

Thursday  
31 October 2019

Volume 667  
No. 13



**HOUSE OF COMMONS  
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY  
DEBATES**

**(HANSARD)**

**Thursday 31 October 2019**

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# House of Commons

*Thursday 31 October 2019*

*The House met at half-past Nine o'clock*

## PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## Oral Answers to Questions

### ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

*The Secretary of State was asked—*

#### Wildlife Crime

1. **Andrew Jones** (Harrogate and Knaresborough) (Con): What plans her Department has to tackle wildlife crime. [900243]

**The Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Zac Goldsmith):** This is the last time I will be able to address you from the Chamber, Mr Speaker, so I would like to put on record my thanks to you for what you have done for this House, particularly during my time as a Back Bencher, when we worked closely on a number of issues. I thank you very much what you have done.

The UK is a world leader in efforts to protect endangered plants and animals from poaching and illegal wildlife trade. We have invested over £36 million between 2014 and 2021 on work to directly counter the illegal wildlife trade, including reducing demand, strengthening enforcement, ensuring effective legal frameworks and developing sustainable livelihoods. We will significantly scale up our funding from 2021 by doubling the illegal wildlife trade challenge fund as part of the £220 million international biodiversity fund announced in September.

**Andrew Jones:** I am concerned, along with many constituents who have contacted me on this issue, that the persecution of raptors is not treated as a priority by local police forces. Can my right hon. Friend confirm that raptor persecution, particularly that of hen harriers, is a national wildlife crime priority and that strong penalties are in place for offences committed against birds of prey?

**Zac Goldsmith:** The illegal wildlife trade is not just an international issue; it is a domestic issue as well. All our birds in the UK are protected. Wild birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and there are strong penalties for committing offences. The Government take wildlife crime very seriously and have identified raptor persecution as a national wildlife crime priority, and that includes species such as hen harriers and peregrines of course. We are very concerned, however, about hen harrier populations, which is why we took the

lead on the hen harrier action plan to increase hen harrier populations in England. I add that DEFRA has committed to at least maintaining existing levels of funding for the national wildlife fund until the next spending review.

**Nick Smith** (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab): A constituent of mine has been terrorised by off-road bikers, who are also devastating local wildlife. Because this is happening on private land, our local police have found it difficult to take action, so will the Department and the police work together to overcome this dreadful problem?

**Zac Goldsmith:** I have had letters from the constituents of a number of hon. Members raising the same issue: off-road bikers causing wildlife mayhem in sensitive and fragile parts of the countryside. I of course commit to the hon. Gentleman to talk to the police and landowners and animal welfare charities to see what the best solution is. There is no silver bullet to solve the problem. It needs to be addressed, but it is not immediately obvious what that solution would be.

**Mrs Pauline Latham** (Mid Derbyshire) (Con): Canned lion breeding in South Africa is causing terrible angst for many people because these lions, barely two years old, are shot at point-blank range. That adds to the trophy hunting imports to this country. When is the consultation my right hon. Friend has mentioned going to begin?

**Zac Goldsmith:** My hon. Friend is right: canned lion hunting is one of the grimmest of all human activities. It is hard to see any defence for it. There are concerns that, although it may not be a direct conservation issue, creating a legal trade in lion parts, particularly lion bones, provides a cover for the illegal trade, and we know that lion numbers have plummeted in the last 15 or 20 years. As she mentioned, we have committed to launching a call for evidence and, based on the results we get, we will take whatever steps are necessary to end or to regulate the import of hunting trophies.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): I commend the Minister for all he has done to stop imports from trophy hunting, but with special reference to that can he outline recent steps taken to absolutely ban any such imports? I think it is the mood of the House and the country for that to happen. Can he tell us what has been done?

**Zac Goldsmith:** The hon. Gentleman knows my views on the issue; we have discussed it many times. From the Back Benches and as a Minister, I have debated the issue with him, although we have been on the same side of the debate. I am appalled by the very concept of wanting to shoot these extraordinarily beautiful, endangered wild animals. I cannot see any obvious link between that activity and protection of those animals. However, we are obliged as a Government, before embarking on any kind of legislation to prevent the import of trophies, to consult so that we know exactly what the impacts of that potential legislative change would be. So we have to do that consultation. We have to do it in an honest fashion. On the back of that consultation, we will take whatever steps are necessary, but I can assure the hon. Gentleman that this is not an issue that we intend to kick into the long grass.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** May I just say that I am not ignoring the hon. Member for Penistone and Stocksbridge (Angela Smith)? I am conscious that she has Question 6, on which another party wishes to come in, so it would perhaps be better for her to wait until then. We look forward to hearing from her in a few minutes.

**Sue Hayman** (Workington) (Lab): I wish you all the best for the future, Mr Speaker, and thank you for charring DEFRA questions with such patience and consideration over the last few years.

We know that there are loopholes in the Hunting Act 2004 which are being exploited. A Labour Government would strengthen the hunting ban, so may I ask what the Conservative Government have been doing to stop foxhunters from breaking the law?

**Zac Goldsmith:** There is no doubt that illegal activities continue. They are well documented and often secure widespread coverage on social media in particular, and they cause outrage among the population. Those activities are already illegal: they are against the law. Digging up setts, bashing fox cubs on the head and breeding foxes to feed to hounds are illegal as well as abhorrent. The challenge relates to enforcement and prosecution. As I mentioned, we are committed to maintaining levels of funding for the National Wildlife Crime Unit, and we are encouraging other Government Departments to play their part as well.

#### Animal Cruelty

2. **Mike Wood** (Dudley South) (Con): What steps she is taking to prevent animal cruelty. [900244]

**The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs** (Theresa Villiers): May I join others, Mr Speaker, in thanking you and your chaplain for your service to the House? You have been particularly kind in enabling me to raise from the Back Benches many issues that really matter to my constituents, and I am profoundly grateful.

The Government have introduced a range of measures to improve animal welfare, including a rigorous ban on the ivory trade and mandatory CCTV in all slaughterhouses. We are considering proposals to tighten the welfare rules for animals in transit, including a ban on unnecessary and excessively long journeys to slaughter.

**Mike Wood:** A year ago, a Dudley magistrates court convicted a teenager of abducting, torturing and killing a pet cat. What steps is my right hon. Friend taking to protect the welfare of all cats?

**Theresa Villiers:** We will be pressing ahead with the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill so that horrific crimes like that can meet with the appropriate punishment. We are consulting on compulsory microchipping for cats to ensure that lost pets can be reunited with their owners, and we have also banned third party sales of kittens and puppies.

**Christian Matheson** (City of Chester) (Lab): One way of preventing animal cruelty would be to tighten the law on illegal foxhunting. Will Ministers undertake to

introduce a system of monitoring before the foxhunting season starts in order to find out just how many illegal killings are taking place, so that we know how to address the problem?

**Theresa Villiers:** As my right hon. Friend the Minister of State has said, we believe that it is crucial for all our laws to be properly enforced, including the Hunting Act, and we will continue to engage with the appropriate authorities to ensure that that is the case.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** It is a great pleasure to call Dame Caroline Spelman. I am very sorry that the right hon. Lady is leaving the House. I know that she will be performing in her own right later, but she will be greatly missed by Members in all parts of the House.

**Dame Caroline Spelman** (Meriden) (Con): That is very kind of you, Mr Speaker. I will save my tribute for the right time, in due course.

Unfortunately, as colleagues with rural constituencies may know, at this time of the year there is a steep rise in the number of abandoned horses as winter approaches. A couple of weeks ago I personally dealt with four abandoned ponies, including two foals barely weaned at 12 weeks. They were in a terrible condition: their feet had never been trimmed, their ribs were showing, and they had lice and mites. I had to get them rehomed.

I welcome the Government's proposals to take a tougher line with those who abuse animals in this way, but can my right hon. Friend reassure me—gently, given the problem with her voice today—that the Government will support the police and local authorities in taking action and enforcing the law on these criminals?

**Theresa Villiers:** I can of course give my right hon. Friend that assurance. This is a worrying problem, and we are keen to engage with the charities that are involved in trying to address the issue. I wish her well in her retirement and thank her for that question.

**Luke Pollard** (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Lab/Co-op): There is cross-party support for increasing prison sentences for those who hurt and cruelly kill animals, but Ministers have dithered and delayed over the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill. Even in this divided Parliament, and even at this late stage, there is still a chance to get that Bill on the statute book before the election. Labour backs the Bill, the Secretary of State's own Back Benchers back the Bill and the public back the Bill, so will she give a commitment that she will use every effort to get it on the statute book before the general election is called?

**Theresa Villiers:** I can give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that, when a Conservative Government are returned to serve in this House, the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill will be back on the agenda and we will get it on the statute book.

#### Air Pollution

3. **Ruth Cadbury** (Brentford and Isleworth) (Lab): What recent steps she has taken to support local authorities in reducing air pollution. [900245]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Rebecca Pow):** May I add my fond goodbyes, Mr Speaker? I will forever remember, as a Back Bencher, waiting and bobbing and finally being woken up and called by you saying, “Rebec-Kerpow!” I will always remember that, although you probably did not realise you had said it.

The Environment Bill includes measures to improve air quality, which will ensure that local authorities have a clear framework and simple-to-use powers to tackle air pollution. DEFRA and the Department for Transport’s joint air quality unit works closely with local authorities, underpinned by £572 million in funding, to tackle nitrogen dioxide exceedances. More than £3 million in air quality grant funding was awarded to local authorities in March for projects in local communities.

**Ruth Cadbury:** Mr Speaker, may I first thank you on behalf of many of us for the role you have played in ensuring that this elected House calls the Executive to account with such fervour? Also, could you turn your attention to the bag that is in the cupboard in your office, which requires your signature so I can use it as a raffle prize?

**Mr Speaker:** It will be done today.

**Ruth Cadbury:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. We know that the ultra low emission zone in central London has been a huge success, bringing about a 36% reduction in nitrogen dioxide pollution in London. Does the Minister not agree that it is vital that the Government support the Mayor of London in his efforts to tackle air pollution, and will she please support the expansion of the ULEZ in 2021?

**Rebecca Pow:** The hon. Lady makes a very good point. London faces specific challenges, not least because the size and complexity of the capital’s transport network is quite different from others, and the commitment of the Mayor and the Greater London Assembly to tackle air quality in the capital is absolutely welcomed. The Mayor has received a comprehensive funding settlement for dealing with air quality, to the tune of £5 billion, which includes measures to tackle the nitrogen dioxide limits.

**Neil Parish (Tiverton and Honiton) (Con):** May I wish you well in your retirement, Mr Speaker?

Air quality has been worked on across Government, across Departments and across local government, so can we be assured that all parts of the Government will do everything they can to get everybody working together to monitor air quality, get more electric cars and actually do something about the quality of air across the whole of our country, especially in the hotspots?

**Rebecca Pow:** The Chairman of the Select Committee makes a very good point. Air quality is an absolute priority because it affects human health. We already have the clean air strategy, but in the Environment Bill we are putting through much clearer and simpler powers for local authorities to actually use their duties to tackle air quality, and we will see many more of these charging zones coming in over the next year. As the Minister in charge of air quality, I will ensure that these are tackled as fast as possible.

13. [900259] **Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op):** Bad planning is leading to more and more ill-thought-through developments in the heart of York, resulting in the poor air quality in our city worsening. What steps will the Minister take to ensure that planning departments in local government really comprehend the consequences of their actions?

**Rebecca Pow:** Tackling air quality is closely linked to what happens in the planning system, particularly when it comes to housing. Officials in the two Departments have recently collaborated on developing planning guidance. I recently wrote to Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Ministers to urge much closer collaboration on, for example, housing and housing design, because all the emissions from housing affect climate change. This is all about cross-working.

**Tracey Crouch (Chatham and Aylesford) (Con):** Parts of Chatham suffer from high levels of air pollution. Medway Council is doing what it can to tackle it, but I am working with a school that sits right on a very busy road to develop a green wall to reduce some of the air pollution specifically for children. What work is the Minister doing with the Department for Education to support schools to provide their own green solutions to tackle air pollution?

**Rebecca Pow:** That question is of great interest to me as a former horticultural journalist. Green walls are a great thing. Not only do they look great, but they help by taking in carbon emissions and so on. DEFRA has an air quality grant programme that can help local authorities to fund projects to tackle air pollution in specific areas like schools, so that school could ask for support under the programme. Good question.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** On my last day in the Chair, it gives me particular pleasure again to call—Bambos Charalambous!

**Bambos Charalambous (Enfield, Southgate) (Lab):** One of the things that I will certainly miss when you are not in the Chair is how you pronounce my name, Mr Speaker. Thank you so much.

Why does the Environment Bill not include World Health Organisation targets for air pollutants or set clear targets to meet them?

**Rebecca Pow:** Air quality targets are included in the Bill, but we already have an ambition in the clear air strategy. Reaching the target for particulate matter 2.5 is an absolute priority, but the actual target will be set in secondary legislation after expert advice has been taken on exactly how to do that. I met one of the heads of the WHO just last week, and she agreed that that is the right way of doing things, because this is tricky, and we must get it right.

### Plastic Pollution

4. **Jeremy Lefroy (Stafford) (Con):** What steps she is taking to tackle plastic pollution. [900246]

**The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Theresa Villiers):** To tackle plastic pollution, we have introduced a world-leading microbeads ban, reduced single-use plastic bag usage by 90% in the main supermarkets, and launched the Commonwealth Clean



Ocean Alliance to tackle the issue globally. We also have a widespread package of measures on plastic pollution in our Environment Bill.

**Jeremy Lefroy:** I thank you, Mr Speaker, for your tremendous support for Back Benchers throughout this House during your time in the Chair. I also thank Becki Woolrich, who founded Stafford Litter Heroes, for all that she and her colleagues have done. By this weekend, they will have collected more than 2 tonnes of litter from the area in a very short time. We should pay great tribute to volunteers like them.

There are 5,000 items of marine plastic pollution per mile of beach in the UK. The amount of plastic produced globally has increased from 1.5 million tonnes in 1950 to 320 million tonnes a couple of years ago. It is clear that we need to produce less plastic, not more, so will my right hon. Friend explain what we are doing to ensure that as much plastic is recycled as possible and that that happens here in the UK? Plastic should not be shipped overseas for other people to deal with.

**Theresa Villiers:** My hon. Friend is correct: current levels of plastic pollution are intolerable, and the Government are determined to tackle them. We will be introducing a system to incentivise plastic packaging producers to use more recyclable material, but also less material in general. We will be banning plastic stirrers and cotton buds. We are introducing a deposit return scheme on drinks containers. We will also be introducing more consistent recycling to help everyone to recycle more to tackle the terrible problem of plastics pollution.

**Graham Stringer** (Blackley and Broughton) (Lab): Plastic was rare when I was brought up in the 1950s, so is it possible for the Government to set targets to get us back to those low levels? Recycling just delays the amount of plastic going into the environment.

**Theresa Villiers:** Our Environment Bill provides the opportunity for future Governments to set targets on the use of resources and recycling. Reducing the need for single-use plastics is an important part of this, but recycling will also be a crucial part in reaching our goal of eliminating avoidable plastic waste in the coming years. That is why we are seeking to increase the amount of plastic that is recyclable and is recycled.

**Rachel Maclean** (Redditch) (Con): May I, too, wish you all the best, Mr Speaker? May I also thank you for teaching me the value of patience and for helping me have considerable exercise for my knees during my time in this Chamber?

Is my right hon. Friend aware that my constituent Nik Spencer has invented an incredible, groundbreaking piece of technology that would eliminate the need for plastic waste entirely if it is commercially adopted, because it converts plastic waste in the home into energy? If, as I very much hope, we are returned to government, will she agree to meet me to see how we can stimulate and incentivise technologies such as this machine, so that we can tackle plastic pollution at its source?

**Theresa Villiers:** Yes, I can give my hon. Friend that assurance. I fully agree that technology is going to be crucial if we are to address the concerns that have been expressed in the House today about plastics.

**Sandy Martin** (Ipswich) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for making me feel welcome in the short time I have been here so far.

After “The Blue Planet” and other television programmes, after the in-depth investigations by Friends of the Earth and others, after the mass campaigning by schoolchildren all over the world to prevent plastics in our oceans and after the verdict against a major British company for exporting unsorted waste, can the Secretary of State explain to me why there was nothing in the Environment Bill to tackle waste once it has left this country or to ensure that material collected in good faith for recycling is actually recycled?

**Theresa Villiers:** The Government are absolutely determined to crack down on any unlawful waste exports and to ensure that waste that is exported is dealt with appropriately. I wish to emphasise that this Government are doing more or less more than any other Government in the world on this, including by making real progress in ensuring that we protect 4 million sq km of the world’s oceans by the end of next year.

### Air Quality

5. **Tim Loughton** (East Worthing and Shoreham) (Con): What recent steps her Department has taken to improve air quality. [900247]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Rebecca Pow):** Our clean air strategy sets out an ambitious programme of action to reduce air pollutant emissions from a wide range of sources. The World Health Organisation has recognised the strategy as an example for the rest of the world to follow. We have also put in place a £3.5 billion plan to tackle roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations, and our Environment Bill makes a clear commitment to set a legally binding target to reduce fine particulate matter.

**Tim Loughton:** May I echo the tributes being made to your chairmanship, Mr Speaker, although I did not get the memo about sending a bottle to your office as part of it?

I very much welcome the inclusion of air quality provisions in the Environment Bill. May I urge the Minister to look at some of the technological solutions, including one from a company in my constituency which is producing paints and coverings that neutralise nitrogen oxide emissions, not just absorb them? May I also ask her to look at the issue of air quality monitoring, because it turns out that several bits of air quality monitoring equipment in my constituency have not been working for some time? Although we have obligations on local authorities to reduce air pollution, we do not appear to have similar requirements on them to make sure they are monitoring it properly and accurately, and that needs to be looked at.

**Rebecca Pow:** I thank my hon. Friend for raising these important points. Officials would be pleased to hear about any technologies, because the use of innovation and tech is absolutely the way we are going to solve lots of these problems. So I would be grateful if he would like to feed them in so that I can pass them on. Monitoring is also key, and it is all about science and data, which are very important. Our landmark Environment Bill requires us to set legally binding targets on this fine particulate

matter, which is what authorities are mostly monitoring, as well as nitrogen dioxide, and to have separate long-term air quality targets to improve air quality nationwide. So we are moving in the right direction.

**Clive Efford** (Eltham) (Lab): We are hearing commitments and good words from the Government but we are seeing very little action. They have been lackadaisical when it comes to the breaking of legal limits on air pollution, including at 50 sites across London. The Mayor of London has taken effective action, through the ultra low emission zone, and has taken practical steps to reduce air pollution. Is it not time we saw the same sort of determination from the Government?

**Rebecca Pow:** A great deal of action is taking place: local authorities have a duty to tackle air pollution and this year clean-air zones are coming into major cities right across the nation. The Department is working closely with others on the introduction of those zones, about which the House will hear more shortly.

#### Office for Environmental Protection

6. **Angela Smith** (Penistone and Stocksbridge) (LD): What plans she has to ensure the (a) transparency and (b) accountability of the proposed Office for Environmental Protection. [900249]

**The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Theresa Villiers):** Clause 20(2) of the Environment Bill places a duty on the Office for Environmental Protection to

“have regard to the need to act...transparently.”

It must publish key documents, such as its strategy, annual report and accounts, and lay them before Parliament.

**Angela Smith:** The concept of the OEP has been touted by the Government as an independent watchdog, yet it will be funded by the Government and its chair will be appointed by the Government. Surely the Secretary of State will agree that at the very least the relevant Select Committee should play a key role in the appointment of the chair and the non-executive members of the board.

**Theresa Villiers:** I assure the hon. Lady that the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee and the Environmental Audit Committee will play a key role in the pre-appointment scrutiny of the OEP chairman. I also assure her that the OEP will have a multi-year funding settlement and that Ministers will be required to safeguard its independence. In many ways, the departmental structure will be broadly similar to the Equality and Human Rights Commission, which has clearly demonstrated its total independence from the Government. I am sure we will see that same determination from this powerful new environmental watchdog.

**Deidre Brock** (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP): I was very sorry to have to miss your visit to the SNP group the other day, Mr Speaker. I shall take this opportunity to thank you for everything you have done—for your doughty defence of democracy and particularly your support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights and for Back Benchers’ interests. I wish you and your beautiful family all the very best for the years

ahead. May I also commend the two gentlemen to your left—stage left, as we used to say—Mr Peter Barratt and Mr Ian Davis, who I know have offered you such valuable support over years?

Let me begin my question by saying happy non-Brexit day to the Government Front-Bench team. Will the Secretary of State tell us whether the Scottish Government support the proposals on the OEP? Were they consulted on them?

**Theresa Villiers:** There was extensive work between the UK Government and the Scottish Government on the Environment Bill, including the clauses on the OEP. We are grateful that, as a result of that work, large elements of the Bill will apply in Scotland. I understand that the Scottish Government intend, I hope, to create a body that is broadly similar to the OEP, to manage the scrutiny of environmental matters where they are devolved in Scotland.

**Sir Oliver Heald** (North East Hertfordshire) (Con): May I join the tributes to you, Mr Speaker? I thank you for your comradeship in opposition, when you were a spokesman with me in various Departments, and for your encouragement in respect of the Animal Welfare (Service Animals) Act 2019—[HON. MEMBERS: “Hear, hear.”] Thank you.

**Michael Fabricant** (Lichfield) (Con): Say, “Question 7.”

#### Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill

7. **Sir Oliver Heald** (North East Hertfordshire) (Con): What discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on the timeframe for the passage of the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill. [900250]

**The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Theresa Villiers):** I congratulate my right hon. Friend on steering Finn’s law through Parliament. The Government remain absolutely committed to tougher sentences for animal cruelty offences, and we intend to bring the Bill back to the House as soon as possible.

**Sir Oliver Heald:** Thank you for my second go, Mr Speaker.

My right hon. Friend will know that the supporters of the Animal Welfare (Service Animals) Act 2019 were also keen to improve the maximum sentences and to see them go up. Can she confirm that that will be a top priority for any incoming Conservative Government?

**Theresa Villiers:** Yes, I can.

**Mr Speaker:** It brings me further great pleasure, on my last day in the Chair, to call again Thangam Debbonaire.

**Thangam Debbonaire** (Bristol West) (Lab): Oh Mr Speaker, I do not know what to say. I am going to miss this. Thank you for everything you have done for Back Benchers.

The Secretary of State says that the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill is going to come back to the House as soon as possible; that could be Monday. There is cross-party agreement on this short Bill, and as the Labour DEFRA Whip I have the permission of our shadow Secretary of

State to say that we support the Bill, we could crack on, and it could be done and on the statute book before Dissolution. Even at this late stage, why will she not put it on the Order Paper for Monday or Tuesday?

**Theresa Villiers:** I can reassure the hon. Lady that a Conservative Government will put this Bill on the Order Paper very soon after we are re-elected to serve this country.

### Waste Crime

8. **Craig Tracey** (North Warwickshire) (Con): What plans her Department has to tackle waste crime. [900252]

**The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Theresa Villiers):** Waste crime blights local communities and the environment, and we are committed to tackling it. We have given the Environment Agency £60 million extra to tackle waste crime since 2014. The Environment Bill takes forward a number of commitments on preventing, detecting and deterring waste crime.

**Craig Tracey:** Fly-tipping is a scourge in many communities across North Warwickshire and Bedworth, and it costs councils and local landowners hundreds of thousands of pounds to clear up, but it is often unwittingly facilitated by householders failing to ask whether a valid waste licence is in place. What steps can householders take to check that there is a valid licence, so that they do not unwittingly become the recipient of a fine themselves?

**Theresa Villiers:** Householders can check using the carrier's business name or registration number, which the carrier should be able to give them on request, and they have the opportunity to check those against the details on the Environment Agency website, or by ringing the Environment Agency helpline.

**Nic Dakin** (Scunthorpe) (Lab): I would like to say, Mr Speaker, what a pleasure it has been to serve under your speakership during my time in Parliament.

Recently, I went out with members of the National Farmers' Union in my constituency and was horrified to discover a spate of fly-tipping of very dubious materials that then need to be checked by the landowner. The landowner has a responsibility to check out the hazardous nature of the materials and then to dispose of them safely. This is putting much additional pressure on farmers and rural communities. What can the Government do to support those rural communities and the police forces who continue to be under significant pressure to address this spate of fly-tipping?

**Theresa Villiers:** I share the hon. Gentleman's concerns. Fly-tipping is completely unacceptable, and it is blighting life in rural areas, in suburban areas, such as my constituency, and in urban areas. One thing the Environment Bill will do is facilitate the introduction of electronic waste-tracking, which should assist the law enforcement authorities to crack down on this unacceptable crime.

**Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con): One of your predecessors, Mr Speaker, congratulated me on always addressing the Chair. If I may say so, it has been my particular privilege to address the Chair when you are in it, and, if I may also say so, those who stand beside it have always gone to extraordinary lengths to be helpful.

The New Forest is being desecrated by people fly-tipping. Will my right hon. Friend have a word with her colleagues in the Ministry of Justice to ensure that we are more robust with respect to punishments—perhaps garrotting perpetrators with their own intestines?

**Theresa Villiers:** I am not sure that I could go quite that far. Certainly, in providing extra resources for the Environment Agency, we are absolutely determined to crack down on this deeply antisocial crime. I hope the courts will view it seriously and inflict appropriate punishment.

**Mr Speaker:** I thank the right hon. Gentleman. The word "inimitable" could have been invented to describe him, and that is supposed to be the warmest compliment. I genuinely appreciate what he said.

**Mr Gregory Campbell** (East Londonderry) (DUP): May I join others in expressing the hope that no circumlocutory measures will be put in place to try to restrict your perorations post your retirement, during the next stage in your career?

May I ask the Minister to liaise with the Northern Ireland authorities to ensure that action is taken on the huge waste dump at Mobuoy, outside Londonderry, to ensure that restrictions are put in place and that we pursue those responsible?

**Theresa Villiers:** I am happy to engage with the Northern Ireland authorities on that important question.

### Several hon. Members *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** We are running late, but, of course, the Chair has the benefit of Kantian perfect information. That is to say that I know how many people have or have not applied to speak in subsequent business, and subsequent business is not especially heavily subscribed. My priority is to try to accommodate, within reason, Back Benchers.

### Chalk Streams

9. **Dame Cheryl Gillan** (Chesham and Amersham) (Con): What steps she is taking to protect chalk streams. [900253]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Rebecca Pow):** This Government are committed to taking action to protect and enhance the water environment, including our valuable chalk streams. Chalk streams are under particular pressure at the moment due to low groundwater levels following two dry winters. We are working closely with partners to reform and reduce the volume of abstraction, deliver catchment sensitive farming, reduce pollution and plan future environmental resilience.

**Dame Cheryl Gillan:** Today is a sad day for Buckinghamshire, Mr Speaker, because we are going to lose you as the Member for Buckingham. Before I ask my question of the Minister, may I just say that you have been a superb colleague to sit alongside? I am going to miss you particularly because you will not be there to join me in championing the Chilterns, but you have consistently stood by my side when opposing HS2,



and you are to be congratulated on what you have done on autism. As I press for the Chilterns area of outstanding natural beauty to become a national park, I do hope that, even though you will have left this place, you will still stand by my side and support that proposal.

**Mr Speaker:** I will.

**Dame Cheryl Gillan:** Thank you.

The Chess and the Misbourne are ecologically vulnerable chalk streams in my constituency, and there are several in the Chilterns that are under threat. HS2 Ltd has now said that it requires 8 million litres of water a day for two years in order to build phase 1 of HS2. That means that we could face over-abstraction again, and could see these streams irreparably damaged or destroyed altogether. Will Ministers really take this on board and work with the Department for Transport to get HS2 cancelled—and, if not, to protect these absolutely precious pieces of our environment for our future generations?

**Rebecca Pow:** Chalk streams are some of our most precious environments, so this is a serious issue. The Environment Agency is advising HS2 Ltd and its contractors on mitigating the potential impact of its work on water levels and the quality of chalk streams, including when it comes to water usage for tunnelling in the Chilterns. The Environment Agency will be reviewing any application for increased abstraction in line with the relevant abstraction management strategy to ensure that there is no detrimental effect on chalk streams. I take this matter very seriously and would be happy to meet my right hon. Friend to discuss this further because chalk streams are so important and it is important that we get this right.

**Daniel Zeichner (Cambridge) (Lab):** Mr Speaker, thank you for turning the pronunciation of challenging surnames into an art form in itself—although I have to say that my campaign to be called in reverse alphabetical order continues.

The River Cam is fed by chalk streams. In July this year, it fell to a third of its normal level, which has caused huge concern not just in Cambridge, but in the surrounding county. This has happened largely due to over-abstraction. What can the Minister do to assure us that that is going to be tackled with urgency?

**Rebecca Pow:** The issue with chalk streams, of course, is that they are fed by groundwater from aquifers; they are very special areas of water extraction. There is going to be a section in the Environment Bill on abstraction licences. I hope that when that gets going and we have proper discussions about that Bill, it will include some ameliorations for chalk streams.

### Topical Questions

T1. [900262] **Liz Twist (Blaydon) (Lab):** If she will make a statement on her departmental responsibilities.

**The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Theresa Villiers):** Since the last EFRA oral questions, the Government have: introduced a major Environment Bill; committed to plant 1 million trees in Northumberland; pledged £1.6 billion for climate measures abroad; published proposals to restrict the import of

hunting trophies from endangered animals; banned the sale of primates as pets; and introduced cat microchipping. We have made clear our determination to improve the welfare of live animals in transport, with a view to choking off live exports for slaughter or fattening. I have also had the chance to make visits around England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to talk to farmers, fishermen and those involved in the food sector.

**Liz Twist:** May I join colleagues in thanking you for your help, Mr Speaker? I am going to once again try to avoid your eye while I ask what should be a very short question.

Blaydon Quarry landfill site in my constituency causes a huge nuisance for the communities surrounding it, particularly from the regular bad smells, as residents tell me there are at the moment. I think it is time for the site to be closed—safely. Will the Secretary of State join me in that call and put an end to the absolute misery caused to local residents by this landfill site?

**Theresa Villiers:** It is worrying to hear the reports of the odour from the site. I understand that an odour suppression system has now been installed in the waste tipping bay and that further engineering works are under way to try to tackle the problem. I can assure the hon. Lady that the Environment Agency continues to take this issue very seriously and is working with the community and the local authority. Earlier this year, it took regulatory action preventing the site from accepting waste until remedial work has been undertaken.

T3. [900264] **Gillian Keegan (Chichester) (Con):** May I add my personal words, Mr Speaker? Thank you for your friendship, your support and your guidance to all new Members as you have helped us to navigate our way through what, at times, feels like a very turbulent Parliament. From my family to yours, I look forward to seeing much more of you in your retirement. It has been a pleasure to serve with you for a couple of years.

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Lady is an excellent godparent.

**Gillian Keegan:** Thank you very much, too, to Oliver and Freddie. I look forward to seeing very much more of you.

Pagham Harbour in my constituency is one of the best places to see wildlife in the UK, covering 600 hectares of salt marshes, mudflats, reed beds and lagoons. It is an important natural store of carbon and it absorbs up to 310 tonnes per hectare. What steps is my right hon. Friend taking to ensure that carbon-rich natural habitats are protected to improve biodiversity and help us to reach net zero by 2050?

**Theresa Villiers:** Protecting nature is a key part of the Environment Bill. It supports the nature recovery network envisaged by our 25-year environment plan. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for the work that she has done in relation to this wonderful site. She is right to say that nature-based solutions, with natural storage of carbon in such locations, will form a key part of becoming a net-zero economy.

T2. [900263] **Mr Alistair Carmichael (Orkney and Shetland) (LD):** May I first say, Mr Speaker, that I was one of the early adopters of Bercow for Speaker, as we called the campaign in 2009? Unfortunately, I am part of a much diminished band in that regard now. While I think we would all occasionally have found ourselves wondering

in quiet moments just exactly what we had done, I am also confident in saying that at the end of the day none of us who backed you in 2009 have ever, as parliamentarians, regretted the decision that we took then. I thank you and your family for the service that you have given.

The December Fisheries Council this year will be on the Monday and Tuesday following the general election. There is every indication that it is going to be a challenging negotiation, so what are the Minister and his officials doing now to ensure that the voices of our fishing industries are heard and properly represented at that Council?

**The Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (George Eustice):** I thought for a moment that for the first time in six years we might not get on to fisheries and agriculture at DEFRA orals. May I take this opportunity, Mr Speaker, along with others, to thank you for your chairmanship and stewardship of these occasions and wish you well for the future? May I also record a tribute to Reverend Rose, who is also leaving us? She not only presided over my marriage in St Mary Undercroft but baptised my daughter. Many Members have benefited from her pastoral support and advice.

I had a meeting with officials yesterday to discuss the issue of cod and the EU-Norway negotiations. Those negotiations will take place during November. I remain Fisheries Minister during the election period and will continue to monitor events. The right hon. Gentleman is right that the December Fisheries Council that formally adopts these proposals will be about three days after the general election. I hope still to be in place and to go there, but if I am not, I am sure that whoever my successor is will have a steep and enjoyable learning curve in coming to terms with the complexities of the December negotiations.

T4. [900265] **Vicky Ford** (Chelmsford) (Con): Mr Speaker, may I also thank you for your many hours and years of dedication in the Chair? But there is one issue that still has to be resolved, which is the harassment of and threats to female colleagues. I was particularly concerned to hear that a female candidate has already received a death threat this week. Could you use your last few hours and days in this position to urgently look at what more we can do to ensure that everybody is kept safe at this election? No one should be discouraged from standing because of their sex, their race or any other reason.

It is a great honour to be in this place. One of the things that I have most enjoyed doing is cajoling so many colleagues to take part in the “give up plastic for Lent” challenge, which opened our eyes to the fact that we need action by Government and across society to deal with the scourge of plastic waste. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Environment Bill is a step change in how we deal with plastics and that one of the first actions of the next Conservative Government must be to bring the Bill back and get it through Parliament?

**Theresa Villiers:** We will do exactly that, because the Environment Bill has a really strong package of measures to respond to the grave public concern about plastics pollution. The public are determined to tackle this issue, and so are the Conservative Government.

T5. [900266] **Patrick Grady** (Glasgow North) (SNP): Despite the Prime Minister’s bluster, we are not leaving the European Union today. If we were, his deal would mean that tomorrow Scotland’s fishing fleet would still be subject to the common fisheries policy, but with added red tape and bureaucracy to get its catch to market. Should Scotland’s fishermen not use the upcoming election to stop this dreadful Tory deal?

**George Eustice:** I completely disagree with the hon. Gentleman. The Scottish fishing industry wants to leave the CFP and take advantage of the sea of opportunity that we will have when we become an independent coastal state. It is his party that is standing against the interests of the Scottish fishing industry by wanting to remain in the European Union.

T7. [900268] **Andrew Jones** (Harrogate and Knaresborough) (Con): I am keen that the next generation are engaged with why climate change happens and what they can do to prevent its impact. Harrogate Borough Council is putting in place a scheme that gives every schoolchild in the borough the opportunity to plant a tree, which will be both fun and educational. Will the Minister encourage other authorities and bodies to offer that opportunity to every schoolchild in our country?

**The Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Zac Goldsmith):** I thank my hon. Friend for his question, and I commend Harrogate Borough Council. The National Trust has said that a child today is three times more likely to go to hospital for falling out of bed than falling out of a tree. Obviously I do not recommend either activity, but there is no doubt that children who are insulated from nature are losing out; I very much agree with him. Working with the Woodland Trust and community forests, we are on track to meet our target of planting 1 million trees at English primary schools by 2020, and we committed in the 25-year environment plan to encourage children to be closer to nature in and out of school. The last week of November is National Tree Week, and I strongly encourage Members to plant trees with their local schools, so that we can all celebrate together.

**Dr David Drew** (Stroud) (Lab/Co-op): Mr Speaker, our careers have been somewhat in parallel. I had a slight interregnum in the middle of your speakership, but I am pleased to be here today, to top and tail it. We have remained good friends throughout.

The Government committed to keeping the current level of farm spending until the end of this Parliament, which will be in the next couple of days. The Labour party will commit to keep that level of spending and, indeed, even spending more under the new system, which will be expensive to introduce. Will the Government make that commitment?

**George Eustice:** The hon. Gentleman is right; the Government are committed to keep spending exactly the same until the end of this Parliament. He will have to wait to see our manifesto to find out what will happen in the next Parliament, but I will simply say this. It is implicit in the Agriculture Bill that there will be a transition over a period of seven years, during which we will roll out the new policy, and we have already committed to fund the objectives of the Agriculture Bill.

**Michael Fabricant** (Lichfield) (Con): The Woodland Trust, of which I am a keen member, believes that we can increase the amount of tree coverage by natural regeneration. That seems to be the best way of doing it, so how can we incentivise that within the new environmental land management scheme?

**Zac Goldsmith:** I thank my hon. Friend for his question, and he is absolutely right. Much of what we need to do to tackle climate change and restore nature involves rewilding or natural regeneration. A growing number of projects around the country are already delivering vast benefits. For example, at Knepp Castle in West Sussex, agri-environment funding has helped to create extensive grassland and scrub habitats, with huge benefits for declining bird species such as the turtle dove and the nightingale. As he says, the new environmental land management scheme will be transformative, because it will make subsidies conditional on the delivery of public goods such as biodiversity, woodland and flood management. It really could be the big thing that improves biodiversity in this country, which of course means increasing tree cover and encouraging natural regeneration.

T6. [900267] **Paul Blomfield** (Sheffield Central) (Lab): May I join colleagues in thanking you, Mr Speaker, for everything that you have done to stand up for our democracy?

The Government's Environment Bill does not actually include targets; it only requires Ministers to set them. Those targets could be 15 years in the future, they could be lower than current standards and they need be nothing more than aspirations. The Prime Minister has said that he would "enshrine the highest standards" in law. Obviously, nobody believes a word that the Prime Minister says, but does the Minister agree that there should be a legislative commitment to non-regression from current environmental standards?

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Rebecca Pow):** The Environment Bill sets out a duty to set targets—actual targets will all be set in secondary legislation, as has been quite clearly stated—and it has had a lot of support from many organisations across the board. The whole system will be overseen by the Office for Environmental Protection, which will have to look at the five-yearly targets and review them annually. There is a very strict set of regimes in there. The Government have given very clear indications about not reducing our environmental standards—that is absolutely not the direction this Government would ever intend to go in—and that includes comments made just last week by the Prime Minister about non-regression.

**Jeremy Wright** (Kenilworth and Southam) (Con): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for your kindness in calling me today, for your broader kindnesses to all of us and for all your service from the Chair.

I want to raise an issue again that I know is also of concern to you, Mr Speaker. Ministers know that HS2 and its construction will affect a good deal of farmland. They will also be aware, I hope, that HS2 Ltd has not been as effective as it should have been either in providing full and timely financial compensation for land lost or in making the practical arrangements necessary to allow farmers to farm properly the land they have left. Will

my right hon. Friend and her colleagues please make sure they engage with colleagues at the Department for Transport to ensure that the financial and psychological consequences for the farmers affected by HS2 are properly mitigated, if this project is to continue?

**Theresa Villiers:** Of course I am happy to give a commitment to engage with colleagues in the DFT on these important matters. It is of course vital that HS2 Ltd does all it can to ensure that it meets its obligations in a timely way in relation to farming and environmental concerns.

**Several hon. Members rose—**

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I have stretched the envelope as widely as I think is reasonable, but we must move on.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

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

### **Speaker's Advisory Committee on Works of Art: Frequency of Reports**

1. **Patrick Grady** (Glasgow North) (SNP): How frequently the Commission receives reports from the Speaker's Advisory Committee on Works of Art. [900269]

**Tom Brake** (Carshalton and Wallington): The Speaker's Advisory Committee on Works of Art publishes an annual report, which is considered by the House's Finance Committee. The Commission does not receive routine updates. The annual report for 2018-19 was published on the Committee's website yesterday.

**Patrick Grady:** The right hon. Gentleman will be amazed that I am not asking him about electronic voting for a change. This question was originally on the Order Paper in July, when Winnie Ewing was celebrating her 90th birthday. In a couple of weeks—on 2 November—we will mark 52 years since her historic by-election win and of the continuous representation of the Scottish National party in the House of Commons. Has the Commission been advised of any discussion by the Committee regarding commemorating Winnie's immense contribution in this place with a portrait somewhere on the estate?

**Tom Brake:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his question, although I am disappointed he did not manage to work electronic voting into it. He will be pleased to know that the Committee is conscious that Winnie Ewing is currently a notable absence from the parliamentary art collection. It is investigating the possibility of a temporary loan of a portrait for display in Parliament, and it will continue to search for a portrait painting or drawing to acquire for the permanent collection.

**Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): Mr Speaker, may I quickly say what a joy you have been for all genuine Back Benchers during your time in the Chair? We started a relationship early in your career



here, and I saw you improve as a parliamentarian step by step. People sometimes forget the great inquiry you made into special educational needs under Tony Blair. I also remember other good things that you did with me, and others, on anti-bullying, as well as a cross-party campaign on autism.

Someone should also mention what you had to put up with due to the concerted malicious press campaign that was run against you, and your family, at a certain time in your career. It was a disgrace to British journalism and the profession of journalism. It did not come from the redtops—it was *The Times* and the Prime Minister's *Daily Telegraph*. It came from journalists from whom we had expected better. Some of us stood by you at that time, and we will continue to stand by you. You are a young man with a career in front of you. I hope that you will do startling things, and that this miserable Prime Minister, who yesterday could not even pay tribute to the Father of the House, will put you in the House of Lords as your office deserves.

**Mr Speaker:** That is extraordinarily kind of the hon. Gentleman. I think he was also going to ask about the Speaker's Advisory Committee on Works of Art.

**Mr Sheerman:** I like the range of art that we have, Mr Speaker, but it should be more accessible. Why do we have to pay a surcharge in our shops to pay for your art?

**Mr Speaker:** Very good. The hon. Gentleman is a dextrous parliamentarian who can always think on his feet.

**Tom Brake:** I believe that was probably a bid for a portrait of you to be provided in the House, Mr Speaker, so we look forward to that.

### Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme

2. **Justin Madders** (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): To ask the right hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington, representing the House of Commons Commission, what progress the Commission has made on implementing the independent complaints and grievance scheme. [900270]

**Tom Brake:** Good progress is being made on implementing the independent complaints and grievance scheme, and on the recommendations by Dame Laura Cox and Gemma White, QC, to improve the working culture of the House. Complainants with non-recent cases, and former members of the parliamentary community who were not previously covered by the scheme, were able to access it from Monday 21 October this year. A staff group is examining options for implementing the Cox recommendation on independent determination of complaints against Members.

**Justin Madders:** I do not believe that the Commission is making good progress. It has been a year since the Dame Laura Cox report came out, and historical cases were finally reopened only last week. Recommendation 3 makes it clear that there must be an entirely independent process for investigating complaints of bullying and harassment in which Members of Parliament do not take part. It has been a year; it has gone on too long. Does the right hon. Gentleman understand how important

it is for staff to have confidence in the system and know that Members of Parliament are not involved in judging their peers?

**Tom Brake:** I agree that there should be a completely independent process, and I regret that 12 months on that has not been resolved. A group is making good progress on that, and it expects to report back to the Commission later this year. I hope that by the end of this year that issue will be resolved.

**Jim McMahon** (Oldham West and Royton) (Lab/Co-op): May I thank you, Mr Speaker, for the support you have given me as a relatively new Member, and for the visit that you made to Manchester after the Manchester Arena attack, which killed two of my constituents? That meant a great deal to the families, and to me as a local parliamentarian. and I thank you for that.

A great deal of work has been done by the Commission, but what work is being undertaken to give Members of Parliament the adequate legal support they need to carry out their duties? Many of us have been the voice of people who have been mistreated, and we have called out corruption, mismanagement and fraud. When we seek help when we are the target of harassment, however, we are left wondering where that support is. Will the right hon. Gentleman look into that very real issue, so that MPs are not bullied, harassed and intimidated into eventually moving away from the responsibilities they have in representing their constituents?

**Tom Brake:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for that question. If he is referring to particular cases, he can pass the details on to me. I am aware that support has been made available to Members of Parliament against whom legal cases have been pursued. I will follow that up if he is able to pass me the details.

### Digitising Parliamentary Processes

3. **Chi Onwurah** (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab): What recent progress the Commission has made on digitising parliamentary processes. [900271]

**Tom Brake:** As I hope that Members are aware, the House of Commons and the Parliamentary Digital Service have made significant progress in digitising various parliamentary processes, such as through the Members' hub for tabling questions digitally. Members might not be aware that "Erskine May" was made publicly available online for the very first time in July this year and is available through the UK Parliament website.

**Chi Onwurah:** You were my first Speaker, Mr Speaker. I wish you and your family every happiness. I find it very hard to imagine this Chamber without you, although I do hope the electors in Newcastle give me the opportunity to find out. You have been a great reforming, inclusive, witty and stimulating Speaker, both in this Chamber and across the country. Your visits to Newcastle mean that you will be very fondly remembered by the people of my great city.

Part of the reforms you have instigated, Mr Speaker, have been on the digital and technology front. I congratulate the Parliamentary Digital Service and the right hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Tom Brake) on the progress that has been made in making us more



effective technically—the Members’ hub, the digitisation of tabling questions and support for Android—but there is much, much more to be done if we are to be truly as effective as possible. I know that Members of Parliament are very hard use cases to tie down, but participation in the development and design of digital processes is essential. What will he do to ensure that new and returning Members are part of design processes so that technology empowers us, as it should for all our constituents?

**Tom Brake:** I can reassure the hon. Lady and other Members that if they have issues about the way the Members’ hub works, for instance, they can simply walk the short distance from here to the Table Office. I understand that the Table Office, on a monthly basis, reviews suggestions and possible improvements that Members have drawn to their attention. I know personally, from having raised an issue, that that has then been reflected in how the system works. I therefore encourage all Members—perhaps in the new Parliament we will need to remind new Members of this fact—to remember that the Table Office is there, and that it will respond to and review matters on a monthly basis.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): May I put on record my thanks to you, Mr Speaker, for the encouragement you have given me? I remember my first day here in 2010 and seeing my name on the entrance as I came in. I remember your firm handshake and the friendship you showed, which put me very much at ease. As a Back Bencher, I thank you for giving me and others the opportunity to express ourselves on many occasions, which we have done. I also thank you for your encouragement, guidance and friendship. To your wife Sally and your family, I say thank you so much. It will never be forgotten: not by me and not by many in the House. Thank you.

What consideration has been given to encouraging more paperless routes to parliamentary procedure in an attempt to be an example to businesses outside this place on how to cut down and make the most of physical resources?

**Tom Brake:** I can reassure the hon. Gentleman that that has happened and that there are further changes in the pipeline, for instance in relation to Committees, legislation and Members’ web pages. The changes he seeks to introduce to make this place a paperless environment are in the pipeline and, I hope, will be delivered over the next few years.

## CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

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

### Climate Change: Investment in Companies

4. **Michael Tomlinson** (Mid Dorset and North Poole) (Con): What progress the Church of England has made on holding the companies in which it invests to account on climate change. [900272]

**The Second Church Estates Commissioner (Dame Caroline Spelman):** Since this is my last set of oral questions, I would like to record my heartfelt thanks to my small team of staff, and especially my constituency secretary, who has faithfully served me for 20 out of 22 years. We

often forget that our staff are on the frontline of much of the abuse that we receive, and I want to record my admiration for their fortitude. I also thank the amazing staff I have had to support me in this role, particularly Simon Stanley at Church House.

In tribute, Mr Speaker, I thank you for your kindness and courtesy—unfailingly so, and especially at times of personal duress. I single out your inspired choice of Speaker’s Chaplain, who has enriched the spiritual life of this place—but more of that later.

The Church of England Pensions Board has tabled a shareholder resolution ahead of the annual general meeting of BHP Billiton, the world’s largest mining company, on 7 November this month. It asks BHP to suspend its membership of trade associations that are not lobbying in line with the climate change agreement. This is just the latest example of the Church Commissioners using their shareholder position to change company policy in line with the climate change agreement.

**Michael Tomlinson:** Just as much as you will be missed, Mr Speaker—tributes are being paid to you—I know that my right hon. Friend will also be missed. This is her last set of questions and it is a pleasure to ask her about eco-churches. Last year, Salisbury became the first diocese to be awarded the status of eco-diocese. Ten churches in my constituency have signed up to the project. Will she tell the House what more the Church can do to help to tackle climate change?

**Dame Caroline Spelman:** My hon. Friend’s illustration shows that the Church is consistent from top to bottom in its determination to tackle climate change. Today we really can celebrate the fact that Salisbury diocese, with all that it has had to cope with, is indeed the first to win an award for an entire diocese. These awards are provided by the Christian environmental charity, A Rocha. Perhaps upon hearing this, all Members in the Chamber might like to encourage their churches and diocese to become eco-churches and an eco-diocese, because that would demonstrate consistency from top to bottom across the Church.

**Chris Bryant** (Rhondda) (Lab): I, too, pay warm tribute to the right hon. Lady; she is an absolutely magnificent woman—[*Interruption.*] And I should know. She has done so much on so many different subjects, and it has been great that she took on this role, which is not often wanted by many MPs. She has carried it off with great panache and we should be grateful to her. She has also done a lot on the restoration and renewal of this Palace, and that will stand testament to her when she has gone.

I do not know the right hon. Lady’s favourite hymn, but mine is

“Hills of the North, rejoice,  
river and mountain spring”.

Right at the heart of the Christian gospel is surely a belief that we must preserve the planet on which we live—creation that was given to us for future generations. Must that not be at the heart of all the decisions that the Church of England makes?

**Dame Caroline Spelman:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his very kind words. I nearly invited my family to come and sit in on this last set of questions, but I think

that if they had heard that description, there might have been a little heckling from the Gallery, so it is a big relief that they will read about it without having the opportunity to heckle.

The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right, and the Church needs to set an example in terms of its stewardship of the earth's resources, which we are charged to look after. I certainly recognise that every one of us in this Chamber has an absolute duty to make sure that we leave this planet in a better place than we inherited it when we were born on to it. Of course, I wish him the very best with his candidature for the speakership, and I urge whomever is elected Speaker, with the forthcoming restoration and renewal, to think very, very hard about ensuring that the future Parliament is a green Parliament.

## PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

*The hon. Member for Gainsborough, the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission, was asked—*

### HS2: National Audit Office Progress Review

5. **Dame Cheryl Gillan** (Chesham and Amersham) (Con): What the timeframe is for the publication of the National Audit Office's progress review on High Speed Two. [900273]

**Sir Edward Leigh** (Gainsborough): Before I answer that question, Mr Speaker, I would like to thank you for your friendship over the years. I do not always agree with you, but in this place, John, friendship is more important than agreement, so thank you very much.

The NAO expects to publish its progress review of High Speed 2 in early 2020. The NAO expects to examine progress since its last value-for-money study in 2016, the reasons for cost and schedule increases, and the risk to value for money that remain.

**Dame Cheryl Gillan:** In his bombshell report, Allan Cook, the chairman of HS2, admitted publicly that HS2 was billions of pounds over budget and years behind schedule. Quite frankly, given HS2's poor corporate governance and the rapid turnover of not only senior staff but Ministers, who are supposed to have oversight of this project, may I encourage the NAO to provide an in-depth report on the financial operations and probity of HS2, and can this report be made available to Douglas Oakervee, who is carrying out the Oakervee review of HS2? That review should not report until it has had the advantage of the NAO analysis, and I hope that this project will then be cancelled or radically changed.

**Sir Edward Leigh:** Of course the NAO will not get involved in the political argument about whether the programme is wise, but it has already reported three times on HS2. It found that the cost and benefit estimates underpinning the business case were uncertain, and addressed the weaknesses in the business case and in the estimate of the cost of land. I assure my right hon. Friend that the NAO will leave no stone unturned to ensure we get value for money from this project, if it proceeds.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. Colleagues, I would like to accommodate all remaining Questions on the Order Paper, but we must also consider those waiting for subsequent business. I do not intend or wish to be guilty of any discourtesy to colleagues in that regard, so I appeal to colleagues who are being accommodated late to be pithy. In so far as we have taken up time because people have been extraordinarily nice about me, while that is enjoyable for me, from this point on it is unnecessary.

## Leaving the EU: National Audit Office

6. **Martin Vickers** (Cleethorpes) (Con): What assessment the National Audit Office has made of the potential effect on its work of the UK leaving the EU. [900274]

**Sir Edward Leigh:** Brexit is, of course, a major task for Departments. Since 2016, the NAO has published 26 reports on aspects of Brexit. Most recently it has published reports on the UK's border preparedness for Brexit and on Brexit's implications for the supply of medicines to the health and social care sectors.

**Martin Vickers:** My right hon. Friend and I represent neighbouring and largely Brexit-supporting constituencies, and of course we want to get Brexit done as quickly as possible, but can I ask how the NAO will approach post-Brexit financial audit?

**Sir Edward Leigh:** The NAO wants to get the Brexit work done as quickly and efficiently as possible and has been working with all Departments to assess the potential impact on their financial performance of the decision to exit the EU. The exact impact in the current year may depend on the outcome of negotiations.

## CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

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

### Archbishops of Canterbury and York: Workload

7. **Michael Fabricant** (Lichfield) (Con): What assessment has been made of the effect of the workload of the Archbishops of (a) Canterbury and (b) York on their ability to carry out their functions effectively; and if she will make a statement. [900275]

**The Second Church Estates Commissioner (Dame Caroline Spelman):** The Archbishops of York and Canterbury have many duties in relation to the northern and southern provinces of the Church of England, and the Archbishop of Canterbury is also the spiritual leader of the Anglican communion, a global network numbering tens of millions of members. There is no doubt in my mind that both these men are able and effective.

**Michael Fabricant:** But both these men are overworked. My right hon. Friend—indeed the whole House—will be aware that 1,200 years ago, Archbishop Hygeberht was the Archbishop of Lichfield. It seems to me that you, Mr Speaker, could have a future role in your retirement as the Archbishop of Lichfield—

**Dr Julian Lewis** (New Forest East) (Con): Canterbury!

**Michael Fabricant:** No, Lichfield. We want him in Lichfield and then the hard work done by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York could be shared. We have that precedent; we want you now.

**Dame Caroline Spelman:** Fortunately, I had a little advance notice of the tenor of my hon. Friend's question. He is absolutely right that, for around 16 years between 787 and 803, there was an Archbishop of Lichfield. This arose from the fact that King Offa, in the kingdom of Mercia, struck a deal with the Pope, requesting an archbishop to be named to serve in his kingdom, but that deal involved sending an annual shipment of gold to the Pope for alms and supplying the lights for St Peter's church in Rome. My hon. Friend, as the Member for Lichfield, might like to make a similar offer to the Archbishop of Canterbury.

### Community Reconciliation

8. **Rachael Maskell** (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): What role the Church of England plays in leading community reconciliation processes. [900276]

**Dame Caroline Spelman:** The Church of England is involved in reconciliation work, both at home and abroad, and most recently on the international scene, the leadership of the Church of England has worked with the Roman Catholic Church on peace-building in Sudan, convening a meeting of Sudanese leaders in the Vatican. The Archbishop of Canterbury identified reconciliation as one of the key priorities for his tenure.

**Rachael Maskell:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the veracity with which you have chaired this House and the firm but kind way in which you have held that office. We recognise your service, but also the sacrifice you have made for this Parliament and our democracy.

I thank the right hon. Lady for her reply and also wish her well in her retirement. Our communities are divided and so many people across our country are broken at this time, so what is the Church of England doing to drive forward a process of peace and reconciliation for the future of our country?

**Dame Caroline Spelman:** There is an active proposition to initiate a reconciliation process, run out of Coventry. The cathedral of Coventry has a mission for peace and reconciliation because of its heritage. The Archbishop of Canterbury has spearheaded this offer. I do not know much about retirement, but I have offered to help with this process, because there is no doubt that we need to heal the divisions in our society. The Church has the necessary infrastructure—a cathedral in every city; a church in every parish—to help us to do this.

**Rehman Chishti** (Gillingham and Rainham) (Con): May I also pay huge tribute to the Second Church Estates Commissioner, who has done an amazing job?

With regard to paying tribute to the Archbishop of Canterbury and His Holiness the Pope, I was in the Vatican representing the Prime Minister. The work is amazing. Does the Second Church Estates Commissioner agree that one key thing that we need to do is to ensure

that our diplomats have appropriate religious literacy training so that they can carry on such work on religious reconciliation around the world?

**Dame Caroline Spelman:** I thank my hon. Friend for his kind words. I certainly welcome him to this Question Time in his role as the special envoy for freedom of religion and belief. He can do important work within the Foreign Office to deliver on promises that officials will be required to undertake religious literacy training before postings to countries where it is really important to understand the role of religion in the culture and life of those nations.

**Fiona Bruce** (Congleton) (Con): What is the Church of England doing to help women leaving prison to strengthen family and community ties?

With your permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to say on behalf of colleagues that we are hugely grateful to my right hon. Friend for her service to us here and to the Church in her role as the 41st Second Church Estates Commissioner. She has listened and acted as a wise counsel and an adviser behind the scenes to the Church, the General Synod, the Government and the many colleagues here who have raised concerns with her about the big questions of the day: the persecution of Christians overseas, Church schools and buildings, and strengthening our communities.

My right hon. Friend has helped the cause of getting mothers' names on marriage certificates and has been a great all-round advocate for the role of faith in public life—not forgetting, too, that she was our first female Second Church Estates Commissioner. She will, I am sure, continue to be a positive voice and a presence for people of faith outside this place, and she will be greatly missed here.

**Dame Caroline Spelman:** Those are such kind words, and I will treasure them; I really appreciate the thought that went into expressing them. On the work of our prison chaplains and in particular the focus on ex-prisoners being reconciled into their communities, my hon. Friend is right. I did in fact host a meeting in Parliament with Bishops Christine and Rachel of Newcastle and Gloucester respectively, which focused on the great need there is to provide a suitable transition for women as they leave prison and return to the community and to address some of the long-standing issues from which they suffer. I commend the work of the Re-Unite project in Gloucester and the Anawim women's centre in Birmingham; they are doing a remarkable job in helping these women make that transition.

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Member for Congleton (Fiona Bruce) has offered a beautiful tribute, but every word of it was richly deserved by the right hon. Lady.

### Telecommunications: Use of Churches

9. **Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con): What discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on the effective use of churches in the telecommunications network. [900277]

**Dame Caroline Spelman:** This is a subject that my right hon. Friend has been very diligent in drawing to my attention. I recently met the Minister for digital and broadband, my hon. Friend the Member for Boston and Skegness (Matt Warman), and we had a really



positive discussion about the work the Church is doing to increase access to digital and broadband networks in rural areas. Hon. Members may recall that the Church signed an accord with the Government to put at their disposal all church buildings and land to try to make sure we can eradicate those notspots in rural areas.

**Sir Desmond Swayne:** This is an issue on which the right hon. Lady has been both most helpful and assiduous, as she has been in the discharge of every duty she has undertaken in the 20 years that I have known her. I thank her for that service and wish her all the best for the future.

**Dame Caroline Spelman:** I am not sure what can be said in answer to that, but hon. Members present will know with what great affection my right hon. Friend is held, affectionately known by most of us as Dessie. There is no one I would rather entrust my life to in a tight spot than this remarkable, brave individual.

On the matter raised, I just want to record the Church's welcome for the announcement made by the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport of match funding with £500 million for the initiative by mobile providers to share masts. It does not deal with the shortfall, where there are no masts, but that is where the Church intends to help.

Given the Secretary of State's announcement that she is retiring, I would like to record my grateful thanks to her for her work in this Parliament.

#### Thefts from Churches

10. **Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): What recent assessment the Church of England has made of trends in the level of thefts from churches. [900278]

**Dame Caroline Spelman:** As we have seen all too clearly in the recent very heavy rainfall, wet weather is often the moment we realise we have a hole in the roof, and, sadly, many churches have discovered that through the theft of lead from church roofs. It is only when the weather turns inclement that thousands of pounds worth of damage is done, which small congregations simply do not have the resources to meet. The Church is working closely with the police and other partners to raise awareness and encourage local parishes to take precautions, such as having roof alarms or SmartWater marking, so we can fend off what is organised crime.

**Diana Johnson:** May I, too, join in the tributes to the right hon. Lady in this role and the other roles that she has had in this place and say that I am sad she is leaving, and I am sad that she cited some of the abuse that she has received as one of the reasons that she is leaving this place?

On the specific question, what work is going on to consider the replacement of lead roofs with those of other materials such as steel or zinc?

**Dame Caroline Spelman:** I thank the hon. Lady for those very kind words, and indeed, with the full support of my staff, I did speak out about the abuse we face and that might perhaps be part of my legacy to this place; I hope sincerely that those who are returned will really do something about it, particularly by tackling the wild west

of the internet where there is not sufficient regulation of what is expressed, although I commend the guidance given by the Church of England about how to navigate the internet wisely.

On the point raised, it is important to share the following information, because theft from churches, particularly of roofs, affects many colleagues. New guidance has been published by Historic England on non-lead metal roofs for churches, to deter the risk of metal theft. It is important to note that even a grade 1 listed building can be fitted with lead substitutes, which do not therefore attract the type of crime that I described at the beginning and is causing so much damage and cost.

#### Marriage: 16 and 17-year-olds

11. **Mrs Pauline Latham** (Mid Derbyshire) (Con): What assessment the Church of England has made of the potential merits of ending marriages involving 16 and 17-year-olds. [900279]

**Dame Caroline Spelman:** The legal position is that 16 and 17-year-olds are entitled to have their banns published and to marry in church. I am sure that all Members who have been to an Anglican wedding will be familiar with the moment during the service when the priest asks whether anyone has an objection to the marriage. That is part of the marriage process. When a young couple are preparing for marriage, they are prepared by the priest for the very profound decision that they are making. However, those of such a tender age constitute only a very small percentage of the number who marry in Anglican churches.

**Mrs Latham:** May I echo the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Fiona Bruce) and reiterate that my right hon. Friend will be missed when she leaves this place?

Does my right hon. Friend agree that, given the international reach of the Anglican communion, the Church of England's support for ending marriages between 16 and 17-year-olds in the UK would send a powerful message to other jurisdictions and faith communities around the world?

**Dame Caroline Spelman:** As I mentioned earlier, the Anglican communion covers a very large number of nations and a very large number of people whose cultural norms differ from our own, but aid agencies often handle the issue of child marriage very effectively through their health and education programmes. I particularly commend the work of the Mothers Union in this respect. Its members are active in, for instance, southern Sudan with finance and literacy programmes to ensure that families do not rely on dowry payments as a way to sustain themselves. Dioceses in Kenya work with the community to prevent child marriage, and there are similar arrangements in Ghana. The Mothers Union also has initiatives to tackle child marriage in the United States of America, because in 13 states there is no minimum age for marriage.

**Tim Loughton** (East Worthing and Shoreham) (Con): May I, too, pay my tribute to my right hon. Friend? She and I entered the House on the same day in 1997, as did you, Mr Speaker. We have shared many worthwhile causes, and she will be greatly missed. One of those



causes was, of course, marriage certificates, whether for marriages between 16 and 17-year-olds or for any other marriages. As a result of my Civil Partnerships, Marriages and Deaths (Registration etc) Act 2019, mothers' names will at last be added to those certificates.

Will my right hon. Friend update us on the progress that is being made ahead of the digital registration that is to be introduced? Is it the case that in certain churches, the Church of England has given its agreement to the manual writing of hard-copy certificates until the necessary technology is available? That, I am sure, would be a welcome common-sense measure.

**Dame Caroline Spelman:** I thank my hon. Friend for his kind words. We did indeed enter Parliament together, and in those early weeks when we did not really have an office, and we were adjusting to the long-hours culture, and we missed our children—I was pining for mine—he was kind enough to make me hot cocoa late at night. I have not forgotten those early times.

Let me update the House. My hon. Friend was the Member of Parliament who landed the prize of securing a change in the law of 1837 that did not allow mothers the same right as fathers in terms of marriage registration, but progress is slow on the accompanying regulation. My hon. Friend may wish to join me in putting some pressure on the future Government to complete that process, because there are practical steps that can be taken in the short term. The Church has offered to allow existing registration books to be used, and where it says “father”, the name of the mother can be added in brackets. If it is to take a while to take marriage registration into the digital age, many mums who are hoping to have that new right can achieve it in the short term by means of a simple practical solution.

### Digital Technology: New Congregations

12. **Andrew Rosindell** (Romford) (Con): What assessment the Church of England has made of the effectiveness of the use of digital technologies to reach new congregations. [900280]

**Dame Caroline Spelman:** During my time as Second Church Estates Commissioner, I have seen the Church of England transform its digital communications. Its annual mission statistics show, for example, that the Daily Prayer app has been downloaded more than 5 million times and is used on average for eight minutes per user per day; our social media now reaches 3.6 million people; the A Church Near You website allows people to google their nearest church and the times of the services there; and an Alexa skill set up by the Church has had more than 100,000 inquiries.

**Andrew Rosindell:** I thank my right hon. Friend for her answer and for the incredible job she has done as the Second Church Estates Commissioner. She has been truly amazing and a great friend to many of us. I have

fond memories of her not only in her current role but on many occasions in Switzerland on the annual skiing visit. I would like to thank her for her friendship.

The Church is central to all our communities, and engaging with the wider public is ever more important. Will my right hon. Friend tell us more about what the Church intends to do to ensure that wider engagement through the use of social media and digital is rolled out more widely across the whole country?

**Dame Caroline Spelman:** I thank my hon. Friend for his kind words. For the record, I must say that being Second Church Estates Commissioner has been a great blessing. When I was invited to do the job, David Cameron said to me, “The thing about this role, Caroline, is that you are answerable only to the Queen and God.” What a privilege that is!

It so happens that I met the diocesan directors of communication yesterday at Canterbury cathedral, and they are all really aware of the transition that the Church needs to make into a fully digital version of what it does today. I have given the House an indication of that, but for those of us who still like a hard copy of things to inspire us, I draw hon. Members' attention to the fact that the forthcoming busy time will at some point be coterminous with Advent, for which the Church has published a “Follow the Star” booklet, which hon. Members are welcome to avail themselves of.

**Mr Speaker:** That was magnificently done. I hope that I can be forgiven for saying to the hon. Member for Romford (Andrew Rosindell), and more widely to the House, that as the hon. Gentleman referenced Switzerland, and I am on my last day, he has given me my cue to say that the best thing about Switzerland is not its skiing, its chocolate, its watches or its financial services; the best thing about Switzerland is Roger Federer.

**Luke Graham** (Ochil and South Perthshire) (Con): Mr Speaker, I should like to pass on my thanks to you, on behalf of Scottish Conservative MPs. You have given us the opportunity to speak so that our constituents know that the Scottish National party is not the only voice for Scotland in this place. It is good for our Parliament, our country and our democracy that all the voices are heard, so I thank you for that.

What conversations have been had with the Department, and indeed the estates in Scotland, to ensure that the Government's new initiatives on the shared rural network for mobile coverage and the exciting new developments on broadband will mean that the estates in Scotland can be used and leveraged so that my constituents can benefit as much as constituents elsewhere in the UK?

**Dame Caroline Spelman:** I am delighted to say that my responsibility covers only the Church of England, but obviously the Church in Scotland is part of the Anglican communion, and the opportunity to use church buildings, spires, towers and the ridges and hills on land that the Church owns is an obvious way to ensure that there are no more notspots in Scotland.

## Points of Order

11.8 am

**Mr Dominic Grieve** (Beaconsfield) (Ind): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I want to raise a point of order in relation to the Early Parliamentary General Election Bill, which we expect to receive Royal Assent today. The Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament, of which I am the Chair, has been investigating the threat posed to this country by Russia. We have produced a report, which, in accordance with the Justice and Security Act 2013, we sent to the Prime Minister on 17 October for him to confirm that there were no classified matters remaining. There ought not to be, because the report has already been carefully looked at by the Cabinet Office. That confirmation should have been received by today to enable publication before the House is dissolved, but I regret to say that it has not been. We thus have a Committee of Parliament waiting to lay before the House a report that comments directly on what has been perceived as a threat to our democratic processes. Parliament and the public ought to and must have access to this report in the light of the forthcoming election, and it is unacceptable for the Prime Minister to sit on it and deny them that information. I raise this as a point of order in the hope that the theme of your speakership—the championing of the role of Parliament in holding to account the Executive—might be, through this point of order, as successful today as it has been over the previous decade.

**Mr Speaker:** I am grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman. He knows that it is not strictly a point of order for adjudication by the Chair, although his articulate efforts to raise the matter are, in my mind, perfectly legitimate. What he has said will have been heard by those on the Treasury Bench, and I understand that he seeks a response today. It is presumably of the essence and the utmost importance to him and his Committee that any such confirmatory response is at the very least received before Dissolution. I would hope that, as the Leader of the House is sitting on the Front Bench, we might make progress on this matter. It can potentially be expedited, and the Leader of the House might be willing to act as a messenger—or maybe more than a messenger—and we will have to see what the result is. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has made his point today, and it is potentially open to him to raise it on Monday—even on Monday—or on Tuesday, but I hope that it will not be necessary for him to raise the matter again.

**Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. Time is of the essence. We have just heard about the matter, and there is some considerable concern among Opposition Members. Surely, a stronger message must go through the Leader of the House that the Prime Minister or a senior Cabinet Minister should put the matter right in the last few days of this Parliament.

**Mr Speaker:** I am sympathetic to the hon. Gentleman's concerns, and I think it is fairly obvious to the Leader of the House that I am sympathetic to the concerns of

the right hon. and learned Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve). I am not myself privy to the rationale behind the absence of a confirmation. I do not know whether it is just an administrative matter because, to be fair, Prime Ministers have a very large volume of matters with which to deal, whether it is a transaction of business issue, or whether there is some substantive reason why the Prime Minister does not wish to provide the confirmatory response that the right hon. and learned Gentleman seeks. I cannot know which it is. It is not unreasonable for the Chair of the Intelligence and Security Committee to seek that confirmatory response in this Parliament or an explicit parliamentary explanation in the House as to the reason for its absence. That, I think, is fair.

**Seema Malhotra** (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. This is a slightly unusual circumstance, so may I seek your clarification? Can you confirm that the report cannot be published without that confirmation from the Prime Minister, or is this just a matter of best practice?

**Mr Speaker:** I think that that is the case. Of course, the Intelligence and Security Committee is not a Select Committee; it is a Committee of Parliament, and therefore different arrangements apply to it. It is encouraging to see the right hon. Members for New Forest East (Dr Lewis) and for Rutland and Melton (Sir Alan Duncan), who have some experience of the Committee and its responsibilities, nodding in assent.

**Mr Grieve:** Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. I am grateful for your response. The position is that for the report to be published, it must be laid before the House on a sitting day. As long as that happens, it can be published and will be made available to the public. If it were to be laid on a day when the House is not sitting—even before Dissolution—the Committee would not be able to publish it. Therefore, we were hoping that it could be laid and published on Monday. The anxiety relates to the apparent delay, for which we have not been provided an explanation, and that has led me to make my point of order.

**Mr Sheerman:** Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. This is a concern for all of us. There is the expertise here. This is a special Committee. What we do not understand is why this cannot be published on the authority of the House. Why can the Executive block this publication? Are they trying to hide something?

**Mr Speaker:** No, it is simply because the composition of the Committee and its modus operandi are determined in a manner different from those that apply to a Select Committee, which it is not. That is the factual answer. I understand the hon. Gentleman's frustration but I think the matter has now been fully ventilated. The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House has displayed exemplary patience, but I do not think we should test it further.

## Tributes to the Speaker

11.15 am

**The Leader of the House of Commons (Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg):** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I do not need patience because proceedings in this House are always interesting. But let us now praise famous men. It was a privilege to propose you as Speaker in the 2015 Parliament and now, in the reverse of Mark Antony in relation to Caesar, I come not to bury you but to praise you, for that is the right thing to do when a period of long service comes to an end. That is not to deny that there will be a debate about your term of office, as there are debates about the terms of office of other Speakers in our history. However, I am very conscious that the good that men do is often interred with their end of service. I think the good that you have done should be heralded and that others at a later date will look at some of the criticisms that they may have. But now is not the occasion for that.

In 2009, when you first addressed this House as a candidate for the speakership, you said that you did not want “to be someone”, but rather that you wanted “to do something”. Your agenda was “reform”, “renewal” and “revitalisation”, and although I think the word “modernisation” is an expletive, which I rarely allow to sound forth from my lips, there can be no denying that during your decade in office you have worked tirelessly to achieve those objectives.

As the 157th Speaker, you have been a distinctive servant of Parliament, both in this place and beyond, representing the House to audiences around the United Kingdom and overseas. I think you share my conviction that politics is at its best when it is engaging. Your work with the United Kingdom Youth Parliament and your work with Parliament’s excellent education team should be celebrated. So many schools from my constituency have taken advantage of this service, and I have always been impressed by the knowledge of the people involved. I know that you had quite a battle to get the education building put up, and some people opposed you, but it has been a resounding success.

During your speakership, our parliamentary democracy has been under intense scrutiny. We have been fortunate to have in the Chair so accomplished a glottologist as you are, in order that language, as well as the intricate and profound workings of Parliament, can be understood by everyone. I think the words “chunter”, “medicament”, “dilute”, “animadvert” and, perhaps my favourite, “susurrations” have been popularised under your speakership and, I imagine, are now in common parlance in pubs and clubs across England—or at least in Boodle’s, the Beefsteak, Pratt’s and the Garrick. But those sorts of clubs probably enjoy those words greatly.

As you have dispensed your immediate duties from the Chair, you have come to be known as the Back Bencher’s champion. Our main purpose as Members of Parliament is to seek redress of grievance for our constituents, and you have been unswervingly diligent in your desire to ensure that all parliamentarians are treated equally, whether novice or hardened veteran. I cannot thank you enough for the help you gave me to ensure that we could get the drug Brineura for a constituent of mine: within about a week, you called me at oral

questions, granted me an Adjournment debate and then gave me an urgent question, all of which helped to build pressure on the Government to act, to the great advantage of a very ill and very young constituent of mine. This is my view of what Parliament is about, and I think you facilitated that for me in a way that other Speakers may well not have done. My personal gratitude and, more importantly, the gratitude of the family who have benefited from that, is, I think, a real tribute to how you have operated. You have allowed parliamentarians to seek redress of grievance, and that is basically where our law making in this place comes from historically.

The ultimate, most important, highest duty of the Speaker of the House of Commons is to be the champion of our House and its Members, and to defend our right to freedom of speech in defence of our constituents. Mr Speaker, you have done that. During your time you have presided over what you yourself have termed the “rumbustious” Parliament. Now, as you step down from the office of Speaker of the House of Commons, having what is undoubtedly the highest honour that the House of Commons has in its power to bestow, I wish you a prosperous and successful retirement, and thank you and your family—Sally, Freddie, Jemima, and particularly the great Oliver, who I know has more my view of modernisation than your own, at least with regard to wigs.

11.20 am

**Valerie Vaz (Walsall South) (Lab):** May I start by thanking the Leader of the House for his statement? I note that there are no business questions this morning, but he did say that you would allow us a bit of latitude, Mr Speaker, so may I ask one question through you? When is Parliament likely to return after the election? Perhaps the Leader of the House could answer that in his own time.

Most people can read the basic facts about your life on your website, Mr Speaker, and on various other websites. You are the first Speaker since the second world war to have served alongside four Prime Ministers and to be elected to the post four times. I shall concentrate on my interactions with you.

Those of us in the 2010 intake were pleased that the rules were suspended slightly and we were allowed to ask questions before we made our first speeches. I think that made a huge difference to us. You spoke at, and gave up a Saturday evening for, the launch of the campaign to have a bust for Noor Inayat Khan, who served in the Special Operations Executive—Churchill’s special group. Karen Newman sculpted the wonderful bust that is now in Gordon Square. Noor was executed in the Dachau concentration camp. It was important to recognise her.

You allowed me the use of Speaker’s House for the launch of the Sidney Goldberg competition, which you attended and spoke at. Sidney Goldberg was in the headquarters ship during the D-day landings. It is important that you have opened up the use of Speaker’s House to civil society and charities—roughly eight a week, more than 150 a year. It is really important for people to see what goes on in Speaker’s House, and I am sure many people will thank you for that. When fielding a number of questions as guests walked through to the bed in the final room, we had to explain to them that it was not you and Sally who slept there.



[Valerie Vaz]

With your friend since 1982, the right hon. Member for New Forest East (Dr Lewis), you trained quite a lot of Tory candidates, and I am sure you have seen many of them here. You have obviously trained them well, because they have been quite argumentative towards you.

**Robert Halfon** (Harlow) (Con): I was one of them.

**Valerie Vaz:** Ah!

Being in the Chamber is what you have loved most, Mr Speaker. Perhaps they are going to patent your bladder—the sight of Ian and Peter checking your vital signs as you leave after a long session is quite interesting. As many people have said, you have opened the Chamber up to urgent questions. You knew which Select Committee Members served on and called people appropriately for urgent questions and statements.

I will not forget the phone call that you made to me; I thought I had done something wrong, but you picked up the phone and said, “It’s Mr Speaker here. Would you like to come to Burma?” I think Joan Ruddock could not make it. It was great to be on that trip with you, and particularly to see your groundbreaking speech at the University of Yangon, before Daw Suu was elected. We went to Mon state, where we visited the legal aid clinic and then a school. There were people looking through windows with cameras. They were not actually following us—they were sent by someone else—but I remember you waving your hand and saying, “Who are those people? Send them away.” And they did go—they listened to you.

There is a phrase: “Behold the turtle. He only makes progress when he sticks his neck out.” I think people would say that you are a turtle on skids, Mr Speaker. You commissioned “The Good Parliament” report by Professor Sarah Childs, and many of her recommendations, particularly on proxy voting, have now been implemented. You produced a landmark report on speech, language and communication needs for children. Ican, the children’s charity, has done a follow-up report, “Bercow 10 years on”, and I hope that it has made a difference and they have seen the difference that your initial report has made.

The Leader of the House mentioned the Education Centre, which has been used by many of our schools. It is such a delight to walk through Speaker’s Yard to the Education Centre. It has made a huge difference to the understanding of Parliament.

I was privileged to sit on your group for the Speaker’s school council awards. It was incredible to see the level of the children’s entries, how they were thinking about other people and how they want to change society. It is a tribute to you that that happened.

Then, of course, there is the Youth Parliament. Since 2009, you have chaired every Youth Parliament and you have been to every annual conference. It is incredible to see the way the members of the Youth Parliament have risen to the occasion. I am sorry that you will not be here for the next one, on 8 November. The level of debate, as you know, is absolutely exemplary and something that we can learn from.

It is UK Parliament Week next week, from 2 to 10 November—as part of my contribution to business questions, I am adding bits of information. There will be 11,400 activities—15 in Walsall South, but 11 in North East Somerset, so it has some catching up to do.

Mr Speaker, you are chancellor of two universities: the University of Bedfordshire and, your alma mater, the University of Essex. I know that you will continue to teach them about how Parliament can be opened up. You have opened up Parliament, which has been part of the golden triangle of accountability involving the Executive and the judiciary. Parliament is not the subservient partner, but, under your speakership, the equal and relevant partner. I say to the other side that I think you did do your job as a very impartial Speaker. I know that some of us on our side actually questioned you, calling other sides first. So everybody thinks that you are an impartial Speaker and have favourites one way or the other. However, you will be pleased to know that your ratings on the Parliament channel have gone up and that the word “Order” is now used by parents around the country as the new naughty step.

I thank your long-serving staff: Peter Barrett, Ian Davis and Jim Davey, those in your outer office and those in your inner office. They have always been absolutely exemplary to me, whether I was a Back Bencher or on the Front Bench, and to other Members.

Of course, we cannot forget the great Sally, who has always been by your side and supportive of the work that you do. We all need that person who will support us in our work—particularly Oliver, Freddie and Jemima. It was lovely to watch them in the Gallery yesterday, as they were looking down almost in tears. It was very nice for them to hear the tributes because I know that they have faced difficult times in the playground when you have been attacked.

So, John Simon Bercow, this was your life in Parliament. We wish you well in whatever you choose to do, and you go with our grateful thanks and best wishes.

**Mr Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** The answer to the right hon. Lady’s question is that the expectation is that we will come back on the Monday after the general election for swearing in.

11.28 pm

**Sir Alan Duncan** (Rutland and Melton) (Con): Mr Speaker, may I echo the heartfelt comments that have been made about you from so many quarters over the past few days? May I do so by way of two confessions, which I have been needing to get off my chest? The first is that I was at a primary school—it is always there that you get the difficult questions—and I was asked, “What is the rudest thing that anyone has ever said to you in politics?” I thought for a bit and said, “Do you know what, it is when someone came up to me in the street and said, ‘Good morning, Mr Bercow.’” I hope that you will forgive me for that. The second confession is rather worse. I may well burn in the fiery flames of hell for ever having done this. I am known occasionally in the Tea Room to have referred to you as Mr Speaker Hobbit. I hope that you will forgive me this affectionate teasing



and, in paying my own tribute to you, it gives me pleasure that my last words in this House are to wish you the best for the future.

**Mr Speaker:** I gently point out that a hobbit is a friendly creature.

11.29 am

**Pete Wishart** (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I say that for the last time. I was just saying to the SNP Chief Whip, given that questions were allowed to go on for 40 minutes longer, Bercow must go.

I was, of course, one of your nominees 10 years ago. I would therefore like to congratulate myself on my solid and sound judgment on that occasion. I always knew that you would make an excellent Speaker. Even that awful impersonation you did of Peter Tapsell when you were trying to be elected did not disabuse me of that notion. But I did not know that you would be such a transformative Speaker. The way in which we do business in this Chamber is now forever changed because of your speakership. You have pioneered and transformed. The speakership of this House is now no longer just about overseeing the business in the Chamber, and the way in which we debate and interact with each other. It is about asserting the rights of Parliament and championing parliamentary democracy. And you have been singularly brave in the way you have challenged various Governments who believed that it was their gift always to get their way. We will never go back to those days now, because of the way in which you have challenged that assumption.

I will never forget sitting with you in that curry house in Buckingham, when MP4 did a gig for you in your constituency. That curry house stayed open because Mr Speaker was coming with some strange guests from a rock band, and the vindaloo you ordered that night had to be specially prepared. We could not get you to come up on stage with us that evening, but now you have a bit more time. Given the Prime Minister's Sinatra reference yesterday, maybe you could give us a rendition of "My Way"; we would happily supply the backing for that occasion.

The culture of this House has been totally and radically transformed. You have ensured that the Back Benches are now fully accommodated. I have been here long enough to remember the days when urgent questions and statements were cut off after half an hour or 40 minutes, and it would always be the Back Benches and Members of the smaller parties who would lose out on an opportunity to say something and give their point of view on the issue of the day. That no longer happens. Everybody is now accommodated. I hope that that transformation that you have made will continue to be adopted as we go forward. We all now get an opportunity to give our point of view in this House, and it is important that that remains the case. For that, we thank you.

We on these Benches will miss you, and you will forever be a friend of Scotland and of the Scottish National party. On behalf of our party, I wish you and your family—Sally, Freddie, Jemima and Oliver—all the very best for the future. I wish your staff, Peter, Ian and Jim, all the best as well. I hope that you enjoy the

next stage of what has already been a fascinating and unique journey. You are a one-off, sir, and we will miss you.

**Mr Speaker:** Thank you.

11.33 am

**Sir Roger Gale** (North Thanet) (Con): Mr Speaker, a couple of days ago, you commended me for my brevity, so let me be brief. Two weeks ago you were kind enough—or possibly unkind enough—to remind me that I was the longest serving member of the Panel of Chairs. Let me say on behalf of that panel, thank you for your guidance and wisdom over very many years of service. All your friends on the panel wish you and your family well in your retirement.

**Mr Speaker:** Thank you. I call the Mother of the House, Harriet Harman.

11.34 am

**Ms Harriet Harman** (Camberwell and Peckham) (Lab): Mr Speaker, you are my fifth Speaker now, and I can say from that experience that you have been a remarkable Speaker of this House. You have been a champion of Parliament and a reformer. As other hon. and right hon. Members have said, you have thought about opening up this House so that young people all around the country can see that it is their Parliament that is here for them. You have been a great champion of the Youth Parliament. The Leader of the House and the shadow Leader of the House were right to say that everybody agrees with that now and recognises that it is a thoroughly good thing, but you had to fight for it because there were those who resisted change and said, "We cannot have all these children here in the House of Commons. We've got work to be done." You relentlessly, and in a principled way, pushed for it, and I thank you for that.

You have used the Speaker's state rooms to give outside organisations a sense that their work is recognised by and valued in this Parliament. As the shadow Leader of the House said, over 1,000 organisations have come into this House, and the grandeur of those state rooms has inspired and encouraged them, in knowing that their works in communities all around the country are valued here.

I would like to pay particular tribute to the work that you have done for the women's movement. Organisations campaigning for equal pay have been in those grand state rooms surrounded by those 20-foot-high portraits of former Speakers. They have had their place there: those championing equal pay; those complaining that we need more childcare; those campaigning against domestic violence. They have been there; you have brought them in and endowed them with a sense of importance.

You actually turned one of the bars of the House of Commons into a nursery for the children of staff in Whitehall and in the House and of Members. That too is something we can be proud of, but it is something that you had to fight for. We had been fighting for it for decades and had failed; it was not until you were in the Chair that you made it happen. You supported the coming into this Chamber of 100 women MPs from 100 Parliaments from all around the world so that here in the mother of Parliaments we could validate their work in their Parliaments all around the world.

[*Ms Harriet Harman*]

I think we can fairly say that you are politically correct, but it was not always the case. You have been on what they describe as a political journey. You started off going towards the views of the Monday Club. You are woke now, but my goodness me, you were in the deepest of slumbers.

You really have made a huge difference in championing us here in the House. Above all, you have been concerned about the role of Parliament in being able to hold the Executive to account. That is not just about Back Benchers and Front Benchers; it is about the role of Parliament. Members who have come here more recently perhaps would not remember this—I thank the Library for getting this information for me—but in the 12 months before you took the Speaker's Chair, two urgent questions were granted in that whole time. The impact of that was that people outside the House would be discussing issues but they would not be discussed here, and therefore Parliament felt irrelevant. In the past 12 months, you have granted 152 UQs. You have made Parliament relevant. I thank you for that—but again, it has not always made you popular. Ministers would rather sit in their Departments talking to civil servants and junior Ministers who agree with them than come here and face the House. But it is better for Government to be held to account. It is easy to make mistakes when doing things behind closed doors. You have always believed that the minority must have its say in Parliament, and you have championed that, but you have also always believed that the majority must have its way, and that is right.

Precedent offers less help in unprecedented times, which we have been experiencing, but you have had a profound sense that you are accountable to the House and that you want to enable and facilitate the House, and that is what you have done. You leave the Chair in uncertain and, I would say, even dangerous times. Thank you for your support and recognition of all those Members—men as well as women—who have gone about their business under a hail of threats of violence. Our democracy should not have to experience that. I would like to thank you for being tireless in your work, and I would like to thank your family for their support of you. They can be rightly proud of what you have done, and we are too.

**Mr Speaker:** Thank you.

11.40 am

**Sir David Amess** (Southend West) (Con): I am disappointed that I am not able to put my question to the Leader of the House regarding the lack of funding from the national lottery for Southend West and the lousy ticket machines installed by c2c, but I will get over that.

The House is at its best when we are being nice to one another. This will not last, as we are about to embark upon a general election campaign. Mr Speaker, you and I have known each other for a long time, and I cannot imagine how you and the others who are leaving this place voluntarily must feel today. I wish each and every one of those colleagues every good fortune for the future.

You and I followed very different paths to this place. It has not been easy for you being the Speaker, particularly in the circumstances in which you took that great office,

but you have been a champion of Back Benchers, in so far as you have ensured that every voice is heard, particularly when you notice that a voice is not always heard within a Member's own political party. You would be the first to say that you could not have done the job so well without your magnificent backroom team—I am not going to show favouritism—of Peter, Ian and Jim. They have been wonderful.

I know that we will have tributes to Reverend Rose later, but she was an inspired choice. For those of the Catholic brethren who were in the Crypt last night, it was particularly wonderful to hear her speak with my great pal Father Pat Browne, who has just celebrated 10 years as the Catholic chaplain to the House.

Mr Speaker, among the things that you have done, you have made sure that it is worth while being on the Order Paper. It took colleagues a little time to get the hang of it, but you gave everyone on the Order Paper a chance to have their say. You have also done a magnificent job in promoting the work that you do throughout the country.

The election of the new Speaker will be held on Monday. A number of the contestants are in the Chamber at the moment, and each and every one of them would do the job splendidly. I did not seek to fill your shoes because those shoes would pinch. I do not have your control of the bladder, and I certainly do not have your photographic memory, but if there is an opportunity for a slightly different role, I will certainly be a candidate.

My final point is about your family. You and Sally can look after yourselves. This is a very tough job when you have children. When my children were young, they did not take kindly to the fact that not every member of the general public thought their father was wonderful. Your children have somehow got through all that, and they are a credit to you and Sally—of that there can be no doubt. I wish you every future success and every happiness, especially in your new role as a sports commentator.

**Mr Speaker:** Thank you.

11.44 am

**Ms Angela Eagle** (Wallasey) (Lab): Mr Speaker, I do not intend to repeat the warm and generous tributes that have been paid to you and your speakership today, except to agree wholeheartedly with all of them. There have been some extremely good summaries of the particular flavour that you have brought to the speakership.

Mr Speaker, you took over in very difficult times—right at the height of the controversies about expenses—when the House had to regain a great deal of good will from the public. You did so in a way that I think few would have expected, given where you began your political career. The thing I saw most quickly about you was that, although you had a respect for tradition, you also had a very open mind about how it needed to change. I referred to that in my own maiden speech, when I came into this House in 1992, and it is a rare combination. It is particularly rare, I suspect, coming from someone who began his life in the Federation of Conservative Students.

It was clear, Mr Speaker, that you had not only the capacity but the desire to go on a journey, and many of us noticed your particular commitment to your principles

as you grew into them when you resigned from the Conservative Front Bench because you objected to being whipped to vote against the equalisation of the age of consent. It was nasty for anyone, in what was then a rapidly modernising social situation, to be expected to do that for their party.

The journey that you have taken on matters of equality, Mr Speaker, has been noticed by all of those who were oppressed by not having access to it. It has been celebrated, and the LGBT community in particular owes you a great deal. You have been an untiring and unfailing champion for women's rights, for the rights of those who have disabilities, and for LGBT and BAME people. That commitment has been shown in many of the decisions you have taken in your executive role. I was privileged to be able to serve with you on not the most glamorous of committees—the Speaker's committee behind the scenes—as you drove forward some of the modernisation that you have been responsible for, as Members on both sides of the House have pointed out in their tributes to you today.

Mr Speaker, the reactionary resistance that you faced in driving that change—for example, on the education department, or to allow the Youth Parliament to sit in this Chamber—had to be seen to be believed. However, if I may say so, you have driven a coach and horses through that resistance and achieved real and lasting change, which—when you are finally in your bath chair, and I know that will be a very long time from now, watching Roger Federer still winning the veterans trophy at Wimbledon—I think you will be able to sit back and reflect very much on.

I have a couple of other points, Mr Speaker. One is that I have always loved your use of language and command of the House. You are never one who is content to say “medicine” when you can say “medicament” or “suitcase” when you might say “portmanteau”. Many of us have enjoyed that aspect of your time in the Chair.

There is one place still far too hidebound by tradition that needs your open and reforming zeal, Mr Speaker, in order that we might deal with it. This is a question for the Leader of the House: why on earth does the right hon. Gentleman not get up now and say that he recognises the absolute ability you have shown to drive change in fusty-dusty organisations and send you where you belong—to the House of Lords?

**Mr Speaker:** Thank you. [HON. MEMBERS: “Answer!”] The Leader of the House has made his contribution, but he may respond.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** Mr Speaker, I think this has changed from a statement into a succession of speeches, and it would be tiresome for the House if I popped up every other moment.

11.50 am

**Justine Greening** (Putney) (Ind): Let me add my congratulations to you, Mr Speaker, on a fantastic 10 years as Speaker during what has probably been one of the most turbulent and difficult times that this House and this Parliament have seen. I echo all the points raised by others about how you have reformed the way the House works, and the causes you have championed. Our relationship has changed over the years. I have

been a Back Bencher asking questions, as well as a shadow Minister, a Minister, and a Secretary of State—all while you sat in that Chair and adjudicated over our proceedings.

In my experience, the approach that you have taken to parliamentary matters, in particular urgent questions that have allowed Members to raise issues with Ministers and Departments, has been unfailingly fair. Whenever a Department has been genuinely getting on with an issue and had a good case to make for a question not being urgent, you have looked at that point and processed it fairly. I was a Minister for many years, and I never had any issues with the way you made such a decision. Indeed, I welcomed the chance for my Department and ministerial team to be held to account in the Chamber. In my view, your decision made us behave more appropriately and up our game, which is exactly what it was meant to do.

One final point that has not yet been highlighted is the Speaker's parliamentary placement scheme, which has enabled the House to become accessible to a range of young people from backgrounds that are very different from those of the more traditional cohorts of MPs and employees. Like a number of other Members, I have had two candidates from the scheme in my office over the past two years, and they were both outstanding. Not only did they learn, I hope, from the chance to take part in the scheme that you set up, but my office, my team and I also learned and grew from having those candidates as part of our team. The chance to open up Parliament to a new generation of young people who would otherwise not get the chance to come here, and let them realise that this is everybody's Parliament, is one of the most powerful steps you have taken. I very much hope that your successor will continue the scheme, and consider how it can be expanded so that young people from all over the country, and many more MPs, have the chance to experience the wonderful Speaker's parliamentary placement scheme.

Mr Speaker, you have been a parliamentary referee during perhaps the toughest game that we have played here for many years. I am sure that has taken its toll on both you and your family, and the support you have received from them has been amazing. I wish you well in the next phase of your life. As I, too, leave this House, perhaps our paths will cross again, but in different capacities.

**Mr Speaker:** Thank you.

11.53 am

**Tom Brake** (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): I will start from a slightly different place from other Members, and thank you, Mr Speaker, for the support you have given me on the House of Commons Commission. We have not necessarily seen eye to eye on every matter raised, but I am sure we both wish to thank the staff who supported you, and the civil servants who supported me. I have no idea whether I will be back seeking their support again, or indeed whether I will return to my position as spokesman for the House of Commons Commission, but they do sterling work for us and support us effectively.

I want to start, as others have, by thanking your family. We all know, as politicians, that our families are often on the frontline. They do not see enough of us



[Tom Brake]

and when they do, it is not exactly quality time that they get with us, so I hope that you will spend very valuable time with them in the future. I remember, as one of the highlights of being in this place, attending one of the events you organised in the Speaker's House and your children coming in to kiss daddy goodnight. I remember that and often use it as an anecdote when I am doing my best to entertain people.

I want to commend you for your commitment to modernising this place. Many people have referred to some of the initiatives you have spearheaded, whether proxy voting, the Youth Parliament, the education service or the much greater frequency with which urgent questions are heard in this place. I would like to commend you for improving the diversity among staff and making the House of Commons a place where hopefully anyone will feel comfortable working, including our excellent Chaplain, Rose, who has served us so well.

As one of the House of Commons Commission members, I want to draw attention to the work you have done in pushing through the restoration and renewal project. That is something that needs to move forward. The mother of all Parliaments is at real risk of simply collapsing around our ears. The role you have played in making sure that the restoration and renewal project proceeds will certainly rest as one of your legacies in this place.

Finally, and I think perhaps most importantly, I would like to commend you for ensuring that this Parliament is not an encumbrance to be trampled upon, but a sovereign Parliament proud and resolute in standing up for the rights of our constituents and the people of the United Kingdom. From the Liberal Democrat Benches, I wish you a very bright and positive future.

**Mr Speaker:** I thank the right hon. Gentleman very warmly for that. We have worked together for a long time.

11.56 am

**Dr Julian Lewis** (New Forest East) (Con): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for calling me, for once, quite early on in proceedings and not “saving the good doctor” for tail-end Charlie. [Laughter.] One of the disadvantages, it must be said, of having originally met you 15 years before we both entered the House in 1997, is the fact that you have, from time to time, felt it incumbent upon yourself to demonstrate that you were showing no particular favouritism to a personal friend by not calling me perhaps as early as I would have liked.

I was impressed that the shadow Leader of the House referred to our 10-year period training up Conservative activists—I think 600 in all—before we entered the House of Commons together in 1997. At that time, I used to do the campaigning part of the course and you used to do the oratorical part of the course. You used to say that in a good speech the speaker should have, at best, one key point and at most two key points to convey to the audience. So, my one key point about you, your character and your speakership is that you have shown that you are a good man to have by one's side when the going gets rough. That does not just apply to individuals; it applied to Parliament as a whole, because when you came into office in 2009 the going was very rough indeed.

You made your entry into Parliament in a somewhat dramatic way as the MP for Buckingham. Such were your skills as an orator during the selection process, you had been shortlisted for not only Buckingham but the Surrey Heath constituency. You were due to be in the semi-final in Surrey Heath and in the final in Buckingham on the same night. You will recall that, at my suggestion, we organised a helicopter to enable you to go from one interview to the other, so that you would not have to withdraw. I know that you have felt for many years a great deal of gratitude towards me for making that possible. I have to tell you that that gratitude was entirely misplaced, because I knew that only a few days later, the process of selecting for New Forest East was going to begin, and we were both on the longlist. [Laughter.] I thought, “If I can't get this blighter selected, I'm not going to have a chance,” so it worked out as a win-win situation.

It has often been remarked, and has been again today, that you went on a political journey, but the detail of that political journey has not always been spelt out as clearly as it should be. There is a myth out there that the young Bercow was part of the Monday club, had very right-wing views, and then saw the light and repudiated them all. It is with great pleasure, therefore, that I remind the House that on 2 December 1997, when we had both been elected and there was a Second Reading debate on the treaty of Amsterdam, I was making only my fourth speech from the Benches of the House of Commons and you—chuntering from a sedentary position—kept heckling me on why it was that I was such a johnny-come-lately to the cause of ardent Euro-scepticism. Some people may wish that some journeys had been rather shorter than they turned out to be.

I will not detain the House much longer, other than to make a couple of closing points. I am still waiting for the dinner that I earned in a bet with a young female Conservative MP—now a Minister, I am delighted to say—when she made a bet with me that you would not last one year as Speaker without being ejected. And I observe that now, finally—at last—freed from the constraints of the speakership, you will feel able to speak your mind and not hold back your views so self-effacingly.

On a more serious note, but a heartfelt one, as well as thanking you for your personal friendship over many years, I am sure that you will agree that it would be nice to close this tribute to you with a personal tribute that I would like to make to the right hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Ann Clwyd). She has been here for 35 years, and in all that time, she has never ceased to promote human rights at home and abroad. From the opposite side of the Chamber, I salute her as I salute you, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Speaker:** Thank you. I completely endorse what the right hon. Gentleman just said about the right hon. Lady, who has been fearless, principled and insistent on speaking up for the rights of people around the world when those rights have been egregiously abused. If ever there has been, in this Parliament, a voice for the voiceless, she has been that voice.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

12.3 pm

**Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): On a personal note, Mr Speaker, you know that I met you before you were a Member of Parliament, and I can



remember what an irritating young man you were at that time. [*Laughter.*] You were clever, and you knew it, and a bit arrogant with it, and you wanted to tell me just how right you were on every political issue—this is before you were in Parliament. Over the years, I have got to know and like you a great deal, and I hope that I can count you as a friend. You actually like my ties, which is something that recommends you to me.

When I chaired the Education Committee, I remember that you asked me to come to your constituency, and then much later you asked whether you could come to Huddersfield to see what sort of constituency I represented. I have told the House this before. I met you at Wakefield station. You got off the train and said, “It’s a hell of a long way, isn’t it?” Of course it is—it is nearly 200 miles to Huddersfield. We had a fantastic day together. I think you have learned a great deal from going to people’s constituencies and finding out what the journeys are like and how vulnerable we are when we are travelling. I think you woke up to that on that day and have been such a good influence ever since—remember this was just after Jo Cox was murdered. It was also the day after the referendum, so it was an auspicious occasion.

On a more personal note, you know I have a large family: three daughters, a son and 12 grandchildren. A few years ago, we were wondering what to do on Boxing Day. We were all down in London for a big reunion and thought we would go to London Zoo. Of course, the favourite place to go was the penguin pool, and who did we find there? You, your wife and your children. It gave a flavour of you as the great family person we all know you are. We love that you and Sally have been living here with your family. The kids seem to have grown up really wonderfully even in this strange environment. I congratulate you on all that.

You are very easy to get on with, and you are a very good friend, so may I have the privilege of giving you some careers advice? I give a lot of careers advice. I am told it is one of the things I am quite good at: helping people to identify their talents and moving them on a bit. Now, I did not realise that you are a very good manager. I recall the dark days in this place before you became Speaker. It just needed management. From those early days, you built up a great team of people around you. It was not easy, but you made changes in a place that was desperately badly managed. We had inherited a crazy system, but you came in and transformed the management of this place. I think we will look back on the Bercow years as great years for Parliament. It is more efficient and sensitive in so many areas—families, children, women and diversity—and you will be remembered for all that, but you will also be remembered for bringing this place back to life. We were in deep trouble and you helped us to save it and led that saving process.

I want to repeat something I said earlier about what you went through at a certain stage in your career and how the press treated you—not just the red tops, but *The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph*, people who used to be MPs. Political sketch writers used to be funny—not some of those who hounded you. We know who they are. They stimulated on social media some ghastly stuff that you and your family had to put up with, and I am proud that you stood up to it. It didn’t get you down and you are still here, a robust champion of everything you did.

The careers advice comes now. You are still very young. I hope to be re-elected as the Member for Huddersfield, and if I am successful, I will miss you, but you are only in your mid-50s, I think, which is just the time to start a brilliant new career. I won’t talk about Frank Sinatra. His voice, though I loved it, had gone by then. You are in the prime of your life and I see you making a contribution greater even than the one you have made up to now. I say to the Leader of the House: it would be an absolute insult to the House if the tradition that the Speaker is offered a seat in the House of Lords was not respected. I was worried this week when the Prime Minister failed to pay a warm tribute to the Father of the House. I hope that that kind of pettiness will not go to a repudiation of a long tradition that our Speaker, when he retires from this place, is offered a place in the House of Lords.

Even if that happened, Mr Speaker, you have your talent—that of mimicry, your voices and all that stuff. Yesterday, I was phoned by ABC, which said, “Would your Speaker be interested in doing a programme? We love him in America.” I said, “No, we want him to have a brand new television programme about politics called ‘Order, Order!’” So, Mr Speaker, I want you to stay in politics, do a really good job on the media and bring that to life in the way that you have brought this place to life. But whatever you decide, Godspeed.

**Mr Speaker:** I am extraordinarily grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I am conscious that these exchanges have become very lengthy, and there is other business with which the House has to deal. That is not a criticism of anybody. People have spoken genuinely from the heart, and I appreciate that, but if we are to accommodate colleagues and then get on to the very important business of tributes to the Reverend Rose, which must happen, and in the most fulsome terms, perhaps a little self-discipline would assist us.

12.10 pm

**Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con):** You will be aware, Mr Speaker, that it was recently announced that we are being given a new hospital in Harlow, one of six to be built—in the early stages—in the country. I mention that because much of it is down to you. You gave me five debates. You allowed me to ask questions. You helped me when I came to you to say that this was a very important issue in my constituency. That example is recent, but it is one of many throughout my time in the House since 2010. What is not known in the media is how often you help MPs who have real constituency issues to make their case to the Government, and I think that the Leader of the House mentioned that.

You have been unfailingly kind to me, and unfailingly helpful whenever I needed to support the people of my constituency. Whatever may happen at the general election, much of what I have been able to do is down to you, and the people of Harlow owe you a debt for what you have enabled me to do in my role as MP. I thank you for your constant kindness to me over the last few years. I will never forget it, and I wish you every possible success in the future.

**Mr Speaker:** I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman.

12.12 pm

**Ann Clwyd** (Cynon Valley) (Lab): I do not use many words, but I want to say to you, Mr Speaker, that I cannot imagine this place without you. I have been here a very long time now, as the right hon. Member for New Forest East (Dr Lewis) and my hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield (Mr Sheerman) know. When it was difficult for women to get into politics, my hon. Friend helped me to become the MEP for Mid and West Wales, and I thank him for that. I have disagreed with the right hon. Member for New Forest East, particularly on defence matters over the years, but I still look on him as a friend.

As for you, Mr Speaker, the BBC, apparently, has a particular tribute to you. It talks about your catchphrase, “the traditional cry of Commons speakers through the centuries... ‘Order!’, often elongated and twisted into an extraordinary sound that is all his own.

To mark his retirement, the BBC has analysed 100 years of Hansard—the official Parliamentary record—to discover just how different he was to any previous occupant of the chair.

The first thing we discovered is that he has said ‘Order!’ nearly 14,000 times.”

I think that must be a record, but it

“is just the beginning of the Bercow story in statistics.”

I want to thank you in particular, Mr Speaker, on behalf of those of us in this place who are older. There is a place for older people in this Parliament. Sometimes we are not able to jump to our feet quite as fast as we used to when we first came here 35 years ago. I am grateful that, when I had a new knee, you allowed me to sit down but still get in on questions. Thank you for that.

Thank you also for understanding people’s weaknesses and strengths in this place. I have sat here since 1984—I cannot count under how many Speakers, but it is quite a number—and you, in my view, have been the best, because you have given us Back Benchers, in particular, the opportunity to get in on questions, urgent questions, statements and all the rest. Sometimes it has been difficult to catch your eye, although I usually wear a red coat. However, I quite understand that, and I feel grateful to you for opening up this Parliament to everybody, which many of my hon. Friends have mentioned. That is particularly the case with Speaker’s House. People from outside who have come here have been amazed by how accessible you have been to the public.

You have been particularly nice to children. My nieces and nephews wrote to you after being here. They wanted to know what you have for breakfast; you had some conversation with them about food. They were very young and kept asking me that question, so I said, “Why don’t you write and ask him?” I think they got an answer as well.

Thank you for everything. Thank you for being such a good human being. You were very active before you were Speaker, particularly on human rights, so I hope you will continue to be the voice for people who need your help all over the world. I am sure you will be, because that is your natural instinct.

Diolch yn fawr, Llefarydd—thank you, Mr Speaker. Welsh is my first language; I spoke my first few words here in Welsh. Thank you very much from all of us. I will not say happy retirement. I do not like the word “retirement” because those of us who want to keep on talking will, I am sure, use every opportunity to do so.

12.17 pm

**Sir Christopher Chope** (Christchurch) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Ann Clwyd). In so doing, may I thank her for her exemplary public service over so many years?

The hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr Sheerman) referred to career advice. I can remember, Mr Speaker, that you once asked me, at one of these meetings of potential Conservative candidates, whether I could give you some advice as to how you might become a proper parliamentary candidate selected in a constituency. The advice I gave you, which you followed, was that you should get married. That just reminds us, does it not, of how times have changed?

You and I have been friends for many years. I had the privilege of nominating you for the Conservative party candidates list at a time when our views were very similar. Indeed, one of your qualifications then was that you regarded, as did I, Enoch Powell as a schoolboy hero. I think that in more recent weeks, you have been following the advice that Enoch gave. I had the privilege of serving with him on the—*[Interruption.]* Yes, back in 1984 this was. Enoch Powell was on the Procedure Committee, and he gave advice to us that, in the absence of a written constitution, the procedures of the House are our constitution. That is something that you have taken very much to heart over recent weeks and months, Mr Speaker. I hope that nothing that has happened in that period will cause pressure to build for a written constitution, because that would deprive us of those flexibilities.

You have obviously been a really good servant for Back Benchers. You have also always had your finger on the pulse. I will give just one example of that. Back in 2010, after the coalition Government were elected, there was an announcement that the Government were going to bring in a measure which had not been in the manifestos of either of the two coalition parties: to change the prerogative powers of the Prime Minister to call a general election. You, with your finger on the pulse, chose me to secure the first Adjournment debate of that Parliament on the subject of the Dissolution of Parliament. The debate, which I think went on for about an hour and a half, was an opportunity for new Members and old to hold the Government to account for their extraordinary announcement, which at that stage was for a threshold of 55% in order to trigger an election. We asked questions such as, “55% of what?” On that occasion, Mr Speaker, you showed your perspicacity regarding which issues were going to be—and indeed still are—important.

You were fantastic, Mr Speaker, when we had the presidency of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. You went out of your way to impress our colleagues across the other 46 countries that belong to the Parliamentary Assembly, and then you stood up for those of us in this House who found ourselves being arbitrarily removed from membership of the Parliamentary Assembly because we had had the temerity to vote against the Government’s attempts to try to rig the referendum by suspending the rules of purdah. Your intervention caused the Government to be put into the naughty corner. As a result, a few years later, those of us who had been removed from the Parliamentary

Assembly were reinstated. I thank you for that and for your fantastic service to this place and to democracy over so many years.

**Mr Speaker:** Thank you. I really appreciate what the hon. Gentleman has said. We have known each other for 35 years and I richly appreciate his words.

12.21 pm

**Chris Bryant** (Rhondda) (Lab): I do not think that the Leader of the House should be so shy today. He is an innovator—we have now had a statement that has become a debate. That has never happened before in the history of Parliament, so he is a great innovator and we look forward to his many more innovations.

I want to pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Ann Clwyd). Tony Blair never managed to say that correctly; according to him, it was always “Sinon Valley”. I first met her on a trip long before I was a Member of Parliament. She was already a doughty figure in the Labour movement when we went to Chile many years ago. As many Members have said, she has stood up for human rights—and for that matter sat down for human rights in Tower colliery. I know that her constituents, and mine in the Rhondda too, for that matter, have a great deal of respect for her.

As for you, Mr Speaker, I hope that you remember Tom Harris. Tom was not the most left-wing of Labour MPs. Indeed, on one occasion in the Tea Room, when he was trying to say that he was a leftie, I said to him, “Tom, the only vaguely left-wing thing about you is that you quite like the gays”—he decided he would have that on his tombstone one day.

It is not often that I speak solely about the LGBT issue, but I think it has been an essential part of your journey, Mr Speaker. There have been occasions when Speaker’s House has felt a bit like a gay bar night after night, which is wonderful, because change has come so quickly in this country, as has acceptance and diversity. You have played a very important part in that.

The main reason why I wanted to speak is that I want to say a very specific thank you. For centuries, as hon. Members will know, Members of Parliament and their very close relatives have been allowed to get married in St Mary Undercroft. Many have taken advantage of that and it has been a great delight to them. Of course, that was never available to gay MPs, and it still is not because of the rules of the Church of England. I fully understand that, although I did have to persuade Richard Harries, the former Bishop of Oxford, that he could not marry me, first because canon law did not allow it and also because the law of the land did not allow it.

When it was mooted that we should be able to find somewhere in the Palace of Westminster where gay and lesbian MPs would be able to form their civil partnerships, you, Mr Speaker, were the first person who leapt forward and said that you would do everything in your power to try to make it happen. I know this to be the case because you rang Chris Mullin to ask him what he thought about it. Chris Mullin has always been a very liberal-minded chap—he is always in favour of the modern world, diversity and so on—and he was very friendly to me and my partner, Jared Cranney, but I happen to know, because it is Chris Mullin’s published diaries, that he said that he thought that civil partnerships

in the Palace of Westminster would be a step too far at that time. But you ploughed on, Mr Speaker, and what was particularly nice was that opening up the Palace to allowing civil partnerships meant that any member of the public could form a civil partnership in the Palace. We have now made that possible for several hundreds of people, I understand, which is a great delight.

I particularly remember Harriet—if you don’t mind my calling the Mother of the House that—chatting to Cilla Black, Sally, Pat Brunner and lots of other women from the Rhondda Labour party, with copious quantities of champagne and everyone enjoying themselves enormously. We were the first civil partnership in Parliament, and that was entirely down to you, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Speaker:** I am very grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I think it was on Saturday 27 March 2010. I remember it extremely well and it was a very happy occasion. It brought no harm to anyone, but it brought much happiness.

12.26 pm

**Philip Davies** (Shipley) (Con): As you know, Mr Speaker, I did not vote for you to become the Speaker when you were elected in 2009, and I am sure you will recall that I spent about an hour with you, sitting down at a table over a cup of tea and explaining all the reasons why I was not going to vote for you to become Speaker. I think that it is also fair to say, Mr Speaker, that we have had our disagreements, particularly on the decisions you have made over Brexit in recent times; I do not think that will come as a great shock to anybody either in the House or outside the House, but we have always conducted those conversations in perfectly civil terms.

Mr Speaker, you have always been immensely kind to me in my time in the House of Commons, not least during the preparations for our wedding—mine and Esther’s—next year, about which you have been especially kind. I must at this point pay tribute to Rose, the chaplain—an inspired appointment by you, Mr Speaker—who has been equally amazingly kind to me and Esther, and indeed is so kind that she has offered to come back to conduct the service even after she has left, which is a mark of her as a person and which is very special for both me and Esther; we are very privileged that that has been the case. That was an inspired appointment by you, Mr Speaker, and you have been incredibly kind.

However, Mr Speaker, I think and hope you will be most remembered for your support for Back Benchers. As you know, I am a permanent Back Bencher, Mr Speaker, so this is more important to me than anybody else; as I always say, the one thing that the Prime Minister and I always agree about is that I should be on the Back Benches. You have always been a champion of Back Benchers, to allow everybody’s opinion, whatever it is, to be heard in the Chamber, and I have always been immensely grateful for that.

Some people have very short memories, but I remember when I first entered Parliament in 2005 in Question Times we barely got beyond Question 6 or 7 on the Order Paper and at Prime Minister’s questions those with a question after Question 10 had no chance of being called, to the great irritation of many colleagues who had spent ages trying to get on the Order Paper for Prime Minister’s questions only to find that they could



[Philip Davies]

not even get to ask their question. I do not think anyone could possibly go back to that kind of regime now; indeed, I do not think the House will allow any Speaker to go back to such a regime, and that is because of your making sure that Back Benchers get to have their say. That has made what I think will be a permanent change to the way that this House operates.

I have been very grateful for your friendship over many years, and the fact that you came to my constituency and spoke at Beckfoot School, which those there particularly cherished. I hope we will stay in touch after you have finished your term, Mr Speaker, and I wish you every success for the future.

**Mr Speaker:** I am extremely grateful to the hon. Gentleman. He and I will continue to have curry together: I think we can be sure about that.

12.29 pm

**Seema Malhotra** (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op): May I take this opportunity, Mr Speaker, to put on record my thanks to you and my appreciation for all your guidance and support since the day I was elected? You are an extraordinary parliamentarian, human being and friend to so many—and I extend that to your family, who also deserve our thanks. As I know, your welcome to new MPs goes a long way towards settling them in the House at a very daunting time for them, when everything is so confusing. It went a long way towards giving me the confidence to stand up in the House and do my duty on behalf of my constituents, and I thank you for that.

May I also say thank you on behalf of my family? My brother Sundeep in Australia has just texted me to say that he, too, wants to extend his best wishes and his thanks to you, particularly for your support when we were going through extremely difficult times, notably the illness and death of my father. You were accommodating when I had to leave before a debate ended; you came to our last family tea downstairs; and your letter to my father wishing him good health was a huge boost to his spirits in his final months.

Your commitment to equality and wellbeing has been second to none in the House. I know how much you have done. It has indeed been an honour to serve on your Speaker's Committee on equality, diversity and inclusion since very soon after I was elected, and I am grateful for the opportunity to do so. You have done incredible work, often behind the scenes, to secure a proxy vote for colleagues who are benefiting from that now. You have been committed to increasing diversity in senior and significant positions in the House, and the visibility of that diversity has gone a long way towards making the House seem feel more relevant and inclusive, not just to us here, but to those outside.

**Penny Mordaunt** (Portsmouth North) (Con): Will the hon. Lady give way?

**Seema Malhotra:** These are responses to a statement.

Mr Speaker, your work on the Education Centre has been extraordinary. You are an agent of change, and you set a standard for how to push the boundaries to

achieve the reform and revitalisation that are so desperately needed, no matter what the organisation. I also thank you on behalf of my constituents, because I know that hundreds, if not thousands, have been through the Education Centre. Young people, many of primary school age, have been able to experience the House and build a connection with a place that is their House and is fighting for their future, too. I have no doubt that future parliamentarians, and indeed future Speakers, will embark on their roles in public life as a result of their experiences of our fantastic Education Centre and all who work in it.

You have opened up Speaker's House, where we have held events such as National Sikh Awareness and History Month. Indeed, you hosted an event marking the first anniversary of the launch of a project in Hounslow, Hounslow's Promise, which seeks to advance the educational attainment, social mobility and employability of our young people.

I also pay tribute to you for your defence of this House and our democracy. This is a House that is a beacon of democracy across the world. Its integrity and its reputation as a national institution go beyond us as individuals and must never be taken for granted. It is indeed for each of us to protect and safeguard the House, because it is our democracy that keeps our nation safe.

You have led us through unbearable times—events that have stunned the nation, such as the terror attack on Parliament and the murder of our dear friend Jo Cox. You have also seen us through the unconventional but extremely important and peaceful unveiling, on a Saturday, of her coat of arms here behind us, by her husband and her children. I was honoured to be here that day, along with local councillors Adriana Gheorghe, Candice Atterton and Samia Chaudhary, and others who came to support the family at that time and to remember Jo.

In the Chamber, Mr Speaker, you have been tough and fair when that has been needed for either Front or Back Benchers, but you have also been generous when that has been needed. You have, for instance, been generous in respect of urgent constituency matters—including events such as the life, and then the death, of young Charlie Gard from my constituency—and, indeed, in respect of policy matters such as those relating to young offenders in Feltham young offenders institution. You have allowed us to raise those issues at moments of great importance, and I am grateful to you, as are my constituents, for the times when that has made the difference.

Mr Speaker, you have touched the lives of hundreds of thousands who have walked through the doors of this place. You are loved by many across the House, political friend and foe alike, and you will be deeply missed. I know, however, that this will not be the end of a sterling career and that whatever you do next will be a great contribution to our democracy and to our country. I am excited, as well as intrigued, about what it might be.

12.36 pm

**Richard Harrington** (Watford) (Con): You have been given careers advice today, Mr Speaker, by people rather more experienced than I am, particularly the hon. Member

for Huddersfield (Mr Sheerman), but I have been thinking a lot about this. At first I thought that perhaps you could be the host of the Radio 4 programme “Just a Minute”, but, given your experience, can you imagine no deviation, hesitation or repetition? No chance!

Then I thought of a programme of my childhood, which older Members may recall; you may recall it, Mr Speaker, and the Leader of the House may as well. I thought that there might be a remake of the programme “Call My Bluff”. You could be the Frank Muir character. Let me explain for the benefit of younger Members that each of the members of one panel would give a definition of an English word—most of the people listening would have no idea what it meant—and the others had to decide which version of was correct. “Chunter” is a good example, and now you have made it into a household word, Mr Speaker. It can be a verb, an adverb, a noun—almost anything.

You are the only Speaker who has been in the post during my time in the House, and I think that you have been a very fair, very decent and very honourable Speaker. Given the nonsense that you have put up with—here, in the press and everywhere else—it is to your credit that you have seen your way through it all. Your system, Mr Speaker, is based on what my children and my former employees have called my system: parenting and management by sarcasm. I think you should be very proud of that, because you have taken it to a new level. Sarcasm can be used as a way to control 650 people—as well as my children and my former employees.

You have fans everywhere, Mr Speaker. My mother has a large photograph of you on her mantelpiece at home, and I am continually asked, “Why can’t you be like John Bercow?” Harriet Rainbow in my office, the doyenne of the Watford parliamentary office, is also a big fan.

Every time I have stood up to speak in the Chamber, I have said, “Thank you, Mr Speaker”—so I will finish by saying, “Thank you, Mr Speaker.”

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Gentleman is extraordinarily generous. He has talked about employees, and as well as being a very diligent Member of Parliament, he has employed a lot of people over the years. As his mum knows very well, before he came into this House he was an extremely successful business person. That is something that I have never been. There are lots of things I have never been, and I have never been a successful business person. I thank the hon. Gentleman for what he has said and for the way in which he has said it.

12.39 pm

**Ian Mearns** (Gateshead) (Lab): For the very last time: I am grateful to you for calling me to speak, Mr Speaker. It has been a real pleasure to work under your speakership for the past nine and a half years. My right hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Ann Clwyd) stole a little piece of my thunder by mentioning the fact that the BBC reported this morning that you had used the term “Order, order” no fewer than just under 14,000 times. Maybe you are fortunate in one way, because you might not have achieved that record, had we been living through less interesting political times. Those interesting times were exemplified two Saturdays ago when we assembled here in this Chamber for Prayers and your Chaplain used the words, “be not anxious”. A nervous giggle ran

around the House, and I thought that that was a moment to treasure because it captured the mood of the House, and the mood of the country, in the light of the political position we are currently in.

Mr Speaker, you have been a true champion of Back Benchers for the entire duration of my nine and a half years’ tenure in this House. For nine of those years, I have served as a member of the Backbench Business Committee, and for the past four and a half years, I have been Chair of that Committee. Sir, you have been a champion not just of Back Benchers but of the role of the Backbench Business Committee, which came into being when I first entered the House. Through your speakership, the Committee has allowed Members across the House to air issues of vital importance to their constituents across the whole United Kingdom. You have been a true champion of their capacity and ability to do that. You have allowed us as Back Benchers to hold the Executive to account.

On behalf of my elder sister, I also want to thank you for pronouncing my name correctly. I think we had a little lesson about that in a curry house not too far away from this very establishment. It has been a pleasure to work under your speakership, and I wish you a very long and happy next stage of your career.

12.42 pm

**Sir Henry Bellingham** (North West Norfolk) (Con): May I please ask for your indulgence, Mr Speaker? I have to go and chair a debate in Westminster Hall, but I should like, initially, to pay tribute to the Speaker’s Chaplain. Bishop Rose has been an inspiration to us all, and one of the great joys of having an early question on the Order Paper has been to come into Prayers and hear the uplifting, spiritual and wholly Christian way in which she conducts Prayers.

When I came back into the House in 2001, after a short absence courtesy of an ungrateful electorate, you and I became friends, Mr Speaker. In fact, we always happened to sit near each other in the Chamber, on the third row back, quite near where the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr Sheerman) now sits. You always gave me good advice. I had been in the House a few years before that, but the House had changed a great deal. At that stage, you were, at different times, shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury and shadow Secretary of State for International Development. We had some very interesting discussions. In fact, you were so robust that you made me look like an old-fashioned Tory wet and a moderniser. You also taught me something else. Whenever you jumped up to try to catch the Speaker’s eye, you had a habit of giving the back of the Bench in front a loud, firm kick. I will not try to demonstrate that now. It always worked, because Speaker Martin would look up, see you and call you to speak. On one occasion, when I was trying to get called, you were sitting next to me but not trying to get called. I started kicking the Bench in front, but Speaker Martin called you, even though you were not standing.

**Philip Davies:** You were one of the few people he knew, Mr Speaker.

**Sir Henry Bellingham:** Well, that is certainly not a fault with you, Mr Speaker. Your memory and recollection of every single name and detail regarding every colleague is beyond extraordinary.

[*Sir Henry Bellingham*]

I have spent the last fortnight or so on the Speaker election hustings. The candidates have not agreed on everything, but one thing that all nine of us have agreed on is that you have done the most superb job for Back Benchers. You have done this through the urgent question revolution, through Back-Bench debates and through calling colleagues to speak when you know that they have a particular constituency interest.

We also agree that what you have done for outreach, for children and for schools has been transformational. In the past, when school parties came down from Norfolk, they would meet me in Central Lobby and we would struggle to find a Committee Room and there was nowhere to go for a cup of coffee. Now, they can go to the Jubilee Café and to the new Education Centre, and it is a completely different experience, thanks to you. You have made the lives of those children much more fulfilling in terms of their understanding of democracy than was ever the case before.

I entirely agree with the Leader of the House that you look out for colleagues who have individual constituency cases. When there is a real issue, you come to the rescue of those colleagues and help them to get justice and some form of satisfaction for their constituents. The hon. Member for Gateshead (Ian Mearns) and I were both on the HS2 Select Committee, and during that inquiry we spent a lot of time going along the route of HS2. That included a number of days in your constituency, Mr Speaker, where we had meetings with action groups and residents in communities and villages. One of the things that struck me—and, I am sure, the hon. Member for Gateshead—was that, whenever you arrived at a meeting of distraught village residents, you not only knew the name of every single one of them, but you knew everything there was to know about the village. You were the local MP who was on their side, and you were admired and respected in a way that few of us could aspire to achieve. You were able to do that in spite of also carrying out your duties here as Speaker.

I thank you for the way in which you have helped me on a lot of different issues, to do with my constituency and elsewhere, both in my capacity as a Minister and as a Back Bencher. You can leave this place confident and secure in the knowledge that you are leaving behind a powerful, special and long-lasting legacy.

**Mr Speaker:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for what he has said.

12.47 pm

**Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): I should like to carry on this theme about names. When I was selected as a candidate, my constituency neighbour, John Prescott, seemed to have a problem with my name. He kept calling me Melanie. Then, when I got to the House of Commons, the then Speaker seemed to have a problem with my name as well, because he referred to me as Jacqui. So I am delighted that you have never had a problem with my name, Mr Speaker. You have always called me Diana, for which I am very grateful.

First, I want to thank you on behalf of the children of Hull, because through the Hull Children's University, so many of them have been able to visit Parliament and to use the Education Centre, which I know is very dear

to your heart. Huddersfield is a long way from Westminster, but Hull is even further, so this is a great tribute to your commitment to ensuring that this place is accessible to children from all around the country. I also want to thank you on behalf of the Youth Parliament for the work you have done to support those budding politicians and for inviting them into this Chamber and overseeing their proceedings.

I personally would like to thank you for the kindness you have shown me when I have come to you with illness or adversity. You have always been a very decent, kind man, and I very much appreciate that.

Your use of urgent questions has been remarked on by many in the House today. I think I probably have the record for the number of urgent questions you have granted to any Back Bencher, and they have been on the issue of contaminated blood. I know that the community who have been infected and affected by that awful scandal in the NHS hold you in very high esteem and regard for allowing parliamentarians to pursue the Government of the day and to seek justice for what happened to them. I want to say a very big thank you on behalf of that group.

You have also been innovative with urgent questions. I remember coming to speak to you when the Church of England made the ridiculous decision not to allow women bishops, and I asked you what Parliament could do to make the Church of England think again. You advised me that, although it had never happened before, an urgent question could be submitted to bring the Second Church Estates Commissioner to the House to answer for the Church of England, so a big thank you for that. I am delighted that we have one of the women bishops in the Church of England with us today.

You have always been a great champion of women's rights, particularly on sensitive issues such as abortion. You have allowed debate in this Chamber on issues that people find difficult and sensitive. The way that you have allowed debates to take place, particularly on the issue in Northern Ireland, has been really important. My hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy) is a doughty champion of women's rights, and I know that she holds you in high regard.

I am going to miss you, and I send you every good wish for whatever it is you go on to do. Whatever it is, it will be an enormous success, but we will miss you.

12.51 pm

**Tracey Crouch** (Chatham and Aylesford) (Con): I can exclusively reveal that the tactic of kicking the Bench in order to be called works, Mr Speaker. I start by echoing the opening words of the Leader of the House about what you have done to revolutionise the work of the education service. The way that it now brings children of all ages through this place and introduces them to Parliament is phenomenal. I also pay tribute to what you did with the Youth Parliament. I was lucky enough to be the Minister with responsibility for the Youth Parliament, and I stood at the Dispatch Box, with the shadow Leader of the House opposite me, to make the opening statement. I found it really quite intimidating, and the quality of debate in the Youth Parliament was incredible, so I thank you for bringing that through here.

I want to make my own personal tribute to the right hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Ann Clwyd). I do not know her particularly well, but I hold her in great



esteem and shall miss her and, indeed, the many experienced colleagues who are leaving this place. Young whippersnappers like myself need wise counsel from those who have been here for many years. I am grateful that we in Kent have my right hon. Friend the Member for North Thanet (Sir Roger Gale), who gave all new MPs elected in 2010 templates for what he does to help us in dealing with our constituents. I know full well that if I have a difficult piece of casework, there are Members across the House who have seen it all before and to whom we can go for advice.

I have known you for what I thought was a long time, Mr Speaker, but we have never been for a curry, so perhaps we do not know each other as well as I thought. However, a few weeks ago, I said to Mr Speaker that I had fallen out of love with the Chamber in recent months. It has been an incredibly challenging time in Parliament, and I just was not feeling like I was here or that I really valued what we do. Mr Speaker has been kind enough to call me on a regular basis over the past couple of weeks for questions and interventions and so on, and I have fallen back in love with this Chamber. I thank you, Mr Speaker, for giving me the confidence to move from the Front Bench to the Back Benches and feel like I can make a positive contribution in a debate. I am genuinely grateful to you.

I do not know whether colleagues are aware of this, but in all good bookstores there is now a book called “Be More Bercow”. It is an excellent book—

**Dr Julian Lewis:** Did he write it?

**Tracey Crouch:** Mr Speaker did not write it but, like some other hon. Members, I have had him sign a couple of copies for auction. The book has quotes that he has said over many years and then, on the next page, some self-help. For example, as we have heard Mr Speaker say many times, “Calm down man”—a quote that will follow you around for some time—may be on one page, and then there will be a mindfulness lesson about how to breathe properly in order to calm yourself down. We can all learn from elements of “Be More Bercow” but one lesson that is not in there is how not to go to the toilet for over nine hours. Mr Speaker, you have the bladder of a camel. Had you not announced your retirement, we ought to have thought about reinstating the commode that was under the Speaker’s Chair once upon a time.

You are an extraordinary character, Mr Speaker, and I have sat here since 9.30 am listening to some incredible tributes to you, but it is about time that I offered some balance. It is true that you have been a champion of Back Benchers, and you are also a champion of sport, which I really appreciated when I was Sports Minister—I am still very sorry for playing football here in the Chamber. However, Mr Speaker, you are still a Gooner. I would like all Speaker candidates to promise me that the next Speaker will not allow another debate paying tribute to Arsène Wenger or, indeed, any other Arsenal manager, particularly if the Sports Minister who has to reply to it is, like me, a lifelong Tottenham fan.

I do not refer to those I employ as my staff. I think of them very much as part of my team. In this place, we are nothing without those in our team, so I take this

opportunity to pay tribute not just to you, but to Jim, Peter and Ian, who work for you. There are others whose names I do not know, but I am sure that they keep you under control. I also thank Reverend Rose, who is very much part of our team in Parliament. I have taken great comfort from her spiritual guidance, and I will be forever grateful that she christened my son Freddie. I thank her and thank you, sir, and I wish you well in whatever happens next.

12.56 pm

**Paula Sherriff** (Dewsbury) (Lab) *rose*—

**Liz McInnes** (Heywood and Middleton) (Lab): It was all going so well. [*Laughter.*]

**Paula Sherriff:** What can I say, Mr Speaker? I hope we have moved on since that Wednesday a few years ago when you threatened me with an antisocial behaviour order here in this Chamber. I will keep my remarks brief today but, as the hon. Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch) just suggested, we are nothing without a good team, and I want to thank Jim, Peter, Ian, Rose, of course, and all the others in your private office who have served you and all of us so well. They are simply the best of us. As an example of their humanity, when I was working on the period poverty campaign, one of those gentlemen to whom I just referred approached me in the corridor one day with a carrier bag. He had gone out and bought loads of women’s sanitary products, and he said, “Will you donate these to somebody in need? I have never done this before. I have never gone into a supermarket or a chemist and bought these items.” I just thought that was really touching.

Mr Speaker, your humanity and personal touch will never be forgotten. They have been in evidence on some specific occasions, but none more so than when we lost Jo. The next day, you came to Birstall, which is next door to my Dewsbury constituency, and you did not just turn up and lay flowers, but you stayed and talked and empathised with local residents and then went on to the local church and spent time there. It was so appreciated—not just the gesture of being there, but your authenticity and just spending time with local people who were feeling that loss so much. Equally, after the dreadful terrorist incident here a couple of years ago, when we lost such a wonderful police officer and it was such a traumatic time for so many of us, you were not only typically stoic, but very supportive as well. The same has been true in the past few months, which at times has been a difficult period for me, particularly with some of the abuse that I have received, as have other Members, particularly female Members. You called me at home one Sunday morning to ask whether I was okay, because I had received a particularly unpleasant death threat—all death threats are unpleasant but I had received something that was particularly unkind. I was very grateful for your support at that time.

You are an extraordinary man, Mr Speaker. I will miss you hugely. I wish you and your family every happiness. I had the pleasure of chatting to them last week, and your delightful young daughter Jemima is an absolute credit to you and Sally. I look forward to reading your memoirs, and I particularly look forward

[Paula Sherriff]

to seeing you in sequins in a future episode of “Strictly Come Dancing”. Thank you, above all, for your kindness, Mr Speaker.

1 pm

**Mr Iain Duncan Smith** (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con): First, I want to apologise for not having been here at the beginning of these tributes, Mr Speaker. I had to engage in a podcast with the Father of the House. It was a joint podcast. I say that, but he took up at least 90% of it, so it was joint in the sense that it is joint whenever you sit to hear him and you ask him to speak briefly and he does exactly that!

At the outset, I also want to say a farewell to you, Mr Speaker. We have known each other for a significant amount of time. I believe you once referred to me as a “sea green incorruptible”. You may or may not recall that. I am not sure to this day quite what you meant by it, but I had been rebelling against the Government then for some time and I fancy that you thought that was a good thing. It was on the back of that that when I became leader I employed you in the shadow Cabinet, as shadow Chief Secretary. It was not altogether a happy period. I recall being approached by one particular colleague of ours, who will remain nameless but who upbraided me in the Lobby, saying “It is fantastic that you have got somebody who is really campaigning on the rights for gay people and out there speaking on all these subjects. I was thinking, “Oh, very good, thank you.” He then said, “Do you think we could have a shadow Chief Secretary when you next get to the appointments for the shadow Cabinet?” I think he was not altogether enamoured of your journey, but it was certainly a journey, one that you have taken personal ownership of. You have been part of changes that have come about, all of which have been overdue. I fancy that your legacy in this matter will also therefore be recorded by everybody, notwithstanding your period in the Chair.

On that note, I wish briefly to deal with the idea of legacy. I recall a quote from “Julius Caesar”:

“The evil that men do lives after them;

The good is oft interred with their bones”.

I wish to reverse that process and simply say that there is much that you have done in this House that will stand the test of time and will return this House, in a way, to where it probably was many, many decades before, before it became too subjected to the concept of the overarching power of the Executive. I was a little tongue in cheek there. When I was, unexpectedly, in the Cabinet for six years, I regularly used to curse you in the mornings at about 9 o’clock when I heard that you were about to grant an urgent question—I think such questions came at noon—and I had to give you some reason why we should not have the UQ. Almost invariably I was told by your office that you had read what I had put but not required that it was the case and had granted the UQ. During that period, I do not think any Minister would not have been frustrated, annoyed and angry. However, having returned to the Back Benches, I have to congratulate you on reinvigorating the UQ, turning it from being an unusual event to being a very standard one, and I hope I have taken advantage of that. Of course the Government do not like that. When one is in

government, surrounded by all the decisions one has to take and things one has to do, coming back to the House and being forced to answer questions is a nuisance, but it is a nuisance that really does matter.

I recall being frustrated as a junior Back Bencher on many occasions because I could not get in on a question and I thought that I had been pushed to one side, that everybody senior had got in and that the usual rules had applied. Any Member coming in here now will not have any knowledge of how it was before and they will just be used to standing and getting called. I often say to such Members, “It was very different in the old days. You might stand for three separate questions not related to each other and still not get called. Eventually you would approach the Chair and the Chair would say, “Next time we will call you. And you would then argue, “Well, I may not have an interest in the next question” but you would still have to come in and stand. Banishing that and getting rid of that process will stand as an important legacy of yours, because it allows non-Privy Counsellors to get their word in. I have one word of slight advice: my general rule is that in this place after about an hour there is absolutely nothing that anybody is going to get up to say that has not already been said at least three or four times. You have been incredibly tolerant that even on the fifth time it is worth hearing and sometimes quite important.

In that regard, your use of this place and your reforms of this place were overdue. I also remind colleagues that you came in at a difficult time; this House was in shame. The expenses scandal was all that people in the country saw and thought of us in this place. They thought all of us were corrupt and involved only for our own sakes, which is completely untrue but was overwhelmingly the view. As you know, Mr Speaker, people come here because they genuinely believe that they want to do good and to try to improve the quality of life for their constituents and for citizens around the country. To some degree, we are still suffering from that view. We needed the reforms such as opening this place up, letting younger people come here, using the education service and expanding that process, and giving colleagues the power to bring Governments to the Dispatch Box so that they could ask those questions and force Ministers, even in difficult moments, to answer the most difficult questions of the day. That is a set of vital reforms and I cannot see any future Speaker reversing them, nor should they, because they are absolutely structural.

We have not always agreed on everything, Mr Speaker, nor should we; I confess there have been times when I have been somewhat frustrated. However, as colleagues have said, this is not really about being frustrated about the decisions; it is about whether or not somebody is consistent in the process they engage in. The one thing you have been absolutely consistent in is your belief that Back Benchers have the right and should have the power to be heard, regardless of whether you agree with them or not, and of whether they sometimes say things that might be an abhorrence. You believe that they have the right, because they were elected to this place, to be heard here without fear or favour. Restoring that process will be your greatest legacy, so I wish you a good retirement—although I suspect it will not be retirement and you will have some other kind of career. Perhaps you will be speaking across the States, where I gather you are becoming quite a celebrity on the speaking

circuit. Whatever else you do, I know you will bring to it longer speeches, with words that nobody has ever understood or heard before. Notwithstanding that, people will be fascinated by them, as I have always been by your approach at the Chair. So I wish you the very best of fortune, and I consider it in a way a privilege to have been in this House when these reforms have taken place, and you were the architect of them. Thank you.

**Mr Speaker:** Thank you very much indeed.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** I get the opportunity for the second time today to call Thangam Debbonaire.

1.8 pm

**Thangam Debbonaire** (Bristol West) (Lab): I want to thank you, Mr Speaker, on behalf of three groups of people. As other Members have mentioned, the schoolchildren who have been through the Education Centre, thanks to you, have been inspired by that experience. I echo the tribute on that that others have paid to you.

There are two other groups, and one of them is my constituents. You have a lot of fans in Bristol West, so if ever you feel like popping down, you will get a warm welcome. Many of them have asked me to pass on to you their admiration and to tell you that they have been glued to the television over the past year. It is an interesting by-product of where we have been politically that people text me to say, “What’s that funny thing you do when you bow at the table?” You have facilitated that sort of interest.

This is a slightly quirky one, but I want to thank you on behalf of the very unofficial parliamentary string quartet, the Statutory Instruments. It was in your Speaker’s palace at a Christmas celebration last year that Emily Benn and I first hatched the plot. We were enjoying the Christmas tree, and I think probably some Christmas carols and possibly some mince pies. I will always be grateful to you for being there at the birth of the parliamentary string quartet, and then at its first performance. Every time we play, we will be thinking of you. We are a little bit thwarted, because we were supposed to play at a concert for the Archbishop of Canterbury on 12 December but I gather we are doing something else on that day. Nevertheless, the Statutory Instruments are grateful to you.

Other people have said this, but I feel I must add that you and Reverend Rose—I cannot be here for her tribute—have been here for us at our darkest hours, as well as our moments of joy and celebration. Those dark moments been very dark indeed: June 2016 in particular and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Paula Sherriff) mentioned, the murder of PC Keith Palmer. There have been other times as well. You have been here for us and it has been incredible. It is a source of great support and comfort, both spiritual and non-spiritual, that the two of you have given to us as individuals, and to me as a Whip.

Your views on Whips are well known, Mr Speaker. Despite what has been said about your views on Whips, I have always known you to be really rather kind and helpful to us. I have sat in Whips’ corner for three years now—I cannot believe it has been three years, but I

think my Chief Whip will confirm that I have been an Opposition Whip for three years—and you have been extraordinary. I have learned such a lot from working by your side and also, of course, from Peter, Ian and Jim, to whom I also owe a great debt of thanks. I hope they will not be leaving us, even if you are.

The Leader of the House could perhaps have cleared up a mystery for us. He said that to him the word “modernisation” is an expletive; if that is so, I am slightly perplexed as to why he has not taken this opportunity to confirm that your 10 years of public service will be rewarded in the traditional manner. I think it would be courteous if somebody on the Treasury Bench could clear up that mystery for us at some point in the not-too-distant future. I think the traditional time to do that would be today.

**Mr Rees-Mogg** *indicated dissent.*

**Thangam Debbonaire:** The Leader of the House is shaking his head at me, but I do think that somebody ought to clear it up. Nevertheless, I know that whatever it is that you go on to do, Mr Speaker, you will do it, I hope, billowed up on a cloud of love and admiration from us all, and with the great enjoyment and collegiate spirit that you have shown to us and, I hope, we have shown to you. Some of the greatest and the darkest moments in my four years here have been enhanced by your presence in the Chair, including a tiny little thing involving a packet of peanuts and an Order Paper that I think will best be left to my memoirs or yours. Yes, you know of what I speak.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, and good luck.

**Mr Speaker:** Thank you.

1.13 pm

**Rehman Chishti** (Gillingham and Rainham) (Con): Time does not allow me to do justice to all the amazing work that you have done in the service of this Parliament, Mr Speaker. Before I came to Parliament, I was a young barrister, and I was told, “Brevity is a virtue, not a vice, so keep it short.” You have applied that rule when we have all spoken.

I wish to cover three things: accessibility; the way you have treated Back-Bench Members of Parliament; and wellbeing. First, on accessibility, all Members of Parliament are among equals in this place, and you have applied that rule. As a young Member of Parliament, many years ago, when I thought I needed to talk to the Speaker, I contacted the Speaker’s office and said, “I would like to speak to the Speaker of Parliament.” I was told, “Thank you, Mr Chishti,” and within minutes the Speaker could be reached on his mobile phone in his constituency. I thank you, Mr Speaker, and the brilliant team around you—I see one of them standing there, and there are others. Members of Parliament judge the moment when they need to speak to our Speaker—you are our Speaker—and accessibility is key for Members of Parliament and for anyone when they want to reach a person in a position of responsibility. You, Mr Speaker, has have always ensured that.

Secondly, Mr Speaker, you have been the champion of Back-Bench Members of Parliament. We all have our own cases. One thing on which I can never compromise



[Rehman Chishti]

—I never have throughout my time in Parliament—is freedom of religion or belief. I came to this country as the son of an imam. My father was an imam, my grandfather was an imam and my uncles were imams. I came to Gillingham in 1984, and we could practise our religion openly and freely at every level. Morally and ethically, it would be wrong for me not to stand up at any level when I see individuals of minority faiths being persecuted.

In 2014, I wrote to you, Mr Speaker, to ask for an Adjournment debate on the abuse of blasphemy laws in Pakistan, where they are used to target minority faiths, and the case of Asia Bibi, who was on death row. Before the case came up in the media in the past year, I wrote to you, Mr Speaker, and you gave me the chance to raise it on the Floor of the House. And it was not just then, because you know what matters to Members of Parliament. We all champion different issues, and you have been absolutely brilliant in realising what issues matter to Members of Parliament. When I resigned from the Government in November 2018—the Government did not agree with my view on the Asia Bibi case, so I stepped aside—I wanted to question the Prime Minister at Prime Minister's questions, but I was not listed on the Order Paper. I was sitting on the Bench right there, and although I am slightly short, I was still bobbing up and down. You, Mr Speaker, called me so that I could raise my issue with the person who had to make the final decision. You have been absolutely amazing as a champion of Back-Bench Members of Parliament.

Thirdly, there are some outside who do not see Members of Parliament or those who work here as fellow human beings. We are all human beings, and we all suffer from the same challenges that every other citizen in our great country suffers. We all have challenges and issues that arise. I wish to touch on the work that you, Mr Speaker, have done on the wellbeing of Members of Parliament and of those who work in this great Parliament. I cannot thank you enough for the way you have dealt with those issues with compassion, decency and complete regard to human dignity. You have put in place a system with the brilliant Dr Madan. It is a clinician-led approach, and I thank Dr Madan, because often those who do the work behind the scenes do not get the credit. They do an amazing job. If everyone applied your approach, Mr Speaker, of making sure that those who work here, at whatever level, get support when they need it—and quickly, swiftly and appropriately—individuals could go on and be better than before. That comes down to individuals in responsibility taking such decisions.

I was very fortunate to represent the Prime Minister in the Holy See at the canonisation of Cardinal Newman. I did not know much about Cardinal Newman, but when I was there I listened to people speak about that great man's values. One of the hymns was "Lead, Kindly Light", which has the lyrics:

"I do not ask to see

The distant scene; one step enough for me."

In the 10 years for which you have sat in the Chair, Mr Speaker, every step that you have taken has been for the betterment of this Parliament. Thank you, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** Thank you.

1.18 pm

**Clive Efford** (Eltham) (Lab): I listened carefully to the opening statement by the Leader of the House and was interested to hear what he had to say. I always listen to him carefully. He chooses his words carefully and gives me the impression, at least, that he understands the meaning of them—after all, he is the only person I know who reads the words "lounge suit" inside his jacket and takes them as instructions for use. You, Mr Speaker, have challenged the House in respect of the rights of Back Benchers. There are people in the House who have benefited from that at times but who, now that time has moved on, perhaps do not quite appreciate how you have stood up for the rights of this House and for those of us who have wanted to stand up for our constituents.

In particular, I want to pay tribute to you for standing up for the people of the 48% who voted in 2016 to remain in the European Union. If people had listened to the Government's views on the outcome of the referendum, which we all respect, they would have believed that it was a resounding victory, and that the country was not split at that time. But, indeed, the country was split, and it was for this House to stand up and hold the Government to account and to speak up for the views of those people who wanted to remain in the European Union, or who wanted, in leaving, to retain as much of our relationship with the European Union as we could. Without your strength of character, Mr Speaker, to stand up to an Executive who were prepared to try to ride roughshod over those of us who wanted to hold the Government to account, we would have been in a very different place now. That is a tribute to you, and your actions during these very trying times have earned you a place in history. You deserve enormous credit for that. I will always admire you for what you did, because, at times, it was very difficult for you. You were out there as an individual having to stand up to those people. I understand that you have an excellent team around you, but you did it none the less, and you did it for us. For that, I will always be grateful.

I am also grateful to your team. I do not do this very often, but I pleaded with them to ensure that I was called at Prime Minister's questions to raise something on behalf of a disabled constituent who had had their personal independence payment taken away, and was about to have their car repossessed on the Thursday after that Prime Minister's questions. I did not think that I would be called, Mr Speaker, but because you had been generous with time at Prime Minister's questions—you allowed it to overrun—I was called right at the tail end. I always seem to get called at the tail end, but if you are patient, you get there. I thanked you, Mr Speaker, when I was interviewed on the radio subsequently about this issue. As a consequence of my being able to raise that matter at Prime Minister's questions—because you heard my plea and called me—the life of my constituent was completely transformed in a moment. That is the power of being in that Chair, and I pay tribute to you for how you stood up for us Back Benchers so that we could stand up for our constituents. My constituent's PIP was reinstated and they did not have their car repossessed.

Your inspired appointment of Rose Hudson-Wilkin was, again, a testament to your strength of character, and to your determination to modernise and to take us forward as a House of Commons, representing all the

people. I pay tribute to Rose. She has an amazing career ahead of her and will be a very influential person in our society in whatever role she goes on to do when she ceases to be Chaplain to the Speaker of the House.

Mr Speaker, you came into the House in 1997, the same time as me. You have a constituency in the home counties; I have one in London. No doubt schools from your constituency have frequently visited this place and you have taken them round on tours. But on rainy days, when they wanted to have their packed lunch, children used to be told that the Speaker of the House and the Serjeant at Arms did not allow packed lunches to be eaten in Westminster Hall. There was no cafeteria down there, and when we got one, it was not accessible to schoolchildren, because they had to buy something to be in there. This was an appalling place for young people to visit in terms of how they were welcomed, although they were awestruck as they were taken around the place and no doubt educated by all the MPs who were boring them to tears with the details of the House. None the less, it was important that they were here. They were inspired by the House, but it was very unwelcoming to them.

The changes that you have made in opening up the Education Centre and making this place feel welcoming to young people have been inspired. I want the Speaker who follows you to do more of that, and it is a mark of the way that you have brought modernisation and change to this House. You have earned your place in the history of this House and I wish you all the best for your future.

**Mr Speaker:** Bless you, Clive. Thank you very much indeed.

1.24 pm

**Andrew Rosindell** (Romford) (Con): Mr Speaker, it is a pleasure to pay tribute to you today. I have known you for the best part of 30 years, and I echo everything that has been said in the Chamber today. I will not repeat those tributes, but instead add to them by saying things that have not been said.

I thank you for your patriotism, for being an upholder of tradition and for being a lover of your country. You are a patriot. The Mother of the House said that you were politically correct, but on those issues you have never been politically correct. It was you, Sir, who supported the long-running campaign to ensure that the flag of our country was flown from the Victoria Tower every single day of the year. Members will recall that it used to be flown only when the House was sitting. In the early part of 2010, the House agreed, with your support, Mr Speaker—a statement was made in the House—that the flag would fly permanently, 365 days of the year. That is, I think, a subject of pride in our country and it is appreciated by many.

It is also you, Mr Speaker, who has upheld the tradition of St George's day for England. When we celebrate our traditions for England, Speaker's House has been opened to the Royal Society of St George and to organisations that celebrate our English heritage. I thank you, Sir, for allowing the St George's day organisations to come to Speaker's House to celebrate 23 April.

I also remember that it was you, Mr Speaker, who allowed the tradition—the sad tradition—of crests of MPs who have been assassinated and murdered to be

displayed in this Chamber. For a very long time, the crest of Airey Neave was in the Chamber, but the previous Speaker was not in favour of additional crests. You may recall, Mr Speaker, that Lord Howe of Aberavon and I came to see you and asked whether we could have a crest in memory of the late Ian Gow, who was murdered. You were very supportive of that, and that led to crests being put up not only for the late Ian Gow, but for Dr Robert Bradford, Jo Cox, Sir Anthony Berry and others who were killed by Irish terrorists. It was you, Mr Speaker, who allowed that tradition to be reinstated so that we could remember Members of Parliament who were so cruelly taken from us by assassination and political murder.

The diamond jubilee of Her Majesty the Queen was a great celebration for the whole of Parliament, but it was Mr Speaker who opened Speaker's House for a wonderful celebration for representatives of all Her Majesty's realms and territories. Indeed, how can we forget the renaming of the Clock Tower as the Elizabeth Tower? There are many things that you will be remembered and thanked for, Mr Speaker, but from my personal point of view, it will be your kindness, your friendship, your understanding, your willingness to deal with issues as they arose, and your being on the side of Back Benchers who need a voice—you have always made sure that we have had that voice.

Mr Speaker, you have been a wonderful champion of this House. You have promoted the Mother of Parliaments, and I believe that you will be remembered for many years to come.

1.28 pm

**Dr David Drew** (Stroud) (Lab/Co-op): May I start by saying what an honour it is to sit next to my right hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Ann Clwyd) who will be sadly missed? I completely associate myself with the remarks that were made by the right hon. Member for New Forest East (Dr Lewis).

I want to say something rather different, Mr Speaker. I want to take you back to a trip that we made together to Sudan. I know that you agreed to go at quite short notice: we needed a Conservative Member and you agreed to come on that trip. I had never been to Sudan—and this was pre-secession—without getting unwell. When we say that someone looks green, we are usually greatly exaggerating, but I can assure Members that, when we flew round on that trip, I looked at you and you were green—you were absolutely unwell—but you carried on and we got to Nyala, which was, at that time, the heart of the struggle for Darfur. As we got there, all the lights went out, but it was wonderful because our hosts said, "Don't worry, we'll go to the local takeaway and get you something to eat." I remember that we had not had anything to eat all day; we probably did not want anything. I am a vegetarian and could not eat the food that they brought back, and I am eternally grateful to you for being there, because you did eat it.

The great tribute that our hosts paid us was that we were to share the President's bedroom, so you and I went to the President's bedroom—and that was fine. But we were then able to take advantage of using the President's toilet. Now, I do not know whether or not it was a Sudanese tradition, but the President's toilet had previously been used. And I now know why you are

[Dr David Drew]

such a steadfast Speaker, able to sit in the Chair for nine hours. It is because you and I decided that it was one ask too many to use the President's toilet, and waited. Dare I say that the constitution of this Speaker was built in that President's palace in Nyala?

People do not realise that making such trips—visiting the trouble spots of the world—is part of our role and responsibility. You did that, and I hope that you will do so in the future, because you will be welcomed and admired. People will see you not only as the former Speaker—unlike in the States, where people are always referred to as Congressmen and Senators, even when they are no longer in office. It has been an honour to call you a friend, and that trip will always stand in my memory even though I have been a number of times since. Long may your life continue, and I hope that future toilets will be slightly better than the one we were asked to use on that occasion. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Speaker:** Bless you. I have never forgotten that trip, and I never will—for all sorts of reasons.

1.31 pm

**Mr Bob Seely** (Isle of Wight) (Con): I thought I had missed the tributes to you, Mr Speaker, but I am delighted that I have not. By the way, it is a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Stroud (Dr Drew). I fear that I lack your constitution, Mr Speaker, because I have been dying for the loo, but I also wanted to get in, so I am holding it in for the moment. I actually came to the Chamber to follow your advice to persist, persist, persist. I am following up on a point I made earlier in the week, to get an answer from the Leader of the House—if he wants to give one—on whether the Government would allow a future debate on Huawei and the importance of 5G, but I am very happy to ignore that request if you feel that it would be inappropriate at this moment.

**Mr Speaker:** No, no—I said to the hon. Gentleman that he could raise what he wanted to raise with the Leader of the House.

**Mr Seely:** That is very kind of you, Sir, because I fear that I might—not for the first time—have misread the Order Paper. However, it will make you happy to know that since “Erskine May” has been available online, I have been reading it in bed every night. Indeed, I was going to raise a point of order to ask why paragraph 12 of chapter 20 consisted of not one paragraph but two, but the Whips advised me against it; I think it was during the Saturday sitting and we were all very keen to get away.

Mr Speaker, your support for Back Benchers is always important and incredibly welcome, and your calling Ministers to account is excellent because scrutiny always strengthens. Any good Minister always appreciates being called for an urgent question, because it gives them the chance to explain the Government's position. If a Minister is happy to explain the Government's position, they are confident of the Government's position. And if they are not, there should be questions about why they fear being called. I thank you for that, and I hope that the tradition of UQs will continue under all future Speakers; it is very important that it does.

Likewise, the Education Centre has been superb. The excellent teacher at Ryde Academy on my Island often brings the kids down. In fact, the most trying interviews that I have are often with primary and secondary schoolchildren from my Island, who test me and my knowledge as best they can. Long may that continue.

Some of my constituents have specifically written to me to say how much they will miss you, but specifically to say that they will miss you chastising me. One of them told me that so frequent has that reprimanding and guidance become that they regularly look forward to my being told off by you on a regular—indeed, almost weekly—basis. You have brought joy to many people—occasionally to myself, but very often to my constituents, especially if you have been beasting me.

On the point of persist, persist, persist—if the Leader of the House has a chance to answer—5G is very significant issue, and there is very little public and parliamentary debate about it. What can we do about it, and can we have debate before decisions are made so that we can give our opinion and say what we think the options are?

**Mr Speaker:** That was extremely gracious of the hon. Gentleman, whom I have known for a very long time. I thank him for what he said, and I know the Leader of the House will want to respond to him.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** As this is a statement, I probably should have been replying to everything, but I think, in the broad context, it was better not to have done. But 5G is of course a matter of concern and one that the Government take very seriously, and the security and resilience of the UK's telecom networks are of the greatest importance. I obviously cannot promise debates at the moment, because we will have Dissolution on Wednesday, but the general election is coming up and I have a feeling that this is a matter that will be of interest to many people, who will want to ensure that we have a safe and secure system. The Government have not yet made a decision on the matter, and that is an important point to underline. In spite of press reports to the contrary, a decision will be made in due course. I think that a wide debate among the British public is the best thing that we can have; we should always trust the people.

1.36 pm

**Martin Whitfield** (East Lothian) (Lab): I do not intend to speak for too long because some wonderful compliments have been paid, and it is sometimes hard to sit and listen to people complimenting you—that is very human. I would just like to say thank you. Thank you for the first handshake and words when I took my oath; the lovely note after my first speech; and the tea morning for the new entrants held by Rose and yourself in your chambers. I also thank you and your staff for the huge help that you have given with regard to Grace's Sign and the Any Disability symbol, and for the J. P. Mackintosh lecture that took place in Speaker's House, which was gratefully received by his family and the people of East Lothian. For all that and so much more, thank you.

**Mr Speaker:** I thank the hon. Gentleman.



1.37 pm

**Tom Tugendhat** (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con): Mr Speaker, I can see that you are saving the best till last. It is a huge pleasure to say thank you this afternoon. I wonder, though, whether when we bump into each other again in years to come, I will feel as I did that time I jumped off my bicycle and a man 6 feet taller than I looked at me and said, “Hello, sir. I notice you haven’t polished your shoes today.” It was the academy sergeant-major from Sandhurst and I was wearing trainers. He was pointing out what he knew then, which is that standards matter, and you have defended the standards in this House religiously. For that, I can only be extremely grateful.

Defending the rights of parliamentarians is not actually about defending 650 people who may or may not have an opinion on a subject. It is about defending the very principle of democracy in our country. It is about defending the very principles of freedom of thought, freedom of expression and individual liberty. And it is absolutely about defending the foundations of the economy and society that we have built with much care and many failures, but over many, many decades. For that, I am hugely grateful.

On a personal basis, if I may, there is another thing for which I would like to thank you. You have not only introduced us to a wonderful chaplain, who is here and to whom I pay huge personal thanks and tributes, but you have also introduced a new chaplain in Father Pat Browne. To have a Catholic chaplain in this House and to have a regular mass on a Wednesday afternoon is an act of extreme kindness to many of us in the Catholic community in this place, but it also reflects the fact that this House does not now legislate for the exclusion of one religion, does not now silence one form of worship and does not now reject the individual practice of so many people in these islands.

I know that you have been on a journey, Mr Speaker. Some people have spoken of your origins on one wing of the party, and your arrival at the seat in which you now find yourself—the defender of many liberties, which would have surprised others 20 or 30 years ago. Many of us have been on a journey. I see the Leader of the House sitting there on the Front Bench. When I used to sit next to him, he was a guardian of the purity of this House, but he has gone with the speed of a whippet from the purity of the Vestal Virgin to the Whore of Babylon deep in Executive power.

We have all been on various different journeys, Mr Speaker, and I am delighted that your journey has taken you to where you are now. I am personally grateful that the past four years, particularly the two in which I had the privilege of chairing the Foreign Affairs Committee, have been under your speakership. You have enabled those of us who are very new to this place to have a voice and, I hope, to represent some of the views that need speaking up for in our House. Even if we may sometimes chunter when criticised, almost certainly justifiably, that might give us cause to remember that your defence of this House means that sometimes we are in the wrong, too.

1.40 pm

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): May I, on behalf of the Democratic Unionist party, thank you, Mr Speaker, for all that you have done as Speaker?

May I also pay tribute to the right hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Ann Clwyd), who sits behind me so regularly, very often in her colour of red? I said to her this morning before we came into the Chamber that she has often been the conscience of many in this Chamber with regard to human rights issues. When she has spoken here on human rights issues, I have been more than pleased to join her in those opportunities to speak out and speak up for those across the world who do not have a voice. We in this House are very privileged to be the voice for them.

When I came here as a new Member in 2010, Mr Speaker, as I said earlier, I was just a tad nervous and maybe a wee bit apprehensive. I never, ever thought that I would be in the House of Commons. It was a dream, perhaps, but not something I really thought would happen in my life, and it did. I vividly remember meeting you. You shook my hand with a very welcoming and generous introduction. At once, I felt the warmth that you exuded then and you exude now, and that put me at ease in this House. I was not put at ease when I made my maiden speech, because I was as nervous as can be about that, but once I had got that speech over with, I realised that you could do it.

As I learned the rules and regulations of the House under your guidance, Mr Speaker, you occasionally chastised me, always rightfully and always justly. I found out that the word “you” can only be used for your good self. I am not quite sure whether I have learned that yet, but I am trying hard and I will endeavour to do so over the next period.

As the Back-Bench champion that you are, Mr Speaker, we in this House, and I, have felt that our views would always have an opportunity to be heard. To quote you, the voice of Strangford must and will be heard. It was heard in this House, and we thank you for that.

Your choice of Speaker’s Chaplain, which we will have a chance to refer to in a few moments—I wish to do that as well—was right and appropriate, as was your choice of the Serjeant at Arms. I supported both those choices. I thank you for all your team’s support. Peter, Ian and Jim are always kind and courteous and undoubtedly a great team.

Behind every great man—and I believe, Mr Speaker, you are a great man—is a great woman. You have been very blessed and very privileged to have at your side, as your wife, Sally. Her support for you was and is vital. I thank Sally and the children for the support they give you. I know myself how important it is to have a family behind you to give the support that you need.

I believe that the future for you, Mr Speaker, will be successful; it will be incredible. I am a great believer, as you know, in the power of prayer, and always have been. Your chaplain will know that as well. I believe that with prayer we can move mountains. Every morning I pray for you, Mr Speaker, and I will continue to do so in the time when you are not in that Chair and have moved on to other jobs. You will not be forgotten in this House, certainly not by me. I will miss you, not least for the Adjournment debates that you and I shared on many occasions. Not having you present will be a minus for me, but I hope that there will be someone else there who can take your place.

I want to thank you, Mr Speaker, for your kindness, for your friendliness and for the wise guidance that you have given to me and many others in this House. I wish

[Jim Shannon]

you Godspeed. I thank you for all that you do and did, and wish you every success for the future. Thank you so much.

**Mr Speaker:** Thank you.

1.44 pm

**Sir John Hayes** (South Holland and The Deepings) (Con): Mr Speaker, I am coming to you. But, first, for the Leader of the House, William Morris said that

“the very foundation of refinement”

includes

“green trees, and flowery meads, and living waters outside.”

My constituents in Market Deeping seek just those things, as they crave open spaces. I hope that the Leader of the House, in the time available—for there are two more days, after all—will allow time for an urgent statement on how planning policy guidance can be altered, so that open spaces are provided for communities such as those in the Deepings and future generations have the chance to choose to work, play and rest in them and enjoy them at their leisure.

Now to you, Mr Speaker—my friend. My wife said to me, “How will you manage when John goes?” I said, “I have no idea, I suppose I will have to compete on equal terms.”

John Ruskin said that

“no cultivation of the mind can make up for the want of natural abilities”.

You, sir, have no such want. Indefatigable, irrepressible and incomparable you certainly are, but much more than that: in a time in which our politics is an unhappy marriage of hysterical hyperbole and technocratic turgidity, you have brought theatre to this place, and life and art to your role. Some of those on the Conservative Benches see that art as a sort of Jackson Pollock with a touch of Damien Hirst, but I see you more as Van Gogh, with a vibrancy and vividness, a colour and theatricality, which reveals rather than conceals sensitivity and deep humanity—for those are your qualities.

Many people have spoken of your achievements, the Education Centre and the change in balance between the House and the Executive prominent among them. The business of making this place alive and relevant, and giving our proceedings that very theatricality which gives life to our democracy, will be your most lasting legacy. That is why you are so widely known outside this place—and widely admired, by the way, too. I thank you profoundly for that. As our polemic has become increasingly strange, brutish and cruel as a result of social media—I have never seen it myself, but I understand that it takes place on computers and other sorts of devices—you have stood proud from that.

I thank you for all you have done, and I thank you for your friendship, which, of course, I hope and trust will endure long beyond the roles we now play. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Speaker:** I am almost beyond words. I am extraordinarily grateful to the right hon. Gentleman.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** Good heavens, Mr Speaker—our right hon. Friend was as beautifully eloquent as ever. On his request for a debate or a statement on open

spaces, I could bring his attention to the Adjournment debate that will take place on Tuesday, to which I will be responding. The only drawback is that it is primarily for right hon. and hon. Members who are retiring—a category into which I hope he is not tempted to fall.

**Mr Speaker:** It may well depend upon the interpretive approach taken by the Chair. It will not be me, but we shall see what happens. I note what the Leader of the House has said.

1.49 pm

**Rosie Duffield** (Canterbury) (Lab): First, I need to say that I will not be here for the tributes to the chaplain, but the House’s loss is Canterbury’s gain, and I am thrilled that I will get to see much more of Rose Hudson-Wilkin in my constituency; that is brilliant.

Mr Speaker, it is so difficult to put into words what seeing you in the Chair means to people like me on the Back Benches. Some of the speeches today have been incredibly moving. I need to find a new word for kindness, because when we look at today’s *Hansard*, that is the word that will come up the most.

I do not know how to express my gratitude for how immensely patient and lovely you have been; I do not want to get too emotional. My father has Alzheimer’s, and his recent memories are not that great, but he will never forget and never stops talking about the day that I was sworn in and how kind you were to my very ordinary family, who had never set foot in a place like this. You made an effort to wave to them and mention them, and my dad was talking about it even yesterday, when we were at a family funeral. It meant a great deal to him and my family, and that is something I will never forget.

When those of us here—especially women and Back Benchers—who are pretty terrified of this experience get up and talk about things that are personal and make us vulnerable, we can stand here and look at you, and you are a bit like a lighthouse in a stormy sea. During the speech that I made recently, when I felt very vulnerable, you kept me going. I just kept concentrating on you, and I knew that you were there, emotionally holding my hand; you have done that physically as well, which is lovely. I do not know how to thank you enough, but I am trying to say thank you. I will never, ever forget your kindness. Thank you very much.

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Lady does not have to thank me at all. It has been a great privilege, as in respect of every other colleague, but I hugely appreciate what she said, which was said with evident and palpable sincerity.

1.51 pm

**Craig Mackinlay** (South Thanet) (Con): Mr Speaker, this is a very special day for you. I was not going to speak, but I want to put on record a couple of my times with you.

As I mentioned to you on shaking your hand when I took up my place here in 2015, we had a tea together many years ago—perhaps when you were in a different place politically, but we will put that aside.

There is one kindness you have given me. You have earned me a few pennies while I have been in the House. I am not always the first to be called or the last, but I

have earned many a good coin from my hon. Friend the Member for North West Leicestershire (Andrew Bridgen), because we often have a little bet as to who will be up last. I am grateful to you for adding to my wealth and detracting from the wealth of my hon. Friend.

I had a very difficult experience at the end of last year and the beginning of this year, which you took a great interest in throughout. The day after my acquittal, there were business questions. I came to speak to you at the Chair, to tell you that I had rather more to say than is appropriate at business questions. You allowed me, on that very special day for me, the opportunity to explain in far more minutes than one would usually allow for business questions what I had been through and the annoyance thereof.

There is lots that I have not agreed with you on over the last few years, but I will never forget your fairness to me and to others in the House who face difficulties. That was an opportunity to put on record in this great international public space what I had been through and the annoyance that I felt. I thank you for that occasion probably more than for any other since my time in the House, and I wish you every great success in the future, a long life and much happiness.

**Mr Speaker:** That is extremely gracious of the hon. Gentleman, and I thank him from the bottom of my heart.

1.54 pm

**Jack Dromey** (Birmingham, Erdington) (Lab): The hon. Member for Southend West (Sir David Amess)—the great city of Southend—was right when he said that today is a day when the House comes together to say a fond farewell. There are so many to whom we can say a fond farewell. Indeed, some of them are in the Chamber: my right hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Ann Clwyd) and my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry South (Mr Cunningham). I want to add a fond farewell to the remarkable right hon. Member for Meriden (Dame Caroline Spelman). She is a truly outstanding parliamentarian who was prepared to put the national interest over narrow party political interest. She is lionised by Jaguar workers and Land Rover workers, as we have worked together to defend the interests of our manufacturing base against the background of Brexit. She will be sorely missed.

Mr Speaker, yours has been a remarkable trajectory, from being a member of an organisation so right-wing that even Norman Tebbit abolished it, to being a fully paid-up Macmillanite, to I know not where. I know not where because you do not wear your politics or your prejudices on your sleeve. You are truly impartial.

In 600 years of our parliamentary democracy, there have been few champions of Parliament as great as you, writing a noble chapter in the history of Parliament and, crucially, enabling Parliament to hold the Executive to account. That may sometimes be frustrating for those on the Treasury Bench. There have been times when the right hon. Member for Downton Abbey, the Leader of the House, has expressed his concerns and frustrations, but you have allowed Parliament to hold the Executive to account. You have done that without suffering the fate of some of your predecessors, who literally lost their heads.

You have been a great champion of parliamentarians. There is no question about it: our country is deeply divided. Sadly we see a politics of hate on the march, sometimes manifested in attacks on parliamentarians. You have been a champion of parliamentarians, including on that front. You have also been a champion of reaching out to the country. In troubled times, you have truly been a bridge over troubled waters.

You have been a champion of opening up Parliament. You have built a brilliant team, including the wonderful Rose, reflecting the rich diversity of our capital city and our country. You have also been a champion of opening up Parliament to young people. I will never forget your powerful addresses at the four Erdington Youth Parliaments. I remember meeting a group of apprentices from the Erdington Skills Centre the week after, and one of them said, “That bloke Bercow, he’s really something, isn’t he?” As a consequence of what you have done, tens of thousands of young people have come to the cradle of our democracy, and they have loved every moment.

You have a remarkable, Shakespearean turn of phrase and a rhetorical flourish the like of which I have never heard. You are also humble, reaching out to those suffering difficulties in their life or in their career in Parliament. So many Members here today will never forget your kindness when kindness was desperately needed.

You are not just one of Parliament’s greatest Speakers, who in centuries to come will be remembered like some of the great figures of the past. You are a profound family man, but also—forgive me for saying this—you are just a plain, decent man. We will never, ever forget you.

**Mr Speaker:** I am immensely obliged to the hon. Gentleman. I have told him many times how much I appreciate his support, and I do so again in the public square this afternoon. Thank you.

1.58 pm

**Sir Peter Bottomley** (Worthing West) (Con): Mr Speaker, before turning to you, I want to make one point. There has been unconfirmed bad news about my constituent Amelia Bambridge. Everyone wished that she would be found alive and well. I ask that people use sensitivity and common sense and avoid circulating distressing images.

May I say, Mr Speaker, as technically the longest-serving Conservative Member of Parliament, although the Father of the House properly holds that title, that all of us, from me to the most recent person elected to this House, acknowledge all the good that you have done and the good that has been done while you have been Speaker?

I have to warn those who want to write you off in retirement, Mr Speaker, that in 1656 Cromwell found out that a unicameral Parliament was a bad idea and he created the Other House. Those at the time could not decide on the title, which is why we use the expression “the other House” for the House of Lords. In the last 363 to 361 years, we have relied on some of the words that Speaker Lenthall used. He actually went from this Chamber to the Other House and then came back as Speaker, and that course is open to you if you want to break precedent in more ways than you have already.



[*Sir Peter Bottomley*]

When a decision was taken in the Chair by you, Mr Speaker, I submitted to the Clerks an early-day motion giving a direction that it should not happen again. They, I think humorously—I assume it was humorously—asked me how I could do that. I said, “What are the only words people can remember of a previous Speaker?” The answer was Lenthall’s words that he could only do as the House “directs”. If that is true, putting down a motion to give a direction to the occupant of the Chair would seem perfectly proper and the motion was accepted.

I want to say, Mr Speaker, that although you were not my first choice in the year that you were elected as Speaker, I honour you. I praise Sir George Young for asking you, and you agreeing that he could have his party in your House. I think that shows the mood and the friendship that exist in this place, and that has continued strongly with you as Speaker.

I explained to my constituents that had they chosen you rather than me in Worthing West in 1996, they could have been represented by the Speaker for the last 10 years. When one of them said that your tenure of 10 years seemed rather longer than the nine years, I said, “He did say he was going after nine years, and 10 years is after nine years, isn’t it?” If any pedant uses the word you actually put in your letter, I shall criticise them for being too pedantic.

I have dragged you to the Chair twice, Mr Speaker. We do not have to drag you out of it because you have chosen the time to leave. As people heard me say privately a year ago, I think you deserve a margin of appreciation. Those who would want to make a great fuss about the time you have been in the Chair are wrong. However, at some calm period, we may wish to discuss whether the normal expectation should be that the Speaker will do up to nine years, as you had once indicated.

It would also be a useful idea if we could have a debate, in some period of calm, about whether we should have a regular discussion—perhaps every two years—on the way the Chair is occupied and how decisions are made. It is one of the areas where we can contribute, and the occupant of the Chair and the Procedure Committee can consider whether anything can be done.

There are a few things that people do not know about what you do, Mr Speaker, but it is worth mentioning the one referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for North West Norfolk (Sir Henry Bellingham) about your relationship with your own constituents. During the Select Committee considering objections to HS2,

we went around with you on a number of occasions, and I think people who only see you in public will not know what you are like in private with your constituents. The Speaker is knowledgeable, he is calm, he is reasonably quiet and people trust him. That is what people can ask of their Members of Parliament, and the service you have given to them should be remembered in these tributes today.

There are other things I could say, but I think the best thing to do is to say that the good you have done should be remembered—and you have acknowledged the good that we have done—and were there to be a signal honour motion, we hope that it would be passed with acclamation. Thank you, Mr Speaker, for occupying the Chair.

2.3 pm

**Mr Speaker:** Let me thank the hon. Gentleman who has made the concluding contribution from the Back Benches, and in thanking him I want to register the view that, in addition to all his other attributes, the hon. Gentleman is a gentleman. What he has said is very much appreciated by me, and it will not be forgotten.

I do want to thank colleagues. This is quite an embarrassing experience, and people watching may think it bizarre or surreal, but it is a procedure that very often takes place. It was opened with considered élan, style and good humour by the Leader of the House. The right hon. Gentleman always places a premium on the Chamber and regards his overriding duty to be in it whenever possible. If that was true as a Back Bencher, it is true almost in triplicate for the holder of a designated office, and most assuredly it is true for this holder of the office of Leader of the House when business to which he is speaking is involved. Notwithstanding that fact, I do think that the right hon. Gentleman deserves some appreciation for staying from the very start to the very close of this series of exchanges—it has been genuine and sincere, but also long—so I thank the Leader of the House very much.

I would like to thank all colleagues—all colleagues—who have spoken. They do not owe me anything, but I thank them for what they have said. [*Interruption.*] The right hon. Member for Bournemouth West (Conor Burns), who is on the Treasury Bench, says, “And those who can’t speak”. He and I have known each other a long time, and I told him outside the Chamber the other day how impressed I was by the way in which he had conducted himself at the Dispatch Box. Anybody would have thought that he had been a Minister for many years, as opposed to being virtually an ingénue, but I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his sedentary chunter.

## Standards

2.5 pm

**The Leader of the House of Commons (Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg):** I beg to move,

That this House—

(1) approves the First Report of the Committee on Standards, Keith Vaz, HC 93;

(2) endorses the recommendations in paragraphs 99 and 101; and

(3) accordingly suspends Keith Vaz from the service of the House for a period of 6 months.

Today's motion follows the publication of the first report of the Committee on Standards of this Session on the conduct of the right hon. Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz). I have been asked to say that he cannot be here today to listen to this because he is currently in hospital. The report was agreed by the Standards Committee following a process of investigation and consideration by recognised due process, and it was published on Monday 28 October. The Government have sought to schedule a debate as quickly as possible, as is the usual practice.

It is always regrettable when a motion such as this is before the House. The matter before us today has been investigated by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, and it has now been reported on by the Committee on Standards. I thank the former commissioner, Kathryn Hudson, and the current commissioner, Kathryn Stone, for their work. I also thank the hon. Member for Stretford and Urmston (Kate Green), the Chairman of the Committee on Standards, and the other members of the Committee for their work in producing this report.

The motion approves the report of the Committee on Standards, endorses the recommendation of the Committee and proposes that the right hon. Member for Leicester East be suspended from the service of the House for a period of six months. I commend this motion to the House.

2.7 pm

**Mr Nicholas Brown** (Newcastle upon Tyne East) (Lab): I am replying for the Opposition, Mr Speaker. Before I do so, however, may I say to you, Sir, that I want to identify myself with absolutely everything my right hon. Friend the shadow Leader of the House said in tribute to you. You have been an outstanding Speaker, and you deserve the gratitude of us all. I know that to be praised by the Opposition Chief Whip will probably not help your standing with your colleagues, but let us face it—just between the two of us—it is probably too late to make amends. I can truthfully say, Mr Speaker, that nobody is going to miss you more than I am.

To turn to the matter at hand, this is a sad day for us and for me personally, because I am friends with the right hon. Member who is criticised. However, we accept the report, we accept the findings and we accept the recommendations in full. I want to say thank you to my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford and Urmston (Kate Green) for chairing the hearings and to both commissioners who have conducted the investigation. I also want to thank the Committee, and particularly the lay members of the Committee. The introduction of the laity into affairs of this kind was controversial, but it

seems to be working well. On behalf of my party, I certainly accept the report—and the obvious consequences—in full.

**Andrew Bridgen** (North West Leicestershire) (Con) *rose—*

**Kate Green** (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab) *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** Ordinarily, I would go to the other side of the House, but it seems appropriate to call the Chair of the Standards Committee first, and I hope the hon. Gentleman will accept that.

2.9 pm

**Kate Green** (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): May I add my own warm tribute to you, Mr Speaker, because you have been an exceptional Speaker throughout my time in Parliament? I am sorry to contribute to this short debate, and I thank the Leader of the House for bringing forward this motion before Dissolution next week.

I assure the House that the Committee on Standards has taken the greatest possible care with all the information that was put before us. We have done our best to focus only on issues that pertain to this House's code of conduct, and not on extraneous matters of personal and private conduct. Neither have we wanted to put any information into the public domain, other than where that has been absolutely necessary to explain the reason behind the Committee's decision. The decision is unanimous, and we have accepted the recommendations of the current commissioner. We are grateful to her for her work, and for the work of the previous commissioner. I wish to put on record my thanks to all colleagues on the Committee, and to my Clerk and his staff.

Subsequent to our report, the right hon. Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz) put some information on his website. I assure the House that all the points raised in that posting are addressed within the Committee's report. I and my Committee appreciate that constitutionally, no Parliament can bind the actions of the next Parliament but our view—we have placed this on the record in a letter to the Leader of the House which is published on the Committee's website—is that should the right hon. Gentleman be returned to the House at the forthcoming election, we urge the incoming Parliament and the new Leader of the House to pass a resolution as quickly as possible to ensure that the full period of the proposed sanction is served. I am grateful for the chance to contribute this afternoon.

2.11 pm

**Andrew Bridgen** (North West Leicestershire) (Con): I thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to speak in this debate. Although I am the originator of the complaint to the Committee on Standards in September 2016, I rise more in sorrow than anger to comment on these matters. I, too, wish to thank the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, Kathryn Stone, for her diligent work on our behalf, protecting the reputation of this House. I also thank her predecessor, Kathryn Hudson, and all elected and lay members of the Committee on Standards.

[Andrew Bridgen]

After 37 months we have the report. It is 69 pages long, and it makes grim reading for those colleagues who have taken the time to wade through it. The recommendations of the Committee include the longest suspension to be handed out since records began—six months—which in normal times would trigger a recall. The Committee also said that the right hon. Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz) should not be offered a former Member's pass when his time in this House ceases.

It is clear why this investigation has taken so long, and the delays, deflection and confusion that the Committee believes the right hon. Gentleman to have conducted, have been quite damning on his character. He sought to drag out these proceedings so that if he does not stand at the next election, none of the punishment will be meted out to him, and he will have avoided a suspension. If the House decides to accept the recommendations, they will be in place for only a few days, not for six months, and there will therefore be no recall. Effectively, the only censure that he will face is that of not having the privilege of a former Member's pass when he ceases to be here.

I am aware that the right hon. Gentleman is not present, but the Chair of the Committee on Standards hinted at a statement that he put on his website immediately after the publication of this report. In fairness to the right hon. Gentleman, and to inform the House, I would like to read the statement that was posted on his website on 28 October, shortly after the release of the report by the Committee on Standards into his conduct:

“The events of 27th August 2016 were purely personal and private, and occurred in circumstances where neither Mr Vaz's public nor his Parliamentary role were engaged.

Mr Vaz has never bought, possessed, dealt with or used illegal drugs. He has a cardiovascular condition which would mean that were he to consume any non-prescribed drugs he would in all likelihood die. The Commissioner has confirmed that Mr Vaz has not committed any criminal acts. The referrals made (including by Andrew Bridgen MP) were a waste of police resources.

The transcript of the recording which the Committee and Commissioner rely on has been completed discredited by a highly qualified forensic scientist, who has cast considerable doubt on its reliability. She stated: “Overall the transcript supplied to me fell significantly short of what is expected in terms of a transcript intended for use in legal, disciplinary or similar proceedings and it cannot be considered a reliable evidential record of the speech content of the questioned recording.

Mr Vaz has cooperated at all stages of this process. At no stage during the inquiry has either Commissioner stated in writing or otherwise that Mr Vaz has been uncooperative. Commissioner Hudson stated in terms that Mr Vaz has been helpful. Mr Vaz vigorously rejects the allegation that he has failed to cooperate with the inquiry: to the contrary he holds the standards system in the highest regard and with the highest respect.”

There are then some links to reports from the inquiry that are available on the parliamentary website, and it indicates where people should look in the report for various information that the right hon. Gentleman regards as evidential to support his statement. The statement concludes:

“Keith Vaz has been treated for a serious mental health condition for the last three years as a result of the events of 27th August 2016. He has shared all his medical reports in confidence with the Committee. He has today been admitted to hospital and this office will not be making any further comments.”

I have read the report, and there is no apology from the right hon. Member for Leicester East. There is no hint of apology, no hint of regret, and a complete denial of the unanimous conclusions of the Committee on Standards. That may hint at his state of mind—he is in complete denial about the level of dissatisfaction that the public feel with the behaviour of some Members of this House, and he has certainly detracted from our reputation.

Many tributes have been paid to you today, Mr Speaker, and I wish to add my own. If you had acted on the letter that I wrote to you in September 2015—a year before the incident involving the then Chair of the Home Affairs Committee—in which I raised my concerns that if the actions and activities of the right hon. Gentleman came to light, they would risk seriously damaging—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman will resume his seat. This matter was raised on a previous occasion and I am going to say, in all solemnity and with firmness, to the hon. Gentleman and to the House what the position is.

I could not have known that the hon. Gentleman intended to use this debate in the way that he has thus far—in an orderly fashion, but in a way that I could not have predicted. I certainly could not have anticipated, and the hon. Gentleman did not do me the courtesy of telling me, that he intended to address my reaction to these matters, but I will say to the House that I do recall—I do not have the detail in front of me—the hon. Gentleman writing to me highlighting his concerns about the right hon. Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz) and imploring me to act. I indicated to the hon. Gentleman, in terms, that both on the basis of my own knowledge, I say to the House, of the role and responsibility of the Chair, and on the strength of the professional advice of the Clerk of the House, that it was not—repeat, not—for me to intervene in any way, shape or form.

The premise upon which the request by the hon. Gentleman for me to intervene was based was entirely—I emphasise the word “entirely”—misplaced. It is not for the Speaker to get involved in the study of, or investigation into, complaints that are made about individual Members of Parliament. It is not for the Speaker to perform a second job as a kind of night-time Columbo looking into matters that one Member wants to raise about another. That is not only not necessary, but not appropriate. It is totally outwith—I say this with complete clarity and for the avoidance of doubt—the role of the Speaker.

If, after nine and a half years in this place, notwithstanding my best efforts to help the hon. Gentleman to do better, he still labours under not merely the misapprehension but the ignorant delusion that it is somehow the responsibility of the Chair to intervene, frankly, I have to say to colleagues, I cannot help him. I cannot help him. I have tried to help the hon. Gentleman and I have tried on many occasions to educate the hon. Gentleman, but if the hon. Gentleman will not be helped or educated, I cannot do anything about that.

What I can do something about—I have sought to do so for 10 years—is securing compliance with the procedures of this House. It is absolutely legitimate for the hon. Gentleman to speak in this debate if he thinks it is proper to do so. If the hon. Gentleman feels that the general approach that he has adopted to these sorts of matters—allegations of misconduct against other



Members—enhances his standing in the House, it is entirely for him to make that judgment. If he thinks it makes him a more popular or respected Member to spend quite a lot of time writing to the Standards Commissioner to complain about this one, that one or the other one—if that is the approach to parliamentary service, or a part of the approach to parliamentary service, for which the hon. Gentleman opts—that is his privilege. If he wishes to speak in this debate, including when I have resumed my seat, he is welcome to do so. He might usefully make a judgment about whether the House wants to hear him at great length when there is a clear judgment by the Committee that has been accepted and endorsed by the Opposition Chief Whip, but if he still feels he wants to speak at some considerable length, if it makes him feel better and if he thinks what an excellent contribution he has made, that is his prerogative.

What the hon. Gentleman will not do is to breach the rules of this House and tell me—I say this not least to members of the public—what the job of the Chair is. I know what the job of the Chair is and I have done it to the best of my ability. To err is human, so I make my mistakes, but I have done it to the best of my ability for over a decade. I do not simply assert or suggest but state with complete confidence that it is not part of my job to make representations to a Member that, because of this rumour or that rumour, or this allegation or that allegation, or this person disliking him or that person disliking him, it would be best if he stood down from the chairmanship of his Select Committee. That is not the responsibility of the Speaker of the House of Commons. If the hon. Gentleman still thinks otherwise, I fear he is beyond redemption in the matter. I would like to help him, but he just does not want to be helped.

**Andrew Bridgen:** Mr Speaker, I thank you for your advice, as always. For the past 10 years you have advised me on many occasions, but had you waited for my conclusion, you would have seen that I was going to extol your decision not to get involved in this matter. Had you done so, we may well have protected the reputation of this House, but I doubt that we ever would have got to see the full report that is now before us.

Despite this report being public knowledge—it has been available for Members to read for several days—the right hon. Member for Leicester East remains a member of the Labour party. He has the Labour Whip. He is still a serving member of the Labour national executive committee and he is still currently the candidate for Leicester East at the forthcoming election. That, of course, is a matter for the Labour party, and it is also, I believe, a matter for the public we all serve in our constituencies, not least in Leicester East. I believe—I think that many other people do—that Leicester East deserves rather better, Mr Speaker.

We can recall what we have done in the past and the way we have voted. We will all be held to account for that very shortly, on 12 December. Only a month after the right hon. Member for Leicester East rather reluctantly resigned, following the rent boy and cocaine scandal, from the chairmanship of the Home Affairs Committee, he was nominated by the Labour party to serve on the Justice Committee. That was only four weeks after he had considered himself unsuitable to continue as Chair of the Home Affairs Committee.

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I am sorry, but I must invite the hon. Gentleman to resume his seat and I will tell him why.

The hon. Gentleman tries to demonstrate how fair he is being by saying that, belatedly, he agrees with me, which he has never previously given any indication of at all. If that is what he now says, I am glad he has come to recognise the error of his past ways and the extreme folly, as well as the sheer nastiness, of making repeated representations to the Chair to intercede in a matter in which the Chair should not, of course, intercede.

What the hon. Gentleman is doing now is what he attempted to do on the occasion of the debate about the nomination of the right hon. Member for Leicester East to the Justice Committee. What the hon. Member for North West Leicestershire (Andrew Bridgen) is seeking to do is to drag into this debate, as he dragged into that debate, material that it is not appropriate to share with the House in the context of the debate. This is a short debate on a report. The reason why the hon. Gentleman's point is not relevant or appropriate is, first of all, that he is going back on matters to do with the Justice Committee, of which I think the report does not treat. The report does not get involved in that. That is a historical matter. It was a matter of political opinion and parliamentary debate at the time; it is not relevant to the Standards Committee's report.

Secondly, I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman, who is a party politician and a campaigning party politician—I acknowledge that—just cannot resist getting into the subject of whether it is or is not appropriate for a particular person to be a candidate in a given election. The hon. Gentleman gives his view—he obviously thinks it is enormously important and interesting, although it may not be enormously important or interesting to anyone else—as to whether the health of the people of Leicester East is best served by representation by its current right hon. Member or by someone else. I have to say to the hon. Gentleman that I am not interested in that. Frankly, I do not think that the House is interested in that. If the hon. Gentleman wants to say, “Look, I complained and I was right, and the report has criticised, censured and punished, or proposes to do so, the right hon. Gentleman,” he could have done that and sat down by now.

I give him a final warning, and it is a warning: I am not going to have the House abused by the way in which the hon. Gentleman chooses to behave. If he has a sentence or two that he wants to utter as to why he thinks that this is a decent report and he agrees with it, that is fine. If he wants to launch a further ad hominem attack on the right hon. Member for Leicester East, this is not the time or place to do so.

I say in all sincerity and kindness to the hon. Gentleman: show some antennae, man, for the will of the House, and show some sensitivity. You have made your point in making a complaint, which you had every right to do, and the Committee has determined the matter. It would be, I think, seemly if the hon. Gentleman speedily brought his speech to a conclusion.

**Andrew Bridgen:** Thank you once again for more help and advice, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman will resume his seat. It is not help and advice; I am telling him what the position is. Don't mix it with the Chair. If you have a couple more sentences to utter, you will do so; if you want to dilate at length, you will not.

**Andrew Bridgen:** Mr Speaker, I will bring my remarks to a conclusion, but it is clear to me, and it will be clear to the public, that to the fag-end of your tenure in that Chair, you are defending the indefensible and your very close relationship with the right hon. Member in question. The House can come to its own conclusions. The Standards Committee has come to its own conclusions. And, Mr Speaker, the public will come to theirs. Thank you very much.

**Mr Speaker:** I am quite sure that the public will come to their own conclusions. Let me say to the hon. Gentleman that he can try to smear me; he will get the square root of nowhere. I am friendly with the right hon. Member for Leicester East, as I am friendly with the hon. Member for Christchurch (Sir Christopher Chope), the right hon. Member for Aylesbury (Sir David Lidington), and the hon. Members for Stroud (Dr Drew) and for Strangford (Jim Shannon). I am friendly with a great many Members, having served in this place for 22 years. I do not get involved in matters appertaining to standards. There is a machinery for deliberation on those matters in the form of a Parliamentary Standards Commissioner and a Committee. They deal with those matters.

The hon. Gentleman, only a few moments ago, was saying, in what he thought was a frightfully clever twist, that he had come to accept that I was right to say that I could not get involved. If he is now saying that, in fact, my close relationship shows that I am trying to defend the right hon. Member for Leicester East, he is contradicting himself not within days, weeks or months; he is contradicting himself within minutes. I am not trying to defend the conduct of the right hon. Gentleman. What I am doing, on behalf of and in support of the House, is—colleagues; members of the public—defending the integrity of an independent process. If the hon. Gentleman cannot or will not grasp that fact, with the very greatest of respect to him—or such respect as I can muster—that says more about him than it does about me.

2.33 pm

**Sir Peter Bottomley** (Worthing West) (Con): I, and I hope the whole House, wish that the right hon. Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz) recovers and that his health is restored.

I strongly support the motion, which says that the House

“approves the First Report of the Committee on Standards ...HC 93”,

and that we endorse

“the recommendations in paragraphs 99 and 101”

and the suspension from the service of the House for a period of six months.

I served with others on the Standards Committee in the early 2000s, when Elizabeth Filkin was the Standards Commissioner. She was badly treated by the House and treated even worse by the right hon. Member for Leicester East. Paragraph 97 of the report states:

“Mr Vaz has previously been found to have been in serious breach of the Code and in contempt of the House. In 2002 the Standards and Privileges Committee found he had recklessly made a damaging and untrue allegation against another person, which could have intimidated them, and had wrongly interfered with the House's investigative process: in particular that ‘having set the Commissioner on a false line of inquiry Mr Vaz then accused her of interfering in a criminal investigation and threatened to report her to the Speaker’”.

It goes on to other points that he made.

My hon. Friend the Member for North West Leicestershire (Andrew Bridgen) rightly read out some of the words on the right hon. Gentleman's website, which are totally contradicted by the report that I have in my hand. I think that someone who has done that after the report has come out should have the suspension doubled to a year.

I say this: this is not a party point, but the right hon. Gentleman should not be nominated. If he is nominated, he should not be elected, and if he is elected, he should be suspended for a very long time.

**Mr Speaker:** I thank the hon Gentleman for his contribution.

2.35 pm

**Sir Christopher Chope:** I had not intended to participate in the debate, but I am a member of the current Committee. As my hon. Friend the Member for East Worthing and Shoreham (Tim Loughton) will recognise, serving on the Standards Committee is one of the less pleasant responsibilities that falls to Members, but that is the position I have been in for quite a long time. I can recall a time when we passed sentence, in a sense, on my right hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mrs Miller), saying that she should make an apology to the House. I was in the House when she made her apology, and I recall the sense of outrage that her apology was not as full as some people might have wished. As a result, she suffered additional penalties in her constituency—it was a long time ago and I am sure that has all been forgiven.

In that context, when I listened to my hon. Friend the Member for North West Leicestershire (Andrew Bridgen) reading out what is on the website of the right hon. Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz), it filled me with horror, because it is totally contradictory to the findings of the Committee. What does not come across in a report such as this is the detail that has been gone into by the members of the Committee—including lay-members, who do it for love, really—the commissioner and her predecessor. An enormous amount of work has gone into this, and we reached a conclusion:

“We are satisfied from the evidence we have considered that Mr Vaz did on 27 August 2016 offer to procure and pay for illegal drugs for use by a third party.”

Paragraph 54 states:

“On the basis of the evidence supplied by the audio-recording and the transcript, we reach the following conclusions germane to the Commissioner's findings...that Mr Vaz's explanation of the incident on 27 August 2016 is not believable...that on this occasion Mr Vaz expressed a willingness to procure a Class A drug, cocaine, for the use of another person...that on this occasion Mr Vaz engaged in paid-for sex. We consider that the evidence supporting these conclusions is compelling.”

On that basis, I follow my hon. Friend the Member for Worthing West (Sir Peter Bottomley) in asking whether it would be reasonable, if the right hon. Gentleman is returned following the next general election, for the

Standards Committee to revisit this issue, having regard to what is on the website now. I commend the work of the Standards Committee and particularly that of its Chair, the hon. Member for Stretford and Urmston (Kate Green), but it seems to me that what is on the website is designed to bring the work of the Standards Committee into disrepute.

**Mr Speaker:** I am extremely grateful to the hon. Gentleman, who has expressed himself with his customary courtesy. I think that the answer to that question—I am looking plaintively in the direction of the Chair of the Standards Committee, the hon. Member for Stretford and Urmston (Kate Green)—is that that is a matter for the Committee. It would be quite wrong for me to seek to influence it any way, and I do not do so. It is absolutely not a matter for me or, indeed, for any occupant of the Chair. It is, I think, a matter for the Committee. I say this by way of explanation and attempted intelligibility to observers: the Committee has authority in this matter and, if you will, ownership of it. Committees are in charge of their own inquiries. It would be a matter for the Committee, but obviously not in this Parliament. That is the best way to leave it.

Obviously, although I heard the recital—I do not use the term “recital” in any disobliging sense—by the hon. Member for North West Leicestershire (Andrew Bridgen) of what was on the website, it is not something that I have studied, and I hope people will understand that it is not something that the Speaker would have studied. There is no reason to expect that I would have done so. It is a matter for the Committee. It has a range of sanctions available to it, and it makes the judgment as to which sanction or set of sanctions it wishes to recommend to the House. If, for whatever reason, the Committee does not recommend an apology, an apology is not required. If, on the other hand, it does, it might be. A very different matter was recently brought to my attention in relation to a non-Member and the allocation of a pass, and I had to point out that there was not an unpurged contempt. A person had behaved badly and been criticised, but he had not failed to apologise when instructed to do so. For whatever reason, he had not been instructed to do so and was therefore not required to do so. My understanding is that that is the case in this instance. Whether that is the right thing or the wrong thing is a matter for the Committee.

**Sir Peter Bottomley:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker. On that point, we notice that the motion is in the name of the Leader of the House, so were the person concerned to be re-elected, we would not have to wait for the re-establishment of the Standards Committee. The Leader

of the House could re-present a motion in the same terms, and if, subsequently, the Standards Committee wanted to take further action, that would then follow.

**Mr Speaker:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his point of order.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. It might help the House if I explain that the Standards Committee has specifically asked that the next Leader of the House—or me, if I continue in office in the new Parliament—bring the suspension forward as soon as the House reassembles, so that it is not, in effect, only a two-day suspension. That has been specifically requested by the Committee.

**Mr Speaker:** Forgive me, but I was myself perfectly clear on that point, although I am grateful to the Leader of the House for making it clear to colleagues. It was always intended that, if the House accepted the report, the suspension would take effect after the election. Whether the Committee wishes to revisit the issue, in the light of what the hon. Member for Christchurch (Sir Christopher Chope) and others have said, is, if he will forgive me saying so, a slightly different point.

**Kate Green:** Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. My understanding is that in the event that the right hon. Member is returned, we would like the next Leader of the House to bring forward a motion to continue the suspension, but neither this Parliament, this Leader of the House nor any Member of this Parliament can compel that. It would be a matter for the next Parliament. In so far as the next Committee is concerned, any Member is at liberty to make a complaint about the conduct of a Member at the time that he was serving as a Member. We have recently introduced new provisions around historical cases, but the Committee would be a new Committee, and would not be able simply to pick up an old case conducted by our current Committee.

**Mr Speaker:** Thank you. That was by way of a public information notice from the Chair of the Committee, which I hope is helpful to colleagues.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House—

- (1) approves the First Report of the Committee on Standards, Keith Vaz, HC 93;
- (2) endorses the recommendations in paragraphs 99 and 101; and
- (3) accordingly suspends Keith Vaz from the service of the House for a period of 6 months.



## Tributes to the Speaker's Chaplain

**Mr Speaker:** As people will speedily see, we move from one subject to another quite quickly, and we now come to the very happy business of the motion on tributes to the Speaker's Chaplain. I have the great pleasure of calling the Leader of the House to move the motion.

2.42 pm

**The Leader of the House of Commons (Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg):** I beg to move,

That this House congratulates the Reverend Prebendary Rose Hudson-Wilkin on her twenty-eight years of ordained ministry in the Church of England, nine years of which have been in the service of Mr Speaker and this House as Chaplain to the Speaker, the first woman and the first BAME holder of that post; expresses its appreciation for the generous, ecumenical and compassionate spirit of her work among hon. Members and staff of the House; and wishes her every success in her forthcoming ministry as Bishop of Dover and Bishop in Canterbury.

You are absolutely right, Mr Speaker, to say we are moving on to a really happy discussion. It is a great honour to move the motion and give the House the opportunity to pay tribute to the Reverend Prebendary Rose Hudson-Wilkin, the 79th Chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons. I would like to thank her on behalf of the whole House for her service.

"Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us."

These are the beautiful uplifting words that the reverend prebendary reads to us in her strong, resonant, resounding voice every morning when we meet in private to send up our petitions to God. It is when your chaplain, Mr Speaker, creates an atmosphere of prayerfulness that allows right hon. and hon. Members to set their souls at ease with God as they prepare for the business ahead of them. She does so in a way that would move the heart of the most stony-hearted atheist to feel there is a true and a divine presence. To achieve this through the power of speech and the use of language is a great achievement, and one that has daily been the triumph of your chaplain, to the benefit of Members of Parliament.

It is not only liturgically that your chaplain, who is now retiring to go on to greater things, has been a major asset to this place, Mr Speaker; it is also in her pastoral work, for the chaplain has been a help to many Members, in counselling, guiding and supporting them through difficulties in their lives and giving them succour as a true shepherd to her flock. She has worked closely in a spirit of ecumenism with Father Pat Browne and has not been in any sense narrowly sectarian. Anybody who has had dealings with your chaplain or who has met her has found it a help and benefit. What more can possibly be asked from someone in clerical orders?

It has been 359 years since the first Speaker's Chaplain, Edward Voyce, was appointed in 1660, and while it is of great significance that the reverend prebendary is the first in the intervening three and a half centuries to be a woman and the first to be from an ethnic minority, I look forward to the day when we no longer have to remark on the race or sex of the Speaker's Chaplain. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. She is a person of God—the highest

calling of all. Dare I say it, but the calling to God is a higher calling than the calling to political life, and all that matters is that calling?

For the chaplain, it has always been very simple. God's calling has made her who she is, and she has followed her calling with the calm confidence we all admire so much. Her key responsibilities, in addition to pastoral care and daily prayers, have included running a weekly eucharistic service in the chapel and performing weddings, marriage blessings and baptisms for Members and their children. She has also led many services to celebrate the lives of those who have died during their service to Parliament. I think many of us would particularly like to thank her for her part in the commemorative ceremonies and her support following the loss of a dear colleague, Jo Cox and PC Keith Palmer. We will never forget the bravery and passion of all those who have worked in this place, and we will never forget the chaplain's dutiful care to her flock.

The chaplain has always shown her devotion to those who need her, whether in Montego Bay or on these shores, and I know so many people in the parliamentary estate feel that her remarkably self-possessed view of life has sustained them through difficult times. We will never forget the chaplain's trust in God's grace, which has, I think, helped give her the courage of her convictions to speak out during her ministry. We should all seek to live by her words on the importance of improving the culture in Westminster and making this a place where everyone is treated as they should be.

It only seems suitable to end with words from the 1662 Prayer Book—that great book of liturgical beauty, that ornament of the Church of England and, speaking as a Catholic, that bit of the Anglican Church of which I am possibly the most jealous; some of our translations are nothing like so beautiful. Leaving that to one side, it seems suitable to end with words from the Prayer Book:

"Almighty and everlasting God, who alone workest great marvels: Send down upon our Bishops and Curates, and all Congregations committed to their charge, the healthful Spirit of thy grace; and, that they may truly please thee, pour upon them the continual dew of thy blessing."

I hope, Mr Speaker, that as your chaplain moves to Dover, the continual dew of God's blessing will rain down upon her.

2.48 pm

**Valerie Vaz (Walsall South) (Lab):** I thank the Leader of the House for a really wonderful tribute to Reverend Rose. Before I pay tribute to Reverend Rose, I want to refer to your statement yesterday, Mr Speaker, on the new Speaker's Chaplain. We welcome Reverend Canon Patricia Hillas, who will be with us shortly. I am sure she will do the same wonderful job as Reverend Rose has done. I was sorry to miss mass yesterday, when Reverend Rose and Father Pat were together. They have made a formidable team in our darkest hours.

We wish Reverend Prebendary Rose Hudson-Wilkin—I am sorry she is not here in the Chamber, in her usual place—a heartfelt farewell. Reverend Rose arrived in the United Kingdom to join the Church Army as an 18-year-old young woman, displaying the Windrush generation's adaptability. It did not take long for Reverend Rose to flourish, and in 1994 she was ordained to the priesthood, at the point where women had only recently been allowed to be priests. She continued to splinter the

glass ceiling spectacularly, given the context of the male-dominated area she was called to—not only for women, but crucially, and seemingly effortlessly, for women of colour.

It is no surprise to those of us who know her that, while holding the prestigious position of 79th Chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons—as you heard, Mr Speaker, in tributes to you, a well-deserved appointment—and being one of the three chaplains to Her Majesty the Queen, she is much loved by her congregation at Holy Trinity church, Dalston, and at All Saints church, Haggerston, where she has worked for over 16 and a half years.

If you ask Reverend Rose, I am sure she will say that her pastoral missions both here and in Hackney share a common thread, and that is to make sure that everyone is well spiritually and everyone feels good enough to do their jobs well. The Leader of the House was right: when she says prayers, which she does every day, I often feel as though I have never heard those prayers before. She has an amazing way of making you feel that that is the first time you have ever heard those important words. Reverend Rose will tell you that prayer is at the heart of what she does.

Reverend Rose has always been a visible presence and is often seen around Parliament, as she says, “loitering with intent”, comfortable in her own skin and “in her hair”. I know that she has sought out hon. Members when they have faced difficulties. We have not had to go to her; she comes to us, and she makes sure that she counsels us in the appropriate way.

But what Rose has always been keen to emphasise is that in all she does she feels connected with—rooted to—her past in Jamaica, her grandparents and their grandparents, with sacrifices, ideas and hope passed through stories flowing from one generation to the next. She says that such a foundation will be an integral part of success for the next generation of young black people growing up in the UK, on the basis that “they survived, so we must thrive.” Yes, she has a way with words.

True happiness, Reverend Rose maintains, flows from where you come from, where you are rooted and the depth of spirit that tells you who you are. She poses questions: why should women be seen and not heard? Why not live in this world and not in the past? Why should not women be in leadership? Why should people of colour not be seen in all walks of life? But a good leader, she says, acts with integrity and loves the people whom they serve.

We certainly have felt the warmth of the Reverend Rose Hudson-Wilkin's spiritual leadership while she has been in Parliament, and at a very exacting period of our history. In an interview with *The Observer*, she revealed that her secret prayer was that she would like to see a more civil attitude among MPs. She warned that the world was looking in, and she would like to see a change in the way we MPs handled listening and speaking to one another. I think that it is a work in progress. Perhaps, when she is looking back on us from Dover, she will see that we have achieved her aims.

I have seen Reverend Rose sitting through many debates, particularly the European debates. Rose, we shall miss having you with us, guiding us gently but—in the words of Labi Siffre—with “something inside so strong” so that we learn to deal with our individual

experiences through the way in which we respond to them, and, in the case of us women, teaching us to respond to high barriers by becoming taller.

We wish you, Ken, your two daughters and son all the very best in your new role. We know that you will continue, as Bishop of Dover, with your own mantra: to achieve, to excel, to overcome obstacles—that no limitations will rule your efforts. As we have already witnessed, we know you will go on to greater things and are proud to have crossed paths with you. A true pilgrim's progress, from Jamaica to Canterbury. As Aretha Franklin would say—respect! Reverend Rose, we thank you. You were there for us when we needed you most.

**Mr Speaker:** I must thank the shadow Leader of the House, and I think I speak for the House in doing so, for the sheer warmth and magnificence of that tribute. I think that there is an electricity in the Chamber as a result of what the right hon. Lady has said and the unadulterated passion with which she has delivered it, and I want to thank her.

2.54 pm

**Sir Peter Bottomley** (Worthing West) (Con): As parliamentary warden of St Margaret's church, Parliament Square, may I join in supporting the motion of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House? The only thing that surprised me about his speech is that he did not mention—although the motion does—that Rose Hudson-Wilkin will be the Bishop in Canterbury, where my right hon. Friend married his wife, with a number of people presiding, and he managed to incorporate in this currently Anglican cathedral a Roman Catholic mass. I think that it is almost coming home time for him.

May I say how much I welcomed the words of the right hon. Member for Walsall South (Valerie Vaz)? Watching Rose Hudson-Wilkin work with John Hall as Dean of Westminster, with Andrew Tremlett and with Jane Sinclair, who have been the rectors at St Margaret's, and in her sharing of the monthly parliamentary communion and the breakfast in your house, Mr Speaker, we have seen closely in private what she is also well known for in public. I add that it was a delight to meet her grandchildren at the reception in your house, Mr Speaker; they are a tribute to the modern generation in this country, and if some of them were to come here not perhaps as Speaker's chaplain but as Members of Parliament it would be a delight, especially if I could remain here to welcome and join them.

I want to end with some words that will be familiar to Rose Hudson-Wilkin:

“Our vision is for everyone, everywhere to encounter God's love and be empowered to transform their communities through faith shared in words and action.”

She says she comes from Montego Bay; I say she comes from the Church Army, and those words are the Church Army dedication. I thank her for her dedication to us.

**Mr Speaker:** Bless you; I am deeply obliged to the hon. Gentleman for what he has said.

2.56 pm

**Patrick Grady** (Glasgow North) (SNP): Mr Speaker, I hope you will not mind if I start by briefly expressing my thanks to you for your service in the Chair and

[Patrick Grady]

wishing you all the very best for the future. You have been a source of encouragement and sound advice to many of us in the Scottish National party, and I have been particularly grateful for your support in my role as Chief Whip. Of course, for Scottish National party Members, staying at Westminster is not a long-term ambition, but the role that you have played and the reforms that you have introduced have certainly made our time here more tolerable.

As others have said, Mr Speaker, one of your most significant legacies and early decisions is the appointment of Rev. Rose Hudson-Wilkin as your chaplain. I remember as a younger, keener but casual observer of business in this place reading some of the coverage and criticisms of that appointment at that time, but, as you have previously said, Mr Speaker, those critics were wrong in every single respect.

From the start, SNP Members here have found that Rose brings a presence of welcome, comfort and reassurance. There are some who would question the value or relevance of starting the parliamentary day with Prayers, but of course participation is voluntary and, as the Leader of the House alluded to, I do not think that anyone, believer or non-believer, who has had the privilege of experiencing the prayers led by the Rev. Rose Hudson-Wilkin could doubt their value. No matter how tense the day may be, no matter how important or portentous the business to come, her tone and eloquence at the start of each day have a levelling effect and remind us all that ultimately we are all equal—for believers, we are equal in the sight of God.

Prayers, especially in recent times, have provided some memorable moments, even if they have not always been visible to the public. The Rose's choice of texts often matches with uncanny ability the occasion of the day and hits the right note. At the start of our proceedings on the historic Saturday sitting a couple of weeks ago, she began with St Paul:

“Do not be anxious”.

That was the moment that broke the ice, and chuckling could be heard across the Chamber.

By leading those prayers, Rose has ministered to the House collectively. Her presence in the Under Gallery, literally praying for us as we have taken part in some of the biggest and most historic votes of recent years, has not gone unnoticed. She has also ministered to many Members individually as a chaplain, especially at times when tragedy has struck Parliament and the House. She has also built strong ecumenical relations, forging, in particular, a firm bond with Canon Pat Browne. He may officially be titled the Roman Catholic duty priest to the Houses of Parliament, but to the Catholic community in Westminster—and, I believe, to many others—he too is undoubtedly a chaplain, and early-day motion 71 congratulates him on his 10 years of service. He invited Rose to address us at mass in the crypt yesterday—it is, after all, the chapel of her chaplaincy—and her reflection was once again on that admonition to not be anxious but to trust in God. We hope that that is what she will do as she takes on the role of Bishop of Dover. Once again she is breaking down barriers and conventions, as she has done here in Westminster, and as you have done, Mr Speaker, in appointing her.

We will warmly welcome, in due course, Canon Tricia Hillas. She brings considerable experience of promoting diversity, inclusion and ecumenism, all of which means that we can have every confidence in her as a worthy successor to Rose.

Rose said to us last night that, although she was leaving this place, she would carry us in her heart and in her prayers. She can be assured that we will do the same for her, in ours. This morning, at Prayers, she invoked the priestly blessing from the Book of Numbers:

”The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine upon you”.

Perhaps, in return, we can invoke the old Irish blessing:

“May the road rise up to meet you. May the wind be always at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face; the rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of His hand.”

**Mr Speaker:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for what he has said. I hope that observers of our proceedings understand the enormous affection and esteem in which we all hold Rose. I just want to mention that a constituent of mine, and a former constituent, are in the Public Gallery: Julie Kincade, my constituent, and former councillor Sue Polhill, who was one of my constituents until relatively recently. In this session, I hope that they are seeing the House at its best.

I want also to mention, because I think it is apposite and there is a piquancy about it, that the Church of England's diversity adviser, Elizabeth Henry, who has helped to deliver real beneficial and progressive change, is with us as well. Elizabeth, you have been the most enormous asset to the Church, but I want to thank you publicly. You have been a great support in relation to Rose—you were an early champion of hers, knowing her quality—and you greatly assisted my colleagues and me only the other day in the recruitment of her successor. I salute the work that you do, the passion that you share, the experience that you bring, and the counsel that you offer. They are very precious.

3.2 pm

**Sir Roger Gale** (North Thanet) (Con): I have always thought that the job of the Speaker's Chaplain is rather like the job of the person known as “the bish” on one of Her Majesty's warships. That person prowls around the lower decks, surrounded by heathens and heretics, waiting for somebody to call upon him. I guess that this place, particularly in the last few months, has been just a little bit like that. But the wonderful thing about Rose is that she has always been there to be called on when she is needed, and through some very stressful times for everyone on both sides of the House she has been a tower of strength.

You guys and girls have come to say goodbye to Rose. I have come to say hello. As my hon. Friend the Member for Worthing West (Sir Peter Bottomley) said, the Bishop of Dover is the Bishop in Canterbury. Let me also say, just as an aside, that earlier today, during questions to the Church Commissioner, it was asked, “How does the Archbishop of Canterbury manage when he has so much to do, not only at home but overseas?” The answer is, of course, that he is not the Bishop in Canterbury. That will be Rose, and I know that she will be a tower of strength to Archbishop Justin, as she has been to this place.



But Rose is coming to east Kent, and I have warned the lady who is going to become Bishop Rose that one of her first duties will be to visit the wonderful constituency of North Thanet, and to spend a happy couple of hours on Margate's seafront—in January, when the rain and the wind and the snow will almost certainly be horizontal. That is when we in Margate celebrate the Blessing of the Seas. That is the occasion, on the feast of the Epiphany, when we throw a small Greek Cypriot boy into the freezing waters of the North sea and—so far without success—try to drown him. The Bishop of Dover—the Bishop in Canterbury—plays a key role in that event. Rose, we are looking forward enormously to welcoming you to east Kent.

**Mr Speaker:** That speech was typical of the hon. Gentleman. Thank you.

3.5 pm

**Gavin Robinson** (Belfast East) (DUP): I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in this tribute, but I regret that I was not in my place to take part in the tributes to you, Mr Speaker. I should say that I was not here for your tributes because I was adhering to your rule that we cannot just beetle into the Chamber after the start of a debate, although I realise that you might not have been adhering to that rule quite so strictly today as on other occasions. Had I been here from the start, or had I had the opportunity to participate, I would have said that one of the things you have done, with which I would like to associate myself in every way, is to give steadfast support to Rose. Not only before I joined this House but subsequently, on a number of occasions I have heard you stand steadfastly and resolutely against racism associated with her as an individual, and against gender bias and gender discrimination. What you have exuded with your appointment of Rose as Speaker's Chaplain is what I hope we as a House embody. I have never heard a Member of this House—maybe they did previously—criticise Rose. I think she is wonderful. She exudes a faith that I do not talk about often but that I hold personally and privately.

The shadow Leader of the House, who is also a wonderful lady, said that she was sorry that Rose was not here. I think that that embodies Rose's character. She was here during your tributes as a steadfast support for you, Mr Speaker, but she is much too humble to be here for this. She exudes the Christian strength that we should all embody. I have been here four years. On occasions I have gone to Rose, tapped her on the shoulder and shared with her the difficulties that some of my colleagues have been facing. I know, without asking, that she then went to see them. She provided the strength, the assurance and the love that she exudes on our God's behalf.

The Leader of the House mentioned the comfort that we get from liturgy. There is huge comfort from liturgy, but depending on who gives it, it can often appear repetitive. That has never been the case during Prayers in this House. I remember the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Alex Chalk), who is not in his place, talking about Rose's beautiful intonation. The poetry she injected into scripture brought it alive for us. As somebody from Ulster Protestantism who knows how important Sunday morning is, I did not think I would skip into those Anglican ways of believing that coming into this Chamber

for Prayers was important. Not only is it important, but it has provided huge comfort for me. Not every day, but on the days when we are facing difficulties collectively and on days whenever, nationally, we know that politics is in a bad place, just coming here for those three or four minutes and hearing the Word expounded in such a beautiful way is a huge source of strength.

I have never spoken publicly before, and I probably will not do so again, about the difficulties that my wife faced when my son was born. Those difficulties meant that public baptism at the front of church was not an option. So, two years after he was born, Rose baptised him here, very privately and very personally. As a two-year-old, when the light of life was passed, he blew it out. When solemn prayers were being shared, he was trying to run around. Rose just put her arm around him and held him there during all those precious moments. She has been precious to me and to my wife, and I know she has been precious to many in this House. For my part, Mr Speaker, I thank you for allowing me to speak so early and for giving me the opportunity to participate in this debate and to thank Rose from the bottom of our hearts.

3.9 pm

**Sir David Lidington** (Aylesbury) (Con): I am delighted to be able to associate myself with and wholeheartedly support the motion moved by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. I want to say two things about my memories of Rose. First, from those few minutes at the beginning of our parliamentary days when the Speaker's Chaplain reads a psalm and leads us in a brief session of prayer, I will always remember the sheer musicality of Rose Hudson-Wilkin's voice, which gave extra resonance and meaning to the texts in which she was leading us. I remember, too, her willingness to vary the normal order of prayers when the occasion made that right. There have been times—I remember this from when I was Leader of the House in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attack on Westminster bridge and the Palace of Westminster—when the sense of shock in this Chamber at the beginning of the day has been palpable. Somehow on those occasions, Rose knew which psalm, which passage, which prayer to introduce in place of one of our usual prayers to reflect that mood in the House and to respond to the particular occasion.

My second point is about her pastoral care. The hon. Member for Belfast East (Gavin Robinson) has spoken of his and his family's experiences. Again from when I was Leader of the House, in the months and, indeed, years that followed the dreadful murder of our colleague Jo Cox, one of the things that is etched in my memory is how Members on all sides—particularly, though not exclusively, women Members—began to open up about the abuse and threats that they had been suffering for quite some time. Whether it was about those things or whether it was dealing with a Member at a time of personal or family crisis or tragedy, Rose was always there: quiet, listening, offering comfort, and offering solidarity when it was most needed.

In years when the reputation of this House and of its Members collectively has been under fierce and sometimes vicious attack, Rose was also willing to speak up in public to affirm the value of the political vocation and to assert that, from her experience, she knew that most Members here, regardless of which political tradition

[Sir David Lidington]

they represented, had come into politics with a noble motive of trying to make things better for the people they serve.

Rose is now going on to greater things within the Church, and I am sure that the people of Margate and the rest of north Kent will soon discover that they have in Rose Hudson-Wilkin a shepherd of great talent and unparalleled pastoral commitment. Those of us in this House now, whether we are hoping to stay or intending to leave, will always remember Rose with affection, with pride and with a sense of love, because love was what she brought to this place and what she always sought to embody.

3.14 pm

**Stephen Pound** (Ealing North) (Lab): I appreciate that you, Mr Speaker, are occasionally someone who believes in constructive iconoclasm. This is the sort of occasion when I say to myself, "Would it not be wonderful if, just for once, we could not sit as Robespierre demanded we sit in the revolutionary council, on the left and the right, but we all sat together, on one side or the other?" I say that because today we are not divided. We are not divided by politics, theology or religion; we are divided in no way. We are united by an extraordinary admiration for a truly remarkable woman. We have heard some extraordinary contributions. Everyone who has spoken related to Rose Hudson-Wilkin in their own particular and personal way. That is so typical of the henotic qualities of the woman: that she appealed to every one of us, from our different traditions, in so many different ways.

Some of the tributes that have been paid today have been emotional. Some of them have been stirring. Some of them have been hard to listen to. But in many ways, that was Rose's ministry here in this place; sometimes she went when the words were difficult to say. When my mother died, Rose was an extraordinary source of comfort to me, and I think every one of us has had a similar story to tell. The hon. Member for Glasgow North (Patrick Grady) was slightly censoring his comments when he gave that famous Irish blessing about the wind always being at your back and the road always rising up to meet you. I mention my late mother, God rest her soul, and I seem to remember that the last two lines of that blessing are:

"And may you be in heaven

half an hour before the devil knows you're dead."

I cannot imagine why my late mother, Dominica, felt it appropriate for me to learn that couplet, but she certainly did and, in the manner of education back in those days, she made me repeat it on a regular basis.

Slightly oddly, we have heard Rose described as the "Reverend Prebendary Rose Hudson-Wilkin. As she ascends to the Episcopal purple, some of us refer to her as the "about to be bishop". But whatever we call her, a Rose is just as sweet by any name, and what we have here is our Rose, be she bishop, prebendary, or canon. Be she whatever, she is our Rose Hudson-Wilkin and she is remarkable for that.

The horror of the murder of Keith Palmer was mentioned earlier. Many of us were in the House on that occasion, and many of us remember that Rose and

Canon Pat Browne organised three different services on that very day, so that everyone could have the opportunity to make their peace with God and to find comfort and succour on that day. It was a truly remarkable occasion, and she rose to that occasion. I think you rose to that occasion too, Mr Speaker, as did the House. It is a tragedy that it took that appalling, cold-blooded murder of such a good man for us to come together, as we did in the memory of Jo Cox. We have had some terrible times in Parliament in the past decade, but we have also had some great, great times, and the terrible times have been mitigated by the love, warmth, illumination and prayer of Rose Hudson-Wilkin.

Last night, as my friend, the hon. Member for Glasgow North said, Rose concelebrated the holy mass in the Chapel underneath. The reading was from Romans, which has wonderful lines saying, "Don't worry too much about praying because if you can't find the words, God will give you the words. God will always find the words for your prayer. You don't need to worry about getting the words right. You don't even need to worry about getting them in the right order. You don't even need to worry about your vocabulary or your enunciation. God will give you the words." Rose Hudson-Wilkin always had the words; she always knew what to say, be it a short contribution or a long one.

It has been mentioned that Rose is not in her usual place in the Under Gallery, where I have seen her sit many a time, shaking her head, almost imperceptibly, but sending us the message that says, "Oh dear, oh dear, what are you doing now?" and praying for us. I believe she is without at the present time, but close, and I like to think she will always be close to this place.

The former Bishop of London the Right Reverend and right hon. Richard Chartres and I were at school together. We have an arrangement whereby he does not say anything about what I got up to and I reciprocate. We took different theological paths, but when it came time to appoint the next Bishop of London, I felt it appropriate to write to him to say, "I make no suggestion as to who the next bishop should be, but she should be a woman of colour, she should be a woman, her initials should be R. H. W. and if possible, she should come from Montego Bay. If you can find anyone who fits those criteria, I am sure she would make an excellent Bishop of London." An excellent choice was made, and I am glad to say that Rose has found her bishopric down on the south coast—although I have to say that when the right hon. Member for North Thanet (Sir Roger Gale) talked about hurling young boys into the foaming brine for some extraordinary marine sacrifice, I thought that perhaps a bit of exorcism might be appropriate in such places. Had Rose been appointed the Bishop of London, she would have broken not only another ceiling but a stained-glass ceiling. That is what Rose has done. She would have achieved so much by doing that.

I find Rose's kindness, generosity, warmth and love remarkable—they are characteristics from which I draw strength—but let us not forget her intellect. She has a formidable intellect: she is a great Bible scholar and a great student of theology. From the discussions we had, perhaps from slightly different theological perspectives, I learned such a number of things from Rose. She is one of those people who believes that intelligence is like a fire to be lit and a brain is like a bucket to be filled. She actually wants to draw you out and discuss matters with

you. She is a truly remarkable woman. I feel the need to head down to Dover just to keep in contact with her. Whether or not I transport myself corporeally down to Dover, all I know is that her prayers will be enveloping this building and this place, because she is part of our history and part of the culture that we have here, and we are the better for it.

This morning, during the tributes that were quite rightly paid to you, Mr Speaker, one thing we could not do was give any credit to your successor, because we do not know who your successor is—bookmakers appear to know, but that is entirely inappropriate to mention—but in the case of Rose we can mention my good friend Tricia Hillas. On behalf of all the community and congregation of St Barnabas Northolt, may I say what an excellent choice you have made, Mr Speaker? Despite an unfortunate predilection for Watford football club—I rather suspect she was attracted to Vicarage Road for theological reasons, rather than the lure of Troy Deeney—I must warn you, Mr Speaker, that when we come to meet Tricia Hillas, there will be dancing, singing and music, because Tricia Hillas can never stand still in one place from one minute to the next. We have talked about our different theological traditions—I tend to be with the late Monsignor Ronnie Knox, who felt that by and large enthusiasm was not a good thing and that we have a bit too much of it—but Tricia Hillas is an enthusiast. She is a marvellous pastor and will bring so much energy, courage, colour and excitement to this place.

I am, of course, backing away from the stage and the limelight, returning to well-merited obscurity—[HON. MEMBERS: “What a shame!”] No, no; were it put to a vote, I think I would have left years ago. [HON. MEMBERS: “Never!”] Well, I think there is precedent for holding a seated vote, or a standing vote—I forget which one is which—but let us not chance fate. I wish everyone who is standing in the election every success and happiness. I want Members to know two things for when the new House assembles and they meet Tricia Hillas. First, she is absolutely a woman of God to the marrow of her bones. She is a woman who will bring God's blessing to this place. Secondly, it is almost impossible to imagine anyone following Rose Hudson-Wilkin, but believe you me, Mr Speaker, Tricia Hillas is going to come very, very close.

We are here to mention Tricia for the future, but for the present and for the future in Dover, let us remember for a moment how incredibly lucky every one of us has been to be touched by that extraordinary, joyous, joyful Christian woman Rose Hudson-Wilkin, the Chaplain to the Speaker, a woman who has taught us all so very much.

There was a time when I was the mayor of Ealing, and I revived the old habit of appointing the mayoral chaplain, which had fallen into desuetude. I appointed Father Pat Foley, my parish priest. At the beginning of each council meeting, he would stand, look at all the councillors, look at them again and then cast his eyes up to heaven and pray for the Borough of Ealing.

I have to say that Rose has never ever stopped praying, not just for us poor parliamentarians, but for what we stand for—for our democracy, for our nation, for our community and, I hope, for a better, fairer and safer world. Rose has been an exemplar. She is going to Dover, but she is going with our prayers. Let us ask her to take with her our thanks, our gratitude, our respect and, if you will allow me, Sir, our love.

3.25 pm

**Dr Julian Lewis** (New Forest East) (Con): As I have listened to the successive tributes, I have been looking at my page of notes of all the things that I wanted to say in order to show appreciation for everything that Rose has brought to this place during her years of service here, and I have been having to cross them off one after another, because the heartfelt speeches so far have really encapsulated everything. But, as we know, Mr Speaker, in politics, everything may already have been said, but the show is not over until everyone has said it.

I wish to try to say something that has not been said explicitly, from a slightly unusual perspective in this context. What I mean is that most of the tributes that have been made so far have clearly come from people blessed with deep religious belief, but, sadly, I am not such a person, having had my religious belief holed below the waterline when I read too much for someone at a young age of some of the things that had happened in British and European history in the first half of the 20th century.

If, as some people say, religion is irrational, then also agnosticism can be irrational, too. What do I mean by that? I mean that somebody who does not have a particular religious belief is nevertheless hugely touched and impressed by those people who do, and particularly by those people who do and who put it into practice by praying on one's behalf. At the risk of slightly embarrassing him, and I suspect that he will be the next to be called, the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) has a habit of sending little notes to colleagues on the eve of elections—[*Interruption.*]

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I know that the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) would want to hear this. The right hon. Gentleman is referring to him and I am sure that he will want to hear it.

**Dr Lewis:** As I was in mid-sentence saying, the hon. Gentleman has a wonderful habit of sending little notes to colleagues at election time and at other times when he thinks that they may need a little bit of encouragement saying, without any sort of patronising air, but with an air of true Christian love, that he is praying for them and their welfare. As someone who is not blessed with deep religious faith, I know how much I deeply appreciate that, and that is, I am sure, one of the reasons why he, irrespective of politics, is loved and respected in all parts of this Chamber. Rose Hudson-Wilkin falls into, from my perspective, exactly the same character. It must have been very daunting for her to descend into this pit of monstrous egos, but she carried it off tremendously. She has never talked down to us or scolded us. She has gently guided us. As has been said, she has given hints through the choice of appropriate prayers and appropriate language, and through the putting forward of a philosophy of righteousness, encouragement and love from which we all have benefited, whether we are religious, whether we have faith or whether we lack it. For that and for her kindness to all who work in this place, I thank her.

3.30 pm

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for New Forest East (Dr Lewis). He has come through a hard time in relation



[Jim Shannon]

to health. As I was aware of that, I made it my business to hold him very much in my prayers, as I do many people in this House—not that anyone will know, because our prayers are private. The right hon. Gentleman does know that, however, because I spoke to him about it.

I am also very pleased to follow the hon. Member for Ealing North (Stephen Pound), who made a constructive contribution, as he always does. I will miss him when he leaves, as he is my friend in this House. In fact, he was one of the first Members I met when I was first elected to the House. I wish him well in whatever the future may hold; I know it will be a good one. I have very much enjoyed our fellowship. He has also had a hard time health-wise, and has come out the other side, due—I believe in my heart—to the prayers of God's people.

I wish to add my voice to the many who have paid tribute to the Speaker's Chaplain, Rev. Rose Hudson-Wilkin. I have met her on many occasions, and I have always been inspired by the gentle, measured and thoughtful manner with which she has approached personal conversations as well as scheduled events. I do not think there is one of us who could say that they did not enjoy and feel uplifted by a conversation with Reverend Rose. I know that I always did; I just always felt so encouraged by what she said.

Scripture says, in Proverbs 31, "Who can find a virtuous woman? Her value is greater than that of rubies." Well, this House has been blessed and encouraged to have been guided spiritually by Rev. Rose Hudson-Wilkin. We can easily see the worth of her guidance and the worthwhile things that have been accomplished in this place. Rose by name, rose by nature; I think every one of us has enjoyed her time here. Parliament has seen frustration and tempers rising to unheard of levels in this place, with repeated calls for calmness and compassion. Reverend Rose has had a gentle spirit and calming influence, and has been a true ambassador for the Lord Jesus. We are exhorted by the word of God to speak the truth but to do so in love, and she does so all the time. That has been missing all too often in this Chamber, but never, ever in the actions of Reverend Rose.

I am a member of the Baptist Church. When I first came to this place, I was made aware that there was holy communion in St Margaret's church across the way. Although I am not an Anglican, I felt that I should—I wanted to—be there. From the very beginning, I was encouraged by that holy communion. As I look around the Chamber today, I see many Members who were also at holy communion. We enjoyed that time of fellowship together.

We have daily Prayers in the Chamber. People back home ask me whether we still have Prayers and Scripture in the Chamber, and they are encouraged when I tell them that we do. I am also encouraged every day when I come into this Chamber and hear Scripture and Prayer, which is so important. I can honestly say that that makes me feel encouraged for the day ahead. I said to Reverend Rose once, "I would like to have holy communion at least once a week or maybe every day, if that is possible, instead of once a month, because every day that we have holy communion I feel that we have had a visit from the Lord himself." Holy communion was an important part of what she did.

My hon. Friend the Member for Belfast East (Gavin Robinson) referred to the empathy and compassion that Reverend Rose has shown him, his wife and his young child. None of us in this Chamber—especially not me, as his colleague and friend—could fail to be moved and encouraged by that.

I wish Reverend Rose every success and God's richest blessing as she continues her ministry as the new Bishop of Dover. I exhort her to keep pressing towards the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. May the words of St Patrick—our patron saint in Northern Ireland—be her battle cry as she moves forward:

"Christ with me,  
 Christ before me,  
 Christ behind me,  
 Christ in me,  
 Christ beneath me,  
 Christ above me,  
 Christ on my right,  
 Christ on my left,  
 Christ when I lie down,  
 Christ when I sit down,  
 Christ when I arise,  
 Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,  
 Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,  
 Christ in every eye that sees me,  
 Christ in every ear that hears me."

I thank Reverend Rose. God bless her in all that she does and will do in the future. I know that in Dover or wherever it may be, she will serve her Lord and Saviour, who we serve here.

3.35 pm

**Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con): It is a privilege to follow the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon).

The hon. Member for Ealing North (Stephen Pound) referred to the holy mass. What is the meaning of the word "holy"? Daily, at Prayers, we invoke the fellowship of the Holy Ghost. I know that the hon. Member for Strangford would say "Holy Spirit", but I prefer to stick with the original words. I have no idea how to define "holy" or "holiness", and I am satisfied that there is no satisfactory dictionary definition, but I know holiness when I have encountered it, and we have encountered it in the presence of Rev. Rose Hudson-Wilkin.

3.36 pm

**Robert Neill** (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con): I want briefly to add a personal note of thanks and tribute to Rev. Rose Hudson-Wilkin. Rose married Anne-Louise, my wife, and me about 18 months ago. She did that with great charm, great style and joyfulness, and great Christianity. She showed great care and sensitivity to us in preparing us for that wedding, and also to our families, and, in particular, Anne-Louise's two children, who had lost their own father tragically. The care that she showed has always stuck with us. Since then, particularly in the past few months, when Anne-Louise, sadly, has been unwell, Rose's continuing support and prayers, and the kindness that she has shown to our family, mean more to us than any words that I can say in this Chamber could ever adequately convey.

I also want to say a quick word about Rose's husband, Ken, who has been a great support to her, and who I, as Chair of the Justice Committee, had the pleasure of meeting when he was working as a prison chaplain. He, too, has been a great servant of God and of the broader community, and a great witness to his faith. That enables me also to say how valued the work of the prison chaplaincy service is by many in difficult times of their lives.

Anne-Louise specifically asked me to come here today and say that she is still in hospital but on the mend, and that Rose's support has meant more to us than anything. For those of us who do have a Christian faith, she could not be a better pastor and shepherd. For those who do not have such a faith, there could be no better ambassador. Dover will gain immeasurably from her arrival as its suffragan bishop.

Finally, Mr Speaker, I wish you every success and your family every happiness for the future. It might not be so easy for me to see directly eye to eye with your successor; that might be more of a physical challenge for some of us. I wish you well and hope that all goes happily for you and your family in the future. In the end, we ought to remember that the things that bring us here in our desire to serve our communities are more important than the things that may divide us on political grounds.

**Mr Speaker:** The beauty of the hon. Gentleman's tribute to Reverend Rose will, I think, remain with colleagues for a long time to come. As to the matter of physical stature, he, I and the right hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Sir Alan Duncan) share in common that characteristic of notable shortness, but I have always argued that we should at least be regarded as environmentally friendly on the grounds that we do not take up excessive space.

3.39 pm

**Martin Vickers** (Cleethorpes) (Con): It is a pleasure to join these tributes to Reverend Rose. Only a remarkable lady could have come from Montego Bay to the position of your chaplain, Mr Speaker, and those of us who have heard something of her journey realise how remarkable it has been.

I am one of those who has regularly attended her morning communions, followed by breakfast in your apartments, Mr Speaker. One of the great beauties of those occasions is that, as the Leader of the House said, the service is based on the Book of Common Prayer, which is vastly superior to all that has followed. We have heard a wide range of speakers from the community, and Rose has introduced us to many people who have shared with us the challenges of their ministry or work, which has been exceptionally valuable. On those occasions, Rose has also invited individual Members to describe their faith journey, and I have found those sessions to be of particular value.

I also want to talk about Rose's wider ministry. Last year she came to my parish church in Grimsby, St Giles with St Matthew, and I learned that she has visited other Members' constituencies—or, in my case, the neighbouring constituency—to preach at their parish church. It was a wonderful occasion, and I know that the whole congregation greatly appreciated it.

As we heard earlier, Rose has varied the Prayers that she says at the beginning of our daily sessions. I am sure that that has caused a few ripples here and there, because the exact prayers that must be said are probably laid down in statute, but it has been extremely helpful and valuable. She is not in the Chamber at the moment, but when I popped out a short while ago, she was providing pastoral care and comfort to a Member. That just shows her devotion to her calling, which I think we would all want to place on record.

Mr Speaker, if you will indulge me for an extra minute or two, I would like to say a few warm words about you. We first met when I was the constituency agent in Gainsborough. I drove you around on various visits, one of which was when I was studying at Lincoln University, and you spoke to the politics group of which I was a member. I can assure you that that went down particularly well. You returned to Lincoln University two or three years ago to give an address. You spotted me in the audience and spoke very warmly about me as a Member. My wife said to me, "He's going a bit over the top, isn't he?", and I said, "John going over the top? No, never!" I greatly appreciated that.

You have called me relatively early in the proceedings. One or two of us at this end of the Chamber have, on odd occasions when we have been bobbing up and down, thought that your eyesight may be failing. You have always been particularly courteous to me, and I thank you for that. In particular, this occasion calls for our thanks to Rose. May God go with her.

3.43 pm

**Mr Dominic Grieve** (Beaconsfield) (Ind): I shall be very brief. Throughout the time that Rose has been the chaplain to the Commons, it has been abundantly clear that her pastoral skills are outstanding. Those of us who have gone to the monthly communion in St Margaret's have come to value her fellowship and her company. In addition, we have had the benefit of seeing her around the building and enjoying her pastoral support at times when some of us have needed it.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Cleethorpes (Martin Vickers), I have had Rose visit my parish to preach, during a time when we had an interregnum between priests. She was something of a star attraction, which showed just how extensive her reach had become in using her chaplaincy of the Commons to spread the gospel and the word that she wanted to put forward in her own way. I will be very sorry at her departure, but I am delighted that the Bishopric of Dover will be available to her, where I am sure her pastoral skills will be used to full measure. I wish to use this opportunity—on behalf of both myself and my wife, who got to know her—to wish her farewell.

Finally, I would just say that Rose was of course your choice, Mr Speaker, which I seem to remember attracted some controversy at the time. As we consider the end of your career here in the House and of your period as Speaker, I would just like to repeat my thanks to you. It is abundantly clear that if you have ruffled feathers, there are some feathers you ruffled for very good reasons. Ten years on, those who look back will conclude that our proceedings and our life in this House were enhanced by many of the things that you did.

**Mr Speaker:** I am very grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman. That is very kind of him, and I take it in that spirit. As he knows, I wish him extremely well. Quite apart from his contributions in the House, the right hon. and learned Gentleman is the most exemplary county colleague that anyone could want. He has been a brilliant colleague for me in Buckinghamshire over the last 22 years, and I salute him.

3.45 pm

**Mr Laurence Robertson** (Tewkesbury) (Con): At the beginning of my short address, perhaps you will allow me, Mr Speaker, to thank you for and congratulate you on your work. I think we have known each other in excess of a quarter of a century. You have visited my constituency, and you were very helpful to me when I was Chairman of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee. You have championed Back Benchers; I have a long record of being one. I would like to thank you and wish you well for the future.

Mr Speaker, you very kindly allowed me to use your state rooms on the occasion of my wedding reception on 7 February 2015. Mentioning that leads me seamlessly into thanking Rose for her work, because she did me the great honour of marrying my wife Annie and me on that date in the chapel downstairs—St Mary Undercroft. What a wonderful day it was. No one who attended will ever forget it. It still gives us strength and fills us with great affection when we look back at it. I well remember that I had to be interviewed separately, Annie had to be interviewed separately and then we had to be interviewed together before Rose recommended to the Dean of Westminster that we should be allowed to be married, and it was a wonderful occasion. That is my personal recollection.

It has also been wonderful to see Rose in action over the past 10 years. I have attended many services. I tend to go to the one at 12.45 pm in the chapel downstairs, which is immediately after Prime Minister's questions, and it is a welcome contrast from that experience to hear Rose tell us about Christianity, peace, love and how important the way we treat each other is. I hope that one of her many legacies, as she goes, will be for us to remember that how we treat each other is very important. Personally, I will never say anything in this Chamber in a tone or in words that I would not say outside it to the person I am talking about or to, and I hope that we could all try to do that as we move forward. I think the public would really like us to take on the lesson that Rose has taught us.

It hardly seems credible that, 25 years ago, there was a terrible split in the Church of England about whether to ordain women. That seems incredible thinking back. I was very much on the side of ordaining women because I believe that the person who should get the job is the one who is best qualified and best able to do that job, regardless of whether they are a man or a woman. I am glad the right side won in that debate, because we would have been deprived of the services of Rose if that debate had gone the wrong way. Many years on, when it came to the question of women bishops, it was hardly a debate at all—quite rightly—and that has enabled Rose to move on to be appointed as the Bishop of Dover.

I would like to thank Rose for all the enormous work she has done in this place, and the messages she has instilled in us about Christianity, the beliefs and what it means to be Christian. I would like to wish her all the very best as she goes forward.

3.49 pm

**Mr Richard Bacon** (South Norfolk) (Con): It is a pleasure to take part in this brief debate, Mr Speaker, and have the opportunity to offer my own tribute. I will start by offering a tribute to you, Mr Speaker, because I was not able to be here earlier. I remember well, as a young man, running into the party conference in 1985 to hear you speak, so we must have known each other for at least 34 or 35 years. You were a remarkable young man, and you have had a remarkable, and in some ways famous and controversial, speakership. Of all the things you have done—someone said earlier that you have undoubtedly ruffled feathers—I think that your best decision was to appoint Rose as your chaplain.

Rose has served this House extraordinarily well, and she always seemed to have a knack of knowing what to say. In one of the most difficult times in my life, I happened to bump into her in New Palace Yard. She looked at me from across the yard, pointed at me, and said, "I need to see you." Although I had not talked to her at all about the difficulties I was facing, she already knew. She had a way of having her finger on the pulse and of knowing who needed help and counsel. Within an hour and a half or two hours, she had made time in her diary, and I spent probably 80 minutes in her study. Those were the most reassuring and illuminating 80 minutes of all the time that I spent talking to people about the difficulties I was facing, and she gave me an enormous amount of reassurance and relief. Rose has an extraordinary gift for pastoral care, and I shall always be extraordinarily grateful to her. She set me on the course that I am relieved I ended up on, and I felt reassured by her that it was an okay course on which to embark.

I endorse the tributes we have already heard. The Church of England often gets a lot of stick, and people worry about the future of our established Church. I believe that so long as people such as Rose are within it, and rising within it, the future of our Church will also be secure.

3.51 pm

**Luke Graham** (Ochil and South Perthshire) (Con): I appreciate the opportunity to pay a tribute to Rose. Like many in this House, I had experiences here that, when the personal combined with the professional, meant that I found myself having what might professionally be called "a bit of a wobble"—I know that many colleagues from my intake have had similar experiences. The one thing I would say about Rose is this: she was there. Her office is one of duty, but everyone would agree that her performance goes far beyond that. She makes time to see people, and gives them the opportunity to speak. She listens, far beyond the level that her office would necessarily require.

Rose has set an incredible example and a fantastic precedent for new Members and the future chaplain to follow. More broadly, the prayers that she leads before each sitting of the House give us the chance to reflect. In a time when we are constantly on social media and looking at emails, iPads and phones, that gives us a



moment to step back in silence, listen to the words being said and think about the principles that are laid out here and that make this place and make us who we are. That is one of the greatest contributions that Rose has made to this place. Both personally and professionally, Rose has helped all Members strive to become the better part of ourselves while we are here, and I thank her on behalf of myself, my colleagues and our families.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House congratulates the Reverend Prebendary Rose Hudson-Wilkin on her twenty-eight years of ordained ministry in the Church of England, nine years of which have been in the service of Mr Speaker and this House as Chaplain to the Speaker, the first woman and the first BAME holder of that post; expresses its appreciation for the generous, ecumenical and compassionate spirit of her work among hon. Members and staff of the House; and wishes her every success in her forthcoming ministry as Bishop of Dover and Bishop in Canterbury.

**Dawn Butler** (Brent Central) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Will you indulge me for a moment? I have a bit of FOMO—fear of missing out—because as a Front Bencher I have not been able to say thank you for everything that you have done in the House. I thank you for all you have done on issues of equality and for not shying away from talking about race. I thank you for all you have done on LGBT+ issues, and for making this House more inclusive. Thank you for opening your state rooms, so that small organisations that thought the Houses of Parliament did not care about them could come to some of the grandest rooms in the Palace and feel valued. Thank you for all you have done.

I also want to thank you, Mr Speaker, for bringing Reverend Rose into the House. Hearing everybody's testament on how she has touched all our lives has been very moving. She has touched my life in many ways. My right hon. Friend the Member for Walsall South (Valerie Vaz) spoke about Labi Siffre. Reverend Rose and I talk often about this song and I just wanted to say the first verse:

“The higher you build your barriers  
The taller I become  
The further you take my rights away  
The faster I will run  
You can deny me, you can decide  
To turn your face away  
No matter 'cause there's  
Something inside so strong  
I know that I can make it  
Though you're doing me wrong, so wrong  
You thought that my pride was gone, oh no  
There's something inside so strong”.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, for being so strong. I thank Reverend Rose for all that she has done for the House, for me and for everybody. Thank you.

**Mr Speaker:** Well, that was extraordinary and magnificent. I thank the hon. Lady for her excessively generous personal remarks as regards me, but what is much more important is what she said about Rose and I want to underline and reinforce that.

Colleagues, I am extremely grateful to each and every one of you, as we approach the end of this Parliament, for sparing the time and making the commitment to

share your experience of and demonstrate your—I was going to say respect for—devotion to the Reverend Rose, who has after all been devoted to us for nine years. In every particular—I say this not so much for colleagues, but for those observing our proceedings—Rose has not just done the job, she has excelled beyond anything that we could reasonably have imagined or contemplated. Her daily commitment is there for all to see, day after day, combining her duties in the Chamber with the responsibility for the conduct of services and the need to attend to St Mary-at-Hill in the City and to interact with large numbers of people on the parliamentary estate.

On big occasions, as so many colleagues have eloquently evidenced, Rose has found the words that needed to be expressed. She has expressed them with feeling and with a transparent and undeniable sincerity. It is that authenticity about her that impresses everybody who hears or meets her. We all know, of course, that a very important part of Rose's role, as has been referred to by many colleagues during these tributes, is the offer of pastoral care. To Members, to Members' staff, to the staff of the House, to anyone not employed by the House but contracted to work for it, or to anyone who has reason to be on the parliamentary estate who needs help, Rose has been there to provide that help. It has been a singular and unforgettable contribution.

I certainly do not mind vouchsafing to the House that as well as being aware in many cases of when, how and to what extent Rose helped other colleagues, she has been a terrific source of support, succour and counsel to me. Until my dying day, I will appreciate that support, that succour, that counsel and that camaraderie, which she has been able to provide. Many people have also referred to the circumstances of the terrorist attacks. In those circumstances, we could not have wanted anyone, for the purpose of providing comfort and mitigation of pain, other than Rose.

So many people over the past three years have referred to our departed and beloved colleague, Jo Cox, and someone referred earlier to Birstall in Yorkshire, where the then Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition went the day after the appalling murder of Jo. Of course I went as well, but what was really significant was how Rose went, and each of us, the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and I, observed the impact of Rose's presence and persona—her love, kindness, compassion and empathy—on people who were experiencing quite unendurable pain. That pain could not be removed, but it could at least be mitigated, and it could be mitigated by no one better than the Reverend Rose. I have a sense, my friends and colleagues, that we are all agreed in this Chamber that the House of Commons' loss is Canterbury and Dover's gain.

## ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE

*Ordered,*

That, at this day's sitting,

(1) the Speaker shall not adjourn the House until—

(a) any Message from the Lords has been received and any Committee to draw up

Reasons which has been appointed has reported; and

(b) he has reported the Royal Assent to any Act agreed upon by both Houses, and

(2) Standing Order No. 41A shall not apply.—(*Rebecca Harris.*)

## Northern Ireland

**Mr Speaker:** We now come to motion No. 4 on Northern Ireland. It says in the dossier “Minister to move”, but we have an upgrade, as the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office, observes from a sedentary position. I call not merely any Minister, but the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, no less.

4.2 pm

**The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Julian Smith):** I beg to move,

That the Northern Ireland (Extension of Period for Executive Formation) (No. 2) Regulations 2019 (S.I., 2019, No. 1364), which were laid before this House on 21 October, be approved.

I just wanted to add to my tribute yesterday to your speakership by saying something about the Education Centre, Mr Speaker. During my comments, I did not mention all the amazing feedback that I have had from my constituents on the centre, which you were so key to developing. Listening to the tributes that have been paid to you, it seems to me that you will have limitless invites to the Kennington Tandoori, should you so wish, over the coming years.

Having sought the House’s approval for the Northern Ireland Budget Bill yesterday, I now seek the House’s approval for this equally vital statutory instrument. I announced on 21 October an extension of the period for Executive formation to 13 January 2020. That is the only extension permitted under the terms of the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc) Act 2019, and I have no discretion as to the length of the extension.

I took the decision because, despite relentless engagement over the summer with the political parties and the Irish Government, the political parties have not been able to reach the accommodation that we know they need to reach to form the Assembly and the Executive. I was disappointed to have to take this approach and extend the period, but failing to extend the period and leaving it to expire at the end of 21 October would have severely constrained the ability of the Northern Ireland civil service to make decisions in the absence of Ministers. It would also have precipitated an Assembly election. That would not have been the right approach for Northern Ireland at this time.

I am pleased that, in the last week, the Northern Ireland political parties have indicated a willingness both within and outside this place to restore the institutions. There will be a short window after the general election, and before the 13 January deadline, when talks should be convened. I hope that both parties will engage seriously. As I have said in this House many times, the remaining issues are soluble if the will is there. These regulations ensure it is possible to undertake that swift work once a new Administration is formed in December. I will remain in close contact with all political parties in Northern Ireland throughout the election period, and I am sure the whole House will join me in urging the parties, particularly Sinn Féin and the DUP, to show leadership and to be ready to restore the institutions. I commend these regulations to the House.

4.4 pm

**Tony Lloyd (Rochdale) (Lab):** The Secretary of State knows that it is inevitably with considerable regret on both sides of the House that we once again confront the need for these regulations to be passed. Come the

13 January deadline, Northern Ireland will have been without an Assembly and Executive for about 1,100 days, if by then there is still no newly formed Executive or Assembly in operation. I hope the general election campaign will be conducted in Great Britain and—even more importantly—in Northern Ireland with the kind of decorum that does not entrench antagonism between people and that we come out of it more likely to reach agreement in this Parliament, yes, but most certainly in Stormont. Elections can be healing, but they can also of course be divisive.

I do not plan to say an awful lot more. The Secretary of State and I, and the Minister and the shadow Minister, have debated these issues many times. We could once again talk about the paucity of decision making that bedevils Northern Ireland, the things that are not being done and the problems this causes. Those things are a matter of record. It is important that there is continuity of Executive function over the next weeks and in particular that the Secretary of State does not find himself in the extraordinary position of having to call an election during that period.

I do not think the House has any ambitions to do anything other than pass these regulations, but I am bound to finish on the following note. We are now at the end of the road for this particular process. Whatever follows in the new year has to be more creative—let me use that word—and the creativity may be the creation of an Executive and a Northern Ireland Assembly that functions.

4.7 pm

**Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP):** I will not detain the House for long. It is with some regret that we reach this decision, but we understand why the Secretary of State is bringing forward these regulations. He has to bring them forward—it is logical to do so—to the Chamber today and to extend the timescale. It is vital that, after the general election on 12 December and the run-up to it, and after that the discussions to find a way forward, we can engage again, including in the new year.

At the DUP’s party conference this Saturday past, our leader, Arlene Foster, made several suggestions that could lead to discussions being engaged in again. They were constructive comments; they were meant to be. They were positive comments from the point of view that we wish to find a way forward for the Northern Ireland Assembly to engage. The leader has done that very well.

We debated the budget Bill last night in the Chamber. We all understand the issues for the budget in Northern Ireland and why it is important that those decisions be made by the Northern Ireland Assembly. I would be very pleased to report to the Chamber that the Assembly was back up and running. There is one thing we all agree on, and that is that we all think that that is the way forward.

I do not want to be entirely critical of other political parties, but I will say this: our party, the Democratic Unionist party, is willing and able and will be at Stormont on Monday morning, or whatever Monday morning, to engage in the political process and move forward. I would encourage Sinn Féin to have the same understanding of how the process works. This election will perhaps

delay that. It is better that we do what we are doing and then after we can move forward, hopefully with a constructive attitude. Certainly the DUP will be of that mind. We hope that Sinn Féin will be as well.

*Question put and agreed to.*

## Civil Partnership

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** Before I invite the Minister to move the motion to approve these regulations, I should inform the House that the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments considered them at its meeting yesterday and agreed to draw them to the attention of the House. The relevant extract of the Committee's report is available in the Vote Office.

4.10 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Victoria Atkins):** I beg to move,

That the draft Civil Partnership (Opposite-sex Couples) Regulations 2019, which were laid before this House on 21 October, be approved.

In what has been an emotionally charged and very moving day in the Chamber, this statutory instrument is, I hope, a cause for celebration, as it allows opposite-sex couples in England and Wales to form civil partnerships. This Government want to see more people formalise their relationships in the way they want with the person they love. We know that there are over 3 million opposite-sex couples who cohabit but choose not to marry. Those couples support 1 million children, but do not have the security or legal protection that married couples or civil partners enjoy.

That is why we announced last year that we would extend civil partnerships to opposite-sex couples and why we supported the Civil Partnerships, Marriages and Deaths (Registration etc) Act 2019, which was taken so ably through Parliament by my hon. Friend the Member for East Worthing and Shoreham (Tim Loughton). The regulations are before the House. In short, section 2 of the Act enables the Secretary of State by regulation to amend the eligibility criteria for civil partnerships to make other appropriate and consequential provision. The Act requires the regulations extending eligibility to come into force no later than 31 December 2019.

These regulations, as Madam Deputy Speaker said, have been expedited in their consideration by both Houses. I am extremely grateful to the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments, which considered them yesterday. In particular, the chairmanship of the hon. Member for Newport East (Jessica Morden) was helpful in understanding the urgency of this statutory instrument.

I will outline briefly the concerns of the Committee and the response of the Government to those concerns. Our approach on conversion—that is, conversion from marriage to civil partnership and vice versa—maintains a difference between opposite-sex and same-sex couples in their ability to convert their civil partnerships into marriages. Importantly, those two groups are not in a directly comparable position. The right to convert a civil partnership to marriage was introduced to enable same-sex couples to marry without having to dissolve their civil partnership as marriage had historically been denied to them. That same consideration does not apply to opposite-sex civil partners, who will always have been able to marry.

Even if same-sex and opposite-sex couples can be compared, the Government consider that maintaining the status quo in the short term is justified. Extending conversion rights to allow opposite-sex couples to convert



[Victoria Atkins]

their civil partnership to marriage now, while we are considering responses to the consultation, would risk creating uncertainty and confusion about future rights. We do not wish to introduce a new, potentially short-term conversion right that might subsequently be withdrawn in 2020.

Once we have made civil partnerships available to opposite-sex couples, our priority will be to resolve our longer-term position on conversion rights for all civil partners and to bring forward further regulations as soon as possible next year. I hope this reassures hon. Members that we have considered these issues carefully and we consider the regulations to be compliant with the Human Rights Act 1998.

Let me again pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for East Worthing and Shoreham, and also to Baroness Hodgson of Abinger, for their skill and tenacity in driving the Act through Parliament. I know that my hon. Friend has been invited to a civil partnership ceremony which the happy couple hope will take place on 31 December. We intend to implement the regulations on 2 December, which would enable the first opposite-sex civil partnership ceremonies to take place on 31 December, given the usual 28-day notice period. I very much hope that my hon. Friend will be able to make those celebrations.

I know how long some opposite-sex couples have waited for the opportunity to formalise their relationships, and to enjoy the stability, rights and entitlements that other couples enjoy. This is the final legislative step in the process, and I look forward to the first opposite-sex civil partnerships being formed by the end of the year.

I hope, Mr Speaker, that you will allow me a moment away from the important issue of civil partnerships, so that I can play my part in the tributes to you on your last day in that very special seat in the House. It is indeed an honour to be at the Dispatch Box today, and, of course, to hear the wonderful tributes to your chaplain, Rose. May I thank you personally for your service as Speaker of the House over the last 10 years?

As I was preparing for this debate, I sat in our wonderful House of Commons Library. Around the ceiling of one of the rooms are 30 wooden panels containing the names of every single Speaker, dating from 1377 to 2009, when you were sworn in. Your impact on this place will be present not just on those wooden panels in the Library, but in the day-to-day business and interactions of the House. Having sat here in the Chamber hearing some of the tributes to you—which have ranged from the very personal and very serious to some more light-hearted and fond recollections—I will, if I may, add one of my own. I consider it to be one of the achievements of my parliamentary career; it may, in fact, be the only achievement of my parliamentary career. By describing the name of my cat, I caused you to stand up and say:

“I am as near to speechless as I have ever been.”—[*Official Report*, 20 December 2018; Vol. 651, c. 984.]

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for everything that you have done for the House, but also for me, at the Dispatch Box and also as a Back Bencher. I wish you, and your loved ones, the very best for your future.

**Mr Speaker:** Does the hon. Member for East Worthing and Shoreham (Tim Loughton) wish to speak in the debate?

**Tim Loughton** (East Worthing and Shoreham) (Con): I do.

**Mr Speaker:** Just before I put the Question, I want to say, by way of response to the Minister, a big thank you. That was a very generous and gracious tribute from her. If I may return the compliment—and I think it is relevant to the whole question of the language of discourse—let me say that the hon. Lady has perfected the art of disagreeing agreeably. She is a brilliant advocate of her case, and a very highly respected and rising member of the Government. It is obvious that, in conducting debates in the Chamber, she relishes the political argument, the analysis of policy, the competing claims and so on, but in my experience—and I have heard her speak many times at that Dispatch Box—when engaging in debate, she always plays the ball rather than the man or the woman, and that is to her enduring credit. I reciprocate her very warm wishes: I wish her all the best.

4.18 pm

**Dawn Butler** (Brent Central) (Lab): I welcome the regulations, and I congratulate the hon. Member for East Worthing and Shoreham (Tim Loughton) on his campaign. I too called for the law to be changed, so I am delighted that the Government are finally introducing legislation that will put everyone on an equal footing.

Last year, I pointed out:

“The Government should have already legislated to ensure all couples have equality of choice.”

At the time, I called on the Government to

“take action and change the law to ensure all people have access to civil partnerships”.

I have no idea why it took so long. I have no idea why the Lib Dems and the Conservatives did not want this to happen a lot sooner. It was over a year ago—16 months, in fact—that the Supreme Court ruled that restricting civil partnerships to same-sex couples was discriminatory. The judges ruled that current UK laws were incompatible with human rights laws on discrimination and the right to a private and family life, so there was no reason for the delay. As the Minister said, there are 3.2 million cohabiting opposite-sex couples, and this is unfortunately another example of the Government dragging their feet on equality. Maybe it is a result of all the changes in Ministers and all the upheaval, but this foot-dragging on equality is unnecessary and quite costly. The Government seem to be letting a lot of people down when it comes to equality.

This change only came about because of the brave steps taken by Rebecca Steinfeld and Charles Keidan. In October 2014, the London couple tried to form a civil partnership at their local registry office in Chelsea Town Hall, but they were told that they could not do so because they were not a same-sex couple. They bravely took their case all the way to the Supreme Court, but they should not have had to do that. I would like to remind the House what Ms Steinfeld said outside the court. She said:

“We are feeling elated...But at the same time we are feeling frustrated the government has wasted taxpayers’ money in fighting what the judges have called a blatant inequality.”

When the Minister gets to her feet, perhaps she could explain to the House how much it cost the taxpayer to take this to court. It was the Lib Dem-Tory Government

who decided not to do anything at a time when they could have just changed the law; if they had done so, we would not have had to go through all this.

As I have said, I am pleased with this decision, as it will give cohabiting opposite-sex couples the recognition that they deserve. It will provide stability and security, and ultimately allow couples to decide what is right for them in their relationship. It will give stability to families and children. I am looking forward to the election, because I hope that we will then be able to form a Government with a stand-alone Department for Women and Equalities and be able to push equality issues a lot faster than we have seen over the past 10 years.

4.22 pm

**Tim Loughton** (East Worthing and Shoreham) (Con): I have a bit of a sense of déjà vu all over again on this Bill. It has been a long journey getting here, but this is a happy day that will lead to very many happy days for happy couples, starting on 31 December. I will be going out to buy a new hat in anticipation of those events shortly. Before I make my brief comments and put some specific questions to the Minister, however, I just want to take issue with the hon. Member for Brent Central (Dawn Butler). It is a shame that the Opposition Front Bench has taken a slightly churlish attitude in this debate. There is a simple response to her question as to why this has taken so long. Very simply, it is because, having promised me that they would vote for it, Labour Members voted against the amendment to the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 that would have achieved this several years ago. So she might like to look to her own side before she tries to cast aspersions on what has been a magnificent effort by the Government to get here today.

**Sir Edward Leigh** (Gainsborough) (Con): I pay tribute to my hon. Friend. I have been campaigning on this for many years. I was approached by two sisters at the time of the passing of the original Civil Partnership Act 2004 by Tony Blair. The sisters had lived together for many years and faced being evicted and losing their home because they could not have a civil partnership. Will my hon. Friend say a bit more about that particular case?

**Tim Loughton:** That would probably be stretching out of order, but I appreciate that my hon. Friend took up the issue before I did. It is a cause with which I have some sympathy, and there have been measures in the other place for a Bill on that topic. This legislation is about couples and relationships and recognition and protections that are not available. The matters to which he refers, which relate particularly to siblings who are living together and are entirely dependent on each other, are largely financial ones, and that should be addressed in financial legislation. I would absolutely support him if that were to happen in the future.

I just want to pay some tributes, because this might not have happened today. If this debate had not happened before the end of this Parliament, the necessary regulations that form part of the 2019 Act, which received Royal Assent back on 26 March, would not have been completed in time for the first civil partnerships between opposite-sex couples to take place, as promised, before the end of this year. I am therefore grateful to the Chief Whip, the usual channels, the Minister, the Statutory Instruments

Committee, which met hurriedly yesterday, and the officials, who worked tirelessly in order to get us to where we are today. Otherwise, the promises that we made to the people who were looking forward to having their happy day on 31 December might not have been kept.

I have constantly stated that many register offices around the country have been taking provisional bookings for civil partnerships, including on the very last day of this year. A lot is hingeing on this, and many people will be watching these proceedings and the news that comes out. The issue was that, in order for civil partnerships to take place by the end of this year, the regulations had to be laid and then there is a minimum of 28 days—it is not really a cooling-off period—between a couple registering their interest in a civil partnership before it is able to be conducted. That meant that if the regulations had not been approved before 2 December, that process could not have been gone through. I am therefore grateful to the Government, because it was always a big thing for me that this should happen this year, rather than there be yet further delay. The Minister, true to her word, was able to persuade the powers that be to agree to that. I am grateful to all the officials and Ministers who have made this possible.

It is something of an honour that this will be the last piece of debatable business in this Parliament and the last debatable business that you will oversee, Mr Speaker. You have been a big supporter of this change, although you would never admit it and show any degree of partiality, but I know, unofficially, that you have got behind this change, which has been of great help and comfort to people outside this House who see this as an obvious equality measure that should have happened some time ago.

The process has been expedited, but I just have a few brief questions for the Minister. First, will she confirm—I think she already has—that the fact that we are debating this well before 2 December does not mean that the 28 days start from today? If so, we may need to expedite the purchase of hats before the end of November, rather than the end of December, but I think she has confirmed that the earliest that the first civil partnership ceremony can take place will be 31 December 2019 for those who have registered their interest by 2 December. Emergency civil partnerships are an exception and, as happened with civil partnerships between same-sex couples back in 2014, could be approved in a matter of hours or days after 2 December. Some people who have been part of the equal-partner civil partnerships campaign and who have terminal illnesses are very much looking for the change to happen as soon as possible. Perhaps the Minister can confirm that for the benefit of those for whom the date is particularly crucial. Could the Minister also confirm the status of opposite-sex civil partnerships registered outside England and Wales, for example, on the Isle of Man, which was the first part of the British Isles to approve opposite-sex civil partnerships and where key people involved in the campaign have undergone a civil partnership? Will their civil partnership be recognised in our law from 2 December or 31 December, or will this still be contingent on further work on regulations that needs to take place?

I fully appreciate that this measure is not the end of the story; this enables new opposite-sex couples to engage in a new civil partnership and there is much

[Tim Loughton]

work still to be done on the conversion for those who are already married, just as there was a conversion the other way round in respect of civil partnerships for same-sex couples. Looking through the regulations, which are detailed and technical, I appreciate the work that has gone into everything from gender recognition to the status of children, the warm home discount and digital switchover. All that legislation, extraordinarily, has to be considered in these regulations in order to get this right. Will the Minister therefore clarify the status of existing overseas or ex-England opposite-sex civil partnerships?

Will the Minister also issue guidance as soon as possible to registrars around the country that they should be open for business from 2 December? There has been confusion as to whether this would happen and some registrars, the more far-sighted ones, have been taking provisional waiting lists as from 31 December, whereas others have said, “It’s not happening, so don’t call us, we’ll call you after 31 December.” It is important that clear instructions are now issued. If she could signal from the Dispatch Box as well, that would be helpful, because people need to prepare. People who have been waiting years and years for this day to happen want to be able to get on with it, and we need to ensure that registrars know what they are doing in order to facilitate their request.

Finally, let me say that this is just but one part of my Civil Partnerships, Marriages and Deaths (Registration etc) Act 2019. There are three other parts to it. I raised the issue of mothers’ names on marriage certificates with the Second Church Estates Commissioner, which has yet to be resolved by formal regulations. The second issue is about the Secretary of State giving the go-ahead for coroners to have the power to investigate stillbirths. The last issue is the review of sub-24-week stillbirths. They are all important parts of my multifaceted Act that still require further regulations. I appreciate that today we are dealing purely with the civil partnerships part of it, but it would be helpful if the Minister gave some indication that work is ongoing on those other important parts of this Act.

Once again, may I thank the Minister in particular for expediting these measures today, just in the nick of time? For many hundreds of couples up and down the country waiting on this, it is a really important and happy development.

4.33 pm

**Victoria Atkins:** As always, my hon. Friend asks me many questions. I sometimes think he is doing it in the hope of catching me out, so I am going to do my best to prove him wrong. The date on which the regulations come into force is set out in regulation 1(2) and they will be very much in force on 2 December, so that the 28 days’ notice can be in force for civil partnerships on 31 December, with the exception, as he rightly points out, in respect of emergency applications.

On overseas civil partnerships, overseas relationships can be recognised as civil partnerships in England and Wales if they meet the conditions set out in the Act. Opposite-sex couples who formed a civil partnership on the Isle of Man will be recognised as civil partners in

England and Wales on the day these regulations come into force—in other words, from 2 December. I should say that the regulations include a list of specified overseas relationships that will be treated as civil partnerships here, but other overseas relationships can also be recognised as civil partnerships if they meet general conditions.

Yes, the General Register Office will issue clear guidance to local registration services about the commencement of the new scheme. I do not have a date to hand, but when I discover one, I will write to my hon. Friend.

On the other matters in the Bill, I am delighted to confirm that the General Register Office is currently working on the secondary legislation, IT systems and administrative processes required to implement the marriage schedule system. Officials are working with the Church of England and the Church in Wales on the details of the proposals, and a timescale will be announced in due course. I am keen that we help to get mums’ names on to marriage certificates as soon as possible.

I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me in respect of the other matters he raised. We have concentrated on civil partnerships, so I will have to write to him on the other two matters—he caught me out on those two.

*Question put and agreed to.*

## ROYAL ASSENT

**Mr Speaker:** I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that Her Majesty has signified her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

Early Parliamentary General Election Act 2019  
Northern Ireland Budget Act 2019.

## Business without Debate

### DELEGATED LEGISLATION

**Mr Speaker:** We come now to a series of motions that I think we should take separately, for reasons that will become obvious. Before I invite a Whip to move motion 6, which is the first in the sequence, I must announce my decision on certification for the purposes of Standing Order No. 83P—“Certification of instruments”. On the basis of material put before me, I certify that, in my opinion, the instrument does not meet the criteria required for certification under that Standing Order.

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

### INCOME TAX

That the draft Income Tax (Trading and Other Income) Act 2005 (Amendments to Chapter 2A of Part 5) Regulations 2019, which were laid before this House on 14 October, be approved.—(*Leo Docherty.*)

*Question agreed to.*

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

### REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE

That the draft Representation of the People (Annual Canvass) (Amendment) Regulations 2019, which were laid before this House on 14 October, be approved.—(*Leo Docherty.*)

*The House divided: Ayes 206, Noes 33.*



**Division No. 17]****[4.37 pm****AYES**

Afolami, Bim  
 Afriyie, Adam  
 Aldous, Peter  
 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  
 Bellingham, Sir Henry  
 Beresford, Sir Paul  
 Berry, rh Jake  
 Blackman, Bob  
 Blunt, Crispin  
 Bone, Mr Peter  
 Bottomley, Sir Peter  
 Brady, Sir Graham  
 Braverman, Suella (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Steve Baker*)  
 Bridgen, Andrew  
 Brokenshire, rh James  
 Bruce, Fiona  
 Buckland, rh Robert  
 Burghart, Alex  
 Burns, rh Conor  
 Burt, rh Alistair  
 Cartledge, James  
 Cash, Sir William  
 Caulfield, Maria  
 Churchill, Jo  
 Clark, rh Greg  
 Clarke, Mr Simon  
 Cleverly, rh James  
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey  
 Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse  
 Courts, Robert  
 Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey  
 Davies, Mims  
 Davies, Philip  
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan  
 Docherty, Leo  
 Dorries, Ms Nadine  
 Double, Steve  
 Dowden, rh Oliver  
 Doyle-Price, Jackie  
 Duddridge, James  
 Duguid, David  
 Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain  
 Dunne, rh Mr Philip  
 Ellis, rh Michael  
 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  
 Gale, rh Sir Roger  
 Garnier, Mark  
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat  
 Gibb, rh Nick  
 Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl  
 Glen, John  
 Goldsmith, rh Zac  
 Gove, rh Michael  
 Graham, Luke  
 Graham, Richard  
 Grant, Bill  
 Greening, rh Justine  
 Griffiths, Andrew  
 Hall, Luke  
 Hancock, rh Matt  
 Hands, rh Greg  
 Harris, Rebecca  
 Harrison, Trudy  
 Hayes, rh Sir John  
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver  
 Heapey, James  
 Heaton-Harris, Chris  
 Heaton-Jones, Peter  
 Henderson, Gordon  
 Herbert, rh Nick  
 Hinds, rh Damian  
 Hollinrake, Kevin  
 Hollobone, Mr Philip  
 Holloway, Adam  
 Howell, John  
 Hughes, Eddie  
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy  
 Hurd, rh Mr Nick  
 Jack, rh Mr Alister  
 Javid, rh Sajid  
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil  
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard  
 Jenrick, rh Robert  
 Johnson, Dr Caroline  
 Johnson, Gareth  
 Jones, Andrew  
 Jones, rh Mr David  
 Jones, Mr Marcus  
 Kawczynski, Daniel  
 Keegan, Gillian  
 Kerr, Stephen  
 Kwarteng, rh Kwasi  
 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  
 Lidington, rh Sir David  
 Lopez, Julia (*Proxy vote cast by Lee Rowley*)  
 Lord, Mr Jonathan  
 Loughton, Tim  
 Mackinlay, Craig  
 Maclean, Rachel  
 Mak, Alan  
 Malthouse, Kit  
 Mann, Scott  
 May, rh Mrs Theresa  
 McVey, rh Ms Esther  
 Menzies, Mark  
 Merriman, Huw

Metcalf, Stephen  
 Milling, Amanda  
 Mills, Nigel  
 Moore, Damien  
 Mordaunt, rh Penny  
 Morgan, rh Nicky  
 Morris, David  
 Morris, James  
 Morton, Wendy  
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll  
 Murrison, rh Dr Andrew  
 Neill, Robert  
 Newton, Sarah  
 Norman, Jesse  
 Opperman, Guy  
 Patel, rh Priti  
 Penning, rh Sir Mike  
 Penrose, John  
 Percy, Andrew  
 Philp, Chris  
 Pincher, rh Christopher  
 Poulter, Dr Dan  
 Pow, Rebecca  
 Prisk, Mr Mark  
 Pursglove, Tom  
 Quin, Jeremy  
 Quince, Will  
 Raab, rh Dominic  
 Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob  
 Robertson, Mr Laurence  
 Robinson, Mary  
 Rosindell, Andrew  
 Rowley, Lee  
 Rutley, David  
 Scully, Paul  
 Seely, Mr Bob  
 Shapps, rh Grant  
 Sharma, rh Alok  
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec  
 Smith, Chloe  
 Smith, rh Julian  
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas  
 Spelman, rh Dame Caroline  
 Spencer, rh Mark  
 Stephenson, Andrew  
 Stewart, Bob  
 Stewart, Iain  
 Stride, rh Mel  
 Sunak, rh Rishi  
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond  
 Throup, Maggie  
 Tolhurst, Kelly  
 Tomlinson, Michael  
 Tracey, Craig  
 Trevelyan, Anne-Marie  
 Truss, rh Elizabeth  
 Tugendhat, Tom  
 Vara, Mr Shailesh  
 Vickers, Martin  
 Villiers, rh Theresa  
 Walker, Sir Charles  
 Walker, Mr Robin  
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben  
 Warman, Matt  
 Watling, Giles  
 Whately, Helen  
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather  
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John  
 Williamson, rh Gavin  
 Wood, Mike  
 Wright, rh Jeremy  
**Tellers for the Ayes:**  
**Michelle Donelan and Nigel Huddleston**

**NOES**

Ali, Rushanara  
 Antoniazzi, Tonia  
 Ashworth, Jonathan  
 Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta  
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas  
 Burgon, Richard  
 Butler, Dawn  
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan  
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair  
 Creasy, Stella  
 Dakin, Nic  
 Duffield, Rosie  
 Fletcher, Colleen  
 Green, Kate  
 Griffith, Nia  
 Grogan, John  
 Huq, Dr Rupa  
 Johnson, Diana  
 Lloyd, Tony  
 Malhotra, Seema  
 Martin, Sandy  
 Matheson, Christian  
 McInnes, Liz  
 Peacock, Stephanie  
 Platt, Jo  
 Pound, Stephen  
 Robinson, Mr Geoffrey  
 Sherriff, Paula  
 Shuker, Mr Gavin  
 Timms, rh Stephen  
 Twigg, Stephen  
 Vaz, rh Valerie  
 Whitehead, Dr Alan  
**Tellers for the Noes:**  
**Thangam Debbonaire and Jeff Smith**

*Question accordingly agreed to.*

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

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

That the draft Newcastle Upon Tyne, North Tyneside and Northumberland Combined Authority (Adult Education Functions) Order 2019, which was laid before this House on 22 July 2019, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved. —(*Leo Docherty.*)

*Question agreed to.*

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

## PREVENTION AND SUPPRESSION OF TERRORISM

That the draft Terrorism Act 2000 (Proscribed Organisations) (Amendment) (No. 2) Order 2019, which was laid before this House on 22 July 2019, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.—(*Leo Docherty*.)

*Question agreed to.*

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

## EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION (ANIMALS)

That the Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (England and Northern Ireland) (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (S.I., 2019, No. 1308), dated 7 October 2019, a copy of which was laid before this House on 7 October 2019, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.—(*Leo Docherty*.)

*Question agreed to.*

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

## EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION (AGRICULTURE)

That the Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) (EU Exit) (No. 2) Regulations 2019 (S.I., 2019, No. 1313), dated 7 October 2019, a copy of which was laid before this House on 7 October 2019, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.—(*Leo Docherty*.)

*Question agreed to.*

**Tony Lloyd** (Rochdale) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I understand that the Historical Institutional Abuse (Northern Ireland) Bill has now passed all its remaining stages in the other place, which means that there is capacity for the Bill to come to the Commons. The Opposition have made it clear to Government business managers that we will cause no impediment to the orderly and rapid passage of that Bill through this House. The House recognises that this is a matter of justice for people who were the victims of abuse and are now survivors, some of whom are very elderly. They deserve both the recognition that the Bill will give and some level of financial compensation. I hope that, if the business managers were to approach you, Mr Speaker, you would ensure that the facilities of the House could be managed such that the Bill could come before the Commons in the days before Dissolution.

**Mr Speaker:** It is up to the business managers. Is there scope for that to happen? The answer is yes, and it is perfectly feasible to imagine that the hon. Gentleman will achieve successful closure. It is not in my hands, but he has made his point with force and alacrity. It is on the record, and it will have been heard by the most senior representative of the usual channels, who is bestriding the Treasury Bench—none other than the Patronage Secretary.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. My right hon. Friend the Member for Lagan Valley (Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson) has been very industrious today, talking with the Government to ensure that there will be no obstacles to the Historical Institutional Abuse (Northern Ireland) Bill coming forward next week. Will the Government do everything they can to ensure that the legislation can come before the House on Tuesday, so that it can become law before Parliament dissolves, meaning that these victims who have been waiting years for compensation can have their just deserts?

**Mr Speaker:** I do not think that that requires any response from me, other than to say that the hon. Gentleman has made his point with great clarity. It will have been heard, and he will have to await events.

## PETITION

## Ipswich Northern Bypass

4.57 pm

**Dr Dan Poulter** (Central Suffolk and North Ipswich) (Con): Mr Speaker, may I briefly pay tribute to your diligent stewardship of the House in the nine years or so that I have been here and to all you have done to modernise the procedures of this place, while maintaining appropriate traditions? I am sure that I echo the comments made by many others earlier in the day.

The petition of residents in my constituency rejects any and all proposals by Suffolk County Council and its leader, Councillor Matthew Hicks, for an Ipswich northern bypass. The petition is ongoing, but since late July 2019, it has already received 5,372 signatures. I am particularly grateful to Nick Green, Nick Deacon, Gerard Pearce, Amy Waspe and everyone in the Stop! campaign for all their dedication and hard work in collecting signatures for this petition.

Residents in both north Ipswich and the rural villages that I represent recognise that there is little or no evidence to support the building of the bypass, and that the many thousands of extra homes that would need to be built to fund it will further increase traffic congestion and pollution in Ipswich. Importantly, an Ipswich northern bypass will do little to improve traffic flow in and around Ipswich for the few hours every year that the Orwell bridge is closed. The environmental damage that would be caused by the bypass is inconsistent with Suffolk County Council declaring a climate emergency and its desire to become the greenest county.

The petition states:

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government and the Department of Transport to press upon Suffolk County Council and its Leader Cllr Matthew Hicks for the need to reject proposals for an Ipswich Northern Bypass, and to bring forward properly evidence based and environmentally sustainable solutions to decongesting central Ipswich.

*Following is the full text of the petition:*

*[The petition of residents of North Ipswich, Kesgrave, Rushmere St Andrew, Claydon, Grundsburgh, Westerfield, Hasketon and villages in the Central Suffolk and North Ipswich Constituency,*

*Declares that Suffolk's residents reject any and all proposals by Suffolk County Council and its Leader Cllr Matthew Hicks for an Ipswich Northern Bypass; further that residents recognise that there is little or no evidence to support the building of the Bypass and that the many thousands of extra houses that would need to be built to fund the bypass will increase traffic congestion and pollution in Ipswich, recognises that an Ipswich Northern year that the Orwell Bridge is closed, acknowledges that the environmental damage that would be caused by the Bypass is inconsistent with Suffolk County Council declaring a climate emergency and its desire to become the Greenest County Council; further recognises that Suffolk's local authorities have already identified an evidence based housing land supply until around 2035 and therefore*

*rejects proposals for any additional houses to be built in the East Suffolk and Mid Suffolk District Council areas in order to fund the Bypass; and further that this petition is on-going but since late July 2019 has already received 5372 signatories from both residents of North Ipswich and rural Suffolk.*

*The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government and the Department of Transport to press upon Suffolk County Council and its Leader Cllr Matthew Hicks for the need to reject proposals for an Ipswich Northern Bypass, and to bring forward properly evidence based and environmentally sustainable solutions to decongesting central Ipswich.*

*And the petitioners remain, etc.]*

[P002539]

## Housing Succession Policy

*Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(Leo Docherty.)*

5 pm

**Rushanara Ali** (Bethnal Green and Bow) (Lab): Mr Speaker, it is a real privilege to see you sitting in the Chair for this debate, as it will be the last time that you do so. I join colleagues on both sides of the House in the tributes they have paid to you today and previously. I also want to pay a personal tribute to you for all your work to transform this House for the better. You have been a powerful advocate on many things, including human rights, which is an issue close to my heart.

Mr Speaker, you have also championed our values of equality, fairness and justice, and you have stood up against those who seek to inflame division and hatred in our country, including one President. When the question of inviting him to this House came up, you rightly pointed out that we have a reputation to uphold of being against racism and sexism, and of standing up for equality before an independent judiciary. I am summarising what you said, but it is important that we remember the courage and bravery with which you held to those standards.

I hope that whoever succeeds you, Mr Speaker, will build on your work and legacy, will have the courage to stand up for what is right and decent, will hold the Executive to account, and will stand up for the sovereignty of our Parliament. From the bottom of my heart, thank you for everything you have done and all the support you have provided to Members on both sides of the House.

I also want to pay tribute to Rev. Rose Hudson-Wilkin for all that she has done, as this is also her last day. She has contributed much to this country, particularly here in Parliament and, of course, in my part of London. We wish her the very best of luck in her new role.

This debate is about the policy of succession in social housing. Social housing, whether council housing or social landlord housing, is the bedrock of successful communities in my constituency of Bethnal Green and Bow as well as many other parts of the country. It is important to remind ourselves of the original purpose of social housing, because it was not only to provide a safety net for the poorest people, or a last resort for the most vulnerable and those desperately in need. The purpose of social housing was to provide safe, stable and affordable homes, often close to city centres and sources of work—for all on middle and low incomes as an alternative to rip-off rents and exploitation. That need has not gone away. The principle should be maintained, but it has been under threat for a very long time.

Social housing is about not just homes but communities in which the same families live through the life cycle while growing together, helping each other out, putting down roots and building a real community spirit. That is the spirit of the social housing in my constituency, as it has been for generations. It has been a springboard for social mobility, aspiration and success. As the then Housing Minister, Nye Bevan, said, the goal was

“the living tapestry of a mixed community”.—[*Official Report*, 16 March 1949; Vol. 462, c. 2127.]



[*Rushanara Ali*]

Our goal should be mixed communities with people of different incomes and backgrounds living among one another, not monocultures or sink estates.

Social housing provides security and stability, and part of that stability has been the right to pass tenure from parent to child, if needed. Under the Conservative-led coalition Government of 2010 to 2015, this right was severely undermined, and I believe that that has done serious damage to people in my constituency and many others across the country.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): I congratulate the hon. Lady on securing the debate. I have been a great supporter of social housing over the years and I understand exactly the point she is making. Does she not agree that associations need the legal capability to have limited discretion so that qualified and experienced staff can use their wisdom and discernment to ensure that there can be as just a succession policy as possible—in other words, to make it possible?

**Rushanara Ali:** I very much agree with that point. People need to be given the right advice about the legal framework when they apply so that mistakes are not made, and I will come on to mention some of those. Individuals in public organisations such as housing associations and local authorities find themselves in the very difficult position that while they feel they have to apply the law, that law itself is flawed, which is why we need action from the Government.

Section 160 of the Localism Act 2011 ended the right of those who are not spouses or civil partners to succeed to secure tenancies that were agreed after 1 April 2012. The Act passed responsibility for decision making to local authorities, and clear central guidance has meant that many more bereaved children have faced eviction after the death of their parent. In the depths of their grief, they have had to fight bureaucracy, and often legal threats, just to stay in their homes, all the while dealing with the consequences of losing a family member.

Guidance on the allocation of accommodation for local authorities was issued in 2002. It includes guidance on when it might be appropriate to grant a tenancy to members of a household. For example, that could be when someone has been living with a tenant for a year prior to that tenant's death, when they have provided care, or when they have accepted responsibility for the tenant's dependants and need to live in the family home. There are many example of caring responsibilities that people have fulfilled over many years, and such people should not be treated in such a way.

The whole House will understand why, when left to their own devices, local authorities prioritise those in need on the housing waiting list. They are often placed in an impossibly difficult situation and need to make difficult choices. However, that does not balance out the needs of vulnerable people who are at risk of being made homeless, and who are treated inhumanely and unsympathetically at a time of bereavement.

No one suggests that large family homes should be occupied by single tenants—the 2002 guidance makes that clear—or that the rent book should stay with the same family in perpetuity. As the MP for Bethnal Green and Bow, I know all too well the desperate need for

more affordable homes, and for an end to overcrowding and appalling housing conditions. The rationing of housing has meant that even in those cases, people are threatened with eviction because of changes made in the Localism Act 2011. Surely that is an unintended and pernicious consequence of the Act, but the way it has been interpreted by local councils and housing associations means that people face homelessness at the very time when they need support from the state and solace, rather than having to think about whether they will be allowed to live in their homes. If ever there was a need for a humane and flexible approach, it is this.

I have had to deal with so many cases over the past few years. Families with caring responsibilities have had to fight multiple eviction notices having just buried family members. Older children have given up their own council properties, because they could not afford private accommodation or to buy, and have moved in to look after a parent for many years. They are then faced with eviction when that parent dies.

One constituent moved out of his own council property to care for his father, who suffered from a number of serious health and mobility conditions. After successfully registering to have him and his wife added to his father's tenancy agreement, the housing association sent a letter, two days after his father's death, to explain that that may not be possible. My constituent eventually received an eviction notice. I am pleased that he was ultimately allowed to stay and the housing association reversed its decision, but he should never have faced the trauma of having to go through that so soon after the death of a family member.

Another constituent wanted to succeed to her late mother's tenancy, having lived in the property as her main home since the late-'80s. She suffers from a number of health issues. She feels that the EastEndHomes housing association applied discretion appropriately, but she now faces eviction.

There have been many cases where constituents of mine have been wrongly served eviction notices in the circumstances of bereavement. I even had a case where a constituent came to my surgery who, having just lost her partner of 19 years, was told, wrongly, that she could not succeed to his tenancy. In one case, the combination of an eviction threat and a bereavement faced by my constituent, after having cared for her mother for over a decade, was driving her to the edge of a nervous breakdown. She was worried about bailiffs coming to her house—she had received eviction notices—and that she would be thrown out. The only thing I could offer her was that I would go there and stand with her, and do whatever was needed to help her so that she did not get seriously ill as a result of the pressure and, in essence, the harassment she was experiencing at the hands of the state.

There have been so many cases that we have had to fight. Many hon. Members from across the House will have had similar cases. This is no way to treat hard-working and caring family members who, through their caring responsibilities, have saved the state billions of pounds. We should be supporting them, especially through bereavement, rather than punishing them. What can we do? In so many cases, it is too late for those who have experienced such treatment. People have been evicted from their homes and subjected to needless concern,

worry and stress. That has affected their mental health and wellbeing. In other cases, the effect has been even more severe.

Being treated this way by the national Government and by local government, through legislation, is wrong. Surely, we can do better in the future. Surely, we can reach cross-party agreement to look at this issue and look at the number of cases around the country. It is very hard for us to get the aggregate statistics on the impact on our constituents across the country, and this is a major problem. I strongly urge all local administrators to be made to adopt a humane, compassionate policy for those facing such difficulties. The Government should instruct them to stop sending eviction notices to our constituents when they have been bereaved. There should be a significant length of time before matters such as remaining in the properties they are resident in are considered, even if they are larger properties, so that they have an appropriate time in which to grieve and recover.

I am extremely grateful to Ministers and hon. Members from across the House for attending this debate, given that we are in the midst of an election campaign. I appreciate that this issue may well get drowned out in the election campaign because there are so many other big issues such as Brexit, the NHS and other public services that we will want to talk about. However, I hope that when the next team of Ministers returns to the House, we can all agree that we need action. I therefore ask the Minister to address the following points.

Does the Minister agree that passing a tenancy to an appropriate person who might be a relative—a child or a carer—can be an appropriate way to maintain stability and ensure that the parent receives the right support and that the child, who is often an adult, is not made homeless and punished for dutifully providing care to a family member? What assessment has she made of the workings of the Localism Act with regard to tenancy succession for those family members who have been carers for many years? How many cases end up in court? What is the financial and personal cost, in terms of health and wellbeing, to residents? Does she not agree that we need national guidance to provide clarity on how local agencies and authorities should treat people in such circumstances and that local authorities must not use eviction notices or bailiffs to threaten our constituents with eviction when they are suffering and grieving? That is utterly unacceptable. There is a wider point about the use of bailiffs by local authorities that this Government need to act on, because in such circumstances we can see how much damage is done. What steps will she take to ensure that there are common standards and that public servants take appropriate, sensitive actions in these times of need? Finally, will she commit to a timetable to deliver change?

In conclusion, to lose a parent or a relative is a terrible blow. The aftermath requires a suitable period of grieving and healing, and the amount of time required will vary as between different people. Those of us who have grieved for loved ones will know that we cannot put a fixed timetable on grief and recovery from it. Just because I am talking about people who are not wealthy, who do not have the means to own their own properties and do not have the resources but who have cared for a loved one does not mean that their suffering should be

treated in this way—that they should not be treated compassionately for what they are doing, not only for their families, but as a public service. They have shown a duty of care and love to their family members and loved ones as their lives have come to an end, providing them with the dignity that they rightly should have, and we should make sure that such people are also treated in a dignified, caring way.

**Mr Speaker:** I thank the hon. Lady for her speech, including the very kind remarks that she made at the start.

I referenced a constituent and a former constituent earlier, whom I am absolutely thrilled to see in the Gallery. As we approach the end of the day and just before I call the Minister, whom I regard as a personal friend, I want to reference three other people in Gallery, because I regard their presence as being of great significance. First of all, Stephen Benn is in this place more often than he is out of it, and he has forged a magnificent link between the science community and Parliament. As a result of his prodigious efforts, boundless energy, personal charm and obvious commitment, those links are stronger now—I say this almost as much for the benefit of members of the public as I do for Members of the House—than they have been in the past. That is an enormous tribute to you, Stephen. Of course, you know that our bond is also strengthened by the fact that I came to know you through your late father, Tony, who was, without question, one of the great parliamentarians of the 20th century. I came to know Tony well and benefited from his counsel and support. I think of him pretty much every day and often regale audiences with anecdotes flowing from my friendship with and benefit gained from him.

I also want to mention Tim Hames, who has worked as an adviser to me for the last decade and who is as near to being a polymath as I know. He is one of these people who is incredibly accomplished at a very large number of different things—at writing and speaking, as an academic, as a journalist and as somebody who ran the British Private Equity and Venture Capital Association very successfully for a very long period—but who, in particular, has been a wonderful counsellor to me, of which I am enormously appreciative, as I think he knows. Tim, it is great to see you, and to see you accompanied by your wife Julia, and to have you in the Gallery as we approach the end of the day—my last day in the Chair—has a very special significance for me.

5.18 pm

**The Minister for Housing (Ms Esther McVey):** It is indeed an honour to be answering this debate—the very last debate that you will chair, Mr Speaker. In that regard, it is quite an occasion. Many of us will only know you as the Speaker. You have a reputation for being a thorn in the side of Ministers, but as a Minister I appreciate that your job is to help to ensure that Back Benchers hold Ministers to account, and you have done that better than anyone else. That is your job and your purpose for being here.

Many people have also mentioned how you have been a modernising Speaker, that you have ensured that Back Benchers have had more say and, in doing that, that the public have had a greater say in this House, as a centre of democracy; the people are being heard.

[Ms Esther McVey]

I wish you well as you go forth. There is a chapter closing here, but I do not want to dwell on that. I want to look forward to a chapter that will be opening, for you and your family. I am sure we have not heard the last of your dulcet tones. You have accrued an almost—no, not almost—an encyclopaedic knowledge of what goes on in this House, of its processes and procedures, and I hope you take that forth into another job that allows you to speak about what happens in Parliament. I hope you remain a good friend of this House too.

I want to also pay tribute to Rose—I will call her by her first name because most of us class her as a friend and call her by her first name. She has touched the hearts of many, as we have heard here today, and has been there for many during this turbulent time when people have turned to her in their time of need. She has celebrated with us and spent sad times with us. She has not left the House entirely: she is coming back next September, when I shall be, late in life, getting married for the first time.

I turn back to this important debate. I commend the hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Bow (Rushanara Ali) for securing it and bringing this matter to the Government's attention. The Government recognise the important role that affordable housing in general, and social rented housing in particular, plays in supporting people and communities. That is why the Government are committed to increasing the supply of affordable housing and have made £9 billion available through the affordable homes programme, to March 2020, to deliver 250,000 new affordable homes of a wide range of tenure, including homes for social rent. It is also why we are determined to ensure that social housing is safe and decent and that those who live in social homes are treated with dignity and respect. The hon. Lady raised very relevant issues about those who have been bereaved and could be going through a period of grief.

The hon. Lady talked about succession and social housing. Social housing confers many benefits, including security of tenure and below-market rents. For local authority tenants, it also confers the statutory right to buy. It is incumbent, therefore, on local authorities and housing associations to manage their housing to benefit the community, particularly those in greatest need; they need that housing. It is important, therefore, that the succession rules strike a balance between the needs of those members of the deceased tenant's family who consider the property to be their home, the interests of the local authority and the housing association in making best use of their housing, and the interests of those on the housing waiting list who are also in need.

There will always be sensitive and difficult cases that cannot always be foreseen or captured by the statutory provision, which is why there is an addition to that provision: the social landlord can exercise discretion to take into account individual circumstances such as those the hon. Lady raised, and that is what they should be doing. Provided it is in line with their own allocation policies and the Regulator of Social Housing's tenancy standards, there is nothing to stop a social landlord granting the surviving family member a new tenancy in the same property, or they may be able to offer a tenancy for a different property, should that be more appropriate. Indeed, it is partly because the previous

succession rules were considered too inflexible and not sufficient to allow for a household's individual circumstances to be taken into account that the Government introduced changes under the Localism Act 2011.

Those changes apply to social tenancies granted from 1 April 2012. They mean that social landlords are no longer limited by law to providing only one succession to a spouse or a partner, or, in the case of local authorities, to a resident family member. Instead, social landlords have, since April 2012, been able to give to new tenants more extensive succession rights in tenancy agreements, in addition to the statutory one succession to a spouse or partner. That important flexibility means that, for example, carers or adult children who have lived in a property for many years can be provided with the assurance of a right to succeed to the tenancy, regardless of whether a previous succession has already taken place.

Striking the right balance between competing interests is never easy.

**Rushanara Ali:** I would be grateful if the Minister addressed the point about discretion. In some cases, discretion is being applied positively, humanely and compassionately, but, because of the pressures that local authorities face, in others they are being very hard line, which is the subject of the debate. Is she prepared to write to local authorities, giving them clear instructions on such situations, so that we avoid causing further harm to people's lives?

**Ms McVey:** The hon. Lady raises a good point. As she rightly says, some authorities are doing this very well, but perhaps, in her circumstance, that has not necessarily happened. I will indeed work with her to write that letter, or to ensure that this happens and that this discretion is used when it should be.

On affordable house building, we want to ensure that everyone has a place that they can call home. In our 2017 housing White Paper, we pledged to address overall housing supply, and in the autumn Budget 2017 we set out our ambition to deliver 300,000 homes per year, on average, by the mid-2020s. Affordable housing, including affordable homes for rent, plays a vital role in reaching this target. Since 2010, we have delivered over 430,000 new affordable homes, including over 308,000 affordable homes for rent. We continue to support housing associations and councils with grant funding for the construction of new affordable homes. We have made over £9 billion available.

A mix of different tenures is vital to meet the needs of a wide range of people and to allow housing associations and local councils to build the right homes in the right places. That is why we have reintroduced social rent as part of our expanded programme. Social rent will meet the needs of struggling families and those most at risk of homelessness in areas of the country where affordability is most pressured. That would be in the hon. Lady's constituency.

We have also set a long-term rent deal, announcing that increases to social housing rents will be limited to the consumer prices index plus 1% for five years from 2020. Through all those measures, we are creating an investment environment that supports councils and housing



associations to build more. That in itself, if we are building more, could ease some of the pressures the hon. Lady mentioned.

Housing associations build the majority of this new affordable housing. Going forward, we want to see housing associations continue to maximise their contributions to housing supply. That is why we have been listening and working to create a stable investment environment to support the delivery of more affordable homes across the country. We have introduced strategic partnerships to offer housing associations greater flexibility, ensuring funding can be allocated where it is needed across multiple projects while still meeting overall delivery targets. That funding certainly also makes it more viable for developing housing associations to invest in more ambitious projects with greater delivery flexibilities and funding guaranteed over a longer period.

We have gone further, providing the sector with longer-term certainty of funding. Last September, the Government also announced £2 billion of long-term funding, which

will boost affordable housing for associations. This unprecedented approach will deliver more affordable homes and stimulate the sector's wider building ambitions. Strategic partnerships and our 10-year funding commitment mark the first time any Government have offered housing associations such long-term funding certainty.

That is what we need to do to ensure that we can always have that human interaction with tenants in houses when a bereavement happens. We have already opened up £1 billion of this funding through Homes England and we are working closely with the Greater London Authority to open bidding for London. I will close there and again thank the hon. Lady for bringing this debate to the House.

*Question put and agreed to.*

5.30 pm

*House adjourned.*



# Westminster Hall

Thursday 31 October 2019

[SIR HENRY BELLINGHAM *in the Chair*]

## E-cigarettes

1.30 pm

**Norman Lamb** (North Norfolk) (LD): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the Seventh Report of the Science and Technology Committee, Session 2017-19, E-cigarettes, HC 505, and the Government Response, Cm 9738.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship for the very first time, Sir Henry, in my last appearance in this Chamber, and it has been a pleasure to have you as my constituency next-door neighbour for the last 18 years. I am pleased to have secured a debate on this important work undertaken by my Committee before this Parliament draws to a close. It is great that we have been able to hold the debate in the month of Stoptober, the big anti-smoking initiative, which I think has been successful, and which I remember launching in my time as a Minister, back in the day.

Statistics released by the Office for National Statistics show that in 2018 in England, 14.4% of adults smoked. That represents a significant advance in reducing the prevalence of smoking in our country; ONS figures show that smoking rates in England have fallen every year since 2011. It is important to say that there is one exception to that advance, and it relates to mental ill health—something I care a lot about. People with severe and enduring mental ill health tend to die much younger than others, by as many as 20 years, one key reason being the prevalence of smoking among that group, around 40% of whom smoke. Although we have been very successful in reducing smoking rates in the population as a whole, we have not been successful in doing so for those with mental ill health. I will return to that.

In Great Britain in 2018, there were approximately 3.2 million vapers—6.3% of the population—which marks a significant increase since 2014, when the figure was 3.7%. Why does that matter? The tobacco control plan stated:

“Tobacco is the deadliest commercially available product in England”—

it is important to hold on to those words from the Government—

“with tobacco regulations serving to safeguard people, particularly children and young people from the avoidable disease and premature death it causes.”

The recent prevention Green Paper clearly articulated that some people are disproportionately likely to smoke, which we should all be deeply uncomfortable with:

“Smokers are disproportionately located in areas of high deprivation. In Blackpool, 1 in 4 pregnant women smoke. In Westminster, it’s 1 in 50.”

What an extraordinary contrast! Deprivation causes that significant risk to the health of mothers and babies.

According to Public Health England, vaping is at least 95% less harmful than smoking. That does not mean that vaping is safe, and it certainly does not mean that we should encourage non-smokers to start vaping, but based on all the evidence we have, vaping is considerably less harmful than smoking.

**Graham Stringer** (Blackley and Broughton) (Lab): I put on record my thanks to the right hon. Gentleman for his time chairing the Select Committee on Science and Technology. It has been an interesting period, in which we have gone into great detail—effectively, I think—on many subjects. I was annoyed that NHS England, which has the time to put out often crass and obvious statements on health, did not have the time to come and give us advice on e-cigarettes, the use of which, as he says, is one way get people to stop smoking.

**Norman Lamb:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for that. I will call him my hon. Friend, because I am demob-happy and I do not care about the normal rules. It has been a great pleasure to work with him on the Committee. I share his concern. Given that the Government’s own tobacco control plan describes tobacco as

“the deadliest commercially available product in England”,

one would have hoped that the body that runs the NHS in England would show a strong commitment to confronting that clear risk. Despite it being very clear from all the available evidence that vaping is significantly less harmful than smoking, I none the less absolutely encourage continued research in this area. We should always be alert to anything that indicates a potential risk; that is exactly what our Committee recommends.

E-cigarettes are not only less harmful than smoking, but appear to be an effective tool for stopping smoking, as the hon. Gentleman made clear. A study published earlier this year in the *New England Journal of Medicine* randomly assigned adults attending UK NHS stop smoking services either nicotine replacement products of their choice, including product combinations, for up to three months, or an e-cigarette starter pack. That study of 886 participants found that the one-year abstinence rate was 18% in the e-cigarette group, compared with 9.9% in the nicotine replacement group. That is a significant difference, and we need to make sure that we act on that difference now that we have knowledge of the effectiveness of e-cigarettes as a stop smoking tool.

Results from a 2019 survey carried out by YouGov for Action on Smoking and Health—ASH—found that

“the three main reasons for vaping remain as an aid to quitting (22%)...preventing relapse (16%) and to save money (14%)”,

because people who vape spend much less money than people who smoke. That demonstrates that users perceive e-cigarettes as a stop smoking tool. E-cigarettes are therefore likely to help the Government to meet their ambition, announced in the prevention Green Paper, for England to be smoke-free by 2030. None the less, I accept that further research is needed on the effectiveness of e-cigarettes as a stop smoking tool. Will the Government or one of their agencies request further independent research on the effectiveness of e-cigarettes as a stop smoking tool?

Our report highlights the issue of what the NHS does on smoking cessation. Cancer Research UK recently pointed out that primary care clinicians face barriers to discussing e-cigarettes with patients who smoke; one in three clinicians is unsure whether e-cigarettes are safe enough to recommend. Given the death toll from smoking, it is extraordinary that it appears that clinicians are unaware of the clear advice from Public Health England in that regard.



**Gareth Johnson** (Dartford) (Con): I agree with everything that the right hon. Gentleman has said. Does he agree that the Government could reach their ambitious target, which he alluded to, by embracing vaping, getting more information out there to those clinicians and working through the law, particularly post Brexit, to ensure that people who want to give up smoking have all the information they require in order to take up vaping instead?

**Norman Lamb:** I totally agree. The statistics that I am citing make the point about raising awareness, even among clinicians. We thought that it was just the general public who needed to understand better the relative risks, but clearly clinicians also need to understand the relative risks so that they can advise their patients more effectively.

Two in five clinicians feel uncomfortable recommending e-cigarettes to their patients who smoke. Again, that is an extraordinary finding. Fewer than three in 10 agree that their current knowledge is enough for advising patients about e-cigarettes. That extraordinary data reveals a clear need for the awareness raising to which the hon. Member for Dartford (Gareth Johnson) has just referred.

What assessment has the Minister made of the number of smoking cessation services in the NHS that are actively promoting e-cigarettes as alternatives to conventional cigarettes? It ought to be every single one throughout the country, but are they actually doing it? Do we know? Can the Minister tell us what work the Government are doing with NHS England on increasing knowledge among clinicians of the uses, benefits and risks of e-cigarettes for current smokers?

Our report recommended that NHS England should create a post for someone who is responsible for implementing the Government's tobacco control plan. The response said:

“The Government broadly accepts this recommendation.”

However, no specific steps to implement our recommendation were set out. We pursued that with NHS England, which in January told me:

“It is our intention to appoint an individual with lead responsibility for this role. This will be an important part of our delivery programme for the NHS Long Term Plan.”

We would all assume that that person was appointed long ago and that active work is now underway to pursue this vital agenda, which will save lives, but can the Minister confirm that NHS England has created that post and, if so, is someone actually in post and doing the job?

The Government say that, in their long-term plan, provision is made for

“all smokers who are admitted to hospital being offered support to stop smoking”.

That is not due to be fully implemented until 2023-24. Again, given the extraordinary health benefits of stopping people smoking, I would have hoped for a tighter timescale than '23-24 to implement that. Will the Minister tell us how implementation of that proposal is going and whether consideration is being given to implementing it fully before 2023-24?

Our report recommended that the NHS should have a clear policy on e-cigarettes in mental health facilities that establishes a default of allowing e-cigarette use by patients. This comes back to my point that approximately 40% of those with severe and enduring mental ill health still smoke. The attitude and culture within mental

health trusts is critical if we are to enable and help people with severe and enduring mental ill health to give up smoking. We said that it should be the default that e-cigarettes should be made available in mental health facilities unless there are clear evidence-based reasons for not doing so.

The Government response said:

“NHS England will provide guidance to mental health trusts that sets out that existing vapers should be permitted to use e-cigarettes as part of smoking cessation programmes, and...tobacco smokers should be supported to stop smoking through smoking cessation programmes”.

Can the Minister tell us whether that guidance has been issued? I very much hope that it has. If not, when will it be issued and what is the reason for the delay in issuing such important guidance? If it has been issued, what assessment has been made of how it is working?

The UK is making good progress in getting people to stop smoking and use e-cigarettes to achieve that, but that is at risk from recent concerns about e-cigarette use. Those concerns have been expressed particularly in other countries. We have put the concerns to Public Health England. The first is the claim that deaths in the US have been linked to the use of e-cigarettes and vaping products. The reality is that the US operates in a totally different regulatory context and “illicit products” were “implicated in this outbreak...including vaping cannabis derivatives.” That is from Public Health England. It has also explained that

“the suddenness of the outbreak across many USA states in just a few months, suggests that this is not a gradual effect of long-term use, but because of a specific agent coming into use in the affected population.”

Next are the concerns that flavoured e-cigarettes are “luring” children into vaping. Public Health England's response explained that the data it had seen so far was reassuring that e-cigarettes were not re-normalising smoking. Furthermore, the UK and the US have different rules on advertising, nicotine concentration and education on vaping, which explains why flavours of e-cigarettes are less impactful in the UK compared with the United States.

The next issue is the introduction of a ban in India on the production, import and sale of e-cigarettes because of concerns about the risks that they pose to health and to the young. Again, an assertion has been made that is at risk of infecting the debate that we have in this country. However, Public Health England has explained:

“India is one of several countries that appears to be responding to the outbreak of lung disease among cannabis”

vapers

“by proposing a ban on nicotine inhalers.”

It has also explained that smoking is far more prevalent in India and causes 7 million deaths a year there.

**Sir Kevin Barron** (Rother Valley) (Lab): Is it not true that India has a massive vested public interest in the tobacco industry?

**Norman Lamb:** I suspect that the right hon. Gentleman knows better than I do, but I note the point that he makes. My view, based on the evidence that the Committee heard, is that the action taken by India is not based on evidence and is likely to result in more people dying of lung cancer. I think that is shameful.

I encourage all right hon. and hon. Members to read the helpful and comprehensive reply that we received from Public Health England on these issues and others, and which we have published so that anyone can delve into the detail. I am reassured that Public Health England is in “close dialogue” with a range of international partners, and I agree with Public Health England when it says:

“It is no exaggeration to say that inflating fears about e-cigarettes could cost lives.”

Incidentally, I have concerns about the attitude at the World Health Organisation, which does not take the same evidence-based approach, as far as I can see, as this country has done. Again, that has implications through the potential loss of life for millions of people across the globe.

It seems to me that people often conflate the fact that we do not have all the long-term evidence on vaping impact with an assertion that that should lead us to conclude that we should not be recommending vaping as an alternative to smoking. Frankly, that is stupid as a public policy approach, because we know that smoking is killing—I think—more than 70,000 people in England every year, and all the evidence so far shows that nothing like that is happening from vaping. According to Public Health England, it is 95% less dangerous than smoking. Therefore, the clear public health advice has to be that vaping is an appropriate way to help people give up smoking. Of course, the best thing of all is not to vape and not to smoke, but if that is not possible for someone, the clear public health advice needs to be that vaping is better than smoking.

Will the Minister set out what contact the Government—she or other Ministers—have had with other countries on international approaches to e-cigarettes? In particular, what are they doing at the World Health Organisation to encourage a more enlightened approach? What assessment have the Government made of the effects of those international approaches on public perception of e-cigarettes in the UK? What steps will the Minister take to ensure that this misinformation on e-cigarettes is challenged?

**Graham Stringer:** It is not only the World Health Organisation that is not using evidence for its advice, but the EU. The EU’s directive on the size of the bowls used and the amount of substance put in is not based on evidence. It is likely to mean that those people getting a nicotine kick—much less dangerous than cigarettes—will not find the products satisfactory and will go back to smoking.

**Norman Lamb:** I share the hon. Gentleman’s concern about the directive and the proscriptive rules relating to vaping, which do not appear to be sufficiently evidence-based.

E-cigarettes are positive in helping current smokers to stop smoking, and they are significantly less harmful than smoking conventional cigarettes. Yes, there are unknowns about long-term risks, and we need to maintain research on e-cigarettes, but doing nothing is not an option when people’s wellbeing and lives are at risk. I look forward to the contributions of other right hon. and hon. Members, and to the Minister’s reply.

1.51 pm

**Bill Grant (Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock) (Con):** It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Henry. I congratulate my friend, the right hon. Member for North Norfolk (Norman Lamb), on securing this important debate.

E-cigarette use in the UK has followed a gently rising trend over the past few years, and last year, statistics from the Office for National Statistics showed that 6.3% of those over 16 were regular users—a rise of less than 1% over five years. In our August 2018 report, the Science and Technology Committee concluded that e-cigarettes should not be viewed in the same way as conventional cigarettes. They are an effective stop smoking aid and should be formally considered as such.

In its response to the letter sent on behalf of the Committee by the Chair, Public Health England confirmed that it believed, as the Committee did, that e-cigarettes are around 95% less harmful than conventional smoking. As our Committee found:

“A medically licensed e-cigarette could assist smoking cessation efforts by making it easier for medical professionals to discuss and recommend them as a stop smoking treatment with patients.”

Existing smokers should be encouraged to give up, but if that is not possible, they should switch to e-cigarettes as a considerably less harmful alternative.

We must acknowledge that there are uncertainties about the longer-term health effects of e-cigarettes. They have not been in circulation long enough for any scientific research to be certain. Concerns have been raised in the United States, as was mentioned, about an isolated outbreak of serious lung injury linked to illicit vaping products, but I suspect, as the right hon. Gentleman said, that there may have been other factors at play in that instance. In any event, we have not seen that replicated in the UK, largely because, as ASH confirms, we have a strong regulatory system in place, which is not yet the case in the US.

The Government mandate strict conditions, namely a minimum age of sale, a ban on advertising in broadcast media, print or the internet, and a stipulation that products containing over 20 milligrams per millilitre of nicotine need a medicinal licence. Products must also be child-resistant and tamper-evident, and packs must carry a health warning covering over 30% of the surface area.

Moreover, to be balanced, any judgement on the future of e-cigarettes must take account of human nature and the most likely alternative to vaping, namely returning to harmful conventional cigarettes, which have proven to be a serious health risk over time. While some groups would prefer the firmest possible line—Cancer Research UK, for instance, is pressing for a tobacco-free UK within the decade—most groups agree that e-cigarettes can provide a useful route towards quitting harmful conventional cigarettes.

We have seen clear evidence that e-cigarettes are an effective quitting aid for adult smokers and, crucially, the percentage of young smokers trying e-cigarettes in Britain is small, with continued use smaller still. They flirt with the e-cigarette, but do not continue with it. There is little evidence to suggest that such products act as a gateway to conventional smoking—they are not, as some would suggest, a stepping-stone to conventional smoking—and figures show that almost 3 million people in the UK today are using e-cigarettes as an aid to quitting harmful conventional cigarettes.

[*Bill Grant*]

Unfortunately, the Committee found that some aspects of the regulatory system for e-cigarettes are holding back their use as a stop smoking measure. Restrictions on the strength of refills and maximum tank size have led some users to move away from e-cigarettes and return, sadly and regrettably, to conventional smoking. There seems to be little scientific basis for these limits, and I am pleased that the Government, in response to our report, intend to consider these anomalies and how to address them. It is good to see that the Government also agree with our conclusion:

“There should be a shift to a more risk-proportionate regulatory environment; where regulations, advertising rules and tax duties reflect the evidence of the relative harms of the various e-cigarette and tobacco products available.”

Such a move might well bring about the welcome improvements in health that we, as a society, desperately seek, particularly from lung cancers and other by-products and unintended consequences of smoking. It is proven beyond doubt that conventional smoking is harmful. I look forward to seeing those changes implemented.

I take this opportunity to speak directly to conventional smokers. Despite being a fire officer for 31 years, sadly I was a 50-a-day smoker for many years, although I have long since stopped. Believe me: being a smoker was a costly, smelly and unhealthy mistake in my life. I only realised that afterwards. Yes, I enjoyed my cigarettes then, as the smoker today does. Even in my time in the fire service, when I left a fire with my breathing apparatus on and pulled the face mask off, some kindly colleague would have a pre-lit cigarette for me. It was certainly madness at the time, and I indulged in it. It is not easy to stop, but anything that is good is not always easy. Believe me, it can be done. My plea to those who do smoke is: you can stop if you put your mind to it, and it is absolutely worthwhile.

**Norman Lamb:** The hon. Gentleman kept that information very quiet on the Select Committee.

**Bill Grant:** It is something to be neither proud nor ashamed of. It was part of the culture of the time. I was part of that culture. There are two things in life that I have never regretted: marrying my wife, Agnes, and giving up smoking. They are equally wonderful.

I have had the pleasure to serve on the Science and Technology Committee since shortly after I was elected to this House, and it has been a fascinating and often inspiring journey. I am incredibly proud of the work we have undertaken as a Committee, ably assisted by a very fine secretariat, and I wish to put on record my thanks to them for their support. Indeed, as my friend the right hon. Member for North Norfolk and I both intend to retire at the forthcoming election, this will be our last debate together, and I wish to thank him for his fine stewardship over the two years.

1.58 pm

**Sir Kevin Barron** (Rother Valley) (Lab): I am really happy to be here this afternoon, also giving my last speech in Westminster Hall, which is something that I have been looking forward to for a considerable time—since 2016, when something that I do not want to mention happened.

I have been active in smoking cessation over many years in Parliament. This is a good, well sourced and evidenced report about where we should move in the future to protect our fellow citizens. Let me admit two things—this is a bit of a confession. First, it has been more than 40 years since I stopped, but I, too, used to smoke cigarettes; I was quite addicted. Secondly, I ought to mention that although there is no money in it, I am an honorary fellow of the Royal College of Physicians.

The report makes it clear that e-cigarettes have proven to be a unique opportunity to steepen the decline of smoking rates in this country. They lack the dangerous tar and carbon monoxide components of conventional tobacco cigarettes and are consequently 95% safer, as Public Health England says. It should also be noted that second-hand vapour from e-cigarettes is substantially less dangerous than from tobacco cigarettes. As we all know, e-cigarettes can and do operate as a pathway from conventional smoking to quitting altogether. At present, something like 2.9 million Britons use them as a pathway towards quitting, with tens of thousands successfully stopping each year.

We were all surprised that under the previous tobacco control plan we got well below the target adult smoking rate: it is below 16% now, which is extraordinary. Sadly, that was not because e-cigarettes were used in smoking cessation programmes, although in my view that should be the future; it was because millions of our fellow citizens were buying those products themselves. Getting adult smoking below 16% is no mean feat, but more than 80,000 of our fellow citizens are still dying prematurely from tobacco use each year. We should never forget those statistics. If anything else were taking lives in this country every year at that level, we would be up in arms and this House would have done more to stop it.

Cancer Research UK’s briefing recommends that e-cigarettes be used as a tool to aid smokers who wish to quit in achieving their goal. However, it rightly points out—as the Chair of the Science and Technology Committee, the right hon. Member for North Norfolk (Norman Lamb) did—that unfortunately surveys have shown that 40% of clinicians are uncomfortable recommending e-cigarettes to their patients, and a further third are unsure whether they are safe to recommend, notwithstanding what Public Health England says about them. Moreover, just 30% feel that their knowledge is sufficient to advise patients on vaping.

Healthcare professionals must be made aware of the benefits of e-cigarettes in aiding people to quit. Although vaping is not completely risk-free, the reality is that it is significantly safer than smoking conventional cigarettes. Healthcare professionals must be made fully aware of that, so that they can ensure that their patients have the strongest chance of quitting smoking. It is difficult, and it may not necessarily be something that new doctors or doctors in training will be looking at. However, any health professionals attending or reading this debate, especially general practitioners, could do worse than go round to the vaping shop on their local high street to talk to the people who sell the products, because those are the people who trace their patients. They will know people who have gone from 50 cigarettes a day to none, or who used to need higher hits of nicotine but are now on lower and lower doses. I know people who still vape but use no nicotine at all; they are satisfying not an addiction, but a habit of using their hands. That is what



ought to happen. It is quite true that there is no long-term evidence, just as there was not when the first heart transplant happened in South Africa, but it is pretty clear that there is evidence out there in our communities. We need our health professionals to go and talk to the people who have probably been dealing with their patients for some time.

Naturally, many people have raised deep concerns about whether vaping can operate as a gateway to smoking conventional tobacco cigarettes, but there is no evidence to suggest that such a phenomenon has materialised in any meaningful or demonstrated way. ASH, which I have been active with in this country for decades, has been monitoring what is happening annually, particularly around young children, and there is no evidence that it is causing nicotine addiction and leading people on to cigarettes.

I have to say that some of the evidence that we have seen about vaping in America is shocking. Some of the stuff that they put in is class A drugs—that is why we are having deaths. I know from going to America from time to time, where I have two step-grandchildren, that one company, which shall remain nameless in this debate, has been promoting vaping to young children with different flavours, although not necessarily with nicotine. When we talk to schools about it, they are up in arms about the nuisance and the litter. There is something to think about there, but we should not be too scared of it.

Although there are advertising restrictions and regulations on vaping, they are less stringent than those that apply to tobacco products. In June, the Library published a briefing paper that is well worth reading, “Advertising: vaping and e-cigarettes”. I first campaigned against tobacco in the 1993-94 Session when I introduced the Tobacco Advertising Bill, a private Member’s Bill to ban tobacco advertising and promotion. We are a long way down the road now, but there are still lessons to be learned from the Library’s paper about how these products are advertised.

The Science and Technology Committee has recommended that cigarette pack inserts could be used to refer smokers to e-cigarettes as a healthier alternative, but unfortunately that is currently banned under the Standardised Packaging of Tobacco Products Regulations 2015. We need to think quickly, because the people addicted to cigarettes are the ones who are going into shops and buying e-cigarettes. They are the people we should be targeting; I do not think that we can do it with things like websites. We could change those regulations in super-quick time—I can’t, because I’m off, but Parliament could, which would put us in a position to get to the people who are still addicted.

E-cigarettes need to be endorsed as mainstream in cessation programmes. About three years ago I visited the Leicester smoking cessation programme, which has been at the forefront of using such products. It has a wonderful scheme—led by a nurse at the time—in which pregnant women vaped at least throughout their pregnancy, which greatly enhanced the health and the life chances of their child. There is no reason why we should not make that mainstream. I know that people who smoke will now be referred to community pharmacies; that is good, but we should be looking at specific interventions with these products for people who are vulnerable, including unborn children.

Smoking cessations ought to be funded directly by the tobacco industry. I know that that would be an issue for the Treasury, but the Minister will need to talk to it. We often talk about making the polluter pay; tobacco companies should be paying for our smoking cessation programmes. Sadly, as we have said in previous debates, some of those programmes are now fading away. There are parts of this country that still have heavy and intense levels of adult smoking but have no smoking cessation programmes at all. That is wrong and, with more than 80,000 deaths a year, it should be stopped.

2.7 pm

**Gareth Johnson** (Dartford) (Con): Unlike the three previous speakers, I rather hope that this will not be my last speech in Westminster Hall—but that is up to the people of Dartford, not me.

I am pleased to contribute to the debate, because I feel strongly that vaping is something that we should embrace as a country. It has been mentioned that Public Health England says that vaping is 95% risk-free; that is really significant, and it is not just Public Health England making such statements. Cancer Research UK says that there are significant benefits from vaping in comparison with tobacco consumption. ASH, the British Heart Foundation and the British Lung Foundation—organisations that understandably have traditionally frowned on anything associated with smoking—recognise that vaping saves lives. That is what we are talking about, and the sooner the country recognises that we have an invention that could save thousands of lives in the UK, let alone the rest of the world, the sooner we can start saving the maximum possible number of lives.

It was with great regret that we heard the stories coming out of the United States. It was only when we starting drilling down and saw that the deaths were potentially linked to acetates, cannabis oil and so on—those are the irritants actually causing the deaths—that we recognised that we should not allow those tragic circumstances to cloud people’s image of vaping. It is not only clinicians who are unsure about vaping, and whether they can recommend it to patients; the general public are also unsure whether vaping is as safe as some experts have said. We need to educate people, and say that it is a well-known fact that tobacco seriously damages health and therefore is highly risky, but that with vaping the risks are substantially smaller.

Nobody in this debate, or anywhere in the House of Commons that I am aware of, is suggesting that people who do not smoke should take up vaping. The suggestion is that it is people who smoke, and who are addicted to tobacco and nicotine, who will benefit from vaping. There are risks associated with pretty much anything, and vaping is no exception. The message should go out loud and clear that people who do not smoke should not start vaping, but people who smoke may wish to try that alternative as an effective way of reducing their tobacco consumption, or helping them to come off tobacco completely.

I welcome the fact that some tobacco companies have embraced vaping; they realise its potential. Japanese Tobacco International has highlighted to me some of the dangers associated with products that do not contain nicotine, and so do not come under the Tobacco and Related Products Regulations 2016 and can be targeted

[*Gareth Johnson*]

at children. They can be marketed to look like food, or something trendy that people will want to get involved with, and as they do not have to comply with the tobacco regulations, their ingredients are not known. We need to look at that.

The Science and Technology Committee, chaired by the right hon. Member for North Norfolk (Norman Lamb), has looked at the 2016 regulations, which have serious flaws. For a start, they should not lump together tobacco and vaping products; they should be covered by separate regulations. That would bring an end to the ridiculous situation whereby a vaping product that has no nicotine in it must have a warning on its front saying, "This product contains nicotine". If the vaping company does not put that warning on its product, it will fall foul of the regulations, but if it does, it might fall foul of other regulations. It is a crazy situation that has developed.

We need to consider whether it is right to allow more advertising of vaping products. I believe that it is, but regulations seem to prevent that. I think it is right that we should enable people to be educated, and aware of the products available and their potential benefits.

I do not want to turn this into a debate on Brexit, but there is no getting away from the fact that once we leave the European Union, we as a country can look at the regulations ourselves, and see what best suits our needs and what would be a sensible approach to vaping. We can ensure that people are aware of vaping and can benefit from it, so we should do so.

I have met a number of organisations that are trying to push forward a change in vaping regulations. Imperial Brands—formerly Imperial Tobacco—is doing a lot, and there is also a company called Blu, whose products are pioneering. That is a key part of the process. Companies are investing a lot in developing products that will be attractive to smokers, in that they will satisfy their cravings, so that they feel less necessity to smoke cigarettes.

I do not want to demonise smokers. If an adult chooses to smoke, knowing the risks, that is their decision. However, it is incumbent on the Government to ensure that people are aware of the alternatives to smoking, of the risks, and that there is comparatively less risk associated with vaping.

The Government are rightly pursuing a target of reducing the number of people who smoke and eventually eliminating smoking in this country. That is very ambitious, and if we are to achieve that, it will be necessary to introduce people to vaping through their GP.

**Sir Kevin Barron:** On this idea that smoking is an adult thing, very few people start smoking after the age of 21. The hard reality is that for most people, the starting point comes when they are quite young. I think I was about 11 or 12 when I started getting addicted to nicotine. I think we have to be very careful about this. It is not really an adult choice; it is just something that adults have done from a very early age.

**Gareth Johnson:** I totally agree. I take the view that if adults want to smoke, knowing the risks, that is up to them. However, there is a duty of care on the Government to ensure that tobacco products are not consumed by children. That is absolutely clear, and it is right that we

keep the age at which people can start vaping at 18; we do not want vaping products targeted at children. In my experience, no responsible vaping company would do that or has done that.

The Government approach is sensible. I believe that they can embrace the potential of vaping to save lives. There are so many measures that could be taken—through the taxation system, through advertising, through education, and by making people aware of these products and making them more accessible to smokers.

We must recognise that for the first time in my life, there is something that genuinely can help people to get off tobacco—something effective that works. If we look at a graph of the number of people smoking and a graph of the number of vapers in this country, we can see a direct correlation: the more people vape, the fewer people smoke. We need to highlight that and celebrate it, and the Government should take that forward.

2.16 pm

**Jane Dodds** (Brecon and Radnorshire) (LD): I have not put my name forward to speak, but I would like to say a few words.

**Sir Henry Bellingham (in the Chair):** Yes, indeed. I call Jane Dodds.

**Jane Dodds:** Thank you, Sir Henry. I wanted to draw attention to the correlation between people who have mental health difficulties and the propensity to smoke. I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for North Norfolk (Norman Lamb), who has championed the cause of mental health throughout his time in Parliament. I hope that Committee members will not mind my thanking him for everything he has done.

This debate relates specifically to England, and I am a Welsh MP, but I draw attention to the issue of cross-border healthcare. Many people in Wales who need to attend a residential mental health unit have to travel to England, and of course there is complete disparity between the practice in Wales and that in residential units in England. I realise that this is not totally within the Committee's brief, but I would like it to consider how the policy for mental health units in England, which have particular rules and regulations around access to e-cigarettes, could be married up with the policy in Wales. There are significant differences between them. We talked earlier about learning from international bodies and countries around the world, but there is also a need to look at the whole UK, and consider how we can get parity between the nations. Thank you, Sir Henry, for allowing me to speak. Diolch.

2.17 pm

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson** (Washington and Sunderland West) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Henry. I apologise if I sound a bit croaky; I have a cold that is going round. Hopefully I will get rid of it soon, given what is to come over the next few weeks.

I thank the right hon. Member for North Norfolk (Norman Lamb) for introducing this debate, and for his characteristically well-informed speech. It is sad to think that it could very well be his last speech in what has been an illustrious career as an MP. I am sure that it will

not be his last speech as a campaigner or activist. I also congratulate him on his work chairing the Science and Technology Committee, and on the excellent report that we are considering.

I thank all the other right hon. and hon. Members who have spoken, including the hon. Member for Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock (Bill Grant), and my right hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Sir Kevin Barron), who I have enjoyed working with for many years. He has also had an illustrious career, and was an excellent Chair of the Health Committee for a number of years; he will be sorely missed in this place. There were also speeches by the hon. Member for Dartford (Gareth Johnson) and by the hon. Lady who has just spoken; I did not catch the name of her constituency.

**Sir Henry Bellingham (in the Chair):** Brecon and Radnorshire—by-election win.

**Mrs Hodgson:** Excellent. Thank you.

As we have heard, there is still some uncertainty about the use of e-cigarettes. They entered the UK market only 12 years ago, and because this technology is still so young, we do not know for certain what its long-term impacts on health will be. What we do know is that e-cigarettes are around 95% less harmful than conventional cigarettes, and because of that, an estimated 2.9 million people in the UK are using them to stop smoking. Each year, tens of thousands of people successfully use e-cigarettes to quit. A randomised controlled trial, published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* earlier this year, found e-cigarettes used in a stop smoking service to be nearly twice as effective as licensed nicotine replacement therapies, such as patches and gum.

The importance of e-cigarettes as a smoking cessation tool should therefore not be dismissed. However, that must come with the caveat—I think everyone has made this point—that using an e-cigarette is not completely risk-free. There has been a recent outbreak of serious lung injury in the US linked to vaping, although that has not been replicated in the UK. Currently, 3.6 million people vape in the UK, yet the number of cases of severe respiratory pathology associated with vaping is low and diverse, with reports over a long period.

I agree with ASH's recommendation that e-cigarette users should buy vaping products, including e-liquid, only from mainstream suppliers that sell regulated products, because using black market products may carry lethal risks. They should report any adverse effects from e-cigarettes to the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency using the yellow card scheme. If they experience serious adverse effects that they think are due to vaping, they should immediately stop vaping and get advice from their doctor.

Has the Minister considered launching an e-cigarette safety education programme that will ensure that e-cigarette users know the risks, and what to do if anything goes wrong and they manifest any such symptoms? That may lessen the possibility of manifesting the same patterns that we have seen in the US of lung injuries linked to e-cigarettes.

The Committee's recommendation 4 says that NHS England should issue e-cigarette guidance to all NHS mental health trusts, and the default should be to allow e-cigarette use by patients. As we have heard, people

with mental health issues smoke significantly more than the rest of the population, and could therefore benefit significantly from using e-cigarettes to stop smoking. Encouraging and allowing patients in mental health units who are smokers to switch to e-cigarettes as a means of smoking cessation would allow them to engage with their treatment sessions in the facilities without the interruption of smoking breaks.

A third of the 50 NHS trusts that responded to the Committee's survey ban the use of e-cigarettes. The Government have agreed to issue guidance to NHS trusts about e-cigarettes. Will the Minister please tell us when she anticipates that it will be published? I know that she might have to rush it out in the next couple of days, but she might have a magic wand and be able to do that. Doing so could allow patients in mental health units to engage more fully with their treatment, which could improve outcomes.

As the Committee has found, e-cigarettes have a role to play in our society and in the Government's commitment to achieving a smoke-free generation. However, we must ensure that advice on the safety of e-cigarettes, both short and long term, is updated regularly and publicly, so that users have the most relevant and up-to-date information available to them. The Government must also consider the role that e-cigarettes play in mental health services and improving patient outcomes across the NHS.

Every contact counts, especially when it comes to smoking cessation, and none should be missed. However, due to the Government's public health budget cuts since 2013, which I know the Minister is not personally responsible for, smoking cessation services have suffered, leaving the most vulnerable smokers behind, without any support to quit smoking. That must change. Again, I ask the Government to reverse those public health budget cuts, so that local authorities can provide the smoking cessation services that their local communities need and deserve. I look forward to the Minister's response.

2.24 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Jo Churchill):** It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Henry. I congratulate the right hon. Member for North Norfolk (Norman Lamb) on securing the debate, and I thank the whole Committee for the report, for its tone, and for the intelligent way in which it has approached the difficult subject of trying to stop behaviour that is detrimental to individuals.

We want smoking to reduce to zero, and for us to be smoke-free by 2030. It is an ambitious programme, but it will benefit many more people than just the individuals who smoke themselves, as it affects those around them. I thank the right hon. Gentleman, whom I have always highly respected, for his important work leading the Science and Technology Committee, and for his broader work on the health agenda. Although today's debate might be his last in this place, I hope that it will not be the last time I hear him waxing lyrical on the airwaves about this subject. I say the same for the right hon. Member for Rother Valley (Sir Kevin Barron), who has really been quite formative in this area, both on the Health Committee and in his work with the all-party parliamentary group on smoking and health.



[*Jo Churchill*]

It is timely that we are having this discussion at the very end of this year's Stoptober campaign; I pay tribute again to the right hon. Member for North Norfolk for his work in starting it. There is never a better time to stop smoking, and I encourage everybody who is thinking about doing so to visit their local stop smoking service, or to go online, and consider all the options available to help them to quit.

I am really proud of the tobacco control work over the past two decades and the progress that has been made, for which we have been recognised internationally. According to the Association of European Cancer Leagues' tobacco control scale, the UK has been rated consistently as having the most comprehensive tobacco control programme in Europe. As we have heard from the numbers discussed, it is working—but we are not there yet.

Smoking remains one of the leading causes of preventable illness and premature death, with more than 78,000 deaths a year. That is not only a waste but a personal tragedy for all families affected. We are determined to do more, as set out in our tobacco control plan, the NHS long-term plan and the prevention Green Paper, which only concluded on 14 October. I am looking forward to seeing the results of that consultation.

Our ambition is to be smoke-free by 2030. We know that we need to work harder in certain groups, including pregnant women and those with mental health issues. Like the right hon. Gentleman, I was struck by the extremely high prevalence of smoking in some areas. He mentioned Blackpool but, as he knows from representing a coastal region, in many coastal areas there is a very high prevalence of pregnant women who smoke. They interact with many healthcare professionals during what should be the enjoyable, exciting time when they are expecting a baby. We should use every single one of those interactions to help them to quit.

I have already asked officials whether there are other forms in which we can message that particular group in a way that helps them to understand the risk, as well as the things that are available to help them. I listened to the right hon. Gentleman's point about people with enduring mental health issues. Facilities should allow e-cigarettes and provide more support. That is an ongoing part of the agenda. I will write to Simon Stevens to see where we are, and I will let the Committee know.

**Norman Lamb:** I thank the Minister for her very kind comments. I am pleased that she will write to Simon Stevens, because pressure from Government Ministers on NHS England to recognise the significance of the subject is really important. I am conscious that I asked a lot of questions in my contribution, and she may well be unable to answer them all, but will she write to me before Parliament rises next week, if possible, to answer those questions that she is able to, so that we get that on the record?

**Jo Churchill:** I will do my very best. If there is anything I have not covered, I hope that the answer will be winging its way to the right hon. Gentleman on Monday.

The Government are absolutely clear that quitting smoking and nicotine use entirely is the best way for people to improve their health. We recognise that e-cigarettes

are not risk-free, as has been stated by all Members who have contributed; however, they can play an exceedingly important role in helping smokers to quit for good, particularly when combined with stop smoking services. It is an addiction, and we are trying to achieve a step change in people's practices and behaviours that enables them to quit entirely. We do not know the long-term harms of e-cigarette use, and no authorities in the UK assert that they are harmless. Based on current evidence, Public Health England and the Royal College of Physicians estimate that e-cigarettes are considerably less harmful than smoking because of the reduction in levels of exposure to toxicants in e-cigarette aerosols compared with tobacco smoke. However, I reiterate that quitting smoking is the best option.

It is fair to say that opinions on e-cigarettes are divided, both in the UK and globally. It is important that we listen to concerns, while looking objectively at the evidence base and seeking to build it further, which I think is the point that the right hon. Member for North Norfolk was making. On the question of research, I assure him that there is an NHS England dedicated lead—a director for prevention—in place, overseeing the NHS long-term plan commitments. I note the right hon. Gentleman's comments about India and the fact that making decisions too quickly, not based on the research that is available, has unintended consequences.

As the House is aware, we have introduced measures in the UK to regulate e-cigarettes: to reduce the risk of harm to children; to protect against e-cigarettes acting as a gateway to starting smoking—another important point that has been made today—to provide assurance on relative safety, and to give businesses legal certainty. Regarding what has happened in the United States of America, we take those concerns seriously—we are aware of the tragic deaths associated with vaping in the United States and are monitoring the situation carefully. Public Health England and the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency are in close contact with the US agencies. Investigations are ongoing; they have not yet been able to confirm the definite cause of the deaths, although it appears that the majority of those who died had used illicit cannabidiol with THC products, which led to those unfortunate deaths.

To date, there have been no known deaths from e-cigarette use in the UK. The MHRA yellow card reporting system is in place to report any adverse effects. It has been running for three years and, to date, has been notified of about 85 individual cases; all have been minor, and none has been considered life-threatening. However, I assure the right hon. Member for North Norfolk and all other Members who have contributed to this debate that we remain vigilant on the issue and are grateful for all research done in this area, including—my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Gareth Johnson) alluded to this—by those within the charity sector who do a great deal of work in looking at the harms caused.

In our tobacco control plan, we made strong commitments to monitor the impact of regulation and policy on e-cigarettes and novel tobacco products. To inform future policy, we are looking closely at the evidence on safety, uptake, health impact and the effectiveness of these products as smoking cessation aids. Public Health England will continue to update its evidence base on e-cigarettes and other novel nicotine delivery systems.

The use of e-cigarettes by young people was mentioned by the right hon. Member for Rother Valley and by my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford. Such use currently remains low, at 2%, and we have not seen the rise that has occurred in the United States. However, we will monitor the data closely to ensure that regular use does not increase and it is not seen as a gateway to tobacco use, and will also keep a close eye on any new evidence about long-term harms caused by flavourings. If the evidence shows that we need to address either or both of these issues, we will consider taking action, including further regulatory action where necessary. I would like the industry to show stronger leadership in the areas of e-cigarette product labelling and, in particular, design to ensure that its products do not appeal to young people. Some of the current naming appears to lean in that direction.

In future, we will have the opportunity to reappraise current tobacco and e-cigarette regulation to ensure that it continues to protect the nation's health. I thank all Members who have spoken today, particularly the right hon. Member for North Norfolk, who will be leaving this House. Today has been a bit of a goodbye party for him, for my hon. Friend the Member for Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock (Bill Grant)—I am staggered by the revelation that he smoked 50 a day; I wonder that he had time to do much else, let alone run around being a fireman—and for the right hon. Member for Rother Valley. I am sure that all of them will continue to work in this area.

I reiterate the Government's commitment to help people quit smoking, which is ultimately the best course of action, and to seek evidence on reduced-risk products. We will continue to be driven by that evidence. Although we can celebrate the fact that adult smoking in England has fallen by a quarter and regular smoking among children has fallen by a half, I will truly be able to celebrate—like all right hon. and hon. Members present, I am sure—if we reach the goal, which both the report and the Government are aiming for, of being smoke-free by 2030.

2.36 pm

**Norman Lamb:** I thank the Minister for her response to the debate and for her kind comments. There has been a remarkable consensus about the action we are taking in this country, and the need for it to be evidence-based. It is clear that the United Kingdom is ahead of the game internationally on smoking cessation work, and that is something we should celebrate. However, we should never allow ourselves to feel that we have done the job. We have so much still to do, particularly given the number of people who die every year from smoking, as the right hon. Member for Rother Valley (Sir Kevin Barron) made clear. The carnage—the death toll—is enormous, so the work needs to continue.

We have heard some wonderful admissions. The right hon. Member for Rother Valley and the hon. Member for Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock (Bill Grant) have admitted to smoking heavily in the past; they are both wonderful

living examples of life after smoking. *[Interruption.]* Less coughing, please. They are wonderful examples to others of the potential value of giving up smoking, and I wish both of them a very happy retirement from this place.

I will quickly pick up on one or two points. I agree with the right hon. Member for Rother Valley that inserts in packs are a very good way of targeting an important public health message directly at people who need to hear it, and who need to be reassured that giving up smoking and vaping instead is going to help their health—a point we made in the report. I also agree with him about the case for the tobacco industry making a contribution to the cost of smoking cessation services, on the basic principle that the polluter pays.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnorshire (Jane Dodds), who has had to leave, made some important points about cross-border health issues. I applaud her for championing access to mental health support in Wales, which is incredibly important. The point in this debate is that every mental health facility and, in particular, every in-patient mental health facility, whether in England, Wales or Scotland, should offer the same access and support to enable people to give up smoking, using vaping as the mechanism to do so. Giving up smoking will lead to significant gains in not only people's life expectancy, but their mental health; smoking harms their mental health as well as killing them earlier.

The hon. Members for Dartford (Gareth Johnson) and for Blackley and Broughton (Graham Stringer) both made the point that regulation must always be evidence-based. That has not been the case with the European Union directive or internationally, given the debate we have had about the World Health Organisation and the approach that is taken in America. In this country we want our regulations to be evidence-based, to give people the best chance of giving up smoking and having a healthier life.

On a personal basis, not in my role as Chair of the Select Committee, I agree with the hon. Member for Washington and Sunderland West (Mrs Hodgson) that investment in public health is important. There is much evidence that investment in early prevention work of all sorts, and in public mental health, provides—in brutal economic terms—a return on investment. It also changes lives. The plea to whomever becomes the Government after 12 December is this: make the investment in public health, because we will all benefit.

I thank you, Sir Henry, for your stewardship of the debate, and I wish all hon. Members well for the next few weeks. I am very relieved that I am not fighting to retain my seat in the middle of winter.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered the Seventh Report of the Science and Technology Committee, Session 2017-19, E-cigarettes, HC 505, and the Government Response, Cm 9738.

2.41 pm

*Sitting suspended.*

## Disability-inclusive Development

[MR NIGEL EVANS *in the Chair*]

3 pm

**Stephen Twigg** (Liverpool, West Derby) (Lab/Co-op): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the Thirteenth Report of the International Development Committee, DFID's work on disability-inclusive development, Session 2017-19, HC 1880, and the Government Response, Session 2017-19, HC 2680.

It is, as ever, a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Evans, not least because you serve as a distinguished member of the International Development Committee. I thank you, and indeed the other members of the Committee who are not present, for your service on the Committee. I also thank the hon. Member for Stafford (Jeremy Lefroy), who previously served with great distinction on the International Development Committee and who, like me, is standing down at the forthcoming general election. He has played an extraordinary leadership role on the Conservative Benches and in working cross-party across a range of development and humanitarian issues. I pay tribute to him for that and wish him well for the future. I thank the Minister, the shadow Minister and the Parliamentary Private Secretary for their attendance today at what I hope will be a positive and focused debate on an important issue.

In July, the International Development Committee released our thirteenth report, addressing the Department for International Development's work on mainstreaming disability inclusion. Earlier this month, the Government published their response to the report. I am pleased that they responded very positively, accepting either wholly or partially all but two of our recommendations. I look forward to hearing from the Minister how DFID intends to achieve progress in the areas to which it is committed.

When we launched this short inquiry last December, we invited submissions on all aspects of the Department's work on disability. We had a particular focus on whether the Department's new disability strategy provided an adequate framework for approaching disability-inclusive development. I am grateful to everyone who gave evidence to our inquiry, and I put on the record my thanks to the fantastic Committee staff, some of whom are in the Public Gallery, for their hard work on the inquiry.

We have seen in recent years a substantial increase in DFID's focus on disability. The Department launched its first ever strategy for disability-inclusive development, and the United Kingdom co-hosted the first global disability summit with the Government of Kenya and the International Disability Alliance. It is against that backdrop that we took an early look at this work. Overall, we were very pleased that the Government have reacted positively to this agenda.

It was under my predecessor, Lord Bruce, that the International Development Committee made a number of recommendations, including that the Department should develop a specific strategy on disability. I believe it is a critical step both in boosting disability inclusion and in ensuring that the Department has a clear commitment to disabled people right the way across its programming on development and in humanitarian crises. It is crucial in the context of the global goals—the sustainable development goals. As the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, outlines:

“Societies will never achieve the SDGs without the full participation of everyone, including people with disabilities.”

Disability is surely at the heart of this endeavour. A billion people, or around 15% of the world's population, have some form of disability. It is estimated that around four in five of people with disabilities live in the world's poorest countries, and that one in five people in those countries have some form of disability. They are perhaps one of the groups most at risk of being left behind. In many countries, what we would regard as basic or essential services for disabled people are not available—or if they are available, they are of very poor quality.

The “UN Flagship Report on Disability and Development 2018” found that poverty rates are higher on average for disabled people. On global goal 2—zero hunger—it found that:

“the average percentage of persons with disabilities who are unable to afford a meal with protein every second day is almost double that of persons without disabilities.”

Of course, we live in a world scarred by conflict. Armed conflict is a major cause of disability. Research by Human Rights Watch across a number of countries, including Cameroon, Syria and Yemen, shows that people with disabilities in situations of armed conflict face a disproportionate level of violence, forced displacement and ongoing neglect. Even more horrifying, Human Rights Watch found that, in some cases, disabled people are simply abandoned in their homes or in deserted villages for days or even weeks, with very little access to food or water.

I recently met Bahia Zrikem, Humanity and Inclusion's humanitarian and policy co-ordinator for Syria. For the past eight years of the Syria conflict, Humanity and Inclusion, previously known as Handicap International, has deployed rehabilitation teams and partners to help Syrians, particularly in Jordan and Lebanon. More than 60% of refugee households from Syria have someone with a disability, and one in five Syrian refugees now living in Lebanon or Jordan have a disability. The challenges that they face are enormous.

I support Humanity and Inclusion's Stop Bombing Civilians campaign. I hope that ending the use of explosive weapons in populated areas will be at the centre of the Government's forthcoming review of the protection of civilians strategy. I pay tribute to Humanity and Inclusion and all the other organisations working in this field for advocating the rights of people with disabilities. Such organisations represent the experience and views of people with disabilities, and the Committee did its utmost to ensure that those voices shaped our inquiry and its resulting recommendations.

I pay tribute to Sightbox, a small charity born out of the passion and leadership of Dr John Patterson, who is the headteacher of St Vincent's School for the visually impaired in my constituency in Liverpool. Pupils at St Vincent's have created Sightbox containers filled with equipment, providing blind and visually impaired children with the means to access education and sport, and to have a more independent lifestyle. The boxes have been sent around the world to countries including Nepal, Gambia and Pakistan.

Too often in the past, development programmes have left out people with disabilities, and disabled people have not been involved in the decisions that affect their



lives. That is why we welcome DFID's decision to mainstream disability inclusion across the work of the Department.

Last year's global disability summit was an important step forward. The Department announced initiatives that became part of the disability strategy, alongside the charter for change, which was signed by participating countries. The Committee commends those initiatives, which demonstrate true global leadership. We know that disability inclusion was a high priority for the previous DFID Secretary, who is now the Home Secretary, and particularly for her successor, the right hon. Member for Portsmouth North (Penny Mordaunt). We have seen a lot of change in the Department this year, and I urge the Minister to reflect on that. It is so important that DFID maintains momentum on delivering on the global disability summit commitments, and that it continues to take the lead in urging other donors to act and deliver on their commitments. I hope that the priority given by the two previous Secretaries of State will be maintained—the current Secretary of State was very positive when we asked him about the subject last week.

I welcome the Government's commitment in their response to develop robust accountability on this issue. I hope the Minister can say a bit more about the Department's plan for an independent secretariat and governance structure, so that everyone, including DFID, is fully accountable for the delivery of its commitments

As part of its strategy for disability-inclusive development, the Department has a twin-track approach that involves funding projects that are disability-specific alongside mainstreaming disability across other programmes. The Department takes a similar approach in other cross-cutting thematic areas, such as climate change, and the Committee believes that in principle it is the right approach. It has the potential to achieve real and sustainable improvements, provided the commitment is there in a sustained and sustainable way. Early progress has been positive, but much work still needs to be done.

The Committee received several pieces of evidence expressing concern that aspects of the strategy and delivery plan were vague, adding to a broader worry about the lack of clarity about what is expected of the staff who are to implement mainstreaming. Programmes, business units and teams across the Department need clarity about what mainstreaming involves in practice, so that they can implement it as effectively as possible. As Humanity and Inclusion told us,

“Disability Strategy's Delivery Plan does provide a framework for actions, with lead departments, and as such is a vital and welcome tool for outlining DFID's work on inclusion. But in many cases actions are too vague and lack specific outcomes.”

The Committee is concerned that there is a risk that implementation might be inconsistent across DFID, and difficult to measure. I am pleased that DFID has committed to monitoring the progress of its business units in meeting inclusion standards. Hopefully that will help provide a better understanding of how effective the two-strand approach to inclusion is.

Sightsavers, a fantastic charity, recommended that DFID republishes its delivery plan to make it more specific, and to include a clear evaluation mechanism, and a timeline for when all business units should meet the minimum standards. The Department has extended the deadline for its republished plan to June next year. I really appreciate the desire to get it right, so I hope that

the Minister can outline what opportunities there will be for a consultative update on planned changes to the delivery plan in that period. I hope also that DFID will use the opportunity to update its strategy to include some of the more neglected areas on which there should have been specific commitments, such as health, ageing, and the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities.

The Committee feels strongly that barriers to education should be removed as a top priority. The Minister leads on education for the Department and gave evidence to the Select Committee on it earlier this week. I know that his personal commitment is strong. We know from the evidence that disabled children face huge barriers to education. We know from constituency casework, and the evidence that comes before us and the Education Committee, that that is the case in our own country. The Education Commission has estimated that half—50%—of all children with disabilities in not only low but middle-income countries are out of school. Of course, that is an average. In some of the poorest and most fragile countries, the figures are even worse.

As we said in the IDC's 2017 report on education:

“DFID has shown leadership on education for girls and young women...The Department should now use its influence in the same way to shine a light on the needs of disabled children. It has made great progress with the Disability Framework, but needs to now ensure this is being implemented across all DFID programmes.”

I know that DFID's education policy, “Get Children Learning”, is working towards that aim, and is supporting children with disabilities in moving into mainstream education wherever possible. It supports comprehensive and cost-effective interventions, and most importantly, it is increasing the number and quality of teachers and support staff available. I urge DFID to do all it can to address the specific needs of children at each stage of education, starting with the early years and early child development, and taking into account both the obvious and less obvious barriers to education.

I welcome the Prime Minister's commitment, reflected in the Queen's Speech, to all girls having access to 12 years of quality education. The UK's pledge at the recent UN General Assembly to higher investment in education is very positive, but we must as part of that address the particular needs of those who are disabled. I hope the Minister can provide assurances that children with disabilities will be front and centre in the Government's efforts to secure 12 years of quality education in the Leave No Girl Behind initiative.

A key commitment of DFID's at the disability summit was the inclusive education initiative, which aims to accelerate action by countries and to support their efforts in making education more inclusive. The initiative does this by helping Governments and other stakeholders to mobilise finance and develop programmes that ensure inclusive education. When he responds, will the Minister set out how the Government will build on the initial investment and, in particular, how we can bring other donors on board to maximise its impact?

Of course, it is important when implementing such programmes that we put pressure on national Governments to budget for the costs of disability inclusion in their planning. DFID agreed to the Committee's recommendation that the Government should create a framework to ensure that programmes identify correctly the specific challenges in each host nation, and provide the technical guidance to deliver education projects that

[Stephen Twigg]

address those challenges. National Governments should also be encouraged to plan and budget for disability inclusion in their own education programmes.

More broadly, disability should not be an obstacle to participation in economic and social life. We welcome the inclusion of social and economic empowerment as pillars of DFID's strategy. This reflects the high living costs and barriers to healthcare, employment and other economic opportunities that people with disabilities face. As we know, a large majority of people with disabilities are either not employed or are under-employed. If they are in work, they earn lower wages than people without disabilities. For women with disabilities, gender inequality compounds that divide.

We have called on the Department to gather more evidence on the impact of poverty reduction on social protection programmes, and to work with Governments and stakeholders to fund and support the inclusion of people with disabilities in existing social protection schemes, or, where necessary, to develop appropriate new schemes targeted at the particular needs of disabled people. The Department should also ensure that disability inclusion is mainstreamed throughout its economic development programming. Clearly, one of the most important opportunities for disabled people is to set up their own business, to get work, and to get the training that they need so that they have the skills required for the jobs of the future. Disability inclusion should also be an aspect of broader investment decisions, particularly by CDC, which should have a disability-inclusive approach to its investment.

Palladium, a contractor, said to us in evidence:

"Encouraging diversity in the supply chain by engagement of companies owned or led by people with disabilities and by encouraging programme implementers to do the same will increase economic empowerment and bring diversity of thought to DFID programming."

People with disabilities should be assisted in overcoming skills gaps or accessibility issues that may prevent them getting work with DFID.

The disability strategy, alongside the summit, has provided a renewed focus on boosting disability inclusion. It has rightly been commended across the sector, but the progress needs to be sustained. As I implied, there is a concern that disability might not have the priority that it previously had in the Department, and that it was very much a personal priority of two previous Secretaries of State, but I am sure the Minister will be able to reassure us that disability inclusion absolutely remains a top priority for the Department, so that we really do leave no one behind. I hope that the Department is scaling up its spending on disability-specific projects, while further embedding disability inclusion across the strategy and budget of DFID.

This is the final report that I will have the opportunity to present as Chair of the International Development Committee. I am very proud of the work that the Committee has done, but I am particularly proud of the work that my predecessor did on this issue, which contributed to disability being a higher priority in the Department's work. That goes to the very heart of the sustainable development goals.

I want to finish by speaking about a project I have spoken about previously, because it is so impressive. Two years ago, the Committee went on a visit to education

projects in east Africa, and the one that sticks in my memory is the Girls Education Challenge programme in Kisumu in Kenya, which is funded by DFID and run by Leonard Cheshire. We were so impressed by the programme, which is aimed at girls with disabilities, that we reflected, on a cross-party basis, that we wanted more of those sorts of programmes to be funded by DFID. We also want DFID to act as a catalyst to enable Governments in countries such as Kenya to spread the very best practice—like what we saw in Kisumu—through their countries. It felt to me as if the very best of UK aid was reaching those who are often left furthest behind, and that it was also giving UK taxpayers the best value for money.

I applaud the Department for using its influence to shine a light on the needs of disabled children, just as it has successfully shone a light on the needs of girls and young women. UK aid should be about not just removing barriers but supporting people with disabilities to thrive in every facet of life. There is no surely no better example of leaving no one behind than enabling every child to go to school and every adult to participate in economic and social life and, perhaps above all, ensuring that the voices of disabled people are heard, listened to and acted on.

3.21 pm

**Jeremy Lefroy** (Stafford) (Con): It is an honour to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Evans. It is also a great honour to follow the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Stephen Twigg)—the two years I spent on the Select Committee under his chairmanship were among of the most enjoyable of my time in Parliament. He has been a great Chair of the Committee and it is the House's loss that he is standing down. However, I am sure that he will make a huge contribution to the area in question in his future career, wherever that will be.

I declare an interest as a board member of the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine. I want to talk about neglected tropical diseases, an area in which the school does great work, which is why I am declaring that interest. I am also chair of the all-party parliamentary group on malaria and neglected tropical diseases.

I want to pay tribute to the hon. Member for Wirral South (Alison McGovern). I seem to remember that in the 2010 to 2015 Parliament, when we produced the first report on DFID and disability, she was one of the main instigators of work in that area, along with my hon. Friend the Member for Mid Derbyshire (Mrs Latham) and myself.

There are three areas that I want to address: neglected tropical diseases, jobs in the private sector, and nutrition. All of those have a strong relationship with disability and DFID's work on it. Neglected tropical diseases are those that, as the name suggests, have been neglected, but I am glad to say that they are much less neglected than they used to be, because of the strong work done by many around the world—not least DFID and the United States, and increasingly now other countries, such as Germany.

It was a great honour when I recently chaired a meeting of the all-party group where we helped to publicise DFID's new programme on accelerating the sustainable control and elimination of neglected tropical diseases. ASCEND covers five of the worst diseases:

trachoma, lymphatic filariasis, onchocerciasis, schistosomiasis and visceral leishmaniasis. There are two programmes within ASCEND—one covering east and central Africa and one covering west Africa. The programme aims to accelerate sustainable control and elimination of neglected tropical diseases and is spending £200 million over the period between this September and March 2022.

The work that I have seen on tackling neglected tropical diseases, particularly in Africa but also elsewhere, is not only essential but incredibly cost-effective. DFID did an evaluation of work on NTDs and said that it paid back something like £30 or more for every £1 spent. Why is that relevant to disability? It is simple: those diseases, even if people are treated for them, lead to disability, or in some cases they cause disability that can then almost be cured by the treatments.

A few weeks ago I had the honour of visiting, with the hon. Member for Stockton South (Dr Williams), a clinic in Rombo in east Kilimanjaro, where we saw surgery being performed on people's eyelids, through the Commonwealth Fund and with the help of Sightsavers and DFID. The people had a condition that almost removed their eyesight, but after a few days they could see much better. It was wonderful, because often those were people in their 60s, 70s or 80s—there was even one woman in her 90s—and they were suddenly given a new lease of life and could perform tasks that they could not perform before, because of that simple but hugely beneficial operation.

Another great thing about that experience was that I saw the ophthalmic surgeon not only performing the operation but teaching two highly skilled nurses how to do it; it was training as well as an operation. What gave me great joy was the fact that at the end I shook the surgeon's hand and he asked my name. When I gave it he said, "Are you related to Dr Lefroy?" I said, "Yes, she's my wife." He said, "She trained me at the medical school in Kilimanjaro, the best part of 20 years ago." It was lovely to see the link between the work that Janet did all those years ago, training a young man who is now an experienced eye surgeon and who also trains experienced eye nurses. That gave me great joy, but probably not as much as seeing those men and women undergoing a quite difficult operation with great fortitude and stoicism, having their eyes bandaged, and then moving out, knowing that in two or three days' time their lives would be made a lot better by being able to see. They would be able to perform jobs and tasks, and engage in activities that they would not otherwise have been able to do.

I remember a second visit, a few years ago, just south of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, where we saw a programme, also with DFID funding, working together with the Tanzanian Government. The point I would make is that those programmes are working together with the Government in health facilities supported by the Government, whether they are faith-based or Government-owned. They are integrated into the Government system. They are supported by other organisations such as Sightsavers, which is excellent, as the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby has said, but they are integrated into the work that is already going on.

The programme I saw was tackling lymphatic filariasis, otherwise known as elephantiasis. It is a very disabling disease and, as the name suggests, it causes the swelling

of limbs. People were being taught how to look after and treat their condition so that they would be able to work again. The other element of the programme was to take away some of the stigma. As the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby has said, stigma is a big issue in connection with disability, and there is great stigma attached to lymphatic filariasis.

I want to praise the work that DFID, its partners and others in the sector are doing, and to encourage the United Kingdom to continue the work. The programme is worth about £60 million to £70 million a year, and it has a huge impact. If one considers that the number of people affected by NTDs around the world is in the order of 1.4 billion—these programmes are helping hundreds of millions to cope with disabilities, and are treating and preventing disabilities—one can see how important that work is.

The second area that I would like to tackle is jobs and livelihoods. The report is very good on that, and section 113 and those following it talk about the private sector. Again, I have personal experience of this, as my father was disabled. His disability came in his mid-30s, and he found it very difficult to get work. I pay great tribute to the Church of England, because he was a vicar and it supported him. Understandably, in the 1960s he found it very difficult to find places that would accept somebody who was disabled. Nevertheless, he was supported right the way through by the congregations he served in London, which in those days was quite unusual.

From that experience, I have always wanted the United Kingdom to take a lead in disability support within the workplace, particularly within the private sector. I was very encouraged by the example given in the report of the hotel chain ITC Welcom Group, which has produced a disability handbook for industry. It argues that employees with disabilities

"tend to have better attendance records, stay with employers longer and have fewer accidents at work".

It highlights other important benefits, such as improving the company image and boosting staff morale. That applies in the United Kingdom and across the world. I welcome DFID's work, together with that of its private equity arm, CDC, in putting that at the forefront of their work.

Nutrition does not feature highly in the report, but I fully understand that not everything can be covered. Just last week I was talking to the head of the World Food Programme for Burundi, where 56% of the population are malnourished. It is one of the poorest countries in the world, but sadly, because of the serious problems with governance there, it has been neglected by the international community. I know that the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby shares that view. I encourage DFID to strengthen its support in Burundi.

The point is that if we do not support babies and children in the first 1,000 days—this is shown by work that DFID has done on nutrition, the work that Melinda Gates has done on the issue, and the work of my hon. Friend the Member for Worthing West (Sir Peter Bottomley) and others in this country—the problems last for the rest of their lives. If babies, children and young people do not have access to adequate nutrition, they will be much more susceptible to acquiring disabilities, either at a young age or later. Will the Minister address the issue of Burundi, where I believe there is a hidden



[Jeremy Lefroy]

nutrition crisis—indeed, more than a crisis? I know he is aware of that, but what can we do about it? How is DFID's work on nutrition, which is of the highest order, feeding into its work on disability?

I am most grateful for this opportunity to speak. I am very grateful for the work that DFID is doing in these areas. I encourage the Minister and the whole Department to make further progress on their work with disability, but I thank them for what they have done over the past five years, moving from the framework to the strategy, and for taking a leading role in this most important of areas.

3.34 pm

**Mr Jonathan Lord** (Woking) (Con): It is an enormous pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Jeremy Lefroy). It is a great sadness to many of us that he has decided to stand down from this place. His speech demonstrated to us in a very real way the things that inspire him in politics. It was a vision of compassion, of looking outwards and of helping others. I know that he will not mind me saying that it was also inspired by his Christian faith. We will miss him very much in this place. We thank him for all his efforts in the arena of international development, and on the other issues that he has taken up in this House.

I also pay tribute briefly to the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Stephen Twigg), who has chaired the International Development Committee extremely well. As I think he knows, he is not only very well respected across the House, but very well liked. We will certainly miss him too. I wish him well for the future.

I wanted to speak for two reasons. In general terms, our country is grappling with its future place in the world, and perhaps some of our friends around the world, and indeed our enemies, are wondering when the UK will regain a surer footing on its vision for the future. The work that this country does, ably led by our Department for International Development, in trying to alleviate poverty and suffering around the world, gives a strong signal—it is perhaps not publicised widely enough or known about—to all the countries around the world that might be harbouring one or two doubts about the political difficulties of the past couple of years. It gives a powerful signal that this country stands for the right values, is compassionate and wants to have a leading, positive role in the world.

I am proud that my town and borough of Woking proactively decided to take in Syrian refugees. I am able to report to the House that it has worked extremely well. Some of the refugees had severe health and disability issues. I pay tribute to the efforts of our local national health service's efforts in giving them the help and support they needed. I also pay tribute to our local mosques, particularly the Shah Jahan mosque, and our Christian churches, which rallied around those people, who had come from a terrible war-torn situation. Many of them had very difficult personal stories of what they and their families had been through. It was very moving when many of those refugees, who are now fully settled—most are looking forward to a future in this country, but if they wish to return they will be helped to do so—decided to cook a feast at the end of Eid and invite the community, particularly the faith communities from the mosque

and our churches, to celebrate together. They made it clear how thankful and grateful they were to the churches, the mosque and the wider Woking community for giving them such a warm welcome after their times of trouble.

I will not detain hon. Members any longer. The work that our Department for International Development does is very valuable around the world. It is important that the International Development Committee scrutinises it and encourages it in its efforts; we thank the Committee for its work. I hope that the Minister will tell us in his response a little more about this country's international development efforts to help and support people from conflict zones, such as Syria and Yemen. The House would be grateful to hear more about its work in those areas.

3.39 pm

**Alex Norris** (Nottingham North) (Lab/Co-op): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairship, Mr Evans, and to respond for the Opposition on a very important and impactful report, to which many hon. Members have contributed, not least yourself as a member of that Committee. The report is clearly the culmination of the Committee's work and focus spanning several chairships, and as my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Stephen Twigg) said, it will be his final report. The Committee's work will continue to make a difference.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend—he is my friend—for whom I have considerable admiration and lots of respect. I believe that that view is shared not just among Labour Members, but by hon. Members across the House, who know that he is a man of great integrity, personal character and obvious and clear talent, and that he is fundamentally a very decent person. As we know, there is lots of room for that across the House. In that spirit, I would say that I am sad to see him go, but he will only be a phone call away, so I will still be able to ask him daft questions which he will take in the spirit in which they are asked. I will not take my tribute any further because I know that that is not what he wants, but it was important to say that. The report is excellent and it is characteristic of my hon. Friend's time as Committee Chair and of the excellent colleagues who served with him.

It was impossible not to be moved and struck by the story about east Kilimanjaro told by the hon. Member for Stafford (Jeremy Lefroy). If ever there were a story that characterised a small world, that is it. It also made a really important point about Britain's future place in the world and the importance of being generous with our knowledge, whether in medicine, as in this case, in sciences, as we talk about tackling climate change globally, in nutrition, in farming and so on. We have an awful lot of expertise and excellent academic institutions in this country, and we have lived experience as well. We ought to be really generous with how we share that. If we do, we can make a really big impact. We will always talk about aid in terms of the 0.7% of GDP commitment, which is exceptionally important, but sharing knowledge is a soft way of contributing even more, and that is really important.

The hon. Member for Stafford also made a point about jobs. I often say that my love for development stems from my values. The things that I want for my community are the things I want for the rest of the world. His point about employment and employers is really important. In Nottingham, when that has been

done well, it has been transformative for people and businesses, but when it has been done poorly it has had quite the opposite impact, and that applies around the world. I hope that we can be generous in the way that we support others to do as well as they can. I wish the hon. Gentleman very well in the future.

The hon. Member for Woking (Mr Lord) spoke about Britain's place in the world, which chimed with the previous contributions. He mentioned the Syrian refugee programme, and I do not think I would be too bold to say that there was a universal sense across all communities of just how good that scheme was, and how much communities stepped up and rallied around. We are very proud of that in Nottingham; it is clearly the case in Woking, too.

We should not be shy of acknowledging the importance of faith communities in such schemes. Whatever their faith, people from faith communities in my constituency make a massive impact on a daily basis for those who have the least. They do that because they think it important. I suspect that other hon. Members will agree that when the road is long from visiting projects, and we are having difficult days, seeing those schemes and meeting those people fills our hearts and sends us off with a spring in our steps. We should not miss the opportunity to highlight and trumpet that work whenever we can.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby said, 1 billion people—almost one in eight globally—live with disabilities. Among the poorest people in the world, that number is one in five, and rising. Including people with disabilities in development and humanitarian interventions is not a side issue; it directly affects millions of people in fundamental ways. I commend DFID for the global leadership that it has shown on this issue in recent years. Only when we lead by example can we raise the bar internationally, and I believe that DFID has made a significant effort to do so. That work is a good example of what an independent DFID can do and of the leadership that it can show at home and abroad. On behalf of the Opposition, I put on record our commitment to the DFID's disability agenda and affirm that it is crucial in the fight against inequality of justice. We would plan to make significant steps in the leadership of that fight, perhaps from 13 December.

I would be interested to hear the Minister's reflections on three points. First, as my hon. Friend said, momentum and political will on disability should not be lost. I welcome the Government's agreement with the report's first recommendation on developing a robust accountability mechanism for commitments made at the global disability summit in July 2018. A significant amount of time has passed since that summit, and once the election period is over, it will have been 18 months. The mechanism is not likely to be in place until 2020. We risk losing a bit of momentum from the summit. Will the Minister tell us what is taking so long? Can he elaborate on what the plans and timing are, and whether a follow-up summit is planned in due course?

As my hon. Friend said, there has been significant political change in the Department in recent years. Obviously, there have been four Secretaries of State, two of whom—the right hon. Members for Witham (Priti Patel) and for Portsmouth North (Penny Mordaunt)—have made disability a real priority. I want Ministers to make it clear today that this is a departmental

priority, not just a priority of individuals; that this will not relate to the politics of the day; and that any future changes will not mean that this will be lost as a priority. It is important to have that clarity on the record.

Secondly, it is important that we talk positively about the impact that businesses have in this area, but also reference some of the risks involved in that, and our part in the world and in global trade in future. I welcome DFID's work, set out in its response to recommendation 29, to better include people living with disabilities in its humanitarian interventions. Whether in conflict, in the climate crisis or in humanitarian crises, people living with disabilities are by definition the most vulnerable and at risk of being forgotten and/or excluded. Inclusion or exclusion can be the difference between life or death.

We know that conflict causes disabilities, life-changing injuries and trauma, and that over 90% of the casualties of such conflicts are civilians. It is therefore good and important that in Vienna, countries agreed to work together towards a new international political declaration to stop the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Do the UK Government support those efforts unconditionally, and if not, why not? We have to accept our own place within that. We must accept that if there is any sense that British-made bombs have caused these problems, that undermines the case that we make in our communities about the importance of British aid and helping people with disabilities. That is an inconvenient truth, but one that we must not lose from this conversation.

Thirdly and finally, there must be coherence between our international and domestic approaches. In the Government's responses to recommendations 19, 20 and 21, they affirm that DFID will want to strengthen the access of people with disabilities to social protection in developing countries, and in some cases, agree to go further in the future. There is the challenge of that not chiming with constituents who contact me about experience at home. We of course know from the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities about some of the challenges in this country. Those are issues for the next six weeks, so I will not go any further than that, but there will be a challenge for us on the credibility of both public policy and aid policy, which is so important, if we do not demonstrate that we are practising and preaching at home the values that we believe in and hold globally. That is exceptionally important, and I would be interested to hear the Minister's response.

I thank you, Mr Evans, for chairing the debate and hon. Members for their contributions. I thank the hon. Member for Stafford and my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby for everything that they have done, and for their leadership. We stand on their shoulders. I find it comforting to be able to say that, and we wish them nothing but the best in the future.

3.49 pm

**The Minister of State, Department for International Development (Andrew Stephenson):** It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Evans, for what I think is the first time. It is good to see my constituency neighbour in the Chair.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Stephen Twigg) on securing the debate, and I thank International Development Committee members for their long-standing interest in disability-inclusive

[*Andrew Stephenson*]

development. They have consistently shown strong support and leadership on this issue. Their most recent report will be an invaluable contribution to our achieving our ambition. I thank my hon. Friends the Members for Woking (Mr Lord) and for Stafford (Jeremy Lefroy) and the hon. Member for Nottingham North (Alex Norris) for their informed and thoughtful contributions.

Disability inclusion is a top priority for DFID and will remain so. Momentum is building, but we recognise that we have to do more. The world will not achieve the sustainable development goals, or deliver its commitment to leaving no one behind, without a sustained, concerted effort to include people with disabilities at all stages of their lives.

Disability inclusion is a neglected issue internationally. Although 180 countries have ratified the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, implementation is slow. There are an estimated 1 billion people with disabilities globally; 80% of people with disabilities live in developing countries. People with disabilities are poorer than their non-disabled peers, in terms of access to education, healthcare, employment, social support and civic involvement. As the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby said, the differences are particularly stark in education; more than half of the 65 million children with disabilities in low and middle-income countries are not in school.

I will add some personal reflections. In 2008 I had the privilege of attending the Paralympics in Beijing to watch my university friend Helene Raynsford win gold in the women's single sculls. I remember the event vividly, but I also remember being told how the Paralympics had helped transform Beijing from a city that was almost totally inaccessible to disabled people to one ready to welcome disabled people from across the globe.

More recently, last month I met Charlotte Frost and Joshua Hartley, two International Citizen Service volunteers from Barnoldswick in my constituency. In 2018 Joshua spent three months in Ghana volunteering on a disability project for people with visual impairments. After that, he returned to his job at Pendle Borough Council and helped set up a goalball team—a sport designed for people with visual impairments—in Blackburn. That is a great example of a DFID-funded project benefiting disabled people in a developing country, and bringing knowledge and learning back to the UK.

Without efforts to reduce barriers, many people with disabilities would be trapped in poverty. We know that women and girls with disabilities are even more marginalised and discriminated against because of their gender as well as their disability. That is why this issue is so important. If we are to deliver real change for people with disabilities, we all need to fundamentally change the way we do business.

We are pleased that the Committee concludes from its assessment that DFID is making good progress on this aim. We were particularly pleased to see that its report commends our leadership on the global disability summit in 2018, and supports our five-year disability inclusion strategy. That gives us renewed confidence that the strategy, published in December last year, will achieve real and tangible outcomes for people with disabilities. The strategy includes time-bound commitments

over the next five years, and sets out how we will mainstream disability inclusion in DFID's systems, structures and culture.

DFID agrees with the vast majority of the recommendations in the report. We recognise that this is a long-term, complex agenda, and the recommendations will help shape our future direction. Our priority is to continue to be a leading light in disability inclusion. I will highlight four main areas where we will continue to do this. The first is in leadership and culture. Leadership on this issue is essential—not just senior leadership or leadership from Ministers, but leadership throughout the organisation. A number of Members have commented on the personal commitment of the previous Secretary of State to this issue. I was pleased that the Secretary of State reconfirmed last week to the Committee that disability inclusion is a top priority for DFID.

Our worldwide network of 67 disability champions will continue to share best practice and inspire action. We are supporting offices in undertaking stock-takes and implementing actions plans to embed disability inclusion properly in their systems and structures. Of the 52 offices that completed a recent self-assessment, 48 indicated that they were on track or had achieved the standard for creating an inclusive office culture.

Secondly, we must focus on getting the right expertise to deliver our agenda. The Committee made a number of recommendations on improving the diversity and skills of our staff, with which we fully agree. We strongly believe that people with disabilities should be at the forefront of DFID's work. We are working with human resources to improve access and opportunities for people with disabilities. That is happening alongside DFID's wider efforts in areas such as gender equality and race.

To deliver on the strategy, we need to develop the technical skills of our staff in the UK and in our country offices. Alongside a dedicated helpdesk, we are developing an interactive resource site containing detailed guidance notes, tools and advice to support the roll-out of the strategy. Our central team provides bespoke support to country offices, especially those working towards high achievement standards. Our offer also includes training courses for staff on specialist topics such as mental health. That is already having an impact. We have seen a significant rise in the number of programmes marked as disability inclusive, from 19% in November 2017 to over 31% now.

For example, in Jordan, assistive technology is being integrated in humanitarian programming. People with disabilities are being provided with assistive devices, such as crutches, wheelchairs and prosthetic limbs. Through the Girls Education Challenge, mentioned by the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby, we have helped over 46,000 girls with disabilities receive an education in countries including Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

Thirdly, we recognise that we cannot achieve outcomes for people with disabilities by working alone. We must work in partnership with others and continue to bring new actors to the fore; that was a success at the global disability summit. We agree with the Committee's recommendations on working with the private sector and deepening our relationships with country Governments. DFID is uniquely placed to influence other organisations and drive up standards in the sector. We welcomed the



publication of the UN disability inclusion strategy in June 2019 as evidence of continued momentum on the part of other agencies.

We need to be able to hold ourselves and others to account. We plan to create an independent secretariat to drive progress on the 968 commitments from the global disability summit. We know that change is not possible without shared responsibility. We all have to hold each other to account if we are to deliver the change we want. Our continuing relationship with the Committee will be crucial to that.

Importantly, we recognise that DFID should strive to consult more meaningfully with people with disabilities and their representative organisations, and should build their capacity. We have seen an improvement in this area across DFID; country offices routinely consult with disabled people's organisations. Through our disability catalyst programme, we are working with the International Disability Alliance and the Disability Rights Fund to build the capacity of disabled people's organisations. We fully agree with the Committee's recommendation that we should continue to advance this work. It remains the responsibility of us all to embrace the disability movement's principle, "nothing about us without us."

Finally, improving data collection and gathering rigorous evidence on what works will be a key part of our work on disability-inclusive development. The Washington Group questions are an important tool to improve measurement of disability. We are strengthening their use throughout our programming to ensure that we can measure our impact. Our inclusive data charter action plan, released in March 2019, articulates how we will gather high-quality data on people with disabilities.

We recognise that there are gaps in our knowledge of what works and how to reach the most marginalised. Our £37-million disability-inclusive development programme will deliver best-in-class research to address this. Working across a range of sectors, this programme will test a range of innovative solutions and then take them to scale.

We welcome the Committee's scrutiny of our activities, and are pleased that the recommendations are almost uniformly in line with our own thinking. We would like to express further thanks to the many civil society partners and stakeholders who contributed to the report.

I turn to the questions that Members asked. The hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby asked about economic development programming. That is one of the four pillars of the strategy. We know we need to close the employment gap, and have to work with the private sector to do that. For example, our RATE programme—the Responsible, Accountable and Transparent Enterprise programme—works with multinational and local businesses to be more accountable for poor workers, including people with disabilities. Our UK Aid Connect programme, run by Sightsavers in conjunction with Leonard Cheshire Disability, is also supporting thousands of people with disabilities in four countries.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned what we are doing with CDC to ensure that it focuses on disability and inclusion. CDC is working jointly with the World Bank to develop a good practice note in order to incentivise private sector companies to invest in making their work inclusive of people with disabilities. That was one of the commitments made at the global disability summit.

Once again, I thank the Committee for its continued interest in this area. We look forward to engaging further in the coming months and years. I thank all the Members who have spoken, particularly my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford. It is a huge shame and a great loss to this place that he is standing down. As was evidenced by his speech, and as he has shown in his many speeches over the years, he has a huge wealth of knowledge on topics in this area, such as neglected tropical medicines and all sorts of other things. My mind is often boggled by his depth of knowledge. I pay tribute to him for everything he has done for his constituents in Stafford, and on humanitarian issues, education and a range of issues over the years. I will take away his point about Burundi; we are spending £4.6 million in Burundi on education, sexual reproductive rights and humanitarian programmes run by partners. We have some challenges due to the EU sanctions that prevent us from giving money directly to the Burundi Government, but as a personal commitment to him, I am very keen to go away and look at what more we can do in that country.

Finally, on behalf of the Department for International Development, I pay tribute to the outgoing Chair of the Committee, the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby. I thank him for his service over the past four and a half years. In that time, I believe he has seen off five Secretaries of State and 13 junior Ministers, his Committee has published 28 reports, and he has found the time for 11 official country visits. He has been a prominent and tireless advocate for, among other things, global education, the safeguarding of beneficiaries, the implementation of the sustainable development goals and humanitarian action across the globe. I am sure he will enjoy his time away from this House, but he will undoubtedly be missed as a Member of it.

**Mr Nigel Evans (in the Chair):** Before I call Stephen Twigg to make his closing remarks, I thank everyone who has taken part in the debate. As a member of the Committee, I must say that this subject has been overlooked in the past, and I am delighted that it has been addressed in this report. It has been an honour and a joy to serve with the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Stephen Twigg) as Chair of the Committee. He is passionate about this subject and has shown great leadership throughout his tenure. I am sorry to see him go and I hope he will find a role somewhere outside this House, perhaps in a similar position.

It was an honour and a joy also to serve alongside the hon. Member for Stafford (Jeremy Lefroy) when he was a member of the Committee. He was absolutely dedicated; indeed, the only reason he is no longer a member is that he stood aside to allow another Member to take up his position, as there were no women on the Committee. That shows just how principled he is. I love the story about Janet—a wonderful, personal tribute to your wife and the legacy she has left behind. Thank you, Jeremy, and good luck for the future.

4.3 pm

**Stephen Twigg:** Thank you, Mr Evans, not only for your chairmanship today but for your service on the Committee. I wish the Committee well in future. You anticipated one of the things I was going to say, as did the Minister. He made the point that in my four and a half years as Chair of the Committee, there have been

[*Stephen Twigg*]

five Secretaries of State for International Development, but what has been striking has been our ability to work together, not just as a cross-party Committee but with Government Ministers. No matter who takes over as Secretary of State after the election, today's debate has demonstrated the strong cross-party commitment from the Minister and the shadow Minister to disability at the heart of our approach to inclusive development.

Mr Evans, you mentioned that the hon. Member for Stafford (Jeremy Lefroy) stood aside from the Committee, which was a huge loss, to enable the hon. Member for Mid Derbyshire (Mrs Latham) to remain a member. I pay tribute to her; she has been a Committee member since 2010. She spoke up on sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment before the various issues were covered in the media last year. She has been a tenacious rapporteur on that issue and a passionate voice on other international development issues. I hope that when the new Parliament convenes, we shall not again be in a position where there is only one woman on a Committee of 11 in such an important area. We must ensure that Labour's delegation on the Committee is not entirely male. We must have a more appropriate gender balance in this important area.

We have had an excellent debate. I join the tributes to the hon. Member for Stafford for his service to the House, the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine and the all-party parliamentary group on malaria and neglected tropical diseases. In particular, I echo what he said about Burundi, which we took the opportunity to raise with the Minister when he appeared before us earlier this week.

The hon. Member for Woking (Mr Lord) made a passionate speech. In what he said about Syrian refugees, he spoke for all of us and for the best of this country, with that generosity of spirit. I hope that we can learn from that in our broader policy. After I became the Chair in 2015-16, the Committee's first report was on the Syrian refugee crisis. One of our recommendations was that in taking vulnerable refugees in resettlement, the UK should absolutely focus on those with disabilities, so I welcome the local example from Woking. I also echo what he said in the context of the UK and Brexit. Whatever happens with Brexit, our commitment to development and humanitarian relief is an important part of our country's soft power. As he said, our values of compassion, and of seeking and leading a positive role, should be at the heart of the approach.

My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham North (Alex Norris) made several powerful points. We echo his point on the coherence of domestic and international policy, which is important in this area and others.

The Committee raised that in the context of the sustainable development goals because, as we know, the global goals are universal. They say that, yes, no one should be left behind because of their disability in sub-Saharan Africa, but neither should they be in Nottingham, Liverpool, Stafford, Woking or any of our constituencies. Achieving that coherence is an important challenge for every Government.

I was delighted to hear the Minister reaffirm once again that disability inclusion is a top priority for the Department and that, in his words, it will "continue to be a leading light". That is hugely welcome.

I thank everyone for their kind words on the work I have done with the Committee. It would not have been possible without the other Committee members or, in particular, without the amazing staff and specialist support that the Committee gets from advisers and the hugely vibrant sector. As the Minister said, there are very strong NGO, business and academic sectors in this area, and we rely on them for the best evidence that we get as a Committee. He rightly reminded us of the point that comes so strongly from disability organisations: nothing about us without us. That is the message of the debate.

I hope that next Tuesday I will catch the Deputy Speaker's eye when there will be an opportunity for valedictory speeches. I intend to say that it is so important that we maintain the consensus for our global engagement, for our commitment that 0.7% of gross national income goes to development, and for DFID as a stand-alone Department. I know that there is not unanimity in the House on those issues but I hope that, moving forward, the cross-party consensus will continue behind those commitments, which speak to our moral purpose and sense of mission as a country. As the hon. Member for Woking said, they enable us to be an influential player in the world, rooted in the best universal values that this country has long been committed to.

I thank the Minister for his response. I feel confident that disability inclusion will remain a priority for the British Government. I am equally confident that, whoever takes over from me as Chair, the Committee will continue to press whoever is in Government to ensure that that is the case.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered the Thirteenth Report of the International Development Committee, DFID's work on disability-inclusive development, Session 2017-19, HC 1880, and the Government Response, Session 2017-19, HC 2680.

4.10 pm

*Sitting adjourned.*

# Written Statements

Thursday 31 October 2019

## CABINET OFFICE

### Government Business: Pre-election Period

**The Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office (Chloe Smith):** The Prime Minister will write to ministerial colleagues shortly providing guidance on the conduct of Government business during the pre-election period. The Cabinet Secretary will also issue guidance to civil servants on their conduct during this period.

[HCWS65]

## TREASURY

### HMRC: Automation of Tax Notices

**The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Jesse Norman):** The Government are committed to doing what is necessary to protect the Exchequer, maintain fairness in the tax system and give certainty to taxpayers. Therefore, the Government are announcing today that legislation will be brought forward in the next Finance Bill to put the meaning of the law in relation to automation of tax notices beyond doubt. Specifically, that legislation will put beyond doubt that HMRC's use of large-scale automated processes to give certain statutory notices, and to carry out certain functions is, and always has been, fully authorised by tax administration law. This measure will have effect both prospectively and retrospectively.

The Government introduce legislation with retrospective effect only where necessary. In this case retrospective effect is necessary to close off the Exchequer and operational risks presented by judicial challenges to HMRC's ability to automate certain functions. It will protect very substantial sums of tax and penalties already legitimately paid. It will preserve the status quo for taxpayers and HMRC, merely confirming the validity of HMRC's longstanding and widely accepted operational practice. Taking this action will help to guarantee the integrity of the tax base, provide certainty to taxpayers, and allow the Government to continue to administer the tax system efficiently. More details will be published on the Finance Bill 2019-20 pages of gov.uk.

[HCWS61]

### Work of the Department

**The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Sajid Javid):** The fundamentals of the UK economy are strong, and the public finances have been repaired. Government action has supported the British people with the cost of living. Poverty and inequality have been reduced, ensuring everyone can benefit from the UK's economic success. Investment has increased, promoting productivity, creating job opportunities and driving growth in the economy.

Since 2010, the hard work of the British people has: reduced the deficit by four fifths; created 1,000 new jobs a day to reach near-record employment; and overseen

nine consecutive years of growth. The Government's Brexit deal will give people and businesses the certainty they need to invest.

### *Economy and public finances*

The economy has grown 18.9% since 2010. The IMF's latest world economic outlook forecasts the UK to grow as fast as France, and faster than Germany, Italy and Japan in 2019 and faster than all four in 2020.

The inflation rate is stable and low at 1.7%, below the Bank of England's target of 2%.

Borrowing has been cut by over four fifths as a share of GDP since 2010, from a post-war high of 10.2% in 2009-10 to 1.9% in 2018-19, the lowest level since 2001-02.

There are 3.6 million more people in work, and the employment rate is at a near record high.

Unemployment has fallen by 1.2 million. The unemployment rate is near its lowest level for over four decades.

The proportion of low paid jobs is at its lowest since records began in 1997.

The number of unemployed 16 to 24-year-olds has fallen by 47% since 2010, and over 80% of 16 to 24-year-olds are in work or full time education.

The gender pay gap, hourly pay, excluding overtime, is at a record low of 17.3%. For full-time employees, the gap is 8.9%, near the record low.

Over 60% of the growth in employment since 2010 has been outside of London and the south east.

The Government have committed more than £2.7 billion towards city and growth deals for all parts of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

This UK Government investment is creating jobs and driving regional economic growth across Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

### *Supporting the cost of living*

The Government have cut income tax for 32 million people since 2015-16, saving the typical basic rate taxpayer £380 and taking 1.74 million out of income tax altogether.

Supported by the national living wage (NLW), the lowest paid saw their wages grow by 8% above inflation between April 2015 and April 2018. The NLW increased by 4.9% on 1 April to £8.21, increasing a full-time minimum wage worker's annual pay by over £2,750 since its introduction.

Fuel duty has been frozen for nine consecutive years, so the average driver will have saved a cumulative £1,000 compared to pre-2010 plans.

The introduction of a new temporary energy price cap on default standard variable tariffs this year has protected 11 million customers from poor value energy bills.

The doubling of free childcare for eligible working parents of three and four-year-olds which will save parents who take up full entitlement up to £5,000 a year per child.

### *Poverty and inequality have been reduced*

Real household disposable income per person is above its pre-crisis peak, and it is 11.2% higher than at the start of 2010, meaning people have more money to spend than they did in 2010.

Income inequality is lower now than it was in 2010.



The top 1% of income taxpayers pay over 29% of income tax, higher than at any time since 1999.

Since 2010 there are, before housing costs:

400,000 fewer people in absolute low income.

100,000 fewer pensioners in absolute low income.

300,000 fewer working-age adults in absolute low income.

The percentage of people in absolute poverty, after housing costs, is around its record low.

Since 2010 there are over 1 million fewer workless households, and the number of children living in workless households is down by 730,000, both record lows.

#### *Boosting productivity*

Since 2010 the Government have:

Provided over half a trillion pounds in capital investment, investment in skills, and reduced taxes for businesses.

Established the national productivity investment fund (NPIF) to deliver additional capital spending for areas critical for improving productivity across all parts of the UK. The NPIF is now set to deliver £37 billion of high-value investment to 2023-24 in economic infrastructure, R and D, and housing.

Improved technical education by reforming apprenticeships and developing new T-levels for delivery from September 2020.

The Government have supported business and enterprise with lower taxes:

The UK has the most competitive corporation tax rate in the G20 at 19%.

Since Budget 2016, the Government have announced reductions to business rates worth more than £13 billion over the next five years.

#### *Funding public services*

Spending Round 2019 (SR19) saw the fastest planned increase in departmental day to day spending for 15 years. Resource spending is now set to rise by 4.1% in real terms from 2019-20 to 2020-21.

SR19 was the first SR since 2002 where no department will face a cut in its resource Budget.

SR19 funded:

An extra £750 million investment in policing in 2020-21 to begin delivering the Government's commitment to recruit 20,000 additional officers by 2023, up to 6,000 officers will be in place by the end of 20-21;

Further health investment, building on the extra funding provided last year of £33.9 billion a year by 2023-24 in cash terms, compared to 2018-19, the largest cash increase in public services since the Second World War.

A cash increase in schools spending of £2.6 billion in 2020-21, rising to £7.1 billion in 2022-23, compared to 2019-20.

£400 million extra to train and teach 16 to 19-year-olds to get the skills they need for well-paid jobs in the modern economy.

To fund public services, the Government have taken unprecedented action to make sure people pay their fair share of tax. The Government have introduced over 100 measures to tackle tax avoidance, evasion and other forms of non-compliance since 2010 which, alongside HMRC's compliance work, have secured and protected an additional £200 billion in tax revenue which would otherwise have gone unpaid.

[HCWS67]

## DEFENCE

### Work of the Department

#### **The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Ben Wallace):**

The first duty of any Government is to defend our country and to keep our people safe. The Ministry of Defence plays a pivotal role in delivering our national security objectives to protect our people, project our influence and promote our prosperity. This Government have increased the defence budget by 0.5% above inflation every year to over £41 billion by 2020-21, making us the biggest defence spender in Europe and the second biggest in NATO. The UK is the second largest defence exporter in the world, selling equipment worth £14 billion last year and supporting more than 260,000 British jobs. We are investing an extra £2.2 billion into defence over this year and next to ensure the UK's world-class armed forces can continue to modernise, meet ever-changing threats and continue to protect the country's national security. This includes prioritising key capabilities such as cyber, shipbuilding and the nuclear deterrent.

#### *Operations*

The UK armed forces are deployed around the world 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

In 2019 alone we have marked 50 years of continuous at sea deterrence, increased the number of armed forces personnel in Afghanistan from 650 to around 1,100, delivered over 400 bespoke training activities in the middle east and north Africa, and provided military aid to the civil authorities on over 120 occasions.

British forces made the second largest overall contribution to the fight against Daesh after the US. We lead a 1000 strong force (c.800 from UK plus troops from France and Denmark) to undertake NATO enhanced forward presence in Estonia, and UK Typhoon aircraft have recently completed an air policing deployment in the Baltic sea region (2019).

We have delivered on our commitment to double the number of military personnel involved in UN peacekeeping, following deployments to Somalia and South Sudan, and increased our presence in the Gulf (Dubai), Asia-Pacific (Singapore) and west Africa (Abuja) to provide a focal point for defence activity. In 2018 we opened the first overseas navy base in 50 years in Bahrain.

In both 2017 and 2019, the UK provided military support for humanitarian and disaster relief to the Caribbean islands left devastated by natural disasters, Hurricane Irma (Op RUMAN) and Hurricane Dorian (Op BARYTONE). This year, in the Caribbean and Atlantic, the RFA have seized or disrupted 1.4 metric tonnes of cocaine and cannabis, worth over £45 million.

#### *People*

We are working to strengthen the support we give to our serving personnel, veterans and their families.

More than 4,000 organisations have signed the armed forces covenant and the new office for veterans' affairs will ensure the UK leads the world in care for armed forces veterans.

We have launched the first ever UK-wide strategy on the delivery of support for veterans, including a new ID card for veterans, which will help them access specialist support and services.

The Flexible Working Act was passed enabling service personnel to request restricted separation and or part-time working to enable them to balance their personal commitments with Defence, helping to improve retention. We have also doubled the operational allowance for deployed military personnel and are currently investing a further £123 million, as a minimum, this financial year to improve service family accommodation in the UK.

We have made £280 million in payments to more than 18,000 applicants so far through the forces help to buy scheme and allocated over £230 million from LIBOR fines for the armed forces community.

We achieved the target of enrolling 50,000 apprentices in the MOD, 16 months ahead of the target date.

We are based across the United Kingdom, and through our industrial contracts and bases we support 10,000 jobs in Scotland and more than 6,000 in Wales.

We have met our target of cadet expansion programme of 500 cadet units parading ahead of time.

#### *Equipment*

We will spend £186 billion on equipment and equipment support between 2018 and 2028.

The Army have signed major equipment support contracts including a £439 million contract for Apache helicopter support and funded a demonstration phase to upgrade Warrior vehicles.

We have placed a £4.5 billion contract, including in-service support until 2024, to purchase 589 AJAX vehicles.

This month (October), UK F-35 Lightning jets landed and took off from HMS Queen Elizabeth for the first time, as part of the preparations for the carrier strike group deployment in 2021. Her sister ship, HMS Prince of Wales, is conducting sea trials and will be commissioned later this year.

In 2019 we took delivery of additional F-35B aircraft, bringing the total to 18, and placed order for more to be delivered between 2020-22. British F-35Bs completed their first operational missions this year.

We have taken delivery of our final Typhoon aircraft (taking the current fleet to 157) and have continued to grow the UK's A400M transport aircraft fleet.

This year we have announced our intent to procure five E7 airborne early warning aircraft and in recent years we have secured deals to provide nine P-8A maritime patrol aircraft and 50 Apache AH-64E aircraft through a foreign military sales agreement with the US Government.

The first steel has been cut for the second ship in the Royal Navy's next generation of Type 26 anti-submarine frigates; the first ship, HMS Glasgow, will enter service in 2027. Australia and Canada have committed to purchase the design.

All four of the TIDE class tankers have been delivered while HMS Medway, the second of five new offshore patrol vessels, has been accepted into the fleet.

Building on the success of the RAF's first ever satellite, Carbonite-II, we have joined the U.S. combined space operations centre in California. An RAF pilot has been seconded to Virgin Orbit.

#### *Industry*

The UK continues to play an ambitious and trailblazing role on the global stage, designing, developing and rapidly procuring state-of-the-art equipment that ensures our armed forces are fit for the future.

The defence industry champions British manufacturing, pushes the boundaries of technology and delivers unique export opportunities across the world to protect not just the UK, but our allies too.

As a thriving national sector with a truly global reach, the work of defence underpins the Government's industrial and economic strategies and continues to drive British innovation on the international stage.

The DSEI exhibition showcases every two years the very best of British ingenuity, innovation and industry on the international stage, demonstrating how Global Britain continues to be a world leader in technology and defence.

Built on more than 400 years of excellence and innovation, we consistently push the possibilities to the limit, developing and exporting battle-winning capabilities that redefine the defence landscape.

We are constantly sharpening our cutting-edge capabilities, exploring and procuring the very best technology to ensure we continue to outpace adversaries for generations to come.

The UK alone injects nearly £20 billion into our national defence industry every year, almost £300 for every person in the country, making defence spending a powerhouse behind the UK economy, driving export orders and future-proofing the industry for generations to come.

We are implementing the national shipbuilding strategy to transform the procurement of naval ships, make the UK's maritime industry more competitive, grow the Royal Navy fleet by the 2030s, export British ships overseas, and boost innovation, skills, jobs, and productivity across the UK.

Built on the foundations of a thriving UK defence sector that continues to turbocharge regional economies, a consortia led by Babcock, in partnership with the Thales Group, has been selected as the preferred bidder for the Type 31 general purpose frigates procurement process reinforcing international partnerships, building security co-operation and strengthening our influence across the world.

We have invested over £40 million in developing a new cyber security operations capability.

Investing £48 million to deliver a new state of the art chemical weapons defence centre at DstI Porton Down.

We have published the combat air strategy to strengthen the UK's role as a global leader in the sector and to protect key skills across the UK industrial base. Team Tempest will bring together the UK's world leading industry and sovereign capabilities across future combat air's four key technology areas.

We have opened the £83 million state of the art defence fulfilment centre at Donnington, Shropshire, operated through the MOD'S partnership with Team Leidos to transform defence logistics.

The small and medium-sized enterprises action plan was published this year, and the defence and security accelerator has allocated over £36 million to over 200 proposals.

We have secured a £6 billion Qatari deal to purchase 24 Typhoon and nine Hawk aircraft from the UK.

As our exports orders climb, our supply chains continue to reinforce our regional economies, supporting highly skilled jobs and training apprentices to be the future of our pioneering UK defence sector.

[HCWS62]

## DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### Strategic Priorities for Telecommunications, Radio Spectrum and Postal Services

**The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Nick Morgan):** I wish to inform members that I have designated the Government's statement of strategic priorities for telecommunications, the management of radio spectrum, and postal services, for the purposes of section 2A of the Communications Act 2003.

The statement sets out the Government's strategic priorities and desired outcomes in a number of areas, including the deployment of nationwide gigabit-capable broadband as soon as possible, high-quality mobile coverage where people live, work and travel, the paramount importance of the security and resilience of telecoms networks, and furthering the interests of telecoms consumers.

The statement was laid before Parliament on 18 July 2019 and the statutory period required under section 2C of the Act has now ended. Ofcom is required to have regard to the statement when carrying out its relevant functions and must explain in writing what it proposes to do in consequence of the statement within 40 days, in accordance with section 2B of the Act. Ofcom is thereafter required to publish annual reviews of what it has done in consequence of the statement.

[HCWS59]

## EDUCATION

### Early Education Funding

**The Minister for School Standards (Nick Gibb):** Today I am confirming the final hourly funding rates for the free early education entitlements in 2020-21. In total we are planning to spend more than £3.6 billion in 2020-21 to support nurseries and child minders in England to deliver high-quality care and education.

As a result of the additional funding announced by the Chancellor at the spending round for early years, we will increase the hourly funding rates for all local authorities for the two-year-old entitlement by 8p an hour. Funding for the three and four-year-old entitlement will also increase by 8p an hour in the vast majority of areas. We are increasing the minimum funding floor for the three and four-year-old offer to £4.38p.

Thirteen councils have had their 2019-20 hourly funding rates for three and four-year-olds protected by the "loss cap" in the early years national funding formula, to ensure that they do not face large drops to their funding rate. Funding for all these councils will be maintained in

2020-21. Loss cap areas are: Bradford, Bristol, Camden, Derbyshire, Ealing, Halton, Islington, Lambeth, Rutland, Southwark, Sunderland, Tower Hamlets, and Westminster.

I can also confirm today that supplementary funding for maintained nursery schools (MNS) will continue, at its current rate, for the whole of the 2020-21 financial year. I can also confirm that the Government remain committed to funding for MNS in the longer term; and that any reform to the way they are funded in future will be accompanied with funding protections.

Further details and guidance will be published on gov.uk.

[HCWS56]

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### Work of the Department

**The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Theresa Villiers):** DEFRA has wide and hugely important objectives: to protect and enhance our natural environment, to lead the world in food, farming and fisheries, to deliver a safe and ambitious departure from the EU, and to be an outstanding organisation. This means we play a major role in people's day-to-day lives, from the food we eat to the air we breathe, and the water we drink.

I would like to update the House on some of DEFRA's key domestic achievements since 2010, which have been delivered whilst maintaining the highest standards of preparedness for EU Exit.

*On the natural environment, we have:*

Produced a 25-year environment plan setting out how the Government will achieve the aim of being the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we found it. In 2019 we published the first 25-year environment plan progress report with 90% of the plan's actions delivered or being progressed.

Introduced the first Environment Bill in 20 years, setting out a domestic framework for environmental governance and legally binding long term targets as the UK leaves the European Union. This is a vital step towards delivering the 25-year environment plan.

Improved or created 16,000 acres of water dependent habitat, creating 2,700 acres of intertidal habitat and improving 380 miles of river habitats

Published Julian Glover's "Landscapes Review of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty", setting out how we can fulfil the vision for our finest landscapes to be places of natural beauty.

Announced £60 million to help plant new woodlands and urban trees to help meet the Government target to plant 11 million rural trees and 1 million urban trees by 2022, announced the creation of a Northern Forest and Northumberland Forest, and appointed a tree champion to drive tree planting rates.

Trees are an important carbon sink for the UK as we aim to meet our target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, with the UK the first major economy to legislate for this in July 2019. We have made a strong start, planting over 16 million trees since 2010.



We have cleaned up the air: since 2010 toxic emissions of nitrogen oxides are down 29%, sulphur dioxide emissions are down 62%, and fine particulate matter emissions are down 10%.

Announced funding for the restoration of 6,498 hectares of degraded peatland, much of this in the uplands, allocating £10 million to 62 sites across England. Peatlands are the UK's largest terrestrial carbon store.

Designated the third tranche of 41 new marine conservation zones, marking the most significant expansion of England's "blue belt" of protected areas to date and protecting UK waters.

Committed to protect 30% of the world's oceans by 2030 and created a global alliance with 10 countries signing up to the UK led initiative to protect at least 30% of the world's ocean and its wildlife.

Launched a review into highly protected marine areas, sea life, and marine habitats as well as publishing an updated marine strategy showing progress towards good environmental status.

Launched the clean air strategy which the World Health Organisation praised as "an example for the rest of the world to follow". It will tackle all sources of air pollution, making our air healthier to breathe, protecting nature and boosting the economy.

Implemented a ban on plastic straws, stirrers and cotton buds from April 2020, to reduce plastic waste, and led a Commonwealth clean oceans alliance with half of the Commonwealth to tackle marine plastics.

In 2018 we introduced a microbeads ban to prevent these harmful pieces of plastic entering the marine environment.

Launched and published responses to consultations on the reform of the waste system, including on extended producer responsibility for packaging, a deposit-return scheme for drinks containers, consistency in recycling, and tax on plastic packaging containing less than 30% recycled content.

Committed to reintroducing formerly native species, including iconic species such as the white tailed eagle and beavers, where there are clear environmental and socio-economic benefits,

*On food, farming and fisheries, including improving animal and plant health, we have:*

We are replacing the restrictive rules of the EU's common agricultural policy, freeing farmers to seize the opportunities offered by Brexit. Instead we are introducing an ambitious new environmental land management scheme which will allow us to reward the farmers and land managers who protect our environment.

Protected allergy sufferers through "Natasha's Law", requiring food businesses to include full ingredients labelling on pre-packed for direct sale.

Protected service animals through "Finn's Law", which makes it an offence to cause unnecessary suffering to service animals.

Introduced "Lucy's Law" ensuring that puppies and kittens are born and reared in a safe environment, with their mother, and sold from their place of birth.

Delivered the Ivory Act 2018, introducing one of the world's strongest bans on ivory to prevent commercial activities involving ivory in the UK that could directly or indirectly fuel the poaching of elephants. We have

also launched a call for evidence on extending a ban to a range of animals including hippopotamus, walrus and narwhals, and are consulting on banning imports from trophy hunting of endangered species.

Commissioned the bovine tuberculosis strategy review, published in 2018, on the Department's strategy for achieving officially bovine tuberculosis free status in England by 2038.

Created a stronger future for farming with new markets for British farming products opening across the world. Markets for British beef and lamb worth £127 million over five years have been opened in Japan and in 2018, China lifted the ban on British beef worth £250 million in the first five years, which had been in place since 1996. A deal has also been secured to enable UK exports of seed potatoes to China; the seed potato export market as a whole is worth an annual £90 million to the UK.

Published the "Sustainable Fisheries for Future Generations" White Paper as part of our goal to promote a more competitive, profitable and sustainable fishing industry across the whole of the UK, and setting a gold standard for sustainable fishing around the world in addition to announcing £37.2 million of extra funding to boost the UK fishing industry.

We have also carried out our duties on domestic emergencies, including leading the response following the Salisbury attack. We are investing £2.6 billion in protecting people against flooding. This will fund over 1,000 flood defence schemes with 300,000 homes better protected, and improve protection to 690,000 acres of agricultural land, 279 miles of railway and over 5,000 miles of highways by 2021. Additionally, between 2015 and 2020 we will be spending over £1 billion on the maintenance of flood defence assets. This is a real terms increase in spending compared to the £812 million spent in the previous five years.

DEFRA will continue to pursue this ambitious agenda over the coming months and years, making further progress both domestically and through seizing the opportunities that leaving the EU will present.

[HCWS63]

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

### Hong Kong: Six-monthly Report

#### **The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and First Secretary of State (Dominic Raab):**

The latest six-monthly report on the implementation of the Sino-British joint declaration on Hong Kong was published today, and is attached. It covers the period from 1 January to 30 June 2019. The report has been placed in the Library of the House. A copy is also available on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website ([www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-office](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-office)). I commend the report to the House.

The report can be viewed online at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2019-10-31/HCWS53/>.

[HCWS53]

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### Personal Health Budgets: Legal Rights

**The Minister for Care (Caroline Dinéage):** Today, and following consultation, I am pleased to announce that I am laying legislation that will extend the legal right to have a personal health budget to a further two groups. These groups are:

- People eligible for section 117 aftercare services; and
- People who access wheelchair services, whose posture and mobility needs impact their wider health and social care needs.

The evidence base for personalised care demonstrates a positive impact on people, professionals and the system. It is shown to produce better outcomes and experiences, improving individual's quality of life, whilst reducing health inequalities. It has also demonstrated the ability to reduce pressures on the system—people who are more confident and able to manage their health conditions have 18% fewer GP contacts, and 38% fewer emergency admissions than people with the least confidence.

That is why the provision of personalised care was a central component of the NHS long-term plan, with the intention of making personalised care, business as usual. This means reaching 2.5 million people by 2023-24, doubling that within the decade.

Significant progress has already been made. Over 70,000 people now have a personal health budget; nearly a 300% increase compared to the same time two-years ago. “Universal Personalised Care” has also recently been published, setting out the 21 actions that together we will take in the coming years. It can be found at: [www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/universal-personalised-care.pdf](http://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/universal-personalised-care.pdf)

Personal health budgets are integral to delivering personalised care, and this extension marks an important step in delivering our ambition. We will continue to explore the feasibility of further extension and consult in due course.

#### Timing

The consultation on extending the right to have a personal health budget was concluded on 8 June 2018 and the consultation response published on 21 February 2019. The changes to the regulations are being made at the earliest opportunity to bring about these positive impacts as soon as possible and will come into force on 2 December, rather than awaiting a common commencement date.

[HCWS54]

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### G6 Munich

**The Minister for Security (Brandon Lewis):** My noble Friend the Minister of State, Home Office (Baroness Williams of Trafford) has today made the following written statement:

The informal G6 group of Interior Ministers held its most recent meeting in Munich on 28 and 29 October 2019. Representatives from the USA, the European Commission, Interpol and the World Jewish Congress also attended the meeting.

The summit was chaired by the German Interior Minister, Horst Seehofer. I represented the United Kingdom. The other participating states were represented by Sylwester Tulajew (Deputy Minister of the Interior, Poland), Christophe Castaner (Minister of the Interior, France), Luciana Lamorgese (Minister of the Interior, Italy) and Fernando Grande-Marlaska (Minister of the Interior, Spain).

The European Commission was represented by Dimitris Avramopoulos (Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship) and Sir Julian King (Commissioner for the Security Union). The United States was represented by a delegation led by David Pekoske (Acting Deputy Secretary, US Department of Homeland Security). Interpol was represented by Jurgen Stock (Secretary General) and the World Jewish Congress was represented by their president, Ronald Lauder. The European Commission joined all of the plenary sessions.

The first plenary session was on migration and asylum and focused on the reform of the common European asylum system (CEAS). Given the UK did not opt in to the CEAS package, my intervention focused on our commitment to finding sustainable solutions and the “whole of route” approach to migration. This includes increasing the efforts to tackle people trafficking and finding new ways to stop criminal gangs from operating. I highlighted the UK's major contribution to resettlement of the most vulnerable refugees. I also updated the G6 on the recent tragic incident in Essex where 39 migrants lost their lives.

The second plenary session was on future co-operation with the UK where the discussion covered the mutual benefits of a close security partnership following the UK's exit from the EU. I made the case for an ambitious UK-EU security partnership in line with the political declaration agreed between the UK and EU, which should exist alongside strengthened bilateral and other multilateral channels of co-operation with our G6 and wider international partners. Interpol joined this discussion. There was broad consensus amongst the G6 to seek a close and comprehensive future security partnership between the UK and EU to protect our citizens.

The day concluded with an informal working dinner, where discussion focused on the current situation in Syria, including the internally displaced persons and security implications. During the discussion I stressed the UK's dedication to international security and that anything which risks the security of detention facilities threatens the security of us all.

At the third plenary session we were joined by the representatives of Interpol and the World Jewish Congress. Discussion focused on right-wing extremism and antisemitism. I set out the action the UK is taking domestically and internationally to tackle these issues, including in the online world.

The final plenary session covered terrorist content online and the security of 5G networks. I expressed our concern about the European Parliament's position on the draft EU regulation on tackling terrorist content online, and made the case that only by encouraging a proactive approach by online service providers will we secure a meaningful impact on the terrorist threat. I also set out the UK's approach to ensuring a secure and resilient 5G network.

At the meeting it was confirmed that the UK will host the next G6 in 2020.

[HCWS60]

### Istanbul Convention: Ratification Progress Report

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Victoria Atkins):** The Government have today laid before Parliament and published the third annual report on the United Kingdom's progress toward the ratification of the Council of Europe convention

on combating violence against women and domestic violence, the “Istanbul convention”. The UK signed the Istanbul convention in 2012 to signal the UK’s strong commitment to tackling violence against women and girls (VAWG) and this Government remain committed to ratifying it.

The report sets out the steps taken by the UK Government and the devolved Administrations toward ratification of the convention and the work that has been undertaken since the 2018 report on progress.

This year, we have continued to strengthen our efforts to combat VAWG. We have published a refreshed cross-Government VAWG strategy to ensure that we are doing all that we can to tackle crimes which affect disproportionately women and girls. The refresh captures new programmes of work and sets out 54 new actions the Government have committed to take to drive forward this agenda, including the establishment of an end-to-end review into the criminal justice response to rape.

In most respects, the UK already complies with or goes further than the convention requires. Since signing the convention in 2012, we have significantly strengthened our laws and introduced a range of new tools and measures to protect victims. But we know that there is more to do. That is why in July this year we introduced a landmark Domestic Abuse Bill 2019 in Parliament, which followed a public consultation that attracted more than 3,200 responses. The Bill set out a package of measures to transform our response to domestic abuse.

The Domestic Abuse Bill 2019 included the necessary legislative measures to ensure that the criminal law in England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland satisfied the requirements of Article 44 of the convention in respect of extra-territorial jurisdiction; the provisions in respect of Scotland and Northern Ireland were included at the request of the Scottish Government and Department of Justice. In addition, and again following a request earlier this year from the Department of Justice in Northern Ireland, the Bill also included a new domestic abuse offence for Northern Ireland which would enable Northern Ireland to be fully compliant with Article 33, psychological violence. After the report went to print yesterday the Early Parliamentary General Election Bill completed its passage through Parliament, which means that the Domestic Abuse Bill will not continue in this Parliament. It remains the case that the drawing up of the legislation represents an important milestone in our progress towards compliance with Articles 44 and in Northern Ireland 33. The Government remain fully committed to ratifying the convention and to taking the measures necessary to enable us to do so.

The issue of support for migrant victims of domestic abuse was raised by the Joint Committee on the Draft Domestic Abuse Bill in its report published in June this year. In response, the Government have committed to reviewing the overall response to migrant victims of domestic abuse, including by specifically considering the Committee’s recommendation to extend the period of time that support is offered for and how this relates to a victim’s ability to access refuge accommodation. As part of this review, we will also take into account any obligations we have under the Istanbul convention. We have therefore recorded Articles 4(3)—to the extent that it relates to migrant and refugee status—and 59 as “under

review” in the report this year to reflect that we are currently considering the Committee’s concerns in greater detail.

The publication of this report fulfils the requirement of section 2 of the Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Ratification of Convention) Act 2017.1 will lay before Parliament the report required by section 1 of that Act when our timescale for ratification is clear.

Copies of the report will be available in the Vote Office and it will be published on the Government’s website at gov.uk.

[HCWS58]

## HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### Leasehold and Commonhold Reform

**The Minister for Housing (Ms Esther McVey):** During the leasehold and commonhold reform Westminster Hall debate on 2 October, I pledged to set out in full the actions the Government are taking on leasehold and commonhold reform. [Column 366WH]

The Government are taking forward a comprehensive reform of leasehold and commonhold, so it is fairer for homeowners. We responded on 27 June 2019 to the technical consultation on leasehold reform which set out how our plans will work in practice. We will legislate to ensure that, in future, apart from in exceptional circumstances, all new houses will be sold on a freehold basis. We will also reduce ground rent to zero on new leases and will improve how leasehold properties are bought and sold by setting fixed time frames and maximum fees for the provision of leasehold information. We will implement these changes when parliamentary time allows.

We are also working with the Law Commission to:

- standardise the enfranchisement process, so that buying a freehold or extending a lease can be made easier, quicker and more cost-effective.

- review how commonhold works, so that it is a viable alternative to leasehold for both existing and new homes.

- make it easier for leaseholders to obtain the right to manage, in both straightforward and complex developments.

The Law Commission will report back to Government on options to reform the valuation process this autumn, and on all three projects in February 2020.

In March 2019, we launched an industry pledge which commits freeholders to identifying any lease with ground rent terms that double more frequently than every 20 years and contacting leaseholders to offer to amend the terms. The pledge has been signed by more than 60 leading developers, freeholders and managing agents. We will continue to monitor its effectiveness and take further action as necessary.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) announced in June 2019 that it will carry out an investigation into the mis-selling of leasehold properties. The CMA will use its consumer protection powers to determine whether leasehold terms—including onerous ground rents and permission fees—can be classified as “unfair”.



If the evidence merits it, the CMA will consider whether to bring forward enforcement proceedings. We look forward to receiving the outcome of this work.

We have also:

made it easier for leaseholders to form recognised tenants' associations (RTAs). We will shortly be reviewing this legislation to see how effectively it is working in practice;

worked with trading standards to improve information on accessing redress through the publishing of new guidance, which will help current leaseholders understand the redress process better;

committed to implement most of the Law Commission recommendations in its 2017 "Event Fees in Retirement Properties" report. We will consider two recommendations (on succession rights and a database of leasehold retirement properties with event fees) further to determine the most effective way of improving the system for consumers;

asked the Law Commission to update its 2006 report, "Termination of Tenancies for Tenant Default", so that we can consider next steps on the law of forfeiture;

committed to introducing legislation to extend mandatory membership of a redress scheme to all freeholders of leasehold properties;

set out our intention to give freehold homeowners the same rights as leaseholders to challenge the reasonableness of estate maintenance fees, and to apply to the tribunal to appoint a new manager;

committed to ensuring homeowners cannot be subject to a mandatory possession order for minor ground rent or rentcharge arrears;

announced in March 2019 that we will address the issue of legal costs. We believe leaseholders should not be subject to unjustified legal costs and will close the legal loopholes that allow this to happen;

We have also committed to regulating managing agents and to improving the transparency and fairness of service charges. This includes introducing a single mandatory and legally enforceable code of practice to set standards across the sector and requiring agents to be qualified to practice.

Last October, we established an independent working group, chaired by Lord Best, to take this work forward. They looked at how standards can be raised across the property sector and how fees such as service charges should be presented to consumers. The working group published its final report to the Government in July 2019, and we are considering its recommendations and will announce the next steps in due course.

[HCWS55]

## JUSTICE

### Work of the Ministry

**The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Robert Buckland):** I am pleased to be able to update the House on the Government's significant achievements in modernising the justice system over the past 10 years.

We have supported the prison system and created decent and safe prisons by undertaking the following actions:

Since 2010 we have removed almost 50,000 foreign national offenders (FNOs) from our prisons, immigration removal centres and the community, and agreed new

prisoner transfer agreements with countries around the world to allow FNOs to serve their prison sentences in their own country, including Albania and Pakistan.

In January 2017, we launched a campaign to recruit 2,500 additional prison officers by December 2018 to ensure the safe running of our prisons. We achieved this target six months early.

In 2018-19 £70 million was invested in prison safety, security and decency.

From April 2018, we have been testing and evaluating innovative approaches to helping prisoners recover from drug addiction through our £9 million drug recovery prison pilot at HMP Holme House. This is a joint project between MoJ and the Department of Health and Social Care/NHS England.

In April 2019, we released the national prison drug strategy together with guidance, and introduced innovative programmes such as incentivised substance free living.

The recent 10 Prisons Project saw an overall 16% reduction in the rate of assaults and a 50% reduction in total positive drug tests.

We are making a £100 million investment in prison security to tackle the drugs, weapons and mobile phones that increase the risk to officers and hinder rehabilitation.

We have ensured that the sentences handed down by the courts are fair by introducing the following measures:

In 2012, the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders (LASPO) Act abolished the imprisonment for public protection (IPP) sentence and introduced extended determinate sentences for dangerous offenders. Since 2016, implementation of measures contained in a comprehensive IPP action plan in 2016 has seen a dramatic reduction in the IPP prison population since abolition of the sentence.

That same year (2012) we also consolidated previous release legislation (contained in 1967 and 1991 legislation) into the Criminal Justice Act 2003, thereby making the sentencing and release framework less complex and confusing.

In 2015, the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2014 was brought into force. This strengthened the extended determinate sentence (EDS) by providing that in all cases where such a sentence was imposed the prisoner could be held until the end of the term, with the possibility of Parole Board release from the two-thirds point (previously, some EDS prisoners were released automatically at the two-thirds point).

In July 2019, we implemented new Parole Board rules. This included the introduction of a new reconsideration mechanism to make it easier to challenge parole decisions which appear seriously flawed. This built on the rule changes enacted previously in 2018 which abolished the prohibition on disclosure of information and enabled the Parole Board to issue summaries of its decisions to victims and others who requested one.

In October 2019 we laid legislation to ensure that serious violent and sexual offenders spend a greater proportion of their sentence in custody.

We have also this month laid legislation to implement 2012 legislation to introduce alcohol abstinence and monitoring requirements as a sentencing option.

This month we have also introduced the Prisoners (Disclosure of Information about Victims) Bill, responding to the Helen's Law campaign, which will ensure that cases where prisoners do not disclose the location of victims' remains or the identity of children in indecent photographs are fully considered by the Parole Board when considering the release of such a prisoner.

We have improved support for the victims of crime by introducing the following measures:

In 2010, the first Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales was appointed. Their role is to promote the interests of victims and witnesses and encourage good practice in their treatment.

In 2011, we implemented the Prisoners' Earnings Act which allows a levy to be imposed on prisoners' earnings when they are undertaking paid work in the community. This helps raise £1 million plus each year to support victims.

In 2012, we launched a consultation on "Getting it right for victims and witnesses", setting out the Government's proposed approach to ensuring that victims and witnesses get the support they need.

In 2012, the EU directive for victims of crime 2012/29/EU was passed. This requires all EU countries to establish minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime. The UK fulfils these obligations through the code of practice for victims of crime (victims' code). In 2015, the victims code was revised to full transpose rights within the EU victims directive.

In 2013-14, Police and Crime Commissioners were allocated local funding to commission emotional and practical support services for victims of crime in their area.

In 2014, the Government established the victims panel, to represent the voice of victims in Government policy making.

In 2018, the victims strategy was published, providing a national, cross-Government framework to make fundamental improvements for victims.

In 2019, we published a consultation on amendments to the victims code.

We have modernised the justice system by introducing the following reforms:

In 2012, we created new offences of causing serious injury by dangerous driving and squatting in a residential building.

In 2015, we criminalised sexual communication with a child and made it a crime to possess a "paedophile manual" (Serious Crime Act 2015).

We also tackled female genital mutilation (FGM) by extending extra-territorial jurisdiction (tackling crimes committed overseas), providing anonymity for victims, introducing a new crime of failure to protect a girl under 16 and introducing new FGM Protection Orders (Serious Crime Act 2015).

That same year we also strengthened the law on grooming and made revenge porn a crime (Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015).

In 2016 we introduced public hearings to the Court of Protection increasing transparency around the Court's work.

In 2016, the Government commissioned the right hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr Lammy) to conduct an independent review into the experience of and outcomes for black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) people in

the criminal justice system. In December 2017, MoJ confirmed its commitment to make progress on all the recommendations in some way.

Since October 2017, we have been working with health partners on a community sentence treatment requirement (CSTR) protocol which aims to increase the number of community sentences with mental health, drug and alcohol treatment requirements attached.

The Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act 2018 created a new offence and raised penalties for assaults on emergency workers, including police and prison officers.

In June 2018, MoJ published a female offender strategy, which set out our vision and plan for reducing women's offending by taking a gender-informed approach to improve outcomes for female offenders at all points of the justice system.

In April 2019 we introduced new legislation to reform divorce law, removing the need for divorcing couples to blame each other for the breakdown of their marriage.

In February 2019, MoJ brought in a new law to ban "upskirting" following engagement with campaigner Gina Martin.

In June 2019, the Government scrapped the "same roof rule" that made some victims ineligible for compensation through the criminal injuries compensation scheme.

In July 2019 we introduced the landmark Domestic Abuse Bill to increase protections for victims of domestic abuse and prevent victims being cross-examined by their abusers.

We have modernised the prison estate:

Since 2010 we have opened 8,397 places via four new prisons: Isis, Thameside, Oakwood and Berwyn, totalling 5,734 places.

Alongside new prisons we have built 11 new house blocks at existing sites: Elmley, Nottingham, Parc (x2), Buckley Hall, Moorland, Bure, Peterborough, The Mount, Thameside, and Stocken, totalling 2,663 places.

In the same period, we have closed a total of 7,295 places via: 20 prison closures (6,530 places) at Ashwell, Lancaster Castle, Latchmere House, Wellingborough, Bullwood Hall, Canterbury, Gloucester, Shrewsbury, Kingston, Shepton Mallet, Dorchester, Northallerton, Reading, Blundeston, Blantyre House, Haslar, Dover, Holloway, Kennet, and Glen Parva; and two partial closures (765 places).

In 2019 the Prime Minister announced an additional £2.5 billion to provide an additional 10,000 prison places; the first of which will be built at Full Sutton. This is in addition to new prisons already planned at Wellingborough, which is in progress, and Glen Parva, which we expect to start building next year.

We have made improvements to probation services:

Since 2010, we have extended probation supervision to more than 40,000 prisoners serving short sentences, who previously left prison with no statutory supervision.

In May 2019, we announced plans to strengthen probation services by bringing the supervision of all offenders under the National Probation Service while ensuring a significant role for the voluntary and private sectors in the delivery of interventions.

MoJ has made available £280 million for voluntary and private sectors to deliver innovative rehabilitation services. The new probation structure will convene services from other Government Departments to support offenders, and improve the skills of the probation workforce, and the estate.

We have made considerable improvements to rehabilitation in prison, including:

We published our education and employment strategy in May 2018, which set out how we will transform our approach to ensure prisoners develop the skills they need to secure employment on release.

We have introduced reforms to the disclosure of criminal records to prospective employers to help get ex-offenders into employment, which makes reoffending less likely.

In May 2019, we made changes to release on temporary licence policy to improve opportunities for work and resettlement while in prison.

Through the Government's rough sleeping strategy, we are investing up to £6.4 million in a pilot scheme to support individuals released from three prisons: Bristol, Leeds and Pentonville.

We have made reforms to the way legal aid and legal support are provided:

In 2010, the coalition Government committed to carrying out a "fundamental review of legal aid", in order to contribute towards reducing the deficit. This led to two major transformation programmes (the legal aid reform programme and the legal aid transformation programme) which included the introduction of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPO). As a result of this, between 2010-11 and 2018-19 legal aid spending fell by £945 million in real terms, or 36%, whilst ensuring those in need of support could access it.

Since the passage of LASPO, MoJ has also delivered a series of legislative changes to ensure those in need of legal aid can access it, including victims of the Grenfell disaster, offenders in prison, and most recently separated migrant children in immigration cases.

Alongside a post-implementation review of the legal aid changes made by and since LASPO, in February 2019 MoJ published a legal support action plan which announced a range of initiatives that aim to help people resolve their legal problems earlier, including a new legal support innovation fund. We also announced a comprehensive review of the legal aid means tests to ensure that legal aid is available to those who need it and have recently announced a consultation on the housing possession court duty scheme which will ensure anyone at risk of losing their home has access to the legal help they need.

Following reforms to the fee schemes for advocates in the Crown Court in 2017 and 2018, the MoJ has also announced a comprehensive review of criminal legal aid with the aim of creating a modern, resilient and sustainable criminal legal aid market, with a diverse workforce.

We have made reforms to the way in which Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service operates:

In 2016, the Lord Chancellor and senior judges set out their vision for the £1.2 billion HMCTS reform programme, to modernise the courts and tribunals system and reduce complexity in processes.

Four new online services have been delivered to the public covering divorce, probate, civil money claims and social security appeals and have been used by over 250,000 people with user satisfaction rates over 80%.

We have begun using the common platform in the magistrates courts, which in time will deliver a single online system enabling the police, the CPS, HMCTS and legal professionals to access and share all relevant information about a case.

We used to reject 40% of paper divorce applications because they were incorrectly filled in. The new online service has received over 65,000 applications and the rejection rate has dropped to under 1%.

Two courts and tribunal service centres (CTSCs) have been opened in Birmingham and Stoke-on-Trent with a third due to open in Loughborough in 2020. CTSCs are transforming the way we deliver justice services and manage cases by providing a centralised, national service for all users.

Wi-fi has been installed in all of our courts and tribunals, and more than 80,000 professionals are accessing wi-fi in our courts each week.

We have closed underused, dilapidated court buildings, raising £125 million to invest more effectively in improving our justice system.

A new system for summary offences has handled over 68,000 Transport for London and TV licensing cases, cutting delays and inefficiency.

We have supported the UK's world-renowned legal services sector:

We have launched the "Legal Services are GREAT" international marketing campaign in 2017. This promotes the UK's legal sector overseas, worth around £25 billion to the UK economy, to win business for our law firms, chambers and professional bodies.

Since its launch in Singapore in 2017, the campaign has featured in 30 countries worldwide, with trade missions to Kazakhstan, China, Chile and Nigeria.

[HCWS64]

## TRANSPORT

### Work of the Department

#### **The Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps):**

Transport plays a critical part in all our lives and is central to some of the biggest issues the country faces, including decarbonisation, growing our economy and uniting the country. I would like to update the House on key recent achievements by the Department for Transport.

#### *Rail*

Launched the Williams Rail Review in September 2018 to look at the structure of the whole rail industry, including increasing integration between track and train, regional partnerships, and improving value for money for users and taxpayers.

Invested record levels in the railway between 2014 and 2019, with over £40 billion being spent on enhancing, renewing, and maintaining the network. £15 billion of this was spent on enhancing the railway. This included:

Capacity enhancement projects such as additional platforms, for example at Liverpool Lime Street and Manchester airport stations; and rail line capacity upgrades, such as re-signalling between Plymouth and Penzance, and four-tracking on the Filton Bank in Bristol.



Completing major infrastructure upgrades as part of the Thameslink programme in December 2018, creating 24 train paths per hour between Blackfriars and St Pancras, including readiness for digital signalling and automatic trains.

Opening new routes such as the reinstatement of the Halton curve, which enables passenger services from north Wales and West Cheshire to directly access Liverpool City Centre and airport for the first time in more than 40 years.

Electrification of the Great Western Mainline between London and Cardiff, due to be completed early in 2020.

Over 4,300 additional rail services per week have been introduced since May 2018.

Confirmed £47.9 billion is available for the railway between 2019 and 2024. This spending will be targeted on operations, maintenance and renewals to deliver a modern, reliable service for passengers across the network.

£450 million committed to digital rail as part of the national productivity investment fund at Autumn statement 2016.

#### *Rail fares*

Cancelled above-inflation (RPI) rail fare rises every year since 2014.

Introduced the new 26 to 30 Rail Card in January 2019, allowing 4.5 million young people to travel by train for less, and launched the new 16 and 17 Railcard which from September 2019 will give up to 1.2 million young people a guaranteed 50% discount on rail travel

Introduced the “Delay Repay 15” scheme in 2016 which allows passengers to claim compensation when trains are more than 15 minutes late.

Over 8,000 new railway carriages have been ordered since 2010.

More than 80% of passenger rail vehicles by summer 2019 now have on-train wi-fi available

We have committed to Northern Powerhouse Rail and are working with Transport for the North on proposals to improve the rail network across the north.

In August 2019, launched an independent review into HS2 to advise the Government on whether and how to proceed with the project. The review is ongoing.

#### *Regional and devolution*

Through the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2017, created new powers to put sub-national transport bodies (STBs) on a statutory footing. Transport for the north’s status was enshrined in law in April 2018.

As part of the Northern Powerhouse:

Established Transport for the North, bringing together northern transport authorities with the task of working with Government to create the first ever comprehensive transport strategy for the region, covering roads, rail, freight, airports and smart ticketing.

Committed record investment of over £13 billion in the strategic roads, local roads and rail infrastructure of the north between 2015 and 2020.

#### *Local transport*

Established a new £2.5 billion transforming cities fund, with funding announced at autumn budgets in 2017 and in 2018. Allocated £1.08 billion of the transforming cities fund to the six mayoral combined authorities. £1.3 billion is being made available competitively

to 12 shortlisted cities. Initial funding for “quick win” transport projects in the initial shortlisted cities was allocated in March 2019.

Announced in September 2019 that 14 major road network and large local major schemes will go forward for further development. These included the Tyne Bridge and central motorway renewal and the A140 Long Stratton Bypass in Norfolk. On 18 October the York outer ring road became the first MRN scheme to be granted programme entry.

Around £1.7 billion has been awarded so far for 13 schemes through 2018 and 2019 from MHCLG’s housing infrastructure fund. These include delivery of significant new transport infrastructure, with £102 million towards delivering the Carlisle Southern Link Road, and £218 million towards a bypass and new bridges for the Didcot Garden Village.

In December 2018, published the results of a consultation on the creation of the major road network, which brought over 5,000 miles of local authority A roads into scope for new funding from the national roads fund.

Between 2011 and 2019, approved 74 major local transport schemes with over £2.3 billion of funding such as the extension of Nottingham Tram, Heysham to M6 Link Road and the A43 Corby bypass; and the Preston Western Distributor Road.

Played a key part in the setting up of the local growth fund, and made a contribution of over £7 billion to the £12 billion total, which devolved real spending decisions to local enterprise partnerships and prioritised over 500 transport schemes through growth deals in three funding rounds in 2014, 2015 and 2017.

Allocated a record level of funding of over £6.6 billion to local authorities for local road maintenance in the period 2015-21, including a dedicated pothole action fund.

#### *Buses*

Launched the “Better deal for bus users” in September 2019, a £220 million package to boost bus services. This includes trialling a new “superbus” network approach to deliver low fares, high frequency services in Cornwall, expanding our fleet of low emission buses with an all-electric bus town, funding to enable local authorities to improve current bus services or to restore lost services, and investment in bus priority measures in the West Midlands.

Committed £48 million to fund 263 zero emission buses in 2019.

Supported local authority spending of around £1 billion per year on concessionary bus travel, enabling older and disabled people to make free off-peak bus journeys and helping them stay more connected to their communities and social surroundings.

#### *Cycling*

Government spending on cycling and walking has increased to around £2 billion over the 2016/17-2020/21 spending review period.

Invested over £40 million in the cycle rail programme since 2012 which has tripled the number of cycle parking spaces at over 500 stations, bringing the total to over 80,000.

Invested £22 million in 33 new and upgraded cycle routes on the national cycle network this year.

Launched a £2 million e-cargo bike grant programme in February 2019 to support the uptake of e-cargo bikes.

Announced a further £13 million in the Bike-ability training for school children in October 2018, to extend the scheme into 2020-21. In the year up to April 2019, around 400,000 children completed the scheme.

Secured funding through the cycle city ambition programme to improve cycling infrastructure in eight cities to get more people cycling by improving and expanding cycle routes between the city centres, local communities, and key employment and retail sites.

Published the first ever statutory cycling and walking investment strategy in April 2017.

#### *Strategic roads and safety*

Made good progress in delivering the first road investment strategy. At the end of the fourth year of the strategy, in March 2019, Highways England had started work on 28 schemes, in addition to the 16 schemes where works were ongoing at the start of the strategy; opened 29 schemes for traffic; and had 15 schemes in construction.

Ended tolls on the Severn Crossing in December 2018.

Announced that a second roads investment strategy will start in April 2020 with a record funding allocation of £25.3 billion from the national roads fund.

Produced a refreshed road safety statement in 2019 with a two-year action plan for four priority road user groups; young road users, rural road users, motorcyclists, and older vulnerable road users.

Strengthened drink-drive enforcement by removing—Deregulation Act 2015—the automatic right for drivers who fail a breathalyser test to demand a blood and urine test—“statutory option”—removing the opportunity to sober up while waiting for the test to be taken.

Provided £100 million of funding for the “safer roads fund” to improve the safety of 50 of England’s most dangerous local A roads.

#### *Motoring and the environment*

Launched the road to zero in 2018, our strategy on the transition to zero emission road transport, including that all new cars and vans will be effectively zero-emission by 2040.

Launched a new £400 million electric vehicle charging infrastructure investment fund, the first £70 million of which was allocated in September 2019 for 3000 rapid charge points, more than doubling the number across the UK to 5000.

Published the Clean Air Strategy 2019, which is the most ambitious air quality strategy in a generation, aiming to halve the harm to human health from air pollution in the UK by 2030.

We are investing in one of the most comprehensive global programmes of support for ultralow emission vehicles, including grants for vehicles and charge point infrastructure;

Since 2011, the plug-in car grant has supported the sale of over 170,000 vehicles ultralow-emission cars in the UK by Q2 2019, up from 111 in 2010, based on cars eligible for plug-in car grant support; including those cars not eligible for grant, there are currently 210,000 licensed ULEVs in total.

The electric vehicles home-charge scheme (EVHS) has supported over 120,000 charge points being installed in homes to date. All chargers installed using this grant must be smart from July 2019.

Invested £20 million to deliver new, dedicated charge points for electric taxis in local areas, with funding awarded to 27 local authorities in 2017 and 2019.

Hosted the world’s first international zero-emission vehicle summit in September 2018.

#### *Tackling poor air quality*

Published the 2017 NO<sub>2</sub> plan and its 2018 supplement, which has led to 61 local authorities being required to assess what action is needed to address the exceedances.

Committed £495 million as part of the Government commitment to improving transport and tackling air quality, which has now increased to £572 million technology and innovation

Committed £250 million to help position the UK as a global leader in the development and deployment of connected and self-driving vehicles, and have launched 90 projects as of summer 2019, involving over 200 organisations.

Created the centre for connected and autonomous vehicles (CCAV) in 2015 to help position the UK as a global leader in the development and deployment of connected and self-driving vehicles.

Passed the Automated and Electric Vehicles Act (2018) through Parliament to enable drivers of automated cars to be insured on UK roads, and are working with the Law Commission on exploring regulations for self-driving vehicles.

Launched the future of mobility urban strategy in 2019 which set out nine principles to guide the UK’s approach to emerging mobility technologies and services, as well as actions for regulatory reviews of further areas such as e-scooters.

#### *Accessibility*

In August 2019 the eligibility for disabled parking badges—blue badges—was expanded to include those with non-visible disabilities or conditions, where these severely affect an individual’s mobility.

Following improvements to the gov.uk service, the percentage of blue badge applications submitted online has increased substantially, with 61.2% online in October 2019

Launched the inclusive transport strategy in 2018, to create a transport system that provides equal access for disabled people by 2030, with assistance if physical infrastructure remains a barrier.

Progress has been made, for example by mid-2019, 91% of heavy rail vehicles met modern accessibility requirements and 99% of buses either had an accessibility certificate or had low-floor access by March 2018, compared to only 81% at March 2010.

#### *Aviation*

Launched Operation Matterhorn to repatriate over 140,000 people over a two-week period in Autumn 2019, resulting in the UK’s largest peacetime repatriation effort to date. The Civil Aviation Authority led the operation with support from HM Government, covering over 700 flights with support from 50 partners from

around the world. About 94% of people were flown back on the original day of their cancelled Thomas Cook flight.

#### *Environmental*

In 2019, along with BEIS, HMT and the devolved Administrations, consulted on options for ensuring that our post-Brexit approach to emissions trading is at least as ambitious as the current arrangement.

Worked with International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) to secure the first worldwide scheme to address CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in any single sector, the carbon offsetting and reduction scheme for international aviation (CORSA)

Established the independent commission on civil aviation noise in 2019, an important voice for communities concerned about the impact of aviation .

#### *Passenger interests*

Updated the ATOL scheme and brought it in to line with modern trade practices. In 2012, updated the scheme to address gaps in consumer protection by extending the ATOL scheme to include “flight-plus” arrangements. Then, passed the Air Travel Organisers’ Licensing Act 2017 to allow for UK businesses to trade across Europe more easily, and ensure a wider body of consumers are protected.

#### *Sustainable growth*

Set out that airspace modernisation, reforming the way airspace is used, is vital to help deliver quicker, quieter and cleaner journeys for passengers and businesses, legislation is forthcoming.

Made progress on delivering a revised aviation strategy, which aims to make the country’s aviation sector world-leading in prioritising passengers, fostering sustainable growth, and promoting trade

#### *Connectivity*

Protected air routes into London that are in danger of being lost by providing financial support for several routes through public service obligations, currently routes from London to Dundee, Derry and Newquay.

#### *Drones*

Implemented a package of new legislation to keep our skies safe and secure, including extending the zones around airports in which it is illegal to fly drones above 400 feet or within the airport’s air traffic zone.

Worked with the Home Office, the police, and the Ministry of Justice to introduce primary legislation providing police with new powers to help tackle the misuse of unmanned aircraft, and contributed to the Home Office counter unmanned aircraft strategy.

Responded successfully to planned disruption by Heathrow Pause at Heathrow airport in September 2019.

#### *Aviation Security*

Created the first aviation security strategy in 2018 that sets out our strategic response to the threats to civil aviation. This is currently being revised.

Regulated that all major airports must introduce new 3D cabin baggage screening equipment by the end of 2022.

#### *Aviation Skills*

Recruiting a new general aviation advocate, and nine general aviation ambassadors.

Launched the women in aviation and aerospace charter in 2018, which seeks to bridge the diversity gap.

Launched the reach for the sky programme with the aim to increase the number of young people entering the sector as well as increase diversity.

#### *Maritime safety*

Published the maritime safety action plan in 2019, which sets out a number of actions to achieve ambitious safety targets.

#### *Maritime growth*

London international shipping week took place in 2019, helping to advance London’s status as the world’s capital for maritime services and demonstrate the UK maritime sector’s world-leading capabilities.

Published the maritime 2050 strategy in 2019, which provides a long-term strategic vision for the sector. It establishes clear trajectories against which Government and business can plan for the long-term, maintaining the UK’s position as a global maritime leader through to 2050.

#### *Maritime environment*

Published the clean maritime plan in 2019 which sets out how Government see the UK’s transition to a future of zero-emission shipping. It includes that by 2025, all new vessels being ordered for use in UK waters are designed with zero-emission propulsion capability, and zero-emission commercial vessels are in operation in UK waters.

#### *Other departmental priorities*

Provided significant input into the Government’s 2018 year of engineering, leading to 5.1 million direct experiences of engineering for seven to 16-year-olds.

Published the transport infrastructure skills strategy and set up a task force to deliver it. By mid-2019, some 5,000 new apprenticeships had been created.

Published the transport investment strategy in 2017 which sets out the Department for Transport’s priorities and approach for future transport investment decisions. Government have since confirmed that it is spending £72 billion in the five years to 2020-21 on transport. This strategy ensures Government’s investment decisions are aligned to wider goals, including building a stronger more balanced economy.

Published the transport infrastructure efficiency strategy in 2017.

Published the rail sector deal in December 2018 to build on the strong partnership working between the rail sector and the Government to exploit the opportunities of new technologies, improve the efficient use of our rail network capacity and enhance the experience of those who use our railways.

Established an organisation to boost the export of UK transport expertise.

#### *Brexit*

Substantial work preparing for Brexit and ensuring that sufficient contingency plans are in place in the event of a no-deal to keep freight moving and ensuring the supply of essential medicines into the country.

#### *Roads*

Passed the Haulage Permits and Trailer Registration Act 2018 which will ensure that the UK has the powers it needs to support British hauliers to continue operating internationally after exiting the EU.



*Aviation*

Put in place measures to ensure that flights between the UK and the EU can continue in any Brexit scenario.

Secured new bilateral agreements or effective mitigations in place for the 17 non-EU countries where market access is currently provided for by virtue of our EU membership. This includes new agreements with the US and Canada.

Put in place new arrangements to cover bilateral aviation safety agreements (BASA's) with the US, Canada and Brazil, which are currently provided for by virtue of our EU membership.

Ensured that in any Brexit scenario, UK security standards will be recognised, allowing for the continued flow of air cargo between the UK and EU.

*Maritime*

£10 million for 16 ports across England to help their preparation for Brexit through the port infrastructure resilience and connectivity fund.

Secured the supply of vital medicines to the UK after Brexit, whatever the circumstances.

[HCWS57]

**WORK AND PENSIONS****Work of the Department**

**The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Dr Thérèse Coffey):** The Department for Work and Pensions is the UK's biggest public service Department, supporting people into work and administering the state pension and a range of working age, disability and ill health benefits to around 20 million claimants and customers. The Department is carrying out a world-leading transformative welfare agenda, and has had great success in recent years, while the Health and Safety Executive continues to make the workplace safer.

Universal credit is the biggest change programme in Europe, and the UK is seen as a world leader in welfare. The roll out of universal credit is now complete and it is available in every Jobcentre across the country, with 94% of all claims paid in full and on time to 2.5 million people. This financial year we will spend over £95 billion on working age benefits and over £120 billion on benefits for pensioners, bringing the total welfare spending across Government this year up to £220 billion.

The Government believe that work is a pillar of a strong economy, and that work should always pay—according to the 2018 universal credit full claimant service survey, 85% of claimants believe getting and keeping a job is their number one priority—with 75% feeling that having almost any job is better than being on benefits. Overall satisfaction among claimants has remained consistently high over the last three years, with four out of five people satisfied with the support they have received when claiming universal credit.

The next phase of universal credit, “Move to UC”, will open up work, allowing people to increase their hours without the penalties they would normally be subject to under tax credits. As of 26 September 2019 we have made over 13,800 severe disability premium

transitional payments, worth on average £2,280. This represents over 90% of expected backdated payments, totalling over £37.2 million.

Universal credit introduced a single taper system so payments reduce in a transparent and predictable way as earnings increase, making sure we support claimants in their transition into work. Additionally, when we complete moving legacy benefit claimants over to universal credit, an estimated 700,000 more people will get paid their full entitlement because of universal credit—getting on average an extra £285 per month.

As universal credit was rolled out, we made the taper more generous, reducing it to 63%, which means claimants can work more hours and keep more of their benefits. And again, in April this year, we increased the universal credit work allowance by £1,000 per year. This means that 2.4 million households will keep an extra £630 of income each year.

To support our claimants, we have introduced additional dedicated specialist work coaches, with training covering domestic abuse support, mental health, support for those with disabilities and health conditions, through to specialised local employment support.

Furthermore, we have made changes to support the most vulnerable, such as reducing the length of the maximum single sanction from three years to six months.

From October this year we reduced the normal maximum level of deductions in universal credit from 40% to 30% of the standard allowance; lowering this rate could see a couple keep up to an extra £600 over 12 months.

To support families and households, we announced the policy to support a maximum of two children would no longer be extended to apply to children born before 6 April 2017 in new claims to universal credit. We have also introduced more flexible childcare cost arrangements, as well increasing their worth from up to 70% to up to 85%.

Additionally, we provide alternative payment arrangements such as more frequent payment options and managed payments to landlords—we have created an online system for landlords to facilitate this. We also encourage payments to go to the main carer.

From April 2019, Citizens Advice have been delivering the new “Help to Claim” support service to claimants making a new claim for universal credit.

In 2012, we reformed the child maintenance system with the aim of increasing co-operation between separated parents to meet their financial responsibilities, as this produces the best outcomes for their children. The scheme promotes parental responsibility by encouraging clients to set-up a private family-based arrangement where appropriate—and removing the obligation to join the statutory scheme.

We introduced further enforcement powers at the end of 2018 to enable us to deduct child maintenance directly from a wider range of accounts, target complex earners via a calculation of notional income based on assets and to disqualify non-compliant parents from holding a UK passport.

In June 2019, the child maintenance service was managing 488,300 statutory child maintenance arrangements, covering 706,700 children.

The Government are committed to improving employment outcomes for disabled people and for those with long-term health conditions. We want to support

employers to realise the benefits and insight that the huge pool of talented disabled people can bring to the workforce.

That is why we have committed to more than doubling the number of disability employment advisers in our Jobcentres to over 500 to provide specialist expertise to help disabled people enter employment. Alongside this, the Government are spending £55 billion a year on benefits to support disabled people and people with health conditions. That's a record high and an increase of £10 billion in real terms since 2010.

In November 2017, "Improving Lives: The Future of Work, Health and Disability" set out the Government's 10-year plan, including an ambition to see 1 million more disabled people in work by 2027.

Over the past six years, we have seen 1.15 million more disabled people in work, reaching a total of 4.1 million in the second quarter of 2019. This includes an increase of 404,000 over the first two years since the Government announced their 2027 goal.

We are working with employers through our disability confident scheme; over 14,000 employers have now signed up and all Government Departments are signed up to this scheme.

The Government have completed a consultation on their proposed reforms to statutory sick pay so that it will be better enforced, more flexible and cover the lowest paid employees for the first time.

The Health and Safety Executive continues to make the workplace safer. It has clarified guidance on health and safety regulations to improve employer understanding of the need to consider mental health alongside physical health when undertaking a first aid needs assessment. The UK continues to rate as one of the safest countries in Europe in terms of fatal injury and to perform well against EU countries on a range of other health and safety indicators

Personal independence payment (PIP) is a more modern, dynamic and fairer benefit than the predecessor, disability living allowance. PIP focuses support on those experiencing the greatest barriers to living independently. The number of working-age people now receiving support from PIP and DLA is up by over 257,000 since PIP was introduced in 2013 and, crucially, a higher proportion of the over 2.2 million people on PIP receive the top rate of benefit than on DLA—31% compared to 15%. Claimants are also receiving their benefits sooner—the average time taken to process claims is down by over 60% since July 2014 for new claimants.

We have reduced the number of assessments for those receiving the highest level of support, where needs will not improve, as well as for people over the state pension age. Up to 325,000 pensioners will benefit from the change to ensure that pensioners will receive ongoing PIP awards with a light touch review at the 10-year point.

The Government's pensions agenda will provide more security and safety to pensioners in retirement, tackle reckless behaviour from employers on people's pensions and help more pensioners than ever before to plan for their retirement. In 2019-20 alone, the Government expect to spend over £120 billion on benefits for pensioners—this includes £99 billion of expenditure on the state pension.

Since 2012, 10 million workers have automatically enrolled into a workplace pension thanks to automatic enrolment. This policy alone has helped to reverse a decade of decline in savings and, as of 2019-20, an estimated extra £18.6 billion a year will go into workplace pensions.

We are building on the success of auto-enrolment, looking to make it easier for self-employed people to save. In December 2018 the Government published a report setting out their delivery plan for research and trials to identify the most effective options to increase pension savings among the 4.9 million self-employed workers and we will carry out these trials throughout 2019 to 2021.

The Government introduced the triple lock and, accordingly, the full yearly amount of the basic state pension is around £675 higher than if it had just been up-rated by earnings since April 2010. This is a rise of over £1,600 in cash terms.

Pioneering work has been undertaken to help more people prepare for retirement than ever before. Pensions dashboards—digital interfaces that will allow people to see online what they have in their various pensions, including their state pension—will put individuals in control of their data; they will, for the first time, provide clear and simple information regarding pension savings in one place online and help people reconnect with "lost" pensions pots.

The Government are also tackling reckless behaviour of employers that would strip people of their hard earned retirement funds. In February 2019 we announced measures to reduce irresponsible conduct from employers by extending the pension regulator's powers, including the power to send business owners to jail.

Recognising that climate change is a defining national and international emergency, we have introduced three key measures to ensure that pension schemes understand their responsibilities in responding to it. Since January 2019, those running single employer occupational pension schemes are required to establish an effective system of governance, including consideration of environmental, social and governance factors related to investment assets in investment decisions; and schemes with 100 or more members must carry out and document a risk assessment of their system of governance including risks relating to climate change.

Furthermore, as of 1 October, trustees of occupational pension schemes must state their policy on how they take account of the financial risks of climate change when developing their investment strategies.

The Government are committed to ensuring that people have access to the information and guidance they need to make effective financial decisions throughout their lives. The Financial Guidance and Claims Act 2018 has brought together the services provided by Pension Wise, the Pensions Advisory Service and the Money Advice Service into a single organisation.

We have promoted long-term savings and pensions products, including the lifetime individual savings account, to encourage and incentivise more people to make provision for long-term needs, including a house purchase and retirement. We are encouraging working people to save for a workplace pension by helping to protect their savings and monitoring the products, charges, and processes adopted by pension schemes. We are also giving individuals

the confidence to save and access their pension pots by providing more guidance and support on pensions through the establishment of the Money and Pensions Service which is delivering free and impartial money and pension guidance, along with debt advice.

We will continue to engage across Government to ensure that we are aligned with the industrial strategy, supporting the flexible working task force, and the careers strategy and the national retraining scheme—ensuring that skills provision meets the needs of an ageing demographic. We have introduced older claimant champions into all 34 Jobcentre Plus districts. We will also continue to work with employers through our business champion for older workers and the local enterprise partnerships. We will ensure there are provisions for older returners to the workplace by working with Government Equalities Office and HM Treasury, and are engaging with businesses to understand their concerns in line with changes to the ageing demographic of the workforce.

We have also been supporting everyone who can, and wants to work, to continue to work. Initiatives such as the fuller working lives strategy have led to more people aged 50-64 in employment than ever before. In addition to our legislative reforms such as removing the default retirement age and extending the right to request flexible working, we are supporting employers to recruit, re-train and retain older workers.

Our record on employment is strong, and the number of people in work is up by over 3.6 million since 2010—a near-record high. The employment rate, at 75.9%, is also at a near-record high, with 1,000 more people moving into work on average every day since 2010.

Through our new enterprise allowance (NEA) scheme, we have supported 209,000 claimants to create over 130,000 businesses since 2011. On average, we have helped to launch 203 businesses by unemployed benefit claimants, every week since 2017.

UK nationals make up around 90% of all people in work and have accounted for 66% of the rise in employment over the last nine years. Additionally, over 60% of the growth in employment since 2010 has been outside London and the south-east. There are now more than 1 million fewer workless households than in 2010 and 730,000 fewer children living in a household where no one works.

Since 2010, over 75% of the growth in employment has been in full time work and employment, and employment high-skilled occupations has risen by over 2.9 million.

There are over 1.8 million more women in work since 2010, and the female unemployment rate is at 3.7%—a near record low; the black Asian and minority ethnic employment rate has reached 66.2%—a near record high—up 7.4% since 2010; and, the youth unemployment level has almost halved since 2010, to a near record low—falling by more than 130 on average every day. Furthermore, wages have been growing for 19 consecutive months.

We are providing targeted support for young people between the ages of 18 and 24 to get into employment, through the youth obligation support programme (YOSP), as well as other specialised support within Jobcentres for young people.

[HCWS66]



# Petition

Thursday 31 October 2019

## OBSERVATIONS

### HOME DEPARTMENT

#### Windrush

*The petition of Residents of the United Kingdom,*

Declares that the Prime Minister has spoken at great length recently about her legacy; further that if she leaves office before resolving the Windrush scandal and the many outstanding cases, then this will be her legacy; further that the Prime Minister should offer more than warm words and take action to solve the crisis she created; further that in 1948, individuals throughout the British Empire received citizenship under the British Nationality Act; further that these citizens, some from the Caribbean, came to the United Kingdom in order to help rebuild the country after the war; further that these citizens lived here, worked here and raised families here; further that the hostile environment policy accelerated during Mrs May's time as Home Secretary led to many of these citizens losing their rights and in some cases being deported back to the Caribbean; further that others lost jobs, were forced into debt and suffer from immense stress and fear because of the policy; further that the former Home Secretary Amber Rudd said in April 2018 that it would only take two weeks to resolve the Windrush cases, however over a year has passed and there is still a significant number of outstanding cases; further that what has been done to these British citizens is outrageous, unfair and must end; further that a change.org petition initiated by Dawn Butler MP on this matter has received over 9,600 signatures.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Prime Minister Theresa May and the Government to resolve all outstanding Windrush cases by Wednesday 24th of July.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Dawn Butler, *Official Report*, 23 July 2019; Vol. 663, c. 1273.]

[P002502]

*Observations from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Seema Kennedy):*

This Government have apologised for the harm suffered by the Windrush generation and have vowed to right the wrongs that had been done to them.

On 16 April 2018, the Home Office established the Windrush taskforce in order to give people the documents they need to demonstrate their status here. As part of this we gave an undertaking to complete applications within two weeks of receiving all the evidence being gathered. Usually this will be from the point that a person's biometrics are taken, although in some cases further evidence is supplied by the applicant or other sources after this point. The Home Office has always acknowledged that some decisions will fall outside these timescales due to their complexity.

In May 2018, we launched the Windrush scheme, giving a free route, with reduced requirements, to British citizenship. While we have reduced the requirements for individuals, the Home Office does make additional checks on citizenship applications than for applications for confirmation of status and, as a result, we have not stipulated a timescale for these decisions. We continue to process applications as quickly as possible with careful consideration being made to each application.

We have now granted status, including citizenship to over 8,100 people but applications continue to be made under the scheme, and that is why there is continued work in progress. However, the scheme has also invited some claims that are without merit and a number fall for refusal. None of the refusal decisions have been made lightly, and all decisions have had lengthy and detailed consideration. The decision to refuse in these cases has been checked and challenged extensively.

Further to the Windrush taskforce and the Windrush scheme, the Home Office launched the Windrush compensation scheme on 3 April 2019 which followed the launch of an urgent and exceptional payment scheme on 17 December 2018.

On 26 September, the Home Secretary launched the Windrush advisory group, where community and faith leaders were brought together to advise on how the department can maximise the number of people applying to the Windrush compensation scheme. In September, we also launched the second phase of engagement and outreach to promote the compensation scheme and the wider work of the taskforce. Events are being held across the country, including in Lewisham, Liverpool, Sandwell, Leeds and Southwark.

The Home Office is also attending some events in partnership with, and arranged by external partners. Full details are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/windrush-compensation-scheme-and-taskforce-community-events>



# Ministerial Corrections

Thursday 31 October 2019

## BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

### Topical Questions

*The following is an extract from Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Topical Questions on 22 October 2019.*

T10. [900069] **Douglas Ross** (Moray) (Con): I recently visited Orbex in Forres, which is heavily involved in the new spaceport at Sutherland and is seen as a sector leader with its new innovative launch vehicle. Will the Minister outline what support the UK Government can give to companies such as Orbex, which plans to bring 250 high-quality jobs to the region?

**The Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation (Chris Skidmore):** The Government support growing our national space capabilities, especially by establishing the new national space council, which will be chaired by the Prime Minister. We are supporting Orbex to develop an exciting new launch vehicle technology with a grant of £5.5 million as part of our industrial strategy. We are keen to work with it as part of the wider national space framework we are establishing.

*[Official Report, 22 October 2019, Vol. 666, c. 808-09.]*

*Letter of correction from the Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation, the right hon. Member for Kingswood (Chris Skidmore):*

An error has been identified in the response I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Moray (Douglas Ross).

*The correct response should have been:*

**Chris Skidmore:** The Government support growing our national space capabilities, especially by establishing the **Cabinet-level National Space Council**. We are supporting Orbex to develop an exciting new launch vehicle technology with a grant of £5.5 million as part of our industrial strategy. We are keen to work with it as part of the wider national space framework we are establishing.

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE

### EU Trade Agreements: Roll-over

*The following is an extract from questions to the Secretary of State for International Trade on 17 October 2019.*

2. **Dr Rupa Huq** (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab): What progress she has made on the rollover of existing EU trade agreements. [900002]

**The Minister of State, Department for International Trade (Conor Burns):** In preparation for our exit from the European Union, the Government have, to date, secured 16 continuity trade agreements with 46 countries. Trade with those countries represents 72% of the UK's total trade. I am pleased to inform the House that only last week my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State signed another agreement with the Southern African Customs Union and Mozambique to roll over the existing EU trade agreements that we have with them.

*[Official Report, 17 October 2019, Vol. 666, c. 431.]*

*Letter of correction from the Minister of State, Department for International Trade, the right hon. Member for Bournemouth West (Conor Burns):*

An error has been identified in the response I gave to the hon. Member for Ealing Central and Acton (Dr Huq).

The correct response should have been:

**The Minister of State, Department for International Trade (Conor Burns):** In preparation for our exit from the European Union, the Government have, to date, secured 16 continuity trade agreements with 46 countries. Trade with those countries represents 72% of the UK's total trade **with those with which we are seeking continuity**. I am pleased to inform the House that only last week my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State signed another agreement with the Southern African Customs Union and Mozambique to roll over the existing EU trade agreements that we have with them.





# ORAL ANSWERS

Thursday 31 October 2019

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**not later than  
Thursday 7 November 2019**

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