thought we were getting a ditch joke, to which I was going to say, “Ha-ha.”

Lloyd Russell-Moyle (Brighton, Kemptown) (Lab/Co-op): Why is the Leader of the House playing games with resolutions rather than taking up the Opposition’s offer to programme the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill properly?

Mr Rees-Mogg: We have done both, but offering an election is not playing games but trusting the people. Her Majesty’s Government, the Conservative and Unionist party, trust the British people; the Opposition do not.

Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

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

6.5 pm

Gordon Marsden (Blackpool South) (Lab): This is the second Adjournment debate I have been granted in 16 months on Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and concerns about its governance. In the first debate, last June, I expressed profound concerns about the processes and lack of transparency leading up to the appointment of the trust's current chair, Pearse Butler. As I said then, it was the first time in my 20-year relationship with the trust and its predecessors, as a Blackpool MP, that I felt it necessary to express such concern in an Adjournment debate. I felt I had no choice, given the catalogue of errors, evasion and lack of transparency that had accompanied the process, including failings within NHS Improvement.

Last year I said:

"I am forced to conclude that the nominations committee thought that it could get away with evading proper scrutiny and transparency—that a thin veneer of irritated politeness attempting to conceal a determined effort to override public governors unless they were rubber-stamped...would do the trick. Well, it does not do the trick".

The Minister's predecessor, the right hon. Member for North East Cambridgeshire (Stephen Barclay), said in his reply that the issues I raised

"are clearly a cause for concern...it is clear that the recruitment process for the new chair had a number of irregularities."

He criticised the trust's failure to give decent or timely advice to MPs and stakeholders or to give suggestions for people who might apply. He assured the House that he would be

"working with NHSI to ensure that the irregularities regarding this appointment do not occur in the future. The hon. Gentleman has done the House a service in highlighting the clear irregularities in respect of this appointment."—[*Official Report*, 27 June 2018; Vol. 643, c. 1005-9.]

Indeed, when I met the new chair, Pearse Butler, in August 2018 for a review and a discussion of all the hugely important issues affecting our trust, which not only serves 330,000 acute patients on the Fylde coast but provides community health for nearly half a million patients into Wyre and north Lancashire, he hastened to assure me that he had taken on board the critique and would ensure new openness and transparency on these issues. I accepted the assurance at face value. I little dreamed that, just over 12 months later, I would have to return to the subject, but this time with him not as the passive beneficiary of a flawed process, but as an active agent—probably the leading agent—in another area.

I make it clear that my concerns in no way reflect on the vast majority of hard-working staff in the trust or on the challenging financial and other circumstances, especially in my Blackpool South constituency, which is the most deprived in England—overall health in Blackpool is the worst on 23 of the 32 health indicators. Their work, and many examples of good care under extreme pressure, were noted in the recent Care Quality Commission report, and I associate myself with those comments.

Cat Smith (Lancaster and Fleetwood) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing yet another Adjournment debate on the Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. It is, indeed, a sorry state of affairs when we find ourselves debating the trust once again. He makes important points about the staff, who work incredibly hard. Does he share my concern that the CQC report said that the staff did not always feel respected, supported or valued, and were concerned about the culture within Blackpool Victoria Hospital?

Gordon Marsden: I share those concerns, and I will show how they are inextricably linked to some of the shenanigans in the confirmation of the chief executive. It is all the more reason why staff might share the concerns and sense of grievance to which I will refer.

In the autumn and winter of last year and into this spring, as the trust's chair settled into his new position, the problems of cuts, waiting times and cancelled operations, which still leave the trust with some of the worst mortality rates and waiting times in England, continued. A snap visit by the CQC in January found patients waiting on the floor of Blackpool Victoria Hospital, because of a lack of space, and triage delays of more than three hours. As Blackpool's *The Gazette* said when the report finally came out, the CQC was demanding that

"bosses must improve the standards of care and staffing...in the emergency department".

Unfortunately, by this time, the trust had a further shadow hanging over it, with a police probe into issues of alleged poisoning in the stroke unit. That situation remains unresolved and I do not intend to talk about it further. The then chief executive, Wendy Swift, had left fairly unexpectedly in April, and the chair was at pains to tell *The Gazette* that her departure was

"in no way related to the trust's performance."

But he struck a very different tone last month when he told governors that the trust had

"needed a leader with gravitas and experience who could lead a different type of engagement with our staff."

That person was Kevin McGee, who was appointed as the interim temporary chief executive for the six months to 31 October. Naturally, when I heard of that, in May, I spoke to the chairman, who assured me that there would be a full and proper process for appointing a permanent chief executive in due course. I said in a subsequent letter to him, on 10 June, that it would be helpful to confirm when the process would begin, with details of the period between stakeholders being advised and of the closing period, and that this had been one of the issues in respect of his appointment as chair. I heard no more until 20 June, when the trust's secretary sent me a note, which said that the post had been advertised on 9 June and the shortlisting process would take place at the remuneration committee on 27 June. I want to emphasise that that was an even more rushed deadline than the one that the Minister's predecessor had criticised for the chairman's own appointment. In effect, it blocked MP stakeholders from having any ability to inform other potentially suitable applicants.

I began to be concerned, but what I did not then know was that the timeline described in the note to governors on 16 September to rubber stamp Mr McGee's appointment as the permanent chief executive without due process had been given the following rationale:

"On 27th June, the Remuneration Committee reviewed the shortlist provided by Odgers"—

[Gordon Marsden]

the recruiters—

“and determined that the candidates presented did not demonstrate either the experience or the leadership...required for the post...The Non-Executive Directors and myself did not believe that re-advertising the post would result in a stronger field of applicants and this had been discussed with, and agreed by, the Regional Director of NHS Improvement, after a range of discussions with experienced Chief Executives across the sector.”

How cosy! It was very cosy, and I think that to any impartial outside observer it would look like a complete stitch-up by the great and good of the region. The only communication I had received from the trust between June and 16 September was a staff bulletin from Pearse Butler, in which he had confirmed the cancellation of interviews and said

“we will now take a few weeks to consider our options”.

In the meantime, my attention had been drawn to an article published on 9 August in the *Health Service Journal* headed “Chief executive makes bid to lead second trust”. The journalist, Lawrence Dunhill, had interviewed Mr McGee about creating chain models and shared leadership. Mr McGee was admirably concise about what he thought—they were a jolly good thing. He told Mr Dunhill:

“Take personalities out of it, just the ability to work together in a different way”.

When asked whether he wanted to lead both trusts permanently, he said:

“If we can look at working in a different way across Lancashire then it would be a really good thing to do and I’d be really interested in doing that.”

The article stated:

“As reported last month, former Salford Royal chief executive Sir David Dalton...has been brought in to help trusts in Lancashire look at options for closer collaboration.”

Incidentally, this was the same Sir David Dalton who had been the independent assessor for the process of Pearse Butler’s own appointment as chair, which the previous Minister referred to last year.

I want to make it clear that I am not making any judgment—certainly not yet—on whether Mr McGee will be a good, bad or indifferent chief executive. He comes with some reputation, but as he has not met me since his appointment in May, I cannot say more. What is very clear is that for the second part of this exercise, having got Mr McGee as an interim chief executive of Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, in addition to his existing position as chief executive of East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust, there was a clear determination on the part of the chair at least to push through his confirmation without any attempt to reopen the selection process. We know that because of the answer to a parliamentary question that I received from the Minister on 8 October. I asked in what capacity NHS Improvement had given advice on discussing the possibility of mergers, and the reply said:

“The Chair at Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and the Chair at East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust sought the views of NHS England and NHS Improvement on the possibility of merging services and provision between the two Trusts.”

When the chairman had secured the agreement of the governors at the meeting to his proposal for Mr McGee, he finally decided to tell certainly me, and I think my parliamentary neighbour, the hon. Member for Blackpool

North and Cleveleys (Paul Maynard), of his news. This consisted of a rushed phone call to me, I think out in the countryside, just before he was about to go on holiday to Japan. I made it clear to him that I was surprised that he seemed to have learned nothing from the failings of process and transparency in his own appointment, that he was now preparing to foist a merger between the two trusts, that this was a major step and that there should be utmost clarity and transparency in the process. When I asked him why he had not taken that option in respect of Mr McGee, he dodged the question about putting him automatically on the shortlist and said that it would be a great move. When I said to him that it was effectively a merger, it said that it was not, saying that it was an alignment and that no decisions had been made about any merger. We know from the answer to the parliamentary question that that was incorrect. Perhaps the House will not be surprised that in the article in *The Gazette* entitled “More controversy at Blackpool Victoria Hospital”, I said that the process had been

“at best ambiguous and at worst evasive”

in respect of the merger and that we needed confirmation of what was proposed. I have no doubt that the chair will continue to try to muddy the waters but, to continue the analogy, if it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it is a duck.

We now have clarity from the answer to a second parliamentary question that I received from the Minister that Mr McGee will receive a single salary, agreed by both remuneration committees, although the trust still refuses to tell us what it will be. I said to *The Gazette* that the situation “beggars belief” after last year’s debate, and I still believe it does. It appears I am not the only one. The smooth and slippery stakeholder brief that was put out by way of formal amendment for the trust talks of “strategies of collaboration” and extensive discussions with, among others, the governors at Blackpool foundation trust. I am reliably informed that that is not the case. At least one governor has said that they were called on 16 September simply to ratify McGee’s appointment and that nothing was said about the implications of a merger. I gather that others are asking for more clarification. *The Gazette*, which was initially fobbed off about the truth and timing of the appointment, told us the same story. It seems that a number of other non-executive directors have also been confirmed without further press or selection.

It has to be said that this is not the first time that Mr Butler has attracted controversy with governors. When he was chair of the Morecambe Bay trust and outsourced Barrow hospital’s out-patient services, the media reported governors as saying, “I do not believe you got any influence on this structure. You drove the decision and due process was not done.” Governors were not informed of what was happening until July. In this case, it was not only MPs who were not consulted, as is confirmed by the Minister’s answer to my parliamentary question, and nor was the chair of the clinical commissioning group, or the CCG itself. Sadly, in the “not good enough” CQC report on the June inspection that came out just last week, this is amply and damningly exposed.

Mark Menzies (Fylde) (Con): The hon. Gentleman refers to the CQC report, which sums up what is quite frankly a failing of management and senior administration

at the hospital. We have a litany of records going missing—paper records like something from the 1950s—for months on end, and patients not being informed if their records have been found. Today, one of my constituents went to the hospital for an appointment only to be told that that appointment had been cancelled, although they had never been informed. This is not about money; it is about basic admin and basic management. Quite frankly, I say to the Minister that if these people cannot sort themselves out, the time is up. We should send in a taskforce, take these people in hand and sort it out. Our constituents demand better. We are putting the money in and we need to sort these people out if they cannot sort themselves out. My patience has worn out.

Gordon Marsden: The hon. Gentleman speaks very powerfully about the whole process, and I agree with him exactly. Sadly, in the “not good enough” CQC report about the inspection in June, which came out just last week, ample and damning concerns are exposed. There was a continuing series of “requiring improvements” for safety, effectiveness and responsiveness; and one “good” for caring, which speaks volumes for the staff. The biggest black mark went against leadership. When asked to judge whether the trust was well led, the CQC said that it was not and that it was “inadequate”. It gave chapter and verse on the issues. I cannot read all of it out, but I will give the Minister a selection:

“There was limited understanding of the importance of culture...Staff did not feel respected, valued, supported or appreciated by some members of the board...When something went wrong, people were not always told, did not consistently receive an apology...There were levels of bullying, harassment, discrimination and the organisation was not taking adequate action to reduce this...When staff raised concerns, they were not treated with respect, or the culture, policies and procedures did not provide adequate support for them to do so...We heard from several staff groups particularly those from a BME background.”

I have spoken to the CQC since the report came out and asked it to clarify exactly when it got these comments from staff and when it investigated them. It was confirmed that it was the period between March 2018 and June 2019, three quarters of which had been under Pearse Butler’s chairmanship. I asked whether there had been any discussion about the possibility of any future merger/collaboration, and was told that there had been discussions with NHSI and that it was likely—this was in June—that Mr McGee would be able to take that through. That is further evidence, if any more were needed, of this all being sorted out by the people in the bubble between June and August. There was very little evidence that they thought there was anything wrong, but of course there is something wrong—massively wrong. Let us add to this a small number of people in that bubble, in this case spearheaded by the chief executive. Yes, these decisions will affect all our constituents.

The fact of the matter is that the implications of this merger—because that is what it is—are massive. Will the two organisations fit? How will Mr McGee handle both? Why were the governors not given the full facts? East Lancashire, which is a good trust, covers Blackburn, Accrington, Burnley, Clitheroe, Pendle, Colne and Darwen. They are all very different places in terms of geography, demographics and ethnicities. All are a very long way from some of the coastal concerns of this hospital trust. If the people of East Lancashire look to anywhere, proud inland communities though they are, they look—

dare I say it?—to the Pennines or to Greater Manchester. The idea that this is going to work very easily is for the birds.

Foundation trusts were established under a quid pro quo system. They have wide powers of initiative, but in return, the public and external stakeholders have a right to be properly informed, consulted and assured that process is properly applied. In this case, that has not happened. What was needed was proper scrutiny, not winks and nods from a cosy clique within the bubble and nothing that would make the culture inadequate, as was so devastatingly laid out by the CQC. I have no doubt that some of these appointments may in themselves be good—I have met the new nursing director—but the culture over which Pearse Butler has presided over the past year has attracted these black marks.

I will conclude by saying that we really must make sure that we see a turnover from this catalogue of half-truths and evasions, and that there is a proper consultation, involving all stakeholders, about a process that is effectively a merger. Perhaps someone needs to say to the chair and some others in the trust the good words of Robbie Burns:

“Oh what a tangled web we weave,
When first we practice to deceive.”

6.23 pm

The Minister for Health (Edward Argar): On the final point made by the hon. Member for Blackpool South (Gordon Marsden), I would be cautious about that quote because the next line is:

“But when we’ve practiced but a while,
How vastly we improve our style.”

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for securing this debate. I note that my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool North and Cleveleys (Paul Maynard), who is an extremely strong advocate on behalf of his constituents in respect of medical care and the hospital, is here today to listen to the debate.

The hon. Gentleman set out clearly the challenges faced by the trust and the hospital in terms of the geographical context, multiple indices of deprivation and health factors, and the performance and financial issues facing the trust. He is right to emphasise that leadership is a key part of an effective trust. Before turning to that and to the specific points he has raised, I join him in paying tribute to the fantastic work of the staff at the trust, all the way from the consultants to the cleaners and porters—every single person in that team, who I know do everything they can to deliver top-quality care every day. I think we would all recognise that; it is a point of consensus.

The hon. Gentleman rightly highlighted the situation that had gone on in respect of the chair—an issue to which my right hon. Friend the Member for North East Cambridgeshire (Stephen Barclay) responded during the hon. Gentleman’s Adjournment debate just a little over a year ago. I would not dispute what the hon. Gentleman said about that experience, including the need for proper governance processes to be followed and lessons to be learnt.

Let me turn to the appointment of the chief executive and the process that was followed. I will come to progress made and the broader issues shortly, but I think this was the crux of the hon. Gentleman’s concerns,

[*Edward Argar*]

as it goes to a broader concern he expressed about what this may signify in terms of attitude and approach. The focus must always be on what delivers for patient outcomes and patient care, and I will come in a moment to Mr McGee's qualifications and track record.

The hon. Gentleman says that he—I understand that this is also true for my hon. Friends the Members for Blackpool North and Cleveleys and for Fylde (Mark Menzies)—has not yet had the offer of a meeting from the new chief exec. While that is a matter for the chief exec and the trust, I would give some gentle and friendly advice. In my experience, engagement, meetings and an open and trusting relationship with local Members of Parliament is to the benefit of the trust and those who work in it, as well as to the benefit of Members of Parliament. I therefore suggest that holding a meeting swiftly would probably be in everyone's best interests. I hope that the offer is forthcoming to the hon. Member for Blackpool South and to other hon. Members who have either intervened today or have a constituency interest.

As the hon. Gentleman knows, the appointment of a chief executive in an NHS foundation trust is the responsibility of the trust's non-executive directors, including the chair, with approval from the trust's council of governors. He touched on the circumstances in which this situation came about—that, following the retirement of former chief executive Wendy Swift in 2018, Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust undertook an extensive recruitment exercise to look for a chief executive.

It is my understanding that that exercise failed to find the right person from the point of view of the trust and those responsible for appointments. The chair of the trust and the chair of East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust then sought the views of NHS England and NHS Improvement, as they are entitled to do, regarding their proposal for a joint chief executive working across both organisations. Both trusts provided assurances that these proposals would bring benefits to both organisations and, crucially, would improve the care of patients in Blackpool and East Lancashire. On that basis, NHS England and NHS Improvement had no objections to the proposal that was put to them.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned his concerns about the interview process, including the cancellation of interviews. I do not have details about that, but if he writes to me, I would be very happy to look into that specific point, if that is helpful to him.

In the light of the advice from NHS England and NHS Improvement, Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust announced in April that Kevin McGee had been appointed as interim chief executive of the trust from 1 May 2019 while retaining his previous post as chief exec and accountable officer of East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust. On 4 October, both trusts announced they had agreed to work in closer collaboration and to support the appointment of Mr McGee as the chief executive and accountable officer of both trusts and on a permanent basis, which understandably prompted some written parliamentary questions from the hon. Gentleman.

The arrangement that has been put in place for Blackpool is genuinely designed to deliver several benefits, including enhanced quality of care, financial sustainability and improved performance. Mr McGee has a strong track record of significant care quality improvement in

the NHS. Under his leadership, he has improved East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust's CQC quality rating from "requires improvement" to "good". Furthermore, in a previous chief executive role, he led George Eliot Hospital NHS Trust out of special measures for quality reasons in 2014.

My hon. Friend—indeed, my friend—the Member for Fylde made a typically passionate intervention on behalf of his constituents. I understand that entirely; he is absolutely right to be concerned for their care and always to be promoting the best possible care for them. Clearly, the hospital has need of strong leadership and a chief executive who has experience in turning around and improving hospitals, and since his appointment the new chief executive has commissioned an external review of governance processes.

On the basis of the information that I have from the trust, and NHS England and NHS Improvement, I understand that proper and due process was followed in the chief executive's appointment, but I take on board the point made by the hon. Member for Blackpool South about the cancellation of interviews and similar. As I say, if he wants to add to the letter any other facts that he feels are relevant, I will of course look at them and respond to him as swiftly as I can. As he will know, in addition to appointing a new chief exec, the trust appointed a new director of nursing and medical director in October this year.

The Care Quality Commission published the report of its June 2019 inspection of the trust, which the hon. Gentleman mentioned, on 17 October. While it rated that the trust "requires improvement" for quality overall, it did recognise that there had been recent significant leadership changes and that Mr McGee had been in post for only a short time prior to the inspection. I am pleased to note that the CQC rated Blackpool "good" for caring, as he said. That is a testament to the staff, but also, I believe, a positive indicator of the direction of travel.

In the few minutes remaining to me, I will touch on a couple of other factors. The hon. Gentleman talked about mergers. I suspect that part of his concern is that this is a precursor to something that he would not support. It is important—I have spoken to my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde about this—that any decisions or discussions reflect the views of local stakeholders, including local Members of Parliament. I would say to the trust that my hon. Friend has been very clear with me that he believes that any merger would be the wrong way forward, and the hon. Member for Blackpool South has also been pretty clear on that. I would hope that the trust will listen to what informed local stakeholders such as Members of Parliament say.

I believe that the trust is learning from its mistakes and that the current chief executive is determined to tackle the quality issues and bring improvements to patient care. It must be given the space to do that. I have put on record what I believe it should reflect on, and I know that the hon. Member for Blackpool South will continue to make his points. I am very happy to meet him, my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde and, indeed, other hon. Members on this matter if they feel that is helpful.

Question put and agreed to.

6.33 pm

House adjourned.

Westminster Hall

Thursday 24 October 2019

[GRAHAM STRINGER *in the Chair*]

Plastic Food and Drink Packaging

1.30 pm

Neil Parish (Tiverton and Honiton) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the Sixteenth Report of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, Session 2017-19, Plastic food and drink packaging, HC 2080.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Stringer. It is also a pleasure to see the new Minister in her place and the shadow Minister, the hon. Member for Ipswich (Sandy Martin), here as well.

Plastic waste has been at the forefront of public interest for the last few years. There is, quite rightly, outrage about the impact of plastic pollution on the natural environment and about the amounts of recyclable waste exported, only to pollute other countries. The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee set out to examine whether enough is being done to reduce the use of plastic and properly manage waste in the food and drink sector.

It is worth reflecting on the fact that plastic is everywhere for a reason. For food and drink, it is lightweight and flexible, and it ensures high standards of hygiene. We should also remember that when plastic is used properly, it can help us to prevent food waste, which is a big contributor to carbon emissions. We do not want to increase the amount of food that is wasted.

Plastic's durability is both a blessing and a curse. The properties that make it useful for food preservation also mean that it lingers in our seas for decades. We need to manage our waste better. More materials need to be captured for recycling. The Committee was supportive of the Government's proposal to introduce consistency in recycling collections and simpler labelling for consumers. We would like to see that across the whole country.

Unfortunately, it is not particularly clear how much of our plastic waste is actually recycled. The Government often cite a 46% recycling rate for plastic packaging. However, businesses that produce fewer than 50 tonnes of packaging per year do not have to report on how much they place on the market or recycle, so there is a gap in the figures. We think that threshold should be lowered to 1 tonne of packaging. I ask the Minister to consider that.

On top of that, 60% of what is classed as "recycled" is actually exported abroad. Members will have seen media reports that our plastic exports can end up in countries where they are landfilled or burned instead, which can really affect villagers and others in those countries. We must recycle our own waste. We do not currently know how much plastic waste is recycled—it is likely to be less than 46%—and, if we cannot measure recycling, we cannot know whether policy changes are having the right effect. It is vital that we get the right figures.

The introduction of a deposit return scheme was another focus of our inquiry. We heard convincing evidence that a DRS would boost recycling of plastic bottles. I am convinced that if plastic bottles are to be

recycled, that must be done through a reverse-vending machine so that the same bottle can be made again from that plastic. Hon. Members may ask: why am I saying that? It is because most recycled plastic is not used to make the same item again; we get a much lower-quality waste plastic. We need to ensure that the label, the top and all those things are recyclable so that we can make another bottle out of the bottle that went through the reverse-vending machine.

We have also heard concerns from local authorities that taking that valuable material away from kerbside collection would undermine the viability of their wider recycling efforts. We therefore recommend that the Government monitor carefully the financial impact on local authorities of introducing a deposit return scheme.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): In Northern Ireland, we already have kerbside collections—indeed, we have moved on marvellously with recycling materials. It is incredible what a household can do when it commits to recycling. Has the Chair of the Select Committee had an opportunity to look at any of the other regions—Northern Ireland, for instance—where kerbside collection is already in place and working well?

Neil Parish: We did not look at the situation in Northern Ireland, although I understand that that is a good method of collection. In England, we found that because there are so many authorities with so many different contracts, there are totally different methods for what is recycled where. To put on my local government hat from many years ago, local government likes its own views and ways of dealing with things. However, in this case, we need to know how to recycle properly.

Jim Shannon: The hon. Gentleman is very kind to give way again. In Northern Ireland—let us be honest, we are a smaller region—we may have six or 10 councils working together. Perhaps that is something that England could look at.

Neil Parish: The hon. Gentleman makes the point that Northern Ireland is naturally a more compact, smaller community. Recycling works quite well in Wales, where again there are fewer authorities, which can come together better. Given its size and the number of its authorities, England is more difficult. Somehow or other, the Government must send down an edict to local authorities to pull them together. Some local authorities will have long-term contracts that will take a while to get out of, but the Government must pull them together, because what we recycle and how we do it here in London is totally different from what we do on the farm back in Somerset, for instance.

David Simpson (Upper Bann) (DUP) *rose—*

Neil Parish: I give way to the hon. Gentleman, who is on the Select Committee.

David Simpson: During our inquiry, witnesses regularly made the point that kerbside collections and all the legislation can be in place, but if the general public do not take part, stiff penalties in some shape or form are required to force them to. Otherwise, we will have a major problem—more so than now.

Neil Parish: I agree, but before we bring in stiff penalties we must ensure that there is a similar system all over the country. Otherwise, people can quite rightly say, “We didn’t know what we had to do.” The hon. Gentleman is right in his assumption, but let us get the system right. That is clear. There is the old adage, “You can lead a horse to water but you can’t make him drink.” We must keep going with people to make sure they are more concerned. They are concerned about plastic and recycling and want this all to happen, but we must make sure that some of those who are not quite so keen will take part in future. We need a system with a penalty, but let us get the system similar first—perhaps a carrot before the stick.

Douglas Chapman (Dunfermline and West Fife) (SNP): I have spent quite a bit of time working with schools in my constituency, and Commercial Primary School and Carnock Primary School are leading the field on the green agenda and sustainable development. In the last few weeks, we have also seen one of the first plastic-free hotels in Dunfermline.

There is great enthusiasm at grassroots level for recycling and how we dispose of plastic waste and waste in general, but the point, which I think the report covers, is: how do we get that linkage between local authorities, central Government and policy to ensure that we are working with communities and people, with everyone buying into the concept of looking at our environment in general and seeing how we can improve it?

Neil Parish: The hon. Gentleman is exactly right. We must ensure that we explain what we are doing and what it will achieve, and that the public buy into it. I had one of my local schools come in the other day from Axminster, and they said, “What can we do for the environment?” I said, “Why don’t we work to get a water fountain in the middle of Axminster, so that you can refill your bottles rather than buying new plastic ones?”

Schools and others are buying into all this, and students go home and say to their parents, “Why haven’t you recycled this? What have you done?” There is nothing like children being critical of their parents. This is all good stuff, and I think it will work, but we need to work together to make things similar across the country—I keep repeating that, because otherwise people do not actually know what to do.

Our plastic food and drink packaging inquiry also looked at the alternative materials being used instead of plastics. Some were conventional materials, such as paper, and others were more novel, such as compostable plastics. It is easy to think that the solution is to ban plastics, particularly single-use plastics, but, as always, the truth is more complicated. We need to think about what replaces those plastics, and whether they are actually better for the environment.

The society we live in now is in danger of just doing things that make us all feel better—it is right that we do those things, but they must actually be better for the environment and not worse. We need to look at that very carefully. For example, replacing plastic with heavier paper or glass could increase the carbon emissions associated with transporting those products. Compostable plastics are becoming more common, and hon. Members will have noted that here on the estate we have switched towards compostable packaging in our catering facilities. They have probably seen it.

The downside of compostables is that they require a separate waste stream so that they can be industrially composted. They need to reach 60° before they actually compost, and if we are not careful they can end up contaminating recycling, if there are non-compostable plastics as well. They work well at a pop festival or an event where they can all be collected, but when they are mixed, it can be a problem. We found throughout the inquiry that there is a real lack of consumer understanding of waste infrastructure. On this point, we have recommended supporting compostables for “closed loop” environments such as here in Parliament, where we can better control how they are disposed of. That is essential.

The Government and industry have focused on recycling and replacing plastic packaging, but less emphasis has been placed on reducing plastics in the first place. Yet, as we know from health issues, prevention is often better than cure. We therefore looked at how to reduce the amount of single-use plastics that we use. I ask the question, “Do we always need to wrap our carrots and potatoes?” We do not. Other vegetables such as cucumbers perhaps need to be wrapped in plastic so that they last longer. We need to be thoughtful about all these things.

Consumers are increasingly interested in reusable and refillable packaging. We have already seen the shift from disposable bottles and coffee cups towards refillable drinks containers, and that is very good news. Some retailers are experimenting with refillable packaging for food too, which would mean taking our own containers when we go shopping, just as most of us now take reusable carrier bags. We must also ensure that they are clean and that retailers are able to put food in them with confidence. Some vegetables, as I said, will keep longer if wrapped in plastic, but others can be sold loose.

However, refillable packaging is a bit trickier, because it will require a huge shift in the way we shop and consume. People want to use less plastic, but they also like to maintain their lifestyle, so it is a question of getting this exactly right. We like the freedom of a disposable, on-the-go culture, and we do not all have time to remember to wash and bring our containers when we go to a supermarket. On top of that, there are questions about how many times a container would need to be reused before it becomes environmentally better than single-use packaging. We have therefore called for the Government and the Waste and Resources Action Programme to take a closer look at refillable packaging systems and find out what actually works.

John Stevenson (Carlisle) (Con): As my hon. Friend will know, the food and drinks manufacturing sector is the largest manufacturing sector in our country. It is very innovative, it is a big employer and exporter, and it clearly has a major role to play in the reduction of the use of plastics. Does he agree that it is important that the Government work with the industry to look for solutions, rather than trying to impose solutions on it, as those might not actually work?

Neil Parish: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. He does a great deal of work with the food and drink sector, and he is right. It is a question not only of working with the food and drink sector in this country, but of imports. As we change things—as we start to put taxes on plastic, and so on—we must ensure that our businesses here are not affected more than businesses

that make the goods that we import. That is very important, and I am certain that the Minister has taken a great deal of notice of what my hon. Friend has said.

We need to take the industry with us, because they are the ones who will create the packaging in the first place and will then need to have a method of disposal through the retail system; they will need to work with retailers and consumers to ensure that we get it right.

To conclude, we in Parliament need to lead by example, by removing all single-use packaging from our catering facilities. Will the Minister work with House authorities to help us achieve a plastic-free Parliament?

Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab): I thank the Chair of the Select Committee for giving way. Will he join me in congratulating Surfers Against Sewage for all the work it has done on a plastic-free Parliament? We have been doing it through the all-party parliamentary group on ocean conservation. As he says, there is some way to go—that is why I brought my own cup today rather than using the compostable ones, just in case they are not composted—but the organisation has done a good job in trying to get the parliamentary estate to change its ways.

Neil Parish: I thank the hon. Lady for her intervention; she is an excellent member of the Select Committee and I know she has also done a great deal of work on food waste. This is important. We have all worked together with the authorities here to deliver a much better system, but we must ensure that we carry on to conclude it. That is why I ask whether the Minister will work with House authorities to help us to achieve a completely plastic-free Parliament. We have made a lot of progress, but we need to finalise it.

We also need consistency in recycling collections and simpler labelling for consumers—not just putting a green dot on things, because a green dot means nothing; it just means that somewhere along the line, something might have been recycled. It does not mean that that particular item is recyclable. When does the Minister expect new systems to be introduced—knowing her, it will be immediately—and will she commit to ensuring that businesses that produce 1 tonne of packaging per year report on how much packaging they place on the market? That is important, because a lot of plastic is coming through that is not being measured.

Finally, the most important message of our report is that reduction of plastic in the first place is the best way to prevent plastic pollution. Will the Minister work closely with the industry to ensure that we stop the use of unnecessary plastics in the first place?

Graham Stringer (in the Chair): Would any hon. Members wishing to speak stand up so I can see them? [*Interruption.*] It looks as though we have plenty of time, so there is no need for any kind of time limit.

1.49 pm

Derek Thomas (St Ives) (Con): I commend my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton and Tiverton—

Neil Parish: Tiverton and Honiton.

Derek Thomas: I commend my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish)—Tiverton is obviously first—for securing the debate and for all he does with his Select Committee. This is such an urgent

issue, and the report is timely. It contains some helpful work and recommendations, and I hope that the Government take seriously and implement them all. It is urgent that we cut plastic pollution.

I declare an interest: I am the Member for west Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, in the most beautiful constituency—that is undisputed.

Neil Parish: We will contest that.

Derek Thomas: I will not comment on Tiverton and Honiton again. I say that my constituency is the most beautiful because, apart from a short section that neighbours the constituencies of my hon. Friends the Members for Camborne and Redruth (George Eustice) and for Truro and Falmouth (Sarah Newton), we are entirely surrounded by the sea. However, although ours is a beautiful, unspoiled part of the world where every Member—as well as most of the country—gladly chooses to holiday during the summer, the truth is that we do see plastic pollution.

Kerry McCarthy: My researcher loves going to Scilly; he is going there for Christmas. He was showing me in the office just now that it is 12 °C in Scilly and the sun is shining. He was rather wishing, given the weather today, that he was there. Beautiful as Bristol is, I might have to agree with the hon. Gentleman.

Derek Thomas: I welcome that intervention, and the fact that we agree on that is brilliant. The hon. Lady is right: I always say to everyone who comes down, or who wishes to, that the sun always shines—which is true, although sometimes the rain gets in between.

Neil Parish: You can guarantee that, can you?

Derek Thomas: I can, but the clouds sometimes obscure it.

On the Isles of Scilly, where it is 12 °C and warm and beautiful, there is no hiding the fact that plastic pollution is taking its toll. I am the parliamentary species champion for the Manx shearwater, a ground-nesting bird that was in significant decline. We have been able to turn that decline around on the Isles of Scilly because we have been able to get some of those islands—they are both inhabited and uninhabited—completely clear of plastic pollution and rats. As a result, the birds are now thriving, and last year they were the fastest recovering species at risk in the UK. They nest only in two parts of the British Isles. That is an example of the immediate benefit of getting on top of this problem for wildlife.

I was shocked by something that I learned when I went on a visit to Nancledra school, which was holding an eco-fair. People took shovelfuls of sand—anyone who looked at it would have assumed that it was just ordinary sand from the beach, as it was—and poured it into water. As they did so, the plastic came to the top. Anyone who has not done that experiment should do so when they—or their member of staff—go on holiday to Cornwall. If we pour sand that looks perfectly ordinary into a bucket of water, we will find it startling how much plastic is in that water. That plastic harms our marine life, so we really must get on top of it. We will never get on top of all the minute plastic pieces that are in the sand but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton and Honiton says, we can certainly stop contributing to that.

[*Derek Thomas*]

In my constituency and around the country, as we heard from the hon. Member for Dunfermline and West Fife (Douglas Chapman), who is from way up north—I have not been here long enough to learn all the pronunciations—there is a huge amount of effort and will from people on the ground. Right across the Cornwall coastline, organisations continue to undertake regular beach cleans, and they are now moving inland because of all the plastic caught up in bushes and hedgerows. We will see less and less plastic there, but mainly because people are working so hard to clear it up.

Every year, I run an outdoor adventure camp, and I have done for 20-odd years. This year, we decided that we would be plastic free. I cannot tell hon. Members how difficult it was to run a camp for 100 young people and not bring on to the site unnecessary plastic packaging. Schools tell me exactly the same. Mounts Bay Academy in Penzance held a huge event to celebrate its plastic-free status, but staff kept telling me that they could not get suppliers to stop sending into the school stuff that was wrapped unnecessarily in single-use plastic. We need to address that, and I hope that the Government will do so as a result of this report.

There are a couple of things I want to commend. Penzance was the first town to become plastic free. Surfers Against Sewage was started in Cornwall 20 or 30 years ago, campaigning to clean up our beaches. We were pumping raw sewage into our beaches, but we have been able to address that and now we have blue flag beaches that are the most beautiful in the country. SAS staff have now rightly turned their attention to plastic, and they have done amazing work. They have been into Parliament—I am sure that most Members will have met them already—to make the case for bottle deposit schemes and legislation from the Government to change things. SAS also supports the industry to move away from unnecessary plastics.

Despite all that effort, herein lies the problem: there is still no let-up in the use of unnecessary plastic packaging. Supermarkets continue to use it for no good reason. If there is a good reason, I would be delighted if someone—perhaps the Minister—could correct me. I am an old-fashioned person of faith, and I believe that we are provided with what we need. Fruit and veg are provided with their own natural wrappers and protections. Why do our supermarkets choose to shrink-wrap cucumbers—or swedes or turnips, depending on the part of the country—and other fruit and veg? It is completely unnecessary, and it amazes me that we continue to do that.

Kerry McCarthy: There is a counter-argument for some of this packaging, particularly when it comes to cucumbers. The hon. Gentleman will find people who say that if we are trying to address food waste, such packaging is the way to keep cucumbers fresh. However, the Select Committee had a really interesting session with people who are developing alternatives, and the seaweed-based alternatives in particular were absolutely fascinating. Perhaps that is the route to go down.

Derek Thomas: I completely accept that. Cutting down on food miles and getting better at using food when it is available, and from close to where it is supplied, might be part of the solution to food waste. I agree with the hon. Lady, however, and I will come to the alternatives in a moment.

Jim Shannon: I am most intrigued by the hon. Gentleman's comment, and what he said was true. Those of us who come from the countryside probably expect our potatoes to have a bit of soil with them, and maybe a wee distortion or a growth on either side. That does not really bother us. However, the housewife does not see things as we who live in the countryside see them. The housewife sees things as products and, with respect, she probably has no idea where they come from or what they are like; they just have to look good. As far as the supermarkets are concerned, products must look good; as we all know, that may not make them good.

Derek Thomas: I will not criticise my own Government, but I learned home economics in school, which taught me what cauliflowers and so on look like when picked from the ground. There is a joke around in Cornwall about children thinking that bottles of milk are literally collected from nests, rather than that milk comes from cows. However, the point has been properly made that we need to get to a place where people understand—or have the opportunity to learn, if they choose to—how food is produced, and how they can use it in a much more natural way. I will not say much more on that.

I come back to the intervention about shrink-wrapped cucumber. I accept the points that have been made, and that we can use alternatives to keep cucumbers fresh, but we cannot use the same argument for tinned vegetables. Baked beans, which are already wrapped in tins, are wrapped again in plastic. I cannot see the need for that. Some producers find that cardboard is a useful alternative. I think that the supermarkets and food packagers need to be leaned on by the Government to get rid of unnecessary single-use plastic. I do not think that there is any excuse for using it. I do not want to pick on Mr Kipling, who was a favourite of mine when I was younger, but he likes to wrap his cakes and biscuits in far too many wrappers. It would be great for people to take action about the lack of movement, not only from the Government but from some of the companies that continue to use unnecessary plastic.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline and West Fife—I am sorry; I am really not familiar with his constituency—made a good point about the enthusiasm of local people. There is enormous enthusiasm and determination among the people I meet to cut plastic where possible, so I have three, or possibly four, simple asks.

First, what I hear from people is that when they buy biodegradable or compostable products, they want to know what that actually means. If we buy biodegradable nappies, as I did, how long does a nappy sit in our compost heap before it disappears? I put the nappies in my compost heap—and then I had to put them in the bin about four years later. We need to be really clear with people and have a proper legal definition of what biodegradable actually means. How long should we expect something to take to rot down? What is compostable?

Neil Parish: That is what we found in the inquiry. Compostable plastic has to reach 60°C; it has to be industrially composted. That will work, but not in someone's garden. That is why the material has to be collected separately. Somehow or other that has to be explained to the public, because at the moment they are rather confused about the whole matter.

Derek Thomas: I agree, and I intended to refer to the report picking up on that point, so I thank my hon. Friend for the intervention. First, therefore, let us get that issue properly sorted out and the information communicated clearly, so that we have practical measures to deal with items described as compostable and biodegradable.

We need to support the innovation of alternatives. A number of organisations have come into this place in the last year or two, as we have talked more and more about alternatives to plastics, and demonstrated what they have produced—we heard about seaweed earlier. We need to find a way whereby Government can really encourage that research and development.

David Simpson: I refer back to what the Chairman of the Select Committee, the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish), said: we have to get the system right. But supermarkets, of course, are sometimes governed by public health in what they should do, so it is a multi-agency decision on all of this. There needs to be a partnership, as the hon. Member for St Ives (Derek Thomas) has said, to try to relieve the difficulty that we have with plastic, but this is a multi-agency situation.

Derek Thomas: I agree, and I welcome that intervention. It is true that there will be some single-use plastic that we cannot avoid. If we go into a hospital, we will find items that are wrapped for what are obviously good reasons. I will name-check now if I am permitted to, Mr Stringer. There is a large outlet—retailer—in my constituency called Thornes. It sells a lot of fruit and veg and all sorts of other items. It decided, very early after the Government launched their 25-year environment strategy in January 2018, that it would not use single-use plastic, and it has moved away from it, including for its fruit and veg. That outlet certainly compares in size to a small supermarket, so if it can do it, it must be possible for supermarkets to take greater measures than they already do. But I accept that we need real leadership from Government, and urgently.

I have two or three more asks. We need legislation—I hope that we will do this through the Environment Bill—to ban unnecessary single-use plastic. That is the only way we will get businesses to really respond and urgently develop the alternatives. We also need legislation to ensure that all remaining plastic that is necessary—my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton and Honiton was right to say that there is necessary plastic—can be recycled. We still purchase plastics and products that cannot be recycled, and that just needs to come to an end.

Jim Shannon: It would be remiss of me not to commend some of the supermarkets for what they are doing. In my constituency, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Upper Bann (David Simpson) and, I suspect, in everyone's constituency, the large supermarket chains, come Friday and Saturday night, have a system whereby if a product, such as fresh fruit or veg, is coming near its end of life, they disperse the produce among community groups. As I said, that is done in my constituency, and it works exceptionally well. It does away with the loss of the product and someone gets the benefit of it. Supermarkets are chastised, but sometimes they do a lot of good things.

Derek Thomas: I am not here to beat up the supermarkets, and if I have done so, I apologise. I welcome the intervention, and the hon. Gentleman is right: in Cornwall, we have an excellent project—it is very early in the embryonic stage—called Hive, which is doing just what he describes. Already this year, it has taken 8 tonnes of food from the local supermarket, turned it into nutritious meals and distributed it to families who need it.

There is some really good work, and supermarkets are playing an important part in that. Obviously, it saves them a lot of money as well, because they then do not have the costs of having to dispose of the products. All I am saying is that much more can be done across supermarkets and retailers. If there are people, as there are in Cornwall, who are determined to reduce their use of single-use plastic in particular, they must be allowed to do that. They must be able to buy items and products that are not unnecessarily wrapped.

I want to draw the House's attention, before I conclude, to one fantastic piece of technology that has been developed in the UK, supported by Government funding. Called the HERU—home energy resource unit—it is the solution when we just cannot get rid of or cannot stop altogether the use of plastics and other items in our house. This appliance can at the moment be purchased and go alongside our home—outside—and every piece of rubbish from our home, such as nappies, coffee cups and plastic packaging, can be dropped into it. The rubbish is incinerated, which deals with the 60° issue, and then that generates energy for our home. At the moment, it is a brand-new product and an expensive appliance to purchase, but it would be great, as Government move forward on the issue of decarbonising our nation and addressing the question of how we get rid of waste sustainably, to look at an innovation such as the HERU to see how that can be used to support homes and communities and even to help councils to get on top of the challenge that they have.

I shall return to the Isles of Scilly, as it were, once more. They collect very little in the way of council tax from their residents: just over 2,000 people live there. They spend hundreds of thousands of pounds every year moving rubbish from the Isles of Scilly to the mainland and wherever it goes from there. A piece of technology such as the HERU could be the solution for the Isles of Scilly in seriously reducing their carbon footprint, but also their costs, so it would be great if the Minister could continue to work with me and with our right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to see how we can support the Isles of Scilly to use such innovation to address many of their challenges.

Thank you, Mr Stringer: you have been very patient.

2.6 pm

Gillian Keegan (Chichester) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Stringer, and a great pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for St Ives (Derek Thomas), whose constituency includes the Scilly Isles.

Plastic packaging and its impacts on the environment, for many of us and certainly in my case, burst into our consciousness when Sir David Attenborough put a spotlight on the impacts that our activities are having beneath the waves. Perhaps it is because my hon. Friend and I both represent coastal constituencies that that really hit home.

[*Gillian Keegan*]

I probably do not have quite as much coast around my constituency as he does, but I do have in my area the extremely sunny Selsey, the Witterings, which also has blue flag beaches, Bracklesham Bay, Chichester harbour itself, which is an area of outstanding natural beauty, and Bosham. This issue really matters to people in my constituency, because the coast really matters—for many reasons, ranging from tourism to fishing.

Those programmes about plastic really did cut through. So much so that some surveys have even suggested—get this—that the British public care more about plastic pollution than Brexit. Obviously, being in this place, we find that incredibly hard to believe, but apparently 82% of people are now trying to reduce the amount of plastic packaging that they throw away, and I know from meeting people across my constituency that they feel the same. Everyone wants to do the right thing. I am always struck by the fact that the British people are very good at trying to do the right thing, but often we confuse them with mixed messages. The education that we give is not sufficient. The situation is so difficult because we have introduced systems that are non-standardised and are incredibly difficult for people to follow.

The recent report from the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish), whom I thank for securing this debate, highlights the huge amount of work ahead of us if we are truly to get to grips with this issue. I fully agree with many of the recommendations in the report. It was a very thorough report, on which the Chair and the other members of the Select Committee are to be congratulated.

Douglas Chapman: On consistency across the UK and trying to have a more joined-up approach, in Scotland, we are about to launch the deposit return scheme. As the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) has said, there are good examples from across the country, which we can evaluate and spread wider, to share that benefit across the UK.

Gillian Keegan: The hon. Gentleman is right. We have an opportunity to standardise a new scheme—well, an old scheme that has been brought back—that we are not introducing. I hope the Minister takes note that we should be working together to ensure we have standardised schemes.

We need to get to grips with the current situation. As my hon. Friend the Member for St Ives mentioned, the report rightly emphasises the current inadequacy in the monitoring of plastic usage. That impacts our ability to accurately calculate our usage. Some surveys suggest that we are putting about 2.2 million tonnes of plastic packaging into the UK market each year, but we need to do more to know exactly how much we are using.

Our priority must be to use less plastic. There is a whole host of solutions to help us achieve that. We have seen fantastic results from the 5p plastic bag, which led to a significant reduction, with 15.6 million fewer bags used since 2015. There is scope to extend that to other forms of packaging and products where suitable alternatives exist.

We all know that immediate changes can be made. The thing that bugs me is crisps: every packet I buy is half empty. Introducing regulation around packaging,

so that it is designed around product size, instead of making things look bigger, would be a good start. Many shops and some supermarkets are going further.

Jim Shannon: As my friend, the hon. Member for Dunfermline and West Fife (Douglas Chapman), mentioned, some of the schemes run in Scotland have been done in Northern Ireland, too. The plastic bag charge has been incredibly successful in Northern Ireland, to such an extent that the use of plastic bags has reduced to about 20% or 25%—a massive reduction. It has been successful because people want it to be successful, because children tell their parents that they must do it and because that money goes back into society and can help environmental projects. We should be pushing more on that.

Gillian Keegan: I completely agree. As well as being influenced by children, consumer behaviour can take some time to change. I remember coming home from this place late at night and I would never have plastic bags with me to go shopping—I am sure many of us have done the same—but I have solved that problem by buying one of these little fold-up bags, so at least I always have that. We also have reusable plastic bottles. I have lost mine again today. I do not know how many I have lost. I am sure my impact on the environment in lost water bottles is greater than what I have saved, so now I have taken to reusing this plastic bottle. I think I am not supposed to refill it, but I do anyway.

There are plenty of opportunities for us to move towards being plastic-free. Everywhere we go, we see more and more plastic. Once we become conscious of it, that is it, we see it everywhere. Some supermarkets are moving to packaging-free aisles and even the funny-shaped potatoes, which my friend, the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon), referred to—I have seen them with a little bit of soil on them, but I am sure that is just for authenticity.

Last year, I opened Stansted Park farm shop, in my constituency. The whole business has an environmentally friendly ethos. Most of their produce is loose. It has drastically reduced all plastic use. There is a future model in package-free and refill shops, similar to the old-fashioned way. My grandmother used to have glass jars for everything. We used to take them to the shops and they would be refilled from huge sacks. I can see the hon. Member for Strangford nodding, because he remembers the same. We are obviously around the same age.

E-commerce could play an important role in this area by delivering food in reusable boxes on a subscription or bespoke order model. We need to do something about e-commerce. I do not know if you have noticed this, Mr Stringer, but when I order my stuff, it comes in several different deliveries, with several different delivery drivers coming to my house two or three times a day. Maybe I am just a prolific shopper, but they could deliver them by a more transport-friendly mechanism. Moving to online shopping does not necessarily mean it is environmentally friendly, so we need to encourage those businesses, as well.

The humble cucumber has been mentioned a few times. Apparently, wrapped, they have a shelf-life of 15 days when chilled, but only nine days when unwrapped. That is true. They go all soft when they are unwrapped, and they are inedible. Removing plastics in some cases can increase other forms of waste. I do not think there is much market for an end-of-life cucumber. Other forms

of waste and emissions are released when we consider the entire carbon budget of products. We need to get this right.

I am still driving a diesel car. Why? Because I followed the advice and bought a diesel car. Now, of course, I cannot get rid of it. The market share of diesel cars went from something like 14% to 65%. Everybody followed the advice and then we realised the advice was wrong. We must get the advice right. There are many alternatives, as the hon. Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) suggested, such as seaweeds and potato starch wrapping. That innovation will come the more the Government incentivise innovation.

Most of us have the ambition to use less single-use plastic. Many people now use alternatives. I try to use less in my day-to-day life. I mentioned my water bottle. I also gave up plastic for Lent. It was a nightmare. It was incredibly different and I had to change my whole life for six weeks. I chose an easier option this time, because it was so difficult to give up plastic for six weeks. We need to make this easy. We are consumers and we simply will not do it, if it is incredibly difficult and everybody must carry around glass jars and things that do not fit into everyday life.

Jim Shannon: The hon. Lady referred to consumer behaviour. As I was saying to the hon. Member for Dunfermline and West Fife, the greatest scourge of this modern age is probably takeaways. I am in the takeaways regularly, but I am talking about the materials they use to wrap the product in. I am old enough—I do not think the hon. Lady is, despite what she says—to remember fish and chips wrapped in newspaper, and they tasted great. This system does not allow that to happen. Some of the takeaway companies have come up with some ideas for reducing the products they use. I think the Chairman is looking at me—I think this is an important point. If we want to do something specific and great, we should look at methods to reduce takeaway packaging. That would make a magnificent change to the disposables market.

Gillian Keegan: I completely agree. There were some mentions of takeaways in the report. We could also not have as many takeaways. That is another thing that has changed in the last 20 to 30 years: we eat a lot more takeaway food. It is not very good for us, so there are many reasons, not only environmental, to cut out takeaway food to some degree, and to use more locally sourced products and to cook ourselves. My hon. Friend the Member for St Ives mentioned home economics. I cannot say that my home economics classes were very successful. When I brought my rock cakes home, my father said he now understood where the name came from and I have not made a cake since.

Jim Shannon: That was very harsh!

Gillian Keegan: It was harsh, but, unfortunately, it was true.

Making it easy for people to use less is the first thing. Recycling has a major role to play. We have all said that we need to standardise recycling. Between my home in London and my home in Petworth what and how I can recycle is completely different. When I go back to my parents in Knowsley, their system is not only different,

but the opposite of what I do at home in Petworth, so I am always putting things in the wrong bin. Even things such as colours could be made so much easier. We have allowed every council to design it. I think that is driven by the design of the equipment at their local recycling centre, what it can do, and how it manages bottle tops and various bits of plastic. That has driven the standards, just by what local authorities have invested in for their recycling facilities.

As part of the endeavours to increase recycling rates, the Government have proposed a new tax system to ensure that at least 30% of packaging is made from recycled material, and I fully support that direction of travel. However, I also think that the Committee's recommendation to have a more modulated tax system might be more effective in incentivising the use of a greater percentage of recycled material.

We have talked about the deposit return scheme. When I was reading about it, I remember thinking, yet again, "That sounds almost exactly like what used to happen many years ago." I remember the Alpine lemonade man coming round when I was a child. The bottles then were glass. We used to collect them; in fact, it was the only way we made any pocket money. In fact, for today's children, there would be a financial incentive for them to collect all of this plastic if they could make some money out of it.

There is not a single school that any of us go into in which we are not asked about insects that are no longer around, which we never even knew existed. Children today are so well educated on the environment; indeed, they are already forcing a generational change. We have a beach school at Chidham, run by one of my schools, and I will ask the staff if they have done the sand experiment for our area. We also have forest schools. I go to schools in Southbourne, Sidlesham, Harting, Loxwood and Rake, and they all have eco-warriors and eco-councils. The questions I get asked in schools are the hardest questions I get; I can talk about Brexit all day long, but with some of these environmental questions, the children have studied to a much greater degree than we ever did. In fact, we did not do any of that in school and now we are struggling to catch up. The children really have a fantastic approach and I am pretty sure that if they were incentivised with cash, they would make sure that they collected everything for deposit return schemes, because it would be a good way of topping up their pocket money.

The 1st Chichester Brownies unit in Christchurch wrote to me recently to ask me to support its plastic promise, which of course I have agreed to do. It aims to raise awareness of plastic pollution and to reduce our reliance on single-use plastics. So those children are not only telling their parents what to do but telling their MPs what to do, which is very welcome. In the letter I received, it was obvious that the Brownies were very excited by the deposit return scheme; they really welcomed it and I can see them going round in their uniforms to pick up all the plastic, and making some cash in the meantime. Probably, that cash will go to good causes, because that is another thing that children get involved in.

I will conclude by emphasising the importance of international co-operation in tackling this issue. Currently, of the estimated 8 million tonnes of plastics that enter the oceans each year, the US, the UK and Europe collectively contribute about 2%. Therefore, the Government's

[Gillian Keegan]

investment of over £60 million to help the Commonwealth nations improve their waste management is vital and is the right approach. We have to show leadership and there is much we can do to help other countries. That would also make a massive impact. I hope that we can continue our domestic journey of self-improvement in this area, and I believe the best way to instil change abroad is to lead by example at home. I also look forward to seeing the technology and innovation that will rise to this challenge, to make sure that we free our world from plastic pollution.

2.23 pm

John Mc Nally (Falkirk) (SNP): As always, Mr Stringer, it is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship.

I, too, welcome the Minister to her place. I am cautiously optimistic—maybe even optimistic—that she has the ability to deliver improvements on environmental issues for this Government, and that is not a first: I believe it.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish) on securing this particular debate. I agree with the hon. Member and I share his concerns on the gap figures, our export figures and the systems of collection. I think that we are all on the same pilgrimage on this matter. As a point of information for him, a water fountain will be installed in my constituency by Scottish Water on 31 October. I might be going to another destination that day—maybe even one from the Prime Minister—but I hope that I can manage to get back to my constituency. It is exactly the same thing as the hon. Member for Chichester (Gillian Keegan) mentioned—people will be able to fill their bottle of water in the street, as was normal further back than she can go. Fountains were common in every town and city.

Regarding the other interventions, in particular that by the hon. Member for St Ives (Derek Thomas), I am extremely intrigued to hear about the schools and initiatives that are happening; I will come on to that issue later on.

The hon. Member for Chichester was absolutely right about the 5p charge on plastic bags. That initiative has been a success and the easiest way to witness that success is to consider the lack of plastic bags lying about the streets. Before, there were so many that it was a pitiful and disgraceful sight. We could see them around every supermarket; indeed, flung about everywhere we went. So I am impressed by the hon. Lady's little bag and I might purchase one myself soon.

The plastic waste and the crippling cost of it to our planet, with debris that lasts forever, simply has to cease. If we want to change the world, we should get busy in our own little corner of it; I have believed that for a very long time and we should all do that.

At this point, I must declare a non-financial interest. I am a member of CGI, the community green initiative, in Falkirk, and of the Communities along the Carron Association, or CATCA. I am also trying to establish youth climate ambassadors in Falkirk schools, and an all-party parliamentary group on youth action and climate change, to make children's voices heard in this Parliament, the devolved Administrations, local authorities and possibly even—with a bit of good luck—at COP 20 next year in Glasgow.

The Committee's report highlights that it is important to engage with young people about recycling, because they often educate their parents, and we must be mindful of that.

Douglas Chapman: I am just looking at a document on the sustainable development goals: No. 4 is on education and No. 13 is on climate change. No. 4 says that all learners should

“acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development”.

In Scotland, that fits very well, for example, with the curriculum for excellence, whereby all schools encourage their pupils to be responsible citizens. So, regarding my hon. Friend's proposed all-party group to support young people in their efforts, he can put me down to be No. 1 on the list. I am sure that some other Members will also be happy to join him in his efforts.

John Mc Nally: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. I agree with him; in fact, it has already been very encouraging to see the number of Members who have requested to join the APPG. We must engage with future decision makers, who will come from all parts, not just from middle-class backgrounds, and with children who have got little voice. The point of the APPG is to bring that out. I have met the director of education in Falkirk. He will try to get all the local schools to participate and try to identify children who normally do not have a voice, and to bring them forward to participate.

Even going round various schools, such as St Bernadette's primary school in Falkirk, I have been astonished by seven and eight-year-olds, with their in-depth knowledge of what is happening, and what they knew about palm oil and the devastation it causes to the Amazon, the lungs of the world. They are aware of what is going on and Greta Thunberg must be praised for her efforts on this issue; she has brought it into our living rooms.

All of us know of the very successful environmental leaders and community litter clean-up organisations in our constituencies. There are many such examples of volunteers across Falkirk, the rest of Scotland and indeed the world. I believe that a world conversion is taking place in how we treat this planet and how we lead our lives. That behavioural change is happening, and not before time, because we just do not have time on our side.

What impact do the real ultimate decision-makers have on our daily lives, to reduce waste? Well, I will have to get a wee bit political here, Minister, because the austerity measures of successive Tory Governments have held local authorities back and restrained them from delivering improved recycling services in England. Spending on the environment has been cut by 20% and half of English local authorities are planning further cuts to services.

I will quote the evidence from St Helens Council to the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee:

“When faced with a desperately strained social care system...trying to look after elderly people...and increasing numbers of children being taken into care, issues such as recycling rates cannot possibly be considered a priority.”

That statement should worry everyone here and I hope that the Minister will address that concern when she sums up today. Taxes are the price that we all pay for a

civilised society. Austerity affects the poorest in society for the mistakes of the richest. Local authorities should not be forced into making those choices.

Standardising and simplifying the collection of material for recycling has been identified as being key to improving kerbside recycling rates. There is an opportunity to nudge us all into better habits. We are at a pivotal moment in time and we need to start ridding the planet of the filth we are creating. Two or three Members have referred to our collections systems. I have met professionals, partners and stakeholders, whether that is here in Parliament, at conferences or at the Environmental Audit Committee. All agree that a new waste collection system needs to be designed. We certainly would not want to start from here with the system we have.

The conclusions of the Committee's report highlight inconsistency in collections. It is impossible for consumers to understand the on-pack recycling labelling scheme. We heard that the bin infrastructure should be harmonised. A traffic light, colour-coded system was suggested, where the colour symbol on a bottle or paper cup could be matched to the appropriate colour-matching bin lid. That nudge would take the confusion and dilemma out of thinking, "Which bin do I put this product in?"

As manufacturers move to make packaging simpler and easier to recycle, colour coding could be added to all packaging to simply tell people which bin disposable items go in. For example, I have to look at the bottom of this plastic cup to see where it should go. Imagine a harmonised colour-coded bin system at airports, bus stations, train stations, football and rugby grounds and venues across the country. Will the Minister tell the Chamber whether that suggestion has been discussed at any level in Parliament?

The SNP Government in Scotland are leading by example. We take the environment very seriously in Scotland. We aim to make Scotland a zero-waste society with a circular economy, and we have ambitious targets in place to make that vision a reality. The Scottish Government are committed to minimising the population's demand on primary resources and maximising the reuse, recycling and recovery of resources, rather than treating them as waste. There are ambitious targets in place for reducing waste and increasing recycling. For example, by 2025, we want to reduce total waste arising in Scotland by 15% against 2011 levels, to reduce food waste by 33% against 2013 levels and to recycle 70% of the remaining waste, sending no more than 5% of the remaining waste to landfill. Those are ambitious targets, but furthermore, we aim to match the EU ambition for all plastic packaging to be economically recyclable or reusable by 2030.

For information, the Scottish Government have banned personal hygiene products containing plastic microbeads and have launched a consultation on a ban on plastic-stemmed cotton buds. We are keen to follow best practice and improve standards. Scotland's people expect that, and the recent EU plastics directive will be adopted imminently, leading to the banning of plastic straws, stirrers and other throwaway items.

The Scottish Government support the EU Commission's vision that all plastic packaging should be easily recycled or reusable by 2030. We are a founder member of the plastics pact. Scotland is also the first part of the UK to commit to introducing a deposit return scheme for drinks containers, and we aim to have that up and

running within the next two years. The purpose of that scheme is to increase the quantity of target materials captured for recycling and improve the quality of material captured. That will allow for high-value recycling, and, most importantly, build and encourage wider behavioural changes in the use of materials to deliver the maximum economic and social benefit to Scotland.

Graham Stringer (in the Chair): Order. May I ask the hon. Gentleman to bring his speech to a conclusion within the next couple of minutes so that there is equal time for the Labour spokesperson and the Minister? I have divided the time from the start of his speech to the end of the debate approximately into three. I would be grateful if he began to bring his speech to a close.

John Mc Nally: That is lucky, because my voice is beginning to give way anyway. There is real concern that Brexit poses a real threat to environmental standards in the UK, with DEFRA being singled out as the least-prepared Department for the UK's departure from the EU. The best way for us to achieve our environmental ambitions is to ensure that Scotland's devolved powers continue to be respected.

Graham Stringer (in the Chair): I thank the hon. Gentleman for his co-operation.

2.34 pm

Sandy Martin (Ipswich) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Stringer.

I was delighted to read this report, and I congratulate the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish) and his Select Committee on its production. It is wide-ranging, insightful, accessible, level-headed and challenging—all in just 41 pages of actual text. I actually enjoyed reading it; I apologise to any Members who might think I need to get out more. I fully support the emphasis that the report puts on using deposit return schemes to increase the quality and value of recycling, and I thank the hon. Gentleman for emphasising that today.

I hear what the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) is saying about the importance of working co-operatively with councils. That needs to come in before the strategy is created, as well as during the operation of any waste strategy. I agree with the Chair of the Select Committee about ensuring that a convenient and effective regime is in place for people to use before we start to impose any penalties on people for not using it. I agree with the hon. Member for Dunfermline and West Fife (Douglas Chapman) about the necessity for education and public information, to ensure that people know how the regime is meant to work.

The hon. Member for Carlisle (John Stevenson) said that he did not want us to impose things on people. Of course we need to work with industry and retailers, but we also need regulation to prevent bad practice from crowding out and undercutting good practice.

Matt Rodda (Reading East) (Lab): My office and I ran a survey of small businesses in my constituency, and we discovered that many small business people are keen to support that work. They would be interested to read the report, although perhaps not quite as interested as my hon. Friend. Their issue, however, was that they wanted leadership from central Government. It is wonderful

[*Matt Rodda*]

to see the level of agreement among the different parties represented in the Chamber today, but does he agree that what is needed is that leadership?

Sandy Martin: I absolutely agree. Far too much of the discourse about waste and the environment has been couched in terms that sound as though they are intended to make people feel guilty. We do not need to make people feel guilty; we need to put in place the regimes that enable them to do the right thing. I very much welcome the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) about the importance of Parliament's setting a good example. That can extend to us as Members of Parliament—not only here in Parliament, but in our constituencies.

The hon. Member for St Ives (Derek Thomas) spoke about the unspoilt countryside in Cornwall, which I have enjoyed, like almost everyone else in this country. The important issue of plastic litter is clearly one of the public drivers in the debate about waste, and that is one of the good reasons why deposit return schemes are effective. In Germany, more than 98% of applicable packaging is recycled through deposit return schemes. As the hon. Member for Chichester (Gillian Keegan) pointed out, we could have people scouring the countryside, picking things up and ensuring they were not left lying around.

There was some discussion about local foods. The day before yesterday, I was rather distressed to see a response from DEFRA about Brexit, saying that we will need to rely more on local food and mentioning our ability to change over to root vegetables. I would support that, but they referred to cabbages and leeks as root vegetables; given that, I am not sure quite how much guidance we will get from DEFRA about what we should be eating. I absolutely agree about the need to get away from wholly unnecessary packaging and I am sure—well, I hope—that any strategy that the Government bring in will help to address that.

I also agree with the hon. Member for Chichester that people want to do the right thing. I had experience of that in Suffolk when we introduced a three-bin doorstep collection system, and there was an enormously high level of compliance. If we do the right thing, we will get people to comply with the regime.

The past year has been a bit of a roller-coaster ride for waste, and I feel we are on one of the high-speed sections at the moment—I very much hope that the wheels do not come off. A year ago, I was asked to take on the role of shadow Minister for waste and recycling. Within weeks, the Government published their strategy document “Our Waste, Our Resources”. Arising from that have been several extensive consultations, and several petitions and debates have arisen as the general public have made us all aware of the seriousness with which they take the issue.

Running in parallel with all that, the EFRA Committee committed to an in-depth examination of many of the trickier issues, of which the report is the result. Now, of course, we have the new Environment Bill, part 3 of which, on waste and resources, covers many but not all of the issues raised in the report. I say “covers”, but not necessarily “resolves”. I am certain that the work that went into the report and the evidence collected by the

Committee were very valuable in informing the new Bill, but there are clearly concerns in the report, which I share, that are not yet resolved in the Environment Bill.

The report is extremely timely as it can inform any amendments that Members might wish to make to the Environment Bill; I am sure that there will be some. I will mention a few of the main themes, and ask the Minister for her reaction. First, and most importantly, the report is not complimentary about the Government's lack of focus on waste reduction as the first priority. The industry tells us that there has been a significant reduction in the weight of some packaging, but that does not necessarily translate into a reduction in the environmental impact; if a turtle suffocates on a plastic bag, it makes little difference whether that plastic bag weighs one gram or two grams. Substituting plastic for card may well reduce the weight of the packaging but not its carbon footprint.

Between 2000 and 2010, there was a revolution in the recycling of waste in this country, driven largely by the landfill tax. During that revolution, household recycling rose by 235%. The landfill tax was a weight-based system. It was straightforward to understand and simple to administer, but recycling has plateaued for the past 10 years and it is time to move on to new, more effective ways of dealing with the problem. The highest priority has to be reducing the amount of waste that we generate, not just its weight. I ask the Minister whether the Government recognise the need to move away from weight as the prime factor in waste targets, and whether carbon impact might not be a better measure.

Secondly, I concur with the findings of the report, which, while clearly recognising the carbon footprint of plastic packaging and the potential environmental impact of plastic waste that is not properly disposed of, points out the danger of demonising plastic and letting other materials off the hook. As the report says, we urgently need more information about the overall life-cycle impacts of various packaging solutions, and the figures quoted in various parts of the report—and the inconsistencies between some of them—clearly demonstrate that we cannot rely solely on data from the industries involved to inform policy decisions.

There needs to be a far more effective independent research and data regime for waste and resource use. More significant investment in the area is likely to save huge amounts in developing our waste policies in the future. I challenge the Minister to tell us whether the Government intend radically to increase the resources available to the Waste and Resources Action Programme as a matter of urgency, and what other research and development investments in waste management the Government are contemplating.

Thirdly, the report rightly highlights the laxity of the current reporting regime for producers, with the threshold for reporting on packaging set far too high. I would be interested to hear whether the Minister believes that the statutory duty to comply with whatever waste regimes are introduced through the new Environment Bill should apply to all—or almost all—producers, or whether, once more, a substantial number of businesses will simply escape the system.

Fourthly, the report examines in some depth the problems associated with compostable plastics. The desirable disposal methods for compostable plastics and for recyclable plastics are completely different, and it is essential that

they should be kept separate. Yet there is very little recognition of that in the Environment Bill, so I would be interested to hear from the Minister whether she will be guided by the report in amending the relevant sections of the Environment Bill when the time comes.

Finally, an issue that is touched on in the report, and has been mentioned by the Chair of the Select Committee, but is not, I believe, given sufficient emphasis, is the lack of recycling facilities in the United Kingdom, and the tragic impact on our oceans caused by the export of waste to countries that were clearly not equipped to deal with it in a sustainable way. That issue has, however, been extensively covered in a previous report this year from the Environmental Audit Committee, so I understand why the EFRA Committee would not want to repeat those findings.

There is plenty more that I could say about this excellent report, but most of it has been said by others already, so I will take my seat and listen with interest to what the Minister has to say.

Graham Stringer (in the Chair): Minister, may I ask you to leave, if possible, 90 seconds to two minutes for the Chair of the Select Committee to wind up?

2.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Rebecca Pow): Thank you, Mr Stringer; it is a pleasure to serve under you today. I will endeavour to leave a minute for my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish), whom I must thank for introducing the debate and for all the work of his Committee. I was previously a member of the esteemed EFRA Committee, and I know what excellent work it does and how important this inquiry was in informing what is, as we can tell from today's debate, an engaging and really important subject. As constituency MPs, plastic packaging is a subject that so many people come to us about, so the information was—and is—really useful. The Government will publish their formal response shortly.

Clearly, plastic from packaging is a really serious issue. It makes a huge contribution to the overwhelming amount of plastic in the world around us. Some really excellent points have been raised today, as they were in the inquiry, but I wish to assure hon. Members that progress is being made—hopefully I will make that clear in what I will say—and leadership is being shown on the issue.

First and foremost, we have set out our ambitious 25-year environment plan to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste within the lifetime of the plan. For the most problematic plastics, we are going faster. In the resources and waste strategy for England, which was published last December, we committed to working towards all plastic packaging placed on the market being recyclable, reusable or compostable by 2025.

We have already made good strides. We banned microbeads in cosmetic and care products. I thank the hon. Member for Falkirk (John Mc Nally), who was very involved in that campaign, as was I on the Environmental Audit Committee. Of course, waste and recycling is a devolved matter in Scotland, but we worked together on that. We will also ban plastic stirrers, cotton buds and straws by 2020.

I will mention four areas of overhauling the waste system. We have had four major consultations on that. People say, “Why do you keep consulting?” but we have to have the data before we know what the right steps to take are. We have consulted on the consistency of recycling collections, which has been mentioned by so many Members. That consultation had a phenomenal response, and we intend to introduce consistent collections in 2023, subject to further consultation. That will be in the Environment Bill, with further consultation, and is a firm commitment.

Neil Parish: That is a laudable approach, but how will the Government guide local authorities to ensure that they change their contracts and collections actually are more uniform?

Rebecca Pow: That is a good point. Members touched on funding. We will give increased powers to local authorities, fully funded through the producer responsibility scheme, which I will go on to talk about. They should not fear; they are going to be a key part of this. As so many Members have referred to, achieving this alignment is critical to the future of the plastics world. That is all being listened to and consulted on, and there will be further consultation in the environmental improvement part of the Environment Bill.

The Government also carried out a consultation on producer responsibility, which will be a radical reform for producers of packaging. It will put the onus entirely back on them to be responsible for what happens to their product, how much recyclable material it contains, where it will go at the end of its life and all that.

Kerry McCarthy: On a point of clarification, I understand that the EU is currently reviewing both the extended producer responsibility rules and the essential requirements in the packaging waste directive. How does that fit with the reviews that we are carrying out here if we are to leave the EU?

Rebecca Pow: I urge the hon. Lady to look at the detail of the producer responsibility scheme and the consultation. We will develop our own bespoke system. This is all being done in conjunction with businesses, and there is a great deal of support for it.

A point was raised about the thresholds for reporting the amount of packaging waste. Some consultation has been done on that and feedback has been provided, and I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton and Honiton that information will be available in the near future. Similarly, we want consistent labelling on packaging so that consumers know what to recycle, in order to reduce the confusion that everyone keeps talking about regarding what is and is not recyclable. Another consultation is being carried out on that to gather yet more data.

We have also consulted on the deposit return scheme—one of those critical subjects that everyone seems to contact us about. The details of that scheme will come forward in the Environment Bill, with a view to introducing what we hope will be the best system in 2023. There will be a further, final consultation on that in the second part of the Bill to make sure we get it right. As I am sure Members are all aware, there is so much to this: what are we going to include? Will it be glass? Will it be plastic? What does the industry want, so that the scheme

[*Rebecca Pow*]

is usable by them when they gather all the material? It is not quite as straightforward as people think, but it is definitely coming forward.

Douglas Chapman: Will the Minister give way?

Rebecca Pow: I just wanted to address the point, which I think was made by the hon. Gentleman, about local authorities no longer being required to collect DRS material. Obviously, their new systems of collection will be funded through the producer responsibility scheme, so I hope that puts Members' minds at rest.

Her Majesty's Treasury has also consulted on a plastic packaging tax on the production and import of plastic packaging, to encourage the use of more recycled content. DEFRA's proposals will work to increase the quality and quantity of the supply of recycled material; the plastic packaging tax will work in parallel, meaning that the amount of recycled material has to be incorporated into products. If producers do not reach the right level, which is purportedly going to be 30%, they will pay a tax.

I will now move on to the Environment Bill.

Douglas Chapman: Will the Minister give way?

Rebecca Pow: I want to get through all of my information, but go on, then. Make it quick, sir. [*Laughter.*]

Douglas Chapman: I will take as much time as I need, but I thank the Minister for her comments. My hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk (John Mc Nally) mentioned the EU directive on single-use plastics, which is a policy that the Scottish Government support. Beyond 31 October, what does the Minister anticipate will be the view of the UK on keeping pace with environmental policy across the rest of Europe? Obviously, we will still be trading with other member states, and in this case the directive is a force for good. The Minister has talked about bringing in something as an alternative to the directive, so what would that look like?

Rebecca Pow: We have committed to maintaining our environmental standards, and will always keep a weather eye on what is going on in Europe. We will be moving on in our own way, but it is crucial to maintain very high standards in all these areas and we have committed to do so in the waste strategy, the Environment Bill and the 25-year environment plan.

I hear Members say, "It is all very well having all these consultations, but how do you bring them into practice?" As I have mentioned, we will make these measures a reality through the Environment Bill. All the measures I have mentioned—deposit returns, producer responsibility and consistent gathering—will come forward in that Bill, which will be quite radical in getting rid of the "take, make, use, throw away" world that we live in and introducing a much more circular economy. To respond to the point made by the shadow Minister, the hon. Member for Ipswich (Sandy Martin), many of those measures will, of course, result in less waste being produced in the first place.

Much has been said about consumer confusion, and my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton and Honiton and the shadow Minister mentioned biodegradable plastics in particular, which I hope will be addressed as part of

dealing with the labelling issue. It is an area in which data is so important—what is biodegradable? What do things break down into? What do they produce in the soil, and what runs off into the water? All those questions need to be carefully researched. As a consequence, the Government published a call for evidence in July 2019 to help consider the development of the standards and the certification that might be given to biodegradable and compostable plastics. That call for evidence has only just closed, on 14 October, and its findings will be published in due course.

I was very interested in the point about nappies made by my hon. Friend the Member for St Ives (Derek Thomas)—I used washable nappies for my first child, and it nearly killed me because it was such hard work. We will need to address the issue of proper biodegradable nappies in the future. I also wanted to mention the 5p charge, which demonstrated how bringing in such a measure can cause a paradigm shift, making the whole of society change how it acts.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton and Honiton mentioned his water fountains, and I commend him on those; they are a great idea for his local area. He may want to contact Water UK, which advises on introducing water fountains in public and the refillable bottle scheme in cafes and shops. The shadow Minister and I share our bottles in common, and I was one of the people who worked on the plastic-free Parliament initiative—lots of Members did that, across all parties—and on giving up plastics for Lent, which was very hard. Those are great initiatives, and they are moving forward.

I also commend the UK Plastics Pact, the first initiative of its kind in any European country, which is run by the Waste & Resources Action Programme and supported by 80 Members. It contains key issues and objectives for 2025, including the elimination of problematic or unnecessary single-use packaging through design and innovation; for 100% of plastics packaging to be reusable, recyclable and re-compostable; for 70% of plastics packaging to be recycled and composted; and for there to be an average of 30% recycled content across all plastics packaging. Its endeavours are excellent. I know that Scotland was an early member of that group, and it has got a lot of support from businesses including Waitrose, Morrisons and Tesco. Many of those companies are trialling loose and unpacked vegetables. I still use my Somerset wicker basket, which I try to mention in any debate I can possibly get it into, rather than plastic bags. I have run a one-woman campaign on this all my life; we should all have a wicker basket, which also help to take in carbon through growing the willow for the baskets.

A lot of funding and effort is going into research and development and into innovation, which are absolutely key to reducing our plastic use, as has rightly been said by the shadow Minister and many other Members. Already, £20 million has gone into a plastics research and innovation fund, £20 million into a plastics and waste innovation fund, and £60 million into the smart sustainable plastic packaging challenge. A lot is going on in this space, and I commend and welcome it.

This is a complex area, but I assure Members that I feel we are making progress. If Members join in with the Environment Bill, we will get some measures through that will change our lives.

2.59 pm

Neil Parish: I thank all Members for participating; there has been much cross-party support today. We all want to reduce the amount of plastics we use, to recycle more and to make sure that the Government take action.

I welcome the Minister's enthusiasm in her new role, and I also thank the shadow Minister, the hon. Member for Ipswich (Sandy Martin), for actually reading the report—perhaps we should recommend it to all Members of Parliament. I thank my hon. Friends the Members for St Ives (Derek Thomas) and for Chichester (Gillian Keegan) for speaking, and the two members of the Select Committee who are present for their support.

Motion lapsed (Standing Order No. 10(6)).

Diabetes: Tailored Prevention Messaging

[MS KAREN BUCK *in the Chair*]

3 pm

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I beg to move,

That this House has considered tailored prevention messaging for diabetes.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Buck. It is good to see a group of MPs here who have made the effort and taken the time to come to a Thursday afternoon debate. I am pleased to see the Minister in her place. As she knows, I am particularly fond of her as a Minister and look forward to her response. I have given her a copy of my speech, so we can perhaps get some helpful answers. I thank her in advance for that. I am also pleased to see the shadow Minister, the hon. Member for Washington and Sunderland West (Mrs Hodgson), who is always here, and other right hon. and hon. Members who regularly come to diabetes debates.

I am particularly glad to see the right hon. Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz), who chairs the all-party parliamentary group for diabetes, of which I am the vice-chair. We have many things in common. Not only are we both type 2 diabetic—I make that clear at the beginning—but we are faithful fans of Leicester City football club. We have followed it for years, and it is third in the premier league. Tomorrow night, as I understand, it plays Southampton away, where I hope Brendan Rodgers will do the best for us again.

We are here to discuss diabetes. I have been a type 2 diabetic for 12 to 14 years or thereabouts. I was a big fat pudding, to tell the truth—I was 17 stone and getting bigger. I enjoyed my Chinese and my two bottles of Coke five nights a week. I was probably diabetic for at least 12 months before I knew I was. When I look back, I can see the symptoms, but I never knew then what the symptoms were—I was not even sure what a diabetic was. When the doctor told me that I was a diabetic, he said that there were two things to know. They always tell people the good news and the bad news, so I said, "Give us the good news first." He said, "The good news is that you can sort this out. The bad news is that you're a diabetic."

I went on diet control and stayed on it for four years. When I talked to my doctor again, he told me that the disease would get progressively worse. Even after four years of diet control and dropping down to 13 stone—about the weight I am now, although I am a wee bit lighter at the moment, because of not being that well for the last couple of months—I went on to metformin tablets. A few years later, they were no longer working, so he increased the dosage. He also said, as doctors often do, "You might have a wee bit of bother with your blood pressure. You don't really need a blood pressure tablet, but take one just in case." I said, "Well, if that's the way it is, that's the way it is", but he said, "By the way, when you take it, you can't stop it", so it was not just about blood pressure.

I say all that because diabetes is about more than just sugar level control. It affects the arteries, blood, kidneys, circulation, eyesight and many other parts of the body.

[*Jim Shannon*]

If people do not control it and do not look after it, it is a disease that will take them out of this world. That is the fact of diabetes.

Mr Gregory Campbell (East Londonderry) (DUP): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing the debate. He is an assiduous attender; he attends so much that I think the Speaker of the House said on one occasion that he thought my hon. Friend actually slept in the Chamber. He is alluding to his personal circumstances, but I and other hon. Members have raised the issue of juveniles and underage individuals who have an obesity problem that, over time, begins the process of type 2 diabetes. Although we need to tackle the problems in adulthood that he is raising, we also need to tackle them among children.

Jim Shannon: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The figures that he and I have indicate that almost 100,000 people over the age of 17 live with diabetes in Northern Ireland, out of a population of over-17s of 1.6 million. We know it is more than that and that there are a lot of diabetics under 17, so he is right to bring that up. Northern Ireland has more children who are type 1 diabetic in comparison with the population than anywhere else in the United Kingdom.

David Simpson (Upper Bann) (DUP): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing the debate. He referred to having been a big fat pudding; well, I probably am, but we will not go there. Importantly, we have young children in schools who need insulin, but there is a difficulty with teachers and classroom assistants giving it to them. What more can we do about that? How can we encourage the education people to do it?

Jim Shannon: I know the Minister will reply to that, because that is one of the questions that I had hoped to get an answer on.

On the Monday before last, we had a diabetes event in the House. Before I came over, some of my constituents said, “Will you go along to this event about diabetes? It is really important, because some great things are being done in some parts of England and we would like to know about them.” When I got there, the people were most helpful and informed me that Northern Ireland has one of the better type 1 diabetes schemes, which is reaching out to 70% of people. As we often do in Northern Ireland, in this case we have a scheme in place that is almost voluntary. We have an un-functioning Assembly, which is disappointing, but we have a system whereby that scheme is working. Some of the things that we are doing, we are doing quite well.

There are 4.7 million people living with diabetes across the UK, each of whom should be treated as an individual. In Northern Ireland, we have 100,000 people with diabetes in that 17-plus bracket, but obviously it is more than that when it is all added up. Every day across the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 700 people are diagnosed with diabetes; that is one person every two minutes.

I had a good friend—he is not in this world any more, but that is not because of diabetes—who was a type 1 diabetic. He ate whatever he wanted and I always said

to him, “You cannot eat all those things.” He said, “Oh, I can. All I do is take an extra shot of insulin.” I said, “That’s not how it works!” I do not know how many times I told him that. My three hon. Friends—my hon. Friends the Members for East Londonderry (Mr Campbell), for South Antrim (Paul Girvan) and for Upper Bann (David Simpson)—will know who it is, so I will not mention his name. He was very flippant about the control of his diabetes, but it seemed to work for him. I could never get my head around the idea that an extra shot of insulin seemed to cure the problem.

Paul Girvan (South Antrim) (DUP): I thank my hon. Friend for bringing this important debate to the Chamber. My wife is a type 1 diabetic who is insulin-dependent. She has already—she is a bit younger than me—lost a kidney, because of lack of control, which can cause problems. That needs to be identified: control is vital, and it is important for people to monitor regularly. New technology is available that can actually give readings constantly, as people go. It is important that people start to use the available technology, so they do not have to take more insulin than they need, but can take it only when it is needed.

Jim Shannon: Like my hon. Friend, my wife is younger than me. It must be a Northern Ireland DUP MP thing—we look for younger wives to keep us young. I am not sure if that is right or wrong, or if it is politically correct to say that, but my wife is nine years younger than me. She understands the issue of me and diabetes.

Some 10% of people with diabetes have type 1 and 90% have type 2. I will refer to both throughout my speech, and I encourage hon. Members to do the same and to acknowledge the different factors at play with each. We can manage type 2 with medication, provided we control what we eat and what we put in our bodies. Of those living with diabetes, we have the broadest cross-section of society. The condition affects all genders, ages, ethnicities and financial situations. However, too often I see that policy makers and clinicians fall into the trap of treating people with type 1 or type 2 diabetes as homogenous groups that will respond to the same approach and message, but they respond in different ways.

During this debate I want to focus on four things: the primary prevention of type 2 diabetes; the need to offer different messaging to ensure that the support is appropriate for each individual living with diabetes; the necessity of preventing the complications of all forms of diabetes; and innovations in technology—there is marvellous technology—and patient pathways that can improve outcomes for people living both type 1 and type 2 diabetes. I wish that I had known 12 months before I was diagnosed that the way I was living—the lifestyle, the stress—was putting me at risk. We all need a bit of stress; it is good and keeps us sharp, but high stress levels with the wrong eating and living habits is harmful. I do not drink fizzy lemonade any more because it was one of the things pushing me over the edge. That was probably why I lost most of the weight fairly quickly.

Let us talk about prevention. Today more than 12 million people are at increased risk of type 2 diabetes across the UK. More than half of all cases of type 2 diabetes could be prevented or delayed. If I had known a year before my diagnosis, I could have stopped the downward trend in my health, but I did not know, and I wish that I

had done. Many in this House offer leadership on type 2 diabetes prevention; the right hon. Member for Leicester East is certainly one of them. England is a world leader on this front, having recently committed to doubling its national diabetes prevention programme.

I was pleased to attend a roundtable discussion last summer, chaired by the hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate (Bambos Charalambous), at which we considered the link between obesity and diabetes and the importance of tailored messaging for the different subsets of the population. During the discussion I met the inimitable Professor Valabhji, the national clinical director for obesity and diabetes at NHS England, whose leadership in this space should be celebrated. I put that on the record because his knowledge and help for those around him, and his research into and development of how we deal with diabetes, are incredible.

For people with type 2 diabetes, there is the additional aspiration of achieving remission. I echo colleagues' congratulations to the deputy leader of the Labour party, the hon. Member for West Bromwich East (Tom Watson). We watched him almost shrink. One day I stopped him and said, "Tom, is everything all right?" He was losing so much weight, but it was his choice to diet as he did. He is an inspiration for many people because of what he has done, and I commend him for it. The concept of remission can be alienating, however, because it is not possible for every person with type 2 diabetes.

Central to the effectiveness of all types of support for the individual and the wider population is the messaging used, which is what this debate is about. Tailored messaging should be developed for the sub-groups most at risk of type 2 diabetes. For example, those in the most deprived areas of the country are nearly 50% more likely to be obese and have type 2 diabetes than those in the most affluent areas: there is type 2 diabetes in areas where people do not have the same standard of living.

Obesity is responsible for around 85% of someone's risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Additionally, south Asians are six times more likely to develop type 2 diabetes than Europeans are. It is a well-known cliché that men are not so open or proactive—I can say this is true—about their health needs, and men are 26% more likely than women to develop type 2 diabetes. I am willing to speculate, as one who fell into that category, that that is in part due to messaging not being in a format that reaches men. I did not know what it was, did not know what it meant, did not know what the symptoms were, but it was happening.

We need to focus some of the messaging on the importance of prevention and the risk of type 2 diabetes for men. Will the Minister commit to ensuring that all messaging to support those with type 1 and type 2 diabetes, as well as for type 2 diabetes prevention, is tailored to the relevant sections of our society?

I have to manage my diabetes every day. I take my tablets in the morning and at night. I am careful about what I eat. By and large, I manage it. I check my sugar levels every morning. The doctor tells me to check and I do it every day so that I know where I am. I am a creature of habit; I do it all the time so that I know exactly where I am. Some days it is out of kilter, probably because I transgressed and had a cream bun when I knew it was the wrong thing to have. None the less, we do such things.

On self-management, the average person with diabetes will spend just three hours a year with a healthcare professional. That means that they will spend most of their time managing the condition themselves and will need appropriate education. The right hon. Member for Leicester East chairs the all-party parliamentary group on diabetes. He organised a seminar where we looked at healthcare professionals and how people manage their own condition and therefore need appropriate education. The current delivery of structured education does not reflect the varying needs of each individual living with diabetes. We are all different.

The best efforts of healthcare professionals and those who provide education often focus on perfect self-management or no self-management at all. In reality, the daily struggle of living with a long-term condition means that every marginal improvement should be seen as a true achievement. We have to manage it and encourage ourselves as we move forward. We have to make sure that by moving a step forward we can then move forward again. There has been an admirable drive to increase the uptake of education, but education alone will not help an individual manage the ups and downs of living with the condition. They need the tools and confidence, as well as the education, necessary to manage their condition.

When I speak to people in my constituency who live with diabetes, they often highlight the feeling of isolation. I am sure we can all agree today that there is a need to provide each of those individuals with the support they need to take away the isolation. Being a diabetic can be lonely if someone does not know how to manage it. They might think they are doing the right thing when they are not. Issues have been highlighted to me about the delivery and format of education programmes. Digital solutions and coaching services should be explored. The Minister referred to that in a conversation that we had prior to this debate. I look forward to her response. We always get something positive from her, and we will certainly get something positive today.

Will the Minister commit to ensuring that the delivery, format and content of structured education programmes is improved through the use of digital solutions, and that national guidelines are adapted to accommodate that? Health apps could also be used to refine and augment diabetes training programmes by enabling clinicians to learn from patients about what motivates them and therefore what support to provide.

I want to congratulate the hon. Member for Wolverhampton South West (Eleanor Smith) on her leadership on how health apps can be used to improve care and patient self-management. Many MPs in this House are diabetic or have an interest in diabetes. That is why we are here today. We are either diabetic or interested in the matter and here to make a contribution. I commend and thank right hon. and hon. Members for their commitment.

Will the Minister commit to undertaking an extensive public engagement and education programme, using digital platforms where appropriate, to showcase effective and evidence-based health apps and encourage their wider usage? Support needs to be tailored to individuals' particular needs, in recognition that no single solution works in self-management for everyone. Everybody's needs are different. I was the first diabetic in my family. When the doctor diagnosed me as a diabetic he asked

[*Jim Shannon*]

me about my mum and dad and my wife's mum and dad, and whether there was anybody in my family tree with the condition, but there was no one there. Unfortunately, my condition was caused by my diet and my lifestyle, so I created the problem. It was not hereditary, but it is how we deal with such things and tailor our responses that matters.

I have recently been convinced that health coaches—the Minister will comment on this—can play a key role in this space. Coaches can bring a distinct non-clinical skillset that poses questions for patients to help them devise the solutions that work for them, to help build their self-confidence and self-motivation—in stark contrast to the more prescriptive approach taken in clinical settings. Coaching needs to be clearly defined, and the full range of support that coaches can provide to support tailored prevention messaging needs to be identified. I look to the Minister's response, because I believe it will have some positivity in relation to what we seek and what will happen.

It has been brought to my attention that the health service may ultimately need to decide whether to adopt a population-based approach to support improved outcomes across the entire population, or a more targeted approach aimed at those facing the greatest barriers to effective self-management. Will the Minister ensure that the health system explores the full range of ways in which health coaches can support people living with long-term health conditions, as well as carers and family members, through the development of an NHS definition of health coaching? Does she agree with me—and I hope with others in the House—that the UK has an opportunity to be an exemplar in the use of health coaches? It is an excellent opportunity and I hope that through the Minister we can make those changes.

I want finally to discuss the potential of innovations and technology in addressing issues related to self-management. That is what I do—I self-manage my diabetes. A flexible approach to the provision of structured education is vital to support self-management. Once equipped with the information and skills necessary to self-manage, people must have access to, and choice from, a range of proven technologies to help them manage their condition in everyday life. There has been a big investment in technology recently in the NHS.

We welcome the Government's commitment to the extra spend on health, which we talk about regularly. All us in the House are particularly appreciative of the Government commitment. People with type 2 diabetes are now provided with glucose monitors; my hon. Friend the Member for South Antrim (Paul Girvan) referred to those in an intervention. However, people are offered little education on how to use them appropriately. There may be something more that we can do about that. It is good to have the technology, and to be taking steps forward, but it is also good for people to understand how to use it appropriately for management.

The level of investment in innovative hardware for people with type 1 diabetes is substantial and should be commended. However, individuals can be left lost if timely support is not available to help them to interpret and utilise those tools as a means of preventing complications. Many people with type 1 diabetes choose not to access the technologies now available to them. Why is that? I

do not know the reason, but it is a question we must ask. I believe that it is partly because of a lack of individual awareness. In the case of my diabetes, that would be right. It could, potentially, be linked to a lack of information. If information is not being provided, I should hope that something could be done about that.

Later in the month an event is being held in Parliament, chaired by the right hon. Member for Knowsley (Sir George Howarth). The event, held in partnership with the type 1 diabetes charity JDRF, is to do with the development of a new report on access to technology for people with type 1 diabetes, "Pathway to Choice". I look forward to reading the report when it is published, and I know the Minister will be keen to read it.

All of us with an interest in diabetes—and that is why Members are here for the debate—will be interested to read it. Can the Minister inform colleagues here today what measure will be introduced to ensure that all people living with either type 1 or type 2 diabetes can access the latest proven technologies that are right for their situation?

Sir George Howarth (Knowsley) (Lab): The hon. Gentleman has highlighted two important themes: self-management and knowing how to go about it properly; and the more recent theme of the potential of technology to achieve good control. He knows I am keen on both. However, does he accept that artificial intelligence can never replace the human element of having someone to talk to, who can give good, accurate information about how to deal with the condition?

Jim Shannon: The right hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. Artificial intelligence is beneficial: it can help where it can help. However, it is better for people to have the chance to talk to someone who can instruct them. I think probably we all want to talk to someone face to face, so we can understand the issues better.

An event that I attended here—with the hon. Member for Heywood and Middleton (Liz McInnes), I think—was about diabetes and also bariatric surgery. It may have been in the Thames Pavilion. I mention it because sometimes bariatric surgery may be the only way to reduce weight and enable someone to get to the other side, to address the issue of diabetes. That, as the right hon. Member for Knowsley said in his intervention, is something that people need to talk about. It needs to be discussed so they know what the options are. It is not for everyone, but it is for some people. A number of my constituents over the years have had that surgery and it has always been successful. It has reduced their weight in such a way as to control their diabetes. They are fortunate. Not everyone would have been able to have that surgical operation, but bariatric surgery is important.

To conclude, there is no one solution to diabetes prevention or management. Sometimes, no matter how well informed we are, diabetes can present new and potentially insurmountable challenges. I have some recommendations for the Minister. Primary prevention of type 2 diabetes should take a broad population approach, while ensuring that there is a range of programmes, including digital ones, so that no groups are excluded. There should be someone to speak to—access to someone to converse with who can advise and take things forward. Messaging should be varied and regularly re-evaluated, to ensure that there is engagement from

those subsets of the population at the highest risk of type 2 diabetes. We cannot ignore the issue of obesity and diabetes. That was referred to at business questions and will probably be referred to during Health questions on Tuesday.

Finally, a holistic approach should be taken to diabetes care both to ensure value for the individual and to maximise the benefits to the NHS. When we are dealing with the NHS we must look at the money we have to spend, and how to spend it better. Prevention and early diagnosis are among the ways to do that, and the area of type 1 diabetes technology is important. Over the years I have had a number of constituents under the age of 10 who had early-onset type 1 diabetes. I can picture some of their faces, as I speak. They will always have to manage their diabetes. Mine came about through bad diet and bad management, but for some people it is hereditary. I ask the Minister to ensure that the Department for Health and Social Care will continue to focus on the important issue of messaging, in relation to diabetes.

3.26 pm

Liz McInnes (Heywood and Middleton) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairwomanship, Ms Buck. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) for bringing this important debate to the Chamber today and for his comprehensive introduction to the subject, which included his own personal experience. I speak in my capacity as co-secretary of the all-party parliamentary group for diabetes, and I recognise the hon. Gentleman's active role as vice-chair of the group.

My interest in diabetes comes from my background as an NHS clinical scientist, as well as the major health issues presented to our communities by the prevalence of diabetes. My constituency has a higher than average incidence of diabetes—8.5% of the population compared with 6.7% overall in England—so I am always interested in what steps can be taken to improve control of the condition and what preventive measures can be taken to lessen the risk of type 2 diabetes developing.

I want to draw attention to the difference between type 1 and type 2 diabetes, and I sometimes think it would be helpful if we considered them to be two completely separate and distinct diseases. I stress that while being overweight or obese is a major risk factor in type 2 diabetes, type 1 is caused by the body not being able to produce enough insulin and is an autoimmune disease. Although diet and exercise have a role to play in type 1 diabetes management, they cannot reverse the disease or eliminate the need for insulin. It is important to stress that, because of the number of times I have stood in this Chamber and listened to MPs saying, "If only people would lose weight their diabetes would be cured." It is misleading, and it is unfair to people who are unfortunate enough to suffer from type 1 diabetes.

Sir George Howarth: I am grateful that my hon. Friend made that point. She knows that I, too, insist that we deal with them as two separate diseases. There are consequences to the myth that everyone's diabetes is lifestyle-related. In some cases children are bullied at school for having an autoimmune condition that they have no control over. Yet people believe they have caused it themselves.

Liz McInnes: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. There is an unfortunate blame culture and children can be quite cruel to each other at times; we, as adults,

must be careful about the language that we use about diabetes. If I achieve one thing in this place, I would like to get people to understand the difference between type 1 and type 2 diabetes—then I would feel as though I had achieved something.

Despite the growing public pressures associated with both type 1 and type 2 diabetes, a person living with diabetes only spends, on average, three hours a year with a clinician. People with diabetes are often put under a great deal of stress, because of the challenges and complexity in managing the condition and the multiple day-to-day decisions they have to make. In order to allow them to develop the necessary skills to manage their own condition, further support is required—including, but by no means limited to, weight management support.

This debate is very timely and follows a meeting we held in parliament in June of this year, which was attended by the hon. Member for Strangford and my right hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley (Sir George Howarth), among other MPs. The meeting was about realising the potential of health coaches in diabetes care, which the hon. Member for Strangford has already mentioned, and it was supported by Roche Diabetes Care—although of course I have to say that other diagnostic companies are available.

The meeting heard from health coaches about how they support participants in a lifestyle management programme, using their professional expertise as qualified nutritionists to support people to better manage their weight.

Paul Girvan: Does the hon. Lady agree that sometimes GPs do not give the right advice to patients? Perhaps a patient who presents with a bad infection is put on antibiotics, which can have an impact on their absorption of insulin, and as a result they can go into a hypo or take a low. That can cause major problems unless they have someone who knows them well, who can watch the signs and knows how to deal with them. Some GPs do not relay that information to patients when prescribing.

Liz McInnes: The hon. Gentleman makes a very important point, which I will come to later in my speech, about the need for all health professionals to be aware of diabetes and the complications that can arise, particularly in the situation he describes, where a GP may prescribe something without asking how it will impact on other conditions. The hon. Gentleman highlights the need for more and better training for health professionals around the whole condition of diabetes.

The meeting held in Parliament in June had three main themes. The first theme was relieving workforce pressures in diabetes care by providing non-clinical advice where there are gaps in clinical capacity, which refers back to the point that the average diabetic does not spend a lot of time every year with a clinician. The second theme—it is very pertinent to this debate—was about helping people to find their own tailored solutions to immediate health challenges such as weight management, as well as changing the way they think about their situation. The third theme, which the hon. Member for Strangford mentioned, was digital solutions to deliver 24/7 services to users. The health coaches explained to us how, through apps and other devices, users can message them at any time of day or night. The health coaches will get back to the individual, talk to them and help to address the issue.

[Liz McInnes]

Health coaching should be seen as a complement to clinical work and not as a tangent to it. It does not necessarily have to be done by discrete health coaches and could be incorporated into the day-to-day work of NHS staff; that relates to the point made by the hon. Member for South Antrim (Paul Girvan) on GP coaching. It should be incorporated into the day-to-day practice of all staff who work with people with diabetes. That is a point that NHS England and Health Education England should be considering.

Some would say that coaching on lifestyle and weight management is a role that should be fulfilled by the diabetes specialist nurse. I am interested to hear the Minister's comments on the decline in the numbers of those who perform that very important specialist role. The National Diabetes Inpatient Audit reported that more than a quarter of hospital sites do not have a dedicated in-patient specialist nurse—there is a real gap that we need to examine. The specialist nurse is recognised by most diabetics as their go-to person, so it is quite shocking to hear that they are no longer available in a quarter of our hospitals.

I agree with the basic premise of the hon. Member for Strangford on tailored solutions and prevention messaging for diabetes. I hope the Government will follow the issue up, as well as ensuring that provision is equitable and that variations in uptake are addressed.

Of course, underpinning the whole issue is the need for better public health funding. It is no coincidence that just yesterday in this very Chamber in a debate on the declining numbers of health visitors, I quoted the figures for the national reduction in public health funding and the local reduction in my own borough of Rochdale. Nationally, there has been a reduction of £531 million on public health spending. In my local borough, there has been a cumulative reduction of £8 million over the last four years.

We cannot provide important services on an ever-decreasing budget. It was short-sighted of the Government to try to cut costs by reducing public health funding, and the chickens are now coming home to roost on this ill-thought-out decision. Given the emphasis on prevention in the NHS long-term plan, I will be interested to hear what the Minister has to say about how the cuts to public health funding will be reversed, and how quickly.

Finally, I understand that a National Audit Office report on health inequalities will come out at midnight tonight. I suspect that that report will lay bare the health impacts of cuts to public health services. I will certainly read it with great interest, and I hope the Minister will too.

3.37 pm

Keith Vaz (Leicester East) (Lab): It is a pleasure and honour to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Buck—for the first time, I think. I thank the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) for securing this debate, not only as vice-chair of the all-party parliamentary group on diabetes, but as a fellow Fox—a supporter of Leicester City Football Club. As we heard from the hon. Member for South Antrim (Paul Girvan), he is also probably one of the most assiduous Members of this House.

I am pleased to see the Minister in her place and congratulate her on her appointment. I hope she will last longer than the last three diabetes Ministers—I am not one of those who wants a general election tomorrow,

and we would like to see her build herself into her portfolio. I hope she will last as long as the shadow Minister, who has been there a while and so has been through many Ministers. We hope they will be able to share information. Let us keep the Minister in her place for some time—until the election, of course.

I declare my interest as a type 2 diabetic and chair of the all-party parliamentary group on diabetes. I have a family history: my mother, Merlyn, and my maternal grandmother both had diabetes, which gave me a 4% higher than average chance of getting diabetes. Added to my south Asian heritage, that makes me six times more likely than my European counterparts to be someone who would get type 2.

We have heard some amazing statistics. We should all just sit down, as if we were sitting in the Supreme Court, and say, “We agree with the hon. Member for Strangford,” because we agree with practically everything that he and my hon. Friend the Member for Heywood and Middleton (Liz McInnes) have said. However, it would not, of course, be the nature of Parliament if we all just agreed with the speech of the person before us, so I will plough on; I apologise if I repeat some of the things already mentioned.

As we know, every two minutes someone is diagnosed with diabetes. In my own city of Leicester, a higher than average number of people have diabetes—8.9% compared with 6.4% nationally—and that is expected to rise to 12% of the city's population by 2025. That is due to the higher proportion of black and minority ethnic residents compared with the UK national average—BAME communities are genetically more likely to get diabetes.

In the time that I have spent as a type 2 diabetic, which is about 10 years, and as the chair of the APPG, I have come to the conclusion that there are five pillars of diabetes care, and I want to talk briefly about each one. The first is putting consumers first: we must put diabetics at the heart of diabetes care. There are meetings, seminars and events—a whole industry around diabetes care. We need new technology, experts and so forth, but we must never forget that it is the consumers—the diabetics—who should be put at the forefront of the debate on diabetes. Sometimes we forget the user: the people at the end of the process.

As we have heard, we need better technology. Members of the APPG and I visited the Abbott site in Witney in July 2019. I was first invited to go there by the former Prime Minister, in whose former constituency Abbott is based, because we wanted to look at the company that produced flash glucose monitoring devices, which have transformed the lives of so many people with type 1 diabetes. We went there because there are shortages of the equipment. In the past, one could go on the website and take one's own device. There has been a shortage since the Government very kindly decided that everyone with type 1 diabetes would be able to get a machine on World Diabetes Day last year, so we went to talk to the chief executive about it. I know the company is working hard to ensure that the situation is reversed—I suppose we win the lottery by being able to provide the machines, but then we find that we do not have enough machines. I hope that this is going to improve.

I would like to show you my fingers, Ms Buck, so you can see the holes from my twice-daily finger pricking—I am surprised that I have any blood left. I use my GlucoRX device in the morning and am shocked at the reading in the evening, but I just carry on. I would love

to have a flash glucose monitoring device—I cannot get it on prescription, because it would probably bankrupt the NHS if all type 2 diabetics received it, but it is a very important device.

My hon. Friend the Member for Heywood and Middleton, who is an assiduous member of the APPG, reminds us of the importance of diabetes specialist nurses such as Debbie Hicks in Enfield and Jill Hill, who have both given evidence to the APPG at one of our meetings. They have an incredible amount of knowledge. To go back to what the hon. Member for South Antrim said, we know that doctors are gods—they have a better reputation than MPs, anyway. Who wants to listen to an MP when they can listen to their local GP? However, they do not have the time. From our constituents, we all know that doctors are unable to see all their patients and spend sufficient time with them talking about diabetes. The point that has been made about diabetes specialist nurses is very important: we need to ensure that we have more of them.

The second pillar of diabetes care, after the need to put consumers first, is awareness. We all know that diabetes is a ticking timebomb. There are 4.6 million people with diabetes in the country, but an additional 1.1 million people, which is equivalent to the entire population of Birmingham—imagine the whole of Birmingham suddenly getting diabetes overnight—are undiagnosed. We therefore need to support awareness campaigns, which have been led very much by the private sector but supported by the Government, because that is the best way to tell whether people have type 2 diabetes and whether they can change their lifestyle.

We have heard from the former Chinese-meal eating, lemonade and fizzy drink-drinking hon. Member for Strangford how he changed his lifestyle. If only he had been told before, he might have changed it earlier. I remember that when my mother had type 2 diabetes, I had just been appointed Minister for Europe by Tony Blair and had no time to look after my mother. I was flying around Europe trying to enlarge the European Union by bringing in Poland and Hungary—as we are about to leave the European Union, I will not start another debate about that. The fact is that I did not spend enough time with my mum, which is a source of great guilt for me personally—finding out about diabetes, how she got it, what she was doing about it, and why she was still eating chocolate when she was a type 1 diabetic. Looking back at it, it seems amazing. It is important that we diagnose earlier, because then we can take our medication.

Jim Shannon: The right hon. Gentleman is absolutely right, and I thank him for putting forward his own personal story. The Government have taken some steps in the right direction on the sugar tax. Does he think we should be looking at things such as a soft drinks levy; trying obesity reduction through sugar in schools, in food and in the standards that are put forward; addressing the issue of takeaway food and restaurants, where the level of sugar in meals is incredibly high; introducing a 9 pm watershed for junk food advertising; banning multibuy offers; and providing clearer labelling? Those six things would be a step in the right direction.

Keith Vaz: I say yes to the hon. Gentleman on all those points—I agree with them all. I will come to the sugar tax later, but I can take a chunk out of my speech by saying that I agree with all those six points. His shopping list is fine with me, and I will happily copy it.

However, campaigns are extremely important. Very soon, we will have World Diabetes Day. Diabetes UK writes to everyone, asking them to turn buildings in their constituency blue. That is in just 26 days' time. As chair of the APPG, I have written to mayors across the country, asking them to turn their landmark buildings blue. I ask the Minister to turn the Department of Health and Social Care blue on the outside—it may well be blue on the inside—on World Diabetes Day. I say to the hon. Member for Strangford that he should turn the Castle Ward or the statue of St Patrick blue in his constituency to raise awareness. Of course, one day we will have a statue to the hon. Gentleman himself in Strangford, next to the one of Jamie Vardy, and we will turn them both blue.

We in the all-party parliamentary group, of which we have so many members here—one could call them the usual suspects, but I call them the all-stars—meet every month. We produce reports, one of the most important of which is on mental health and diabetes, something that diabetics are simply not aware of when they get diabetes. I certainly was not aware of it. Support for mental health and wellbeing is critically important to people who have type 2 diabetes. It is an ongoing thing; people do not know why they have depression or why their lifestyle has changed, but it is to do with diabetes. I pay tribute to Diabetes UK, to Chris Askew, and to Nycolle Diniz for the work she does for the APPG.

It is not only specialist nurses who can help us, but other professionals, such as pharmacists. Everyone knows that pharmacies and pharmacists have great expertise in diabetes. My mum—I go back to talking about my mum—could spend more time with her pharmacist in Evington in Leicester talking about her condition than she ever did with her doctor. Maybe the Government should run the awareness campaigns through the pharmacies. That would mean reducing the money going to the doctors a little, and they will quaff around and complain—but if we fund pharmacies to do the testing, we will save so much money in the end. Pharmacists such as our APPG ambassador, Jimmy Desai in Ilford, have done an amazing job. Let us empower them to do things.

The third pillar is prevention, which we have all talked about, and reversal if possible. The hon. Member for Strangford has changed in terms of his weight; we have heard from people such as Dr David Unwin, another of our ambassadors at the all-party parliamentary group, that around 60% of cases of type 2 diabetes can be delayed or prevented by making those lifestyle changes and having a healthy, balanced diet.

At the Health Hub in Doha, which I recommend the Minister visits—although obviously not if there is a crucial vote, as the Government will need her here; I am happy to pair with her and we can go together—if a doctor says, “You are borderline diabetic,” they do not give the patient tablets. Rather, they say, “Here is a prescription to go to the gym downstairs. Start doing your gym work, and don't see me again until you get your lifestyle sorted out,” because lifestyle makes a great deal of difference. Some of us have our watches connected to our phones—I do not know whether my right hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley (Sir George Howarth) does—so we know about our steps. I very rarely hit 10,000, but at least there is a willingness to try to do more exercise, and walking round the Palace is a way to make sure we do that.

[Keith Vaz]

As we have heard, obesity is a killer. Obesity-related conditions cost the NHS—cost the Minister—£6.1 billion a year. I adopt as my own the shopping list of the hon. Member for Strangford: the six things he has asked for, from the watershed to multiple offers in supermarkets. We should all do that and say, “Let’s do it.” The private sector has done its bit. Kellogg’s has put traffic light labelling on most of its cereal packs sold in the United Kingdom since 2018—well done to it!

Paul Girvan: On food and how manufacturers can help, does the right hon. Gentleman agree that much of the focus is on sugar, and little is on carbs, which normally convert to sugar in the body? With the Dose Adjustment For Normal Eating—DAFNE—programme, instead of counting sugar, people count carbs. It is really only for type 1 diabetics, but it helps them administer their insulin according to the carbs they have eaten during the day.

Keith Vaz: That is extremely important. I support the DAFNE programme and the work being done on the conversion to sugar. That brings me on to the sugar tax—a great achievement of the previous Government. All praise to George Osborne for introducing it.

Ms Karen Buck (in the Chair): Order. I gently encourage the right hon. Gentleman to stay within the topic.

Keith Vaz: I will. I hope that was not related to my mentioning George Osborne. We want to thank him for introducing the sugar tax, which has made a huge difference. Sugar in soft drinks has gone down by 28.8%, which is a huge achievement.

We have all praised the great Jonathan Valabhji, but I also want to mention the work of Partha Kar, who only this morning set right the statement by Mr Paul Hollywood on “The Great British Bake Off”, who said that one of the dishes looked like “diabetes on a plate”. I am sure he meant it as a joke, but for type 1s it was a real surprise that someone should speak like that. We desperately need structured education. We have all talked about the three hours of care, but there are 8,757 other hours.

In a few days’ time, we will be launching in Leicester the diabetes log book by the Leicester physician Dr Domine McConnell. I hope the Minister will spare some time to come and read it and perhaps launch it with us. It will give patients a better understanding of how they can record and monitor information. They can keep it with them and take all their readings wherever they go. Far too often, when I visit my GP I cannot remember my last HbA1c reading, and I need to make sure that is done. I realise that it can be done on a phone, but not everyone is able to do that.

My last plug for Leicester before I end is about the pilot that has been put together by the chair of the clinical commissioning group, Dr Azhar Farooqui, and Sue Lock, its retiring chief executive. It allows, on a Thursday, all diabetics to go to the Merlyn Vaz Health and Social Care Centre in Leicester. It is a very important initiative. People can have their feet looked at, their eyes looked at, their blood tested, their lifestyle dealt with—all the things they need to do, on one morning in one place. The opportunity to put that together makes a great difference.

Jim Shannon: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Keith Vaz: I think Ms Buck might object.

Ms Karen Buck (in the Chair): *indicated dissent.*

Keith Vaz: No, she will allow it.

Jim Shannon: In my GP surgery, and I think across the whole of Northern Ireland, GPs have classes for diabetics. They bring them in and do all those things: they do their feet, check their blood, check their eyes, talk about their health and check them over physically. They send those tests away, and they are brought back to make sure they are clear. Things are often done in other parts of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland that could be used as examples here. The right hon. Gentleman is talking about what is happening in Leicester, and it is good to hear that, but we are very fortunate to have that in my clinic and other clinics across Northern Ireland, where we get those checks twice a year.

Keith Vaz: Could I have just one minute, Ms Buck, given that the hon. Gentleman intervened?

Ms Karen Buck (in the Chair): Earlier, I was advising the right hon. Gentleman not to stray in terms of breadth, not in terms of length.

Keith Vaz: Well, I will go on longer, then—excellent! That makes me feel much better.

I hope the Minister will come and visit the Merlyn Vaz Health and Social Care Centre. People like me and the hon. Member for Strangford have to go to eight different professionals to have our diabetes checked. In one visit on one morning in Leicester, people can have it all done, from the top of their head to their feet and everything in between—they can get it all tested.

I will end with an anecdote; I was going to end, Ms Buck, because the House has heard enough from me. I recently saw a film—the hon. Member for Strangford will like this, because it was about the Beatles, and people of our general age will remember them—called “Yesterday”, directed by Danny Boyle. It was about how the internet went down on a particular day, and references to the Beatles disappeared, so nobody knew about them. Nobody knew their songs or who they were. When they typed in “Beatles”, they just got a beetle on the screen.

There is a scene in that film when somebody turns to another person and says, “I’m going outside to have a cigarette.” The person says, “What’s a cigarette?” because the cigarette had disappeared from the internet along with the Beatles. No one could remember it. When we introduced the smoking ban, it had a profound effect on cancer issues. We want to ensure that diabetes is reversed for type 2s and that we are able to manage and help those with type 1. We start that with a war on sugar and changing the way we live. Working together, I think the House can achieve that.

3.57 pm

Martyn Day (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) for securing this debate and for his personal account of his experience. He covered diet, control and tablets in his general summary of the issue. He highlighted

the importance of prevention, the correlation between poverty and lifestyle, the importance of messaging to different sections of our society and the value of digital solutions.

We also heard from the hon. Member for Heywood and Middleton (Liz McInnes), who also has direct experience of the issue. She emphasised the importance of the difference between types 1 and 2. Most of my comments will be about type 2. The right hon. Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz), a very knowledgeable Member, covered a range of points. It is impossible to disagree with anything I have heard today. I thoroughly enjoyed the presentations.

I am not diabetic, but when I phoned my office to tell my office manager that I had a debate about diabetes today, she thought I said that I had diabetes. She said, "I'm not surprised, with your lifestyle and diet." There may be some lessons there that we all need to take away. We need to look at our diets, in particular.

We have heard about the scale of the problem in Northern Ireland and England, and I have to say that the Scottish situation is not dissimilar. In 2016, more than 257,000 people were living with a diagnosis of type 2 diabetes across Scotland, and every year 17,000 people are diagnosed with it. It is estimated that about 10% of cases of type 2 diabetes remain undiagnosed. Diabetes Scotland estimates that more than 500,000 people in Scotland are at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes. The NHS spends about 9% of its total health expenditure treating type 2 diabetes.

It is estimated that more than one in 16 people across the UK has diabetes, whether diagnosed or undiagnosed. Around 80% of diabetes complications are preventable, so just think how much we could save the NHS by tackling the problem, as well as the benefits that could be brought to people's lifestyles. We should not short-change ourselves by cutting back on the diabetes spend—it is a spend-to-save area. Many of those complications are preventable or can at least be significantly delayed through early detection, good care and access to appropriate self-management tools and resources.

Being overweight is the most significant risk factor for the development of type 2 diabetes. Diabetes can be prevented with targeted weight management interventions that provide individuals with the support, skills and resources to improve their health and delay the onset of type 2 diabetes. As we have heard, recent studies have shown that it is possible to reverse a recent diagnosis of type 2 diabetes through intensive weight management programmes, which would enable the individual to achieve remission.

As obesity and lifestyle are such significant factors, what we do with our young people is critical. The SNP Scottish Government have a plan to halve childhood obesity by 2030, and that sits at the heart of the diet and healthy weight delivery plan. The Scottish Government's commitment to legislate on the restriction of point-of-purchase junk food promotions will be a major help. I hope that we will see action from the UK Government on advertising, particularly on TV and in the media, because that would make a big difference. In 2019-20, the Scottish Government invested an additional £1.7 million in weight management services for children and young people. Targeted messages are a key component of the Scottish Government's diabetes prevention, detection and intervention framework.

The Scottish Government's framework "A Healthier Future: Framework for the Prevention, Early Detection and Early Intervention of type 2 Diabetes" was published in 2018—the Library briefing contains links to it, so hon. Members can see the full details. The framework is supported by £42 million until 2023, and it was produced in collaboration with the prevention sub-committee of the Scottish Diabetes Group, which comprises informed specialists in diabetes, dietetics, maternal health, public health, primary care and obesity.

Wider support should be available for all individuals who have been identified as at risk. Health and social care professionals should signpost individuals to the support groups that are available to them. A Local Information System for Scotland, or ALISS, is a programme funded by the Scottish Government and delivered by the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland. The objectives are to increase the availability of health and wellbeing information for people living with long-term conditions, disabled people and unpaid carers, and to support people, communities, professionals and organisations who have information to share. The sharing of information is critical. The Scottish Government also published the diabetes improvement plan in 2014, with prevention as its No. 1 priority.

It is important to get the right messages to people, and methods of communication must also be considered. Modern-day flexibility and the use of mobile phones in everyday life means that they are an ideal tool to support people with diabetes, whose conditions need constant management. Additionally, they can provide effective methods of support to patients in rural and remote locations where access to healthcare providers is limited. However, we must be careful when adopting such practices because there are drawbacks, such as the digital divide. Mobile phone use is lower among some groups, such as the elderly, the poorest and people with disabilities, so face-to-face contact remains a vital communication tool.

4.3 pm

Mrs Sharon Hodgson (Washington and Sunderland West) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Buck. In my long tenure as shadow Minister for Public Health, it has been a pleasure to speak in many debates with the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon), on all sorts of health issues. I congratulate him on securing this debate and on his excellent speech. I know that diabetes is an important issue to him and I thank him for speaking so honestly about his own journey with diabetes. In the past, I have spoken about my own journey, but I do not plan to dwell on that too much today.

I thank other hon. Members for their excellent contributions: my hon. Friend the Member for Heywood and Middleton (Liz McInnes), my right hon. Friend the Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz) and the SNP spokesperson, the hon. Member for Linlithgow and East Falkirk (Martyn Day). Although there are not many of us in attendance, we have heard some excellent contributions and the debate has been full, detailed and excellent. I also thank charities such as Diabetes UK for the work that they do, both to support people with diabetes and to prevent diabetes.

Like the Secretary of State and, I am sure, the Minister, we all believe that prevention is better than cure. We all say that, and I honestly think that we all believe it. As

[Mrs Sharon Hodgson]

hon. Members have said, however, the Government repeat that mantra but have cut public health funding to the tune of £700 million since 2013. Those cuts have had a serious impact on the nation's health, but they have hit those in low-income areas the most, as we have heard. That is particularly concerning, given that children and adults living in deprived areas are substantially more likely to be obese, and obesity is a risk factor for diabetes—particularly type 2 diabetes, as my hon. Friend the Member for Heywood and Middleton made clear.

According to NHS Digital, one quarter of people living with type 2 diabetes in England are from the most deprived fifth of society, compared with 15% from the least deprived. We have had that knowledge for a long time, so it really is time that the Government used the knowledge and took action to tackle both the obesity and the diabetes epidemic, both of which disproportionately affect those in the most deprived areas.

Opposition Members have been clear that there is no silver bullet to fix the issue. However, we support the proposal to introduce a 9 pm watershed on the advertising of food that is high in fat, salt and sugar. We also support a restriction on the sale of energy drinks to under-16s and clearer labelling on food and drink—that would help us all. Those are all policies on which the Government have consulted, but we have yet to see anything from the Government setting out whether they will be implemented. Can the Minister update us on the consultations when she responds?

Jim Shannon: I congratulate the hon. Lady on her contribution and her comments. I was sitting here thinking about families and diabetes. In a family of four or five, there may be one diabetic member of the household. I believe that the whole family—mum and dad, brothers and sisters; whoever it may be—need to give consideration to the person with diabetes to ensure that their battle with diabetes is one that the whole family fights together. That is difficult to do, but it is important that families realise that they have a job to do.

Mrs Hodgson: I am not sure whether there is a hereditary aspect to it, but I am aware that sometimes there can be a number of people with diabetes in the same family. I am the only one I know of in my family with the condition, but then again I do not know my father's side. My mam always says that I take after my dad with regard to my size, so perhaps there is a link and I am just not aware of it. The eating habits of members of a family can be very similar. If eating habits have led someone to get diabetes, the condition could have affected others in the same family, so the hon. Gentleman makes a valid point.

The evidence shows that the policies proposed by the Government, if they are fully and quickly implemented, could help us to make real progress towards reducing childhood obesity by 2030. Will the Minister tell us what the delay is? Instead of just window-dressing with the childhood obesity plan chapters 1 and 2 and the former chief medical officer's special report on childhood obesity, which we had in the past couple of weeks, the Government must now take bold action and implement all the policies in the reports. The time for reports and consultations is over. We all know what needs to be done, and now we need urgent action.

According to NHS England, managing the growing incidence of diabetes in England is set to become one of the major clinical challenges of the 21st century, as we have heard expressed clearly in this debate. Estimates suggest that the number of people with diabetes is expected to rise to 4.2 million by 2030, affecting almost 9% of the population, with all the associated costs.

More than half of all cases of type 2 diabetes could be prevented or delayed. The hon. Member for Strangford and my right hon. Friend the Member for Leicester East both spoke about that in detail. By reducing the number of people who are overweight or obese, we can reduce the number of people who develop type 2 diabetes and live with the life-changing complications that are associated with it. Like the hon. Gentleman, I wish I had known much sooner the irreversible damage that I was doing to myself. I have done a detailed blog post about it, which is available online, if anyone is interested in my thoughts—I will go into them no further in this debate. Steps that the Government take today will benefit people greatly tomorrow, so will the Minister please outline the Government's plans to prevent further incidence of diabetes?

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to diabetes, which is why targeted messaging and support is so important, alongside societal and environmental changes to tackle obesity, as I have mentioned. Interventions such as NHS health checks, weight management programmes and the NHS diabetes prevention programme should therefore be offered and taken up more often in order to identify risk and to prevent diabetes. Many people who are eligible for the NHS health checks are not invited to them or do not attend.

What will the Government do to encourage people to attend their NHS health check and to ensure that everyone who is eligible is definitely invited for a check? About 1 million people live with undiagnosed type 2 diabetes, and one in three people already have diabetes complications by the time they are diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, so that service could be invaluable in preventing further incidence of diabetes and of the complications that sufferers experience.

Those who have diabetes know that it is possible to put type 2 diabetes into remission through substantial weight loss. As the hon. Member for Strangford mentioned, my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich East (Tom Watson) has been incredibly vocal about his very visible journey. He has been an inspiration to many. We need to make sure that when people go into diabetes remission, they continue to get support, access to diabetes monitoring and, where necessary, care, because, as I was told, "You are never cured." Even if someone with diabetes is in remission through diet, they will still forever be a diabetic—we have broken our bodies, basically.

People who wish to go into remission must have continued support. There is still a need for more research to understand the long-term impact of remission on reducing complications, but for now the future in that regard looks positive. This debate has been excellent, and it has demonstrated that there are clearly steps that the Government can and should take to prevent diabetes. I hope that the Minister will take them on board. I look forward to her response.

In closing, I thank and congratulate—on behalf of all us who are living with diabetes—Professor Ian Shanks, the inventor of the blood glucose monitor some 40 years

ago. I was so pleased to hear the news overnight that he is to be paid a small award. I say “small” because, although it is £2 million, I understand that most of it will be eaten up by the legal costs of a 13-year battle. He might not be a rich man after he has paid all his legal bills, but he will be rich in terms of gratitude for the millions of lives he has saved, and no doubt improved, with his invention.

4.14 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Jo Churchill): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Buck.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) on securing this important debate, on its tone and on how informative it has been. It is a powerful indicator of how a debate in this place can help to educate and spread information. As the hon. Member for Heywood and Middleton (Liz McInnes) said, types 1 and 2 are distinctly different conditions. It is important for us to note that so that when people talk about diabetes, they do not talk about it in the round as one condition, but nuance it. That goes to the heart of what the hon. Gentleman was asking for—information to be tailored to the patient and every individual, so that people receive the information appropriate for them.

I thank the hon. Member for Strangford and all Members who sit on the all-party parliamentary group for diabetes for their fantastic work. It is one of the most dynamic APPGs in this place. In particular, I thank the right hon. Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz), who chairs it. I am afraid that I do not share his and the hon. Member for Strangford's love for Leicester City, but as a regular visitor to Welford Road, I know his city and I like the tiger in it. I will leave it there.

More than 3 million people in England have been diagnosed with diabetes and, as the hon. Member for Washington and Sunderland West (Mrs Hodgson) said, an estimated further 1 million remain undiagnosed. Public Health England estimates that 5 million people are at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes, and that number rises each year. Like everyone in this room, and probably everyone in the country, I know someone with diabetes. My mum is in remission—she has lost a lot of weight and she exercises, but she is in her 80s, which shows that no matter people's age, they can take steps to help them live healthily, even with a condition.

The hon. Member for South Antrim (Paul Girvan) spoke about his wife, and the importance of people looking after themselves during their journey with diabetes, so that they know they are as in control of their condition as they can be. As we have heard from several Members, diabetes has other effects on the body, and it is important that people with the condition look after their eyes, their kidneys and, in particular, their feet. That presents challenges for people attending multiple different clinics for multiple different things.

I will also mention Professor Jonathan Valabhji, the national clinical director for diabetes and obesity. I look forward to working with Jonathan, who strikes me as a truly inspirational person in this area. Only last week, he told me not to be too hard on the situation, and that we have come a long way over the decades. We no longer see the same number of amputations or complications. There has been improvement in the treatment, and it is important to recognise that clinicians have done an awful lot.

Preventing type 2 diabetes and promoting the best possible care for all people is a key priority. I am proud to say that NHS England, NHS Improvement, Public Health England and Diabetes UK have had great success with the first diabetes prevention programme to be delivered at scale nationwide.

Keith Vaz: With a new Minister, we get a new broom and, therefore, a fresh pair of eyes. The collection of data is a key issue. We have tabled parliamentary questions to Ministers and asked, for example, how many diabetic nurses there are in the country or how many doctors have a specialism in diabetes. Those facts are available in Scotland, but not in England. Will the Minister make it a priority, as a result of this debate, if nothing else, to get more of that data? With good data, we can plan better.

Jo Churchill: I certainly agree that good data and evidence lie at the heart of delivering good patient-centred programmes. I will take that issue away to look at it and write to him on it.

Sir George Howarth: Further to the points made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz), I tried to get information about waiting times in clinics and hospitals for various kinds of appointments related to diabetes out of the Minister's Department, but I was unable to. When she looks at my right hon. Friend's list, will she look at mine too?

Jo Churchill: I truly will. That brings me to the hon. Member for Heywood and Middleton, who wrote to me about the meeting she mentioned. I have written back to say I would really appreciate the chance to meet her to discuss the various challenges. Having already had an obesity roundtable and a Green Paper roundtable, I know there is an awful lot of overlap in these areas. I feel we could work on that. If she will forgive me, I will get back to answering the hon. Member for Strangford.

Over 2018 and 2019, the diabetes prevention programme achieved full national roll-out, making England the first country in the world to achieve full geographic coverage, which is a great achievement. There is strong international evidence demonstrating how behavioural interventions that support people to maintain a healthy weight and be more active can significantly reduce their risk of developing the condition in the first place, which I think the hon. Member for Washington and Sunderland West referred to. The programme identifies those at high risk and refers them on to behaviour change programmes, which, as we know, is very much more likely to lead to positive results than sending someone away and telling them, “Get on with it yourself.”

The NHS long-term plan commits to doubling the capacity of the diabetes prevention programme to up to 200,000 people per year by 2023-24 to address the higher than expected demand and specifically to target inequalities. Furthermore, NHS England and NHS Improvement have enabled digital routes to access the programme, which will support individuals of working age in particular. As the hon. Member for Strangford pointed out, it is important that people can get information where it is most accessible. Those digital routes went live across nearly half the country in August 2019, and full digital coverage is expected in the next year.

[Jo Churchill]

The hon. Members for East Londonderry (Mr Campbell) and for Upper Bann (David Simpson) spoke about children. That is where the prevention Green Paper, “Advancing our health: prevention in the 2020s”, targeted support, tailored lifestyle advice and personalised care using new technologies will all have an effect. I take on board the point that there have been a lot of consultations and so on in this area. We received an awful lot of responses to the Green Paper and we are considering them, but I will make announcements shortly, particularly on ending the sale of energy drinks, on promotions and on one or two of the other areas the hon. Member for Strangford mentioned, so watch this space. I have been in position for only 12 weeks, but this whole area is of huge importance to the nation’s health. I hope that, if we can target children and young people through their lifetime, we can stop problems later on.

Jim Shannon: I am very encouraged—I think we all are—by the Minister’s response on that point. When she brings recommendations and legislation forward, I think she will find that Members across the House will be very supportive of them. I am greatly encouraged by what she says.

Jo Churchill: I thank the hon. Gentleman. I hope Members noticed that yesterday we launched the National Academy for Social Prescribing. I think Members across the House understand that people do not always need a tablet when they go to the doctor. The hon. Gentleman spoke about the importance of mental health support, referral to exercise classes and various other things for people with diabetes. I was lucky enough to go to Charlton Athletic yesterday and see some brilliant things being put into practice in the community, where the messaging was much better received. Twenty-six per cent less men feel able to go and talk to their doctor, so perhaps we can give them the message at their football club, their rugby club or just their workplace. That applies to women too, now they have much busier lives and many more of them work. Targeting people appropriately so we can get messages to them in the right places about how they can look after themselves better has to be the right way to go.

A dedicated Type 2 Diabetes Prevention Week campaign was launched in 2018. The campaign aims to raise awareness among healthcare staff in primary care about the causes, complications and groups at risk of type 2 diabetes, which I think was mentioned, and the services available to manage patient health. Following the success of the last two years, the campaign will be rolled out again in 2020.

The hon. Member for Strangford mentioned the importance of ensuring that messaging to support those with diabetes is tailored to relevant sectors of society. In June 2018, Language Matters was launched to encourage positive interactions with people living with diabetes, to ensure tailored messaging to relevant sectors of society and to expand routes into the prevention programme. It is a little like health checks: people have to know about it, and know how to use it, in order to access it.

In 2017-18, and again in 2018-19, an additional £5 million per year was made available for diabetes specialist nurses. There is a need to beef up support in that area. Diabetes

UK, which I have already met—I happen to be lucky enough to have known its chief executive for some time, and it was at the obesity roundtable, as was Cancer Research UK—does a fantastic job in helping to spread that message and to provide information. Another message that has come out is “think pharmacy first” to empower pharmacists. The 11,500 pharmacists on our high streets are a resource that is just waiting to be used, and I hope the new pharmacy contract will be the start of that relationship.

We will do more in the future to support those with type 2 diabetes. There are a range of apps in the NHS app store to further overcome many of the issues people currently face with traditional, face-to-face structured education. NHS England and NHS Improvement are developing online self-management support tools called Healthy Living for people with type 2 diabetes. Many in the Chamber will be familiar with DAFNE and DESMOND—dose adjustment for normal eating, and diabetes education and self-management for ongoing and newly diagnosed—as well as other programmes for those living with diabetes.

Healthy Living will consist of a structured education course with additional content focused on maintaining a healthy lifestyle, including content on weight management, alcohol reduction and cognitive behavioural therapy for diabetes-related distress. Once the course has been developed, NHSE hopes to commence its roll-out from January 2020. It will have universal availability, it will be free to users and local commissioners, and it is intended as an online resource to supplement other quality assured digital coaching programmes that can be commissioned in local health economies. However, it will be in addition to face-to-face support, because everyone has a preferred method of getting information.

As the right hon. Member for Leicester East said, the risk of developing type 2 diabetes is higher in black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. I am pleased to say that NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with the Cultural Intelligence Hub to deliver an insight project to support future communications and improve engagement with those communities. The aim is to support an increase in available places on the NHS diabetes prevention programme and the take-up of those places; to raise awareness of type 2 diabetes, its risk factors and complications, and ways to prevent it; and to promote messages.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have invested £39 million in each year of transformation funding. That funding is key to improving structured education, reducing variation and helping with foot care for diabetic foot disease.

I agree that new technology is key to the management of diabetes. I hope the shortage in the supply of flash monitors will be overcome shortly, but what fantastic news it is that so many people, including many of our colleagues in this place, now have access to those monitors. I know how much difference they can make to people’s lives, and that is only to be welcomed.

I thank the hon. Member for Strangford for highlighting this issue. I look forward to meeting the all-party parliamentary group and working further with it on these messages. I hope I have demonstrated that we are working hard so people can receive the treatment and support they need to live longer but enjoy quality of life.

4.29 pm

Jim Shannon: I thank the right hon Members for Leicester East (Keith Vaz) and for Knowsley (Sir George Howarth); the hon. Members for Heywood and Middleton (Liz McInnes) and for Linlithgow and East Falkirk (Martyn Day); the shadow Minister, the hon. Member for Washington and Sunderland West (Mrs Hodgson); and my hon. Friends the Members for East Londonderry (Mr Campbell), for Upper Bann (David Simpson) and for South Antrim (Paul Girvan). Most of all, I thank the Minister. We are all greatly encouraged by what she

said and look forward to working with her to deliver a good, effective, positive and evidential diabetes strategy that can make lives better. All of us here are committed to that. Let's do it together.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered tailored prevention messaging for diabetes.

4.30 pm

Sitting adjourned.

Written Statements

Thursday 24 October 2019

CABINET OFFICE

European Union (Withdrawal) Act and Common Frameworks Report

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Michael Gove): I am today laying before Parliament a report, the “European Union (Withdrawal) Act and Common Frameworks - 26 June 2019 to 25 September 2019” as required by paragraph 4 of schedule 3 to the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018. The report is available on gov.uk and details the progress made in discussions between the UK Government and devolved Administrations regarding common frameworks in the fifth reporting period covered under the legislation, and sets out that no “freezing” regulations have been brought forward under section 12 of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act. A copy of “The European Union (Withdrawal) Act and Common Frameworks - 26 June to 25 September 2019” report has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses. The publication of the report reflects the Government’s continued commitment to transparency.

Attachments can be viewed online at

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2019-10-24/HCWS41/>.

[HCWS41]

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

Capacity Market

The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Andrea Leadsom): I am pleased to announce that today the European Commission has confirmed its original decision in 2014 to grant state aid approval for the capacity market, enabling this vital tool for electricity security of supply to be restored and payments that have been suspended since November 2018 to be made.

The Commission opened an in-depth investigation to gather more information on certain elements of the capacity market after the General Court of the Court of Justice of the European Union annulled the Commission’s earlier state aid approval of the scheme on procedural grounds on 15 November 2018.

The Commission has now satisfactorily concluded its investigation and has concluded that the capacity market as operated since 2014, including during the investigation, complies with state aid rules. Notably, the Commission did not find any evidence that the capacity market puts demand side response or any other capacity providers at a disadvantage with respect to their participation in the scheme.

The Government welcome the Commission’s decision, which enables the capacity market to resume its important work as Great Britain’s principal tool for ensuring electricity security of supply and provides confidence that its design is fit for purpose.

We are awaiting the Commission’s full decision, but expect that its decision means we will be able to:

Restart the mechanism for making payments to capacity providers, including the c.£1 billion of deferred payments that have been suspended because of the standstill period as well as future capacity payments. The vast majority of the back-payments will reach capacity providers in January 2020;

Invoice suppliers for the supplier charge relating to the standstill period which will be used to fund the deferred capacity payments. The Government have been engaging with suppliers during the standstill period to ensure they have been setting aside funding to meet what will be a substantial post-standstill invoice;

Confirm that the conditional capacity agreements awarded in the replacement T-1 auction, held in July 2019, have become full capacity agreements. This will ensure we have in place all the capacity needed to ensure security of supply this winter; and

Confirm the three capacity auctions scheduled for early 2020 will take place. These will secure the majority of our capacity needs out to 2023-24.

The Commission’s decision also notes that the UK has committed to implementing a number of improvements to the capacity market’s design to reflect recent market and regulatory developments, including those identified through our recent five-year review of the effectiveness of the capacity market. These will ensure the continued compatibility of the capacity market with state aid rules in the future and relate to: (i) the lowering of the minimum capacity threshold for participating in the auctions; (ii) the direct participation of foreign capacity; (iii) the participation rules for new types of capacity; (iv) the access to long-term agreements; (v) the volume of capacity to be secured in the year-ahead auction and (vi) compliance with the new electricity regulation.

My Department will shortly consult on arrangements for implementing these commitments.

I will be writing imminently to our delivery partners responsible for delivering the capacity market—the capacity market delivery body (National Grid Electricity System Operator) and the settlement body (Electricity Settlements Company)—to notify them of the Commission’s approval decision and confirm the occurrence of the deferred capacity payment trigger event and T-1 capacity agreement trigger event (the triggers for the resumption of capacity payments). These bodies will subsequently be required to resume making capacity payments, carry out new duties arising from the triggers, and restart any duties that had been suspended during the standstill period. Our delivery partners have worked closely with my Department to ensure that their systems and processes remain fit for purpose; they stand ready to support the restart process immediately.

[HCWS38]

Insolvency Service Performance Targets 2019-20

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Kelly Tolhurst): I have set performance targets for the Insolvency Service for the financial year 2019-20. The Insolvency Service is the Government agency that provides public services to those affected by financial distress or failure.

The Insolvency Service provides the frameworks that deal with insolvency and the financial misconduct that sometimes accompanies or leads to it. Its aim is to

deliver economic confidence through a corporate and personal insolvency regime which is regarded as fair and that gives investors and lenders confidence to take the commercial risks necessary to support economic growth.

In 2019-20, an important priority for the Insolvency Service will be to maintain its current high level of customer service whilst delivering a major change programme. I have set measures and targets at a level which reflect the challenges that the agency continues to face.

Ministerial Target		2018-19 target	2018-19 performance	2019-20 target
Delivering economic confidence	Per cent of users ^[1] who are satisfied with the Insolvency Service	85% or greater	84%	85% or greater
Supporting those in financial distress	Average calendar days taken to action a redundancy claim	14 days or fewer	12.2 days	14 days or fewer
Tackling financial wrongdoing	Average time taken to obtain a disqualification	21 months or fewer	19.9 months	20 months or fewer
	Average time taken to obtain a bankruptcy restriction	10 months or fewer	8.6 months	10 months or fewer
	Average time taken to instigate a criminal prosecution	24 months or fewer	25.9 months	24 months or fewer
Maximising returns to creditors	Per cent of reports to creditors issued within 15 calendar days of an attended interview ^[2]	90% or greater	92.6%	91% or greater
	Total value distributed to creditors ^[3]	£55m or greater	£61.3m	£60m or greater
Financial management	Expenditure to be managed within budget	Achieve	Achieved	Achieve

[1] a) Debt relief order debtors; b) approved intermediaries; c) bankrupts; d) directors of insolvent companies; e) redundancy payment claimants; f) institutional creditors; g) non-institutional creditors; h) insolvency practitioners.

[2] Or where a decision is made that no interview is required or the agreed point of non-surrender.

[3] Excludes distributions relating to Carillion.

[HCWS36]

Post-October Environment Council

The Minister for Business, Energy and Clean Growth (Kwasi Kwarteng): My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Minister for Climate Change, Lord Duncan of Springbank has today made the following statement:

I attended the EU Environment Council on 4 October in Luxembourg. Roseanna Cunningham, Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform, also attended. I wish to update the House on the matters discussed.

UNFCCC COP25 preparations - adoption of conclusions

The presidency invited member states to discuss and adopt conclusions on the 25th session of the conference of the parties (COP25) to the United Nations framework convention on climate change (UNFCCC). The presidency set out four objectives for COP25: (1) complete work on the implementation guidelines of Article 6 of the Paris Agreement on “co-operative approaches”, including the international trade of emissions reductions; (2) complete the second review of the Warsaw international mechanism for loss and damage; (3) complete the review of the Lima work programme on gender; and (4) advance technical work under the enhanced transparency framework.

All member states intervened. A grouping of ambitious member states, including the UK, called for the conclusions to state that the EU will “enhance” its nationally determined contribution (NDC-2030 emissions reduction target under the Paris Agreement), while a grouping of other member states supported softer language that the EU would “communicate” or “update” its NDC.

The UK intervened to support the inclusion of a reference to the intergovernmental panel on climate change (IPCC) special report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5 °C and ambitious language calling on all parties to the Paris Agreement to enhance their NDCs by February 2020. The UK stressed the importance of the EU committing to reach climate neutrality (net-zero greenhouse gas emissions) by 2050. The UK also supported calls for there to be five-year common time frames for NDCs and for ruling out carry-over of pre-2020 over-achievement of emissions reductions under the Kyoto Protocol. Finally, the UK noted that it will double its international climate finance to £11.6 billion over the next five years and called on all countries to consider similar pledges that they can make.

The presidency circulated a final compromise text of the conclusions which struck a balance between member states, which the Council adopted. The final conclusions highlighted that the EU will “update” its NDC, stressed the need to step up global efforts in light of the latest available science and in particular the IPCC Special Report on 1.5 °C, stressed that the EU is discussing climate neutrality in light of the Commission’s proposal for an EU-wide 2050 net-zero greenhouse gas emissions target, recalled the importance of striving towards common time frames for NDCs, and expressed commitment to setting up a new mechanism under Article 6.4 of the Paris Agreement that can lead to the closure of the Kyoto Protocol mechanisms.

Clean planet for all - EU long-term strategy - policy debate

The presidency invited member states to discuss the Commission’s proposed long-term strategy, “Clean Planet for all: EU’s strategic long-term vision for a climate neutral economy” and the proposal for an EU 2050 target of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions. The purpose of the debate was to take stock of member state positions and discuss the conditions, incentives, enabling framework, and measures needed for climate neutrality in the EU, ahead of the European leaders reaching a decision at the European Council in December.

The Commission intervened expressing confidence that the EU would reach agreement on the proposed EU net-zero 2050 target by the end of the year.

The majority of member states intervened and were in broad agreement on the need to ensure a fair and just transition, to mobilise investments from the private sector, and ensuring policy and sectoral coherence in the transition. On the EU achieving net-zero emissions by 2050, member states fell into three categories: ambitious member states who stressed the need for the EU to show leadership and seize the first-mover benefits of the transition to net-zero emissions; supportive but more cautious member states highlighting the economic and geographic challenges and issues concerning carbon leakage; and the three remaining member states, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary, opposed to the EU net-zero target. The latter emphasised the differential impacts and costs of decarbonisation, relative wealth, and emissions reduction potential among member states, and therefore the need for funding and support mechanisms for those member states who would be most affected by the transition to a net-zero EU.

The 8th environmental action programme - adoption of conclusions

The presidency invited member states to adopt Council conclusions on the European Commission's draft "8th Environmental Action Programme—Turning the Trends Together".

Seventeen member states intervened, all in support of the programme, with some member states calling for the Commission to come forward with proposals as soon as possible. The UK intervened to note our support for the draft and the high level of ambition outlined in the conclusions. The UK also noted that these were global environmental challenges not restricted to the EU, and the UK looks forward to continuing to work with the EU collectively and member states individually on these challenges.

The presidency closed the discussion and the Council conclusions were adopted.

"More circularity" framework - adoption of conclusions

The presidency invited member states to adopt Council conclusions on the circular economy framework, "More circularity—a transition to a sustainable society". This was the second debate on the circular economy following on from the previous discussion at the informal meeting of the Environment Council in June in Helsinki.

Some 21 member states intervened, all supportive of the position taken by the Commission, and saw the circular economy as a key part of meeting the 2030 and 2025 environmental targets and the Paris Agreement. Many member states identified the key sectors where action was needed, including textiles, water reuse, and plastics.

The presidency concluded the debates and the Council conclusions were adopted.

AOB items

The following items were also discussed under Any Other Business.

Communication on protecting and restoring forests—information from the Commission

The Commission presented its communication "Stepping up EU action to protect and restore the world's forests", adopted on 23 July 2019, the objective of which is to strengthen international cooperation to protect and improve the health of existing forests and increase forest coverage worldwide.

Nine member states intervened in support of the Communication, welcoming ambitious action from the EU in halting deforestation and forest degradation and highlighting the benefits for biodiversity, absorbing CO₂ emissions, and livelihoods.

Transition to a fleet of zero-emission passenger cars, information from the Danish delegation, supported by the Luxembourg delegation

The Danish delegation presented a paper on the transition to a fleet of zero-emission passenger cars for accelerating the decarbonisation of the sector at the same time as preserving its competitiveness.

Eighteen member states intervened. Some member states expressed agreement that further action on zero-emission vehicles is needed to meet the existing targets and contribute to the pathway towards climate neutrality. Other member states highlighted that further action was premature given the recent agreement of CO₂ targets for vehicles at the EU level. These member states also highlighted financial, competitive, and infrastructural concerns and the differential purchasing power of consumers among member states, and the increased export of second-hand cars to Central and Eastern Europe.

The Commission welcomed the discussion and stated that the new Commission, as part of the proposed European green deal, will have to consider its existing suite of policies for reducing emissions in the transport sector. The presidency concluded the discussion.

Regulation on type approval of motor vehicles—information from the presidency

The Council noted the information from the presidency on the new legislative proposal amending the regulation on type approval of motor vehicles with respect to emissions from light passenger and commercial vehicles. The legislative proposal follows the judgment of the General Court on 13 December 2018 that the Commission did not have the competence to amend the limits for real driving emission (RDE) tests. Eight member states intervened, all supportive of the swift adoption of the legislation. Interventions were divided between those supporting setting a lower conformity factor for the RDE tests compared with tests under laboratory conditions on the basis of improvements to testing equipment and the need to take action on air quality, and those supporting retention of the already-agreed limits in order to ensure legal certainty for the automotive sector and their investment decisions.

Regulation on sustainable finance taxonomy—information from the German, Luxembourg, and Austrian delegations

The Council noted the information from the German, Luxembourg, and Austrian delegations on the proposal on taxonomy for sustainable finance, who object to the current approach which classifies nuclear energy as sustainable. Fourteen member states intervened; Belgium and Italy were supportive of the effort to declassify nuclear as sustainable, while other member states stressed the importance of maintaining technology neutrality and the role of nuclear in meeting emissions reduction targets.

Report on the 18th meeting of parties to the convention on international trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora—information from the presidency and Commission

The Council noted the information from the presidency and Commission on the 18th meeting of the conference of the parties (COP18) to the convention on international trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora (CITES) in Geneva on 17-28 August 2019.

The 7th high-level dialogue conference of the China Europe Water Platform—information from the Portuguese delegation

The Council noted the information from the Portuguese delegation on the upcoming 7th high level dialogue conference of the China Europe Water Platform in Guimaraes on 6-9 November 2019.

[HCWS37]

EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION

General Affairs Council October 2019

The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Stephen Barclay): I represented the UK at the General Affairs Council (GAC) in Luxembourg on 15 October 2019. A provisional report of the meeting and the conclusions adopted can be found on the Council of the European Union's website at:

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/gac/2019/10/15/>

Enlargement and stabilisation and association of Albania and North Macedonia

The Council discussed enlargement and the stabilisation and association process as regards Albania and North Macedonia. The presidency recalled the conclusions of 18 June 2019 Council to revert to the issue no later than October 2019. However, the discussion concluded without resolution due to a lack of unanimity. The presidency issued procedural conclusions stating that the Council would return to the issue after the October European Council.

Preparation of the European Council on 17-18 October 2019: Conclusions and European Council follow-up

Ministers continued preparations for the European Council on 17-18 October. The presidency split the discussion into multiannual financial framework (MFF) and other agenda items. There was a lack of consensus among member states on the MFF proposal presented by the presidency. Leaders discussed EU priorities for the next five years; Turkey; and climate change.

AOB: Transparency seminar

The presidency briefed Ministers on the outcomes of the future of EU transparency seminar it held on 24 September in Helsinki.

[HCWS40]

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

Foreign Affairs Council 14 October

The Minister for Europe and the Americas (Christopher Pincher): The High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HRVP), Federica Mogherini, chaired the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) in Luxembourg on 14 October. My right hon. Friend the Minister for the Middle East and North Africa attended the meeting.

Current affairs

The HRVP and Foreign Ministers had an exchange of views on a number of pressing issues. On Iran, they recalled their commitment to the joint comprehensive plan of action (JCPoA) and highlighted the importance of continuing efforts to de-escalate tensions. The United Kingdom highlighted the importance of the joint comprehensive plan of action, the instrument in support of trade exchanges (INSTEX) and our participation in the international maritime security construct.

On Libya, Ministers expressed their support for the resumption of the UN-led political process. The United Kingdom expressed full support for German efforts to boost regional co-operation, and the importance of strict enforcement of the UN arms embargo.

The HRVP encouraged Ministers to participate in the international solidarity conference on the Venezuelan refugee and migrant crisis on 28-29 October in Brussels.

Syria

Ministers discussed the latest developments in Syria. The UN special envoy for Syria, Geir Pedersen, briefed Ministers on the political process and preparations for the Constitutional Committee's first meeting, due to take place at the end of October. He also expressed his

concern over Turkey's military action in north-east Syria and the risks for the political process. Foreign Ministers reiterated their full support for the special envoy.

North-east Syria

The Council condemned Turkey's unilateral military action, noting its impact on regional stability and security and the UN-led peace process, humanitarian assistance, and the global coalition's progress to defeat Daesh (which remained a threat to European security as well as Turkey's, regional and international security). The conclusions, while noting that Turkey was a key partner of the European Union and a critically important actor in the Syrian crisis and the region, urged Turkey to cease its unilateral military action in north-east Syria and to withdraw its forces. They also reiterated the EU's commitment to the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Syrian state, and urged a political and diplomatic resolution to security concerns in north-east Syria.

The conclusions recalled some member states' decision to immediately halt arms exports licensing to Turkey and called for a ministerial meeting of the international coalition against Daesh to address how to pursue its efforts in this regard.

The conclusions reiterated that the EU would not provide stabilisation or development assistance in areas where the rights of local populations are ignored or violated, and that it remained engaged in addressing the humanitarian and refugee crisis.

Turkey's drilling activities in the eastern Mediterranean

Ministers discussed Turkey's drilling in the waters around Cyprus. The United Kingdom stressed that Turkey must respect Cyprus' sovereignty and supported calls for dialogue.

The Council adopted conclusions reaffirming the EU's solidarity with Cyprus regarding the respect of its sovereignty, and noted that delimitations of exclusive economic zones should be addressed through dialogue and negotiation in full respect of international law and in accordance with the principle of good neighbourly relations.

The Council agreed to put in place a framework regime of restrictive measures targeting natural and legal persons responsible for or involved in the illegal drilling activity of hydrocarbons in the eastern Mediterranean.

Ukraine

Ministers had a brief exchange of views in preparation for the discussion with the Ukrainian Foreign Minister Vadym Prystaiko over the working lunch.

Afghanistan

The discussion was postponed to the Foreign Affairs Council meeting of 11 November 2019 due to time constraints.

Lunch with the Minister of Foreign Affairs for Ukraine Vadym Prystaiko

Over lunch, Foreign Minister Prystaiko briefed on Ukrainian reform plans. The Minister for the Middle East and North Africa underlined the United Kingdom's commitment to supporting Ukraine on reforms and stressed the need for the EU to remain focused on Russian influence. Ministers reaffirmed the EU's strong

commitment to Ukraine, both to its territorial integrity and security and to its Government's efforts on the reforms process.

Council conclusions

The Council agreed a number of further measures:

The Council adopted conclusions on the continued presence of Operation Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina to support authorities in maintaining a safe and secure environment for its citizens.

The Council adopted conclusions to extend restrictive measures addressing the use and proliferation of chemical weapons until 16 October 2020.

The Council adopted conclusions renewing its commitment to democracy in a changing global context.

The Council adopted conclusions to adopt a framework for targeted restrictive measures in light of the situation in Nicaragua.

The Council adopted conclusions on its engagement with Thailand.

The Council adopted conclusions on human rights, the rule of law and the fundamental freedoms of the citizens of Cameroon.

[HCWS35]

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Health and Social Care

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Matt Hancock): The Department's remit formally expanded from the "Department of Health" to the "Department of Health and Social Care" in January 2018. Our health and social care services continue to meet the challenges of rising demand and ever more complex need. In 2018-19, there were 24.8 million A&E attendances, 4.3 million more than were seen in 2009-10 and 1.7 million more within four hours. 1.8 million requests for adult social care support from 1.3 million new clients were received in 2017-18. This is down to the commitment, compassion and professionalism of the 1.3 million people who work in the NHS and the 1.6 million people working in adult social care services across the country. As at June 2019 there were over 17,300 more doctors and over 8,000 more nurses and health visitors since June 2010, with plans to recruit even more.

Since 2017, the Department has achieved a significant amount—continuing to drive forwards its strategic priorities to help people live more independent, healthier lives for longer. In July 2019, the Department reached an important milestone: the 100th anniversary since the Ministry of Health was established. It has also been working to ensure the health and social care system is as prepared as possible for EU exit.

A stronger NHS, driven forward by the ambitions set out in the NHS long term plan and significant funding commitments that support it. In July 2018 we celebrated the 70th anniversary of the NHS. Accompanying this significant milestone, the Government announced the single biggest cash increase made in the NHS's history—an extra £33.9 billion a year by 2023-24 (compared with 2018-19). This backs the NHS's clinically led long term plan (LTP), which sets out a bold and innovative vision, safeguarding our nation's health for generations to come.

A healthier nation, with prevention at the heart of our strategy to tackle the causes of poor health and ongoing efforts to ensure we play a leading role in confronting global health challenges.

Prevention remains a high priority for the Department. Important progress has been made across a number of areas, including: the tobacco control plan published in 2018; extending the HPV vaccine to boys; a new £6 million scheme to improve outcomes for children with alcohol dependent parents; exceeding the NHS diabetes prevention programme commitment a year early; being one of the first countries in the world to achieve the UN's "90/90/90" goals on HIV prevention; creating the first Minister for Suicide Prevention alongside the cross-Government suicide prevention workplan; and introducing the soft drinks industry levy in April 2018, which has been hugely successful—the average sugar content of drinks subject to the levy decreased by 28.8% between 2015 and 2018.

The Prevention Green Paper published in July 2019 signalled a new approach for the health and social care system. This included chapter 3 of the childhood obesity strategy and driving forward policies in chapter 2, such as ending the sale of energy drinks to children and exploring what additional opportunities leaving the European Union presents for front of pack food labelling in England.

The Government have continued to protect and promote the health of the nation, including through: consulting on proposals to reduce ill-health related to job loss; fully establishing the Northern Ireland abortion scheme in 2019; announcing a new network of eight walk-in FGM clinics; new legislation on organ donation; and leading the healthcare response to emergency incidents, such as the Novichok poisoning in Salisbury.

We continue to play a leading role in global health security, through our work with the G7, G20, World Health Assembly and the UN. The Government have published a 20-year vision and a 5-year national action plan for how the UK will contribute to containing and controlling antimicrobial resistance by 2040.

A transformation in care, to make sure we are supporting the most vulnerable in our community with joined-up, compassionate and modern services.

We have been supporting primary and community services through: investment which will grow faster than the overall NHS budget; a new 5-year contract for GPs; expanding evening and weekend GP appointments; rolling out the NHS comprehensive model of personalised care; improving diagnosis of dementia with record recent monthly figures; a new clinical negligence scheme for general practice; and we now have record numbers of GPs entering training, with 3,415 acceptances in 2018, we expect that trend to continue this year.

The Government and the NHS are continuing to make progress towards parity of esteem for mental health, including: spending on mental health rising to £12.5 billion in 2018-19; NHS LTP committing to spending a further £2.3 billion a year by 2023-24 to transform mental health services, and support 380,000 more adults and 345,000 children and young people (aged 0-25); publishing the 2017 Green Paper on children and young people's mental health and creating the first wave of schools and college-based mental health support teams; modernising the Mental Health Act 1983; hosting a global ministerial mental health summit to put mental health on an equal footing with physical health; and contributing to the Government's first strategy to tackle loneliness in England in October 2018. Overall, waiting time standards and the IAPT recovery rate continues to improve and we are consistently exceeding the targets: 52.1% of patients who finished a course of psychological therapy recovered in 2018-19 (up from 50.8% in 2017-18), this is the second reporting year in a row when the recovery rate has surpassed the Government target that 50% of eligible referrals to IAPT services should move to recovery; and 89.4% of people were seen within six weeks for their first course of treatment, against a target of 75% (an increase from 89.1% in 2017-18).

Tackling cancer remains a priority for this Government. In October 2018, the Prime Minister announced measures with the aim of seeing 75% of all cancers detected at an early stage by 2028 to save 55,000 lives a year. Survival rates are at a record high, increasing year-on-year since 2010. One-year survival rate for adults diagnosed in 2016 is over 70%, an increase of around 10 percentage points over the last two decades. A recent international study showed that the five-year net survival rate for breast cancer increased by 7% between 2000-04 and 2010-2014—among the fastest in western Europe. In 2018-19 the NHS carried out almost 23 million diagnostic tests, eight million more than in 2010 (an increase of 53%); 2 million people were seen by a specialist for suspected cancer, over 1 million more than in 2010 (an increase of 124%); and 310,700 patients started treatment for cancer, around 70,900 more than in 2010 (an increase of around 30%).

The Government have given councils access to up to £3.6 billion more dedicated funding for adult social care in 2018-19. In total, the Government have given councils access to around £10 billion more adult social care funding from 2017-18 to 2019-20. In the recent 2019 spending round we announced councils will have access to a further £1.5 billion for social care—£1 billion through a new grant and £500 million through the adult social care precept. This will support councils to meet rising demand and continue to stabilise the social care system. We ran two new national adult social care recruitment campaigns to raise the image and profile of the sector and encourage people with the right values to apply for current vacancies. In June 2018 we published the cross-Government carers action plan 2018-20.

We announced new landmark arrangements for community pharmacy, which came into force from October 2019. In addition, working with the branded pharmaceutical industry, represented by the ABPI, we agreed the 2019 voluntary scheme for branded medicines pricing and access, which began on 1 January 2019 and will run for five years. The NHS is expected to save around £930 million on its medicines bill for 2019 as a result.

In July 2019 the new NHS patient safety strategy set out NHS actions to continue to improve patient safety. We published the Health Service Safety Investigations Bill, which will establish the world's first independent body to investigate patient safety concerns and share recommendations to prevent incidents.

A workforce fit for the future, created by recruiting, retaining and developing the people we need to deliver and by making the health and care system a rewarding place to work.

The interim NHS people plan, published in June 2019, set out proposals to grow and support the NHS workforce. As part of the 2019 spending round every nurse, midwife and allied health professional will receive a new £1,000 personal development budget over three years.

In September 2019, we agreed a new contract deal for junior doctors in England, successfully bringing an end to the junior doctors dispute, following a review of the 2016 contract.

In June 2018, we agreed a new multi-year pay and contract reform deal for agenda for change staff which benefits nearly 1 million NHS workers over three years.

Better technology and data, which will harness the full potential of technology to modernise and improve the way we deliver healthcare for the 21st century.

In October 2018, we published the Secretary of State's technology vision "The future of healthcare: our vision for digital, data and technology in health and care". In July 2019 NHSX became operational to drive transformation and lead policy, implementation and change—leading the largest digital health and social care transformation programme in the world; and in August 2019 we announced a new artificial intelligence lab, to help solve some of healthcare's

toughest challenges. In total, over £250 million will have been invested nationally to improve the cyber security of the health and social care system between 2016 and 2021.

We have supported and funded the ambitious and world-leading 100,000 genome project, reaching the goal to sequence 100,000 whole genomes in December 2018. We established the genomic medicine service in the NHS—the first of its kind in the world to integrate whole genome sequencing into the healthcare system.

The Department has maintained its focus on investing in infrastructure and research, through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). In 2018-19 there have been over 1 million participants in NIHR-supported health and social care research studies. We have maintained spending on dementia research and are on track to meet our commitment of £60 million spent annually to March 2020.

In December 2018, the Government, in collaboration with industry, launched the second life sciences sector deal, backed by a range of organisations from across the sector and £1.2 billion of new investment from industry.

[HCWS34]

HOME DEPARTMENT

No-deal Brexit: Immigration

The Minister for Security (Brandon Lewis): The Government priority remains to leave the European Union on the basis of the draft withdrawal agreement reached on 17 October 2019. However, it is appropriate that we also continue to make the preparations necessary in the event that we leave without a deal.

To that end, the Government are laying before Parliament today the Immigration (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019. Further to the written ministerial statement made by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary on 4 September 2019 (HCWS1817), this will deliver changes in immigration arrangements for EU citizens which reflect the fact that, in a no deal scenario, free movement as it currently stands will end when we leave the European Union.

In particular, to increase security and better protect the public, the measure, and associated changes in the immigration rules contained in the "Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules" (HC 170) which the Home Secretary is laying before Parliament today, will mean that a UK conduct and criminality threshold rather than an EU threshold will be applied for EU citizens and their family members moving to the UK after a no deal Brexit. The measures will also apply those thresholds to the post-exit conduct of EU citizens and their family members living here before a no deal Brexit, or who have EU settlement scheme status, and to their pre-exit conduct where their post-exit conduct results in a sentence of imprisonment. This will bring the approach to EU citizens more into line with how we treat non-EU nationals and make our system simpler and fairer.

In addition, the Immigration (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 make changes to the documentary evidence which may be relied upon by EU citizens and their family members for admission to the UK. They also remove the scope for EU citizens and their family members moving to the UK after a no deal Brexit to acquire permanent residence under EU law and the scope for UK nationals and their family members moving to the EU after a no deal Brexit to return here under current EU law-based arrangements.

The “Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules” (HC 170) establishes the European temporary leave to remain scheme, for European economic area (EEA) and Swiss citizens moving to the UK after a no deal Brexit and before the start of the new points-based immigration system from January 2021, and for their close family members, to enable them to obtain a UK immigration status so that they can continue living and working here for a temporary period after 2020. In line with previous policy announcements, it also provides access to the EU settlement scheme—under which EEA and Swiss citizens resident here before Brexit can obtain UK immigration status—for relevant family members joining them here after a no deal Brexit, by 29 March 2022 in the case of existing close family members and by 31 December 2020 for other relevant family members.

Taken together, these changes will begin the process of taking back control of our borders and preparing the way for a new, fairer immigration system which operates in the national interest.

Copies of the statement of changes in immigration rules will be available in the Vote Office and online at gov.uk.

[HCWS42]

Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse: Ealing Abbey and St Benedict’s School

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel): Today the independent inquiry into child sexual abuse has published its latest case study report, which can be found at www.iicsa.org.uk.

This report relates to Ealing Abbey and St Benedict’s School in the inquiry’s Roman Catholic Church investigation. I pay tribute to the strength and courage of the victims and survivors who have shared their experiences to ensure the inquiry can deliver its vital work.

Government will review this report and consider how to respond to its content in due course.

I would like to thank Professor Jay and her panel for their continued work to uncover the truth, expose what went wrong in the past and to learn the lessons for the future.

[HCWS39]

Petition

Thursday 24 October 2019

HOME DEPARTMENT

Rights of British National (Overseas) Passport Holders

The petition of Residents of the UK of Hong Kong origins,

Declares that the rights of British National (Overseas) passport holders should be reviewed; notes that over 150,000 BN(O) passport holders in Hong Kong and China are unable to access British consular assistance and request diplomatic protection despite the deteriorating state of human rights and rule of law in Hong Kong; further that citizens of British Hong Kong were issued the BN(O) passport without the right of abode in the UK as a political compromise with the Chinese government prior to the 1997 handover, instead of being given British citizenship as is the case for citizens of other former British colonies; further that these British nationals still feel proud of their ties with the UK and share British values; further that many highly educated and skilled BN(O) passport holders studying and working in the UK under Tiers 4 and 5 visas are unable to remain and contribute the UK economy and society; and further that a petition on behalf of a group of 240 BNO passport holders and their families have received over 3000 signatures.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to carry out an urgent review of the rights of British National (Overseas) passport holders, addressing the need for these passport holders in Hong Kong and China to be access British consular assistance and request diplomatic protection in view of the ongoing political situation in Hong Kong, and allowing BN(O) passport holders with Tiers 4 and 5 visas to be given routes to residency in the UK.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Steve Double, *Official Report*, 10 July 2019; Vol. 663, c. 410.]

[P002491]

British Nationals (Overseas) (BN(O)s) are eligible to travel to the United Kingdom visa-free, for a visit of up to six months. They can seek to reside here under study, economic or family routes, and can also settle here if

they meet the requirements of the immigration rules. They are treated in the same way as any individual who is subject to immigration control.

The right of abode in the United Kingdom exempts the holder from any restrictions of immigration control, and primary legislation sets out who has that right. Since 1983, it has only been acquired by those who also acquire British citizenship. Ministers do not have discretion to grant British citizenship outside of primary legislation, and there are currently no plans to amend the law in this respect.

In his 2007 Review of Citizenship, Lord Goldsmith recognised that to give BN(O)s full British citizenship automatically would be a breach of the commitments made between China and the UK in the 1984 Joint Declaration on the future of Hong Kong, and that to secure Chinese agreement to vary the terms of that treaty would not be possible.

However, BN(O)s can be registered as British citizens in certain circumstances:

If a person lives in the United Kingdom for a period of five years, and meets the specified residence requirements, they can apply for registration under section 4(2) of the British Nationality Act 1981. Those applying under this section are not required to demonstrate the knowledge of English and knowledge of life in the United Kingdom requirements, and so are not required to pass the Life in the UK test or have an English language qualification in the same way as those applying for naturalisation.

The British Nationality Hong Kong Act 1997 also provides for the registration of British nationals who would otherwise be stateless and are ordinarily resident in Hong Kong.

BN(O)s can also apply for registration under section 4B of the 1981 Act if they do not have another citizenship or nationality.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office can provide consular assistance to BN(O)s living or travelling outside China, Hong Kong or the Macao special administrative regions. However, we cannot help BN(O)s of Chinese ethnic origin in China, Hong Kong and Macao. This is because Chinese authorities consider BN(O)s of Chinese ethnic origin as Chinese nationals, and as Chinese authorities do not recognise dual nationality they are unable to access British consular assistance.

We continue to believe that the best solution for Hong Kong, and the BN(O) passport holders that live there, is full respect for the rights and freedoms guaranteed in the Sino-British joint declaration.

Ministerial Correction

Thursday 24 October 2019

DEFENCE

Strait of Hormuz: UK Shipping

The following is an extract from Defence questions on 21 October 2019.

Bob Blackman: I thank my right hon. Friend for his answers thus far. Clearly the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps is a constant threat to shipping in the strait of Hormuz. Does he agree that it is now time that the entirety of the IRGC was proscribed, with their assets sequestered and sanctions imposed on them and their leadership?

Mr Wallace: My hon. Friend makes an important point about the threat that the IRGC poses to not only the region but countries such as ours. The Quds force is currently proscribed. Further proscription considerations are a matter for the Home Office. However, what is

really important is that, where the IRGC poses a threat, like-minded countries around the world challenge that threat and ensure that it is dealt with.

[Official Report, 21 October 2019, Vol. 666, c. 676.]

Letter of correction from the Secretary of State for Defence.

An error has been identified in the response I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow East (Bob Blackman).

The correct response should have been:

Mr Wallace: My hon. Friend makes an important point about the threat that the IRGC poses to not only the region but countries such as ours. The Quds force is currently **sanctioned**. Further proscription considerations are a matter for the Home Office. However, what is really important is that, where the IRGC poses a threat, like-minded countries around the world challenge that threat and ensure that it is dealt with.

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