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**HOUSE OF COMMONS**  
**OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY**  
**DEBATES**

**(HANSARD)**

**Monday 20 January 2020**

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# HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

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(FORMED BY THE RT HON. BORIS JOHNSON, MP, DECEMBER 2019)

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# THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

## OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT OF THE  
UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND  
[WHICH OPENED 17 DECEMBER 2019]

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

SIXTH SERIES

VOLUME 670

SECOND VOLUME OF SESSION 2019-2021

### House of Commons

*Monday 20 January 2020*

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

#### PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

### Oral Answers to Questions

#### EDUCATION

*The Secretary of State was asked—*

#### **Childminders: Recruitment and Retention**

1. **Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese** (Slough) (Lab): What steps he is taking to increase (a) recruitment and (b) retention of childminders. [900238]

**The Secretary of State for Education (Gavin Williamson):** Childminders provide a quarter of a million childcare places, and 95% are rated either good or outstanding by Ofsted. As such, they make a huge contribution to our society and play a valuable role for many parents. We have worked to make it easier for childminders to set up their businesses and offer Government-funded early education entitlement places.

**Mr Dhese:** The Early Years Alliance has stated that the Government's £66 million of extra funding for early years offers will have a "negligible" effect for providers, who are facing substantial increases in operational costs every year. Will the Secretary of State therefore commit

to a large and sufficient increase in core funding for early years providers, including childminders, in the upcoming Budget?

**Gavin Williamson:** The Chancellor outlined our commitment to put more money into early years, and the hon. Member highlights the extra £66 million that has been put into it. We have seen an expansion of the Government's support for early years, raising the number of free hours from 12.5 to 15 to 30 and supporting children from the most disadvantaged communities. We will continue to look at this and have discussions with the Treasury.

**Harriett Baldwin** (West Worcestershire) (Con): In addition to childminders, nurseries such as the Madresfield Early Years Centre in my constituency provide a wonderful setting for young children. Can the Secretary of State provide reassurance that, where we are increasing pay for some of the lowest-paid workers in our society, those nurseries will be compensated for that when we reimburse them for free childcare provision?

**Gavin Williamson:** My hon. Friend highlights the important role that the private sector and many organisations play in providing great settings for early years care. That is why we put an extra £66 million into the sector. It is too early to comment on negotiations with the Treasury, but I note her comments.

#### **Looked-after Children: Out-of-area Placements**

2. **Ms Marie Rimmer** (St Helens South and Whiston) (Lab): What assessment he has made of trends in the number of looked-after children in out-of-area placements as a result of the unavailability of a place in their home local authority. [900239]

13. **Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck** (South Shields) (Lab): What assessment he has made of trends in the number of looked-after children in out-of-area placements as a result of the unavailability of a place in their home local authority. [900251]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Michelle Donelan):** We know the challenges that local authorities face when making placements. The child's best interests should always come first, so safety and suitability of a child's care placement is our priority. Moving a child out of placement is a last resort, unless it is in the child's best interests.

**Ms Rimmer:** The Minister clearly does not understand the reasons for the increasing use of out-of-area placements. It is because of a lack of resources to meet the needs, and these children are going into out-of-area placements in unregulated care that is not registered with Ofsted, without the support they need. It is also because of a lack of available places in their area. It is a massive problem. The Minister clearly does not understand that the increasing use of out-of-area placements, and particularly unregulated supported living, has left more children at risk of not receiving the appropriate health and social care and support from Government and the police, and at risk of exploitation by criminals. This is happening—not just in my constituency, but in Conservative Members' constituencies.

**Michelle Donelan:** I will do my best to answer that comprehensive question. I can assure the hon. Member that both I and the Government take this matter seriously. However, out-of-area placements can be in the child's best interests if they are at risk of exploitation or if they need specialist provision. We have been addressing the supply of the care sector. In fact, we have invested over £200 million in innovation funding and over £500,000 to try to bolster the number of foster carers. I draw her attention to the care review that we pledged to do in our manifesto, which will look at the entire care system.

**Mrs Lewell-Buck:** Three years ago, instead of increasing children's care home capacity in England, the Government introduced legislation that forced vulnerable children from England to be placed in Scotland. In 2018, over 70 children were moved, some over 300 miles away from their home, their family and their support networks. Can the Minister tell us exactly how the local authorities with caring responsibility for those children living miles away are discharging even their most basic statutory obligations, and is she entirely content to preside over this deliberately cruel and harmful legislation?

**Michelle Donelan:** I believe the hon. Member is referring to a case where a number of out-of-area placements were made in Scotland. We have recently put £40 million extra into capital funding for secure homes, but the whole point is that this is a very complex issue that needs a comprehensive care review—that was part of our manifesto—and I have already begun to work on that.

**Andrew Bridgen (North West Leicestershire) (Con):** There is an increasing number of children in care, with the latest figures showing nearly 80,000 children in care in England alone. What steps is my hon. Friend's Department taking to reverse this trend?

**Michelle Donelan:** My hon. Friend is quite right. The number of children in the care sector is a worry both to me and the Government. That is why we have a number of initiatives to support families to stay

together. We have spent £70 million on supporting families and £84 million on strengthening families for this very reason<sup>1</sup>.

**James Gray (North Wiltshire) (Con):** May I welcome my neighbour to I think her second outing at the Dispatch Box? She graces it. I agree with the two hon. Ladies who asked the question that of course it is important that looked-after children should be kept within the local authority—as close to home as possible. But does my hon. Friend not agree that, on some occasions, actually it might be beneficial for the children to be moved to a neighbouring local authority that is close by still, but none the less rather better than the one they are being brought up in?

**Michelle Donelan:** I thank my hon. Friend for that question. He is quite right: sometimes, it is in the best interests of the child to be placed out of the area. The important thing is that we have a child-centred policy that is always placing their best interests first. They could be at risk of sexual exploitation and gangs, or need specialist provision.

**Angela Rayner (Ashton-under-Lyne) (Lab):** One of the most important responsibilities of Government is to protect and support children in care. However, we now know that, over a decade ago, there was a terrible failure to do so in Manchester: at least 57 children, almost all girls, were victims of child sexual exploitation. I welcome the report from the Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, on Operation Augusta and the work of Jennifer Williams from the *Manchester Evening News*. We must learn the lessons from these terrible events and ensure they never happen again. So can the Minister tell me what the Government are doing in the wake of these revelations and, most importantly, what support is being offered to the victims and survivors?

**Michelle Donelan:** The great tragedy and announcements that have come out of Greater Manchester are awful, and my heartfelt thoughts go to anybody affected and their friends and family. Things have moved on since then. As the hon. Member pointed out, this is over 10 years ago. Since then, the most important reform that we have made is to link up agencies, including health, police and local authorities, so that we can have a combined approach to deal with these issues.

**Angela Rayner:** I thank the Minister for her response and I am sure she agrees that we should ensure that such a scandal cannot happen again. At the last election, as she mentioned, both parties agreed to a review of the care system, so can she tell the House when that review will begin and what will be included in its terms of reference?

**Michelle Donelan:** The wholesale care review was a central part of the Conservative party manifesto and we are committed to ensuring that we get this right. It will be comprehensive, but at the moment I am working on the scope and setting it up. I think that the important thing is ensuring that it delivers for all children within the system, and preventing more from becoming part of the system.

1. [Official Report, 3 February 2020, Vol. 671, c. 2MC.]

### Teacher Recruitment and Retention

3. **Christian Matheson** (City of Chester) (Lab): What assessment he has made of trends in the level of teacher (a) recruitment and (b) retention. [900240]

**The Minister for School Standards (Nick Gibb):** There are over 453,000 teachers in our schools, 12,000 more than in 2010. Postgraduate recruitment to teacher training is at its highest level since 2010-11, and just under two thirds of teachers who started teaching six years ago are still teaching today.

**Christian Matheson:** That means that one third are leaving, which is a high attrition rate. We know that pay freezes are one reason for that, but also the crushing workload. Just in Chester this morning, teachers have told me about the crushing workload that is driving teachers out. What is the Minister doing to reduce that workload, take pressure off teachers and let teachers teach?

**Nick Gibb:** Since we conducted the workload challenge survey in 2014, we have worked hard to reduce the unnecessary demands on teachers' time, whether that is cumbersome marking practices or excessive data collection. Since 2016, teachers' working hours have fallen by five hours per week, according to the second teacher workload survey, which measures teachers' own reporting of their working hours. There is still more to do—the hon. Gentleman is right—but this success so far demonstrates the seriousness with which we take excessive workload and the effectiveness of our early initiatives.

**Damian Hinds** (East Hampshire) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, with the Government's important commitment on starting salaries, the new early career framework and finally some good news, as he mentioned, in the autumn on teachers' workload, now there is a positive proposition to be made for people to join this the most noble of professions?

**Nick Gibb:** I am grateful to my right hon. Friend and pay tribute to him for his work in his years as Secretary of State for Education. It was a pleasure to work with him during that period. He is right—the School Teachers' Review Body has recommended a 2.75% pay rise for teachers across the board, and we are also proposing a £30,000 starting salary for teachers from 2022. In addition to the £26,000 tax-free bursary, teachers of maths, physics, chemistry and languages who start their training this September will receive early career payments of £2,000 in each of their second, third and fourth years of teaching. So this is a good time to start training as a teacher. It is a worthwhile profession and I encourage all graduates to consider teaching as a career.

**Mike Kane** (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab): The Minister surely knows that the pay rise he mentioned will only return starting salaries to where they were in 2010. Furthermore, the prospect of a pay rise in three years' time will do nothing to help schools that are struggling now to recruit new teachers. Does not he accept that the so-called "pay rise" is nothing more than papering over the cracks in this recruitment and retention crisis?

**Nick Gibb:** I do not agree. We are living in a very strong economy, with the lowest level of unemployment for more than 40 years and demand for graduates is strong. We are responding to those pressures. As I said earlier, we have recruited the largest number of graduates into teacher training. I have announced the salaries for teachers when they finish their training and start teaching; 2022 is the right date for that salary increase. The average pay of a headteacher is £70,100 a year, and it is £36,200 a year for a classroom teacher. This is a good time to join the teaching profession and I urge Opposition Members to talk up the attractiveness of that profession and not continually to talk it down.

**Mr Philip Hollobone** (Kettering) (Con): Those who serve in Her Majesty's armed forces represent the very best of British. What is being done to turn troops into teachers when veterans leave the armed forces?

**Nick Gibb:** My hon. Friend raises a good point. Veterans make attractive members of staff in our schools, they inspire young people and help to improve behaviour. Our Troops to Teachers scheme was slow to begin with, but it is now proving successful in recruiting Army leavers.<sup>1</sup>

### Children from Disadvantaged Backgrounds

4. **Alex Norris** (Nottingham North) (Lab/Co-op): What assessment he has made of the educational attainment of children from disadvantaged backgrounds. [900241]

5. **Adam Afriyie** (Windsor) (Con): What progress he has made on closing the attainment gap for disadvantaged children. [900242]

**The Secretary of State for Education (Gavin Williamson):** Against a background of rising standards, the attainment gap has closed by 13% at primary schools and by 9% at secondary schools since 2011. Most disadvantaged pupils attend good or outstanding schools, and 86% of schools are now rated as good or outstanding, which is up from 68% in 2010.

**Alex Norris:** Nottingham schools have made the significant strides in attainment to which the Secretary of State refers, but massed within that, in less well off and less diverse communities, is poor attainment for boys. What specific interventions will the Department make to support schools to improve outcomes for white working-class boys?

**Gavin Williamson:** The hon. Gentleman highlights an important issue. One group that universities are most unsuccessful at recruiting from is white working-class boys and that is something we need to address. The way to do that is by continuing the reforms that the Government have introduced and continuing to drive standards, and by ensuring that academic rigour is there for every pupil. We must support those children by ensuring the very best teaching and support for every child.

**Adam Afriyie:** Across the Windsor constituency, which stretches from Eton as far as Warfield, we have some fantastic schools and colleges, from primary to secondary and beyond. One of the Government's greatest ambitions seems to be to close the attainment gap, so that any

1. [Official Report, 4 February 2020, Vol. 671, c. 3MC.]

child from any background can get a decent education. Does the Secretary of State agree that to continue closing that gap we must ensure that there is a range of schools, colleges, apprenticeships and university places, so that students and parents can make choices for themselves about what suits them?

**Gavin Williamson:** My hon. Friend raises the vital point that we have to have a range of different tools to be able to ensure that children succeed. At the core of that is making sure that as many children as possible achieve and deliver on what they need to do in terms of English and maths, while ensuring there is a range of different opportunities as they progress through their schooling career. The Government have introduced a number of initiatives, including T-levels, and a changing approach in terms of apprenticeships, which will give so many young people the chance they deserve and need.

**Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey) (Lab):** Does the Secretary of State have in his mind that, as child poverty is now rising and due to rise to 5 million by 2022, there will be more disadvantaged people who need more help? What are the Government going to do about that?

**Gavin Williamson:** Through initiatives such as the pupil premium and the extra money we are putting into special educational needs, and the fact that we are levelling up education funding across the country, we on the Conservative Benches recognise the important role education plays in delivering opportunities for young people. That is what we are delivering for all children in this country.

**Alan Mak (Havant) (Con):** Children from disadvantaged backgrounds in my Havant constituency benefit from the national school breakfast programme. What support is my right hon. Friend giving to that programme to expand it so it reaches more children?

**Gavin Williamson:** We are giving £35 million towards supporting that incredibly important programme, which is having such an impact not just in the constituency of Havant but in so many constituencies across the country.

### Pupil Premium

6. **Matthew Pennycook (Greenwich and Woolwich) (Lab):** Whether he plans to review the operation of the pupil premium. [900244]

**The Minister for School Standards (Nick Gibb):** The pupil premium ensures schools receive extra money to benefit disadvantaged pupils who need it most. Schools are helped to make effective decisions and good use of the grant by the Education Endowment Foundation's research and guidance. The Government remain convinced of the effectiveness of the pupil premium in helping to narrow the attainment gap and are committed to this policy.

**Matthew Pennycook:** The House of Commons Library has confirmed to me that there has been a £220 million real-terms decrease in the total amount of spending on the pupil premium since 2015. Schools in my constituency have together lost about £1 million, with the worst-affected losing almost £40,000 a year. In its recent manifesto, the

Conservative party did not repeat its previous commitment to protect the pupil premium. So can the Minister tell the House today what the Government's policy actually is? Will they retain the pupil premium and restore it, or will it simply be left to waste away?

**Nick Gibb:** The pupil premium is for any pupil who has qualified or has been eligible for free school meals in the last six years. It is £935 for pupils in secondary schools and £1,320 for pupils in primary schools—some £2.4 billion a year. Since 2011, we have allocated more than £15 billion to schools to help to narrow that attainment gap. We have the lowest level of unemployment for over 40 years, so there will be different eligibility for free school meals, which depends on the benefits system. When there is a higher level of employment, fewer people are eligible for the benefits system.

**Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con):** A recent survey by the Sutton Trust suggested that 30% of headteachers were using the pupil premium for general funding in their budgets. What studies are the Government doing to ensure that the end result of the pupil premium is good outcomes for students?

**Nick Gibb:** The Education Endowment Foundation has produced a very good guide for schools on how to use the pupil premium in the most effective way to narrow the attainment gap. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State spelled out the fact that we have closed the attainment gap by 13% in primary schools and 9% in secondary schools. Between 2011 and 2018, there was an 18 percentage point increase in the proportion of disadvantaged young people taking the EBacc combination of core academic GCSE subjects—the subjects that provide the widest opportunities in later education, training and career choices.

### Free School Meals

7. **Mrs Sharon Hodgson (Washington and Sunderland West) (Lab):** What his policy is on free school meals. [900245]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Michelle Donelan):** Free school meals play an important role in ensuring that disadvantaged children receive a healthy nutritious meal every school day. I assure the hon. Member and the House that the Government are committed to the provision of free school meals for children from homes that are disadvantaged on low incomes—it is of the utmost importance.

**Mrs Hodgson:** I thank the Minister for stating the Government's policy on free school meals and getting that on the record. Given how beneficial free school meals are for reducing inequalities and improving children's health and attainment, will she mirror Labour policy and extend free school meals to all primary school children?

**Michelle Donelan:** We already provide free school meals to 1.3 million children and 1.4 million infants. This policy is targeted at the most disadvantaged, which we personally believe is right, as it ensures that they have the very best start in life and a nutritious meal every school day.

### Children Entering the Care System

8. **Lucy Allan** (Telford) (Con): What assessment he has made of trends in the number of children entering the care system. [900246]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Michelle Donelan)**: Both I and the Department are concerned about the number of children in care, which has increased by 21% since 2010. That is why we have a multi-tiered approach based on trying to keep families together, improving the supply of each type of care so that it can be child-focused, including work to bolster the number of foster carers, and placing an emphasis on permanence. We recognise the scale of the challenge and the importance of getting this right, which is exactly why we are conducting a care review.

**Lucy Allan**: I am delighted that the Government are going to conduct a comprehensive review of the care system; that is very welcome. The Minister has urged local authorities to prioritise adoption. Does she agree that stability and permanence can be achieved by a range of different care provision, such as kinship care and long-term foster care, and that the circumstance and the needs of the individual child should determine the best option for them?

**Michelle Donelan**: Absolutely. I believe that the system needs to be child-focused. My hon. Friend will have noted that in my letter to local authorities last week, I highlighted other forms of permanence, including kinship care and special guardianships in particular. However, let us not forget that 41% of children with a placement order have not been placed in an adoption setting within 18 months. This is not acceptable and I am determined to bust the myths around adoption, including regarding race and religion, so that we can help those children into permanent, stable homes as quickly as possible.

**Steve Reed** (Croydon North) (Lab/Co-op): Too many children in the care system are being placed in unregulated hostels, as we have heard, without the support that they need to keep safe. Lance Scott Walker was killed aged 18 when he was placed with a young person with schizophrenia who chased him out of a window and stabbed him to death. In another hostel, a young person on bail for murder was placed with a victim of child trafficking, who he got involved in drug dealing. We know that children are at risk right now. We do not need to wait for a review to find that out, so when will the Government properly regulate all housing where vulnerable children and young people are placed?

**Michelle Donelan**: This is something that we are committed to getting right, and I am working with Ofsted, local authorities and the Children's Commissioner to tackle it. While there is and always will be a place for semi-independent living within our system, I cannot imagine a circumstance where that is acceptable for under-16s. Currently, all local authorities must ensure that their placements are suitable, and my right hon. Friend the Education Secretary recently wrote to all local authorities about that. To be clear, unregistered settings where care is provided are illegal and Ofsted conducted over 150 investigations of those last year.

### Free Schools and Academies: Planning Policy

9. **Henry Smith** (Crawley) (Con): What discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on ensuring that the development of free schools and academies is not restricted by planning policy. [900247]

**The Minister for School Standards (Nick Gibb)**: Officials have worked with their counterparts in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on all aspects of planning policy for new schools and existing academies. New national policy and guidance sets out the positive approach that local planning authorities should take in the assessment and determination of planning applications for schools.

**Henry Smith**: Since its launch in 2014, the Gatwick School has been very successful and is looking to expand its capacity, but it is coming into difficulties—there are suspected ideological differences—with Crawley Borough Council planners. What advice can my right hon. Friend give to the school so that it can overcome that obstacle?

**Nick Gibb**: I pay tribute to my hon. Friend's commitment to the schools in his constituency and his support for the Gatwick School in particular. As he said, the Gatwick School opened in 2014 and is providing good school places in Crawley, with its EBacc entry level significantly above the national average, for example. Officials are engaged in the planning process to achieve permission from Crawley Borough Council, which will enable us to deliver the permanent school accommodation and facilities for pupils.

**Lucy Powell** (Manchester Central) (Lab/Co-op): In those conversations with local authorities, will the Minister also talk to them about current children's social services practice to make sure that the deep lessons of the Greater Manchester review are learned and that practice is changed so that vulnerable children never again have wrong assumptions made about them?

**Nick Gibb**: The hon. Member will be aware of the review of children in need. It highlights the importance of schools being aware of those children who are known to social workers and who have particular problems so that we can make sure that they get pastoral support in school and that expectations remain as high for them as for other pupils in the school.

**Suella Braverman** (Fareham) (Con): Free schools have been a huge success—I mention Michaela Community School, which I co-founded and chaired, and which I know the Ministers are familiar with—but too many parts of the country are without access to one. What plans do the Government have for increasing the number of free schools and has the Minister read my recent report "Fight for Free Schools", published with the Centre for Policy Studies, which has some useful ideas for how to achieve to that?

**Nick Gibb**: I will certainly read my hon. Friend's report, and again I pay tribute to her for what she has achieved with Michaela Community School. The free schools programme as a whole is hugely successful and she can be assured we are committed to continuing it. In

2019, seven out of the top 15 secondary schools in terms of progress 8 scores were free schools, including three in the top five: Eden Boys' School in Birmingham, Eden Girls' School in Coventry and of course Michaela Community School in Brent.

### Further Education

10. **Beth Winter** (Cynon Valley) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding for further education. [900248]

**The Secretary of State for Education (Gavin Williamson):** Further education is a crucial sector that needs more investment to deliver its full potential. That is why the Government have committed to putting an extra £400 million into 16-to-19 education in 2020-21.

**Beth Winter:** It has been estimated that there is a pay gap of more £7,000 between teachers in schools and teachers in FE colleges. Does the Secretary of State agree that the current Office for National Statistics classification of FE colleges as non-profit institutions serving households—NPISH status—is hindering the ability to address this growing pay gap?

**Gavin Williamson:** I am sure the hon. Lady is aware that colleges in England are independent and able to set their own staff terms and conditions. We have committed to extra funding for those colleges into the next financial year and continue to back them with more funding through investment and capital.

**Mike Wood** (Dudley South) (Con): My right hon. Friend knows from his own experience the importance of further education, but he has also seen the excellent education and training provided at Dudley College. What assurances can he give that such colleges will have the funding resources they need for the roll-out of T-levels to make this scheme a big success?

**Gavin Williamson:** My hon. Friend raises a valuable point about how vital T-levels are for the success of our colleges and the whole education system. We have committed £500,000 a year to support the roll-out of T-levels plus capital investment. Dudley College is a magnificent institution that we are turning into an institute of technology. We are rolling out 20 of those across the country. We want people to understand how vital our colleges are to delivering the world-class education, technical and vocational, that this country needs.

**Emma Hardy** (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle) (Lab): More than three quarters of sixth-form colleges do not believe they have the funding they need to support disadvantaged students. The FE sector, the Education Committee and the Labour party speak with one voice in supporting the Raise the Rate campaign to increase per-pupil funding to £4,760. Despite warm words from the Secretary of State, the funding needed has not appeared. He talks about it being a crucial sector, so when will he make good on his promise to work hand in glove with the FE sector by both restoring the position of FE and Skills Minister and raising the rate to £4,760?

**Gavin Williamson:** I welcome the hon. Lady to her position and wish her the very best in her new role, although I thought she was a little ungenerous in her comments. Just in the past six months, we have delivered an extra £400 million for 16-to-19 education; committed an extra £1.8 billion to FE colleges' funding; and created a national skills fund to be delivered over three years, worth more than £3 billion. In my judgment, that is a lot of money and a real investment in our college sector. We are giving them the opportunity to achieve so very much. We see the opportunity and have every confidence they will deliver.<sup>1</sup>

### EU Educational and Research Programmes

11. **Patrick Grady** (Glasgow North) (SNP): What plans he has to ensure UK access to EU educational and research programmes after the UK leaves the EU; and if he will make a statement. [900249]

**The Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation (Chris Skidmore):** The Government greatly value international co-operation in education, science and research. The withdrawal agreement protects the continuation of both Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020, and we will seek to participate in the relevant future EU programmes as part of future negotiations. Many of these programmes, or the regulations, simply are not ready yet. The political declaration makes the position absolutely clear. As for participation, it is a matter for the upcoming negotiations.

**Patrick Grady:** Institutions across Scotland, including the University of Glasgow, receive some of the highest per capita shares of Horizon 2020. They will understandably be worried by the comments of the Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, who has said that the UK will be treated as a third party, and that there will be no cherry-picking in any new deals for programme participation. Will the Minister tell us what that means in terms of potential new barriers for institutions such as those in my constituency?

**Chris Skidmore:** I have enormous respect for the University of Glasgow and its excellent vice-chancellor, Anton Muscatelli, who is the author of a report on how to spread innovatory practices across Scotland. I am learning a lot from that work.

I am determined that we should work towards association with Horizon Europe, the successor to Horizon 2020, but we need to know what the final regulations are. I am in regular contact with ministerial equivalents across Europe. Earlier this morning I had an opportunity to speak to the higher education and research Minister of Croatia, which currently holds the presidency of the Council of the European Union, at the Education World Forum. I am determined that, as we proceed with the wider negotiations, Horizon Europe should be part of that.

**Carol Monaghan** (Glasgow North West) (SNP): The sector has repeatedly expressed concerns about our future participation, or potential non-participation, in Horizon Europe. We have been told by the Prime Minister and his Ministers that they intend to remain, or that "we hope to remain, but not at any cost". When can we

1. [Official Report, 4 February 2020, Vol. 671, c. 4MC.]

have absolute clarity? The sector needs it now, as do the EU researchers and academics who work in our higher education institutions.

**Chris Skidmore:** I can absolutely confirm the Government's commitment to research and development, and our wider commitment to doubling the R&D budget. We will spend a record amount on R&D for the future as we seek to become a global science superpower. When it comes the Horizon budget, we obviously want to work at pace to ensure that we can look at association. The association articles have yet to be fully developed, and we need to work with the EU on that. We are not alone in this—Switzerland, Norway, Israel, South Africa, Canada and many other countries are keen to associate themselves with Horizon Europe—but we must wait for the development of those articles. We will respond shortly to the Smith report, prepared by Sir Adrian Smith and Graeme Reid, which sets out alternatives to Horizon Europe.

As I have already said to the hon. Lady, I view this very much as a hub-and-spoke approach. I want association with Horizon Europe to be the centrepiece of our innovation strategy, but I want us then to build on that through future international co-operation.

**Carol Monaghan:** Many of the countries that the Minister has just mentioned also participate fully in Erasmus. The future relationship with the EU has yet to be decided, as was confirmed by the Secretary of State when he said that Erasmus

“will be a question for further negotiations”.—[*Official Report*, 14 January 2020; Vol. 669, c. 912.]

However, at Prime Minister's questions last week, the Prime Minister said:

“There is no threat to the Erasmus scheme, and we will continue to participate in it. UK students will continue to be able to enjoy the benefits of exchanges with our European friends and partners, just as they will be able to continue to come to this country.”—[*Official Report*, 15 January 2020; Vol. 669, c. 1021.]

Who was correct, the Prime Minister or the Secretary of State?

**Chris Skidmore:** When it comes to Erasmus+, as the hon. Lady well knows, we have a current programme that will run until 2021. The whole House had an opportunity to vote for the withdrawal agreement, not once, not twice, not three times; it had a fourth opportunity on Second Reading of the Bill, and a fifth on Third Reading. That withdrawal agreement protects our participation in the Erasmus+ scheme.

**Alan Brown** (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): Does it?

**Chris Skidmore:** It absolutely does. It is not just the Government's withdrawal agreement; it is the EU's withdrawal agreement. Our determination to protect and stabilise our participation is crucial. It has been destabilised by other Opposition parties which have tried to vote down the withdrawal agreement over the past year or so. As for future negotiations, the Erasmus successor scheme, its protocols and its regulations have not yet been prepared. We do not know the overall cost of the programme, and we do not even know what it will look like. However, we will go into the negotiations in good faith, seeking to participate in that future Erasmus programme.

## T-levels

12. **Rob Roberts** (Delyn) (Con): What progress his Department has made on the introduction of T-Levels. [900250]

**The Secretary of State for Education (Gavin Williamson):** We have made excellent progress, and we remain on track for the introduction of T-levels this September. We have selected awarding organisations to deliver the first 10 T-levels, and we continue to work closely with providers to ensure that they are ready for first teaching, including through additional funding and training.

**Rob Roberts:** The T-level is a wonderful example of how this Conservative Government are planning to bring back advanced vocational and technical training, providing stability and life-long skills for a new generation of workers in jobs that probably do not exist yet. As the courses are rolled out in England, will my right hon. Friend join me in encouraging the Welsh Government to observe progress and look into whether T-levels could be introduced in Wales, so that students in my constituency can also benefit from them?

**Gavin Williamson:** I know that my hon. Friend is already distinguishing himself as a strong voice for his constituents and that he wants the very best for them. He recognises that what we are investing in T-levels across the border could bring real benefits to many of his constituents. We know that some of the major employers in his area, including Airbus, will be looking for the very best type of qualifications. It is incredibly important that Governments—not just the UK Government but the Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish Governments—work closely together to ensure that we get the right skillset across the whole United Kingdom. Co-operation and collaboration are the absolute essence of achieving that, and I hope to do that with the Welsh Government as well.

**Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): Is the Secretary of State aware that, in the dark old days when Tony Blair was Prime Minister, we believed in evidence-based policy, from early years right through to FE and HE? What research has he done into the efficacy of T-levels? Are they working? Does he still have a research facility in his Department?

**Gavin Williamson:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his question. I would also like to thank those on the Opposition Front Bench who worked closely with us on the development of T-levels. This is one of the only reforms this Government have embarked upon that they supported. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that we have not started T-levels yet, but we will understandably be looking at them closely to ensure that they are delivering what we expect them to deliver. He will no doubt also welcome the fact that we set up the Education Endowment Foundation because we were conscious that the previous Labour Government often engaged in policy without any evidence whatsoever, and we did not want to make the same mistakes.

### Good School Places

14. **Mark Menzies** (Fylde) (Con): What steps his Department is taking to increase the number of good school places in England. [900252]

**The Minister for School Standards (Nick Gibb):** Delivering good-quality school places is a top priority for this Government. We are on track to create 1 million places between 2010 and 2020, with 920,000 already created. That is the largest increase in school capacity for at least two generations. As at August 2019, 86% of schools inspected by Ofsted were rated good or outstanding, compared with 68% in 2010.

**Mark Menzies:** A huge number of new homes are being built in my constituency, and parents are genuinely worried that the school places to accommodate them will not be built in time. What assurances can the Minister give me that that is not the case?

**Nick Gibb:** We are providing funding to local authorities for every place that is needed, based on local authorities' own data. In addition, when future housing developments are driving pupil numbers, we expect the local planning authority to negotiate significant developer contributions to help to meet the demand for new schools. In our manifesto, we committed to amending planning rules so that the infrastructure, including schools, comes before people move into new homes. I know that my hon. Friend is concerned about this issue, and I would be happy to meet him and his local authority to ensure that the right action is being taken in his area.

### Student Finance: Students from Low-income Backgrounds

16. **Zarah Sultana** (Coventry South) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the effect of the student finance system on students from low-income backgrounds. [900254]

**The Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation (Chris Skidmore):** The current student finance system removes financial barriers to those hoping to study. The Government review support for students annually, and we have recently announced a 2.9% increase to maximum grants and maintenance loans for the 2020-21 academic year. This takes support for the lowest-income students to record levels.

**Zarah Sultana:** In 2010, like thousands of other young people, I argued against the tripling of tuition fees, but the Government ignored us, and I currently have around £50,000 of student debt. I have here my latest student loan statement, which says that the interest added in the past year alone was £2,022.65. Can the Secretary of State look me in the eye and tell me that it is fair that working-class kids who want an education are being forced to take on colossal debt while his Government is led by a man who went from the playing fields of Eton to a free education at Oxford—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. We are going to need short questions.

**Chris Skidmore:** Students pay nothing back until they start earning £25,725 a year, and that will rise to £26,575 from April 2020. It is important to understand that the

number of people from disadvantaged backgrounds going to university has risen by 62% since 2009, and the Government are committed to looking at interest rates in future as part of the Conservative manifesto's proposals.

**Andrew Percy** (Brigg and Goole) (Con): As a working-class lad who went to university and who voted against the tripling of tuition fees, I urge my hon. Friend to ignore the class warfare of the hon. Member for Coventry South (Zarah Sultana). Was not the one thing I was wrong about in that 2010 vote that it would put working-class kids off, because the evidence is that it has had the exact opposite effect?

**Chris Skidmore:** I thank my hon. Friend for making that essential point. Participation has risen year on year. Individuals are going through the school system, increasing the standard of their skills, and deciding that they want to take up HE as a route to future opportunities. However, we recognise that there must also be future opportunities within the FE system, which is why we want to ensure that every pupil in the post-18 education system is able to benefit for the future.

### School Funding

17. **Bridget Phillipson** (Houghton and Sunderland South) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding for schools. [900255]

**The Secretary of State for Education (Gavin Williamson):** We are investing more in schools over the next three years, with an additional £2.6 billion in 2020-21, £4.8 billion in 2021-22 and £7.1 billion in 2022-23, when compared with 2019-20. That money will allow schools to invest more in teachers and resources to ensure that all children get the top-quality education they deserve.

**Bridget Phillipson:** Every secondary school in my constituency has been judged by Ofsted to require improvement. We have seen various Government initiatives come and go, but when will the Secretary of State get to grips with the scale of the challenge at secondary level right across the north and bring forward a far more ambitious and properly funded plan to tackle it?

**Gavin Williamson:** It is troubling that the hon. Lady's constituency has such a large number of schools that are not achieving at a good or outstanding level. We recently launched an educational multi-academy trust in the north-east known as the Falcon Trust to take over some of the most difficult and challenging schools and to instil in them the type of leadership and ability that can turn them around. The Government will look to expand and grow that much more rapidly, because no community should suffer from not having good or outstanding schools. We will not rest until we ensure that we do everything we can to deliver for children in schools in her constituency and many others.

### Topical Questions

T1. [900263] **Mr Virendra Sharma** (Ealing, Southall) (Lab): If he will make a statement on his departmental responsibilities.

**The Secretary of State for Education (Gavin Williamson):**

I would like to address the claim in news reports that data from the Department's learner record service has been shared with a commercial data broker. I reassure the House that my Department does not share any data with the commercial data broker in question and, indeed, the data broker has removed its claim that we do so. Instead, an education training organisation, in breach of its agreement with us, wrongly provided information on learners from our learner record service, which we created to support individual learners and increase their future opportunities. It was a completely unacceptable abuse of information, and we have immediately stopped the firm's access and ended our agreements with it. The Department has begun a full investigation, and any provider found to be in breach of its contracts will have its agreements and access immediately removed.

**Mr Sharma:** The Under-Secretary of State for Education, the hon. Member for Chippenham (Michelle Donelan), responded half-heartedly to the question on free school meals, so I give the Secretary of State another opportunity to clear up the point. About 400,000 schoolchildren in London alone are at risk of food insecurity. When will the Government adopt universal free school meals to end this injustice and ensure that every child can reach their potential?

**Gavin Williamson:** I completely disagree with the hon. Gentleman's assessment of the answer given by the Under-Secretary to Question 7. I thought she answered it with gusto and passion.

This Government are absolutely committed to helping children from the most vulnerable backgrounds. Schemes such as breakfast clubs and holiday activity clubs, which have been trialled in the past year, are making an enormous difference to so many young people. The hon. Gentleman should fully represent that next time he asks a question.

T5. [900268] **Bob Blackman** (Harrow East) (Con): I have been working with a group of parents in my constituency to set up an Islamic faith school as a free school. Sadly, Harrow Council has been obstructing them. Will my right hon. Friend set out what the Government are doing to encourage and enable parents to have faith-based schools on a free school basis if they so wish?

**Gavin Williamson:** On both sides of the House, we all recognise the important role that religious and faith organisations play in our education system. It is saddening to see the political ideology of Harrow Council getting in the way of opportunities for young people. It is shocking to think that the council wants to deprive young people in Harrow of the opportunity to get the very best, and I will certainly write to the chief executive to get assurances that the council is not letting political ideology get in the way of opportunities for the young people of Harrow.

**Tulip Siddiq** (Hampstead and Kilburn) (Lab): The National Day Nurseries Association published research last week showing that three quarters of local education authorities underspent their early years budget in 2018-19, with Surrey County Council having an underspend of £5 million. I am curious to know where this money is going and whether councils are using the money to plug

the gap in overstretched SEN budgets. Does the Minister agree that this demonstrates there is a problem in how the dedicated schools grant is being implemented? Does he also agree that, if money has been set aside to give children the best start in life, it should not be used to plug the gap in other parts of the budget?

**The Minister for School Standards (Nick Gibb):** It is for local authorities to decide how they allocate funding to providers in their local area. I am very happy to look at the issue the hon. Lady raises. We have announced a £66 million increase in funding for early years, which is a good settlement, for the year before we come into the spending review period.

T7. [900270] **Andrew Lewer** (Northampton South) (Con): The all-party parliamentary group on independent education will hold an event in Parliament on 11 February to celebrate the almost 11,500 partnerships between independent and state schools. What steps is the Department taking to make sure that schools have the support and the resources they need to form meaningful partnerships?

**Nick Gibb:** I congratulate my hon. Friend on his election as chair of the all-party parliamentary group on independent education. He is absolutely right to allude to the many unpopular and damaging proposals in Labour's election manifesto, particularly when it comes to education. We should be working with the independent sector, not seeking to outlaw the freedom of parents to spend their money as they wish. I would be delighted to join him on 11 February to celebrate the many successful partnerships between the state and independent sectors.

T3. [900265] **Cat Smith** (Lancaster and Fleetwood) (Lab): I draw the House's attention to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests.

A significant proportion of teaching staff in our higher education institutions are casualised. Is the Minister aware of the University and College Union report published today, which illustrates this culture of fixed-term and casual contracts? Will he join me in welcoming the changes at Lancaster University? After extensive negotiations with the UCU, Unite and Unison, a new policy has now been agreed that commits Lancaster University to using indefinite contracts, wherever possible. What is he doing to change the culture of casualisation in higher education?

**The Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation (Chris Skidmore):** I thank the hon. Lady for rightly raising an important question. I have seen the UCU's report, which demonstrates that approximately 70% of early-career researchers are on fixed-term contracts. There are also zero-hours contracts, and I am extremely concerned by the findings. I want to ensure that, as part of our strategy towards hitting 2.4% of GDP being spent on research and development by 2027, we respect our early-career researchers, which is why I have supported the concordat on early-career research. I call on all universities to reconsider very carefully the sustainability and the opportunities of our early-career research system, because these individuals who are doing their doctorates and doing research at an early stage of their career will be the future researchers and scientists we need in this country.

T8. [900271] **Theo Clarke** (Stafford) (Con): Schoolchildren in Stafford have raised the issue of period poverty with me. Will the Minister update us on when period products will be available in schools and colleges, as per the Government's announcement today?

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Michelle Donelan):** I am delighted to announce that schools and colleges in England can order free period products from today, and orders have already been placed. No young girl should have her education disrupted or should miss parts of her education due to something as normal and regular as a period, and I am delighted that we are now giving access to those products for free.

T4. [900266] **Grahame Morris** (Easington) (Lab): I would like to take issue with responses given earlier by Ministers. May I point out that Durham County Council did not receive any of the funding allocated by the Department to provide holiday activities and meals for disadvantaged families? More than 7,000 children, 40% of children in my constituency, live in poverty. Is it not time we applied an old Labour principle and prioritised the resources for the areas of greatest need?

**Gavin Williamson:** This was a pilot scheme rolled out in a number of areas right across the country. With changed representation in County Durham, I imagine that there will be a much stronger voice for County Durham in making sure that it gets things to happen. I look forward to meeting Members of Parliament from County Durham to talk about what opportunities they can deliver for their county.

**Mary Robinson** (Cheadle) (Con): Last year, Bramhall High School head Lynne Fox received a Pearson award for her success in turning around the school, which had previously required improvement. With some of the top results in the borough under their belt, staff and parents expected a good verdict at the subsequent inspection, just weeks later, and so they were stunned when Ofsted found that the school was still requiring improvement. Apparently, this was partly based on a revised view of schools where the duration of level 4 is extended. Hundreds of parents have complained to Ofsted and the head is set to resign. Will the Minister meet me to discuss the implications of the Ofsted inspection changes, and perhaps visit the school to meet the hard-working staff and pupils?

**Nick Gibb:** Yes, I am happy to meet my hon. Friend to discuss the standard of education in that school.

T6. [900269] **Margaret Ferrier** (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (SNP): Will the Secretary of State confirm whether the recommendations of the Augar review will be taken forward, to end the prolonged uncertainty? When can universities expect a Government statement on this?

**Chris Skidmore:** Philip Augar and his independent panel have made thoughtful recommendations on tuition fee levels, loan repayment, and the balance of funding between universities and further education. We are considering the report carefully but have not yet taken decisions on the recommendations. I can now announce that the Government will conclude the review alongside the next spending review, which will allow government

time to consider the recommendations thoroughly and to respond in a way that provides the sector with clarity about the future of post-18 education and training.

**Mrs Flick Drummond** (Meon Valley) (Con): Will the Minister update us on what support children with special educational needs receive, in respect of improving inter-agency co-ordination in order to provide prompt support and interventions?

**Michelle Donelan:** We totally understand the importance of inter-agency working, which is why we established the education, health and care plan system in the first place and why we are undertaking a SEND—special educational needs and disability—review. Ofsted and Care Quality Commission inspections look at the effectiveness of joint working in local areas, and we are strengthening our support and the challenge for areas where SEND services do need to improve.

T9. [900272] **Rosie Cooper** (West Lancashire) (Lab): As nursery schools in my constituency are threatened with closure, may I ask the Secretary of State what assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding for local councils to fund children's services and nursery provision? We cannot have nurseries close like this.

**Nick Gibb:** As I said, we have just announced £66 million of extra funding for the coming financial year, which means 8p an hour for early years providers in most local authorities. In addition, we have also announced a £60 million top-up for maintained nursery schools. We continue to monitor the marketplace to ensure that there is sufficient provision, and we keep that under review, but, as I said, a £66 million increase was agreed for the coming financial year.

**Sara Britcliffe** (Hyndburn) (Con): It has been proposed that pupils at Broadfield Specialist School in my constituency relocate to Hameldon Community College in Burnley. Is my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State willing to work with me and others on the proposed move, to ensure that our children receive the best education and the support they need?

**Michelle Donelan:** We understand that Lancashire County Council is consulting on the proposed change as part of a strategy to create an additional 60 special-school places in the local area. When such changes are proposed, the council must go through a formal consultation process. In doing so, it must take into account the views of all those affected by the proposal.

**Chris Bryant** (Rhondda) (Lab): Children from poorer backgrounds are four times more likely to suffer from a significant brain injury, either in their very early years or in their teenage years. If they do not get the right neurorehabilitation, there is a real danger that the effects will not be known until a year later, when the school completely misunderstands what is happening because of neurocognitive stall. Will the Government meet me and others who are interested in the subject to try to make sure that we put a proper package around every single child who has a brain injury, so that they really stand a chance in life?

**Michelle Donelan:** I am more than happy to meet the hon. Member, who has done a great deal of work to raise the issue, and take learnings from him. When it comes to SEND, our focus is not on the condition but on the child's individual needs. I want to understand what the hon. Member thinks we could do better to help children.

**Mr David Davis (Haltemprice and Howden) (Con):** The Secretary of State started topical questions by describing the improper release of 28 million records of students and schoolchildren. That serious breach of privacy and data protection was made even more serious by the fact that the data appears to have been used to

get even more young children hooked on gambling. One problem in this policy area is that the companies involved view the fines as just the cost of doing business. Through the Secretary of State, may I say to the Information Commissioner that I hope the fine in this case is many multiples of the profit made? I hope the Secretary of State will have his Department sue the company concerned for breach of practice.

**Gavin Williamson:** We take the abuse of this information incredibly seriously. We have referred the matter to the Information Commissioner and we hope that the Information Commissioner takes the most strident action so that such breaches never occur again.

## Building Safety

3.32 pm

**The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Robert Jenrick):** With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to update the House on the major package of reforms to the building safety system that I am announcing today.

The Government are committed to bringing about the biggest change in building safety for a generation. We took action to address the fire safety risks identified following the Grenfell Tower tragedy, and in the autumn we committed to adopting in full the recommendations of the Grenfell Tower inquiry phase 1 report. We will shortly publish our response to the phase 1 report, and a full debate is scheduled tomorrow for the House to discuss this important issue at length. The focus of this statement will be on the wider programme of building safety reforms and the work that I am leading to ensure that everyone is safe, and feels safe, in their own home.

The Government have already taken steps, including on aluminium composite material remediation, to tackle fire safety, but as that work continues, it becomes ever more evident that problems have developed over many decades, leading to serious incidents and the risk of further loss of life. This is completely unacceptable. It is clear that the problems will take many years to put right, but all of us—building owners, the construction industry, local authorities, the fire service and the Government—have an absolute duty to ensure that action continues to be taken as quickly as possible so that a tragedy such as the one at Grenfell Tower can never happen again.

There has been progress, but it has been unacceptably slow, so today I am setting out reforms that go further, and I intend to ensure that they do so faster. First, we will begin immediately to establish the new building safety regulator. This new regulator will be established within the Health and Safety Executive, which is an experienced regulator and is committed to introducing the new regulatory regime at pace. Ahead of legislation, the regulator will initially be in shadow form, and I am pleased to announce that Dame Judith Hackitt will chair a board to oversee the transition to this new regime. I expect the shadow regulator to be established within weeks, and we will be recruiting the first national chief inspector of buildings.

Secondly, our consultation on sprinklers and other measures for new build flats has now closed. I am carefully considering the responses and evidence received, but I can inform the House today that I am minded to lower the height threshold for sprinkler requirements in new buildings from 18 metres to 11 metres. Subject to further consideration, I will set out my detailed proposals in that respect in February.

Thirdly, we banned the use of combustible materials in the external walls of high-rise buildings in December 2018. My Department concluded a review into the ban's effectiveness, and today I am announcing a consultation on the ban, again going significantly further, including by lowering the 18 metre height threshold to at most 11 metres.

Fourthly, my Department, with support from the independent expert advisory panel, has provided advice for building owners on the steps they should be taking

to address a range of safety risks. We have listened to feedback, and I am today publishing updated advice that will provide the further clarity they have sought. This advice brings together 22 separate advice notes into one consolidated document.

There is evidence that there has not been enough focus among building owners on buildings below 18 metres. The expert panel has decided to clarify that more action is needed to review the risks in buildings below 18 metres, and owners of those buildings should review the advice and take action where needed. I want to be clear with the House that it has never been the case that, simply because a building is below 18 metres, owners are exempt from ensuring the safety of their residents. The requirement on building owners is to make sure buildings of any height are safe, and I expect all owners to be acting responsibly.

The panel's new advice makes clear that ACM cladding with an unmodified polyethylene core should not be used on buildings of any height. This reflects the evidence from the materials research programme, which to date has confirmed that ACM presents a much higher risk than any other materials tested when used on the external walls of buildings.

The consolidated advice note also clarifies the actions building owners should now take in relation to fire doors. I welcome the commitment from members of the Association of Composite Door Manufacturers to work with building owners to remediate their doors that have failed tests, and we will continue to monitor the situation closely.

Fifthly, I am today publishing a call for evidence seeking views on the assessment and prioritisation of risks associated with external wall systems, such as cladding, within existing buildings. For many years, we have relied on crude height limits with binary consequences, and it is clear to me that this approach to assessing risk does not reflect the complexity of the challenge at hand. I have concluded that we need a better, more sophisticated system to underpin our approach. Height will remain a significant and material factor, but it will sit alongside a broader range of risk factors. I am therefore today commissioning leading experts in the field to develop, as quickly as possible, a sophisticated matrix of risk that will replace the historic system and underpin our approach to future regulatory regimes.

Sixthly, while I welcome recent progress, remediation of unsafe ACM cladding, especially in the private sector, is still far too slow. This absolutely cannot continue, particularly when funding is now being provided by the taxpayer. Although all unsafe ACM cladding now has mitigation safety measures in place where required, I do not underestimate the concern of residents living in buildings where remediation has not even started.

The latest data show that, out of 92 buildings in scope, 82 applications have been made to the private sector ACM cladding remediation fund, and that the 10 for which applications have not been made have exceptional circumstances, which I have reviewed. However, an application to the fund is not an end in itself; that can never be sufficient. Construction work to remediate these buildings should be proceeding as quickly as possible. We will therefore be appointing an independent construction expert to review remediation timescales and identify what can be done to increase the pace in the private sector.

Inaction must have consequences. From next month, I will name those responsible for buildings where remediation has not started and remove them from the public list only when it has. My Department will be working with the relevant local authorities to drive enforcement where necessary. The Home Secretary will deliver the fire safety Bill and associated regulatory changes in order to enable delivery of the recommendations of the Grenfell inquiry phase 1 report. The proposed Bill will place beyond doubt that external wall systems, including cladding and the fire doors to individual flats in multi-occupied residential blocks, fall within the scope of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. These changes will affirm the ability to enforce locally against building owners who have not remediated unsafe ACM buildings. Building owners and developers who have not already taken action must do so now. Further delay is not acceptable.

Finally, I am aware of the concerns of leaseholders about meeting the cost of remediation. As I do not want cost to be a barrier to remediation, I am considering, with Her Majesty's Treasury, options to support leaseholders. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor and I will set out further details in due course.

The safety of people in their homes is paramount. Through the reforms that I have outlined today, I want to make it clear that this Government will not falter in doing whatever it takes to ensure that all buildings and all residents are made safe. I commend this statement to the House.

3.41 pm

**John Healey** (Wentworth and Dearne) (Lab): I thank the Secretary of State for an advance copy of his statement this afternoon.

The Secretary of State will remember, as we all do, the shocking disbelief and grief in the immediate aftermath of the dreadful Grenfell Tower fire in June 2017, and he will remember, as I do, the solemn undertakings from all parts of this House to make sure that such a fire could never happen again. I never thought that, two and a half years later, I would be standing here facing a Secretary of State—the third Secretary of State—who still cannot say that all the necessary action has been taken and that a fire like Grenfell cannot happen again in Britain.

Directly after the fire, the then Prime Minister made this promise on behalf of the Conservative Government:

“Landlords have a legal obligation to provide safe buildings... We cannot and will not ask people to live in unsafe homes.”—[*Official Report*, 22 June 2017; Vol. 626, c. 169.]

Yet thousands of people continue to live in unsafe homes, condemned to do so by this Government's failure on all fronts after Grenfell. Why, two and a half years later, are 315 high-rise blocks still cloaked in the same Grenfell-style cladding? Why do 76 of these blocks' owners not even have a plan in place to replace the deadly cladding? Why have 91 social tower block landlords still not replaced their ACM cladding, when this Secretary of State promised that it would be done by the end of last year? And why have the Government not completed and published full fire safety tests on other unsafe, but not ACM, types of cladding? Why has the Secretary of State had nothing to say this afternoon in his statement on these points?

The Secretary of State has made pledges of his own on Grenfell action. He promised

“to take action of a scale and a pace that is commensurate with the tragedy that prompted it.”—[*Official Report*, 30 October 2019; Vol. 667, c. 419.]

Seventy-two lives were lost in that Grenfell Tower fire, yet there have been no prosecutions, no fire safety fund to retrofit sprinklers, no legislation to make private block owners, not leaseholders, pay the safety work costs, and still no legislation in place to overhaul building safety legislation more than 20 months after the Government's own Hackitt review was published and accepted in full by Ministers.

I know that the Secretary of State has approached this task with a very serious intent since he was appointed in the summer, and we welcome the setting up of a national regulator to do the job that Ministers and the Department have been unable to do so far. I also welcome the decision to name and shame block owners who will not do the work, and the recognition that the system of building safety checks and controls does not just affect buildings of over six storeys.

There have been 21 announcements on building safety in this House since Grenfell, but there are still not enough answers and there is still not enough action, so let me ask the Secretary of State: given that the new building safety regulator will need legislation to underpin it, when will the new draft building safety Bill be published, and when on earth is it actually going to reach the statute book?

The Secretary of State has said this afternoon that ACM cladding with an unmodified polyethylene core should not be used on buildings of any height. How many additional buildings does he estimate fall into this category? Also, why wait a month to name and shame block owners who will not do the work? Why not do it now? In fact, why did he not do it in June, when I previously called for him to do so? And why has he not restated to the House that June 2020—fully three years on from Grenfell—is the Government's hard deadline for the full removal and replacement of ACM cladding from all tower blocks in this country? I am afraid that this is too little, at least two years too late.

At every stage since Grenfell, Ministers have failed to grasp the scale of the problems or the scale of the Government action required, and I fear that we will reach the third anniversary—and, Lord forbid, the fourth anniversary—and still not be able to say to people with confidence that a fire like Grenfell can never happen again in Britain.

**Robert Jenrick:** I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his questions and the tone with which he approaches this task. I think we can find a lot of common cause on this issue.

The right hon. Gentleman says that we have not done enough. This is an extremely challenging task, but the Government have already taken a wide range of steps of which he is aware. We announced the independent inquiry, the first phase of which has now reported, and the second phase of which will begin on 27 January. We commissioned Dame Judith's independent review into our building safety regime, which was widely praised. It has reported back, and has led to the measures that we are taking today. Dame Judith remains closely involved in the process and will now be leading the establishment

[Robert Jenrick]

of the new regulator. I have taken the decision that that work needs to begin immediately, and have chosen the Health and Safety Executive to be the home of the regulator because it has the capacity to do so at pace.

We launched the social sector ACM cladding remediation fund in 2018, and that has led to a very large number of properties having remediation work on ACM cladding. We later extended that to the private sector. The right hon. Gentleman is right to say that it is frustrating that the pace of work has not been faster. I am frustrated by it. I said to the House in September that I would name and shame building owners who had not already commenced work or who were not taking the issue sufficiently seriously. I think that threat contributed to an increase in action from building owners, and now every private sector building with ACM cladding—bar 10—has a plan and is working with my Department to commence or complete remediation works. The 10 buildings that have not done so already are in exceptional circumstances; they are mostly buildings that have only recently been discovered to be clad in ACM, so they are late to join the process. We are none the less working to expedite those cases to ensure that they get moving at pace. I have said that we will publish that list next month, so it will happen within a matter of weeks. I hope that that will be a further spur on those building owners to do the right thing and get moving.

We have set out today a very significant set of measures that will have a profound effect on the industry, particularly on new buildings built in the years ahead. I have said that I am minded, subject to the final review of the consultation, to lower the height threshold for sprinklers. We have to be guided by evidence. Dame Judith and our expert panel suggest that it is too crude to say that all high-rise buildings should be remediated and have retrofitted sprinklers—that we need to take an individual-building approach, because it might be the right thing for some buildings but not for all. I will certainly, as long as I am in this job, be guided by the evidence.

We have set up the protection board that I announced last year, which is working with the Home Office, with my Department and with fire and rescue services on a priority basis to assess those buildings where assessments have not yet been made and ensure that the building owners take action.

The right hon. Gentleman asked about legislation. We announced in the Queen's Speech last year that the building safety Bill would come forward. Following the outcome of the first phase of the Grenfell Tower inquiry, I took the view that that was too long to wait, and so we have now divided the work into two Bills, one of which will come forward very swiftly—a fire safety Bill. That will place into legislation the recommendations of the judge that require legislation; some require regulatory change rather than primary legislation. Later this year, we will follow that with the larger, more complex building safety Bill, which we intend to publish before the summer recess. That will be the biggest change to our building safety regime for 40 years. I do not underestimate the complexity of that, and it is obviously right that we get the details correct so that we can move forwards.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I am aiming to run this statement until about 20 past 4.

**Sir Peter Bottomley** (Worthing West) (Con): There will be a welcome for the announcement about the role of Dame Judith Hackitt.

Many points will be made in the next half hour or so, but I want to concentrate on two. First, the Leasehold Knowledge Partnership and the all-party parliamentary group on leasehold and commonhold reform were the first to point out the difficulties of private leaseholders in these tower blocks. When the Secretary of State and his Department work closely with the LKP and with the all-party group, we will not have all the answers, but I commend to him the fact that we can certainly point to many of the questions and some of the problems as well.

Additionally, may I commend what Nick Ross, the independent commentator and expert on risk, has said—that people do not die in buildings where there is a fire if there are sprinklers? We ought to pay more attention to that. Even if they are not required everywhere, we ought to consider whether they would be useful and valuable.

Finally, at the all-party group meeting, leaseholders talked about the sixfold or greater increase in their insurance premiums. The Government should get together with the Association of British Insurers and say, “Are people being scalped or is there scope for a scheme like Flood Re, which made premiums affordable to ordinary people trying to go on living in their homes?”

**Robert Jenrick:** I thank the Father of the House, who has been heavily involved in this issue and has a long-standing interest in leasehold reform. We are working with the insurance industry and the mortgage industry to try to unblock the issues that are flowing there. We have had some success with that. There is now a deal between the major lenders and the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors to find a simpler way to assess the condition of high-rise buildings and ensure that lenders can make a proper assessment of the value of people's homes. We will continue to engage with that very closely.

I am happy to work with my hon. Friend and any others who represent or are interested in leasehold reform. He knows my personal interest in that and commitment to bring forward legislation later in the year. I have been contacted by many leaseholders who feel trapped in their homes and are very concerned about their ability to meet the costs that flow through. It is obviously right that building owners should meet the cost of remediation work, but we need to work with leaseholders to ensure that meeting those costs is not a barrier to getting the work done and keeping them safe. I have made that commitment today.

**Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP): I am glad to see the Minister bringing forward some recommendations. He says that he will be guided by evidence, but in Scotland we already have gone from 18 metres to 11 metres. I have raised this in the House three times now, so I do not understand why he is still at some kind of consultation phase on it. There is evidence already and he could act on it to make those changes. I am pleased that he is bringing forward a building safety regulator, but what additional funding will the Health

and Safety Executive get for that? It is already under significant pressure and should not be asked to take on more without the funds to back it.

What is the Minister learning from the Scottish Housing Regulator, which I have mentioned to him before? Has he met it to discuss the work that already goes on in Scotland? Will people be able to make complaints to the shadow regulator in the interim, or will they have to wait until it is fully set up? Will the reporting of significant performance failures be part of that, as it is in the Scottish system?

On the Secretary of State's point about consolidation of advice notes, I have had constituents contact me about the consequences of advice note 14, which was drawn up by his Government but is having an impact on people in Scotland who cannot sell their properties and are struggling with insurance issues. What communication has he had with the Scottish Government on that? I know that the Housing Minister, Kevin Stewart, has been in touch with him about that issue. We cannot resolve it, because it is an issue for this Government and about mortgage lending, which is not in the Scottish Government's purview. It would be useful to know what discussions the Secretary of State has had and how he intends to resolve this issue in the consolidated advice note.

Lastly, on remediation, we do not have quite the same problem with leasehold in Scotland that exists in England, but we do have issues. I want to ask the Secretary of State, as I have asked him before, about incentivisation to resolve some of these issues. For example, is he looking at reducing the VAT on sprinklers and cladding to encourage people to act at a speedier rate, and will he ensure that the fund is accessible to those who need it in Scotland?

**Robert Jenrick:** I am happy to work with the hon. Lady and her colleagues in Scotland and to ensure that my Department is properly engaged with the Scottish Government, to learn all we can from their experience and vice versa. With respect to the mortgage market, I have said that we have been working closely with lenders and RICS to find a way forward. We have made significant progress, and they announced their deal during the general election campaign in the autumn.

We listened to the commentary that it was too confusing having multiple sources of advice for building owners, so we have worked to consolidate those 22 pieces of advice into one document: advice note 14. That has been published on the gov.uk website, and we remain open to comments on it and refinement of it, if necessary. The research and testing process that lies behind advice note 14, which the right hon. Member for Wentworth and Dearne (John Healey) raised, will be published next month. That process is coming to its final conclusions, and that information will also be in the public domain, so those who take a particular interest and require to see the evidence behind advice note 14 will be able to do so.

We will, of course, give the Health and Safety Executive the funding required to set up the regulator. We chose the Health and Safety Executive, as opposed to creating a stand-alone building safety regulator, precisely because it has the expertise and the capacity and is ready to get going at pace, which I think we can all agree is essential.

**Felicity Buchan (Kensington) (Con):** I welcome the fact that my right hon. Friend will consult on whether height alone should be the determining factor or whether there should be a more sophisticated matrix of risks. I am very concerned about vulnerable residents in the likes of care homes and hospitals. Will they be taken into consideration in the matrix of risks?

**Robert Jenrick:** I welcome my hon. Friend to the House and will no doubt work closely with her on these issues in the years ahead. I think it was right to take the decision that height alone was too crude a measure and that we needed to consider this carefully and involve a whole range of factors, including the likely use of the building and the likely nature of the residents of that building, whether it be a hotel, student accommodation or something else. That is exactly what we are doing, and we will use the best possible expert advice to draw up a new regime.

We saw in the Bolton fire, where the building was 17.6 or 17.8 metres high—just a matter of centimetres away from the 18-metre threshold—that height alone was simply too crude a measure and that building safety needs to be proportionate to the building. Height is likely to continue to be a very material factor—perhaps the most material one—but a range of other factors now need to be considered.

**Ms Karen Buck (Westminster North) (Lab):** The issue of retrofitting sprinklers in social housing blocks seems to be less determined by risk assessment than by cost and the legal right to access those properties. We have seen Wandsworth Council lose its case in the first-tier tribunal. My council has suspended work on retrofitting because of a lack of clarity about rights of access. Can the Secretary of State tell us exactly what the policy is and whether he accepts that, in almost all social blocks, there are multi-tenures—there are private leaseholders—and there needs to be clarity about how retrofitting will be funded and what rights of access councils will have to private leasehold properties?

**Robert Jenrick:** I will take up the issue the hon. Lady raises with respect to rights of access so that I can give her the best possible advice there. With respect to cost, the position today, as it has been throughout, is that this remediation work is the responsibility of building owners. As I have already said now on a number of occasions, I am aware of the fact that clearly there are some leaseholders who will struggle to raise the necessary funds. We have precedents for this: we see, for example, homeowners who purchased their property through right to buy and who may then be presented with significant costs, perhaps by a council or a housing association. Measures have been put in place to help them through that process so that that is not a bar to doing the essential works that now need to be done. That is exactly the conversation I will now be having with the Treasury to see whether we can put in place some sensible proposals to help people in that situation.

**David Simmonds (Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner) (Con):** As someone who, in a past life, chaired a local authority housing committee responsible for these matters, may I welcome my right hon. Friend's announcement of the new regulator? I ask my right hon. Friend to update us on the discussions that he has been having with local

[David Simmonds]

authority leaders on both how to use the information in their possession to identify buildings and structures at risk in their area, and how the learning from that might help the new regulator to bring some clarity to the often confusing area of building control.

**Robert Jenrick:** We have been working closely with local authorities ever since the Grenfell tragedy. We have supported them with advice and funding so that they can draw up lists and provide data on buildings over 18 metres—we have provided them with £4 million for that—and we should be in a position to publish that data in March, which is the deadline that we set local authorities. We have also created the protection board, which is designed to take that work to another level—bringing together the fire and rescue services, the Home Office and my Department with local authorities to assess, on a priority basis, the fire safety of those buildings that have not yet been assessed.

**Marsha De Cordova (Battersea) (Lab):** Would the Secretary of State like to take this opportunity to apologise to all residents and those in privately owned blocks who still are living with this unsafe Grenfell-style cladding wrapped around their homes, when the Government set their own target of December 2019 to have this cladding removed? Will he apologise in particular to those in a social housing block in my constituency, Castlemaine, where this work has been delayed—it has been held up by chaos—and Wandsworth Council is not taking responsibility for ensuring that the work is done and done to a high standard?

**Robert Jenrick:** I am sorry to hear about the example that the hon. Lady raises, and I will look into that if she could give me the details after this statement. Since becoming Secretary of State, I have taken action to ensure that the remediation fund moves forward at pace. We now have a named contact working with every one of these buildings. I review the lists regularly, and we have made a great deal of progress. We have now reached the point, as I have said, where every building is within the system and is working with my Department. The only ones that are not are those that emerged only recently as having ACM cladding. I hope that we will now, finally, make rapid progress.

**Kevin Hollinrake (Thirsk and Malton) (Con):** May I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement and his proactivity on this issue? Advice note 14 states that only limited combustibility materials should be used on external surfaces, but our work on the Select Committee has shown that the actual guidance was much more ambiguous, which leaves many leaseholders in limbo. Will he consider extending the remediation fund to cover other types of combustible cladding?

**Robert Jenrick:** The expert advice that we received said that ACM should be the priority of Government. That is why my predecessors announced the £600 million remediation fund for ACM on high-rise buildings. The testing results, which I will publish next month, confirm that decision and make it clear that ACM is significantly more dangerous than any other substance. That has

rightly been the focus of taxpayers' money in terms of grant, but there may be other ways forward to assist those leaseholders trapped in other types of buildings.

**Jack Dromey (Birmingham, Erdington) (Lab):** Before Christmas, two tenants from a Stockland Green tower block in my constituency asked me why it has taken the best part of three years for the Government not to come up with one single penny towards making safe the 213 tower blocks in Birmingham, which include 10,000 households. They were right, because despite the warm words and promises made at the time, not one penny has been forthcoming. Will the Secretary of State personally look again at the request by Birmingham City Council for the necessary financial support to complete the task of making safe those tower blocks?

**Robert Jenrick:** I am happy to review that once again, but as I said in response to previous questions, we have provided £600 million of funding to ensure that properties in the private and social sectors are remediated as swiftly as possible.

**Alex Chalk (Cheltenham) (Con):** I am grateful to the Secretary of State for the urgency with which he has approached this issue. Employers who employ people in unsafe conditions could be liable to prosecution under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, and there is a parallel with this issue. Does the Secretary of State agree that if this final opportunity to make safe these dwellings is not taken, enforcement action should not be ruled out?

**Robert Jenrick:** Absolutely, and we have not ruled it out. Local authorities have the power to take enforcement action, and we are working closely with them to ensure that they do so if progress is too slow. When we have legislated for our new building safety regime and put the regulator on a statutory footing, there will be new criminal offences in this area. Every building will have a named individual who is responsible for its safety, not just at the point that it is built, but for the whole of its life, and that individual will be criminally liable for the safety of that building.

**Meg Hillier (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/Co-op):** I should declare that I am a leaseholder and all my cladding is being removed—happily, I am one of the fortunate few whose developer is paying for it. However, many of my constituents are mortgage prisoners, shared owners, or people on low incomes, and they are trapped in that position and unable to move their lives on. The Secretary of State has said warm words about talking to the Treasury, but we all know how difficult it can be to get money out of it. Is he looking at other options, such as interest-free loans on a long-term basis? How quickly can he move? These leaseholders are trapped and need to know whether they will be waiting for months or years.

**Robert Jenrick:** The hon. Lady is right—I am concerned about the position of those leaseholders, and we will work closely with the Treasury to see whether there is a way forward. There are already examples of building owners or private finance providers bringing forward low or zero-interest loans, on a hardship basis, to help

individuals who are on low incomes or without savings to make the payments required to remediate their buildings. There may be a role for the Government in ensuring that that works, that the loans are affordable, and that it is done as quickly as possible.

**Eddie Hughes** (Walsall North) (Con): I remain a proud member of the Chartered Institute of Building. Will the Secretary of State endorse the work of the CIOB in driving up standards in construction to ensure that we build safer buildings in the future, not least with its code of quality management, which was published in September last year?

**Robert Jenrick:** I am happy to endorse that work. Our building safety regime in this country is flawed in many respects, and decades of neglect now need to be addressed. That will have to work through all parts of the system, whether Government or the construction sector, and we must ensure that builders and developers pay far more attention to quality and safety than they have done in the past. We have recently seen disturbing reports, such as the independent report on Persimmon that was published at the end of last year, and action is now required from the whole construction industry.

**Grahame Morris** (Easington) (Lab): The Minister referred in his statement to long-standing problems and, quite rightly, to a loss of public confidence. Does he think it will help to improve public confidence if, as newspaper reports state, the investigation panel into what went wrong with the Grenfell cladding is set to include an engineer, Benita Mehra, whose previous organisation was in receipt of thousands of pounds from Arconic, the company that manufactured the Grenfell cladding?

**Robert Jenrick:** I am aware of the issue raised by the hon. Gentleman. As Secretary of State I am a core participant in the inquiry, and I cannot comment on the judge or his panel. Appointments to the panel are made by the Prime Minister, advised by the Cabinet Office. I know the Prime Minister is aware of the issues raised by the hon. Gentleman, and he will be considering them carefully.

**Bob Blackman** (Harrow East) (Con): I thank my right hon. Friend for his statement. There are two issues I want to raise briefly. The first is the extent of the buildings that will now be brought into scope. Clearly, a large number of buildings will now be in scope. Has my right hon. Friend examined how many there will be? Secondly, there is a lot of criticism of the tests themselves and whether they are fit for purpose. Will he review the safety tests to ensure they are brought up to modern standards?

**Robert Jenrick:** I do not have precise figures for my hon. Friend today, but he is right that the changes we have announced will bring a large number of additional buildings within the safety regime that we have been working through since the Grenfell tragedy. That is a difficult decision to take, but I think it is right. We have to be guided by the evidence. We have to make the necessary changes and then take whatever steps emerge afterwards, but I am very mindful, for example, of the impact on leaseholders and on the mortgage market.

That is why my Department is working very closely with lenders to ensure that the steps we have announced today do not have an adverse impact on the market.

**Hilary Benn** (Leeds Central) (Lab): The Secretary of State justifies the particular help because of the risk from ACM cladding, but many leaseholders, including in places like St George's Building, Leeds Dock and Timble Beck in my constituency in Leeds, have been told by the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service that if they do not have a waking watch they will have to move out. The cost of a waking watch risks bankrupting leaseholders even before we get to the point of determining who will pay for the replacement of the cladding. I very much welcome the hint in the statement today about working with the Treasury, but since leaseholders are so stressed by all of this can the Secretary of State give some indication of when that announcement might come? Will they have to wait for the Budget or could it be earlier?

**Robert Jenrick:** I cannot give the right hon. Gentleman precise details of the negotiations, but they are continuing and we will work closely to see what arrangements we can put in place. I encourage any building owner to take action immediately. Building owners need to conduct a fire safety assessment of their building, if that is required, and then take any steps required. No delay should be encouraged by any of us.

**Robert Halfon** (Harlow) (Con): I welcome the statement. My right hon. Friend will be aware of the issue of permitted development rights and the problems it has caused my constituency. How will the building safety regulations apply to that? What is he doing to ensure quality housing and proper building safety for permitted development rights buildings?

**Robert Jenrick:** My right hon. Friend and I have discussed permitted development rights in the past, and he has taken me to Harlow to see some of the issues there. That is why we have reviewed the permitted development office-to-residential regulations and will be taking forward any reforms necessary as a result. All properties built in this country need to be safe. That will have to feed through to all of the Government's policies and our whole building safety regime.

**Kate Green** (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): Generally, leaseholders do not enjoy third-party rights to claim under the latent structural defect insurance taken out by a developer or his design team. Will the Secretary of State consider legislating to provide for minimum levels of cover, minimum terms for such insurance and the third-party rights of leaseholders and managing agents to make claims under those policies?

**Robert Jenrick:** I will consider the hon. Lady's proposals.

**Mrs Natalie Elphicke** (Dover) (Con): I draw the House's attention to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests. I welcome the steps outlined to progress the building safety regulator and the progress that has been made to remediate the majority of the social housing properties. With continuing progress in the private sector, I share the desire expressed that all such properties are made safe and secure as quickly as

[Mrs Natalie Elphicke]

possible. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that all those involved in building and maintenance of housing will be required to meet the important reforms of new building safety systems that he has outlined today?

**Robert Jenrick:** Yes, I certainly can. I also draw attention to the fact that my hon. Friend has taken forward our new homes ombudsman. I will bring forward legislation in due course to put that on a statutory footing, so that developers are held to account and there is a proper redress system for those purchasing properties.

**Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD):** I welcome the appointment of Dame Judith Hackitt as chair to oversee the establishment of the new regulator within the Health and Safety Executive. However, I worry that such regulators have become severely underfunded. The Secretary of State said that there would be new funding, but I worry that it will just disappear within the HSE. Can he reassure me that the budget for the new regulator will be ring-fenced?

**Robert Jenrick:** I reassure the hon. Lady that whatever funds are required to ensure that the regulator succeeds will be made available. A very large number of individuals are already working on building safety in my Department—well over 100 people are engaged in this activity, many of whom will, in due course, transition to the new regulator—but, as I said before, the reason we chose the Health and Safety Executive is that it has the experience and the capacity, and it can move quickly.

**Paul Blomfield (Sheffield Central) (Lab):** I wrote to the Secretary of State over two months ago highlighting the case of a student housing block that had been evacuated, with all tenants relocated, as a result of multiple fire regulation failures. This was a building that had been signed off by a Government-approved private building inspection company without a site inspection. Does he agree—he has not replied to me yet—that he needs to review the entire process of building control in the context of that case?

**Robert Jenrick:** I will look up the hon. Gentleman's letter and make sure that a proper response is given to him as soon as possible. However, the premise of Dame Judith's work, which will be legislated for in our building safety Bill, is to ensure that there is a proper, robust system for the inspection of buildings at the point that they are constructed, meaning that we do not have building inspectors appointed by the developers, but that these are independent individuals working to robust procedures, and then that an individual is criminally liable for the outcomes.

**Margaret Ferrier (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (SNP):** I thank the Secretary of State for his statement. Will people be able to make complaints to the shadow regulator? When will he meet Kevin Stewart to discuss the implications of his advice notes for owners in Scotland? Finally, how much money will he allocate to the Health and Safety Executive?

**Robert Jenrick:** I have already said that we are very happy to engage with colleagues in the Scottish Government, and I will make sure that that happens.

The funding that the Health and Safety Executive requires will be available. We are still having those conversations with it, so I do not want to wrongly advise the hon. Lady, but I say again that we will ensure that it has the resources it requires to take forward this incredibly important work.

**Matt Western (Warwick and Leamington) (Lab):** The Secretary of State says that he is minded to review the minimum height of new buildings for the fitting of sprinkler systems. In November 2007, Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service lost four firefighters in a terrible blaze. Why will the Government simply not legislate for the fitting of sprinklers in all new builds and retrospectively?

**Robert Jenrick:** With respect to the hon. Gentleman, we have to follow procedures so we have consulted, which is the way we proceed on such matters. The consultation is now complete, we have reviewed the evidence and we will be publishing it shortly. However, I have said today that, subject to our exact response in the coming weeks, I am minded to make that move, and that will be done through regulation so it can happen swiftly.

**Lucy Powell (Manchester Central) (Lab/Co-op):** As the Minister knows, 79 unsafe blocks still remain in Manchester. Some have non-ACM cladding. In most cases, the cost of remediation is being passed on to leaseholders—upwards of £80,000 each. I am not sure after two and a half years, with this statement and the big package announced today, what a “name and shame” and conversations with the Treasury will do to reassure my residents in Manchester that their unsafe buildings will be dealt with immediately.

**Robert Jenrick:** I have laid out today a very significant series of reforms—not least creating immediately the first regulator for building safety—and I have said that we will continue to work with leaseholders, such as the ones she represents, to ensure that cost is not a barrier to remediation. However, this is a complex challenge that will clearly take this country a very long time to work through.

**Matthew Pennycook (Greenwich and Woolwich) (Lab):** The Secretary of State referenced the new industry-wide valuation process that was announced in December. Will he tell the House whether the Government have formally endorsed the new EWS1—external wall system—process? Have he or his officials had any evidence that it is working to resolve the problems that leaseholders in high-rise buildings face in selling or re-mortgaging their properties? If not, and if he has found any evidence that it is lacking, will he tell us what further clarification the consolidated advice note will provide in that area?

**Robert Jenrick:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. He raised these issues with me in the summer and has contributed to our work since then. My officials and I have worked closely with lenders, UK Finance and RICS to reach this agreement. It is too early to say whether it has been successful yet—it has only been in place for a matter of weeks—but I am hopeful that it will provide a much simpler system for valuing buildings and getting people's mortgages flowing in the way we all hope.

## Point of Order

4.19 pm

**Robert Halfon** (Harlow) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. On Friday, I met a significant number of dustmen and women in my constituency who sadly have had to take industrial action, their having been bullied and harassed by the senior management of Veolia in ways that are pretty disgusting. Can you advise me, Mr Speaker, on how I can raise this matter in Parliament and lobby Ministers in the Department for Communities and Local Government?

**Mr Speaker:** I think the right hon. Gentleman will recognise that it is not for me to decide, but pursuance of an Adjournment debate might be a good way, and I am sure those on the Front Bench are making notes. No doubt, too, the Employment Minister will wish to have a discussion with him.

## Debate on the Address

[6TH DAY]

*Debate resumed (Order, 14 January).*

*Question again proposed.*

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

Most Gracious Sovereign,

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

## Economy and Jobs

**Mr Speaker:** I inform the House that I have selected amendment (d), in the name of the Leader of the Opposition, which will be moved at the start of the debate, and amendments (b) and (e), which will be moved formally at the end of the debate.

4.21 pm

**John McDonnell** (Hayes and Harlington) (Lab): I beg to move an amendment, at the end of the Question to add:

'but respectfully regrets that the Gracious Speech fails to put an end to a decade of austerity, to invest in the UK's underfunded public services, or to scrap universal credit; notes the damaging impact that the four-year freeze in working-age benefits has had on families on low income; and calls on the Government to bring forward a plan to reverse the damaging impact austerity has had on communities in the UK, tackle the climate and environmental emergency, and reshape the economy to work for everyone by clamping down on tax avoidance, tackling insecurity in work by extending full employment rights to all workers, ending in-work poverty, and introducing a real living wage.'

I appreciate that many new Members will want to speak today, so I will seek to be as brief as possible. *[Interruption.]* I thought that would be appreciated on both sides. We aim to please.

You, Mr Speaker, have been in the House as long as I have, so you will know that the classic approach to a good Queen's Speech and its subsequent debate combines an assessment of the position of the country—a state of the nation address—with at least some attempt to address the issues facing our people. On both counts, the latest Queen's Speech and this process is by any stretch of the imagination crushingly disappointing—I believe that the overriding view that will come to be associated with this Government may well be one of disappointment. They appear to have no appreciation of the lives so many of our fellow citizens live or of the often heartrending problems they face.

The Government's programme in the Queen's Speech fails to reverse the decade of austerity. As the Institute for Fiscal Studies has said, austerity is baked into the Government's economic policies, which fail to tackle insecure work, to end in-work poverty and to introduce a real living wage. Worst of all, the Queen's Speech fails to address the brutal hardship caused by universal credit, introduced by this Government. We face twin emergencies: first, a climate emergency, an existential threat to our planet that, as we have seen only too well in Australia and Indonesia, is rapidly spiralling beyond control; and, secondly, in this country, a social emergency

[John McDonnell]

resulting from a decade of harsh austerity and decline. Last year, the House resolved that we faced a climate emergency. We should also resolve that we face a social emergency.

**Simon Hoare** (North Dorset) (Con): If what the right hon. Gentleman says is true—and I very much doubt it—and if his Eeyore approach to what the country thinks is correct, to what does he ascribe the best result for the Conservative party since 1987 just last month?

**John McDonnell**: I suppose we will have a longer debate at some stage about the outcome of the last general election. I will be straight with the hon. Gentleman: I think the overriding issue was Brexit and that the overriding message was the one the Conservative party put out of “Get Brexit Done”. I ascribe the victory of the Conservative party to that. I cannot be straighter with him than that.

In the last three months in this Chamber, we have had debates on the spending review and the last Queen’s Speech in which hon. Members have highlighted report after report from independent agencies exposing the impact of a decade of austerity. I want to seize on one group as an example—a group dear to all our hearts. If we are to lay any claim to being a compassionate or even a civilised society, surely the most effective test is how we care for our children, and on that count the Government fail appallingly. Surely no Government could ignore organisations such as the Children’s Society and the Child Poverty Action Group, which have reported that more than 4 million of our children are still living in poverty. That means that one child in three is living in poverty in our country in the 21st century. Some 125,000 of those children are homeless and living in temporary accommodation.

The effects on our children of living in poverty are well documented by the Children’s Society. Those children are more likely to be in poor health, to experience mental health problems, and to have a low sense of wellbeing. They underachieve at school, and experience stigma and bullying. The shocking statistic, though, is that 70% of children living in poverty are in households in which someone is in work. The Children’s Society describes that experience as being hit by a perfect storm of low wages, insecure jobs and benefit cuts. The result is remarkable: this Government have achieved the historic distinction of being the first modern Government to break the link between securing work and being lifted out of poverty.

The Chancellor boasted recently that wage rises were at record levels compared with those of the last 10 years. That is a bizarre boast. Wage rises are at a 10-year record high because his Government have kept wage growth so low for the last decade. Average real wages are still lower than they were before the financial crisis. [Interruption.] The Chancellor, from a sedentary position, has again used the slogan “Labour’s crisis”. Let me try to find a quotation for him. George Osborne said:

“did Gordon Brown cause the sub-prime crisis in America? No.”

He went on to say that “broadly speaking”, the Labour Government

“did what was necessary in a very difficult situation.”

The Chancellor, again from a sedentary position, refers to the deficit. Let me quote again. In 2007, George Osborne said:

“Today, I can confirm for the first time that a Conservative Government will adopt these spending totals.”

He was referring to the spending totals of a Labour Government, by implication. Let me caution the Chancellor, because we might want to examine his role at Deutsche Bank, where he was selling collateralised debt obligations, described by others as the weapon of mass destruction that caused the crisis.

As I was saying, average real wages are still lower than they were before the financial crisis. The Resolution Foundation has described the last decade as the worst for wage growth since Napoleonic times. The recent increase in the minimum wage, announced with such a fanfare by the Government, reneges on their minimal commitment that it would be £9 an hour by this year. It certainly is not. The UK is the only major developed country in which wages fell at the same time as the economy grew after the financial crisis.

The Government seem to believe that the answer to low pay is raising national insurance and tax thresholds. When tax thresholds are raised, the highest gainers are largely the highest earners, and raising them and national insurance contributions is the least effective way of tackling poverty. According to the IFS, only 3% of the gains from raising the national insurance threshold would go to the poorest 20% in our society. A £3 billion cut in the national insurance contributions of employees and self-employed people—which, at one stage, was promised by the Prime Minister—would raise the incomes of that group by 0.1%, which pales into insignificance in comparison with the losses endured from benefit and tax credit cuts since 2010. It is also worth bearing in mind that, while the heaviest burden of austerity has been forced on the poorest in our society, this Government have given away £70 billion of tax cuts to the corporations and the rich.

We have also heard Ministers refer to the so-called jobs miracle. Of course we all welcome increased employment, but when we look behind the global figures we find nearly 4 million people in insecure work with no guaranteed hours and 900,000 people on zero-hours contracts. Britain has one of the highest levels of income inequality in the developed world. A FTSE 100 chief executive will be paid more in three days than the average worker’s annual wage. Surely no Member of this House can think that that is right, can they? The gender pay gap is 17.3% and there is now an intergenerational pay gap of over 20%. There is an 8% pay gap for black workers, and if you are disabled the pay gap is 15%. There is nothing in the Queen’s Speech that will address any of this. There is nothing that will address the grotesque levels of inequality in our society and at work, certainly on the scale that is needed.

**Sir Edward Leigh** (Gainsborough) (Con): And 30% of all tax receipts come from the top 1% of earners.

**John McDonnell**: That is just income tax. It is interesting that the lowest earners pay 40% of their income in tax while the highest earners pay 34%. We know who is paying more in comparison with what they earn.

There is nothing in this Queen’s Speech that will address the grotesque levels of inequality. Actually, the reverse is true because the Government are now launching

another assault on trade union rights and, in particular, the human right to withdraw one's labour. The Chancellor has also rejected future dynamic alignment with EU employment rights and standards, and there is a real fear—let us express it now—that this prefaces the fulfilment of ambitions of Conservative Members to undermine workers' rights and conditions. Maybe that is what some of their campaigning for Brexit was all about. Wage levels are low, in part because this Government have produced a productivity crisis. Over the past decade, productivity grew at its slowest level in 60 years. A German or French worker produces in four days what a British worker produces in five, not because the UK worker is any less industrious; far from it. It is because investment in the UK has been broadly weaker than in the rest of the G7 countries, especially since 2016, and investment is currently stagnating.

This has been exacerbated by the lack of investment not just in capital but in human capital—in training and skills. In his interview at the weekend in the *Financial Times*, the Chancellor highlighted the role of further education colleges, and I agree with him. He talked about the role they could play in raising productivity by promoting lifelong learning and skills training. As someone who benefited from further education while I was on the shop floor, I fully agree, but the reality is that this Government have brought FE to its knees, with the IFS suggesting that at least £1.16 billion is needed just to reverse the cuts that the Government have imposed on further education. We have seen a decade of a Government denying opportunities to the very people whose skills have been desperately needed, not just to fire up our economy but also to lift their families out of poverty.

Alongside skills, a vibrant economy needs to invest in the future if we are to compete in the fourth industrial revolution, but on investment in research and development, the UK is now 11th in the EU. We await the Government's detailed proposals on investment in R & D, and if they are of a scale we will support them, but it will take a lot to make up for the lost decade in this field. A lack of investment in infrastructure and R&D has resulted in productivity going backwards in many regions of the UK. The 2017 Kerslake report identified a £40 billion productivity gap in the three northern regions compared with the south, which has produced some of the worst regional inequality in all of Europe.

**Mr Richard Holden** (North West Durham) (Con): The Labour manifesto wanted to scrap R&D tax credits. How does the right hon. Gentleman square that with his support for R&D now?

**John McDonnell:** Quite simply. It is a good question, because we wanted to scrap the tax credits and put direct investment into R&D. Some of the very advisers the Government have called upon, such as Mariana Mazzucato, have been ripping apart some of those tax credits for inefficiency and ineffectiveness. We shared the objective, but we found a different and more effective route.

We have referred in the past to the differentiation between types of investment, and the example that we have used in previous debates is stark. Planned transport investment in London is 2.6 times higher per capita than in the north, so it is no wonder that rail infrastructure in the north has been falling apart. After a decade of

decline, the Government at last seem to have at least acknowledged their mistake in refusing to invest in the regions—something we have been crying out for—but we will see what scale of investment is produced after the fine words.

However, this is not just about capital investment in infrastructure. There is also a desperate need for revenue investment in the social infrastructure of our regions and nations. It is interesting that many cities and towns in the north have borne the brunt of austerity. Seven out of the 10 cities with the largest cuts in the country are in the north-east, the north-west and Yorkshire. That came about not by some miracle, but as the result of deliberate Government policy.

Imitation, they say, is the highest form of flattery, so I suppose Labour should be flattered that the Government are now looking to rewrite the Treasury Green Book to reorient investment decisions towards the regions outside London and the south-east—an exercise that Labour undertook two years ago. I suppose we should also be flattered by the Government now following Labour in adopting a fiscal rule that enables them to take advantage of low interest rates to borrow, which we advocated at least four years ago.

**Richard Fuller** (North East Bedfordshire) (Con): As we are in the habit of stealing clothes, as the right hon. Gentleman would present it, the Labour Party had its election manifesto and the costings—two documents that obviously have been consigned elsewhere—but the third document was about corporate tax breaks, so does he suggest that the Government should look at existing corporate tax breaks and reorient them to support investment in other regions?

**John McDonnell:** Again, Labour undertook work to look at exactly that. We looked at the regional impacts and at how tax breaks are distributed unequally around the country. There is an important and exciting piece of work to be done, and some of those issues were considered by the Kerslake review in 2017. There will be some element of consensus on how we can direct future investment, and we can build upon that in the long term, because if anything comes out of the lessons of the past 10 years, it is that we need a longer schedule than just a five-year parliamentary process for capital investment of that scale.

Returning to fiscal rules, the Government have now advocated a fiscal rule that largely follows Labour's advice, but it is this Government's third or fourth fiscal rule—I have lost count. Some of them have been adhered to—no, actually, looking back at it, none of them have actually been adhered to, which largely defeats the object of having fiscal rules. It will be interesting to see how long this one lasts and how far it is achieved. The problem is that, even if they use all the headroom that their new fiscal rule allows, they are only paying lip service to the need to invest at scale and for the long term. If we are to tackle the issues of poverty, regional inequality and, yes, climate change, the amount of new investment mooted so far by the Chancellor is nowhere near the scale needed to address the dilapidation of our infrastructure outside London, and it is certainly not at the scale needed if we are to tackle climate change. From what we have heard so far, the maximum amount of increased investment talked about by the Chancellor is less than today's estimate of the cost of High Speed 2.

[John McDonnell]

The Chancellor's idea in his *Financial Times* interview, of splitting the Treasury and sending some of its officials to work in satellite offices outside London, is a pale imitation of Labour's plans not just for regional offices but to move whole sections of the Treasury to the north, to move the Bank of England to Birmingham and, similarly, to locate a national investment bank outside London. If the Government are going to plagiarise Labour's policies, they at least have a duty to do so competently.

What all these things have in common is a failure to tackle the root causes of the problems to which the Government pay lip service: the grotesque levels of inequality in income and wealth in our society; the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few; the ownership of the economy by an elite, with the vast majority of people locked out of decision making and having no say on how the economy works or on who it works for; and an economy increasingly serving the few, not the many. There is no sign that the Government recognise the root causes of the crisis we face, whether social or environmental—at least, there is no sign of them doing anything about it.

Of course, all these investment proposals will count for very little if the Government fail to secure a post-Brexit trade deal with our EU partners that protects jobs. On that score, it is hardly surprising that businesses' fears rose when the Chancellor, in his weekend interview, cavalierly threatened to throw our manufacturing sector under a bus, as he rejected the calls from business for alignment with the EU to ensure his own Government's long-standing promise of frictionless trade. He casually said:

"There will be an impact on business one way or the other, some will benefit, some won't."

Let us be clear that if frictionless trade is not achieved in a future trade deal or, worse, if there is no deal, the bulk of our manufacturing sector, including cars, aerospace, pharmaceuticals and food and drink, will be in the "some won't" category. One recent estimate identified that, in the past decade, we have already lost 600,000 manufacturing jobs.

Today, business leaders and unions have combined to warn the Chancellor that his promise to split from the EU will cost billions and damage UK manufacturing. Bizarrely, he blames the manufacturing companies for not having already prepared for any regulatory divergence coming out of any future trade deal, when no one knows what the deal or the rules will be. There is an element of Samuel Beckett or Kafka here, I am not sure which.

We hear that the Chancellor is the only Minister to be secure in his job ahead of the possible "night of the long knives" reshuffle in February.

**Matt Western** (Warwick and Leamington) (Lab): Following the Chancellor's interview in the *Financial Times*, the response from the likes of the CBI, the Engineering Employers Federation, the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, and the Food and Drink Federation is extremely alarming. They have said in unison just how concerned they are about the Government's ambivalence, as my right hon. Friend says, about the real cost both to jobs and to industry.

**John McDonnell:** The Chancellor's statement was reckless. I wish him well, as always, but I caution him that the Prime Minister may well be preserving him in his job to take the hit for any trade deal outcomes that go pear-shaped if frictionless trade is not achieved.

I am aware that many new Members wish to make their maiden speeches. It is important that the Front Benchers do not take too long, so I will come to a conclusion. There is so much more to be said about the operation of our economy: about the failure of the Government to effectively address tax avoidance and evasion and money laundering, which infects our financial system; and about the failure, despite the scandals within the City, and within our accountancy and audit systems, to address our failing regulatory structures.

**Chris Stephens** (Glasgow South West) (SNP): Is the shadow Chancellor aware that Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs' wealthy unit had 1,046 full-time equivalents 18 months ago but now has 961? What does that say about the Government's approach to tax avoidance and evasion?

**John McDonnell:** The whole process of cuts in HMRC over the years has been a self-defeating one, by which we remove the expertise we need to ensure a fair taxation system and to tackle tax evasion and avoidance.

There is a desperate need to harness our economy effectively, as we will discuss at a later date, and to end our dependence on fossil fuel and to do so much sooner than the inadequate target date of 2050. We will still have some opportunity to address these issues in the run-up to the Budget, but for now let me conclude by cautioning the Government that this Queen's Speech fails dramatically to demonstrate the sense of urgency and scale of action needed to provide the decade of renewal they promise. Our people have endured a decade of decline. On the basis of what is laid out in this Queen's Speech and the policy direction laid out so far by the Chancellor, they face not a decade of renewal but a decade of disappointment. We already have had a foretaste of the dangerous politics that disappointment and disillusion creates. We must avoid it, and I ask Members to support our amendment.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** As the shadow Chancellor said, a great number of colleagues wish to speak this afternoon. Just to warn Members wanting to speak, let me say that I will impose an eight-minute time limit immediately after the Front-Bench contributions. I am sure that the Chancellor and the Scottish National party spokesperson will bear that in mind.

4.47 pm

**The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Sajid Javid):** The Shadow Chancellor really is a shadow of his former self; that was a litany of complaints and unreconstructed misery. While he is reading from the same old script—one that has been decisively rejected by the British people—we are writing a new chapter for our great country. We have an unshakeable belief in the brilliant future of this great country. While Labour just keeps on refighting the same old internal battles, this Conservative Government are getting on with improving our schools and our NHS,

tackling crime and getting Brexit done. We will repay the trust that millions of voters have put in the people's Government.

**Robert Halfon** (Harlow) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, with the national living wage, the freeze in fuel duty and the investment in apprenticeships and skills, it is the Conservative party that is the true workers' party of Great Britain?

**Sajid Javid:** Absolutely. May I take this opportunity to commend my right hon. Friend for all the work he has done on all three of those issues? He is absolutely right in what he says.

Our work has started with this Queen's Speech, the most radical Queen's Speech in a generation. It will enshrine in law the largest cash settlement in the NHS's history and invest more in our schools; it will revolutionise our national infrastructure and make great strides towards net zero emissions by 2050; it will level up, spreading prosperity and opportunity across every region and country of the United Kingdom; and it will build that brighter future for our country on the foundation of economic security and sound public finances. This is a one nation Government delivering the people's priorities as we embark on a decade of renewal.

As we begin this new chapter in our country's history, we start with strong economic fundamentals. Our economy has grown in each of the past nine years, and just today, when the International Monetary Fund updated its world economic outlook, it forecast that this year the UK will grow faster than France, Germany, Italy and Japan. Our jobs miracle continues—it is a miracle; Members would think that a party that calls itself the Labour party would welcome a jobs miracle—with the highest employment rate ever and an unemployment rate that is the joint lowest for 45 years.

The UK is an open and competitive economy with some of the most innovative and exciting businesses in the world. Just last week, new figures showed that tech investment in the UK grew faster last year than in the US, China, France and Germany. Although we are optimistic about the future, we are not complacent. It is clear that the uncertainty and indecision of recent months has held back our economy. The global economy is slowing, and an open economy like ours is not immune to global trends. Our productivity growth has not yet recovered to pre-crisis levels, acting as a brake on the potential of our country. The Government have a real opportunity to tackle some of these long-term challenges. I will set out our new economic plan in the Budget on 11 March.

**Julian Knight** (Solihull) (Con): On my right hon. Friend's point about investing in new technology and in the future, will he confirm that the Government remain committed to the 2018 automotive sector deal on funding for research into and the development of the infrastructure necessary to support connected and autonomous vehicles? That is a matter of great concern to my constituents and the wider west midlands.

**Sajid Javid:** Yes—I am pleased that my hon. Friend has asked me that. We are absolutely committed to that deal; indeed, we want to go further. The automotive sector is one of our most important sectors, responsible

for much of the growth and many of the jobs in our economy. It will certainly get the Government's strong support.

Let me briefly address an important question for the future of our economy: our future relationship with the EU. We are leaving the EU, its single market and the customs union. We are seeking an ambitious, Canada-style free trade agreement. In doing so, we will be a sovereign and independent country, not a rule taker, so yes, some things will change. It is a new chapter. We are ambitious for British businesses, through a close relationship not only with the EU but with other partners. Some 90% of global growth is expected to come from outside the EU over the next decade, so there are real opportunities for the UK. We will maintain high standards not because we are told to, but because that is what the British people want. Above all, we will be driven by British interests.

**Sir Robert Neill** (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con): I welcome what my right hon. Friend is saying, but will he bear in mind in particular the need to protect the interests of the financial services sector, as Britain is a world leader in financial services? It is right that so large a sector would not necessarily be a rule taker, but does he recognise that we need better than the current equivalence regime, to make sure that we maximise access for our world-leading financial services?

**Sajid Javid:** I agree absolutely with my hon. Friend and will come to that topic in just a moment.

The foundation of our new economic plan is fiscal responsibility. It has taken a decade of hard work by the British people to turn our public finances around. The deficit has fallen from 10% of GDP in 2010 to just 1.8% today. We are not going to throw that away. We were elected on a platform to manage the public finances responsibly, so it is a matter of trust, as well as economic credibility, that we deliver on that promise to the British people. We will be bound by a credible new fiscal framework that will keep our borrowing and debt under control while allowing for new investment in levelling up and spreading opportunity throughout the country. At the Budget, I will publish a new charter for budget responsibility that will give effect to those rules, and the Office for Budget Responsibility will scrutinise our performance against them.

Thanks to the hard work of the British people, we have got that deficit down, and debt is under control. We can now afford to invest more in levelling up and spreading opportunity right across our country. The first step will be our national infrastructure strategy. Better infrastructure can boost people's earning power by making it easier to find work. It can help businesses access new markets. It can help us thrive and grow. It can boost communities and places and improve standards of living. It is simply not good enough that we have fallen behind so many other countries on infrastructure, and the Government are going to fix that.

**Peter Grant** (Glenrothes) (SNP): The Chancellor may be aware that a very welcome infrastructure announcement was made just before Christmas, when the Scottish Government gave the long-awaited confirmation that the Levenmouth rail link will be reinstated. Exactly how much money do the United Kingdom Government intend to put into that vital project?

**Sajid Javid:** I am afraid I did not catch the name of the project the hon. Gentleman mentioned. If he wants to stand up again and mention it, I will reply.

**Peter Grant:** The Levenmouth rail link—I can give the Chancellor a map if he wants to know where it is.

**Sajid Javid:** The good news for our citizens, whether in Scotland, England, Northern Ireland or Wales, is that our infrastructure revolution and the funds we intend to use to build new infrastructure will benefit every part of the United Kingdom. When we set out our plans and provide more detail in the forthcoming Budget, there will no doubt be a lot more investment in Scotland.

**Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD):** The climate emergency is real, and we need to transfer quickly to energy resources that are not fossil fuels. That means we need a much bigger electricity grid. Is part of the Chancellor's proposals for new infrastructure about how we actually get to a fourfold increase in electricity and the infrastructure that needs to go with that?

**Sajid Javid:** The infrastructure revolution will include significant new investment in our ambition—the statutory requirement to get to net zero by 2050, and also our ambition to make great strides towards that. If she will allow me, I will get in a few moments to the amendment in the name of the right hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton (Sir Edward Davey), which touches on the all-important issue of climate change.

We will invest in infrastructure in every corner and nation of the United Kingdom. We will invest in roads, in railways and in broadband so that our country can boast the most formidable connectivity on the planet.

We will put significant investment into one of the most critical challenges we face, and that is climate change. Our strategy will take huge strides towards achieving our world-leading commitment to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. We will invest in new technologies and markets as we look ahead to the critical COP26 talks later this year.

**Drew Hendry (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey) (SNP):** The Chancellor talks about the investment in technology to challenge climate change. Does that mean the Conservative party will now drop its ideological opposition to onshore wind?

**Sajid Javid:** We have a review into how net zero will be achieved by 2050, and when we publish it the hon. Gentleman will see exactly how we are going to achieve that.

As well as securing our fiscal foundations, levelling up across our country and decarbonisation, our new economic plan will build on one of our more fundamental economic strengths as a country, and that is our openness. This country has always been an open, global, outward-looking country. At the heart of that openness is our belief in free trade. Free trade has raised living standards around the world, it has created jobs and it has lifted millions around the world out of poverty. It will remain a guiding principle of our economic policy.

As we leave the EU, we will have the opportunity to strike new trade deals with our friends and partners across the world. This is a huge opportunity for Britain, especially with so many of our businesses having fantastic

trading relationships abroad. The trade Bill that was announced in the Queen's Speech will help make this opportunity a reality.

When it comes to trade, our biggest exporting sector is our financial and professional services sector, which is a national asset. It employs more than 1 million people, contributes nearly £130 billion to our economy each year and adds value to every region and nation in the UK, not just the City of London. The Queen's Speech introduces a new financial services Bill that will make sure we secure and enhance the success of that industry.

Of course, openness to the world does not mean that we give up control of our borders. The immigration Bill in the Queen's Speech will take the necessary steps to end free movement as we leave the EU and regain control, but that does not mean that this country is closed to the best and the brightest from around the world. I am proud of living in a country as diverse as this. Diversity adds to the vibrancy of our society and the growth of our economy. Some of our greatest scientists, artists and entrepreneurs have been first and second-generation migrants. We will never forget their contribution. That is why we have dropped any arbitrary immigration targets, and we are reforming our immigration system through initiatives such as the new, highly flexible fast-track visas for scientists. I urge Members of the House to vote against amendment (b) in the name of the right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford).

The Queen's Speech will also support the living standards of our people. The best way to boost living standards is to support working families to earn more and to keep more of what they earn. That is why we aim to raise the national living wage to two thirds of median earnings within five years, and why we are extending its reach to those aged 21 and over. I recently announced a rise in the national living wage of more than 6%, starting on 1 April. This is its largest increase since it was introduced. That is a pay rise for 2.3 million of Britain's lowest-paid workers.

We are cutting taxes, too. We have already increased the personal allowance to £12,500 and the higher-rate threshold to £50,000 one year earlier than planned, and we will go further when we increase the national insurance threshold next year—a tax cut for more than 30 million people. We have also set out our tax plans regarding the triple tax lock, with no increases in the rates of income tax, VAT or national insurance in this Parliament.

Let me turn briefly to the amendment in the name of the right hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton. The UK is already a world leader in clean growth. Between 1990 and 2017, the UK reduced its emissions by 42% while growing the economy by two thirds. We have reduced the carbon intensity of our economy faster than any other G20 country since 2000. Our clean growth strategy sets out how we will continue to cut emissions, while keeping costs down for consumers, creating good jobs and growing our economy, but, of course, we need to go further. The Treasury is carrying out a world-leading net zero review. Our national infrastructure strategy will provide significant new investment into the decarbonisation of our economy and we are acting internationally through the COP26 talks, which will be in Glasgow later this year, so I urge hon. Members to reject the amendment.

**Rachel Reeves** (Leeds West) (Lab): I welcome the investment that the Chancellor speaks of and the commitment to get to net zero by 2050. Climate change also means more extreme weather events. In Leeds West, we had serious floods in 2015, and yet still the Government refuse to put in the funding to build the flood defences to protect against the one in 200-year flood event that we experienced. When will the Government put the money into that infrastructure?

**Sajid Javid:** That is an important point. I am aware of some of the serious flooding to which the hon. Lady has referred. That is why our national infrastructure plan includes much more funding—significant new funding—for flood defences, and I hope that she will welcome that and support those plans when they come before this House.

Let me also briefly address the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition. Every Labour MP stood on a manifesto that would have cost the average taxpayer an extra £2,400 each year—each and every one of them did that. Labour committed to spending an extra £1.2 trillion over five years, which is equivalent to funding the NHS budget for nine years. It is no wonder that the hon. Member for Salford and Eccles (Rebecca Long Bailey) said, just a few days ago, that the policies that she helped to write lacked “economic credibility”. It is a bit late for that.

Whatever they may say now, every single one of the would-be Labour leaders tried to make the Leader of the Opposition Prime Minister. They endorsed his vision, his world view and his ideas for Britain, and that is why they will never be able to bring the change that the British people voted for. Instead, they are confirming that Labour is the party of the past and that it is out of touch with working people. Labour will just keep on refighting the same old internal battles while this Conservative Government get on with renewing the country.

**Mike Amesbury** (Weaver Vale) (Lab): I remind the House that taxpayers paid billions of pounds to bail out banks that the Chancellor worked for when he was an investment banker; he should be thanking the British taxpayer.

**Sajid Javid:** May I remind the hon. Gentleman that the banking crisis was so much worse in this country because of the changes made by the previous Labour Government? They were responsible for the depth of that crisis. Gordon Brown and Tony Blair should have listened to the then shadow Chancellor Lord Lilley, who now sits in the other place; at the time, he said that if Labour went ahead with those changes it would be a “field day” for “spivs and crooks”. If they had listened to him, things would have been different. It was the Labour Government who were responsible for the largest banking bail-out in history, and the British people will never forget that.

Just a few weeks ago, the British people were given the starkest choice in decades, between two completely opposed economic visions. On the one hand, the Labour party wants to reach into every corner of people’s lives with the dead hand of nationalisation, excessive regulation and punitive taxation, and its answer to any question one cares to name is yet more state intervention. On the

other hand, the Conservatives believe in a dynamic market economy, founded on a promise of openness, enterprise and freedom. The British people have made a decisive choice. They have given us a mandate to deliver. We have a tremendous opportunity to get on with tackling some of the long-term challenges for our economy. A new economic plan will transform the country as we go from a decade of recovery to a decade of renewal. I commend this Queen’s Speech to the House.

5.7 pm

**Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP): I rise to support amendment (b) in my name and the names of my hon. Friends, and I will start where the Chancellor left off—with claims of having a mandate. Well, he certainly does not have a mandate in Scotland, where his manifesto was rejected wholeheartedly and where the Tories lost more than half their MPs; he has absolutely no mandate to preach to Scotland on his austerity plans. In the last few weeks, we have had a new year, a new Prime Minister and a new UK Government. Under any normal circumstances we would be looking at some kind of fresh start, but for the people of Scotland it is the same old situation: a UK Government who they did not vote for, dragging us out of the UK against our will and sidelining the Scottish Government at every turn.

The Scottish Finance Secretary, Derek Mackay, wrote to the Chancellor looking for clarity on the Budget process on 22 December, but I raised this at Treasury questions on the first day back. I am not sure that the Chancellor even knew what I was asking about, never mind coming up with any kind of response. The Scottish Finance Secretary should not be finding out the date of the UK Budget in the media along with everybody else. It reeks of disrespect, and I think the Chancellor has yet to apologise. This comes after a November Budget that was cancelled so that the Chancellor could avoid any OBR scrutiny in the run-up to the general election.

The Scottish Government and local government in Scotland now face the prospect of writing a budget blindfold, and the stakes could not be higher. I urge the Chancellor and his team to do all they can to make amends for this and to work co-operatively to ensure that the Scottish Government can make the best of this situation. If the non-domestic rates order or the income tax resolution were not passed on time, Scotland could face having to take millions of pounds out of public services. It would be catastrophic, and the blame would lie squarely at the door of this UK Government and this Chancellor. Even if everything does go as smoothly as it can through this process, Scottish councils are being left in the unprecedented position of providing the vital services that the public rely on, without having certainty about their budgets. Should the council tax need to go up, for example, the very practicalities of issuing the necessary direct debit notifications will add time and difficulty to the process for councils across Scotland.

On funding, we welcome the Green Book review that the Chancellor is proposing, but we seek clarity on exactly what this will mean for Barnett consequential, because in Scotland we still have not seen the £3 billion we are due as the share of the DUP’s bung from the previous Government. We still have not seen the £140 million that we were due from police and fire VAT.

[Alison Thewliss]

We need to know exactly what is going to happen with this Green Book process and how the Scottish Government will be involved in it.

The Chancellor has followed the Prime Minister's lead in showing a total disregard for the people of Scotland. We voted against this hard Tory Brexit at every available opportunity, and again we are being sidelined. The Chancellor was keen to talk about the immigration Bill and how much that will matter, but in fact immigration is something that we need, and value, very much in Scotland. I have people at my surgery, week in, week out, complaining about this Government's hostile environment, and all I see the Government doing is making it harder for everyone. They are not making it any better for anybody; they are making it even harder with a further hostile environment being rolled out to EU nationals.

Not only are this UK Government charging ahead with a withdrawal deal worse than the one that the previous Government and the previous Prime Minister came up with, but, as we saw in his interview with the *Financial Times*, the Chancellor is engaging in a race to the bottom when it comes to regulatory standards. He skated over the issue of equivalency, but we need to have a lot more detail on what he actually means by this. His predecessor knew well how important alignment was, and this Chancellor needs to explain why he has decided unilaterally to rip this up. Businesses are concerned that they are going to face tariffs, price rises and the loss of competitive advantage—particularly for Scotland losing out to Ireland. The Government are doing nothing to assuage these fears. This is particularly significant for services, which make up 81% of the UK's total economic output.

The Chancellor needs to confirm what his statement means for equivalency in financial services. What is outcome-based equivalency and what exactly does he mean by it? Without equivalency, the UK faces losing access to European markets. For those working in services, the Chancellor must confirm that he still intends to guarantee mutual recognition of professional qualifications, without which they cannot work and move across Europe.

This withdrawal deal threatens economic growth across all the nations of the UK. For years after this Brexit, businesses will find it more attractive to take their investment moneys to other countries—to Germany, to the Netherlands, to Denmark and to Sweden. This is not my opinion; it is the opinion of David Blanchflower, the former member of the Monetary Policy Committee at the Bank of England. It is not just those nations that will benefit; we are seeing investment in Ireland booming. That is particularly clear to those of us watching in Scotland. Ireland has gained more than 4,500 jobs from international firms as a result of Brexit-related investment. IDA Ireland, the country's foreign investment body, said that its annual results had gone up. Moreover, according to the European Commission, Ireland's economy grew by 5.6% in 2019—the highest in the EU—while the UK's growth dropped to its lowest since 2012. That is no coincidence.

The value of being in the EU in a partnership of equals is not lost on my constituents and those across Scotland. I am sure that it will be more pronounced as we see the increasing negative effects of Brexit—because,

after all, we have not left yet. The Centre for European Reform says that Brexit has already cost £70 billion, or £440 million a week—something the Chancellor has yet to put on the side of a bus. More and more people in my constituency and elsewhere are realising that this place cannot be trusted with safeguarding Scotland's interests. The little growth we have seen has been attributed to businesses stockpiling in case of no deal, while investment has stalled since the EU referendum and does not show any signs of recovering soon. Companies cannot be expected to sit on investment for three years; they will move it elsewhere if they can. All the investment lost since 2016 will have an impact on wage growth and job creation for years to come, even if, by some miracle, we can avoid the harshest of hard Brexits. We are already seeing effects creeping into the labour market. The Fraser of Allander Institute estimates that a hard Brexit such as the one that we might face at the end of the month could cost Scotland 100,000 jobs.

Of course, the Prime Minister and his cronies will say that this is all tosh and they are going to get Brexit done—abracadabra and off we go! I am afraid that the Chancellor knows just as well as I do that our relationship with Europe cannot be formed using a three-word magic incantation, no matter how many times it is said. There will be no getting Brexit done this month. There are still years of negotiations ahead. I cannot reassure businesses in my constituency about what our relationship with Europe will look like, and I do not think the Chancellor can either.

Turning to other measures in the Queen's Speech, the Chancellor knows that I have long criticised his pretend living wage, which fails to meet the aspirations of young people in particular. The gap for young people who will not fall into his pretend living wage is growing. I do not know—and he cannot explain—why a 16-year-old starting the same job on the same day as a 25-year-old is worth £4.17 an hour less. Why is that? He is extending it to 21-year-olds; can he not see the injustice in not extending it to everybody? He must make it a real living wage. The Living Wage Foundation currently sets the living wage at £9.30 an hour. The Scottish Parliament Information Centre suggests that by 2024, it will stand at £10.90—far short of what the Chancellor is suggesting. He cannot justify that age discrimination in the minimum wage, and no Chancellor has been able to justify it yet. The fact remains that women are more likely to be in part-time, low-wage work, so there is a disproportionate effect on women, who often have families to support. They deserve and are entitled to better than the Chancellor is offering.

I turn to the financial services legislation. Can the Chancellor provide a bit more clarity on the progress of the fifth anti-money laundering directive, which we have to implement, regardless of our leaving the EU at the end of the month? We in the SNP want to see reform of Companies House to uncover the beneficial ownership of Scottish limited partnerships, which were in the papers at the weekend, and other companies and trusts. We want to increase transparency, and we want to ensure that UK company information rules no longer allow illicit businesses to funnel millions of pounds of dirty money from all around the world, using British companies, and specifically SLPs. I wonder, is it any coincidence that in the first four weeks of the election campaign, the Conservatives accepted £567,000 from

four companies with links to offshore tax havens in Luxembourg, Guernsey and the British Virgin Islands? I sat on the Joint Committee on the Draft Registration of Overseas Entities Bill. When will we see some progress on that Bill? It has been sitting there for some time, and we have not seen much movement.

It would be neglectful of me not to challenge the Government on their austerity agenda—on issues such as the welfare cuts, the two-child limit, the rape clause and universal credit, which is causing so much pain to so many people across the country.

**Drew Hendry:** My hon. Friend is making a powerful speech. Does she share my dismay that, more than six months after the UK Government said that they would hold a review, Marie Curie and the Motor Neurone Disease Association reckon that over 2,000 people have died before accessing the benefits they should have had through being classed as terminally ill? Is it not time that that scandal was addressed? The Government could take a simple measure to sort that out for these people and their families.

**Alison Thewliss:** I welcome my hon. Friend's intervention and the work he has done on this issue. The Government have had their eye off the ball on universal credit and so many other welfare measures on which the courts have found against them. We are still waiting to know what they will do to remedy the situation for so many of our constituents who are waiting for their money back from the Government.

Another group of people who are waiting for their money back are the WASPI women. The Government have no plan for the WASPI women, who are entitled to their pension and should not have lost out as a result of successive Governments' actions. The Chancellor is not even listening to this point, which is a disgrace. There are thousands of women up and down this country who deserve their money back, and this Government need to find a way of addressing that injustice, because these women cannot wait much longer.

This Government need to be a lot more ambitious in tackling climate change, investing in green infrastructure and making real changes that will last for generations to come. They need to look at the way the energy system is set up, so that those who are producing energy in rural parts of Scotland are not penalised because of geography. With the transition away from oil and gas coming up—I understand my hon. Friends will be speaking about that later—we need to be making sure that that is a fair and just transition, meaning that communities will not be left behind, as they have been in the past.

I am pleased to welcome COP26 to my constituency of Glasgow Central next year, but what has to come with that is investment from the UK Government to make sure that that event works as well as it should do: as a beacon to show what can be done and to highlight the very real achievements of the Scottish Government, who have made great strides in tackling climate change. In fact, a lot of the UK Government's targets are actually being boosted by the actions of the UK Government, and that should absolutely be recognised.

With all of these things in the Queen's Speech, opinion in Scotland is shifting. People are seeing the difference between what is happening at Westminster and the potential of Scotland as an independent European

country—a country where the welfare state could be restored from the tattered, damaged safety net that Tory Governments have left it to a system with a safety net that is full of dignity and has respect for everybody at its core; a country where the Government have all the levers to build an inclusive economy, built on participation and making sure that everybody feels as though they have a part in the economy; a country more equal for women, disabled people and ethnic minorities, where they can play a full part and not feel as though they are being penalised and left behind; and a country where we do not have to rely on mitigating broken Westminster promises. I am determined, as are all my colleagues, that Scotland should have the choice and a right to choose its own future, and to choose it before much more damage is done by this Tory Government.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** Order. The eight-minute limit will now come into force.

5.21 pm

**Harriett Baldwin** (West Worcestershire) (Con): If a week is a long time in politics, three months must be an absolute age. It has been three months since I last spoke in an economy debate on the Queen's Speech, and what a lot has changed in this Parliament. I have to say that I like this Parliament an awful lot more than I liked the previous Parliament. I am aware that there have been some wonderful maiden speeches in these Queen's Speech debates, and I look forward to hearing more maiden speeches today, but I particularly enjoy the speeches from Members who represent areas that have never before elected a Conservative MP. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the good voters of West Worcestershire for returning me to this place.

I welcome the measures outlined in this Queen's Speech, and I am very pleased that they have a much greater chance of being enacted and put on the statute book than when we last had the opportunity to debate them. My hon. Friend the Member for North Dorset (Simon Hoare) asked the shadow Chancellor for his analysis of why the awful diatribe we heard from the Opposition Dispatch Box earlier did not resonate with the British people and lost the Labour party seats at the last general election. The shadow Chancellor simply said it was Brexit. Well, I am going to give him some free advice on some of the other things that I think led to that performance. First, we clearly had a much better manifesto. It was much more fiscally responsible and much more credible to the British public. As the shadow Chancellor said, we also had a much clearer and united approach to Brexit as a party, and that certainly was another factor. Clearly, we also had much better leadership, and that came up time and again on the doorstep.

A point that has not been made as frequently, however, is the one about our economic track record. We would never believe it—would we?—when we listened to that woeful speech of woe from the shadow Chancellor that we have actually just enjoyed an uninterrupted decade of economic growth in this country. We would never believe it when we heard that speech from the shadow Chancellor that we actually have record employment—record full employment almost—and particularly for full-time workers. And we would never believe it when we heard that speech from the shadow Chancellor that

[*Harriett Baldwin*]

we actually have the lowest percentage of people in low-paid work in our economy that we have ever had before in history. That economic track record made a real difference going into the general election.

One thing that has not changed since I last spoke in a Queen's Speech debate on the economy regards additional clarity for a sector that is important to our economy: the financial services sector. My hon. Friend the Member for Bromley and Chislehurst (Sir Robert Neill) raised that issue earlier, and I wish to ask about it again. Financial services are an important sector for our economy. It is our biggest export sector, and it employs well over 2 million people, not just in the City of London, but across the whole UK—indeed, two thirds of jobs in the financial sector are based outside the M25.

When I was Economic Secretary to the Treasury, I had the pleasure of seeing those jobs not only in my constituency of West Worcestershire and the west midlands but in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Belfast, Newcastle, and Leeds. Right across the UK and down to Bournemouth or Cardiff there are important and well-paid jobs in the financial sector. As a result, about £1 in every £10 of tax revenue comes from financial services, which is huge. As we leave the European Union, it is important that we get things right for that sector.

**Sir Robert Neill:** My hon. Friend makes an important point and I entirely agree with her. Does she agree that another strength and reason for the dominance of our financial services sector is that it is part of a hub, together with other key professional services that support it, such as law, accountancy and other services? As we leave the EU we must have a solution for all of those.

**Harriett Baldwin:** It is indeed the world's global financial hub, as we saw today with the wonderful news coming from the UK-Africa Investment Summit. Tax revenues are important, and without that £1 in every £10 of tax revenue we would have 36 new hospitals instead of 40, and 18,000 police instead of 20,000. It is important to get things right with that major engine of tax revenue in this country.

I know that lots of Members wish to make their maiden speeches today, Madam Deputy Speaker, so in conclusion I ask those on the Front Bench to update the House on what they mean by "outcome-based equivalence". If they are seeking something similar to a Canada-style free trade agreement, chapter 15 of which covers financial services, what will be the mechanisms for certainty and for businesses investing in the sector, regarding how quickly that equivalence could be contested or argued about? What will be the strategy for the FinTech sector and the UK being the best country in the world in which to locate a financial technology firm? What, if anything, will we have as a specific strategy on market access for businesses in the FinTech sector?

In reflecting on what has or has not changed from three months ago, I wish to repeat those questions to those on the Front Bench.

5.28 pm

**Rachel Reeves** (Leeds West) (Lab): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for West Worcestershire (Harriett Baldwin), and I echo her concerns about the financial

services sector in any future relationship with the European Union. I also put in a plea for the manufacturing sector and its supply chains, which rely on regulatory convergence with our closest trading partners.

I will concentrate my remarks on the employment Bill, but first I will speak about my worries for the economic outlook, especially ahead of the Budget in a few weeks. Business investment, which is essential for our long-term prosperity and productivity, has been falling for six quarters—the sharpest decline for a decade. The economic growth we have seen is anaemic at best, and the economy is likely to have grown by just 1.3% last year, with even lower rates of growth expected this year. That is half the average growth experienced over the past 50 years.

Far too much of the growth we have seen is premised on unsecured household debt, which now stands at more than £15,000 per household—a record 30.4%. We cannot go on like that if we want to build a strong and sustainable economy. Yet we have heard very little, if anything, on that from the Chancellor this afternoon. Many of our cities are growing and have become richer, but inequalities are increasing, too. In other areas, particularly our towns that were once powered by industry, industries have largely disappeared thanks in large part to previous Conservative Governments, leaving an acute legacy of deprivation and disadvantage that I hope the Government will now make their focus.

Turning to the employment Bill, behind the overall positive employment statistics a few facts should be ringing alarm bells to all of us who care about the living standards and the job security of those we represent, particularly the poorest. We welcome increases in the national minimum wage, even if it is not at a rate that we on the Labour Benches would like it to be, but underpayment has been steadily rising over the past two years. Some one in four workers aged over 25 earning about the legal minimum report that they were underpaid two years ago, yet only seven firms have been prosecuted in the past 10 years for underpayment of the national minimum wage, despite violations being in their thousands. Why is that? Even when fines are levied, the full penalties are not applied. Only half the penalties that could be imposed are being imposed.

If we want our workers to be paid a minimum wage, we must ensure that laws are enforced. I support the Government's commitment to a single enforcement agency to help workers enforce their rights, but I hope that it will be properly resourced and that the barriers the Government have sought to put in the way of workers looking to enforce their rights through the courts will not be repeated in this Parliament.

I urge the Government to look seriously at the recommendations of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee from the previous Parliament, which called for workers to be granted worker status as a default, rather than having to take their case to the courts.

Two other changes not in the Queen's Speech would also be useful: an actual right to a contract reflecting hours worked, not just a right to request one, and, as the TUC has argued, two weeks' notice of shifts, rather than an early morning text message to let people know whether they have work that day; and payment when shifts are cancelled without reasonable notice.

Too many firms, particularly in the gig economy, try to get out of paying full taxes, national insurance, the national minimum wage, and holiday and sick pay. That is a disgrace and we need much stronger action, yet the Government have let the issue drift while a growing number of workers miss out on the rights that we have fought so hard to secure both in this Parliament and, indeed, through the European Parliament. It is hardly surprising that work is now no longer always a route out of poverty. Some 14 million people live in poverty, including nearly 5 million children, and 60% of them are in households where at least one person works. This is a problem that is set to get worse under this Government, with the number of people in zero-hour contracts and in bogus self-employment on the rise yet again.

I also want to say something this afternoon about business excess and the lack of regulatory oversight. We are now more than two years on from the collapse of Carillion. When Carillion failed, thousands lost their jobs, suppliers went unpaid and large-scale infrastructure projects, including hospitals in Liverpool and the west midlands, went unfinished. The collapse was caused by the recklessness, hubris and greed of its directors, yet they have not paid the price—others have. Carillion was a notorious late payer. Suppliers had to wait 120 days to be paid, or pay Carillion if they wanted to be paid on time. When it collapsed, 30,000 suppliers were owed £2 billion.

Meanwhile, its pension scheme had a £2.6 billion deficit. Ordinary workers—but not, of course, the directors—will not get the full pension that they were entitled to. Yet its auditors, KPMG, signed off Carillion's accounts for 19 straight years in a row without qualifying them or raising concerns.

Here we are, two years on, and nothing has changed. The Government's obsession with outsourcing and privatisation continues. The hands-off regulation and light-touch auditing continues. The employment Bill says it will give more powers to the Small Business Commissioner. That is welcome, but it does not really suggest the degree of urgency or priority that is needed.

The corporate failure and the audit failure happened then and it could just as easily happen today. Our audit firms are too powerful. The assumption that the private sector is always best has to end. Small businesses should not be at the mercy of dominant big businesses that determine whether their suppliers are paid, and regulators should clamp down on abuse and not just turn the other way.

This is not some abstract ideal. It is the basis of an economy that: values workers by paying them a decent wage and offering them some dignity and security in the workplace; supports businesses that play by the rules and invest in our economy while ensuring that big businesses do not exploit the system; and invests in every region and nation of our country—in green energy and transport, infrastructure and skills to help our economy to thrive for everyone.

The Queen's Speech touches on some of those themes but I fear that it lacks the conviction to do what is needed. There is a common theme in all this: the failure to put in place rules to stop workers being exploited; the chipping away of regulations that protect the most vulnerable; the remorseless faith in the private sector, with more outsourcing and privatisation; and the creation

of city Mayors but a reluctance to devolve the power and money to let them do their jobs as effectively as they can.

The real problem with the Government and the Conservative ideology is that they do not allow for a challenge to the neo-liberal economic model and do not account for the social value of the public sphere—the glue that binds our society together. While the Government speak on some of these themes, I do not believe that they have the willingness to see them through to deliver the economy that we need.

5.36 pm

**Sir Edward Leigh** (Gainsborough) (Con): I assure the hon. Member for Leeds West (Rachel Reeves) that no Government Member wants to degrade the rights or the dignity of working people—quite the opposite. We are not interested in turning us into some bargain-basement economy by lowering standards.

This Parliament seems to have a much calmer atmosphere. We seem to have passed through a hurricane, and we now have a solid majority. However, some would claim that we are simply in the eye of the storm and that another hurricane will hit us over a so-called hard Brexit and a failure to achieve a free trade deal. I doubt whether the free trade deal will be so difficult to achieve. After all, we start with exactly the same rules, regulations, tariffs and everything. If there is good will on both sides, as there certainly is on ours, I see no difficulty in achieving the free trade deal.

Much has been made of what the Food and Drink Federation said this week, but I see no difficulty there. Are we going to downgrade the Lincolnshire sausage compared with the Bavarian sausage? Are we going to produce low-grade orange juice? Of course not—we will keep our standards. I look at the Chancellor when I say this: there is use in the Government making it absolutely clear, when it comes to environmental standards, working rights and ensuring that we have good-quality products, that we are absolutely top-notch in the world and that we will not downgrade any of our standards. What would be absolutely intolerable is to sign up to a deal that says that for ever more, we have to follow rules made by another jurisdiction. That would be absurd, which is why I am opposed to remaining permanently in some kind of single market or customs union. I know that the Chancellor will be absolutely robust in resisting that, but the free trade deal can and will be achieved, because we are a party of free trade. We are open to the world—that is what we believe in. I am not a believer in a hard Brexit or a soft Brexit; I believe in a Brexit that is good for business—a business Brexit—and I am sure that the Chancellor does, too.

How will we increase our competitiveness in Europe and the world as Brexit takes place, if we are to maintain these excellent standards? I suggest, by way of a Budget submission to the Chancellor, who is sitting on the Front Bench, that we could learn lessons from the past. I think I have now sat through over 40 Budgets in this Chamber, and most have been frankly unimpressive. They have looked to the next day's headlines in spending a bit more money here and there. The one Budget that really impressed me was Nigel Lawson's Budget in 1988, because he had a vision. It was a vision of a lower-tax economy from a Chancellor who was determined to

[*Sir Edward Leigh*]

strip away the mass of allowances and ensure that we no longer had the longest tax code in the world after India. I remember when the Chancellor arrived as a fresh-faced young Back Bencher in 2010, a man who had been a success in the City of London, and I saw him as a Thatcherite. I want him to remember those early days and at the next Budget to take a leaf out of Nigel Lawson's Budget.

Nigel Lawson said, "If you reward enterprise, you get more of it". We are a Conservative Government with a solid majority. Have we got the courage of our convictions? Nigel Lawson reduced the top rate of income tax from 60% to 40%. Throughout the period of the Labour Government, they kept that top rate at 40%, except in the dying days when Gordon Brown increased it to 45%, and it is still at 45%. There is no economic justification for it, nor was there for George Osborne's attack on young entrepreneurs through national insurance. Has the Chancellor got the courage in this Budget to do what Nigel Lawson did, to be a visionary and to start simplifying our tax system and rewarding enterprise? I would be very happy to give way to him, if he wants to make that clear. As I said to the shadow Chancellor, given that 30% of all income tax receipts come from the top 1% of income tax payers, I accept that it will be impossible, probably, to ever achieve the dream of a truly flat-rate tax system, but we can simplify it and gradually flatten taxes. Businesses are employing thousands of accountants to help them avoid taxation. Why can we not simplify our taxation system? I hope we can make progress on that.

I hope we can be a radical Government in other respects. I hope we do not feel we have to ape the Opposition in promising more and more public money. Of course, we have to spend more on the NHS—we have an ageing population with more and more treatments coming on stream—but we have to be a radical Government in trying to deliver outcomes. What is important is not what we spend on the NHS or social care, but the outcome, so we must not be afraid of promoting within the NHS private sector solutions that deliver more efficiency. What do the public care about? They care about their operation and treatment being on time. How that is delivered is not really a priority for them. I feel in his heart of hearts that the Chancellor agrees and is committed to achieving free-enterprise solutions.

**Wera Hobhouse** *rose—*

**Sir Edward Leigh:** I remember that the Liberal party in its heyday was a party of free trade and liberalism, so I hope this intervention will be part of that.

**Wera Hobhouse:** Will the right hon. Gentleman not accept that the many vulnerable people who need help who come to my surgery, and whom I see on a daily basis, need good public services?

**Sir Edward Leigh:** Of course they need good public services, and we are a party of good public services, but we do not believe that the only way of improving public services is by increasing spending in real terms year in, year out. The best way to downgrade productivity and efficiency in the public services is by rapidly increasing spending without tight cost controls on outcomes. I am sure I can rely on the Treasury in that regard.

Where the Opposition have a point, and where we do have an argument, is that some of the big companies, particularly the American digital companies and tech giants, are not paying their fair share of tax. There is also an increasing feeling in this country—this is the one nation point—that the employment rights of some of the people at the bottom of the heap are being downgraded. The Conservative party has an historic opportunity to build on its alliance with working people to improve standards, workers' rights and the ability of those big companies to pay taxes, and we can do that while also being an enterprise Government and rewarding hard work. By doing that, we can achieve a great deal.

The last part of the jigsaw—this alliance with working people—is the question: why do they vote Conservative? Why did they vote for Brexit? It is because they are fed up with cheap labour being imported into this country and fed up with their rights and employment opportunities being downgraded. If the Chancellor is now looking to the world in terms of immigration, let him ensure that we will no longer downgrade the rights of workers in this country by importing cheap labour. Let us have good-quality labour—people who have something real to contribute.

I believe that there is a real, historic opportunity for the Conservative party to build on this alliance with the working people in the north of England who have felt forgotten for so long. That opportunity is here, and I am confident that this Chancellor will deliver it.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** It is a great pleasure to call Beth Winter to make her maiden speech.

5.45 pm

**Beth Winter** (Cynon Valley) (Lab): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for allowing me, as the newly elected Member of Parliament for Cynon Valley, the opportunity to make my maiden speech today.

Cynon Valley is an old south Wales mining community with a history of radical, progressive, socialist politics, having had MPs such as Henry Richard, a campaigner for peace and against slavery, and Keir Hardie, a founder of the Labour party who campaigned for votes for women and for a socialist society. My predecessor, Ann Clwyd, like me, followed in that tradition. Ann's book "Rebel with a Cause" is very much a portrait of a woman politician who kept to her principles, whether you agreed with her or not. She was sacked twice from the shadow Cabinet, once for opposing further spending on nuclear weapons, and again in 1995 for observing, without the Speaker's permission, the Turkish attacks on the Kurds. She is known for her internationalism, and for her campaigning on issues of human rights.

Ann will also be famously remembered for helping to save the last deep pit in Cynon Valley by going down the mine to take part in the miners' sit-in. The following year, Tower colliery was taken over by the miners, and was run successfully for many years. It too has now closed. Approval has recently been given for the opening of a zip wire park on the site of the old colliery, which is positive.

Ann is, like myself, a Welsh speaker—although, Ann, if you are listening to this, *mae'ch Cymraeg chi llawer yn well na Nghymraeg i:* her Welsh is far better than

mine! In 1991, she had the honour of being admitted to the Gorsedd of Bards at the National Eisteddfod, and in 2004 she was made a Privy Counsellor.

Cynon Valley is an area of great natural beauty, with its mountains, its wide valley floor, its rivers and its trees. It is known as the queen of the valleys, much to the irritation of some of our neighbours. It has so many good attributes, such as its parks, leisure facilities and strong communities. I was born in the valley and still live there with my family, so I am very much a part of the community, and Cynon Valley is very much a part of me.

We have pride in our history, and 1984, when Ann first entered Parliament, is a year that is well remembered in Cynon. It was the year of the miners' strike. We saw a great change during and following those Thatcher years, and for the last four decades the area has suffered the consequences of deindustrialisation. Sadly, that left us with an economy with relatively high unemployment, low wages, part-time working and zero-hours contracts. In the last 10 years, communities like Cynon Valley have borne the brunt of Tory austerity: we know that such policies hit the poorest the hardest. Austerity has led to my local authority, Rhondda Cynon Taff, losing £90 million of funding in the last 10 years. That means not just a squeeze on public services but job losses—all of which has had a knock-on effect on local businesses, and on the quality of people's lives.

On top of that, we have the cruel effects of benefit cuts and changes, notably universal credit and the bedroom tax. It is a disgrace that in this day and age people in Britain have to use food banks. At the same time as poorer communities suffer from the effects of austerity, the rich have grown richer, with the gap between rich and poor continuing to grow. That cannot be right.

I look around me in this House and I see wealth and privilege, with people making decisions that affect my constituents when they have no idea about the pattern of our daily lives. It is a world away from my home and my community, and I must admit that I struggle with it. While I am here worrying about getting the parliamentary rules and procedures right, there are people in my constituency worrying about how to pay the rent, feed the children and heat their homes. There is a disconnect between the arcane procedures of Parliament and the priorities of my constituents. This needs to change.

I have to remind myself why I stood for Parliament. I stood for Parliament because I want to see society transformed. I have always sought to combat inequality and injustice, taking a grassroots, bottom-up approach that empowers and gives voice to local people and communities, by doing community development work, working with homeless people, volunteering in a food bank and researching the effects of social exclusion on older people for my doctorate. I want a society that puts people before profits, a society that is fair, equal and just and that gives hope, where my parents can grow old with dignity and care, and where my children can look forward to a life free from wars and poverty, and free from the threat to our climate and our planet.

In spite of all the difficulties and problems, we are fighting back. We have a community and people second to none in Cynon Valley, and I am so honoured to have the opportunity to represent them here. I had tremendous support from local people during my election campaign and I want to thank them all, with a special word of

thanks for Jean Fitzgerald, who sadly died suddenly earlier this month. She had been a great support to Ann over many years and became a good friend to me. Local people have shown great resilience and determination over the years, working to defend local services, and we have a forward-looking Labour local authority, which despite austerity policies has fought to protect frontline services and which is engaged in the delivery of several significant infrastructure projects, proactively working to bring new jobs to the area.

Devolution has given Wales opportunities to do things differently, including our commitment to developing a social partnership approach putting trade unions and the fair work agenda right at the heart of the Welsh Government's programme to ensure greater equality for Welsh workers, as well as the Welsh Government's commitment to developing a foundational economy, which in parts of Wales is the economy. But to maintain and develop our plans, we need adequate funding from Westminster. In fact, we are getting less money now than we were 10 years ago and there are grave concerns about the impact that Brexit will have on our economy. We need assurance that the proposed shared prosperity fund to replace EU funding delivers "not a penny less, not a power lost" in Wales.

We in Wales have the potential to take a lead to change things for the better, as long as we build on our campaigning traditions and our radical and socialist heritage. Campaigning is in my blood, from marching as a child in Cynon Valley in support of the miners in 1984 to marching against austerity and climate change with my family and organising against the casualisation of the workforce as a trade union officer. I am determined to contribute to this continued fightback against the inequalities in our society, and to work even harder for a fair distribution of wealth, for a green industrial revolution creating jobs for the future, and for our young people to have opportunities to reach their full potential. I will end with a quote from one of my predecessors, Keir Hardie, who said:

"We can do with state interference if the homes of the people can be improved or work be given to the unemployed, or bread to the hungry or hope to the uncared for poor...State interference has assisted wealth, monopoly and privilege long enough".

5.52 pm

**Andrew Griffith** (Arundel and South Downs) (Con): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for calling me to speak in this important debate on the economy and employment, which is a subject on which I hope to contribute to the House from my personal experience. It is also a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Beth Winter). I compliment her on her excellent speech and on her passion.

Let me start by acknowledging what a privilege it is to represent the residents of Arundel and South Downs. I pledge to serve them to the very best of my ability. My predecessor, Nick Herbert, made a rich and diverse contribution, leading Business for Sterling, serving as a Minister of State and devoting his many energies and talents to the global fight against tuberculosis in his 14-year tenure. Now, as chairman of the Countryside Alliance, Nick has a somewhat enlarged number of constituents to look after, and we look forward to his continuing to make his presence felt vicariously in this House.

[Andrew Griffith]

Even within this Chamber, which sees more than its fair share of partisanship, the claim of Arundel and South Downs to be one of the most beautiful constituencies in the UK must rank highly. It comprises six historic market towns, together with their many surrounding villages. The common thread is the natural geography of West Sussex, with the South Downs providing a chalky spine and clay flanks facing towards London to the north and, to the south, the Greensand hills stretching down to the coast. This has provided the ideal conditions for cultivating grapes for 2,000 years, and the constituency is the epicentre of English sparkling wine production, with Nutborne near Pulborough, Nyetimber in West Chiltington and Upperton in Tillington just some of the successful local businesses producing world-class products. My constituency also has a farmed landscape that is particularly associated with the grazing of sheep, and it would be remiss of me if I did not say that I will be seeking to protect my local farmers' access to markets, and to achieve a level playing field on quality and welfare standards.

The constituency's eponymous South Downs national park contains a number of unique habitats that allow endangered species to thrive, including the rare Duke of Burgundy butterfly. It is orange in colour and found predominantly in the south of England, but its numbers have been reduced sharply in recent times. It would be uncharitable, however, to draw an analogy with one of the Opposition parties, currently being led by the right hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton (Sir Edward Davey).

The South Downs national park is, by some considerable margin, the nearest national park to the House, and I extend to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, an invitation to visit. Should you make the journey, you will be rewarded by its natural beauty by day and, should you stay after sunset, you will witness a blanket of stars and galaxies, reflecting the area's status as one of the UK's dark sky reserves. Light pollution is a global and growing issue. It is estimated that one third of the world's population, including most of us in Europe, have already lost the ability to see our own milky way galaxy, blinding ourselves to the ability to see our earth in the broader context of the universe. There are many benefits to reducing light pollution, and I hope that this House will be an effective platform for doing that.

Of course, the best way to solve a problem is not to create it in the first place. My constituents have real concerns about the volume and type of housing development that is being proposed. As we speak, I estimate that fully 10% of the southern part of my constituency lies under water. Much of this area is natural floodplain, but an unnatural act is the ambition to build new homes in the hundreds—collectively in the thousands—on this land, which also lacks much of the necessary infrastructure. I shall return to this another day. However, part of the solution, which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has rightly addressed, must be to level up elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

The area has been inhabited since neolithic times. Indeed, the history of England is etched on to the very landscape. My constituency contains part of all three ancient administrative units of West Sussex: Arundel,

Bramber and Chichester. Sitting between Normandy and London, they were of great strategic importance in the years following the 1066 conquest. Their graces, the Dukes of Norfolk, whose seat is at Arundel, have been central to our nation's history since the 14th century and provided the House with many of my predecessors, while the abolitionist William Wilberforce once sat for the old Bramber division.

In the 20th century, local airfields made a substantial contribution to the battle of Britain, while in the run-up to D-day, British and allied troops camped there in their hundreds of thousands awaiting the signal to go. We continue to punch above our weight today as the location of Wilton Park, the influential forum for discussion that welcomes leaders of more than 100 nationalities a year.

There is a great deal to be commended in the Gracious Speech. Businesses have welcomed the ambitious commitment to gigabit broadband and 5G coverage, something I have long campaigned for. Britain should lead, not lag behind, other OECD countries on this. Alongside broadband, we need the roads and railways to reduce friction on trade, which is why investment in improving the A27 is welcome and will secure growth and employment for my constituents.

I can also report that much joy has been provoked in the small market towns of West Sussex by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's commitment to a review of business rates. Having been a finance director, I share his view on the importance of balancing the nation's budget, but I hope he can have sympathy with the argument that it is better and fairer to tax the fruits of the harvest than the soil it is grown in.

I shall be supporting the Government today—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear!"] On the subject of the economy and employment, I could not put it better than the words of Mrs Thatcher's 1979 manifesto: the policy of this Government should be to

"restore incentives so that hard work pays, success is rewarded and genuine new jobs are created in an expanding economy."

6 pm

**Jack Dromey** (Birmingham, Erdington) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Beth Winter) and the hon. Member for Arundel and South Downs (Andrew Griffith) on giving their maiden speeches. They come from two different traditions and two very different constituencies, but Cynon Valley and Arundel and South Downs both have strong voices in this House.

Labour was accused by the Chancellor earlier of being out of touch, so I hope he forgives my saying that I represented workers in the world of work for 35 years. What I learned from that is that key to the success of any company or country is its workforce and how they are treated. I used to argue that there are two simple truths: that the difference between the average and the world-class lies in the extent to which we untap the endless potential and creativity of employees, and that how workers are treated is key to the quality of the service they provide or the product they produce. I worked with many world-class companies in world-class sectors, such as Jaguar Land Rover, Airbus, Siemens, British Aerospace, Rosyth and Devonport dockyards—all good employers that are rightly praised by their workforces.

However, there is another world of work on which we must also focus in this debate: the growing gig economy and the growth of work insecurity. Some 3.7 million people now work in insecure jobs, and 8 million work in relative poverty. Even in companies that purport to be good employers, the sad reality is different, and I want to focus on Amazon, which employs 27,000 people here in Britain. I have worked with the GMB both to stand up for the workforce and to challenge some pretty shameful practices.

I remember one particular woman—a team leader—who was asked to attend a disciplinary hearing. She was 38 weeks pregnant. The charges were for gross misconduct, and her crime that caused downtime during work was pregnancy. She was made to attend a five-hour disciplinary hearing and was not offered food or drink. She got off as a consequence of representation by a GMB official, but when she sought to appeal against the final written warning, Amazon set up the appeal on her due date. She was distraught at how the company had treated her. I also met a young man at the gates of the giant depot at Rugeley who had been sacked at 6 o'clock in the morning, and he had his child with him because of the difficulties of managing life and shift patterns. He wept, as did his child in the back of his car.

One can look at the evidence given to the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee—I praise the work done by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds West (Rachel Reeves) in rightly focusing on this situation—about the targets being set for Amazon workers. One worker said:

“In Amazon, there is—I am not sure if this is the correct expression—a rat race. There is always a fight for the target. You need to hit the target, and if you do not,”

they come after you. Drivers complained that they sometimes have to do 200 drops in one day. A worker at Rugeley was asked, “What’s it like to work for Amazon?” and they responded, “Prison camp.” Another worker at Rugeley was asked, “In your own words, is Amazon a safe place to work?” and the answer was, “No. Productivity is put first. It could be much safer.” A worker at the Dunstable depot was asked, “What’s it like to work for Amazon?” and the response was, “They act in a cynical way. If someone raises a complaint, they—the management—will start to do things until that person feels undervalued and leaves Amazon.” People are being pushed out by the company.

A worker at Peterborough was asked, “Are there enough facilities for everyone, such as washrooms, toilets, drinking water, canteens, etc.?” and the answer was “No! Given the size of the building and the number of people working there, there are not enough toilets or handwashing facilities.” A worker at Tilbury was asked, “In your own words, describe what it is like to work for Amazon” and they said, “To work for Amazon in my opinion is slavery in a modern world.” Finally, a worker at Gourock was asked the same question and the answer was, “This is the most stressful environment in over 40 years of working” that they had experienced and endured.

**Sir Edward Leigh:** For what it is worth, I agree with everything the hon. Gentleman says. Amazon is taking us for fools based on what it is doing to our high streets and on how little tax it pays. We need to find a creative

solution—I am looking at the Treasury Bench—to ensure that these American digital giants are paying their fair due and treating their workers properly.

**Jack Dromey:** I totally agree with the right hon. Gentleman, and I am going to go on to that topic next. To add insult to injury, not only is there the treatment of workers employed by Amazon, but there is, to be frank, tax dodging. *The Guardian* reported in September 2019 that Amazon UK Services, one of Amazon’s key British divisions, paid £14 million in tax despite making £2.3 billion in sales and £75.4 million in pre-tax profits. In March 2018, the *Daily Mail* reported that Amazon paid only £20 million across its eight British-based companies—£4.5 million in corporation tax—despite registering £2.9 billion in UK sales. The issue was also focused upon by the Public Accounts Committee, which found:

“Amazon has a reported turnover of £207 million for 2011 for its UK company (Amazon.co.uk), on which it has shown a tax expense of only £1.8 million, however it shows a European-wide turnover of €9.1 billion for its Luxembourg based company (Amazon EU Sarl) and a tax of €8.2 million.”

I could go on, but the figures are stark and tell the story to which the right hon. Gentleman referred. It is completely unacceptable. Amazon is owned by Jeff Bezos, one of the wealthiest men in the world, and shame on him that he presides over a company that treats workers in such a way on the one hand and dodges paying the tax on the other.

What should be done about this situation? I applaud the tremendous work done by the GMB in standing up for the workers of Amazon, and there is now a global network, because the problem exists not just in Britain, but in Amazon’s companies worldwide. The Government talk about the dignity of labour and respect. The Government talk about wanting to be the champions of working people. What are the Government going to do or say about how Amazon conducts itself? There is a set of commercial relationships between various arms of Government and Amazon, so where do the Government stand? Why not call upon Amazon to do what I proposed when I went into the giant Rugeley depot? I was told, “We are very interested in that idea,” but nothing was done about it. There have been 600 ambulance calls to that and other depots. Why not agree to the proposal that there should be an independent investigation conducted jointly by the Health and Safety Executive and the GMB into the health and safety practices? The Government have power, including the power of advocacy, but will the Government speak out?

In conclusion, I have certainly dealt with some bad employers throughout my life, but I have also dealt with many good employers, and I celebrate how they treat their employees. This country is seeing the growth of insecure employment, under which millions of people endure a difficult life, so the Government should not only bring forward the Taylor proposals, which do not actually go far enough, but speak out. When it comes to the response to today’s debate and to what the Government have to say to Amazon, I am not holding my breath, but I hope the Government say, “Amazon, you need to up your game in terms of your working practices and agree to sit down with the GMB and sort the undoubted and deep-seated problems within the company.”

6.9 pm

**Jack Brereton** (Stoke-on-Trent South) (Con): I congratulate hon. Members, especially my new constituency neighbours, on all the fantastic maiden speeches we

[Jack Brereton]

have heard throughout the debates on Her Majesty's Gracious Speech—I look forward to hearing from my hon. Friends the Members for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Jo Gideon) and for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Aaron Bell) later tonight.

The economy and jobs are critical to rebalancing our national prosperity, and nowhere more so than in Stoke-on-Trent. We now have more people in work but, on average, wage levels continue to be among the lowest in the country. If we are to level up the opportunities, we must ensure that people in the midlands and the north have the same life chances as people everywhere else. A critical part of that is ensuring that people have the skills and the ability to access good jobs.

Improving educational standards is key for the future of Stoke-on-Trent, and we have seen significant and consistent improvements thanks to the hard work of our local teachers, with more children achieving their best. However, there is still more to do. At key stage 4, the city's outcomes are currently far too low. It pains me to say that little more than half of Stoke-on-Trent's pupils achieve grades 9 to 4 in English and maths at GCSE, compared with nearly two thirds of pupils nationally.

In the past we have fallen victim to poor planning in accommodating demographic growth in our local secondary schools. In September, only 82% of children in Stoke-on-Trent got their first preference for secondary school, compared with 92% in the rest of Staffordshire and 90% in Cheshire.

I thank and pay tribute to all our local heads who have done their absolute best and gone beyond what should be expected to accommodate additional pupils this year. Every one of the city's 14 secondary schools is full, with 11 oversubscribed, putting huge pressure on the education system. Children are forced to travel miles to find a place, with many having no choice but to accept inadequate standards.

I am delighted to support plans for a new free school, the Florence MacWilliams Academy, on part of the former Longton High School site. The school will boost excellence and choice for local parents. I am pleased the Conservative-led city council will be working with Educo to take forward this fantastic initiative. A new free school will boost standards in our schools, create more good and outstanding places and equip our young people with the skills to be the workforce of the future.

Another critical part of addressing the economic imbalance will be tackling the decline of our high streets. The sight of boarded-up, derelict properties has become all too common for many towns in the midlands and the north. Once thriving economic hubs, these centres are now struggling to compete with the growth of online retail, as we heard from the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Jack Dromey). We must face the reality that our town centres have always evolved to stay relevant. They must transition to exciting new uses that provide attractive spaces for new and expanding businesses.

Towns and cities like Stoke-on-Trent will need help to achieve that. It remains disappointing that Fenton and Longton, the historic market towns that make up my constituency, are not included in the town deals funding.

Neither has received future high streets funding, which could have achieved so much, particularly as it would tie in with our plans under the transforming cities fund to revolutionise public transport provision in the city.

Towns and cities like Stoke-on-Trent, where property prices are among the lowest in the country, face major viability challenges in converting properties and encouraging redevelopment. Investment is necessary, and I know from our discussions that the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government is well aware of the importance of investing in our towns that make up Stoke-on-Trent.

I am pleased that progress continues on the Longton heritage action zone and that the historic Longton town hall, which the Labour party threatened to demolish in the 1980s, is once again in civic use as a new local centre. Our industrial heritage must be a key asset in Stoke-on-Trent's future, attracting businesses and visitors alike who value the authentic Potteries townscapes that local residents so rightly value.

There also needs to be greater flexibility in planning use categories to make it easier to convert former retail properties. Today's high streets need to be responsive to changing local economic demands. We must also seriously consider removing taxes that disincentivise the redevelopment of our town centres. Creating business rate relief zones that cover town centres is an excellent way of supporting innovation and viability, which will breathe new life into our communities.

We must also continue to build on those schemes that have worked well. I hope the Government will extend the Ceramic Valley enterprise zone, which has helped to transform once derelict brownfield sites across Stoke-on-Trent, creating thousands of jobs and supporting economic growth. We want to see business rates relief continue in the zone, with the zone expanded to include additional brownfield sites in the south of the city.

This is an exciting time for our country and for Stoke-on-Trent. The Government have a convincing majority to deliver the change that people in Stoke-on-Trent, and towns and cities like it, want to see. This should truly be about levelling up communities that, for decades, felt left behind and taken for granted by Labour. It means ensuring excellent educational opportunities in every community, alongside supporting industry and innovation to grow economic prosperity in our towns so that everyone can succeed.

6.15 pm

**Richard Thomson** (Gordon) (SNP): It is a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent South (Jack Brereton) and to be called to make my maiden speech on behalf of my constituents as the newly elected Member of Parliament for Gordon.

Before I get under way, I draw Members' attention to the fact that I am a member of the Aberdeen city region deal joint committee, and I confirm that I have supplied this information in the Register of Members' Financial Interests because it is relevant to some points I wish to make towards the end of my speech.

It is a particular privilege to make my first parliamentary contribution as my party's spokesperson on business and industry. Before I come to the substance of the debate, however, I take this opportunity to acknowledge the service of my predecessor, Mr Colin Clark. I first

got to know Colin when we were both councillors in Aberdeenshire. I had particular reason to get to know him because his election as a councillor for Inverurie deprived me, as the council leader, of a working majority. However, whether in our dealings on Aberdeenshire Council, in my dealings with him when he was a Member or, subsequently, in our dealings throughout the campaign, I have always found Colin to be a very courteous and generous opponent. I wish Colin, his family and the team of staff who worked alongside him all the very best for the future.

Like many colleagues, it has been a privilege for me to have served in local government, and particularly to have had responsibility, as council leader, for all the local government area of Aberdeenshire. I will resist the temptation to say that I now represent the finest part of that historic county, not least because I have no wish to be assailed quite yet by indignant parliamentary neighbours, on whichever side of the Chamber they happen to sit.

Nevertheless, Gordon is a constituency of real contrasts. Geographically, despite its northern location, it sits right on the cusp of highland and lowland Scotland. It is a mix of city and country, upland and lowland, urban and rural. Starting in the north-west, taking in the historic town of Huntly and the villages and landscapes of Strathbogie and Strathdon, it heads eastwards into the fertile agricultural lands of the Garioch and Formartine, where towns such as Insch, Inverurie, Ellon and Oldmeldrum sit close to rapidly expanding settlements like Kintore and Balmedie. Finally, it sweeps down to the banks of the River Don, where the historic papermaking industry continues to this day—in fact, it is where much of the paper we use here in the House of Commons still comes from—and then into the northern suburbs of the great city of Aberdeen, taking in Dyce, Bucksburn, Danestone and Bridge of Don itself.

Many of my constituents still find work in the traditional areas of agriculture and food production. Many, of course, work offshore either in the oil and gas sector or in the burgeoning renewables sector. In Gordon, we brew, we distil and we grow. Through the offshore energy sector and the north-east's world-leading universities, we extract, we harness, we innovate and we power. The strength of the private sector is complemented by the role of the public sector and those who teach, who care, who make, who mend and who help others to live the best lives they possibly can, whatever their circumstances.

Gordon is a constituency that not only makes things; it makes people. It is an area where people are hard-working, fair-minded and community-spirited. It is a welcoming place that embraces those who come to make their lives there, no matter where in the world they come from and no matter what their circumstances. It is a place that earns its prosperity, even if sadly still too few have the opportunity to participate in it. In short, we are a region rich in human and natural capital, and in the end markets for what we produce, we are an area that has always looked outwards to Europe and the world, and is determined to continue doing so.

My constituency is one that emphatically did not vote to “Get Brexit Done”—quite the reverse. People there are pragmatic and well understand the benefits EU membership has brought us, as well as the pitfalls of trying to leave under a Government seemingly without a clear idea of the terms on which they would like that to happen. Although my constituents can take political

uncertainty in their stride, they understand well the need to progress on the basis of a realistic consideration of the problems that might occur. Watching supporters of the Government swaggering into television interviews and arguing about who is going to have the biggest set of bongs in the negotiations to come with our European partners leaves them, as it does our European partners, pretty well cold. This House, in its deliberations to come, would do well to heed the wise words of the Danish Finance Minister Kristian Jensen, when he observed that

“There are two kinds of European Nations—there are small nations, and there are countries that have not yet realised that they are small nations.”

There is absolutely nothing wrong with being a small nation. I, like my colleagues, hope to see another one emerge on to the international stage in the not-too-distant future. When you understand, as we do, that it is possible to enhance your national sovereignty by sharing it and that it is possible to share it without anyone else getting it, you see that it is little wonder that EU membership has not ever seemed to provoke the kind of existential crisis in Scotland that it has elsewhere in the UK.

This is, of course, a debate on the economy and, in drawing my remarks to a close, I wish to highlight three challenges pertinent to my constituents in particular. The first relates to the energy transition. Of course North sea oil and gas will continue to meet our energy needs and provide employment for some time to come. However, we need to be preparing to enact a just transition to the low-carbon industries of the future, harnessing fully the skills and knowledge of our present industries. The best way to start would be to ring-fence the corporation tax receipts from that industry and invest the proceeds with that objective in mind.

The second relates to diversifying the local economy. We need to be growing other areas of our economy in the north-east too, whether that is in digital, life sciences, food and drink or tourism. This is something on which there is complete consensus throughout the north-east, so it remains a disappointment to me that when it comes to the Aberdeen city region deal and the subsequent side deal, the Scottish Government are still out-funding the UK Government's contribution by a factor of 2:1. The Scottish Government are also still doing too much of the heavy lifting on broadband, given that responsibility is still in the purview of Westminster. I believe it is time the UK Government started to take their responsibilities for that seriously, while they still have them.

The final challenge relates to alignment with the single market. We can well see the contradiction between a Prime Minister who assures our colleagues in Northern Ireland that there will be no divergence between Northern Ireland and Great Britain, and a Chancellor who says that there will be changes. There is not so much as a chlorinated chicken whiff of a trade deal coming along that will compensate for the trade deals we are about to leave behind. We must remain in alignment with the single market and not allow the Prime Minister another chance to crash out, leaving others to pick up the pieces of that failure.

If the election brings us two comforts, they are these: first, the Prime Minister is now the master of his own destiny and so is responsible for and in charge of everything that now follows, with the resulting mess

[Richard Thomson]

being his and his alone. Secondly, the people of Scotland have chosen my party to represent them in this place to defend their interests. That is a task I look forward with relish to carrying out, along with my colleagues.

6.23 pm

**Mrs Natalie Elphicke** (Dover) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Gordon (Richard Thomson), and I congratulate him on his maiden speech. I am delivering mine in this debate on the economy and jobs, given my constituency's important contribution to the nation's trade and tourism, and given its thriving local economy.

It is a tremendous honour and responsibility to represent the historic, economically important and great constituency of Dover and Deal. My constituency contains Dover Castle, one of the greatest castles in the land; the Port of Dover, the busiest port in Europe and one of the most successful in the world; and, of course, the greatest people, in a set of wonderful communities across coastal and countryside villages and towns.

For centuries, Dover has stood at the frontline, as the guardian, gateway and custodian. At this historic time, as we leave the European Union and reclaim our independent place in the world, Dover remains as important as it has ever been in the past to the present and future of our great nation.

As the incoming Member of Parliament for Dover and Deal, I will be building on an extraordinary legacy of hard work and delivery by my predecessor, Charlie Elphicke, the Member of Parliament for Dover and Deal from 2010 to 2019. As some Members of the House will know, I have known Charlie for a very long time—more than 25 years. His election success in 2010 was one of the stand-out results of that election. Few expected him to win, but he turned a 5,000 majority against to a 5,000 majority for the Conservatives in a remarkable victory against the odds. That is his trademark in politics: time and again winning against the odds and delivering for those he represented. Early on, he engaged in hand-to-hand political combat to see off the planned sale of the Port of Dover to the French or whoever. With the support of Dame Vera Lynn, the sell-off was ditched and a groundbreaking people's port was delivered at the docks.

Since 2010, more than £500 million of investment—half a billion pounds—has swept into Dover and Deal, including in a brand new hospital in Dover and the fast train to Deal. Some people said those would never happen, but Charlie delivered, against the odds. He also took up more than 23,000 cases for local residents. Charlie Elphicke is the Gallery today, as is our son, Thomas, and I hope you will join me in thanking Charlie for his tremendous record of public service.

That is some record to build upon and it is a high hurdle for any new MP, yet build on it I will. Much has been done, but there is more to do. As such, I welcome the Chancellor's commitment to investment in every corner of our land—he should look no further and invest in Dover and Deal. At the Dover frontline, as we get Brexit done, the next five years will be critical for my constituency. That is why I will be fighting for strong

borders and free-flowing trade, greater investment in roads and rail, new lorry parks, better healthcare, more jobs and money.

But this is not just about what we can do; it is also about who we are. And in the land of the white cliffs we represent so many of our nation's values. My predecessor's maiden speech made the case for the importance of liberty, freedom and justice when defending decorated Army major, Bill Shaw, who had been the subject of false allegations relating to his time in Iraq. In Dover and Deal, we have fought, and always will fight, for those values of liberty, freedom and justice; due process and innocent until proven otherwise; faith and friendship; community; country; compassion; and caring for others.

I have always been committed to decent housing and improving life chances. I am one of a growing number of MPs on these Benches who started life in the safety and security afforded by a council house, and my education at a Catholic faith primary and a grammar school transformed my life chances and indeed my life. Growing up in the 1980s, I was one of a generation who benefited from a time of national ambition, shared prosperity and opportunity for all, where hard work could bring rewards. I am committed to providing for others the tools for social mobility and opportunity that were given to me: good-quality and affordable housing; help for those in need; faith; grammar schools; economic growth; and shared prosperity.

This is an historic time for our nation. As the representative of Dover and Deal, on the Brexit frontline, I am looking forward to the independent, successful, prosperous and strong country that we can build together in the decades to come.

6.30 pm

**Ruth Jones** (Newport West) (Lab): I commend the hon. Member for Dover (Mrs Elphicke) on her maiden speech and thank her for the measured and thought-provoking way she delivered it. I also thank her for explaining to us the familial links between Members for her constituency—that was very helpful.

I am delighted to be able to speak in this important debate on jobs and the economy. It is my privilege to represent Newport West, my home and birthplace. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve all the people who live there, and I will work hard in the many days, months and years ahead to ensure that their voices are heard in the House.

Over my life to date, the nature of employment has changed fundamentally, as has the type, scope and size of industry in my constituency. The closure of the coal mines and steel works saw a massive and destructive loss of jobs in south Wales, but Newport West is now home to groundbreaking companies such as Airbus, the Rutherford Cancer Centre and the Catapult compound semiconductor cluster, which is the only one of its kind in the UK. As such, I welcome the Government's commitment to making the UK a global science superpower and investing in research and development. I encourage any relevant Minister to come to Newport West: I will take them to visit those businesses so that Members can see the industry-leading work taking place in my constituency. Importantly, it will give Ministers the chance to learn about these success stories and inspire them to replicate Newport West's success throughout the UK.

Furthermore, I welcome the Government's move to ensure that investment in industries such as computing are prioritised. Additionally, if investment in hubs in world-leading universities is promised, I recommend that the Minister visit the University of South Wales campus in my constituency to see the fantastic work being done in the field of cyber-security. It is a hub where businesses and university students learn from each other, providing cyber-security services to companies worldwide.

The Government propose in the Queen's Speech to bring forward an employment Bill, and claim that they will protect and enhance workers' rights.

**Matt Rodda** (Reading East) (Lab): My hon. Friend is making an outstanding speech about the importance of so many things. Over the weekend, the Chancellor made some controversial comments about the possible lack of alignment between Britain and the rest of the EU after Brexit. Does my hon. Friend—like me, the Confederation of British Industry and many major British trade unions—have deep concerns about the Chancellor's rather rash statement?

**Ruth Jones:** Absolutely. I thank my hon. Friend for intervening because he made an excellent point. We well know that workers' rights are not a priority for the Government. In fact, from what has been outlined so far, it seems they will attempt to proceed with no input at all from the trade union movement. I regret that and urge the Government to think again. I hope Ministers will remember that those people whose job is in a workplace that is represented by a trade union work in a safer, better-paid workplace. I encourage the Government to keep the trade unions involved in any plans they may make to change the current settlement on workers' rights. It would be beneficial not only to the Government but to people in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England if the Tories worked with the trade union movement rather than against it.

The Government cannot be trusted to improve the settlement for workers on their own. They celebrate high employment rates at every opportunity, but in reality the figures mask high levels of people in insecure work, under-employed and on low pay. In other words, there are thousands of people on zero-hours contracts working a few hours a week, unable to make ends meet and often having to get a second or even a third job. As in-work poverty soars, the reliance on food banks continues to increase. At the same time, many people are losing their homes. In-work poverty is the moral disgrace of our age. Around one in five people in working households now live in poverty. That is the legacy of 10 years of Tory austerity.

We now live in an increasingly unequal society. In my constituency of Newport West, the average household wage in Marshfield is double the average household wage in Pill—and those areas are only six miles apart. We must make every effort to level up wages and create a more equal society. The Government can improve the working lives of millions of people in the UK if they take sustainable and effective action on the living wage, and they must take enforcement action against those businesses that refuse to pay it.

Just days ago, a number of my constituents lost their jobs at Liberty Steel in Newport. Many others in Stocksbridge, Rotherham and Brinsworth had the same

devastating news. Only a few weeks before that, the Orb steelworks in Newport was mothballed. It was the only plant producing electrical steel in the whole UK. This is madness. I know that the thoughts and sympathies of the whole House will be with the people who find themselves out of work and facing an uncertain future. There is never a good time for someone to lose their job, but the situation is particularly hard coming so soon after Christmas. With those job losses in mind, I urge the Government finally to take real action to protect and defend the UK steel industry. Steel remains vital to the ongoing security and independence of the UK manufacturing sector, while providing good jobs for thousands throughout the country. I welcome the Government's commitment to the jobs of the future, but I encourage those on the Treasury Bench to remember the jobs of today.

This is the second Queen's Speech debate in my time in the House—and I have been here for only nine months. As I approach the first anniversary of my time in the House, I pledge to hold the Government to account for the promises they made to my constituents and people right across the country. I accept that the Government have won a majority, but they must now deliver on their pre-election promises. I will be here day in, day out to ensure that they do.

6.36 pm

**Felicity Buchan** (Kensington) (Con): It gives me great delight to address this House as the new Member of Parliament for Kensington. Kensington is a remarkable constituency, with its history, cultural heritage and diversity, but we do have issues. We have substantial inequalities, and in 2017 we suffered the Grenfell tragedy—the worst fire in London since the blitz. I want to bring my community together, represent each and every constituent and help to unleash everyone's full potential.

I want to start by paying tribute to my predecessor, Emma Dent Coad. Six days after the previous election, the Grenfell tragedy happened. It was an appalling loss of life and it must have been tough for Emma to be the new MP in Parliament and to have to deal with those appalling circumstances. Emma worked hard for the north Kensington community, and I must say that she is never shy in holding public bodies to account.

I also want to pay tribute to my Conservative predecessors, Victoria Borwick, Malcolm Rifkind and, under slightly different boundaries, Michael Portillo and Alan Clark. I clearly have a wide range of role models to choose from.

Kensington has a huge wealth of cultural sites. We have Kensington Palace, where Queen Victoria was born and where she lived until her accession to the throne. Our museums are truly remarkable—we have the Natural History Museum, the V&A and the Science Museum, to name but a few. We have many embassies in Kensington, including those of Russia and Israel.

Kensington is not just grand institutions and beautiful conservation areas. We benefit from a truly vibrant and diverse community. Notting Hill has the carnival—the largest street festival in Europe. North Kensington has one of the most diverse populations in the entire country. Earl's Court has always had a thriving LGBTQ+ community.

[Felicity Buchan]

In Kensington, we have many European residents; indeed, South Kensington is sometimes referred to as Paris's 21st arrondissement. That is why I am so delighted that this Conservative Government have unequivocally protected the rights of EU citizens living in the UK.

In Kensington, we have many wonderful parks—Kensington Gardens and Holland Park—and we value those vital and serene green spaces. However, several of our streets suffer from the worst air quality almost in the entire country. I welcome what this Conservative Government have done to help the environment, reducing greenhouse gas emissions by almost a quarter since 2010—the most of any developed country—but, clearly, there is a lot more to be done.

In Kensington, many of our residents work in professional services—in banking, law, accounting, insurance and consulting. I will therefore work hard to ensure that the interests of the City of London and our professional services sector as a whole are protected in our upcoming free trade negotiations. Let us not forget that financial services alone produces a whopping 11% of our total UK tax revenue.

My constituency is often thought of as a powerhouse of the UK economy, and that is undoubtedly the case. However, we do have deprivation, and it is not only economic inequalities—it is also health disparities. If you look at the life expectancy difference between my richest ward and my poorest ward, it is more than a decade for men. That is why I am such a passionate believer in equality of opportunity. That means giving everyone amazing opportunities, whether that be to access education, healthcare or high-quality housing.

It is only with a strong and vibrant community that we can afford those excellent public services. That is why I am so proud of this Conservative Government's record on the economy. We have produced 3.8 million more jobs, we have taken 32 million people out of taxes and we have increased the minimum wage to £10.50 by 2024. It is a record to be proud of.

I want to conclude my remarks by talking about Grenfell. If there is any meaning to come of that appalling loss of life, it must be that a tragedy of that kind can never be allowed to happen again. We must ensure that every single house in this country is safe and truly fit for purpose. I want Kensington to be a beacon of modern urban conservatism, where what matters is not where you came from but where you are going, and where Kensington is the best place to live, work and learn for all its residents.

6.44 pm

**Dan Jarvis** (Barnsley Central) (Lab): It is a huge pleasure to follow the outstanding maiden speech by the hon. Member for Kensington (Felicity Buchan). To have delivered it without notes is incredibly impressive, and she has laid a powerful marker for what an articulate champion she will be for her constituents.

I should declare an interest as a metro Mayor. I want to say at the outset that, as we prepare for the future and for life beyond Brexit, our priority must be to build a collaborative, sustainable and inclusive economy where everyone shares in the benefits of growth. We have one of the world's largest economies, worth \$2.38 trillion,

accounting for 3.3% of the global economy. That is an important achievement, but for too long the size of our economy has been the overriding measure of success, the overriding driver of investment decisions and the overriding focus in public policy, and that has masked a failure to focus on what matters most.

It is our people and their communities who matter most. We fail in our mission to improve the lives of all if that connection between people, place and prosperity remains broken. Given that we have five of the economically worst performing regions in northern Europe, that has been the case for too long. It also costs us billions. It must therefore be our collective endeavour to fundamentally rewrite the rules of engagement in how the Treasury decides where and in what we invest, how policy is made in Whitehall rather than in the regions and how people and their communities must be at the heart of our economic model.

In September, the Prime Minister was in South Yorkshire, where he said that

“there is no limit to the imagination, innovation, ingenuity and leadership in the North.”

I do not always agree with the Prime Minister, obviously, but on this we are as one. However, those words mean nothing until we see meaningful action. No amount of imagination, innovation, ingenuity or leadership can offset under-investment or a system that is skewed in favour of already prosperous areas. We need a fiscal programme that delivers transformational levels of resourcing, tackles poverty and inequality, helps us build the homes people need in the places where they want to live, grows an economy that exploits the opportunities of the green revolution, and helps us to build new infrastructure.

That will not be cheap, and in South Yorkshire hundreds of millions of pounds of investment are needed. That is why I welcome the Government's commitment to changing the way they make investment decisions through the Green Book methodology. That is something I have long called for, and the Financial Secretary to the Treasury may recall that I have raised the issue with him—I badgered him on a number of occasions when he was a Transport Minister. That change must happen to ensure that we get the additional investment in the north that we need and deserve.

However, fundamental to all of this is that the Government must make sure that it is local people, empowered through devolution, who join all this up locally, and that means devolution right across our country. I am pleased at the progress we made in Yorkshire just last week, but we must remember that devolution is a process, not an event, so I would like to see the Government commit to working with metro Mayors—obviously—council leaders and communities right across the country to explore the full extent of the powers and resources that currently reside in Whitehall and Westminster that could and should be devolved further. The Government's first principle in designing their approach must be that it is not in the halls of Westminster or the corridors of Whitehall that decisions over many of the issues that affect our communities are best made.

I think there is agreement that we are at a critical political and economic juncture. We must work to build an economy that works for all—an economy in which

all our communities feel they have a stake. The anger that many of our communities feel at being left behind should serve as a warning to the Government that they will be judged on what they do, not on what they say.

6.49 pm

**Aaron Bell** (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Con): It is a privilege and a pleasure to stand here today on behalf of both the market town and the loyal and ancient borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme—or, as the local Facebook group has it, the proper Newcastle. I apologise to the hon. and right hon. Members from Tyneside on the Labour Benches for that. I concede that not everybody knows exactly where we are. We are the historic trading centre of north Staffordshire, and we have a very proud history. We were given our charter by King Henry II in 1173, and we have been returning Members to this place since 1345. I wish to pay tribute to a couple of those former Members here today.

First, Paul Farrelly, my immediate predecessor, served in this place for 18 years from 2001. Like me, he was a grammar school boy, but he went to a grammar school in Wolstanton in the constituency. He was a home town boy who was very proud to represent his home town, and it, in turn, was very proud of him, which is probably why we Conservatives found him such a tough nut to crack. Reports of his impending doom were frequently exaggerated, despite the best efforts of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and many others.

Unfortunately, Paul parted company with his constituents over the issue of Brexit. I recognise that the referendum put many Members on both sides of this House in a very difficult position. I do not think that any Member should ever have to vote against their conscience on something so fundamental. Although I disagree with the way that Paul voted, I understand why he did so. I also think that his decision to retire was therefore a very honourable one given the strength of feeling in Newcastle-under-Lyme. Like Rocky Marciano, he therefore retires unbeaten. I wish him well for the future, armed as he is with his new Irish passport.

I also wish to pay tribute to my Conservative predecessor in Newcastle-under-Lyme, Mr Charles Donaldson-Hudson. If I tell Members that one of the issues that exercised Mr Donaldson-Hudson was the need to suppress the slave trade in Zanzibar, they will appreciate that Mr Donaldson-Hudson is sadly no longer with us. His retirement was also honourable. He decided that his services were no longer required when we were cruelly reduced from having two Members of Parliament to just one by the Redistribution of Seats Act 1885.

Mathematically-inclined Members will realise that there has been a 134-year hiatus in Conservative representation for Newcastle. The reason for that can be summed up by a four-letter word, and that word is coal. Although mining has taken place in Newcastle since Roman times, it was the industrialisation of mining that led to the growth of the borough and of the pit villages that sprung up around the collieries in the late 19th and early 20th century. Our coal was among the finest in the kingdom. In fact, it is for that reason that the pottery kilns of Stoke-on-Trent are located where they are—just to our east.

Sadly, the same geology that gave us that superior coal also meant that my constituency suffered some of the worst mining disasters in our nation's history—I think here of Minnie Pit and of Holditch. The sad honour that came to me as one of my first civic engagements as a new MP was at the 125th memorial of the Diglake disaster in Audley parish, and that was just last week.

Many Members in this House have spoken about coalfields in this debate. I think of my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent North (Jonathan Gullis), who is my neighbour, and my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mark Fletcher). There were also Members on the Labour Benches who spoke on the issue, including the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Beth Winter). Earlier in the debate, we also heard from the hon. Members for Easington (Grahame Morris) and for St Helens North (Conor McGinn). I want to reassure everybody in this House that those of us on these Benches who have been elected to represent coalfield communities, often for the first time ever or for the first time in many years, do understand and respect and are very mindful of the cultural and industrial heritage that we have inherited.

Coal is not the future, as we discussed last Wednesday. The future is in green jobs, in high-skilled jobs, and—this is my area—in tech jobs. Fortunately, Newcastle-Under-Lyme is very well placed on these fronts, not least because of the presence in my constituency of Keele University and its spectacular science park. Only last September, Keele secured University Enterprise Zone status, which will unlock a further £33 million of public and private sector investment in my constituency, and that, in turn, will support our local economy.

Our local economy also needs supporting in the high street—to go back to the market town aspect of my constituency—which is why I am particularly pleased that Newcastle-under-Lyme will benefit from both the future high streets and the stronger towns funding. I was also privileged to be invited to join the Town Deal Board. Together with the Conservative-run Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council, I look forward to lobbying the Ministry accordingly.

Let me close on a more personal note. My parents are in the Gallery this evening. They, like their parents before them—I am sorry that my 99-year-old grandmother could not make the trip today—always stressed the value of education. A number of Members have also stressed that in this debate. It is, I think, the greatest tool of social mobility that we have. In my time in this place, and in supporting this Queen's Speech today, I want to ensure that every child in Newcastle-under-Lyme and across the country—every young person—can make the very best of themselves, be the best that they can be and that, in the Prime Minister's words, we level up across the country. I look forward to supporting this Queen's Speech and its agenda, and making sure that, in my time in this place, I represent the people of Newcastle-under-Lyme.

6.55 pm

**Sarah Olney** (Richmond Park) (LD): I rise in support of the amendment standing in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston and Surbiton (Sir Edward Davey).

[Sarah Olney]

This, of course, is not my maiden speech, although it is the first time I have spoken in the Chamber after an enforced absence of two and a half years—not quite as long as the break that the Conservatives have taken in representing Newcastle-under-Lyme. The hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Aaron Bell) gave us a very entertaining maiden speech, for which I thank him. I welcome him to the House.

This year is likely to be a watershed for the British economy and will have long-lasting impacts on the shape of our nation's employment. After three and a half years of wrangling, we stand here on the verge of leaving the European Union. We will be abandoning the structures that have underpinned our economy for 40 years; that have enabled businesses across this country to grow their market without barriers or obstacles; that fostered relationships between individuals and organisations to their mutual benefit; and that gave us the easy access to a wider range of goods and services than we could produce ourselves. They gave our young people the option to travel freely across 28 countries, and gave us the benefit of the skills and experience of people who could travel freely back to us.

Although I reluctantly concede that Brexit is now happening, I continue to be baffled as to why. Given that delivering Brexit was the centre of the Conservative manifesto, I was hoping that my confusion could be cleared up by reference to their programme for government. The Queen's Speech opens by telling us that the Government plan to make the most of the opportunities that Brexit brings for all the people of the United Kingdom, but there is no further mention of what the opportunities are or what the Government plan to do to make the most of them.

**Dr Lisa Cameron** (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP): I thank the hon. Lady for giving way. She is making an excellent speech. In relation to making sure that the economy works for everyone, does she agree that it is extremely important that the economy works for people with disabilities, so that they are able to get into employment? We should also champion opportunity for people with disabilities to become entrepreneurs themselves and to run businesses, because without everyone being involved in the economy, it is really worth nothing at all for anybody.

**Sarah Olney:** I thank the hon. Member for her intervention. I agree 100% with her points.

It is striking how often the words “maintain”, “continue” and, dare I say, “remain” appear in the briefing notes about the planned financial services legislation. The importance of the financial services sector to our economy is underlined, but the message is that, far from leveraging the opportunities of leaving the EU to enhance this key sector, every effort must be made to keep things exactly as they are. That is in direct contrast to the comments last week of the outgoing Governor of the Bank of England, who said that close alignment on financial services would not be in the UK's interests, as we would effectively be surrendering control of regulations to a body over which we have no power. That surely highlights the conundrum at the heart of Brexit. Do we want close alignment with the EU to smooth the path of our

exports, or do we want to take control of our own destiny and set our own rules? The Queen's Speech, alas, gives us no indication of the path that the Government plan to take.

We see that conundrum highlighted further in the trade Bill. Its commitments to transitioning trade agreements that we are currently party to as members of the EU are undermined by the Chancellor's comments at the weekend that he wishes to see no alignment with the EU. We cannot transition trade agreements smoothly if we wish to renegotiate the terms on which they are agreed. Again, there is no clarity on what the Government have chosen—alignment without influence or frictionless trade? Are we to have cake or will we eat it? The Government announced their plans to set up a UK-based body to plead with the international community not to be unkind to UK firms. I wait eagerly to see whether this policy is more effective at protecting the interests of UK businesses than having a seat at the table of international rule-setting trade bodies.

The Liberal Democrats made changes to business rates a central part of our 2019 manifesto, because we recognise that urgent reform of this regressive tax is required to support small businesses and revive town centres. I therefore welcome the Government's commitment to conducting a fundamental review of business rates, but I regret that they do not use their substantial majority in this place to commit to a more radical change. The Government state in the briefing notes that they recognise

“the role of business rates as a source of local authority income”,

as if to warn us that we can have thriving town centres or well-funded local services, but not both. It is disingenuous of the Government to pretend that they cannot resolve this conundrum through proper reform of local government finance.

I welcome the Government's commitment to protect and enhance workers' rights as the UK leaves the EU, but regret that they have not provided more detail as to exactly how those rights would be upheld. Liberal Democrats would like to see employees on zero-hours contracts given the right to request a permanent contract after 12 months, but the Government only commit to enabling them to request a more predictable contract—a guaranteed single hour of work, perhaps.

It is disappointing that there has been no mention in the Queen's Speech of reforming either the loan charge or the IR35 regime. The loan charge is causing intense distress to innocent taxpayers up and down the country that is unlikely to be alleviated by the recent recommendations from Sir Amyas Morse, and the IR35 legislation—a looming disaster for the self-employed in the private sector—is not mentioned either. The Chancellor has only committed to a review.

I take this opportunity to highlight the excellent neonatal unit at Kingston Hospital in my constituency, and the fantastic staff who work there. I should also like to mention the charity Born Too Soon, which does amazing work supporting families whose babies have to stay at the unit. To my deep and lasting sadness, we were once one of those families, so I feel qualified to welcome uncritically the Government's commitment to paid neonatal leave for those parents who find themselves in that incredibly difficult position.

The Prime Minister promised us a radical and reforming Queen's Speech, but the most striking feature of its plans for the economy and jobs is its timidity and uncertainty. There is bold talk of making the most of the opportunities presented by Brexit, but very little detail. It is almost as though the Government are not really sure what they want to do with the Brexit that they secured a mandate for. If the best they can come up with is to commit to keeping everything just the same as it was, I am forced to wonder why on earth we are leaving the European Union at all.

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans):** I call Jo Gideon to make her maiden speech.

7.2 pm

**Jo Gideon** (Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Con): I am absolutely determined to focus on the economy and jobs in Stoke-on-Trent Central, and I am extremely grateful to have been called to speak today.

Stoke-on-Trent is on the up—confident about Brexit, proud of our industrial heritage and committed to a manufacturing future. It is an incredible honour to represent the people of Stoke-on-Trent Central, and I thank them for sending me to this House. The city is, as my predecessor Gareth Snell rightly put it in his own maiden speech, “vibrant, welcoming and proud”. I pay tribute to him for championing the ceramics industry and its continued place at the heart of the Potteries' economy. Gareth was always protective of the industry in this House, at every stage of the process—from bringing in the clay by freight train, to getting the finished product out into the world so that plate turners everywhere could flip their tableware and see the uniquely reassuring back stamp, “Made in Stoke-on-Trent”. There will be no change there from me.

Stoke-on-Trent is six historic market towns in one. Tunstall and Burslem are ably represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent North (Jonathan Gullis), and Longton and Fenton by my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent South (Jack Brereton). Stoke-on-Trent Central is made up of Stoke-upon-Trent, commonly known as Stoke town or simply Stoke, and Hanley, which is often seen as the city centre, although not necessarily by everyone in Tunstall, Burslem, Longton, Fenton or Stoke. Our city is polycentric and rich with history, a fascinating place to visit and a wonderful place to live. The last time that either Hanley or Stoke town were in Conservative hands was back in the 1930s, and then only for one term. Much as I am proud to follow in the footsteps of Harold Hales and Ida Copeland in being a Conservative elected by the people of Stoke-on-Trent, I shall be looking to replicate the success of my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent South in being re-elected by the people of Stoke-on-Trent.

The House may think that this was a Brexit election, but it was not just a Brexit election. It was a “Brexit and” election; it was a “Brexit so that” election. We are not just going to get Brexit done. We are going to invest in our NHS, schools, police, roads and infrastructure. With the right support, we can make Stoke-on-Trent an even better place to live and to visit. To do that, we must relentlessly improve education standards and skills, and revolutionise the public transport provision to cut

congestion. Productivity is too low, exports do not match comparable cities such as Coventry and the city does not quite do what it says on the tin. We need more Stoke and we need more Trent.

Stoke town needs every penny of the heritage high streets money it has been promised, and it needs clearer and more direct pedestrian routes to Stoke-on-Trent railway station. I will work with anyone who can preserve our heritage while taking us forward. For too much of its course through the city, you would not know the River Trent was there. I will learn lessons from anywhere as to how to improve public access to watercourses. Although I welcome the Government's fund for new pocket parks, I will lobby relentlessly to get more funds into historic parks too.

Our identity as a city is closely linked to the ceramics industry, and preserving the authentic Potteries landscape must be part of our tourism offer, but the ceramics industry itself must always be allowed to move into the newest processes at the cutting edge of technology. I want to see the successful Ceramic Valley enterprise zone expanded, and the plan for an international research centre for advanced ceramics to materialise in my constituency. This would allow for the expansion of world-class innovation by companies such as Lucideon, where I recently learned about advancing sintering, which is a process that enables materials to handle the heat—something that we know all about in this House. In fact, on Friday I saw some scintillating sintering in Stoke with the Secretary of State for International Trade. The research centre will also be supported by Staffordshire University, the world's leading centre for masters level ceramics and the successor body to the Burslem and Hanley schools of art that gave the Potteries such pioneers as Susie Cooper, Edith Gater and Clarice Cliff. Still today, international ceramicists who could base themselves anywhere in the world choose to locate in Stoke-on-Trent because it is the authentic capital of ceramics, and it must remain so.

Of course, the city has also embraced other industries. Stoke-on-Trent is increasingly a centre for the logistics industry, and over many years retail has been important to the six market towns. But the internet is threatening to harm our marketplaces and high streets even more than they have already been harmed by 1960s traffic schemes and 1970s architects. We need radical reform of retail business rates, and we need to make the high street a more relevant and attractive place to be, with more local residents living in town centres and more international tourists and buyers exploring our city. The entrepreneurial spirit that made the Potteries great must be unleashed again—unleashed and nurtured.

I set up and ran my own business from scratch. I did not have a business background, which probably helped me because I did not worry about the unknown—rather like the feeling I had when I first set foot in this place as the Member of Parliament for Stoke-on-Trent Central. Enterprise has no educational barriers, only barriers of self-belief. It must be the business of Government to enable more people to have the opportunity to pursue their dreams, and we need to include enterprise in the school curriculum. Ambition must be encouraged, supported and rewarded, and your background should never hold you back. Let us back those who have no family history of setting up a business, let us nurture those in business who have never yet exported a product

[Jo Gideon]

and let us encourage those entrepreneurs who are yet to be employers to take on their first member of staff. For my part, I will gently encourage the Government at every turn to invest in the infrastructure and services of Stoke-on-Trent.

Most urgently, that means nothing short of a transport revolution across the city to cut congestion for private vehicles and speed up services for bus and rail users. Beeching did not so much swing an axe in Stoke-on-Trent as wield a chainsaw. Too many branch lines were lost and too many stations were closed—and it got worse still. As late as 2005, the Strategic Rail Authority shut Etruria station, and dug it up completely in 2008. Stoke-on-Trent is crying out for better public transport. We need a big share of the transforming cities fund, the bus fund, the reverse Beeching fund, and more, to make up for the decades of under-investment in Stoke-on-Trent when we missed out on our fair share. I really hope that we will be a pilot scheme for the superb project, as our geography of six towns in one city can offer best practice for places elsewhere.

The people of Stoke-on-Trent have spoken and they need to know the Government are listening. I know they are, and I look forward to doing everything I can to keep it that way—to keep Stoke-on-Trent on the up, with our economy flourishing, our manufacturers making, our job satisfaction high, our earnings good, our talent retained and our opportunities increased. From Trent Vale to Baddeley Edge, and Etruria to Bentilee, my constituency has so much to offer. It deserves every bit of the attention that I will ensure it is going to get.

7.10 pm

**Chris Stephens** (Glasgow South West) (SNP): I congratulate the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Jo Gideon) on her maiden speech, in which her passion for Stoke-on-Trent was noted. Indeed, I look forward to debating with her how we will get the high streets and main streets of the UK thriving again. I gently suggest to her that gentle encouragement of the Government does not always work, and perhaps sometimes a good kick is required, as I have tried to do in my time here.

I congratulate all those who have made maiden speeches so far, but it was a particular pleasure to listen to my hon. Friend—my good friend—the Member for Gordon (Richard Thomson), who reminded us that this is a Government who cannot run a bong in a brewery. I think that is something that we will find as we test the Government over the next few years.

I want to thank the good people of Glasgow South West for sending me back here with an increased majority and an increased mandate. That just goes to show that positive campaigns can win.

This debate has been marked somewhat with a sense of déjà vu, with Government Back-Bench MPs calling Opposition Members Marxists—I had not heard that for at least six weeks. They were being treated terribly. The groans from Government Back Benchers when the 1950s-born women were mentioned were pretty disgraceful. The Government really do need to address that injustice.

We were treated to a speech by the Chancellor that I can only suggest was a masterclass in Tory buzzword bingo in which all the buzz-phrases were used, rolled

into sentences and paragraphs. I was tempted on three occasions to shout, “House!”, as we heard his address. The Queen’s Speech is marked more than anything else by what is not in it rather than its contents. It was very interesting that the Chancellor did not mention how the Government intend to tackle tax avoidance. Let us remind ourselves, as I said in my intervention on the shadow Chancellor, of the current figures for HMRC’s wealthy unit, whose responsibility is to chase tax avoidance by the richest in our society. Eighteen months ago, there were 1,046 full-time equivalent posts in that unit; today, there are 961. Why have 80 full-time-equivalent posts disappeared when we have a widening tax gap? Is it perhaps a recruitment crisis? If so, then perhaps we need to look at public sector pay, and the job needs to attract more people to go to that unit. Is it the terms and conditions? If so, we should be negotiating them with the trade unions. Or are we seeing the unravelling of the HMRC Building our Future programme? All the assurances we were given that jobs would be protected in HMRC are not being delivered as its staff are being asked, on some occasions, to travel more than 100 miles to go to their new workplace.

The Chancellor talked about deregulation, but there is one sector in which regulation is pursued quite rigorously, and that is, of course, the trade union movement. It is rather dangerous of the Government to pursue an attack on the right to withdraw one’s labour. The right to withdraw one’s labour is a human right. Trying to interfere with the right to strike is dangerous. It is perhaps no coincidence that the Government are targeting the transport unions. Why is that the case? Perhaps it is because they are well organised and the Government are trying to reduce their collective bargaining power.

The Government have proposed an employment Bill. I will be reintroducing my Workers (Definition and Rights) Bill. We need to tackle the scandal of zero-hours contracts in this country. As the hon. Members for Leeds West (Rachel Reeves) and for Birmingham, Erdington (Jack Dromey) said, we need to tackle shift changes at the last moment. We need to simplify the status of a worker. It is unacceptable for someone to turn up at their workplace thinking they have an eight-hour shift, only to be told, “No, you now only have a four-hour shift”, or, “No, we no longer need you today.” Those individuals will have paid childcare costs and transport costs to get to work, only to then be told of those changes. Likewise, people turn up to their work having been told they would have a five-hour shift, then to be told it was a 10-hour shift.

To those who think that zero-hours contracts are voluntary, I suggest that we need to tackle the universal credit sanctions regime, which allows for someone who has given up or refused a zero-hours contract job to be sanctioned. Where is the social security Bill to fix our broken social security system? It is unacceptable that people have to wait five weeks to get their initial benefit. The Work and Pensions Committee, of which I was a member, recommended that we should abolish the two-child limit on tax credits. These are the very real challenges facing people on a daily basis as they try to navigate their way through the social security system. New Members will find that their caseworkers and their constituency offices are flooded with cases in relation to universal credit problems and people trying to get state benefit that they are entitled to.

I shall be opposing the Gracious Speech because it does not address the real needs of the country and does not address the needs of the poor and most vulnerable.

7.17 pm

**Suella Braverman** (Fareham) (Con): I want to start by congratulating the fantastic hon. Members who have delivered brilliant maiden speeches today: my hon. Friends the Members for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Jo Gideon), for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Aaron Bell), for Dover (Mrs Elphicke), for Kensington (Felicity Buchan) and for Arundel and South Downs (Andrew Griffith). For those of us who are not newly elected, the bar has definitely been raised, and I am definitely feeling the pressure.

I want to start, Mr Deputy Speaker, by telling you about the moment when I think I realised that I was a Conservative. It was in 1992 and I was 12 years old. The UK was in recession. Interest rates were 10%, rising to 12% and even 15% at one time. Those high interest rates had rendered mortgages very expensive and had caused a fall in household income, a fall in consumer spending, a fall in demand, and a sharp decline in confidence. Unemployment was at 10% in 1992. Companies were laying off millions of people. The UK had to leave the exchange rate mechanism and devalue. The reason I remember that time, and one consequence of that recession, was that my father lost his job. He used to work as a timber merchant and was suddenly unemployed, and it took him some years to get back into employment. Our family fell on hard times, as my mother's salary as a nurse had to be stretched a long way.

People might well say, "That was under a Tory Government. Why on earth would that make you a Conservative?" It was not about who was in charge, but rather the lesson that I learned from that experience and the underlying philosophy. It was the first time that I saw the preciousness of a job. I saw how work was the route out of the devastating ruin of unemployment. I saw how job creators and innovation lifted people out of poverty. I saw that it was not all about handouts and the dole—although that is, of course, vital for those in desperate situations—but more about the pride of self-sufficiency and the dignity of work, no matter how humble, which could be life-saving. For the first time, I saw the intrinsic connection between business and enterprise on the one hand and community and survival on the other. I learned that there was no limit to what can be achieved with hard work, determination and the ladders of opportunity. For me, that is the Conservative philosophy.

The reason I dwell on my family's experience of almost 30 years ago is that today it is simply remarkable that many more millions of people do not have to live with that crippling insecurity. Thanks to the jobs miracle that we have seen since 2010, 3.8 million more people are in work, 32 million people have enjoyed a tax cut, full-time employment is at a record high, unemployment is at its lowest since the 1970s, income inequality is falling and wages are rising. Millions of people around the country have the opportunity to, and the peace of mind that they can, make ends meet, provide for their families and save for retirement.

Thanks to that jobs revolution, the UK is a place where even someone who is born with nothing can, with hard work, improve their situation over time and build something better to leave their children. I will tell the

House why I could never vote for the Labour party or any of the other Opposition parties—it is because every Labour Government has left this country with more unemployment than when it was elected. Every Labour Government has raised taxes for millions of working people. Just as night follows day, every Labour Government costs Britain more.

This Conservative Government understand that growing the economy and reducing inequality are not mutually exclusive goals; they actually work together. Our economy grows best from the middle out, when growth is more widely shared. Our economy has grown by 19% since 2010—faster than the economies of France, Italy or Japan—and as a result we are able to allow significant investment in our services and infrastructure. In Fareham, infrastructure such as junction 10 on the M27 needs vital investment, to enable the delivery of 6,000 new homes and 5,000 new jobs at Welborne garden village. I urge Treasury Ministers to consider the scheme in detail in advance of the March Budget. That transport improvement is desperately needed, as congestion is increasing in the Solent region, slowing down journey times and connectivity and adversely affecting productivity.

This Conservative Government will continue to make an enormous difference to opportunities by bolstering the ladders into the middle class. Levelling up investment in education, increasing the minimum wage and enabling more home ownership will continue to raise standards of living for massive numbers of British people. I am proud that Fareham College—an outstanding further education college—is one of the pilots for the new T-levels, because a focus on technical training will become critical for our workforce and our economy.

It is the Conservatives who have relentlessly worked to eliminate the deficit and support business and, post Brexit, will pursue free trade. The fact is that if we want to help the poorest in our society we have to enable competitiveness, productivity and business confidence, which spurs private sector investment. Labour just does not understand that. It believes that punishing business is the way to support our poorest—a fundamental misunderstanding of wealth creation and how prosperity is spread. What drives this Government is ensuring that every striving, hard-working, optimistic child in the UK has the same incredible chance that this country gave me. That is the driving force for anyone who calls themselves a Conservative, and it is the driving force that makes Britain great.

7.24 pm

**Mr Virendra Sharma** (Ealing, Southall) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak in this vital debate. Over the last 10 years, under the Tory Government, pay has stagnated, while poverty and insecurity have disturbingly risen. Under the Conservatives, we have seen the emergence of the "left behind"—those people whose lives are defined by a constant state of uncertainty and unease. For those families, work no longer guarantees a route out of hardship. Nine million households where at least one adult works now live in poverty. Such families are often only a handful of pay cheques away from destitution, hunger and despair. These families cannot plan for the future, and many have lost all hope. The fact that this injustice exists in the sixth richest economy in the world is a stain on this Government. We must do better than this.

[*Mr Virendra Sharma*]

Last Friday I visited St Mellitus church, which operates a food bank in my constituency, and I was shocked and distressed by what I saw. Recent research by the Trussell Trust has shown that food bank use has increased from 61,000 distributed parcels in 2011 to a record 1.6 million parcels last year. Last year's figure represents a staggering 20% increase on the previous year. Even more shocking is the fact that a third of last year's parcels went towards feeding young children. At my local food bank, I spoke to a volunteer who told me an all-too-familiar story. She said that the vast majority of service users at St Mellitus do not wish to use it but are forced to do so by a combination of low pay, food insecurity and bad luck. People are struggling due to the simple reason that they cannot afford to buy food. Many suffer from severe stress and anxiety from their situation and feel embarrassed as parents. The volunteer I spoke to said that parents who access food parcels often skip meals to ensure that their children have more to eat. Some can go several days without eating properly. In London alone, 400,000 children are food-insecure, which affects their educational, physical and social development. What kind of Government would not want all children in society to fulfil their potential?

My local food bank at St Mellitus church—with support from other churches, gurdwaras and mandirs in my constituency—does superb work under huge financial constraints, but surely our Government should accept their responsibility and end this scourge. One key reason for the increase in food bank use in recent years is the introduction of universal credit. The five-week wait to receive the first payment is pushing many into debt, food bank use and the hands of those willing to exploit the vulnerable. The Government must scrap the five-week wait, which is distressing for so many families.

While the Government have pledged to increase the minimum wage, they must go further and meet the living wage of £10.75 in my constituency. Research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation has shown that secure and fair incomes for employees result in increased workforce motivation and reduced staff turnover and sickness. A living wage will not only tackle the injustice of food insecurity, but address our economy's productivity crisis.

Finally, we must provide greater investment for on-the-job training and strengthen labour laws to protect people from exploitation and zero-hour contracts. We must also champion the creation of highly skilled and well-paid jobs for the next generation of young people, such as the commitment to create 10,000 apprenticeships at Heathrow airport. The Prime Minister may be too frightened to make up his mind on Heathrow airport, but he must show some real leadership to end the tragedy of in-work poverty and deprivation in our society.

7.30 pm

**Mr Richard Holden** (North West Durham) (Con): Mr Deputy Speaker, may I just say how much of a pleasure it is to see you back in your rightful place in the Chair today?

I hope my maiden speech does not defy convention as much as the voters of North West Durham did in returning the first Conservative MP ever for that

constituency. I will work hard for everyone from every political tradition in my constituency over the next few years to repay the trust that they have placed in me.

First, I would like to pay tribute to the outgoing MP, Laura Pidcock. Although we come from very different political angles with very different political philosophies, I recognise particularly the work that she did for the men who were victims of sexual abuse in the 1960s, '70s and '80s at the Medomsley detention centre, and I will continue that campaign. I am sure that all Members of this House will join me in wishing her and her young family every success in her new role as chief of staff to the hon. Member for Leeds East (Richard Burgon) in his quest for the deputy leadership of the Labour party.

North West Durham is a stunningly beautiful place. I readily admit that, as everyone can tell from my accent, I grew up on the wrong side of the Pennines, albeit in a very similar area with some very similar challenges. From Killhope Cross to Burnhope and from Ebchester to Witton-le-Wear, covering much of the former County Durham districts of Wear Valley and Derwentside, my constituency of North West Durham is quite a large one.

There are many local campaigns that I am already stuck into, and which are required to help drive our local economy and the good, well-paid jobs that are the backbone of a strong economy: investment in our high streets in Crook, Willington and Consett; and investment in transport, particularly in rural bus services in Weardale, Tow Law and villages across the constituency and, in the north of the constituency, investment—hopefully—in a new rail line. Consett and the surrounding area is one of the largest population centres in England without a rail line, despite having four rail lines there as recently as the 1960s. I will be campaigning for a feasibility study to reconnect our area to the growth centres of the north-east, with a cycle and walkway alongside it. If this proves viable, as I hope it will, I will be campaigning for public money to get our area plugged into the northern powerhouse. I will also be campaigning for investment in services that support local people, such as Shotley Bridge Hospital, which I hope will be protected for the long term, and over time I will be campaigning for a modern hospital to replace it.

Consett has a proud heritage—a heritage of steel manufacture that goes back centuries—but the steelworks were closed 40 years ago, and now we have to look forward to the future. Over the weekend, I visited the Genesis Project, which is providing much investment in both housing and new industry in the constituency. I will also be campaigning for our rural communities and for the jobs that continue to exist there, particularly in our agricultural and rural economy. We have an absolutely stunning area of outstanding natural beauty and a world heritage site, but those places cannot exist in stasis. In fact, the Eastgate cement works site that was closed in 2002, when over 100 jobs were lost there, is still vacant, and I will be campaigning for investment to put that place back in use.

On a national level, there are a few things I would like to ally myself to, one of which really does affect my constituency quite significantly—vehicle excise duty on motorhomes. My constituency is one of the largest producers of these in the country, and they have already been hit by a huge increase in vehicle excise duty. I hope that the Government Front Benchers will listen to my pleas to see that reversed.

I will also be campaigning—as one might expect, knowing me—for a cut in beer duty. Per head, we have many more pubs than average, including many excellent wet pubs in the constituency. I think of the Black Lion in Wolsingham and the Steel Club in Consett, in which I have been holding my surgeries. I hope that the Government will pay attention to these pleas too.

On a slightly different note, I would also like to see the Government investing in the Pause programme. It is something that I saw in action when I was working in the Department for Education, and I would like to see it rolled out nationally. It is not a huge amount of money, but it will really help women, particularly at the most vulnerable time when they have had children taken into care. It was piloted by a Labour council in one of the poorest areas of east London, and I think it is something that all Members from both sides of the House could support being seen across the entire country.

Furthermore, again on the education side, I would like to see technical and vocational education really at the centre of the Government's agenda for the future. I am very proud to see the 20 institutes of technology that will be pushed out across the country, including one in the north-east, and I really want to see technical and vocational education at the heart of everything we do to drive productivity, particularly in the north-east of England.

Another campaign that many hon. Members were involved in was the one against fixed odds betting terminals. I would like online gambling and online fixed odds betting to face the same restrictions. If we are going to ban people from walking into bookmakers to gamble large sums, we should also look at the gambling that can take place in people's homes, in people's bedrooms or even in the bath. It is one of those things that reach into every aspect of people's lives, and I think it is a really important thing that the Government should look at in the coming years. I will certainly be part of any campaigns that look at restricting that.

Finally on the campaigns I will be involved in, I would also like to make a personal shout-out for a review of legal aid. It is something that Members in another place particularly helped me out on, and for those in difficult circumstances it is something that I hope the Government Front Benchers will address.

It is the greatest honour of my life to have been elected to represent the people of North West Durham. I hope to prove for them a worthy MP and a campaigning MP, and that I will deserve their support in elections for many years to come.

7.37 pm

**Justin Madders** (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): May I first congratulate the hon. Member for North West Durham (Mr Holden) on his maiden speech? His was one of the more remarkable results on election night, and having heard how late he was selected as the candidate, that makes it even more remarkable. He will never forget his maiden speech, and I think he can rightly be proud of the way he delivered it and the sentiment and sincerity with which he spoke tonight. I would say that all the maiden speeches we have heard today have been of an exceptionally high quality. Indeed, I would like to pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Beth Winter) for her excellent speech. She has huge shoes to step into, but I have no doubt that she will do that very well indeed.

This Humble Address is another opportunity for a new Government to set out not just their legislative programme for the year ahead, but their plans for how they intend to reshape the country over the next four or five years. It is certainly a broad legislative programme, and it should be pretty good given that it is the second attempt in three months to write one. However, in many areas where they are addressing issues, I feel that there is a lack of ambition, and of course there are huge areas where there is nothing at all.

The subject of today's debate is jobs and the economy, and there are several proposals that attempt to look at our current workplace settlement. The suggestion that flexible working become the default presumption is to be welcomed. Of course, we have had the right to request flexible working for many years, but it is just that: a right to ask, not a right to have. While it has already given millions of people the opportunity to change their working arrangements to be much more family-friendly, the many who have not had their request accepted have found that the reality is that the employer can almost always find a way to say no. With these new proposals, the devil will always be in the detail, and I do have a big question about what it actually means, as it says in the Queen's Speech, for the employer to have a good reason to refuse. We will have to explore that in more detail in due course.

Workers will also have the right to request a more predictable contract—that is presumably aimed at the many people on zero-hours or flexible contracts. For the reasons I have set out, the right to request in itself will have to be much more robust than it is under the current legislation, and if it is to be effective it must be alive to the reality of what life on a zero-hours contract is like. Current right to request legislation starts from an assumption that the employer and employee have at least some semblance of balance in their relationship, but the fundamental characteristic of a zero-hours contract is that all the power is in the hands of the employer. How realistic will it be for someone to ask for more certain working hours, when they know it is entirely within the gift of the employer not to call them back the next day if they do not want to? That is a huge challenge to address. Indeed, why do we allow such parasitic, unfair arrangements to continue at all? Until we begin to question their very existence, we will only ever be tinkering at the edges of a fundamentally unfair labour market.

We are told that the Government intend to:

“Promote fairness in the workplace, striking the right balance between the flexibility that the economy needs and the security that workers deserve”,

but that presents us with a false choice. There does not have to be a trade-off between security and flexibility, and until we begin to address those fundamental imbalances in the workplace, we will never get a fair and just workplace settlement. A happy workforce is a productive workforce; it is good for employers and for the economy. Research for the TUC found that one in three workers does not feel comfortable approaching managers about a problem at work, that a third of workers do not feel that they or their colleagues are treated fairly, and that nearly half of workers say that their line manager did not explain their rights at work. Rather than the Government tackling those gross injustices, however, we just get a bit of window dressing.

[Justin Madders]

We must end the culture of weak employment rights, avaricious corporations, and a Government who are indifferent to the needs of working people. We must move towards a period of enlightenment, and rebuild one of the main pillars of what I think makes up a decent society—job security—because without job security, people have no security in their life. Over the next five years, the challenge is to move to a point where the quality of a job is valued as much as the creation of the job itself. Whenever a multinational looks to cut its workforce, we always seem to be at the head of the queue to bear the brunt of that. Why are we seen as a soft touch? Why are British workers seen as easier and cheaper to get rid of than just about anyone else in western Europe? We do not need to give those multinationals any more encouragement, but I fear that we are embarking on a course of action that will increase the risk to British workers tenfold. The Chancellor's recent comments about not having alignment will be a massive green light to those multinationals, particularly in manufacturing, that are looking for an excuse to move their production elsewhere.

Just a few months ago the aerospace, automotive, chemicals, food and drink, and pharmaceutical sectors wrote a joint letter, warning the Government that potential new trading arrangements could pose a “serious risk to manufacturing competitiveness”.

Those industries are worth a combined £98 billion to the UK economy, and between them they are responsible for thousands of jobs in my constituency and many others. Their contribution is immense, and I cannot understand what possessed the Chancellor to make those comments about non-alignment over the weekend. I know he is a big Thatcherite, but if he goes through with that he will surpass even her record in decimating the manufacturing industry in the north of England.

I do not doubt that the Government have a mandate to leave the EU, but they do not have a mandate to destroy manufacturing at the same time, or to sacrifice the kind of good, well-paid, highly skilled, permanent jobs offered by many of the industries I have mentioned. They do not have a mandate to jettison the promises made during the election—I think specifically of what the Prime Minister said to those Nissan workers in Sunderland about protecting their jobs. Are those promises now worthless? Will the entire UK automotive sector be cast aside because of some ideological insanity that means that the Government knowingly and deliberately pursue a course of action that will inevitably lead to thousands of people losing their jobs? Labour Members will not stand for that. We might be depleted in numbers, but that will not weaken our resolve to fight for jobs in our communities.

Finally, let me say a few words about housing, because we must not forget the leasehold scandal. Despite the heavy trailing of policies such as peppercorn ground rents and a ban on new leasehold houses, nothing has yet appeared. Perhaps we will see something on those issues, but this Government's first priority should be to give hope to the thousands of people who have found themselves stuck with leasehold houses that they cannot sell. Under the right circumstances the Law Commission's report might represent a slight improvement in enfranchisement, but its major downfall is that the

remit it was given accepts that those leases were created fairly, in a reasonable, open system where both parties had equal bargaining power. The systematic deception and mis-selling seems to have been overlooked, and victims of that fraud cannot understand how human rights have been brought in to protect those who own offshore trust funds and are at the heart of this scandal. If that is who the Government side with, they must understand what a terrible signal that sends to the thousands of ordinary people up and down the country who find themselves trapped in a nightmare just because they wanted to own their own home. I hope we do not go down that road.

In conclusion, I fear that this Humble Address is at best a missed opportunity, and at worst has the potential, in the many years ahead, to destroy the communities I represent.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans):** Order. I call Jane Hunt to make her maiden speech.

7.45 pm

**Jane Hunt (Loughborough) (Con):** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to make my maiden speech during this debate. I thank the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Justin Madders) for his contribution, and all other colleagues for their fantastic contributions and maiden speeches.

I was hugely honoured to be elected as the Member of Parliament for Loughborough, and I am acutely aware that I have big shoes to fill. I worked alongside my predecessor, Baroness Morgan, for nine years as her senior caseworker, and during that time I saw at first hand her dedication to supporting her constituents. She was something of a trailblazer, being the first female to represent Loughborough, and the first female to chair the Treasury Committee. She was also the first MP to lead a general debate on mental health in the House of Commons. Her talents not only as an MP but as a Minister were recognised early on, and she quickly rose up the ranks, being appointed Education Secretary within four years of becoming an MP, and Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport last year. Her talents were recognised still further last week when she was introduced in the other place—now Members understand what I mean by big shoes!

Loughborough constituency is a great mixture of rural and urban, with the largest town, Loughborough, at its heart. The town has a rich history, with its almost 800-year-old market, and annual Loughborough fair. It is home to the John Taylor bell foundry, which is the largest in the world and responsible for making the country's biggest bells. Most importantly for our local area, it crafted 47 bells for the Carillon tower, which is a memorial to local residents who selflessly gave their lives serving in both world wars.

The largest employer in Loughborough is its university, which attracts some of the best students from around the world. Loughborough University's name is synonymous with sporting excellence, and it has trained many elite athletes. Indeed, if the university were a country, it would have finished 10th and 17th in the 2016 Paralympic and Olympic games respectively. It was also recently

crowned British Universities & Colleges Sport champion for the 40th consecutive year. Athletes can benefit from the university's altitude hotel, which simulates sleeping conditions at any altitude up to Everest, even though Loughborough is only 154 feet above sea level.

The university is home to one of the UK's largest science and enterprise parks, which provides a research and development base for high-tech businesses of all sizes. The park is linked with nearby Charnwood Campus, which is the UK's first ever life science opportunity zone. Both those facilities help the town to retain local talent—something I am keen to facilitate further, as it is key to driving inward investment in the constituency.

To the west of the town is the close-knit community of Shepshed, which originally grew as a centre for the wool trade. Today, it holds an annual Scaresheep festival, during which businesses, schools and organisations create their own sheep-themed scarecrows to raise money for local good causes. To the east of the town are the picturesque Wolds villages, at the centre of which are a number of welcoming pubs that are vital to their communities. I am therefore determined to support them, and will be closely following the Government's business rates reforms, which I know is an area of concern for small retailers and publicans. I will also work to roll out gigabit broadband, which will be a great asset to our local businesses and those who work from home.

To the south-east are Quorn and Mountsorrel Castle, which I have had the privilege to represent as a Charnwood Borough councillor, and still do; I refer the House to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests. Mountsorrel Castle is known for having the largest granite quarry in Europe, providing building materials to major projects across the country. Quorn is home to one of two Great Central Railway stations in my constituency. This railway is the UK's only double track main line heritage railway. Nearby is Barrow upon Soar, which is famous for its marine dinosaur skeleton, a plesiosaur, known locally as the "Barrow Kipper". There are also a number of beautiful countryside walks in the area, including the fossil sculpture trail.

In a constituency that is famed for sport, the people of Sileby outdo themselves with teams for cricket, football, rugby, bowls and even long lane skittles, which, if Members have not seen it, is both daring and adventurous—rather like the locals! Both Barrow and Sileby are large villages, but they turn into two islands when it floods. I am committed to addressing flood mitigation and regular maintenance of the waterways in the area, particularly around Slash Lane. To the north is the village of Hathern, which was home to Robert Bakewell, who revolutionised the way in which livestock are bred, reflecting the area's important farming history.

All that being said, it is the generous nature of local residents that led me to make my family home in Loughborough in 1995, to raise my two children there, and to become involved in the local community, as everybody there does. It is clear from street names that, throughout the centuries, there have been a great many people who have contributed to the area either financially or by their actions to help to improve the lives of local residents. This still runs like a golden thread through our communities today. There are a great many street names, such as Griggs Road, Foden Close, Alan Moss Road, Herrick Road and Burton Street, from long ago.

More recently, streets have been named after three people I knew. Terry Yardley Way is named after Terry Yardley, who was a Labour councillor and a lovely man. Then there are two of my absolute favourites who have both sadly passed away. Peter McCaig Way and Roy Brown Drive are named after Peter McCaig and the lovely Roy Brown of Sileby. I knew them all and I saw how much they did for their communities.

I am tremendously proud to be representing the Loughborough constituency. My social media tag is Team Loughborough and I feel very much part of a team. Other members of our team work tirelessly to ensure that our young people have the skills they need to succeed and get on in life; that our local businesses can thrive and continue to compete on an international scale; that those who are unwell or in need of assistance receive care and support; and that people of all nationalities and religious beliefs feel at home in our area. Everybody has a part to play in Team Loughborough and I look forward to playing my part.

7.52 pm

**Gerald Jones** (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney) (Lab): It is a pleasure to speak in this debate and to witness so many passionate maiden speeches from both sides of the Chamber. I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Loughborough (Jane Hunt) for her passionate and entertaining maiden speech. I am sure she will be justifiably proud of her contribution this afternoon. I would also like to pay tribute to my new constituency next-door neighbour, from whom we heard earlier. My hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Beth Winter) spoke with passion and an awareness of the stark realities facing her constituents, as well as mine and many others across the country, due to the actions of this Government.

This is the first time I have had the opportunity to speak since Parliament returned after last month's general election, so I would like to put on record my thanks to the people of Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney, the constituency where I was born, raised and still live, for their continued support and for giving me the huge honour of representing them in this place for the third time in four years.

The Queen's Speech did little seriously to address the poverty prevalent in Wales, including in my constituency, and across the UK. We need an end to austerity. Despite promises from successive Tory Governments, public services continue to be under huge pressure. That is simply not good enough for those who are living in poverty and need real action now. They are left with a legacy of almost 10 years of Tory austerity. Local authorities and public services are cut to the bone. The impact that austerity has had on frontline public services has been huge. Only last week I heard about local authorities being forced to cut the staff operating their CCTV, so that although cameras will remain in some cases there will be fewer people, if any, monitoring them. That will have a huge impact on the fight against crime and antisocial behaviour, given the Tory police cuts since 2010. Councils are forced to make these cuts due to Tory austerity—let there be absolutely no mistake about that.

The Gracious Speech also does nothing to address the shambolic system of universal credit, with many thousands across the UK and in my constituency forced into poverty and experiencing greater hardship due to

[Gerald Jones]

the way the system is operating. The Government's reforms do not go nearly far enough and they must act now to ensure that the benefit system stops punishing some of the most vulnerable people in our society. Need has increased, with demand at our food banks increasing. I speak to many of the wonderful volunteers in our food banks. It is fair to say that many, if not most, of the people using food banks are in work. That highlights the scandal of low pay, the scandal of zero-hour contracts and the high level of in-work poverty that exists in 21st-century Britain.

There was in this year's Queen Speech a sense of *déjà vu*. Yet again, there is a lack of attention shown to the UK's devolved regions, especially Wales and especially with regard to the investment that is so desperately needed. Some Welsh voters put their faith in the Tories for the first time. How let down they will feel as the Government fail to deliver a credible and properly funded industrial strategy for Wales. Many areas in Wales, including in my constituency, suffer from a lack of access to job opportunities. Many of the jobs and schemes available are focused in other areas. In the south Wales valleys it can be difficult and sometimes impossible to access them due to the geographical isolation of communities and the limited availability of public transport. That is yet another reason why it was deeply worrying to hear only more of the same from the Government on their plans for infrastructure investment. There were vague and loose promises, rather than firm commitments that are badly needed to improve our railways and public transport, starting with rail electrification across South Wales and the valleys, which is long overdue, and the infrastructure we desperately need to connect some of our most isolated communities.

The UK Government have stated time and time again that Wales will not lose a penny when we leave the EU, promising that the shared prosperity fund would replace the development funding that areas such as south Wales have received from Europe over many years. Now, however, with Brexit less than two weeks away, and after months of Members from both sides of this House calling for clarity on this fund, it is astonishing that we have still not heard any real detail whatsoever. The Brexit deadline is looming ever closer, and the people of Wales need answers and assurances on this fund. We need to know whether Wales will be worse off as a result of Brexit and we need to know that the new fund will directly benefit Wales. We need urgent clarity on how the fund will operate and who will decide on the priorities for the fund. We were promised "not a penny less, not a power lost" and this Government must now give us assurances that that is still the case.

I turn briefly to social care. In the Queen's Speech debate on Thursday, it was clear that social care in England desperately needs real and emergency attention, not vague and empty promises. I want, in comparison, to praise the Welsh Labour Government for the social care system they have pioneered in Wales: investing more per head on social care than in England; doubling the amount people can keep before they are asked to pay for care to £50,000, the highest level of any country in the UK; and ensuring all domiciliary care workers get a choice of contract after three months of employment, ending the practice of enforced zero-hours contracts. In England, 49% of jobs in home care are zero-hours

contracts. That demonstrates a true success story and what can be achieved when a Labour Government are in power. We do all of that despite operating on a budget from Westminster that has been cut by £4 billion since 2010.

I will end on the environment. I think it is fair to say that the Government need to be honest and clear about the climate and environmental emergency. We all know only too well that their target to reach net zero by 2050 is far too late to avoid dangerous and irreversible climate change. The Government simply will not acknowledge how serious the situation is—2050, frankly, is not good enough for my generation, let alone the young people whose futures are on the line. The Government's policies are not sufficiently ambitious to meet their climate change targets. According to their official advisers, the Committee on Climate Change, the UK is even off track to meet its old climate change target of an 80% reduction in emissions by 2050.

I look forward to hearing some positive comments from the Minister this evening and hope that she can offer some reassurances that the Government will start to listen. With all due respect, we have had enough warm words—it is time for action.

8 pm

**Sir Robert Neill** (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con): It is a pleasure to see you back where we always thought you should be, Mr Deputy Speaker.

During this debate, it struck me that we sometimes forget the fundamental: unless we get our economy right, none of the other social goods that we wish to achieve as a country can ever be delivered. The need, therefore, to concentrate on the economy in the Queen's Speech is fundamental. Whatever our views on what has passed, the way in which we go forward over the next few years must be calibrated in such a way as to make sure that our economy remains strong and stable.

I mention the quality of the maiden speeches that we have heard and I particularly compliment my hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Jane Hunt), the last maiden speaker before me. Her predecessor is a good friend and colleague, and I know that she will be a worthy successor. Anyone who comes to this House from a local government background will find a friend and ally in me, because that is what I did. Perhaps the more people who have done that, the better, because local government leaves us rooted in the reality of our communities.

My hon. Friend the Member for West Worcestershire (Harriett Baldwin) talked in some detail about the importance of financial services, and I echo everything that she said, but I stress yet again the importance of recognising that as we leave the EU, it is clearly not likely to be appropriate that the largest financial sector in western Europe—arguably, in some respects, the largest in the world—should automatically be a rule-taker. Equally, we have to find a sufficient degree of alignment to ensure that we continue to have access to the key European markets, where we trade very successfully and where there is a benefit to the Europeans from the capital that we can provide. The proposed arrangements, were we to leave now, of a form of equivalence are, as the City of London Corporation and the Governor of the Bank of England have pointed out, variable, uncertain and not satisfactory for the longer term. We need our

deal to be more ambitious than that so that we have certainty for those who wish to write their contracts here in London or elsewhere in the UK, because this goes well beyond London.

Financial services are part of a greater hub of professional services in which the United Kingdom excels. As well as making sure that we have arrangements that are satisfactory for the basic financial services—banks, insurers and others—we must still enable our legal services and accounting services, to give two examples, to trade successfully with Europe and elsewhere in the world. That is why, for example, in the legal services sector—I refer to my entry in the Register of Members’ Financial Interests—it is critical that we find both a means of ensuring the proper mutual recognition of qualifications so that British lawyers can continue with the fly-in, fly-out service that they provide for many of the multinational firms in Europe—as well as, I hope, elsewhere—without the need for requalification and, very importantly, a means of ensuring mutual recognition and enforcement of judgments of our courts.

At the end of the day, a contract is only as valuable as its ability to be enforced meaningfully. That is why the Law Society and the Bar Council are right to urge the Government to move swiftly to sign us up to the Lugano convention and to move, in our own right, into The Hague convention. They are not as good as the Brussels I recast arrangements, but they give us a means of ensuring that we have that, which we can then build on with good will. It is worth bearing in mind, too, that the Lugano convention would enable us to protect many small and medium-sized enterprises, consumers and individuals. Mutual recognition matters not just to big business, but, equally, to the small firm with a supplier in an EU state that defaults on its payments, in terms of getting their money back. It matters to the single parent whose partner, or former partner, may be in an EU jurisdiction, who is seeking to enforce their maintenance payment out there. Getting that right is in everybody’s interest on both sides of the debate, so I hope that we can do that and move on constructively.

Let me touch on another important issue: why do people choose to bring their legal business to the United Kingdom? It is because they trust us as a clean, efficient and impartial jurisdiction. Our judges and lawyers are second to none. They are a benchmark that the world—not just in common law jurisdictions, the Commonwealth and elsewhere, but beyond—aspires to. I am conscious that we are looking at future arrangements for our constitutional matters, which is perfectly legitimate, but whatever we do, we must make sure that there is no suggestion of any diminution of either the quality or the independence of the British judiciary. I see no reason why there should be, but it is important to make that point.

I turn briefly to the question of access to justice, which my hon. Friend the Member for North West Durham (Mr Holden) mentioned in relation to legal aid. Access to justice is the other thing that underpins the integrity and reputation of our legal system. In the Queen’s Speech, we are rightly bringing forward a number of criminal justice Bills—some deal with policing and some with better, stronger redress for victims of crime. As a Government, we are rightly putting more money into policing and, where necessary, taking measures to increase sentencing for the most dangerous offenders.

That is all well and good—I entirely support all those measures—but to do that, we must have a system that is funded properly right the way through. If we rightly put more money into policing, that will mean greater work for the courts, the Crown Prosecution Service and, ultimately, our prisons and probation staff. If we are to do that, two things are necessary: first, there must be proper funding, because we cannot do it on the cheap, and secondly, we should take a nuanced approach.

Some people need to be kept inside for a long time—as a practising barrister over 25 years, I saw many of them—because they are a threat and a danger to the public. Equally, many others end up in our criminal justice system having made a mess of their lives at various points. By the time they end up in prison, they are very often well down the stream, and frankly, it is more a question of sadness and inadequacy than threat. We need to find better means of earlier intervention to stop those people being sucked into the system and permanent reoffending, and head that off, and equally, to find strong, robust alternatives. There is an economic, as well as a social, benefit in that: the cost of reoffending is about £18 billion a year.

It is right not just socially but economically to get our justice system right. I think that the Government recognise that. I therefore hope that we will see, building on what is in the Queen’s Speech, a holistic approach that recognises that economic competence and social justice go hand in hand. To my mind, that has always been the tradition of my party and this country.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** Before I call the next speaker, I am going to do something very unusual. Many colleagues today have been incredibly brief in their speeches. Our problem from the Chair is usually that people take much longer than they are meant to—a wonderful bunch of speakers this afternoon have taken a considerably shorter time than they were entitled to. I am therefore going to increase the time limit to nine minutes.

8.8 pm

**Peter Grant** (Glenrothes) (SNP): I will ask for that in writing, Madam Deputy Speaker, because my wife will never believe that anybody asked me to speak for a bit longer than I had intended to.

I am very pleased to speak in this debate and I say, with all good grace, congratulations to all those who made their maiden speeches. Obviously, my preference was for my hon. Friend the Member for Gordon (Richard Thomson). I would have preferred not to have seen elected a number of those who spoke today, but they were. We have to accept the result and we look with considerable trepidation at what the implications of the Government’s new majority will be.

To all those who have been elected, having won the trust of their communities, and who have spoken with such pride about their constituencies, I offer my sincere congratulations. Those who drew a cheer from their own Benches when they said how long it had been since their party had won in their constituency were entitled to do that. I would only mention that by my own reckoning I am one of 25 SNP Members who are still

[Peter Grant]

the first and only SNP Member ever elected in their constituencies. The difference is that we plan to be the last MPs ever elected to those constituencies.

I wanted to speak about what the Queen's Speech says about the economy in my constituency, but actually I need to talk about what it doesn't say, because there is precious little, even in the 150-page dossier of propaganda from the Government at the back of the Queen's Speech, that addresses the real problems facing far too many of my constituents. Most of the impact of their legislative programme will be negative. This week, Fife Council has published a consultative draft economic action plan for Mid Fife, an area that covers most of my constituency and most of the neighbouring constituency of Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath and a small part of North East Fife, down the east side of Leven. From any of the economic indicators for that part of Fife, it is immediately obvious that it should be a priority area for investment. The actions of Fife Council demonstrate that it agrees; the actions of the Scottish Government demonstrate that they agree; the actions of the UK Government demonstrate that, as the Chancellor proved today, most of them do not know where Levenmouth is, never mind understand its problems.

Mid Fife, as defined in that study, is below the national average on almost every measure of economic activity, though not through the fault of the people. They are as hard-working, charitable and honest as you will find anywhere, but they have been let down far too often. There are fewer businesses per head of population; the number of businesses is falling, contrary to what is happening in the rest of Fife and Scotland; of the businesses we do have, fewer provide knowledge intensive business services, which means that fewer of them are likely to generate the high-quality, high-paid jobs of the future; wages are well below the national average; and there are significantly fewer women in paid employment and significantly fewer households where more than one person is in paid work.

There are success stories. Over the years, there has been huge investment by Diageo, though some of that, I know, is a bitter pill to swallow as it has meant closures in other parts of Scotland. I only wish that some of the world-leading branded products Diageo sells around the world were actually marked "Made in Fife". I wish it would stop trying to pretend they were made in a different country altogether, so next time you sip your Tanqueray or your Gordon's, know it was made in Fife, not London.

Apart from that, it sometimes feels as if the only growth industry in Glenrothes and Levenmouth is food banks. Going through the names of some of these communities in Mid Fife, many will immediately see a pattern—I guarantee that if Dennis Skinner was still here, he would see the pattern. I am thinking of names such as Methil and Buckhaven, Kennoway, Balgonie, Wemyss, Dysart, Seafield, Kinglassie, Bowhill, Lochore and Ballingry—trace out those names on a map and you trace out the coalfields of Fife from a bygone age. The sad and shameful fact is that most of the economic and social problems that stretch across that swathe of Mid Fife were created not just by the pit closures but by the way they were closed and the utterly inhuman way the people and the communities that made these islands

such a powerhouse in the world economy were treated: when their labour was no longer needed they were thrown on the scrapheap.

That is why, in communities where generations of people lived through those times and remember who treated the miners and their families and communities with such contempt, hon. Members will find that under a local government electoral system that gives a candidate a seat if they get 15% of first preference votes, there are still huge swathes of that part of Mid Fife that are Tory-free zones. It is maybe not surprising that, to the best of my knowledge, in the recent general election the Tory candidate never showed their face in the constituency. I certainly never saw them during the entire campaign.

That is not to understate the work done by community organisations, the local authority and the Scottish Government: the new Queensferry crossing, built without the evils of the private finance initiative, has been a huge boost to the economy; the building of a new school, Levenmouth Academy, funded in such a way that the net long-term cost to the council will be nil; the funding of the energy park in Fife—not helped by the UK Government sabotaging the renewables industry at every opportunity; and the recent commitment by the Scottish Government to reopening the rail link to Leven. Incidentally, rail networks in Scotland should be jointly operated by the Scottish and UK Governments. When will the UK Government honour their obligation to fund that alongside the Scottish Government?

Why is this particularly relevant to today's debate and the wider debate on the Queen's Speech? Well, we are facing another drastic change in employment related to the extraction of the earth's natural resources, and I want to make sure we at least learn the lessons of what went wrong last time. Oil & Gas UK estimates that there are about 270,000 people in the UK whose jobs directly or indirectly depend on the oil and gas industry, and about 40%—about 101,000—of those jobs are in Scotland. Between 2019 and 2024, that industry is going to deliver £8.5 billion to the Treasury—not bad for an industry that in 2014 they said would be finished in five years. If we are serious about moving to a zero carbon economy—we have been talking about climate emergencies for the last several weeks at least—how many of those 270,000 jobs in the UK, including the 101,000 in Scotland, will still exist as they do now in 10, 15 or 20 years? If we do not expect those jobs to be there, what are those 101,000 people in Scotland and those 270,000 people across the UK going to do for a living?

The SNP is calling for all the £8.5 billion the Treasury expect to get from oil and gas to be reinvested in helping the industry to prepare for a carbon-free future and to helping communities such as those in many parts of Aberdeen and around Falkirk and Grangemouth to prepare so that, when the transition to a carbon-free economy comes, the people in those communities will be treated as human beings with rights and with a future, which is more than can be said about far too many of their predecessors in the communities I represent. It would be unforgivable if the workers in Aberdeen in the future were treated as shabbily as those in Aberhill and other parts of Methil and Buckhaven were.

Finally, I have tried to get answers on the shared prosperity fund before. Several of the communities I have mentioned are helped enormously by community organisations that get significant amounts of money from the European Union, and that then brings in

match funding and shared funding from others sources. I am genuinely worried that this will become a carve-up for the Government and that the money will go to Government pet projects that are not based on the priorities of the people of my constituency or the people who have been delivering projects in places such as Methil, Cardenden and Kinglassie. It will not even be run past anyone in the Scottish Government. I am concerned from answers on that from the Welsh Office that the Government are preparing a Cardiff bypass and a Holyrood bypass so that any money that does trickle into Scotland will be spent where a Conservative Government in London want it spent, not where the people in Fife and of Scotland think it should be going. That kind of contempt is one reason why I am as convinced as I ever have been that the MPs now on these Benches will be the last ones our country ever has to send to represent our people in this place.

8.17 pm

**Mark Menzies** (Fylde) (Con): It is a pleasure to congratulate you, Madam Deputy Speaker, on your election to the Chair and to say that it is the first time in almost 10 years in this place that I have heard the time limit go up for a debate. New Members should not regard this as the normal practice.

It is also a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Glenrothes (Peter Grant), who speaks passionately about some of the issues facing Scotland, and to have heard the maiden speeches, including the two from my hon. Friends the Members for Loughborough (Jane Hunt) and for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Jo Gideon). I am my very own doughnut tonight. The way in which they spoke with passion about their constituencies and communities left no one in any doubt about why they are in this House.

I want to focus on my constituency and some of the issues raised in the Gracious Speech, particularly aerospace, nuclear and trade opportunities. My constituency is at the heart of the military air manufacturing and design industry in the UK. BAE Systems provides just shy of 7,000 jobs at Warton and another 4,500 up the road at Sablesbury. We currently manufacture Typhoon and Hawk and export them to many countries across the globe. More significantly, we do a lot of development work in cutting-edge technologies—work that is then rolled into other aircraft platforms in many corners of the world. The apprentices and the men and women who make those products have to be recognised and celebrated. The people who talk about the northern powerhouse need look no further than some of the technologies being developed in constituencies such as mine.

One thing that I would like to say to those on the Treasury Bench is that we should not only be recognising the work that we are doing at the moment, but always looking to the future. At the last Farnborough air show the former Prime Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May), announced the Government's clear commitment to supporting the future fighter programme and, indeed, Team Tempest. That benefited not just BAE Systems but the likes of Leonardo and Rolls-Royce, to name but a few.

Many thousands of jobs will depend on the future independent UK manufacture of a military air platform. When the Treasury is considering support for Britain's

manufacturing sector, will it please continue to support programmes such as Team Tempest? In the future, not just thousands but tens of thousands of jobs will depend on such programmes. The solution is not buying in expensive technology from overseas, particularly from the United States, but growing our own technology, which we are very, very good at.

As I said earlier, the other issue on which I want to focus is nuclear. Much attention is rightly given to decarbonising the economy and building a low-carbon future, and, yes, renewables are central to that, but so too is nuclear. My constituency has the only nuclear fuel manufacturing facility in the UK, Springfields, which provides just over 1,000 jobs. This is about how we look to the future for nuclear fuel and, indeed, nuclear energy production in the United Kingdom. It is not just about building the big, very expensive power plants with which we are familiar, but about investing in modern technology such as that being driven by Rolls-Royce. I am, of course, referring to small and advanced modular reactors. This is technology that is UK-developed and UK-owned; it can also be UK-manufactured and UK-exported.

As I have said, we are very good at that, particularly in the north-west of England. There is an arc from Warrington to Preston and up into Cumbria, which, as we know, is at the heart of the whole reprocessing industry, and is represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Trudy Harrison). However, we will be able to do it only with the continued support of Her Majesty's Government. If we are ambitious about a low-carbon future and about earning our way in the world, we need to get behind the technologies that are UK-born and bred and owned and built and developed, and are sold abroad, such as nuclear and aerospace.

Finally, let me say something about trade. Far too often, we are passive when it comes to global trade—we are relaxed about inward investment—but I think that Brexit gives us an opportunity to be much more aggressive and bullish: to go out there and get it. I say that as a trade envoy. I see the work that our embassies do across the world, and they do fantastic work, but in my view they are under-resourced. They do not have enough support, be it in London or in country. The Germans and the French, let alone the Americans or the Canadians, will outmatch us every step of the way. However, we have a great story to tell. We are a fantastic exporting country. We are good at what we do.

I appeal to the Government not only to devise new strategies but to resource them properly, and to make people feel empowered to go out there and aggressively pursue the opportunities of foreign direct investment. We talk with great alacrity about going out and building a global Britain and bringing home the bacon, but we must ensure that we understand what a foreign direct investor wants from this country. What skills are required, and how can we work in partnership with our colleges and universities to secure them? In what areas of the country can we locate them? If we are free from European state aid rules, are there things that we can do involving tax policy or various other incentives to attract that foreign direct investment? Above all, we need to add value to the UK and its supply chain, and help to transform communities for generation upon generation to come.

[Mark Menzies]

That is one area in which the Department for International Trade will play a role. This is not just about striking trade deals—which, in some respects, is an easy thing to do—but about building long-term relationships with countries and organisations across the globe. It is about being ambitious, and having the right people to fulfil our ambition. Let us aim high, and get a fair share of that.

If we include those elements in the northern powerhouse network, and if we help to transform towns and cities throughout the country but particularly in the Midlands and the north, there will be a huge economic dividend, but also a social dividend, for the people who benefit from such life-changing opportunities. It is my great pleasure to support the Gracious Speech.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** It is a great pleasure to call Nadia Whittome to make her maiden speech.

8.25 pm

**Nadia Whittome** (Nottingham East) (Lab): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and congratulations on your re-election.

The outgoing Father of the House told me to do my maiden speech quickly to get it out of the way. I wish that I had taken his advice, because I have now heard so many fantastic maiden speeches that the pressure is really on.

I want to give my heartfelt thanks to every person in Nottingham East who put me here and invested their trust in me, and to say “I will not let you down.” I am able to stand here today because of the hard work, solidarity, talent and dedication of the activists, friends, and family who gave so much to my campaign. Only one of us is the Member of Parliament, but I am representing a movement that is so much bigger than me.

Let me also pay tribute to Chris Leslie, who contributed to Gordon Brown’s Treasury team. He too was the so-called “Baby of the House” when he was first elected. Before him there was John Heppell, an excellent constituency MP.

It is the greatest honour of my life to represent Nottingham East and my home city, but I am also here to represent this burning planet, and the generation that will be left to foot the bill and save it from catastrophic climate change. We are a generation that is brave, collaborative and outward-looking. We are determined to fight for a future in which everyone can breathe clean air and live well. These are not the whims of youth, but a deadly serious response to an existential crisis and the moral bankruptcy of our economic system. It is possible only because of the generations of socialists on whose shoulders I am proud to stand.

Nottingham is a city of firsts. We were the first city to recognise misogyny as a hate crime, thanks largely to the work of Nottingham Women’s Centre, and under our Labour council we are on track to be the first carbon-neutral city by 2028. We are proud of our publicly owned Nottingham City Transport, which regularly wins the title of UK Bus Operator of the Year—and it is thanks to its wi-fi that I so often, although not always, got my college work in on time. We are home to grassroots

projects, tackling knife crime by giving young people opportunities in, for instance, the legendary Marcellus Baz and Jawaid Khaliq boxing schools. We have also been put on the map by world-class creatives, from Shane Meadows shooting “This is England” in St Ann’s to Young T and Bugsey, who started out at the Community Recording Studio.

I come to this House as a workers’ representative, not for the pomp and splendour but for the people who elected me. The people of Nottingham East sent me here, so let me tell you what they are up against: 42% of children live in poverty, firefighters are using food banks and 8,000 families in our city are waiting for a council home. That is why I have pledged to take only a worker’s wage, so that I never forget where I am from or whose interests I represent. Of course MPs do an important job, but careworkers, like I was proud to be before I became an MP, also do an extremely important job. When careworkers, retail workers and NHS staff get their pay rise, I will take mine.

Historically, so much happens in this building that is designed to exclude and alienate working-class people: the old conventions, the antiquated language. As a working-class woman of colour, I am made to feel like I do not belong here unless I throw my community under a bus, but that is not what I am here to do. When I first saw the results of the exit poll last month, the first people I thought about were my friends who are one delayed universal credit payment away from homelessness, my neighbour who goes without hot meals so her children do not have to, and my friend’s teenage brother who ended up in prison for dealing weed when he had no other job opportunities, while those here on the Front Benches can use their drug experiences at university to build street cred.

The Queen’s Speech talks about investment, and rightly so, but we have heard enough empty promises that are worth less than the paper they are written on. Jobs without decent incomes, security and a future are creating the new poverty. The new poverty in Britain is people in work. These are the parents of the children going to bed hungry. They are the people who cannot wait five years for the next election to get rid of a Government who do not stand up for them. That is why I support all those fighting for dignity and pay here and now, including the Deliveroo riders in Nottingham, some of whom are going home at the end of the day having earned less than the minimum wage per hour, the Uber drivers who refuse to accept poverty wages, and the Nottingham College teachers organising against unfair contracts. These are the people who refuse to be divided by this Government. They show us how to win by uniting and fighting back together: black and white, British and migrants, the people the Prime Minister calls “bum boys” and “letterboxes”. This is why I will campaign for the rights of working-class people to defend themselves. When the Government threaten to further limit our right to organise and strike, which is already one of the most restrictive in Europe, we will fight back.

Our burning planet cannot wait another five years for us to urgently address the climate emergency. Any investment plan that does not have climate justice at its very core is a plan for disaster. Meanwhile, as the planet approaches breaking point, so called anti-terrorist programmes are used to criminalise those who defend it. My generation wants a future. We want a planet we

can live on, and wages we can live on. We want opportunities that make life worth living, and let me tell you something: if you don't let us dream, we won't let you sleep.

8.32 pm

**Andrew Bridgen** (North West Leicestershire) (Con): It is a great honour to speak in this debate and to follow the maiden speech of the hon. Member for Nottingham East (Nadia Whittome). Nottingham is a city that I know well, having lived there for three years while I was at the excellent Nottingham University. I congratulate her on her maiden speech, and I also congratulate other colleagues who have spoken for the first time in the Chamber today. I and the rest of the House look forward to their further contributions in due course.

In common with much of the country, North West Leicestershire has certainly seen a jobs miracle since 2010, when the Conservatives came into Government and I took my seat from Labour. Over the past decade, unemployment has fallen by more than 60% in my district, and perhaps even more importantly, youth unemployment has fallen by more than 70%. That has been achieved by working with a Conservative-controlled district council and a Conservative-controlled county council, and by playing to our strengths—namely, the connectivity of the road network provided by the M42. That and the environmentally based regeneration project of the national forest are both long-term visions and legacies of previous Conservative Governments from which my constituents and visitors to my constituency continue to reap the benefits.

According to ONS figures out this year, my constituency is now rated as not only the highest on the economic prosperity index but the happiest place to live in the east midlands. The long-term regeneration in my district, together with that of our neighbours, is one that many areas of the country would do well to look at as we prepare for our post-Brexit future. My constituency benefits from being not only the UK's centre of population, but at the centre of the golden triangle of Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire—three counties all benefiting from more jobs, more economic growth and, coincidentally, more Conservative MPs since 2010.

The east midlands is doing well, but we could be doing much better. While the counties appear to be thriving, I am unsure whether the same could be said for our three cities, with their much higher levels of deprivation and unemployment. My constituency has thousands of jobs coming on stream—more than 10 times more jobs in the next three years than I have total unemployed in my constituency—but we do not have an extensive public transport network to get the unemployed from Nottingham, which we have just heard about, from Derby and from Leicester to the employment hub around East Midlands airport and the east midlands gateway.

My constituency does not even have a railway station, despite being this country's centre of population, and my constituents are right to look on enviously at the investment in infrastructure in the west midlands under Mayor Andy Street. Perhaps this is a lesson that we need to take on board in the east midlands to stimulate further economic and employment growth in our region. Time has come for a three cities and three counties Mayor for Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Leicestershire—something I have been requesting for many years.

Local road connectivity through the M1, the M42, the A50 and the A453 has stimulated significant economic growth in my district and in our neighbours. My seat now has the highest economic growth outside London and the south-east, and the election was proof not only that the majority of the country is fed up with rich remainers telling them what is good for them, but that those outside London are fed up with the metropolitan, southern-based Department for Transport telling them that there is not enough money or a case for their local transport projects—projects that would have a genuinely transformational effect on the lives of our constituents. At the same time, however, the Department wants to commit more than £100 billion to HS2 to get a tiny proportion of our population from nearly London to nearly Birmingham, and perhaps beyond, some day in the far future.

**Alicia Kearns** (Rutland and Melton) (Con): Does my hon. Friend agree that if we truly want to support the entire east midlands—particularly if we sensibly scrap the HS2 programme, which does not help or level up the entire country—we need to look at the A1, which is a key road through the east midlands that connects us up to the north and across to Peterborough? The Department for Transport needs to listen to views on the A1 and give us the transport and the roads that we deserve.

**Andrew Bridgen:** I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. Since a third of all private sector jobs in North West Leicestershire are distribution or logistics-based, I have a wider interest in the road network. I would support improvements not only to the A1, but to the A5, which also serves the east and west midlands.

HS2 is what happens when people in London tell the midlands and the north that they know what is best for them. To suggest that all we need to be happier and wealthier is to get to London faster is, frankly, insulting. During thousands of conversations with my constituents, not one has said to me that their transport problems will be solved by getting to London 20 minutes faster, but they do tell me that they need a train line or improved public transport to get a job and to get to work.

My constituency has no railway station, and Coalville—my major conurbation—is the fifth largest town in the country without one, but an existing railway line between Burton and Leicester that passes through Coalville, which would serve hundreds of thousands of people, cannot obtain funding for a mere fraction of the cost of HS2. I have calculated that the Ivanhoe line could be reopened for passengers for around one thousandth of the current estimated cost of HS2. To deliver for the vast majority of people in the midlands and the north, we need to scrap that white elephant project and concentrate the resources on local connectivity, which will have an impact and benefit for the many and not just for the few.

The Prime Minister rightly recognises the need to level up the regions. For example, London recorded a 1.1% annual rise in output per person to £54,700 in 2018, increasing the per capita gap to the poorest region, the north-east, where growth was only 0.4%, to £23,600 per head.

I have already spoken about connectivity, and I make the point again that the north-east will in no way be levelled up when a huge proportion of our infrastructure

[Andrew Bridgen]

investment is spent on getting those who can afford it to London a few minutes quicker. Connectivity within our regions is key to levelling them up and reducing the UK's dependence on London. We need to see investment in our regions, and that investment needs to be decided locally rather than in Whitehall.

This Government have a fine record on the economy, considering the dire position we inherited from the previous Labour Government. With the deficit at a more sustainable level of 1.8% of GDP, we need to build a country in which talented young people from constituencies such as mine do not have to go to London to progress their careers but have high-end opportunities in the midlands and the north. We need to build a country with the connectivity so that my constituents get their railway station and have the option of sustainable public transport, and so that people in our neighbouring cities can access the huge employment opportunities around East Midlands airport and the east midlands gateway. I want a future for the east midlands in which we are able to retain a larger number of the fine graduates we are getting every year from our excellent universities.

Turning to the national picture, the UK is now in a strong position to realise the benefits of Brexit, with a Prime Minister who believes in the opportunities it presents. Recent figures from the ONS show that, in the last 12 months, UK exports outside the EU grew by 6.3%, while exports to the European Union grew by only 1.3%. Those figures are being achieved before we have even negotiated our own free trade deals. We know there are huge opportunities with the USA, and those talks have already been opened up.

Optimism is also soaring among Britain's leading companies and employers. The latest Deloitte chief finance officer survey shows that business sentiment has risen at its fastest rate for 11 years following the Conservative victory at last month's election. Thirty-eight per cent. of CFOs expect to increase capital expenditure and 27% expect to hire more employees over the next year.

It is clear that business, freed from the shackles of the uncertainty that the previous Parliament created, is now in a position to invest in a post-Brexit Britain with a Government who believe in business and believe in our country's future.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** Order. This is exceptionally unusual, but people have been so self-restrained and so brief that, most remarkably, I am going to remove the time limit altogether. We can therefore hear from Marsha De Cordova at some length.

8.42 pm

**Marsha De Cordova** (Battersea) (Lab): May I congratulate you on your re-election, Madam Deputy Speaker? It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for North West Leicestershire (Andrew Bridgen) and to speak on the final day of this Queen's Speech debate.

After a decade of austerity, damaging cuts to public services, continual underinvestment in our NHS and the dismantling of our social security system, I am afraid to say that the Queen's Speech offers nothing

new. There is nothing more pressing than the impending climate crisis facing our country, a crisis that could have been averted by policies that the Conservative Government opposed over the last decade. Instead, investment in clean energy has plummeted since 2015 and, after a decade of inaction and broken promises, the UK will fail to meet vital EU targets on air pollution, which will have a devastating effect on my constituents.

It is time for radical action. That means listening to our young people over big business. It means a more ambitious zero emissions target than the one outlined in the Queen's Speech. And it means following the Mayor of London's lead on tackling air pollution by introducing a new clean air Act. So I hope the Secretary of State will tell us something new and impressive today about what the Government are going to do to tackle the climate crisis we are facing.

Everybody in this country deserves a safe, decent and affordable home to live in, but successive Conservative Governments' housing records are shaped by broken promises and missed targets. This winter, there are more than 3,000 homeless children in Wandsworth, a reality overlooked by this Government, as there is not even a mention of the word "homelessness" in this Queen's Speech. We cannot trust this Government to deliver on their promises on housing, as the Tories have failed to build a single one of the 200,000 starter homes they promised in 2015. Not only that, but this Queen's Speech does not include any measures to improve building and fire safety. Today we heard a statement from the Housing Secretary, but yet again no fixed deadlines have been put in place to compel local authorities, developers and the owners of those private blocks to ensure that they remove flammable cladding from people's homes. Again, it is time for action on this issue, because my constituents who are living in homes wrapped in cladding are still unsafe. Perhaps the Minister will be able to say whether or not the Government can set out a deadline by which to ensure that flammable cladding is removed from those homes.

We face the housing crisis that I have talked about, with high rents and unaffordable homes. It is all fuelled by a jobs crisis and low pay. It is a national scandal that there are 14 million people living in poverty and 9 million of them are in families in which at least one adult works. After a decade of austerity, our economy is not working for working people. The Government are celebrating high employment rates at every opportunity, but the figures mask high levels of people in insecure work, under-employment and low pay. The recent announcement on the national living wage that will come into force this April will apply only to workers aged 21 years and above. That means there will still be 5 million workers in the UK who will be earning less than the real living wage. Why will the Government not choose to pay everyone a real living wage, regardless of their age? I hope the Minister can respond to that.

Not only that, but 3.7 million people are in insecure work or on zero-hours contracts. Again, this is something the Government need to address. If they are genuine about calling themselves the party of the workers, it is time they started treating our workers with respect and paying them a decent wage.

The Government have no plan to address the crisis of the race, gender and disability pay gap. The current disability pay gap for all employees stands at 15.5%,

meaning that disabled people effectively work for free for 57 days—or eight weeks—of the year. That is scandalous and unacceptable. Analysis also found that disabled workers earn on average £1.65 per hour less than non-disabled workers, which is a gap of around £3,000 a year, based on a 35-hour week. So what action are the Government taking to address the disability pay gap?

I now come to a subject close to my heart: the Government's national strategy for disability outlined in the Queen's Speech, with a whole page and a half dedicated to it. I have to say that it is a little too late and does not address the real impact of cuts to public services and social security. Disabled people will not forget that the Government have promised such strategies before and failed to deliver, including on the national accessible housing consultation that was promised to us last year. I hope that consultation will commence this year.

In 2016, the chair of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities labelled austerity as being responsible for "grave and systematic" violations of the human rights of disabled people, but the Government, despite the body of evidence to demonstrate the impact of their austerity on disabled people, continue to choose to bury their heads in the sand. The evidence is there.

The strategy offers little detail on the Government's plans to reduce the disability employment gap—

**The Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work (Justin Tomlinson):** What?

**Marsha De Cordova:** Yes, that is the truth. Under the Tories, the disability employment gap has stayed stagnant and the pay gap continues to widen. The Government have a real opportunity to rethink and reform employment support for disabled people. They have the Disability Confident scheme, but in its current format it lacks any credibility or accountability because it is possible to be a Disability Confident employer and not employ a single disabled person.

**Justin Tomlinson:** Will the hon. Lady give way?

**Marsha De Cordova:** No, she won't.

When will the Government recognise that the Disability Confident scheme lacks any accountability? Will they follow Labour's lead and place a requirement on all organisations with more than 250 employees to report annually on the number of disabled people they employ?

The Access to Work scheme is an essential form of employment support, but it remains one of the best-kept secrets, as only 43% of employers are aware of it. It is a good scheme from which I and many others have benefited, but the Government should try to promote it a bit more so that all employers are familiar with the scheme and can access it and benefit from it. The Access to Work scheme should be expanded to include disabled people who want to engage in work experience or volunteering opportunities. The Government could also follow Labour's lead and introduce what is called a reasonable adjustment passport scheme, which would make it easier for disabled people to move from one job to another. It would be almost like portable support and would save money in the long run.

Let me move on to the assessment frameworks. The Government's commitment to end the cruel reassessment for personal independence payments falls short of the systematic changes that are needed to social security assessments, which are failing too many disabled people. Indeed, 72% of PIP decisions that go to appeal are overturned in favour of the claimant. Disabled people are being forced to wait up to nine months before their case goes to an appeal tribunal. It is the same for employment and support allowance claimants, too. It is shameful.

The consequences of the failing system are devastating. Just last year, the Government released figures showing that 5,690 people had died within six months of being found fit for work under the work capability assessment. That is why Labour and many others were proud to support the Justice for Jodey Whiting petition that called for an investigation into social security-related deaths. The petition was signed by more than 50,000 people. Will the Government, as part of their national strategy for disabled people, finally agree to carry out an urgent inquiry into social security-related deaths?

In conclusion, the Government have an opportunity to address the misery they have caused over the past decade. On jobs, housing, the climate and disabled people's rights, the Queen's Speech has fallen short, which is why I will vote for the amendment tabled by the Leader of the Opposition, my right hon. Friend the Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn). I urge the Government to think about what I have spoken about. This country and the people of my constituency of Battersea cannot afford any more missed targets or broken promises.

8.54 pm

**Caroline Ansell (Eastbourne) (Con):** It has been two and a half years since my last contribution, and I am delighted to have been re-elected to my seat. I am also delighted to see you re-elected to the Chair, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Battersea (Marsha De Cordova), not least because I will try later in my mini- maiden that is now a maxi- maiden to do justice to some of the excellent work in constituencies the length and breadth of the land to support those with disabilities to move into the workplace. I was very proud in my first term to be a Disability Confident champion and to promote, at every level and every opportunity, those who were opening doors so that people of all talents, regardless of disability, had the opportunity to be everything they could be. We need them.

I am particularly pleased and privileged to follow in the footsteps of genuinely new friends and particularly my new neighbour, my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mrs Elphicke), who is of course a fellow coastal community champion. I would also like, without causing offence by not singling out more people, to commend my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Felicity Buchan), who spoke movingly earlier in the debate.

This debate about the economy is particularly important, because it is the economy that powers our public services. I speak with feeling on that, because it powers our schools and I am a teacher. It also powers our NHS, and I stand before the House today not just as a teacher,

[*Caroline Ansell*]

but as a very grateful mum. What brought me to Parliament in my first term was a potentially shattering experience, when my then five-year-old son was diagnosed with a brain tumour. We fell into the embrace of the NHS, and thanks to the surgeons of Great Ormond Street and King's College, his life was saved. That stopped me in my tracks; I was moving towards being a headteacher, and I was overwhelmed with such a need to give something back, having experienced that incredible support and affirmation from the NHS. Ultimately, I found my way here, and the same sense of service that brought me here the first time has brought me back.

I would like to thank the good people of Eastbourne and Willingdon for bringing me back. I would also like to thank one or two hon. Friends for helping me on my way and for campaigning with me in the dark and the rain in my beautiful coastal town. I would particularly like to mention my parliamentary neighbour, my hon. Friend the Member for Bexhill and Battle (Huw Merriman). So confident was he in my success that he said to a member of the media that if I did not win, he would jump off Eastbourne pier naked. Now, there was joy in my campaign centre in the early hours of election night on the back of my win, but there was some disappointment in other quarters that that jump was not to take place, although I am not sure the world is any poorer for that missed opportunity.

I also thank my predecessor, Stephen Lloyd, who, in victory and defeat, brought back and supported the Eastbourne carnival, which is a really important showcase for local community groups and a powerful fundraiser for local charities.

In the context of today's debate, I stood on a platform of inspiring new prosperity in my home town and, critically, new prosperity that left no one behind. For that reason, I wish to highlight two particular groups in Eastbourne whose important work I will be supporting. One is called Project SEARCH. I am sure that other Members will have similar programmes in their constituencies. Project SEARCH seeks to provide supported internships for young adults with learning disabilities. Such internships are to be found at the local hospital, which hosts the programme and which has genuinely opened the door of opportunity to these young people who come and add to that organisation. Their work is of inestimable value. It is hugely important, and I want to see that work grow and develop.

A second group relates to another cohort of people who must not be left behind. They are under the auspices of Reformed East Sussex, which looks to build bridges for ex-offenders who can find it incredibly challenging to find their way back to employment. What an incredibly powerful thing it is to be able to reach out and to provide that first step back into work. It does tremendous work not only for ex-offenders, but for those who are recovering from addictions. I look forward to working with both those organisations for those particularly hard-to-reach groups and to seeing those jobs open up for them.

What do Members know of Eastbourne other than the fact that it is, of course, the sunshine capital of the south, with the highest number of sunshine hours anywhere in the kingdom? Sometimes that is disputed by neighbours, but not tonight, so I will rush on. It is also known for its

heritage coastline—incredible vistas are beamed across the world when we host our international tennis tournaments. We are also the gateway town to the South Downs national park, which is, as my hon. Friend the Member for Mid Sussex (Mims Davies) reminds me, the home of the very famous challenging, but inspiring, Beachy Head half marathon, which she herself ran. I waited on the finish line to welcome her in.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Mims Davies):** In the rain.

**Caroline Ansell:** Yes, in the rain. That is a partnership that I am very happy to continue with.

Members will not be surprised to know that tourism and conferencing are critically important to my home town, blessed as it is. Just last year, a brand new conference centre opened up, which is really going to put Eastbourne on the map. In part, that conferencing centre has been powered by Government investment. The Government recognise that coastal communities such as mine have not just challenges, but opportunities, and those opportunities are being unlocked now thanks to that Government investment. Importantly, in the context of a debate in which we are looking to establish and inspire that greener more sustainable future, I was very pleased, just last weekend, to be part of a launch event—Eastbourne Carbon Neutral 2030—at that very conference centre. It brought together different groups to harness the power of our community to achieve that really important aim of living more sustainably and powering forward in a much greener way.

Language schools are also hugely important to Eastbourne's economy, and we have a cluster of high-performing schools. I look forward to working with Ministers and with my local schools to ensure that we continue to be that open and attractive destination for young people from across the globe.

The fisheries Bill is another really important and welcome Bill in this Queen's Speech, and it will provide that springboard to the future. For my 30 to 40-boat strong fishing community, which includes many families, jobs are really important. There will be a new quayside development at the waterfront. These are really exciting times, and I look forward to see how we are going to support that industry.

The digital and creative industries—perhaps not the traditional, conventional industries that hon. Members might expect in my seaside town—are emerging with more and more strength, creating a whole new vibe in town. There is a strong future there, and I am really pleased that I am going to be a part of it.

I welcome the Chancellor's opening comments, particularly about levelling up. I need to see levelling up, across the nation of course, but also in my hometown. I need to see investment in the north—the north of Eastbourne. We need to open up new opportunities and level up there, because the sorry story is that life expectancy varies even across my small seaside town, and to the tune of six or seven years. We need to bring about far greater equalities in that respect.

There are references to investment in infrastructure in Her Majesty's Gracious Speech, and that will be critical to unleashing potential in Eastbourne. The A27

in particular is a very dangerous and unreliable stretch of road that is strangling the local economy, so I am looking forward to working with Ministers on such issues. The most important point is that global Britain is such a powerful way forward. Global Britain; global Eastbourne.

9.6 pm

**Mr Marcus Fysh (Yeovil) (Con):** It is a great pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Caroline Ansell). It is wonderful to see her back in this place, and to follow so many great colleagues, including new Members who have given us amazing demonstrations of their pride in and passion for their areas. It is interesting to hear some of the passion from new Opposition Members as well. I think the one thing that unites everybody who comes to this House, across both sides of the Chamber, is the genuine desire to see their areas improve. We might have different ways of trying to get from A to B, but I think most of us in this place want a better life for the people who live in our areas.

On election day, I was flabbergasted and moved by just how many people in one of my toughest areas—one of the more deprived parts of south-west England—were telling me that they would vote Conservative. They backed us in the election, and we owe it to them to back ourselves to make that difference for people. We now have a huge opportunity and a mandate for radical change. I think that a lot of people wanted to see that change in their lives when we had the Brexit vote as well, and we have a duty to make that a reality for them.

I was really proud of the people of Yeovil for choosing an optimistic and forward-looking approach, rather than the backward-looking way of socialism. Capitalism is the way forward that has been proven, over many years and in many different parts of the world, to be the best deliverer of better conditions for people. It is wonderful to see that optimism is back, because capitalism depends on optimism. It depends on people believing in each other's ability to fulfil their part of a bargain, whether that is doing a deal, knowing they can get help if they need to climb the famous Conservative ladder, or retiring knowing that their children will have the same opportunities that they had—or even better. We owe it to people to really drill down into what can improve their lives.

Competitiveness is very important in the current global environment. We are in a challenging world. We have interest rates at next to zero, or below zero in many cases. That zero-bound, as it is known, presents a lot of challenges for policy makers to make sure that investment occurs in a way that is productive, because we do not want to be using such low interest rates to be investing in unproductive things. That is something we really need to watch out for.

The UK economy is doing really well, and we should celebrate that. We heard earlier about the wonderful employment performance. We can always do better; we should not rest on our laurels at all. We should look at some of the problems that the European economy is having at the moment, including the persistent problems in the banking system. Despite the low interest rates and the quantitative easing that has been used, à l'outrance, to buy up corporate bonds, the situation is still very fragile. We should not underestimate how resilient we

need to make our own economy to be able to resist the vicissitudes of economic fortune that may or may not occur. It is brilliant, in that context, that we have managed to bring Labour's deficit down so that we are not adding to the national debt in the way that we were when we took over back in 2010.

At a granular level in our constituencies, there are big areas where we need to perform better and to improve things. I am very keen on what is in the Queen's Speech and was in our manifesto about reform of business rates. That is particularly important because our high streets are struggling. Going back to Yeovil, we heard only earlier today that the national department store chain Beales is now in administration. It has a big facility in Yeovil that I would like to persist there, even if it looks difficult at the moment. The company has cited business rates as one of the big factors. We need to make sure that our towns fund is well funded and gets into all areas of the country, not just the north, because many in the south-west feel left behind too. We depend on that and the future high streets fund for investment in our cattle market site and at Glovers Walk. Without help with the basic infrastructure and reconstruction of those sites, which is quite difficult, it is hard to regenerate our main town.

**Mr Holden:** Does my hon. Friend agree that the increase in the business rates discount is an important measure that the Government are taking to help small businesses not only in his constituency but across the country?

**Mr Fysh:** My hon. Friend makes a very good point and he is absolutely right. Increasing that to 33% really is a big deal for smaller businesses. We need to reform the whole system and try to use that to devolve the ability to invest locally raised taxes in our local economies and have them compete with each other. That can create the dynamism in our economy to really grow and create jobs into the future.

We need to invest in roads in the south-west. We need to follow through on the dualling of the A303. We should be starting that this year on the Sparkford to Ilchester section, but we need to make sure that the Stonehenge tunnel is funded, because the value for money of the whole project depends on that.

**Ben Everitt (Milton Keynes North) (Con):** Does my hon. Friend agree that, while the Government are still seemingly committed to the £106 billion total cost of HS2, consideration might be given to reallocating some, if not all, of that funding to the Stonehenge tunnel and other local infrastructure improvements that would benefit my constituency and many others?

**Mr Fysh:** My hon. Friend makes a good point. The Government have some interesting judgments to make. I would not want to gainsay, but there is a strong rationale for investing throughout our country that needs to be put before Ministers. I hope he will do the same for his area.

It is important that we get proper skills development into our regional areas, and I want to mention our further education colleges in Yeovil. Yeovil College is a particularly good example of a top-performing college that is able to improve the life chances of people in

[Mr Fysh]

regional areas. Often, when there is not a university in an area, further education colleges are the only opportunity that people have to change their skill level and skill type, so that they can change jobs and take advantage of job creation.

The helicopter industry is very important to the Yeovil sub-regional area. Leonardo, based in my constituency, is a military helicopter manufacturer and the only end-to-end aerospace manufacturer left in the UK. It supports more than 10,000 jobs in the supply chain, which is incredibly important. The Government have said that they want to reform defence procurement. When we are looking at value for money, we must consider the holistic impact on a community of having such a big employer with such big projects. It makes a huge difference. We cannot just look at the headline costs; we have to look at all the consequential costs and the value throughout the community.

**Mark Menzies:** My hon. Friend makes the point well, and that is something I touched on in my speech. It is also about the technologies that emerge from investment in the helicopter sector, which can be reinvested in future programmes.

**Mr Fysh:** My hon. Friend is right. It is important that we keep these sovereign capabilities in our aerospace sector, whether it is fixed-wing aircraft, such as in his constituency, or rotary-wing. There is an interesting opportunity at the moment to review whether the AW149, which is a Leonardo product, could replace the Puma fleet, which is ageing and a little unsafe. That is a perfect opportunity to militarise a civil product that is produced in Italy and allow the factory in Yeovil to become a military centre of excellence for Leonardo worldwide. I know that the company is keen to pursue that, but we need the Government to play their part.

I want to say a bit more about trade. The helicopter industry is one of our big exporters, and it is one of the reasons why Yeovil exports more than anywhere else in the south-west apart from Swindon and Bristol, so our trading conditions are of particular importance. We owe it to people to make good on our manifesto promises on trade. We need to ensure that we take a holistic approach to our trade negotiations. We need to ensure that we are negotiating with not only the EU but the US and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership countries. It is by being able to have flexibility in our intentions for regulation and tariffs that we can do different deals around the world and get the best out of all of them.

I am a firm believer that unless we put the potential deals on the table, the EU will prove a very hard negotiator, and it is only by doing these things simultaneously that we can get the best out of all our trade opportunities. Trade—free trade—is so important not just for the opportunities it can create for more exports, but for massively reducing costs for our domestic industries. Getting goods into our economy more cheaply is how we can improve our export growth, our domestic economic performance and our job creation.

Clearly there are some challenges when it comes to trade. We need to make sure that intermediate products we import do not have tariffs put on them. Interestingly,

when the Government do the review of tariff schedules that we would have in the context of any deal, it is massively important that we do not automatically think we should keep our tariffs high and then have to cut them again. We could have an agreement that we might apply a lower tariff, even if our bound tariff rate is higher, for a period of time at a zero rate, and tell our trading partners and prospective ones that if they want that situation to continue, they need to finalise a trade deal with us.

There are many other things that we need to talk about on trade. We have heard a lot about level playing field provisions and what the Government might or might not do with them in the context of the EU negotiations, but we need to make sure that we do not just give that up. These are normal provisions that would come into pretty much any trade agreement, and most of them are modelled on the existing WTO agreements on the technical barriers to trade. We should not be afraid of signing up to them, but we must not have dynamic harmonisation of our regulations. We must co-operate and look for equivalence in what we do, but we must not be a rule-taker. It is only by being independent and able to do our own thing that the people of this country will maintain their confidence in us and in our ability to pursue our own destiny. They backed us; we now need to back ourselves to do the best for our people and improve opportunities throughout the country.

9.22 pm

**Lloyd Russell-Moyle** (Brighton, Kemptown) (Lab/Co-op): The Chancellor spoke after the shadow Chancellor. He complained that we were producing an unreconstructed list of misery and that we were not jolly enough about how fantastic he thought the economy was. I ask him to go and speak to the Wetherspoon workers who are on casual contracts, one of whom had to live in a tent because he could not afford his rent. I ask him to go and speak to them, and say whether we are being too miserable or whether the Government are looking through rose-tinted glasses at jobs and the economy. Of course, it was not the Government who helped those workers, but the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union that organised and struck for 24 hours, forcing better payment from the Wetherspoon management. That is constantly what produces better jobs and work conditions in this country—union action, time and again.

The Chancellor should ask the families who, week in and week out, have to use the food bank in Whitehawk, one of the estates in my constituency. Despite their being in full-time work, they are not able to put food on the table for their children. The rebranding exercise that this Government did in calling the minimum wage the living wage has not improved the lives of my constituents. What has improved the lives of my constituents is businesses, the council and trade unions working together to introduce a real living wage in Brighton. Collective action is what has improved their life standards—and where workplaces have refused that, people continue to be paid poverty pay.

Last year, classroom assistants in Moulsecoomb Primary School were made redundant because the Government cut money for our schools: tell them that the job market is rosy, that everything is fine, and that we are being too miserable. They will say that their reality is what they experience day to day, and that the fantasy figures and

rose-tinted Government view is not based in reality. Tell the academics who had to go on strike for numerous days last year, in the longest strike in the history of the University and College Union. Young academics are paid on casual contracts, only when they are marking their papers. They are not well-paid professors; many of them are struggling and cannot get mortgages, pay rent, or put down deposits. This Government's underfunding of the university sector and our public services have forced that. Tell those people that there is no problem, and they will laugh in our face.

We have had an election, and unfortunately we lost. But that does not mean that the Government have won the economic argument—

**Bim Afolami** (Hitchin and Harpenden) (Con) *rose*—

**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:** I will not give way because we must soon move on.

The economic argument shows that this country is stagnating, and that jobs do not pay enough to live. That is a disgrace in this country, one of the richest in the world. We must change that, and the only thing that will change it is trade union action, decent local government, and a Labour Government.

9.26 pm

**Richard Fuller** (North East Bedfordshire) (Con): In marked contrast to the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Lloyd Russell-Moyle), I will start perhaps a little quieter and say a few words about my predecessor as Member of Parliament for North East Bedfordshire. Alistair Burt served the constituencies of Bury North and North East Bedfordshire from 1983 until he stood down at the last election, with a very short break between 1997 and 2001. I got to know Alistair in 1984, and on almost every political issue he and I found ourselves in accordance, with the great exception of our views on membership of the European Union. And on football—Alistair loves it; me not so much. In addition to being well respected across the House, Alistair had great knowledge and understanding of the middle east—an issue he continues to pursue—and a unique ability to be trusted by all sides.

The Register of Members' Financial Interests has not yet been published, so, given some of the things I might say, let me I point out to hon. Members that I am a director of software companies.

A new dawn beckons, and a new Government have been formed to set the initial course for our country—a course to shape the success, or failure, of our refund independence. The most likely error that this Government will make will be to underestimate the scale of the opportunity for change, or to prefer the comforts of the known to the uncertainties of the unknown. It is that the voices of well-connected incumbents will drown out those of precocious challengers. This is not a time for a Government to take timid steps; it is a time for giant strides. Every ounce of radicalism that is lost today will be repaid in pounds of future regret for opportunities lost. Our country needs this Government to argue with the “fierce urgency of now” that President Obama summoned America to embrace a decade ago.

I wish to outline three areas from the Queen's Speech where I believe that such radicalism can take place.

For decades, competitive capitalism has driven enormous gains in human progress, but the case for capitalism now appears tarnished by the consequences of globalisation, by regulatory capture and by repeated examples of corporate excess. This place the home of Smith, Locke and Ricardo-is best placed to remake the global case for capitalism for a new century as we define our new role in the world. At the heart of that case we must place the entrepreneurs, the small businesses, the start-ups and the innovators.

The Government should also review the primacy of shareholder value as the sole mission for our companies. We should simplify the governance code, yes, but also give oversight more clout so that excesses are more effectively curtailed and companies are more accountable for the externalities of their actions. We need measures to weaken the grip of crony capitalism, dysfunctional privatisations, and public contracts being repeatedly handed to the same-as-before conglomerates as the only game in town. We need to disallow the socialisation of losses from private risk-taking, and, yes, a review of our corporate tax breaks.

As we leave the EU, we should not inadvertently leave out the welcome mat, encouraging lobbyists to decamp from Brussels to Westminster—or, for that matter, York. We need measures to provide people with swifter redress and greater protection from business and regulatory failure. For example, in my own area the simplest thing of a local plan not being accepted means creepy private developers trying to put in developments in that short space of time between plans, and constituents of mine in Willington, Harrold, Ravensden and Potton having to deal with a lifetime change just from one small bureaucratic failure.

The UK should make free markets and free trade hallmarks of our foreign policy. I see the Prime Minister is back from his UK-Africa Investment Summit, which was precisely the place he should have been today. I urge him to place a trade deal with Africa at the core of our new relationship, one that casts off the protectionism of the EU and reasserts the value of free trade over development aid.

An urgent imperative for Government action is the reform of markets based on the utilisation of data and, more specifically, the actions of digital platforms. The evidence of externalities in these markets is compelling: the undermining of local accountability through the impact on local newspapers; the unquantified but evident impact on mental health and wellbeing; and the unequalled political leverage dispensed by the machine-learning models, remote from inspection or democratic insight. These only hint at the scale of the potential distortion of competitive capitalism—a distortion in which we are willing and gullible participants. The extraction of our data from our actions and our preferences to enable predictive analysis to be sold for profit makes British citizens in this century the equivalent of those exploited by colonial powers in earlier centuries. The new colonists, these casual exploiters of our future tense, require intelligent and more demanding regulation.

We need accountability in our infrastructure. Recent announcements by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor indicate that he understands the need for radicalism: his proposed infrastructure fund, his commitment to changing investment algorithms to give the regions a fighting chance and his declaration that no industry should expect the state to relegate the national interest to their private interests in our trade negotiations with the EU.

[Richard Fuller]

May I encourage my right hon. Friend further with three thoughts? First, he should maintain fiscal discipline and not use the current experience of low interest rates as a windfall, but rather as a way for reshaping public pensions. Secondly, he should create compelling tax incentives that support local community investment in local free trade zones. Finally, he needs an early cross-departmental example of an infrastructure bid that makes sense. And I have an oven-ready deal.

North East Bedfordshire is already shouldering a substantial amount of the nation's need for housing. Across the constituency, we see shortages of public services, such as GPs. We await announcements shortly on east-west rail. We have a long-standing need for the realignment of the A1, which will be a benefit not only for my constituents but for those in the midlands, as we heard earlier. This is the deal—this is the example that I am sure Ministers will want to point to as precisely what we need as the Government embark on the next stage in our country's great future.

9.35 pm

**Margaret Greenwood** (Wirral West) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Speaker. We have had a number of maiden speeches today, and I congratulate all Members who made theirs. My hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Beth Winter) paid tribute to her predecessor in the House, Ann Clwyd, and spoke about the scourge of high unemployment and low wages that characterises so many of her constituents' experiences. The hon. Member for Arundel and South Downs (Andrew Griffith) spoke about the beauty of the area that he represents and its role as a dark sky reserve.

My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham East (Nadia Whittome) made a very impressive speech in which she spoke of the urgency of addressing climate change and the reality of life for so many of her constituents when 42% of children live in poverty and firefighters are using food banks. There were also maiden speeches from the hon. Members for North West Durham (Mr Holden), for Loughborough (Jane Hunt), for Dover (Mrs Elphicke), for Kensington (Felicity Buchan), for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Aaron Bell), for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Jo Gideon) and for Gordon (Richard Thomson).

Despite the warm words of Ministers, the Queen's Speech fails to put an end to a decade of austerity that the Government must take full responsibility for. There is no shortage of evidence to show just how badly the Government have failed. Child poverty is at record levels at over 4 million and is set to rise to over 5 million by 2022 as a direct result of Government policy. Thirty per cent. of children in the UK are growing up in poverty and, in parts of the east end of London, Birmingham and Manchester, that figure is over 50%. There is no moral case for the Government to continue—*[Interruption.]* I do not understand why Government Members are making such a noise at the news that in some parts of this country, 50% of children are living in poverty—they should be hanging their heads in shame. There is no moral case for the Government to continue with business as usual, and radical action is needed. Most urgent is the abolition of the two-child limit in universal credit and the provision of free school meals to all primary schoolchildren.

Only last week, a major new study highlighted that the wealthiest people in the UK can expect to live around nine years longer in good health than the poorest people in our society. That is a stark indication of the deep-rooted inequality in our country. The UN special rapporteur on human rights and extreme poverty said, in his report on the UK, that

“much of the glue that has held British society together since the Second World War has been deliberately removed and replaced with a harsh and uncaring ethos.”

That is a damning indictment of Conservative Governments' shameful record.

Average wages still remain lower in real terms than they were in 2008. Meanwhile, the dividends paid to shareholders have increased at three times the rate of inflation. UK private sector corporations are stockpiling reserves, so total cash and bank deposits increased by 8.3% last year. That picture suggests uncertainty rather than confidence in the future.

The last decade has also seen a sharp rise in the number of people in low-paid, insecure work. While the Government propose to increase the national living wage, it will fall far short of a genuine living wage, as set by the Living Wage Foundation. The Government have even missed their target of £9 an hour by 2020, set by George Osborne back in 2015, let alone Labour's goal of £10 an hour for all workers aged 16 and over.

There has been an increase in the number of workers who are not even being paid the current national minimum wage. In 2016, just over 22% of workers aged 25 years and over who should have been paid the minimum wage were underpaid. Now the figure stands at 26%, according to a new study by the Resolution Foundation, which estimates that around 350,000 of the 1.4 million people over 25 who were paid the national living wage in 2019 were paid less than they were legally entitled to. It is truly shocking that so many people are being exploited in this way and that so many employers think that it is okay to pay less than the legal rate. Despite that, since mid-2018 the Government have suspended the naming and shaming of employers found by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs to be underpaying. They claimed to have done so on the advice of the director of labour market enforcement, but that is not quite right: in fact, he had called for an evaluation and specific improvements, so why have the Government abandoned workers who are being badly exploited?

Low pay is not the only of concern. The world of work has changed enormously in the last decade. Two thirds of the growth in employment since 2008 has been in areas such as self-employment, zero-hours contracts and agency work, while the total number of people in insecure work is estimated at around 3.7 million by the TUC, and that estimate includes 1.5 million self-employed people earning less than the national living wage. For those in insecure employment, it is extremely difficult to report abuse, not just in the case of underpayment of the minimum wage but when it comes to sexual harassment. Women are more likely to be in insecure work involving temporary, agency or zero-hours contracts than men, and nearly 900,000 people are now on zero-hours contracts, more than half of them women. In July, the EU introduced a directive on transparent and predictable working conditions, part of which was aimed at addressing the use of zero-hours contracts by employers. The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

told the House that the Government had gone further than the directive, but that is not entirely accurate. For example, they have not gone so far as to require employers to give employees a minimum period of notice of their shifts and compensation if they are then cancelled. Can the Minister confirm whether the Government intend to do so, and if so, when?

Alleged bogus self-employment has been the subject of high-profile legal challenge in the past few years. As with underpayments of the minimum wage, the concern has to be whether employers are trying to escape their basic responsibilities to their workers. Are they requiring self-employed status to avoid paying for uniforms, equipment and national insurance contributions and to avoid paying into pensions? The Taylor report and the BEIS and Work and Pensions Committees have called for reform of the law on employment status to place greater emphasis on whether there is an employer who exercises control and supervision over a person who is allegedly self-employed. The Opposition believe the Government should end bogus self-employment by creating a single status of worker for everyone apart from those genuinely self-employed in business on their own accounts. The employment Bill does not seem to address the issue of employment status at all, so can the Minister tell us why not?

The growth of low pay and insecurity in the workplace has been accompanied by severe cuts to social security. Universal credit was supposed to lift people out of poverty and smooth the transition into work. It is failing on both counts. The reality is that many people find it far more challenging to make a claim in the first place and then have to wait five weeks to receive payments. The 1.6 million emergency food parcels distributed by the Trussell Trust last year represented a 20% increase on the year before. In this, as in so much else, the figures show clear regional inequality, with a 38% increase in the north-east of England. It should be a source of deep shame to the Government that food banks have become a hallmark of Conservative administration.

Access to and availability of childcare can make a real difference to people trying to get into work. The all-party group on childcare and early education has highlighted in a valuable report that Government funding for the 30 hours of free childcare is inadequate. It argued that as a result of a £662 million funding shortfall, there is a danger that access will become increasingly restricted in more deprived areas as providers close their doors or charge for extras such as meals or nappies. In the Queen's Speech, the Government announced additional funding for wraparound childcare, but can the Minister tell us when they will fund their core commitment properly?

Many Members have spoken of their concerns about the replacement of the European social fund, but on this matter the Queen's Speech was silent. That is a very serious omission, given that numerous organisations providing employment support for disabled people and deprived communities rely on the European social fund for support. The Government may have guaranteed funding in the current round, but the ESF funding for most organisations will end either this year or next, leaving a major question mark over their future. The Government promised a consultation as far back as July 2018 on the future of the shared prosperity fund,

but since then they have dragged their heels. When will they give details of the design of the fund so that organisations can at least have certainty? Will the shared prosperity fund match and maintain the funding levels provided by the ESF during its next round of funding? Employment support organisations are at risk of closing before we get answers from the Government, and with those closures will come the loss of vital support and expertise. The confusion over the shared prosperity fund is not taking back control; it is delay and drift. Disabled people and the deprived communities who rely on ESF funding deserve better.

We are facing a crisis in productivity. Rather than our seeing the investment in skills and machinery that we need, much of the economy is based on low-paid, low-skilled employment. Overall growth in business investment in areas such as machinery, IT and intellectual property has been slowing since 2015, and has actually fallen in each of the last two years. A recent survey found that only 50% of UK employers expected to increase their spending on skills development in the next 12 months. The Government have failed to provide a lead. Rather than their investing in skills, public funding of adult skills training is set to be cut by half between 2009-10 and 2020-21. There is something seriously wrong when people from disadvantaged backgrounds, with the lowest qualifications, are the least likely to have access to skills training. That was highlighted by both the Office for National Statistics and the Social Mobility Commission last year.

The increase in low-paid, insecure work is damaging people's lives. It leaves children going hungry, puts stress on families, and leaves many unable to meet basic household bills. Low-paid, insecure work is not good for people, and it is not good for the economy. The Conservatives have now had 10 years in which to take action to tackle the scourge of low pay and ensure that work is a route out of poverty. They have had 10 years in which to ensure that when people are not able to work, they are supported by a social security system that has dignity and respect at its heart. Instead, we find that inequality is deeply entrenched. The most disadvantaged have paid the price of the financial crisis through cuts in social security, and the cuts in public services have weakened the very fabric of our society.

It is time that the Government faced up to their responsibilities and took the action that is needed to tackle climate change, rebuild our public services, and invest in our people at every stage of life.

9.46 pm

**The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Dr Thérèse Coffey):** It is an honour for me to conclude this debate on the Gracious Speech, Mr Speaker, and a great pleasure to see you in the Chair.

At the start of a new Parliament, we have particularly enjoyed hearing the maiden speeches of many new Members. Today we have heard from the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Beth Winter), my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel and South Downs (Andrew Griffith), the hon. Member for Gordon (Richard Thomson), my hon. Friends the Members for Dover (Mrs Elphicke), for Kensington (Felicity Buchan), for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Aaron Bell), for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Jo Gideon), for North West Durham (Mr Holden)

[*Dr Thérèse Coffey*]

and for Loughborough (Jane Hunt), and the hon. Member for Nottingham East (Nadia Whittome). We have also heard again from my hon. Friends the Members for Eastbourne (Caroline Ansell) and for North East Bedfordshire (Richard Fuller). All of them have shown their passion and their commitment to their constituents.

Hon. Friends will be friends for life. I encourage them—and, indeed, all hon. Members—to be civil and respectful of each other across the Chamber, recognising that each of us was democratically elected to this place; but to respect the mandate that was given to this Conservative Government by the electorate last month, on which we set out the first part of honouring our manifesto commitments in the Queen's Speech.

After a decade of recovery, we have a decade of renewal ahead of us, and the road map for a renaissance of our great country as we leave the EU next week and can take advantage of the opportunities to truly unleash Britain's potential. The last decade has been challenging as we have had to recover from Labour's record peacetime deficit. The famous note—"I'm afraid there's no money"—reflected the economic crisis. Labour had splashed the cash, and took their eye off the horizon without being prudent about the unforeseen storms, particularly the global economic crash. We ended up with unemployment and income inequality both higher after they left office than when they had entered it.

We made some tough calls on spending, but we steadied the ship, and thanks to the resilience of the great British people, we have seen both economic growth and a record number of people working: 3.7 million more than in 2010, including record numbers of women and people with disabilities who are being supported so that they can fulfil their full potential. That record of success has not come about by chance. We have had a proactive, pro-business Government who have reduced taxes for employers and allowed businesses and employees to keep more of what they earn, which actually leads to increased tax revenues to support our public services. We have lifted more than 4 million people out of income tax altogether, and have increased the national living wage so that everyone gets a share in the country's economic growth. We have also seen over a million new businesses start up, as people have the confidence and support to go out on their own and start to create new jobs. Behind the numbers are the inspirational stories of lives transformed by work: stories of hope, pride, determination and horizons opening up to new skills and better prospects.

Work is not just a wage. We will continue to help those who can work to work, not because we want them to get off our books but because a working life offers so much more purpose and potential than a life on benefits. I pay tribute to the Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work, my hon. Friend the Member for North Swindon (Justin Tomlinson), because this is shown by the numbers of disabled people entering work. In the last six years, 1.3 million have joined the labour market. No longer are they written off; they are contributing their considerable talents to the workplace and holding a stake in society. As a Government, we will not stop there. The new national strategy for disabled people will draw together how we operate to optimise the experience

and participation of disabled people in society, better co-ordinating policy across Whitehall to meet their needs.

After challenging times for families in the country, we now have wages increasing ahead of inflation consistently. That has also helped pensioners, who will see a 3.9% increase in their state pension this April, and income inequality has yet again reduced under the Conservatives. Compared with 2010, there are 1 million fewer workless households, and 730,000 fewer children in such households. That is a record low number of children in workless households.

One of the Government's fundamental principles is to help people get on in life, and my Department has a key role to play in that. The transformation in that approach is underpinned by the key principles of universal credit: people will be better off in work than not in work, unless they cannot work. We are removing the dystopian disincentives for people who wanted to work and earn more but were penalised under the legacy benefit system. This is a Government who do not just think that getting a job is job done. Work coaches across the country are helping people to get a job and to get on in that job. Helping people to progress in work is the future of employment and skills support. We will deliver this new approach through more support for childcare, creating a £3 billion national skills fund and repatriating the EU funds to create a UK shared prosperity fund. We will work as one Government with one vision to ensure that wherever you live and whatever your background, you can achieve your dreams and ambitions through work.

**Ian Blackford** (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): In this utopian vision that the Minister is presenting, I wonder what message she is delivering to the 3.8 million 1950s women who have been denied their pension. Where is the vision for the women who have been told that they will have to wait an additional six years?

**Dr Coffey:** As right hon. Gentleman knows, the original change in the legislation was done in 1995, and he will also know this is still under legal processes, so I cannot comment further.

However, I was just about to come on to people in later age. We will continue to support people in retirement and help them to prepare for retirement. Automatic enrolment has been a huge success, with 10 million employees joining workplace pension schemes since 2012, but we will go further to offer choice and protection through the Pension Schemes Bill in this Queen's Speech. It will introduce three main measures: to help people to be better informed through their individual pension dashboard, which will allow them a better understanding of their path to a comfortable retirement and of how they can boost their savings; to create a new type of pension scheme that is sustainable for employers and employees; and to extend jail sentences for reckless bosses who plunder pension pots.

We want to ensure that people's prosperity grows in a way that increases opportunity right across the country. That is at the heart of what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has put on the agenda to level up the whole of the UK economy and unleash our potential as a nation. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor set out, we have ahead of us a decade of renewal through targeted investment in infrastructure, in skills and education

and in our public services. That starts with the Queen's Speech, with its 25 new Bills.

I really do not understand how anyone could disagree with any of the legislation going through. The employment (allocation of tips) Bill shows that we are the party of the worker, promoting fairness in the workplace and providing flexibility and security in jobs. The environment Bill will do much to ensure that we achieve net zero by 2050 and also support our natural environment and air quality. The NHS long-term plan funding Bill will legislate for the largest cash settlement in NHS history. The sentencing Bill and the serious violence Bill will make our streets safer and punish the most serious violent and sexual offenders. As the House knows, we will also continue to increase the living wage. This bold new agenda will show our constituents that this Government will deliver and stick to its promises.

I am conscious of the other matters that people have raised today. On zero-hours contracts, we are going further with the employment Bill, as I just outlined, but the coalition Government recognised the potential for such contracts to be used to exploit workers, which is why we banned the use of exclusivity clauses in 2015. I am also conscious of people using support networks, such as food banks, and that is why we are committed to helping people find work through a wide range of support targeted to each individual's circumstances, which is why the help to claim support is there. The Government have lifted 400,000 people out of absolute poverty since 2010, and I reiterate again that income inequality has fallen.

Under this Government, people know that we are working on their priorities. We will rise to the challenge of reuniting and rejuvenating the country. As we enter a new decade and a new political era, the Prime Minister has shown a Britain renewed by our resolve to optimise its strengths at home and abroad. Whether people live in cities or towns, in the countryside or on the coast, this one nation Conservative Government are on their side. After the recovery of the economy and employment, we will continue to renew public services and our infrastructure, so that we can bring about a great renaissance in our country. That is why we do the work we do. The Conservative party is leading the charge, which is why I call upon the House to reject the amendments and commend this Queen's Speech to everyone.

*Question put, That the amendment be made.*

*The House divided: Ayes 236, Noes 342.*

**Division No. 16]**

**[9.56 pm**

**AYES**

Abbott, rh Ms Diane	Blackman, Kirsty
Abrahams, Debbie	Blake, Olivia
Ali, Rushanara	Blomfield, Paul
Ali, Tahir	Bonnar, Steven
Amesbury, Mike	Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Anderson, Fleur	Brennan, Kevin
Antoniazzi, Tonia	Brock, Deidre
Ashworth, Jonathan	Brown, Alan
Bardell, Hannah	Brown, Ms Lyn
Barker, Paula	Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Beckett, rh Margaret	Bryant, Chris
Begum, Apsana	Buck, Ms Karen
Benn, rh Hilary	Burgon, Richard
Black, Mhairi	Butler, Dawn
Blackford, rh Ian	Byrne, Ian

Cadbury, Ruth	Hendry, Drew
Callaghan, Amy	Hill, Mike
Cameron, Dr Lisa	Hillier, Meg
Campbell, rh Sir Alan	Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
Carden, Dan	Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Champion, Sarah	Hollern, Kate
Chapman, Douglas	Hopkins, Rachel
Charalambous, Bambos	Hosie, Stewart
Cherry, Joanna	Huq, Dr Rupa
Clark, Feryal	Hussain, Imran
Cooper, Rosie	Jarvis, Dan
Cooper, rh Yvette	Johnson, Dame Diana
Corbyn, rh Jeremy	Johnson, Kim
Cowan, Ronnie	Jones, Darren
Coyle, Neil	Jones, Gerald
Crawley, Angela	Jones, rh Mr Kevan
Creasy, Stella ( <i>Proxy vote cast by Peter Kyle</i> )	Jones, Ruth
Cruddas, Jon	Jones, Sarah
Cryer, John ( <i>Proxy vote cast by Mark Tami</i> )	Kane, Mike
Cunningham, Alex	Kendall, Liz
Daby, Janet	Khan, Afzal
David, Wayne	Kinnock, Stephen
Davies, Geraint	Kyle, Peter
Davies-Jones, Alex	Lake, Ben
De Cordova, Marsha	Lammy, rh Mr David
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh	Lavery, Ian
Docherty-Hughes, Martin	Law, Chris
Dodds, Anneliese	Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Doogan, Dave	Lewis, Clive
Dorans, Allan	Linden, David
Doughty, Stephen	Lloyd, Tony
Dowd, Peter	Lucas, Caroline
Dromey, Jack	Lynch, Holly
Duffield, Rosie	MacAskill, Kenny
Eagle, Ms Angela	MacNeil, Angus Brendan
Eagle, Maria	Madders, Justin
Edwards, Jonathan	Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Efford, Clive	Mahmood, Shabana
Elliott, Julie	Malhotra, Seema
Eshalomi, Florence	Maskell, Rachael
Evans, Chris	Matheson, Christian
Fellows, Marion	McCabe, Steve
Ferrier, Margaret	McCarthy, Kerry
Fletcher, Colleen	McDonagh, Siobhain
Flynn, Stephen ( <i>Proxy vote cast by Patrick Grady</i> )	McDonald, Andy
Fovargue, Yvonne	McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
Foxcroft, Vicky	McDonald, Stuart C.
Foy, Mary Kelly	McDonnell, rh John
Furniss, Gill	McFadden, rh Mr Pat
Gardiner, Barry	McGinn, Conor
Gibson, Patricia	McGovern, Alison
Gill, Preet Kaur	McKinnell, Catherine
Glindon, Mary	McLaughlin, Anne
Grady, Patrick	McMahon, Jim
Grant, Peter	McMorris, Anna
Gray, Neil	Mearns, Ian
Green, Kate	Miliband, rh Edward
Greenwood, Lilian	Mishra, Navendu
Greenwood, Margaret	Monaghan, Carol
Griffith, Nia	Morden, Jessica
Haigh, Louise	Morgan, Mr Stephen
Hamilton, Fabian	Morris, Grahame
Hanvey, Neale	Murray, Ian
Hardy, Emma	Murray, James
Harman, rh Ms Harriet	Newlands, Gavin
Harris, Carolyn	Nichols, Charlotte
Hayes, Helen	Nicolson, John
Healey, rh John	Norris, Alex
Hendrick, Sir Mark	O'Hara, Brendan
	Onwurah, Chi
	Oppong-Asare, Abena
	Osamor, Kate

Osborne, Kate  
 Oswald, Kirsten  
 Owatemi, Taiwo  
 Peacock, Stephanie  
 Pennycook, Matthew  
 Perkins, Mr Toby  
 Phillipson, Bridget  
 Pollard, Luke  
 Powell, Lucy  
 Qureshi, Yasmin  
 Rayner, Angela  
 Reed, Steve  
 Rees, Christina  
 Reeves, Ellie (*Proxy vote cast by Bambos Charalambous*)  
 Reeves, Rachel  
 Reynolds, Jonathan  
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bell  
 Rimmer, Ms Marie  
 Rodda, Matt  
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd  
 Saville Roberts, rh Liz  
 Shah, Naz  
 Sharma, Mr Virendra  
 Sheerman, Mr Barry  
 Sheppard, Tommy  
 Siddiq, Tulip  
 Slaughter, Andy  
 Smith, Alyn  
 Smith, Cat  
 Smith, Nick  
 Smyth, Karin  
 Sobel, Alex  
 Spellar, rh John  
 Starmer, rh Keir

Stephens, Chris  
 Stevens, Jo  
 Streeting, Wes  
 Stringer, Graham  
 Sultana, Zarah  
 Tami, rh Mark  
 Tarry, Sam  
 Thewliss, Alison  
 Thomas, Gareth  
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick  
 Thompson, Owen  
 Thomson, Richard  
 Thornberry, rh Emily  
 Timms, rh Stephen  
 Trickett, Jon  
 Turner, Karl  
 Twigg, Derek  
 Twist, Liz  
 Vaz, rh Valerie  
 Webbe, Claudia  
 West, Catherine  
 Western, Matt  
 Whitehead, Dr Alan  
 Whitford, Dr Philippa  
 Whitley, Mick  
 Whittome, Nadia  
 Williams, Hywel  
 Winter, Beth  
 Wishart, Pete  
 Yasin, Mohammad  
 Zeichner, Daniel

**Tellers for the Ayes:**  
**Thangam Debbonaire and**  
**Jeff Smith**

#### NOES

Adams, Nigel  
 Afolami, Bim  
 Ahmad Khan, Imran  
 Aiken, Nickie  
 Aldous, Peter  
 Allan, Lucy  
 Amess, Sir David  
 Anderson, Lee  
 Anderson, Stuart  
 Andrew, Stuart  
 Ansell, Caroline  
 Argar, Edward  
 Atherton, Sarah  
 Atkins, Victoria  
 Bacon, Mr Gareth  
 Badenoch, Kemi (*Proxy vote cast by Leo Docherty*)  
 Bailey, Shaun  
 Baillie, Siobhan  
 Baker, Duncan  
 Baker, Mr Steve  
 Baldwin, Harriett  
 Barclay, rh Steve  
 Baron, Mr John  
 Baynes, Simon  
 Bell, Aaron  
 Benton, Scott  
 Beresford, Sir Paul  
 Berry, rh Jake  
 Blackman, Bob  
 Blunt, Crispin  
 Bone, Mr Peter  
 Bottomley, Sir Peter  
 Bowie, Andrew

Bradley, Ben  
 Bradley, rh Karen  
 Brady, Sir Graham  
 Braverman, Suella  
 Brereton, Jack  
 Bridgen, Andrew  
 Brine, Steve  
 Bristow, Paul  
 Britcliffe, Sara  
 Browne, Anthony  
 Bruce, Fiona  
 Buchan, Felicity  
 Buckland, rh Robert  
 Burghart, Alex  
 Burns, rh Conor  
 Butler, Rob  
 Cairns, rh Alun  
 Campbell, Mr Gregory  
 Carter, Andy  
 Cartlidge, James  
 Cash, Sir William  
 Cates, Miriam  
 Caulfield, Maria  
 Chalk, Alex  
 Chishti, Rehman  
 Chope, Sir Christopher  
 Churchill, Jo  
 Clark, rh Greg  
 Clarke, Theo  
 Clarke-Smith, Brendan  
 Clarkson, Chris  
 Cleverly, rh James  
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey  
 Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse

Colburn, Elliot  
 Collins, Damian  
 Costa, Alberto  
 Courts, Robert  
 Coutinho, Claire  
 Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey  
 Crosbie, Virginia  
 Crouch, Tracey  
 Daly, James  
 Davies, David T. C.  
 Davies, Gareth  
 Davies, Dr James  
 Davies, Mims  
 Davies, Philip  
 Davis, rh Mr David  
 Davison, Dehenna  
 Dinenage, Caroline  
 Dines, Miss Sarah  
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan  
 Docherty, Leo  
 Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.  
 Donelan, Michelle  
 Dorries, Ms Nadine  
 Double, Steve  
 Dowden, rh Oliver  
 Doyle-Price, Jackie  
 Drax, Richard  
 Drummond, Mrs Flick  
 Duddridge, James  
 Duguid, David  
 Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain  
 Dunne, rh Philip  
 Eastwood, Mark  
 Edwards, Ruth  
 Ellis, rh Michael  
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias  
 Elphicke, Mrs Natalie  
 Evans, Dr Luke  
 Evennett, rh Sir David  
 Everitt, Ben  
 Fabricant, Michael  
 Farris, Laura  
 Fell, Simon  
 Fletcher, Katherine  
 Fletcher, Mark  
 Fletcher, Nick  
 Ford, Vicky  
 Foster, Kevin  
 Francois, rh Mr Mark  
 Frazer, Lucy  
 Freeman, George  
 Freer, Mike  
 Fuller, Richard  
 Fysh, Mr Marcus  
 Garnier, Mark  
 Gibb, rh Nick  
 Gibson, Peter  
 Gideon, Jo  
 Girvan, Paul  
 Glen, John  
 Goodwill, rh Mr Robert  
 Graham, Richard  
 Grant, Mrs Helen  
 Gray, James  
 Grayling, rh Chris  
 Green, Chris  
 Green, rh Damian  
 Griffith, Andrew  
 Griffiths, Kate  
 Grundy, James  
 Gullis, Jonathan  
 Halfon, rh Robert  
 Hall, Luke  
 Hammond, Stephen  
 Hands, rh Greg  
 Harper, rh Mr Mark  
 Harris, Rebecca  
 Harrison, Trudy  
 Hart, Sally-Ann  
 Hart, rh Simon  
 Hayes, rh Sir John  
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver  
 Heapey, James  
 Heaton-Harris, Chris  
 Henderson, Gordon  
 Henry, Darren  
 Higginbotham, Antony  
 Hinds, rh Damian  
 Hoare, Simon  
 Holden, Mr Richard  
 Hollinrake, Kevin  
 Hollobone, Mr Philip  
 Holloway, Adam  
 Holmes, Paul  
 Howell, John  
 Howell, Paul  
 Huddleston, Nigel  
 Hudson, Dr Neil  
 Hughes, Eddie  
 Hunt, Jane  
 Hunt, rh Jeremy  
 Hunt, Tom  
 Jack, rh Mr Alister  
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil  
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard  
 Jenkinson, Mark  
 Jenrick, rh Robert  
 Johnson, rh Boris  
 Johnson, Dr Caroline  
 Johnson, Gareth  
 Johnston, David  
 Jones, Andrew  
 Jones, rh Mr David  
 Jones, Fay  
 Jones, Mr Marcus  
 Jupp, Simon  
 Kawczynski, Daniel  
 Kearns, Alicia  
 Keegan, Gillian  
 Knight, rh Sir Greg  
 Knight, Julian  
 Kruger, Danny  
 Kwarteng, rh Kwasi  
 Lamont, John  
 Langan, Robert  
 Latham, Mrs Pauline  
 Leadsom, rh Andrea  
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward  
 Levy, Ian  
 Lewer, Andrew  
 Lewis, rh Brandon  
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian  
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian  
 Lockhart, Carla  
 Loder, Chris  
 Logan, Mark  
 Longhi, Marco  
 Lopez, Julia (*Proxy vote cast by Lee Rowley*)  
 Lopresti, Jack  
 Lord, Mr Jonathan  
 Loughton, Tim  
 Mackinlay, Craig  
 Mackrory, Cherilyn

Maclean, Rachel  
 Mak, Alan  
 Malthouse, Kit  
 Mangnall, Anthony  
 Mann, Scott  
 Marson, Julie  
 May, rh Mrs Theresa  
 Mayhew, Jerome  
 Maynard, Paul  
 McCartney, Jason  
 McCartney, Karl  
 McPartland, Stephen  
 McVey, rh Esther  
 Menzies, Mark  
 Mercer, Johnny  
 Merriman, Huw  
 Metcalfe, Stephen  
 Millar, Robin  
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria  
 Milling, Amanda  
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew  
 Mohindra, Gagan  
 Moore, Damien  
 Moore, Robbie  
 Mordaunt, rh Penny  
 Morris, Anne Marie  
 Morrissey, Joy  
 Morton, Wendy  
 Mullan, Dr Kieran  
 Mumby-Croft, Holly  
 Mundell, rh David  
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll  
 Neill, Sir Robert  
 Nici, Lia  
 Nokes, rh Caroline  
 O'Brien, Neil  
 Offord, Dr Matthew  
 Opperman, Guy  
 Paisley, Ian  
 Parish, Neil  
 Patel, rh Priti  
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen  
 Pawsey, Mark  
 Penning, rh Sir Mike  
 Penrose, John  
 Percy, Andrew  
 Philp, Chris  
 Pincher, rh Christopher  
 Poulter, Dr Dan  
 Pow, Rebecca  
 Prentis, Victoria  
 Pritchard, Mark  
 Pursglove, Tom  
 Quin, Jeremy  
 Quince, Will  
 Randall, Tom  
 Redwood, rh John  
 Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob  
 Richards, Nicola  
 Richardson, Angela  
 Roberts, Rob  
 Robertson, Mr Laurence  
 Robinson, Gavin  
 Robinson, Mary  
 Rosindell, Andrew  
 Ross, Douglas  
 Rowley, Lee  
 Russell, Dean  
 Sambrook, Gary

Saxby, Selaine  
 Scully, Paul  
 Seely, Bob  
 Selous, Andrew  
 Shannon, Jim  
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec  
 Simmonds, David  
 Skidmore, rh Chris  
 Smith, Chloe  
 Smith, Greg (*Proxy vote cast by Mr John Whittingdale*)  
 Smith, Henry  
 Smith, rh Julian  
 Smith, Royston  
 Solloway, Amanda  
 Spencer, Dr Ben  
 Spencer, rh Mark  
 Stafford, Alexander  
 Stevenson, Jane  
 Stevenson, John  
 Stewart, Bob  
 Stewart, Iain  
 Stride, rh Mel  
 Sturdy, Julian  
 Sunak, rh Rishi  
 Sunderland, James  
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond  
 Syms, Sir Robert  
 Thomas, Derek  
 Throup, Maggie  
 Timpson, Edward  
 Tolhurst, Kelly  
 Tomlinson, Justin  
 Tomlinson, Michael  
 Tracey, Craig  
 Trevelyan, Anne-Marie  
 Trott, Laura  
 Tugendhat, Tom  
 Vara, Mr Shailesh  
 Vickers, Martin  
 Vickers, Matt  
 Villiers, rh Theresa  
 Wakeford, Christian  
 Walker, Sir Charles  
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben  
 Wallis, Dr Jamie  
 Warburton, David  
 Warman, Matt  
 Watling, Giles  
 Webb, Suzanne  
 Whately, Helen  
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather  
 Whittaker, Craig  
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John  
 Wiggin, Bill  
 Wild, James  
 Williams, Craig  
 Williamson, rh Gavin  
 Wilson, rh Sammy  
 Wood, Mike  
 Wragg, Mr William  
 Wright, rh Jeremy  
 Young, Jacob  
 Zahawi, Nadhim

**Tellers for the Noes:**  
 David Rutley and  
 James Morris

*Amendment proposed:* at the end of the Question to add:

“but particularly regrets the Government’s intention to use the Immigration Bill to end freedom of movement within Europe; believes that freedom of movement has brought immeasurable social, cultural and economic benefits to the people of Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland and the European Union as a whole; further believes that freedom of movement should be maintained irrespective of the UK’s future membership status of the European Union; notes that the Gracious Speech lacked proposals for bills that expand parental leave, protect the NHS, introduce tougher legal targets to address the climate emergency, increase the minimum wage to an equal wage, bring justice to the 3.8 million women born in the 1950s who will be denied their pensions at the proper age, and abolish nuclear weapons; further regrets that the Gracious Speech does not contain provision to end the freeze of social security benefits or scrap the two-child limit and so-called rape clause attached to child tax credits; rejects the Government’s proposals for leaving the European Union; and believes the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill must not become law unless and until it has received legislative consent from the Senedd and the Scottish Parliament.”—(*Ian Blackford.*)

*Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 33), That the amendment be made.*

*The House divided: Ayes 59, Noes 341.*

**Division No. 17]**

**[10.12 pm**

**AYES**

Bardell, Hannah  
 Black, Mhairi  
 Blackford, rh Ian  
 Blackman, Kirsty  
 Bonnar, Steven  
 Brock, Deidre  
 Brown, Alan  
 Callaghan, Amy  
 Cameron, Dr Lisa  
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair  
 Chamberlain, Wendy  
 Chapman, Douglas  
 Cherry, Joanna  
 Cooper, Daisy  
 Cowan, Ronnie  
 Crawley, Angela  
 Davey, rh Sir Edward  
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin  
 Doogan, Dave  
 Dorans, Allan  
 Edwards, Jonathan  
 Farron, Tim  
 Ferrier, Margaret  
 Flynn, Stephen (*Proxy vote cast by Patrick Grady*)  
 Gibson, Patricia  
 Grady, Patrick  
 Grant, Peter  
 Gray, Neil  
 Hanvey, Neale  
 Hendry, Drew  
 Hobhouse, Wera  
 Hosie, Stewart  
 Jardine, Christine  
 Lake, Ben  
 Law, Chris  
 Linden, David  
 Lucas, Caroline  
 MacAskill, Kenny  
 MacNeil, Angus Brendan  
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm  
 McDonald, Stuart C.  
 McLaughlin, Anne  
 Monaghan, Carol  
 Newlands, Gavin  
 Nicolson, John  
 O'Hara, Brendan  
 Olney, Sarah  
 Oswald, Kirsten  
 Saville Roberts, rh Liz  
 Sheppard, Tommy  
 Smith, Alyn  
 Stephens, Chris  
 Stone, Jamie  
 Thewliss, Alison  
 Thomson, Richard  
 Whitford, Dr Philippa  
 Williams, Hywel  
 Wilson, Munira  
 Wishart, Pete

**Tellers for the Ayes:**  
 Marion Fellows and  
 Owen Thompson

**NOES**

Anderson, Stuart  
 Andrew, Stuart  
 Ansell, Caroline  
 Argar, Edward  
 Atherton, Sarah  
 Atkins, Victoria  
 Bacon, Mr Gareth  
 Adams, Nigel  
 Afolami, Bim  
 Ahmad Khan, Imran  
 Aiken, Nickie  
 Aldous, Peter  
 Allan, Lucy  
 Amess, Sir David  
 Anderson, Lee

*Question accordingly negated.*

Badenoch, Kemi ( <i>Proxy vote cast by Leo Docherty</i> )	Docherty, Leo	Hollobone, Mr Philip	Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Bailey, Shaun	Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.	Holloway, Adam	Mohindra, Gagan
Baillie, Siobhan	Donelan, Michelle	Holmes, Paul	Moore, Damien
Baker, Duncan	Dorries, Ms Nadine	Howell, John	Moore, Robbie
Baker, Mr Steve	Double, Steve	Howell, Paul	Mordaunt, rh Penny
Baldwin, Harriett	Dowden, rh Oliver	Huddleston, Nigel	Morris, Anne Marie
Barclay, rh Steve	Doyle-Price, Jackie	Hudson, Dr Neil	Morrissey, Joy
Baron, Mr John	Drax, Richard	Hughes, Eddie	Morton, Wendy
Baynes, Simon	Drummond, Mrs Flick	Hunt, Jane	Mullan, Dr Kieran
Bell, Aaron	Duddridge, James	Hunt, rh Jeremy	Mumby-Croft, Holly
Benton, Scott	Duguid, David	Hunt, Tom	Mundell, rh David
Beresford, Sir Paul	Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain	Jack, rh Mr Alister	Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Berry, rh Jake	Dunne, rh Philip	Jayawardena, Mr Ranil	Neill, Sir Robert
Blackman, Bob	Eastwood, Mark	Jenkin, Sir Bernard	Nici, Lia
Blunt, Crispin	Edwards, Ruth	Jenkinson, Mark	Nokes, rh Caroline
Bone, Mr Peter	Ellis, rh Michael	Jenrick, rh Robert	O'Brien, Neil
Bottomley, Sir Peter	Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias	Johnson, rh Boris	Offord, Dr Matthew
Bowie, Andrew	Elphicke, Mrs Natalie	Johnson, Dr Caroline	Opperman, Guy
Bradley, Ben	Evans, Dr Luke	Johnson, Gareth	Paisley, Ian
Bradley, rh Karen	Evennett, rh Sir David	Johnston, David	Parish, Neil
Brady, Sir Graham	Everitt, Ben	Jones, Andrew	Patel, rh Priti
Braverman, Suella	Fabricant, Michael	Jones, rh Mr David	Paterson, rh Mr Owen
Brereton, Jack	Farris, Laura	Jones, Fay	Pawsey, Mark
Bridgen, Andrew	Fell, Simon	Jones, Mr Marcus	Penning, rh Sir Mike
Brine, Steve	Fletcher, Katherine	Jupp, Simon	Penrose, John
Bristow, Paul	Fletcher, Mark	Kawczynski, Daniel	Percy, Andrew
Britcliffe, Sara	Fletcher, Nick	Kearns, Alicia	Philp, Chris
Browne, Anthony	Ford, Vicky	Keegan, Gillian	Pincher, rh Christopher
Bruce, Fiona	Foster, Kevin	Knight, rh Sir Greg	Poulter, Dr Dan
Buchan, Felicity	Francois, rh Mr Mark	Knight, Julian	Pow, Rebecca
Buckland, rh Robert	Frazer, Lucy	Kruger, Danny	Prentis, Victoria
Burghart, Alex	Freeman, George	Kwarteng, rh Kwasi	Pritchard, Mark
Burns, rh Conor	Freer, Mike	Lamont, John	Pursglove, Tom
Butler, Rob	Fuller, Richard	Largan, Robert	Quin, Jeremy
Cairns, rh Alun	Fysh, Mr Marcus	Latham, Mrs Pauline	Quince, Will
Campbell, Mr Gregory	Garnier, Mark	Leadsom, rh Andrea	Randall, Tom
Carter, Andy	Gibb, rh Nick	Leigh, rh Sir Edward	Redwood, rh John
Cartlidge, James	Gibson, Peter	Levy, Ian	Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
Cash, Sir William	Gideon, Jo	Lewer, Andrew	Richards, Nicola
Cates, Miriam	Girvan, Paul	Lewis, rh Brandon	Richardson, Angela
Caulfield, Maria	Glen, John	Lewis, rh Dr Julian	Roberts, Rob
Chalk, Alex	Goodwill, rh Mr Robert	Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian	Robertson, Mr Laurence
Chishti, Rehman	Graham, Richard	Lockhart, Carla	Robinson, Gavin
Chope, Sir Christopher	Grant, Mrs Helen	Loder, Chris	Robinson, Mary
Churchill, Jo	Gray, James	Logan, Mark	Rosindell, Andrew
Clark, rh Greg	Grayling, rh Chris	Longhi, Marco	Ross, Douglas
Clarke, Theo	Green, Chris	Lopez, Julia ( <i>Proxy vote cast by Lee Rowley</i> )	Rowley, Lee
Clarke-Smith, Brendan	Green, rh Damian	Lopresti, Jack	Russell, Dean
Clarkson, Chris	Griffith, Andrew	Lord, Mr Jonathan	Sambrook, Gary
Cleverly, rh James	Griffiths, Kate	Loughan, Tim	Saxby, Selaine
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey	Grundy, James	Mackinlay, Craig	Scully, Paul
Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse	Gullis, Jonathan	Mackrory, Cherylyn	Seely, Bob
Colburn, Elliot	Halfon, rh Robert	Macleane, Rachel	Selous, Andrew
Collins, Damian	Hall, Luke	Mak, Alan	Shannon, Jim
Costa, Alberto	Hammond, Stephen	Malthouse, Kit	Shelbrooke, rh Alec
Courts, Robert	Hands, rh Greg	Mangnall, Anthony	Simmonds, David
Coutinho, Claire	Harper, rh Mr Mark	Mann, Scott	Skidmore, rh Chris
Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey	Harris, Rebecca	Marson, Julie	Smith, Chloe
Crosbie, Virginia	Harrison, Trudy	May, rh Mrs Theresa	Smith, Greg ( <i>Proxy vote cast by Mr John Whittingdale</i> )
Crouch, Tracey	Hart, Sally-Ann	Mayhew, Jerome	Smith, Henry
Daly, James	Hart, rh Simon	Maynard, Paul	Smith, rh Julian
Davies, David T. C.	Hayes, rh Sir John	McCartney, Jason	Smith, Royston
Davies, Gareth	Heald, rh Sir Oliver	McCartney, Karl	Solloway, Amanda
Davies, Dr James	Heapey, James	McPartland, Stephen	Spencer, Dr Ben
Davies, Mims	Heaton-Harris, Chris	McVey, rh Esther	Spencer, rh Mark
Davies, Philip	Henderson, Gordon	Menzies, Mark	Stafford, Alexander
Davis, rh Mr David	Henry, Darren	Mercer, Johnny	Stevenson, Jane
Davison, Dehenna	Higginbotham, Antony	Metcalfe, Stephen	Stevenson, John
Dinenage, Caroline	Hinds, rh Damian	Millar, Robin	Stewart, Bob
Dines, Miss Sarah	Hoare, Simon	Miller, rh Mrs Maria	Stewart, Iain
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan	Holden, Mr Richard	Milling, Amanda	Stride, rh Mel
	Hollinrake, Kevin		

Sturdy, Julian  
 Sunak, rh Rishi  
 Sunderland, James  
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond  
 Syms, Sir Robert  
 Thomas, Derek  
 Throup, Maggie  
 Timpson, Edward  
 Tolhurst, Kelly  
 Tomlinson, Justin  
 Tomlinson, Michael  
 Tracey, Craig  
 Trevelyan, Anne-Marie  
 Trott, Laura  
 Tugendhat, Tom  
 Vara, Mr Shailesh  
 Vickers, Martin  
 Vickers, Matt  
 Villiers, rh Theresa  
 Wakeford, Christian  
 Walker, Sir Charles  
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben

Wallis, Dr Jamie  
 Warburton, David  
 Warman, Matt  
 Watling, Giles  
 Webb, Suzanne  
 Whately, Helen  
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather  
 Whittaker, Craig  
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John  
 Wiggin, Bill  
 Wild, James  
 Williams, Craig  
 Williamson, rh Gavin  
 Wilson, rh Sammy  
 Wood, Mike  
 Wragg, Mr William  
 Wright, rh Jeremy  
 Young, Jacob  
 Zahawi, Nadhim

**Tellers for the Noes:**  
**David Rutley and**  
**James Morris**

Law, Chris  
 Linden, David  
 Lucas, Caroline  
 MacAskill, Kenny  
 MacNeil, Angus Brendan  
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm  
 McDonald, Stuart C.  
 McLaughlin, Anne  
 Monaghan, Carol  
 Newlands, Gavin  
 Nicolson, John  
 O'Hara, Brendan  
 Olney, Sarah  
 Oswald, Kirsten  
 Saville Roberts, rh Liz

Sheppard, Tommy  
 Smith, Alyn  
 Stephens, Chris  
 Stone, Jamie  
 Thewliss, Alison  
 Thompson, Owen  
 Thomson, Richard  
 Whitford, Dr Philippa  
 Williams, Hywel  
 Wilson, Munira  
 Wishart, Pete

**Tellers for the Ayes:**  
**Christine Jardine and**  
**Wendy Chamberlain**

#### NOES

Adams, Nigel  
 Afolami, Bim  
 Ahmad Khan, Imran  
 Aiken, Nickie  
 Aldous, Peter  
 Allan, Lucy  
 Amess, Sir David  
 Anderson, Lee  
 Anderson, Stuart  
 Andrew, Stuart  
 Ansell, Caroline  
 Argar, Edward  
 Atherton, Sarah  
 Atkins, Victoria  
 Bacon, Mr Gareth  
 Badenoch, Kemi (*Proxy vote*  
*cast by Leo Docherty*)  
 Bailey, Shaun  
 Baillie, Siobhan  
 Baker, Duncan  
 Baker, Mr Steve  
 Baldwin, Harriett  
 Barclay, rh Steve  
 Baron, Mr John  
 Baynes, Simon  
 Bell, Aaron  
 Benton, Scott  
 Beresford, Sir Paul  
 Berry, rh Jake  
 Blackman, Bob  
 Blunt, Crispin  
 Bone, Mr Peter  
 Bottomley, Sir Peter  
 Bowie, Andrew  
 Bradley, Ben  
 Bradley, rh Karen  
 Brady, Sir Graham  
 Braverman, Suella  
 Brereton, Jack  
 Bridgen, Andrew  
 Brine, Steve  
 Bristow, Paul  
 Britcliffe, Sara  
 Browne, Anthony  
 Bruce, Fiona  
 Buchan, Felicity  
 Buckland, rh Robert  
 Burghart, Alex  
 Burns, rh Conor  
 Butler, Rob  
 Cairns, rh Alun  
 Campbell, Mr Gregory  
 Carter, Andy  
 Cartlidge, James  
 Cash, Sir William  
 Cates, Miriam  
 Caulfield, Maria  
 Chalk, Alex  
 Chishti, Rehman  
 Chope, Sir Christopher  
 Churchill, Jo  
 Clark, rh Greg  
 Clarke, Theo  
 Clarke-Smith, Brendan  
 Clarkson, Chris  
 Cleverly, rh James  
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey  
 Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse  
 Colburn, Elliot  
 Collins, Damian  
 Costa, Alberto  
 Courts, Robert  
 Coutinho, Claire  
 Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey  
 Crosbie, Virginia  
 Crouch, Tracey  
 Daly, James  
 Davies, David T. C.  
 Davies, Gareth  
 Davies, Dr James  
 Davies, Mims  
 Davies, Philip  
 Davis, rh Mr David  
 Davison, Dehenna  
 Dinéage, Caroline  
 Dines, Miss Sarah  
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan  
 Docherty, Leo  
 Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.  
 Dorries, Ms Nadine  
 Double, Steve  
 Dowden, rh Oliver  
 Doyle-Price, Jackie  
 Drax, Richard  
 Drummond, Mrs Flick  
 Duddridge, James  
 Duguid, David  
 Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain  
 Dunne, rh Philip  
 Eastwood, Mark  
 Edwards, Ruth  
 Ellis, rh Michael  
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias  
 Elphicke, Mrs Natalie  
 Evans, Dr Luke  
 Evennett, rh Sir David  
 Everitt, Ben  
 Fabricant, Michael

*Question accordingly negated.*

*Amendment proposed:* at the end of the Question to add:

“but respectfully regrets that the Gracious Speech does not set out sufficiently ambitious plans to tackle the climate emergency by reducing net greenhouse gas emissions to zero, such as improving the energy efficiency of houses and offices, bringing forward the date for ending the sale of new petrol and diesel cars, expanding renewable energy and banning fracking, and setting out the Government’s objectives for COP26 in Glasgow later this year; further regrets that the Gracious Speech does not set out measures to tackle poverty and inequality and to improve social justice, such as scrapping the two-child limit, increasing in-work benefits and guaranteeing continued employment and skills support currently provided through European Social Funding; is concerned that proposals in the Gracious Speech for a Constitution, Democracy and Rights Commission are intended to curtail human rights, strengthen the executive and limit the role of the courts, rather than to strengthen the voice of citizens; and urges your Government to introduce a system of proportional representation, to end the democratic outrage of one party securing a majority of seats in this House with only a minority of votes and another party receiving less than 2 per cent of seats despite securing 11.5 per cent of votes.”—(*Sir Edward Davey.*)

*Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 33), That the amendment be made.*

*The House divided: Ayes 59, Noes 341.*

#### Division No. 18]

[10.26 pm

#### AYES

Bardell, Hannah  
 Black, Mhairi  
 Blackford, rh Ian  
 Blackman, Kirsty  
 Bonnar, Steven  
 Brock, Deidre  
 Brown, Alan  
 Callaghan, Amy  
 Cameron, Dr Lisa  
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair  
 Chapman, Douglas  
 Cherry, Joanna  
 Cooper, Daisy  
 Cowan, Ronnie  
 Crawley, Angela  
 Davey, rh Sir Edward  
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin  
 Doogan, Dave  
 Dorans, Allan  
 Edwards, Jonathan  
 Farron, Tim  
 Fellows, Marion  
 Ferrier, Margaret  
 Flynn, Stephen (*Proxy vote*  
*cast by Patrick Grady*)  
 Gibson, Patricia  
 Grady, Patrick  
 Grant, Peter  
 Gray, Neil  
 Hanvey, Neale  
 Hendry, Drew  
 Hobhouse, Wera  
 Hosie, Stewart  
 Lake, Ben

Farris, Laura  
 Fell, Simon  
 Fletcher, Katherine  
 Fletcher, Mark  
 Fletcher, Nick  
 Ford, Vicky  
 Foster, Kevin  
 Francois, rh Mr Mark  
 Frazer, Lucy  
 Freeman, George  
 Freer, Mike  
 Fuller, Richard  
 Fysh, Mr Marcus  
 Garnier, Mark  
 Gibb, rh Nick  
 Gibson, Peter  
 Gideon, Jo  
 Girvan, Paul  
 Glen, John  
 Goodwill, rh Mr Robert  
 Graham, Richard  
 Grant, Mrs Helen  
 Gray, James  
 Grayling, rh Chris  
 Green, Chris  
 Green, rh Damian  
 Griffith, Andrew  
 Griffiths, Kate  
 Grundy, James  
 Gullis, Jonathan  
 Halfon, rh Robert  
 Hall, Luke  
 Hammond, Stephen  
 Hands, rh Greg  
 Harper, rh Mr Mark  
 Harris, Rebecca  
 Harrison, Trudy  
 Hart, Sally-Ann  
 Hart, rh Simon  
 Hayes, rh Sir John  
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver  
 Heapey, James  
 Heaton-Harris, Chris  
 Henderson, Gordon  
 Henry, Darren  
 Higginbotham, Antony  
 Hinds, rh Damian  
 Hoare, Simon  
 Holden, Mr Richard  
 Hollinrake, Kevin  
 Hollobone, Mr Philip  
 Holloway, Adam  
 Holmes, Paul  
 Howell, John  
 Howell, Paul  
 Huddleston, Nigel  
 Hudson, Dr Neil  
 Hughes, Eddie  
 Hunt, Jane  
 Hunt, rh Jeremy  
 Hunt, Tom  
 Jack, rh Mr Alister  
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil  
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard  
 Jenkinson, Mark  
 Jenrick, rh Robert  
 Johnson, rh Boris  
 Johnson, Dr Caroline  
 Johnson, Gareth  
 Johnston, David  
 Jones, Andrew  
 Jones, rh Mr David

Jones, Fay  
 Jupp, Simon  
 Kawczynski, Daniel  
 Kearns, Alicia  
 Keegan, Gillian  
 Knight, rh Sir Greg  
 Knight, Julian  
 Kruger, Danny  
 Kwarteng, rh Kwasi  
 Lamont, John  
 Largan, Robert  
 Latham, Mrs Pauline  
 Leadsom, rh Andrea  
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward  
 Levy, Ian  
 Lewer, Andrew  
 Lewis, rh Brandon  
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian  
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian  
 Lockhart, Carla  
 Loder, Chris  
 Logan, Mark  
 Longhi, Marco  
 Lopez, Julia (*Proxy vote cast by Lee Rowley*)  
 Lopresti, Jack  
 Lord, Mr Jonathan  
 Loughton, Tim  
 Mackinlay, Craig  
 Mackrory, Cherylyn  
 Maclean, Rachel  
 Mak, Alan  
 Malthouse, Kit  
 Mangnall, Anthony  
 Mann, Scott  
 Marson, Julie  
 May, rh Mrs Theresa  
 Mayhew, Jerome  
 Maynard, Paul  
 McCartney, Jason  
 McCartney, Karl  
 McPartland, Stephen  
 McVey, rh Esther  
 Menzies, Mark  
 Mercer, Johnny  
 Merriman, Huw  
 Metcalfe, Stephen  
 Millar, Robin  
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria  
 Milling, Amanda  
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew  
 Mohindra, Gagan  
 Moore, Damien  
 Moore, Robbie  
 Mordaunt, rh Penny  
 Morris, Anne Marie  
 Morris, James  
 Morrissey, Joy  
 Morton, Wendy  
 Mullan, Dr Kieran  
 Mumby-Croft, Holly  
 Mundell, rh David  
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll  
 Neill, Sir Robert  
 Nici, Lia  
 Nokes, rh Caroline  
 O'Brien, Neil  
 Offord, Dr Matthew  
 Opperman, Guy  
 Paisley, Ian  
 Parish, Neil  
 Patel, rh Priti

Paterson, rh Mr Owen  
 Pawsey, Mark  
 Penning, rh Sir Mike  
 Penrose, John  
 Percy, Andrew  
 Philp, Chris  
 Pincher, rh Christopher  
 Poulter, Dr Dan  
 Pow, Rebecca  
 Prentis, Victoria  
 Pritchard, Mark  
 Pursglove, Tom  
 Quin, Jeremy  
 Quince, Will  
 Randall, Tom  
 Redwood, rh John  
 Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob  
 Richards, Nicola  
 Richardson, Angela  
 Roberts, Rob  
 Robertson, Mr Laurence  
 Robinson, Gavin  
 Robinson, Mary  
 Rosindell, Andrew  
 Ross, Douglas  
 Rowley, Lee  
 Russell, Dean  
 Rutley, David  
 Sambrook, Gary  
 Saxby, Selaine  
 Scully, Paul  
 Seely, Bob  
 Selous, Andrew  
 Shannon, Jim  
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec  
 Simmonds, David  
 Skidmore, rh Chris  
 Smith, Chloe  
 Smith, Greg (*Proxy vote cast by Mr John Whittingdale*)  
 Smith, Henry  
 Smith, rh Julian  
 Smith, Royston  
 Solloway, Amanda  
 Spencer, Dr Ben  
 Spencer, rh Mark  
 Stafford, Alexander  
 Stevenson, Jane

Stevenson, John  
 Stewart, Bob  
 Stride, rh Mel  
 Sturdy, Julian  
 Sunak, rh Rishi  
 Sunderland, James  
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond  
 Syms, Sir Robert  
 Thomas, Derek  
 Throup, Maggie  
 Timpson, Edward  
 Tolhurst, Kelly  
 Tomlinson, Justin  
 Tomlinson, Michael  
 Tracey, Craig  
 Trevelyan, Anne-Marie  
 Trott, Laura  
 Tugendhat, Tom  
 Vara, Mr Shailesh  
 Vickers, Martin  
 Vickers, Matt  
 Villiers, rh Theresa  
 Wakeford, Christian  
 Walker, Sir Charles  
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben  
 Wallis, Dr Jamie  
 Warburton, David  
 Warman, Matt  
 Watling, Giles  
 Webb, Suzanne  
 Whately, Helen  
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather  
 Whittaker, Craig  
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John  
 Wiggin, Bill  
 Wild, James  
 Williams, Craig  
 Williamson, rh Gavin  
 Wilson, rh Sammy  
 Wood, Mike  
 Wragg, Mr William  
 Wright, rh Jeremy  
 Young, Jacob  
 Zahawi, Nadhim

**Tellers for the Noes:**  
**Iain Stewart and**  
**Michelle Donelan**

*Question accordingly negated.*

*Main Question put.*

*The House divided: Ayes 334, Noes 247.*

**Division No. 19]**

**[10.40 pm**

**AYES**

Adams, Nigel  
 Afolami, Bim  
 Ahmad Khan, Imran  
 Aiken, Nickie  
 Aldous, Peter  
 Allan, Lucy  
 Amess, Sir David  
 Anderson, Lee  
 Anderson, Stuart  
 Andrew, Stuart  
 Ansell, Caroline  
 Argar, Edward  
 Atherton, Sarah  
 Atkins, Victoria  
 Bacon, Mr Gareth  
 Badenoch, Kemi (*Proxy vote cast by Leo Docherty*)  
 Bailey, Shaun  
 Baillie, Siobhan  
 Baker, Duncan  
 Baker, Mr Steve  
 Baldwin, Harriett  
 Barclay, rh Steve  
 Baron, Mr John  
 Baynes, Simon  
 Bell, Aaron  
 Benton, Scott  
 Beresford, Sir Paul  
 Berry, rh Jake  
 Blackman, Bob

Blunt, Crispin	Evans, Dr Luke	Johnston, David	Parish, Neil
Bone, Mr Peter	Evennett, rh Sir David	Jones, Andrew	Patel, rh Priti
Bottomley, Sir Peter	Everitt, Ben	Jones, rh Mr David	Paterson, rh Mr Owen
Bowie, Andrew	Fabricant, Michael	Jones, Fay	Pawsey, Mark
Bradley, Ben	Farris, Laura	Jones, Mr Marcus	Penning, rh Sir Mike
Bradley, rh Karen	Fell, Simon	Jupp, Simon	Penrose, John
Brady, Sir Graham	Fletcher, Katherine	Kawczynski, Daniel	Percy, Andrew
Braverman, Suella	Fletcher, Mark	Kearns, Alicia	Philp, Chris
Brereton, Jack	Fletcher, Nick	Keegan, Gillian	Pincher, rh Christopher
Bridgen, Andrew	Ford, Vicky	Knight, rh Sir Greg	Poulter, Dr Dan
Brine, Steve	Foster, Kevin	Knight, Julian	Pow, Rebecca
Bristow, Paul	Francois, rh Mr Mark	Kruger, Danny	Prentis, Victoria
Britcliffe, Sara	Frazer, Lucy	Kwarteng, rh Kwasi	Pritchard, Mark
Browne, Anthony	Freeman, George	Lamont, John	Pursglove, Tom
Bruce, Fiona	Freer, Mike	Largan, Robert	Quin, Jeremy
Buchan, Felicity	Fuller, Richard	Latham, Mrs Pauline	Quince, Will
Buckland, rh Robert	Fysh, Mr Marcus	Leadsom, rh Andrea	Randall, Tom
Burghart, Alex	Garnier, Mark	Leigh, rh Sir Edward	Redwood, rh John
Burns, rh Conor	Gibb, rh Nick	Levy, Ian	Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
Butler, Rob	Gibson, Peter	Lewer, Andrew	Richards, Nicola
Cairns, rh Alun	Gideon, Jo	Lewis, rh Brandon	Richardson, Angela
Carter, Andy	Glen, John	Lewis, rh Dr Julian	Roberts, Rob
Cartledge, James	Goodwill, rh Mr Robert	Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian	Robertson, Mr Laurence
Cash, Sir William	Graham, Richard	Loder, Chris	Robinson, Mary
Cates, Miriam	Grant, Mrs Helen	Logan, Mark	Rosindell, Andrew
Caulfield, Maria	Gray, James	Longhi, Marco	Ross, Douglas
Chalk, Alex	Grayling, rh Chris	Lopez, Julia ( <i>Proxy vote cast</i> <i>by Lee Rowley</i> )	Rowley, Lee
Chishti, Rehman	Green, Chris	Lopresti, Jack	Russell, Dean
Chope, Sir Christopher	Green, rh Damian	Lord, Mr Jonathan	Rutley, David
Churchill, Jo	Griffith, Andrew	Loughton, Tim	Sambrook, Gary
Clark, rh Greg	Griffiths, Kate	Mackinlay, Craig	Saxby, Selaine
Clarke, Theo	Grundy, James	Mackrory, Cherylyn	Scully, Paul
Clarke-Smith, Brendan	Gullis, Jonathan	Macleon, Rachel	Seely, Bob
Clarkson, Chris	Halfon, rh Robert	Mak, Alan	Selous, Andrew
Cleverly, rh James	Hall, Luke	Malthouse, Kit	Shelbrooke, rh Alec
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey	Hammond, Stephen	Mangnall, Anthony	Simmonds, David
Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse	Hands, rh Greg	Mann, Scott	Skidmore, rh Chris
Colburn, Elliot	Harper, rh Mr Mark	Marson, Julie	Smith, Chloe
Collins, Damian	Harris, Rebecca	May, rh Mrs Theresa	Smith, Greg ( <i>Proxy vote cast</i> <i>by Mr John Whittingdale</i> )
Costa, Alberto	Harrison, Trudy	Mayhew, Jerome	Smith, Henry
Courts, Robert	Hart, Sally-Ann	Maynard, Paul	Smith, rh Julian
Coutinho, Claire	Hart, rh Simon	McCartney, Jason	Smith, Royston
Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey	Hayes, rh Sir John	McCartney, Karl	Solloway, Amanda
Crosbie, Virginia	Heald, rh Sir Oliver	McPartland, Stephen	Spencer, Dr Ben
Crouch, Tracey	Heapey, James	McVey, rh Esther	Spencer, rh Mark
Daly, James	Heaton-Harris, Chris	Menzies, Mark	Stafford, Alexander
Davies, David T. C.	Henderson, Gordon	Mercer, Johnny	Stevenson, Jane
Davies, Gareth	Henry, Darren	Merriman, Huw	Stevenson, John
Davies, Dr James	Higginbotham, Antony	Metcalfe, Stephen	Stewart, Bob
Davies, Mims	Hinds, rh Damian	Millar, Robin	Stride, rh Mel
Davies, Philip	Hoare, Simon	Miller, rh Mrs Maria	Sturdy, Julian
Davis, rh Mr David	Holden, Mr Richard	Milling, Amanda	Sunak, rh Rishi
Davison, Dehenna	Hollinrake, Kevin	Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew	Sunderland, James
Dinenage, Caroline	Hollobone, Mr Philip	Mohindra, Gagan	Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Dines, Miss Sarah	Holloway, Adam	Moore, Damien	Syms, Sir Robert
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan	Holmes, Paul	Moore, Robbie	Thomas, Derek
Docherty, Leo	Howell, John	Mordaunt, rh Penny	Throup, Maggie
Dorries, Ms Nadine	Howell, Paul	Morris, Anne Marie	Timpson, Edward
Double, Steve	Huddleston, Nigel	Morris, James	Tolhurst, Kelly
Dowden, rh Oliver	Hudson, Dr Neil	Morrissey, Joy	Tomlinson, Justin
Doyle-Price, Jackie	Hughes, Eddie	Morton, Wendy	Tomlinson, Michael
Drax, Richard	Hunt, Jane	Mullan, Dr Kieran	Tracey, Craig
Drummond, Mrs Flick	Hunt, rh Jeremy	Mumby-Croft, Holly	Trevelyan, Anne-Marie
Duddridge, James	Hunt, Tom	Mundell, rh David	Trott, Laura
Duguid, David	Jack, rh Mr Alister	Murray, Mrs Sheryll	Tugendhat, Tom
Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain	Jaywardena, Mr Ranil	Neill, Sir Robert	Vara, Mr Shailesh
Dunne, rh Philip	Jenkin, Sir Bernard	Nici, Lia	Vickers, Martin
Eastwood, Mark	Jenkinson, Mark	Nokes, rh Caroline	Vickers, Matt
Edwards, Ruth	Jenrick, rh Robert	O'Brien, Neil	Villiers, rh Theresa
Ellis, rh Michael	Johnson, rh Boris	Offord, Dr Matthew	Wakeford, Christian
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias	Johnson, Dr Caroline	Opperman, Guy	Walker, Sir Charles
Elphicke, Mrs Natalie	Johnson, Gareth		

Wallace, rh Mr Ben  
Wallis, Dr Jamie  
Warburton, David  
Warman, Matt  
Watling, Giles  
Webb, Suzanne  
Whately, Helen  
Wheeler, Mrs Heather  
Whittaker, Craig  
Whittingdale, rh Mr John  
Wiggin, Bill

Wild, James  
Williams, Craig  
Williamson, rh Gavin  
Wood, Mike  
Wragg, Mr William  
Wright, rh Jeremy  
Young, Jacob  
Zahawi, Nadhim

**Tellers for the Ayes:**  
**Iain Stewart and**  
**Michelle Donelan**

#### NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane  
Abrahams, Debbie  
Ali, Rushanara  
Ali, Tahir  
Amesbury, Mike  
Anderson, Fleur  
Antoniazzi, Tonia  
Ashworth, Jonathan  
Bardell, Hannah  
Barker, Paula  
Beckett, rh Margaret  
Begum, Apsana  
Benn, rh Hilary  
Black, Mhairi  
Blackford, rh Ian  
Blackman, Kirsty  
Blake, Olivia  
Blomfield, Paul  
Bonnar, Steven  
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben  
Brennan, Kevin  
Brock, Deidre  
Brown, Alan  
Brown, Ms Lyn  
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas  
Bryant, Chris  
Buck, Ms Karen  
Burgon, Richard  
Butler, Dawn  
Byrne, Ian  
Cadbury, Ruth  
Callaghan, Amy  
Cameron, Dr Lisa  
Campbell, rh Sir Alan  
Carden, Dan  
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair  
Chamberlain, Wendy  
Champion, Sarah  
Chapman, Douglas  
Charalambous, Bambos  
Cherry, Joanna  
Clark, Feryal  
Cooper, Daisy  
Cooper, Rosie  
Cooper, rh Yvette  
Corbyn, rh Jeremy  
Cowan, Ronnie  
Coyle, Neil  
Crawley, Angela  
Creasy, Stella (*Proxy vote cast by Peter Kyle*)  
Cruddas, Jon  
Cryer, John (*Proxy vote cast by Mark Tami*)  
Cummins, Judith  
Cunningham, Alex  
Daby, Janet  
Davey, rh Sir Edward

David, Wayne  
Davies, Geraint  
Davies-Jones, Alex  
De Cordova, Marsha  
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh  
Docherty-Hughes, Martin  
Dodds, Anneliese  
Doogan, Dave  
Dorans, Allan  
Doughty, Stephen  
Dowd, Peter  
Dromey, Jack  
Duffield, Rosie  
Eagle, Ms Angela  
Eagle, Maria  
Edwards, Jonathan  
Efford, Clive  
Elliott, Julie  
Eshalomi, Florence  
Evans, Chris  
Farron, Tim  
Fellows, Marion  
Ferrier, Margaret  
Fletcher, Colleen  
Flynn, Stephen (*Proxy vote cast by Patrick Grady*)  
Fovargue, Yvonne  
Foxcroft, Vicky  
Foy, Mary Kelly  
Furniss, Gill  
Gardiner, Barry  
Gibson, Patricia  
Gill, Preet Kaur  
Glindon, Mary  
Grady, Patrick  
Grant, Peter  
Gray, Neil  
Green, Kate  
Greenwood, Lilian  
Greenwood, Margaret  
Griffith, Nia  
Haigh, Louise  
Hamilton, Fabian  
Hanvey, Neale  
Hardy, Emma  
Harman, rh Ms Harriet  
Harris, Carolyn  
Hayes, Helen  
Healey, rh John  
Hendrick, Sir Mark  
Hendry, Drew  
Hill, Mike  
Hillier, Meg  
Hobhouse, Wera  
Hodge, rh Dame Margaret  
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon  
Hollern, Kate  
Hopkins, Rachel

Hosie, Stewart  
Huq, Dr Rupa  
Hussain, Imran  
Jardine, Christine  
Jarvis, Dan  
Johnson, Dame Diana  
Johnson, Kim  
Jones, Darren  
Jones, Gerald  
Jones, rh Mr Kevan  
Jones, Ruth  
Jones, Sarah  
Kane, Mike  
Kendall, Liz  
Khan, Afzal  
Kinnock, Stephen  
Kyle, Peter  
Lake, Ben  
Lammy, rh Mr David  
Lavery, Ian  
Law, Chris  
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma  
Lewis, Clive  
Linden, David  
Lloyd, Tony  
Lucas, Caroline  
Lynch, Holly  
MacAskill, Kenny  
MacNeil, Angus Brendan  
Madders, Justin  
Mahmood, Mr Khalid  
Mahmood, Shabana  
Malhotra, Seema  
Maskell, Rachael  
Matheson, Christian  
McCabe, Steve  
McCarthy, Kerry  
McDonagh, Siobhain  
McDonald, Andy  
McDonald, Stewart Malcolm  
McDonald, Stuart C.  
McDonnell, rh John  
McFadden, rh Mr Pat  
McGinn, Conor  
McGovern, Alison  
McKinnell, Catherine  
McLaughlin, Anne  
McMahon, Jim  
McMorrin, Anna  
Mearns, Ian  
Miliband, rh Edward  
Mishra, Navendu  
Monaghan, Carol  
Morden, Jessica  
Morgan, Mr Stephen  
Morris, Grahame  
Murray, Ian  
Murray, James  
Newlands, Gavin  
Nichols, Charlotte  
Nicolson, John  
Norris, Alex  
O'Hara, Brendan  
Olney, Sarah  
Onwurah, Chi  
Oppong-Asare, Abena  
Osamor, Kate  
Osborne, Kate  
Oswald, Kirsten  
Owatemi, Taiwo

Peacock, Stephanie  
Pennycook, Matthew  
Perkins, Mr Toby  
Phillipson, Bridget  
Pollard, Luke  
Powell, Lucy  
Qureshi, Yasmin  
Rayner, Angela  
Reed, Steve  
Rees, Christina  
Reeves, Ellie (*Proxy vote cast by Bambos Charalambous*)  
Reeves, Rachel  
Reynolds, Jonathan  
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell  
Rimmer, Ms Marie  
Rodda, Matt  
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd  
Saville Roberts, rh Liz  
Shah, Naz  
Sharma, Mr Virendra  
Sheerman, Mr Barry  
Sheppard, Tommy  
Siddiq, Tulip  
Slaughter, Andy  
Smith, Alyn  
Smith, Cat  
Smith, Nick  
Smyth, Karin  
Sobel, Alex  
Spellar, rh John  
Starmar, rh Keir  
Stephens, Chris  
Stevens, Jo  
Stone, Jamie  
Streeting, Wes  
Stringer, Graham  
Sultana, Zarah  
Tami, rh Mark  
Tarry, Sam  
Thewliss, Alison  
Thomas, Gareth  
Thomas-Symonds, Nick  
Thompson, Owen  
Thomson, Richard  
Thornberry, rh Emily  
Timms, rh Stephen  
Trickett, Jon  
Turner, Karl  
Twigg, Derek  
Twist, Liz  
Vaz, rh Valerie  
Webbe, Claudia  
West, Catherine  
Western, Matt  
Whitehead, Dr Alan  
Whitford, Dr Philippa  
Whitley, Mick  
Whittome, Nadia  
Williams, Hywel  
Wilson, Munira  
Winter, Beth  
Wishart, Pete  
Yasin, Mohammad  
Zeichner, Daniel

**Tellers for the Noes:**  
**Thangam Debonnaire and**  
**Jeff Smith**

*Question accordingly agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

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

Most Gracious Sovereign,

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

*Address to be presented to Her Majesty by Members of the House who are Privy Counsellors or Members of Her Majesty's Household.*

## PETITION

### Universal Credit Bonus Payments

10.55 pm

**David Linden** (Glasgow East) (SNP): It is always a pleasure to see Elderslie's most famous daughter in the Chair, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Members will have seen in coverage in recent weeks that Greggs announced that its 25,000-strong workforce would receive payments of up to £300 each as part of a £7 million reward scheme. However, those of us more familiar with the flaws of the current universal credit system understand that some staff on universal credit will keep as little as £75 after tax and national insurance, and bonus earnings are clawed back by the Government at a rate of 63p in the pound. I am grateful to colleagues at Parkhead citizens advice bureau for helping to raise this as a social policy issue and hereby present the following petition to Government for consideration.

The petition states:

The petition of residents of Glasgow East,

Declares that current rules surrounding bonus salary payments to Universal Credit claimants are profoundly unfair and lead to unintended reductions in subsequent Universal Credit payments which perversely disincentivises work.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to revise Universal Credit rules which would see one off bonus payments treated as capital rather than salary payments.

And the petitioners remain, etc.

[P002550]

## Lowestoft Tidal Flood Barrier

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—(Tom Pursglove.)

10.57 pm

**Peter Aldous** (Waveney) (Con): The purpose of this Adjournment debate is to highlight the vital importance of the Lowestoft tidal flood barrier, which will provide much needed protection for many homes and businesses in Lowestoft. Moreover, it will act as a catalyst for inward investment in the offshore wind sector, the post-Brexit fishing industry and the town centre, where the high street is under considerable pressure at present and businesses need reassurance that their investments will not be at risk from flooding.

East Suffolk Council has prepared a flood risk management project, which includes the barrier in the outer harbour. At present, the project is only partially funded and while work will be starting this year, the outstanding money needs to be secured so that the project can be completed in its entirety and it delivers its full benefits to the UK's most easterly town, which has been exposed to the worst excesses of the North sea for far too long.

It is appropriate that this debate is taking place at the beginning of the Environment Agency's Flood Action Week. At the outset, I shall provide the national context. It is good news that in the Conservative manifesto at the December election and in the subsequent Queen's Speech, which we have just concluded debating, the Government have committed an additional £40 billion to flood defences.

The National Infrastructure Commission has highlighted that this investment is badly needed. It points out that over 5 million homes in Britain are at risk of flooding and coastal erosion; management of floods in the past has been short term and reactive, rather than preventive; and while the six-year capital programme to 2020-21 has provided certainty on funding for the issue of floods, there remains no clear long-term objective for flood resilience and defence. It makes a variety of recommendations for how the situation can be improved. First, it proposes a national standard so that by 2050 we can be sure that communities are resilient to flooding for 99.5% of the time whenever feasible.

**Ian Paisley** (North Antrim) (DUP): As the hon. Member knows, he is my brother's Member of Parliament, and this is an issue that affects him. I understand that one of the key questions is whether there are predictions of tidal surge in the area. If there are, how devastating an impact could they have on his constituency, and indeed my brother's home?

**Peter Aldous:** I am grateful to the hon. Member for raising that issue; it is one I will come on to. The tidal surge in 2013 gave a clear indication of what could happen in a worst-case scenario and we need to put in place measures to avoid that devastation to people's lives.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): I congratulate the hon. Member on bringing this matter to the House. The Ards peninsula in my constituency has 96 coastal erosion points, so this is happening in my constituency as well, and there is much concern about the erosion, the loss of land, and the impact on homes and livelihoods. Does he

[*Jim Shannon*]

agree that the Government must find the money to address these concerns as they are quickly escalating to crisis point—that crisis point being the point of no return?

**Peter Aldous:** As I will highlight, we must not forget that some coastal areas face devastating flood risk problems too. They might not emerge quite as often as fluvial floods, but their impact on communities is very real. I will highlight the 1953 flood, which is still remembered vividly right along the East Anglian coast.

The second point the National Infrastructure Commission raised was that the existing catchment flood management plans and shoreline management plans should be updated to take into account the commission's new standards and should set out long-term plans for flood risk management. Thirdly, it argued that currently—at the beginning of 2020—the Government should be putting in place a rolling six-year funding programme in line with the funding profile the commission set out. This would enable the efficient delivery of projects addressing the risks from all sources of flooding. It is vital that when these improvements to the country's flood defences are made—this comes back to the point the hon. Member for Strangford (*Jim Shannon*) raised—coastal communities are not overlooked. Storm surges, such as those in 1953 along the East Anglian coast and more recently in 2013, have a terrible impact from which it can take communities a long time to recover—some never do.

**Dr Dan Poulter** (Central Suffolk and North Ipswich) (Con): I commend, as always, my hon. Friend's tremendous advocacy for his constituents, and I am delighted that that was so well reflected in the election result in his constituency. Does he agree that the wider economic damage done by the tidal surges in East Anglia can be felt for many years and have an economic impact on businesses in his constituency, many of which have employees who live in central Suffolk and elsewhere? It is particularly important that the Government take note of this as they seek to support economic growth in and protect the economy of the east of England and Lowestoft.

**Peter Aldous:** My hon. Friend is right that these storms can have a devastating impact on homeowners and businesses, but that the supply chains of those businesses extend far outside Lowestoft into places such as his constituency.

The 1953 floods caused devastation and loss of life all the way down the east coast—not least in Lowestoft, where the Beach Village, known locally as the Grit, ultimately had to be pulled down and made way for industrial development. Hundreds of families lost not only their homes, but their families' fishing heritage. The 2013 storm surge, which I shall describe in more detail shortly, thankfully did not have the same impact, primarily because we have better defences than we did 60 years ago, and because we were warned. However, there is a sense in Lowestoft that we “escaped by the skin of our teeth”, and that next time we will not be so lucky.

The needs of coastal communities have been highlighted by the Committee on Climate Change. It has pointed out that coastal communities, infrastructure and landscapes in England are already under considerable pressure from flooding and erosion; that 520,000 properties in England are located in areas that are at risk of damage from coastal flooding; that damages as a result of flooding and erosion amount to an average of more than £260 million per year; and that coastal management around the country is covered by patchwork legislation. In short, we need to do better.

On 5 December 2013, a storm surge caused havoc down the east coast. Lowestoft was one of the worst-affected communities, as I highlighted in another Adjournment debate in the Chamber later that month. In the Lowestoft and Oulton Broad area, 158 residential and 233 commercial properties were flooded, including 90 residential and 143 commercial properties in the low-lying central area of Lowestoft. In addition, tidal flooding resulted in the closure of key transportation links, including Lowestoft railway station, the A47 through Lowestoft and the A12 to the south. Lowestoft was essentially cut off.

The impact on many people and their properties was dramatic. In Levington Court, which provides housing and care for vulnerable older people, 19 flats on the ground floor were evacuated. Residents' possessions were lost, and they did not return to their homes until several months later. In the nearby Fyffe Centre, which provides accommodation for the homeless, 27 people had to leave. Again, it took many months to refurbish and repair the property.

In adjoining residential areas, including St John's Road and Marine Parade, many properties were hard hit, including homes in the rental sector. Some people lost all their possessions, which in many cases were not insured. The community rallied round superbly to support them, but full compensation—and I do not mean just financial compensation—can never be provided for the loss of belongings and possessions that can mean so much personally.

Businesses were badly hit, including the Ling's car showroom, East Coast Cinema—Britain's most easterly cinema—and Buyaparcel. Wetherspoons' Joseph Conrad pub in Station Square was badly damaged, and traders in Bevan Street East, close to the town centre, were dealt particularly savage blows. The doctor's surgery in Marine Parade had to move, and has never returned.

The challenges of rising sea levels and climate change mean that such events will take place more frequently. Sea levels along the Suffolk coast have been rising by 2.4 mm per annum since the 1950s. In Lowestoft, research carried out by Halcrow and BAM Nuttall concluded that a 1953-type flood, which was previously considered to be a one-in-1,000-years event, would now take place every 20 years. There is thus a need to move quickly, and to put proper and full flood defences in place as soon as possible. As climate change continues to drive an increase in severe weather events, significant investment in Lowestoft's infrastructure is required to provide resilience, to facilitate regeneration plans, and to encourage businesses both to grow and to move into the area.

If—although I should say “when”—we get another storm surge, similar to those of 1953 and 2013, the impact on the town could be profound and far-reaching. Not only could many homes and businesses be badly damaged, but vital infrastructure could, in effect, be

taken out. That could include 38 electricity substations, three water-pumping stations, one gas facility, and multiple telecommunications and IT assets.

Transport infrastructure could also be impacted, including Lowestoft railway station again. Up to a mile and a quarter of rail track and signals would be submerged, the bascule bridge across the port could be seriously damaged, and two and a half miles of A roads and 30 miles of minor roads could be affected. In addition, vital community assets would be impacted, including three doctors surgeries, two Government buildings, three community centres and facilities, and up to eight schools and colleges. The results would be devastating and people would quite rightly be very angry, pointing a finger at the council, at the Government and at me, saying, “You had advance warning in 2013, why have you not done anything?”

Actually, since 2013, the council has been proactive. It has acquired temporary barriers that have been deployed on two occasions, when thankfully they were not really tested. It has also been hard at work on preparing a scheme that provides Lowestoft, its residents and businesses with the protection and peace of mind they are entitled to expect. The scheme is oven ready and ready to go, but funding has not yet been obtained for its final phase, the provision of the tidal flood barrier. That gap now needs to be filled.

East Suffolk Council, along with Suffolk County Council, Associated British Ports, the Environment Agency and the New Anglia local enterprise partnership, have developed a comprehensive flood protection scheme that brings together tidal, fluvial and pluvial flood risks under one umbrella. The project includes the tidal barrier in the outer harbour to the east of the bascule bridge, with tidal walls to the north and south of the barrier. It also includes separate but equally important work to protect a number of properties that have experienced significant flooding, especially in periods of heavy rainfall, along Kirkley stream, in Aldwyck Way and on Long Road. The project will protect vulnerable parts of the town and has strong political and community support.

The Port of Lowestoft is owned by Associated British Ports and this includes the outer harbour. The port is undergoing a period of expansion, primarily as a result of the large number of wind farms either in operation, being constructed or being planned off the East Anglian coast. There is also the exciting prospect, post-Brexit, of a revival of the fishing industry. Lowestoft used to be the fishing capital of the southern North sea—a crown that I hope it will acquire again. The port is strategically well placed to serve the wind farms, both for project management during their construction and for their subsequent operations and maintenance. The port is the main base for the Greater Gabbard offshore wind farm and the East Anglia Array. Last year, Scottish Power opened its new £25 million operations and maintenance base in the Hamilton dock.

The original programme for the construction of the tidal barrier envisaged the port closing for up to six months. It has subsequently become clear that this is not practical, as it would make the port unattractive to current and future wind energy companies and business would be lost that we would never be able to get back. The programme for building the barrier has thus been amended to enable it to be constructed over three short

windows each winter, without the necessity of closing the port for any significant period. These plans are now fully developed, but the cost of amending the design and elongating the programme has resulted in the cost of the project rising from approximately £30 million to approximately £70 million. This is the funding gap that now needs to be filled.

There are now three phases to the project. Work on the first two phases—the fluvial and pluvial works, and the tidal walls—will start this year, and the final phase of the flood barrier will be carried out once funding is in place. The project has three particular advantages. First, it is highly innovative. It involves a tidal barrier that will be installed while still accommodating a 24/7 operational port, and it will not impact on the port’s activities. Its delivery will still enable the port to attract new business that will help revitalise the town by bringing new jobs to the area.

Secondly, the need to be low carbon is ingrained in the project’s DNA. East Suffolk Council has made a commitment to carbon neutrality in its procurement procedures and, as such, its existing and future procurement arrangements will reduce the carbon footprint of all new council development. Moreover, the scheme will help to promote the offshore wind industry, which is so important in reducing the nation’s carbon footprint.

Finally, there will be a high level of local and UK content. Local businesses have been involved at the design stage, and their participation will be strongly encouraged and promoted during construction. Moreover, once completed, those businesses will be able to grow as part of the offshore renewables sector.

The construction of the Lowestoft flood barrier will be a catalyst for the regeneration of the town, not only for the offshore energy sector but in fishing through the REAF—Renaissance of East Anglian Fisheries—budget. This is not just a barrier in name, but in its impact: it removes barriers to growth. The overall benefits of the barrier to the town are significant, as the protection provided will remove the risk of flooding, which will allow much-needed regeneration and redevelopment projects to proceed. In the town centre, it will allow new commercial and residential development, which is currently held back due to the risk of flooding.

A study carried out by Mott MacDonald showed that 71% of the current economic value in the town is at risk due to flooding—a significant barrier to jobs and growth creation. The flood defence project reduces the risk to 3% over five years. The Mott MacDonald study also shows that the scheme will support the generation of 3,500 additional direct jobs locally and 8,000 indirect and induced jobs nationally. It will generate an additional £195 million per annum of gross value added. In summary, the barrier will remove barriers to the regeneration of growth in the UK’s most easterly town.

While Lowestoft and the surrounding area are benefiting from the emergence of the offshore wind sector, the opportunity to raise funds from the many developments taking place off the East Anglian coast to improve infrastructure is currently constrained. The coastal communities fund, which is financed by money received by the Treasury from the Crown Estate out of royalties received from the granting of licences for the wind farms, runs until 2021. In reviewing the fund, I ask the Government to consider targeting projects directly related

[Peter Aldous]

to the offshore wind industry, such as the Lowestoft flood barrier, that will have a significant economic impact.

Madam Deputy Speaker, you will be pleased to hear that I have nearly finished.

The Lowestoft tidal flood barrier provides the town's residents and businesses with the protection and peace of mind that they are entitled to expect. It is also the key to unlocking many great opportunities for the town. I have sought to highlight some of them, and I ask the Minister to set out the pathway that East Suffolk Council and I should pursue to ensure the project secures full funding as soon as practically possible and that we build the Lowestoft tidal flood barrier without delay.

11.18 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Rebecca Pow):** As usual, it is a great pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Madam Deputy Speaker. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Peter Aldous) on securing this important debate. The fact that so many hon. Members stayed late tonight shows that flooding is always taken extremely seriously, and that was also demonstrated by the fact that others intervened.

My hon. Friend has been passionate in speaking up for this flood scheme and its meaning for his local community and for Lowestoft, which, as we have just been made aware, is the country's most easterly town. He is also committed to the future of the East Anglian fishing industry, about which he talks a great deal in Parliament, and I cannot let this opportunity pass without mentioning the amazing Lowestoft kipper that I had the other day on a ministerial visit to Great Yarmouth. It might have been in a neighbouring county, but the kipper came from Lowestoft, and it was the best I have ever tasted.

I recognise the work that has been done. We have heard a lot of history tonight. Back in December 2013, there was a tidal surge that affected approximately 160 residential properties and 233 commercial properties across Lowestoft and Oulton Broad. There were also significant impacts on local infrastructure, including road and rail transport, electricity, gas and water utilities. It was serious, and I commend East Suffolk Council for taking a long-term view on managing flood risk and recognising how flood risk management infrastructure can contribute to Lowestoft's future prosperity.

I am mindful, of course, of the challenges faced by the town and of the port's importance as a crucial offshore wind farm construction site that maintains this hugely important industry. Flood and coastal risk management is a high priority for this Government and, coming from Somerset, where we have had many of the dire consequences of flooding over the years, I well know the impact that flooding can have.

Compelling evidence suggests that climate change may lead to increased sea levels by the middle of this century. There are both present risks and future risks, so we have to support our coastal communities and manage these things carefully.

The Lowestoft tidal barrier scheme is the crux of tonight's debate. I acknowledge the work that East Suffolk Council has already done in leading and managing

the delivery of the project, with help from the Environment Agency throughout its development and assurance. The scheme is in two stages, as we have heard, and will reduce the probability of tidal flooding. It will support 22,400 jobs and safeguard 402 households.

It is heartening to hear that stage 1, which includes work to protect against river and surface water flooding, as well as the construction of the tidal walls in preparation for a tidal barrier, has been approved and is fully funded. Construction is scheduled to start later this year, with an estimated cost of £16 million, of which I am pleased to say that £2 million will come from DEFRA's flood and coastal erosion risk management grant in aid funding—that is a big mouthful, but it is an important fund—and £1.9 million will come from the local levy raised by the Anglian Eastern regional flood and coastal committee. The remaining £12 million will come from partnership funding contributions, which includes £10 million from the local enterprise partnership. I commend them all for their work to secure these partnerships and contributions. This is a good example of how flood defence projects should operate.

Stage 2 relates to the construction of the town's tidal flood barrier, about which we have heard much. This clearly has implications for residents and businesses. I understand that an additional £43 million of funding is required to enable this phase to be delivered. It is due to the need to maintain an operational harbour—Lowestoft port is a vital hub for offshore wind—that the programme will now be divided into three short windows over the winter months. That is what has caused the escalation of costs. The outline programme shows the tidal barrier works provisionally starting in 2022 and completing in 2025.

I am heartened to hear that this is a low-carbon project, and I welcome the news that East Suffolk Council has formed a dedicated team to work on phase 2 with a focus on securing partnership contributions, particularly in relation to the infrastructure and all the other developments. Protecting transport networks and the economic prosperity of the region is clearly important, and it ties in with the Government's wider aims. I hope the council and this partnership will attract more funding.

As floods Minister, I am aware that flood risk management systems not only protect communities but create confidence, enable local economies to expand and grow, and deliver environmental improvements. These things are all important in taking a long-term view of the environment, particularly with respect to our 25-year environment plan.

I want to talk more widely about the Government's commitment to dealing with flooding and to flood spending. We are investing £2.6 billion over the six years until 2021 better to protect 300,000 homes from flooding. This will see the delivery of more than 1,000 schemes and is projected to save the economy more than £30 billion in avoided damages. So the Government are taking flooding extremely seriously, and the effects and future effects of climate change are very much interwoven with this. That is why we have also committed a further £4 billion in the next funding programme. I must just correct my hon. Friend on this—I am sure he did not mean to say it—because although it would be brilliant if that were £40 billion, the sum is actually £4 billion. Optimism is always a good thing though.

Our programme of investment aims to maximise the economic benefits and number of homes protected, in terms of the potential damages of flooding or coastal erosion avoided, taking account of local choices and priorities. Further decisions are made on the basis of a rigorous assessment of local needs and the value for money of proposed schemes, and the funding of all projects is allocated according to the rules that govern DEFRA's existing six-year capital programme. DEFRA's £2.6 billion investment is allocated in accordance with the partnership funding policy, which clarifies the level of investment communities can expect from DEFRA, so it is clear what levels of partnership funding they need from other sources. *[Interruption.]* I am being told that I need to get a move on, but I hope I am making it clear that DEFRA does not have a policy whereby it is just there to fill funding gaps in individual projects; there is no provision for that. It is not possible to deliver every single scheme and reduce flood risk in every single area, and it is my duty, as the Minister, to look at the

national perspective on flood risk management and ensure that the available funding is fairly and consistently distributed. I am sure my hon. Friend fully understands that.

The next steps will be to encourage the partnership in Lowestoft to attract the partners and funding it needs.

I thank my hon. Friend for raising this issue. The Government and the Environment Agency fully understand the challenges in Lowestoft, which I know he will continue to raise. The Government are fully committed to addressing climate-affected flooding issues, and I very much look forward to hearing how the project goes. Whatever the Environment Agency can do to support this, with Government advice, we will always listen to my hon. Friend.

*Question put and agreed to.*

11.27 pm

*House adjourned.*



# Written Statements

Monday 20 January 2020

## TREASURY

### Independent Loan Charge Review: Implementation

#### **The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Jesse Norman):**

In September 2019, the Government commissioned Sir Amyas Morse to lead the independent loan charge review. The loan charge is designed to tackle disguised remuneration tax avoidance schemes. These are tax arrangements that seek to avoid income tax and national insurance contributions by paying scheme users income in the form of loans, usually via an offshore trust, with no expectation that the loans will ever be repaid.

On 20 December 2019, the Government published the review and the Government's response to the review. The Government accepted all but one of the review's recommendations (HCWS14).

HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) has today published draft legislation to give effect to these changes, alongside explanatory notes and a tax information and impact note. These can be found using the links below.

The draft legislation and explanatory notes: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/finance-bill-2019-20>

The tax information and impact note: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/tax-information-and-impact-notes-tiins>

HMRC will hold an informal four-week consultation on the draft legislation to invite views from stakeholders. The Government intend to legislate for the changes in the forthcoming Finance Bill, which will be introduced after the Budget.

The draft legislation that the Government have published today does not cover the Government's commitment that HMRC will repay settlements where voluntary

restitution has been paid by individuals and employers for years no longer subject to the loan charge because the year is unprotected. Legislation giving effect to this commitment, together with details of the repayment scheme, will be published separately ahead of the Finance Bill. The scheme will be legislated for at the earliest opportunity in the Finance Bill, alongside the other changes to the loan charge.

HMRC has also published further guidance for taxpayers on the changes to the loan charge following Sir Amyas's review. This supplements the guidance published on 20 December.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disguised-remuneration-independent-loan-charge-review/guidance>

[HCWS45]

## PRIME MINISTER

### Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

**The Prime Minister (Boris Johnson):** The United Kingdom delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe is as follows:

Sir Roger Gale MP (Leader)

<i>Full Representatives</i>	<i>Substitute Members</i>
Hannah Bardell MP	Lord Anderson of Swansea
Stella Creasy MP	Tonia Antoniazzi MP
Sir Jeffrey Donaldson MP	Lord Balfe
Earl of Dundee	Lord Blencathra
Baroness Eccles of Moulton	Sir Christopher Chope MP
Dame Cheryl Gillan MP	Steve Double MP
John Howell MP	Lord Foulkes of Cumnock
Sir Edward Leigh MP	Conor McGinn MP
Kerry McCarthy MP	Lord Russell of Liverpool
Baroness Massey of Darwen	Tommy Sheppard MP
Ian Murray MP	Lord Touhig
Lord Prescott	Martin Vickers MP
Virendra Sharma MP	

[HCWS44]



# Petitions

Monday 20 January 2020

## OBSERVATIONS

### FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

#### Dispute in Kashmir

The petition of residents of Walthamstow,

Declares that the dispute in Kashmir should be resolved peacefully.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urge the UK Government to use their international standing to encourage India to engage in a comprehensive and sustained dialogue process with its neighbour Pakistan to resolve the Kashmir dispute, and urge the international community to play its role in securing a just and peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute in accordance with the aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Stella Creasy, *Official Report*, 5 November 2019; Vol. 667, c. 750.]

[P002545]

#### *Observations from Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:*

We urge both India and Pakistan to exercise restraint and improve channels of communication. We encourage them to engage in dialogue and find lasting diplomatic solutions to the situation, but we recognise that the pace and scope of any dialogue is for India and Pakistan to determine.

We will continue to remain in close contact with the Governments of India and Pakistan regarding the situation in Kashmir.

The long-standing position of the United Kingdom is that it is for India and Pakistan to find a lasting political resolution on Kashmir, taking into account the wishes of the Kashmiri people; it is not for the United Kingdom to prescribe a solution or act as a mediator.

#### Human Rights in Kashmir

The petition of residents of the UK,

Declares that the security situation in Kashmir remains unacceptable with continued human rights violations; further that recent events, particularly around the Indian General Election, have seen an increase in violence and deaths in the region.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to put further pressure on the Indian Government to resolve the long running dispute; and further to commit to working with both parties to encourage dialogue to deliver a resolution to the status of the region; and further to support development in the region; and further to support calls for self-determination for the Kashmiri people by empowering those who live in Kashmir to determine their own future through the ballot box.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Holly Lynch, *Official Report*, 5 November 2019; Vol. 667, c. 747.]

[P002540]

#### *Observations from Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:*

We urge both India and Pakistan to exercise restraint and improve channels of communication. We encourage them to engage in dialogue and find lasting diplomatic solutions to the situation, but we recognise that the pace and scope of any dialogue is for India and Pakistan to determine.

We welcome India's commitment to economic and social development in India-administered Kashmir, and have asked the Indian Government for more detail on how their plans will be realised.

We also recognise that there are human rights concerns in India-administered Kashmir. We encourage all states to ensure domestic laws are in line with international standards. Any allegation of human rights abuse or violations is deeply concerning and must be investigated thoroughly, promptly and transparently.

We have raised our concerns with the Government of India and will continue to remain in close contact with the Governments of India and Pakistan regarding the situation in Kashmir.

The long-standing position of the United Kingdom is that it is for India and Pakistan to find a lasting political resolution on Kashmir, taking into account the wishes of the Kashmiri people; it is not for the United Kingdom to prescribe a solution or act as a mediator.

#### India in the Jammu and Kashmir Region

The petition of residents of Burnley,

Declares that the attached petition calls on the actions of India in the occupied region of Jammu and Kashmir should be resolved to a peaceful conclusion that is acceptable to the residents of Kashmir; notes that the Indian decision to revoke Article 370 and 35A of the Indian Constitution has caused killings and human rights violations in Indian occupied Kashmir; further that the communications blackout in Indian occupied Kashmir has been distressing for residents with families in the region and has stifled journalism on the issue; and further that concerned residents of Burnley many of whom have family in the area have self-organised to create a petition that has received over 1046 signatures to call for action on the issue.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to compel the Foreign Secretary to call for an end to the communications lockdown, lifting the curfew and the compliance of all past United Nations resolutions relating to Kashmir by the State of India.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Julie Cooper, *Official Report*, 4 November 2019; Vol. 667, c. 11P.]

[P002544]

#### *Observations from Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:*

We recognise that there are human rights concerns in India-administered Kashmir. We encourage all states to ensure domestic laws are in line with international standards. Any allegation of human rights abuse or violations is deeply concerning and must be investigated thoroughly, promptly and transparently.

The continued use of detentions and restrictions are worrying: we are clear on the importance of rights being fully respected and of ensuring effective and constructive dialogue with the communities affected.

We have raised our concerns with the Government of India and will continue to remain in close contact

with the Governments of both India and Pakistan regarding the situation in Kashmir.

The long-standing position of the United Kingdom is that it is for India and Pakistan to find a lasting political resolution on Kashmir, taking into account the wishes of the Kashmiri people; it is not for the United Kingdom to prescribe a solution or act as a mediator.

# Ministerial Corrections

Monday 20 January 2020

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### Ockenden Review of Maternity Care: Shrewsbury and Telford

*The following is an extract from the Adjournment debate on 15 January 2020.*

**Ms Dorries:** I am afraid I have to inform my hon. Friend and the House that the additional cases have now been identified and the total number relevant to the review now stands at 900, a small number of which go back 40 years.

The extra cases have been found by a number of means—from looking at previous incidents reported at the hospital to parents brave enough to come forward and talk about their own experiences. I am sure my hon. Friend will understand that, unlike with Morecambe Bay, which involved a small number of cases, it will take the review considerably longer to investigate 900 cases.

*[Official Report, 15 January 2020, Vol. 669, c. 1126.]*

*Letter of correction from the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Ms Nadine Dorries):*

Errors have been identified in my response to my hon. Friend the Member for Telford (Lucy Allan).

*The correct response should have been:*

**Ms Dorries:** I am afraid I have to inform my hon. Friend and the House that the additional cases have now been identified and the total number **that might be** relevant to the review now stands at **over 900**, a small number of which go back 40 years.

The extra cases have been found by a number of means—from looking at previous incidents reported at the hospital to parents brave enough to come forward and talk about their own experiences. I am sure my

hon. Friend will understand that, unlike with Morecambe Bay, which involved a small number of cases, it will take the review considerably longer to investigate **over 900** cases.

## ATTORNEY GENERAL

### Hate Crimes: Prosecution Rate

*The following is an extract from Questions to the Attorney General on 16 January 2020.*

**Peter Kyle (Hove) (Lab):** Overall prosecutions have fallen from a quarter to only one in 10. Why is the CPS prosecuting so few people for hate crime? Why is the number of prosecutions falling, not rising? Is that not deterring people from reporting hate crime in the first place?

**The Solicitor General:** There is considerable evidence that people are particularly concerned about hate crime, and I do not think they are being put off making complaints to the police about that. We are constantly liaising at the Crown Prosecution Service with local police forces about their conduct, and we focus very much on getting results in instances of hate crime. As I have said, **the number of convictions for hate crime** has increased to its highest ever level.

*[Official Report, 16 January 2020, Vol. 669, c. 1145.]*

*Letter of correction from the Solicitor General (Michael Ellis):*

An error has been identified in the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Hove (Peter Kyle).

*The correct answer should have been:*

**The Solicitor General:** There is considerable evidence that people are particularly concerned about hate crime, and I do not think they are being put off making complaints to the police about that. We are constantly liaising at the Crown Prosecution Service with local police forces about their conduct, and we focus very much on getting results in instances of hate crime. As I have said, **the conviction rate** for hate crime has increased to its highest ever level.



# ORAL ANSWERS

Monday 20 January 2020

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**not later than  
Monday 27 January 2020**

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