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**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

Monday 18 May 2020

House of Commons

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The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[Mr SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

The House entered into hybrid scrutiny proceedings (Order, 21 April).

[NB: [V] denotes a Member participating virtually.]

Oral Answers to Questions

TREASURY

The Chancellor of the Exchequer was asked—

Self-employment Income Support Scheme

Tracy Brabin (Batley and Spen) (Lab/Co-op): What plans he has to modify the self-employment income support scheme as part of the Government's covid-19 lockdown exit strategy. [902683]

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Rishi Sunak): The self-employment support scheme opened last week ahead of schedule and provides support worth up to £7,500 to millions of individuals. I am pleased to tell the House that, at the end of yesterday, there had been more than 2 million claims, with grants worth £6 billion in total being claimed for. Those people will have the money in their bank accounts within six working days of their claim, and of course, I will keep the scheme under review.

Tracy Brabin [V]: I thank the Chancellor for his response. Despite him saying that the self-employment scheme is one of the most generous in the world, tens of thousands are still missing out—new starters, pay-as-you-earn freelancers, those paid through dividends and those earning over £50,000. I have three simple questions for the Chancellor. Will the self-employed income support scheme be extended in line with the job retention scheme? Are there plans to lift the cap on profits? And will he please look again at supporting new starters?

Rishi Sunak: We have discussed these things before, but I do not believe that removing the cap would be the right or socially just thing to do. The average income of those above the cap is £200,000, and 95% of those who are self-employed fall underneath the cap.

Covid-19: Economic Support

Owen Thompson (Midlothian) (SNP): What steps he is taking to support the economy during the covid-19 outbreak. [902688]

Amy Callaghan (East Dunbartonshire) (SNP): What steps he is taking to support the economy during the covid-19 outbreak. [902692]

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Rishi Sunak): Our plan to support businesses and individuals is one of the most comprehensive in the world. We have provided tens of billions of pounds in cash grants, tax cuts and discounted loans for businesses; deferred taxes for those who are self-employed, employed and in business; a world-leading job retention scheme to keep as many people in employment as possible; income protection for the self-employed; and a strengthened safety net to protect the most vulnerable in our society.

Owen Thompson [V]: Successful businesses in the tourism and hospitality industries before the lockdown will face a very different reality at the end of it, with overseas visitors gone for the foreseeable future and social distancing in place. These businesses need time to reinvent themselves for the new post-covid environment. What measures will the Chancellor introduce to enable much greater flexibility in the furlough scheme to support them as they prepare for this new reality?

Rishi Sunak: It is precisely because of the time it takes for businesses to ramp up that last week, I announced an extension to the furlough scheme all the way through to October, to provide that runway for growth—in particular, for those who will open later in tourism and hospitality. As I said, we will introduce flexible furloughing in the extension period of that scheme.

Amy Callaghan [V]: Those on fixed-term contracts are in a particularly difficult situation where employers have placed them on furlough but are unwilling to extend it past their contract end date. One employer highlighted to me that that is because they are concerned that if they continue to furlough an employee without formally extending the contract, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs will deem the furlough frivolous and seek reimbursement. Can the Chancellor confirm that employers can continue to furlough those whose fixed-term contracts have ended without any financial repercussion?

Rishi Sunak: I am happy to look at the specific example mentioned. It is important for us—and to protect the taxpayer—that we are paying furlough payments to those who are genuinely in employment and have a formal employment contract, but I am happy to look at that example.

Mr Speaker: I welcome the right hon. Member for Wolverhampton South East (Mr McFadden) back to the shadow Front Bench.

Mr Pat McFadden (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Despite the interventions that the Chancellor has announced, some of our major industrial companies find themselves locked out of the lending scheme for the largest firms—the covid corporate financing facility—because they are not classed as investment grade. These companies support hundreds of thousands of jobs, either directly or through their supply chains, and are often the main employers in the towns and cities where they operate. Will the Government show the same flexibility and urgency in getting finance to these companies, which make up the industrial backbone of Britain, as they have done through the loan scheme for small companies, so that we can retain as much economic capacity as possible through this crisis?

Rishi Sunak: The right hon. Member is absolutely right: finance should flow to the industrial base of our country. The investment grade rating, which relates to the corporate financing facility that the Bank of England runs, is important. Because that money is accessed by companies without any additional credit check by the Government, it is right that an investment grade rating is used, to protect the taxpayer. We have taken a flexible and generous interpretation of that, providing companies with the ability to use their bank rating to get access. For those companies for which commercial paper is not the right approach—many of the industrial companies he mentioned—we have a larger coronavirus business interruption loan scheme programme, and I am in conversations with various industry stakeholders to ensure that that is appropriately sized to provide finance to every part of our industrial base.

Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP) [V]: Research by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development today released today has found that participants in the furlough scheme would otherwise have made up to 35% of their workforce redundant, rising to half the workers in hospitality, where the uptake of the scheme is particularly high at about 80%. Hospitality and tourism were first out and will be last back. Many of these companies have no income and are building up debt, and may feel compelled to sack workers if they are asked to pay more by the Government at the end of July. How does the Chancellor intend to prevent this and to support this part of the economy in the months ahead?

Rishi Sunak: It is precisely the retail, hospitality and leisure sector that has received the most direct fiscal support from the Government through cash grants of £10,000 or £25,000 and a business rate holiday for the entire year—well beyond the point of reopening. That represents significant support, and the extension of the furlough scheme through to October gives those companies enough of a runway to grow back into a safe space.

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Mary Glindon (North Tyneside) (Lab): What plans he has to extend the scope of the coronavirus job retention scheme. [902690]

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Rishi Sunak): As I announced last week, the coronavirus job retention scheme has been extended by four months until the end of October.

Mary Glindon [V]: New starters not registered with HMRC before 19 March and agency staff workers are some of those who currently find they are in limbo when it comes to accessing the job retention scheme. What more can the Chancellor do to help these workers now facing hardship?

Rishi Sunak: When I announced the scheme, we said that those who were on real time information and had notified HMRC on 28 February would be eligible. That covers 29.5 million workers in this country. We found a way to extend that to 19 March—the day before the announcement was made. That protects the taxpayer against fraud and enables as many of those people to be

included as possible. It brought another 230,000 people into the scheme. It is important to remember that this scheme now covers close to 30 million workers. As of the end of last week, 8 million people from about 1 million businesses are covered by the scheme and having their wages paid by the Government to protect their jobs and their future security.

Mr Speaker: We now head down to the south-west and the Chair of the Select Committee, Mel Stride.

Mel Stride (Central Devon) (Con) [V]: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The future fund will provide venture capital-backed businesses with vital support, but of course it excludes investments made through the enterprise investment scheme and the seed enterprise investment scheme. It is certainly the case that there is significant public subsidy within those two schemes. However, businesses supported by them still face the challenges of the virus and, where successful, still go on to generate significant numbers of jobs. Will my right hon. Friend therefore take a second look at the qualification requirements for the future fund to see whether EIS and SEIS might be accommodated in some way?

Rishi Sunak: As my right hon. Friend will know well, EIS is a notified EU state aid, and that is what presents the challenge to providing EIS relief for convertible loan instruments into the future fund. That said, guidance was published today, and the fund will be open for applications on Wednesday. I have been crystal clear that should applications exceed the initial £250 million provided, I will be more than happy to expand the scheme. I think this will be a vital part of fuelling our recovery, because, as he said, these companies provide the growth of tomorrow and they deserve our support.

Anneliese Dodds (Oxford East) (Lab/Co-op): Labour supported the introduction of the furlough scheme, and we have consistently called for it to become more flexible. We recognise that it cannot persist forever. However, according to press reports, the Treasury is considering asking all employers to pay 40% of employee wages on the JRS from 1 August, which risks a massive spike in job losses.

Rishi Sunak: As I think the shadow Chancellor has acknowledged previously, we are in deep consultation with both unions and business groups to ensure that we get the design right for the second part of this scheme. It is right both for the economy and, indeed, for the taxpayer to ask employers to make a contribution to paying the wages of their employees. They will have the benefit of flexibility in furloughing to help offset that. I cannot comment now on this, but I did say that details will be provided by the end of the month.

Anneliese Dodds: I appreciate the Chancellor's comments, but we really need clarity around whether he is considering evidence from other countries, which, in many cases, are calibrating changes to their salary backfill schemes with the lifting of the lockdown. Is he looking at that evidence, particularly on the potential impact of unemployment, or is he only looking at potentially the introduction of a uniform contribution from 1 August?

Rishi Sunak: As I said, there will be details at the end of the month, but the hon. Lady can rest assured that I speak regularly with my counterparts in countries across the world to learn from their experience and will make sure that our scheme continues to be one of the most generous, comprehensive and effective anywhere in the world.

Covid-19: Local Authorities and Devolved Administrations

Dehenna Davison (Bishop Auckland) (Con): What fiscal steps he is taking to support local authorities during the covid-19 outbreak. [902684]

Mark Pawsey (Rugby) (Con): What fiscal steps he is taking to support local authorities during the covid-19 outbreak. [902686]

Alun Cairns (Vale of Glamorgan) (Con): What fiscal steps he is taking to support (a) local authorities and (b) the devolved Administrations during the covid-19 outbreak. [902697]

Karin Smyth (Bristol South) (Lab): What recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on the adequacy of funding for local authorities during the covid-19 outbreak. [902711]

Navendu Mishra (Stockport) (Lab): What recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on the adequacy of funding for local authorities during the covid-19 outbreak. [902712]

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Steve Barclay) [V]: We have announced £3.2 billion of new funding for councils, alongside the £3.4 billion of further support with cash flow. I am in regular contact with Ministers in the relevant Department on further support.

Dehenna Davison [V]: I welcome the Treasury's unprecedented package of support, including the provision of grants, which are benefiting many of the smallest businesses right across Bishop Auckland, but many small businesses in my constituency and others do not pay business rates because they are in shared spaces. What steps is the Treasury taking to make these grants more readily available?

Steve Barclay: My hon. Friend raises an important point, which is why we have allocated a further £617 million of support to local authorities for discretionary payments for cases such as the one that she highlights. Local authorities are free to focus those payments in line with local need.

Mark Pawsey [V]: District councils are the level of local government closest to residents, and I know that they very much appreciated the support that the Government have provided, but responding to the virus has incurred both additional expenditure and a loss of revenue—they have had less income from things such as car parking and leisure services. How can the Minister

ensure that district councils are able not only to meet their short-term demands, but to ensure a long-term, sustainable future?

Steve Barclay: My hon. Friend is right to point to the particular pressures on lower-tier councils, which is why councils such as Rugby have benefited from more than £1 million of additional funding. Seventy per cent of district councils have received more than £1 million, which is why the profile for the second allocation of £1.6 billion was changed to recognise the points that he highlights.

Alun Cairns [V]: I pay tribute to the Chancellor and to the Chief Secretary for their approach. They will appreciate that the sums involved are staggering, but obviously necessary at this time. Does my right hon. Friend recognise that this is an occasion where we appreciate the strength of the Union—the financial muscle to protect economies and communities in all parts of the UK? Has the Chancellor calculated whether individual nations could have acted independently and, if so, what impact has the collapse in the recent oil price had on that assessment?

Steve Barclay: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. That is why £7 billion has been allocated through the Barnett consequentials, including £2.1 billion of additional funding to the Welsh Government. That, of course, sits alongside the UK-wide measures, such as the furlough scheme or the self-employed income support scheme that the Chancellor has announced.

Karin Smyth [V]: In Bristol, that current funding gap is £82.4 million as a result of the current crisis. Will the Treasury consider allowing local authorities to retain all surpluses against the business support grants so that they can be reinvested into local short-term interventions to get us through this crisis?

Steve Barclay: What we have seen through this crisis is an unprecedented level of support, including the £3.2 billion that has been announced and the further £600 million of support specifically targeted at the care home sector. That sits alongside earlier funding, including the estimated 4.3% real-terms increase that councils received this year.

Navendu Mishra [V]: Although the Government's announcement of additional funding for local authorities in England is welcome, care staff, refuse collectors and social workers need to know that their work will continue to be funded once the current lockdown is over. My local council, Stockport, is facing a staggering shortfall of £25 million, with the cost of the coronavirus response standing at £41 million. Will the Minister offer those workers that assurance?

Steve Barclay: The hon. Gentleman is right to highlight the importance of that sector. It is why the initial £1.6 billion funding announced in March was not ring-fenced. It sits alongside the £600 million announced last week. In addition, there is money to help with cash flow, including the £850 million targeted at adult social care, which was paid in one go in April.

Local Transport Infrastructure

Robbie Moore (Keighley) (Con): What fiscal steps he is taking to improve local transport infrastructure. [902685]

Gareth Davies (Grantham and Stamford) (Con): What fiscal steps he is taking to improve local transport infrastructure. [902694]

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Steve Barclay) [V]: My hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Robbie Moore) has, I know, been working hard to highlight the important pedestrian crossing issues in his constituency, and I am committed to working with him on that. He can benefit from the significant funding for cycling and walking included in the £2 billion announced recently.

Robbie Moore: I thank my right hon. Friend for that response, and I am pleased to hear that he will work with me in delivering a pedestrian bridge. May I seek further reassurance that he will meet me and the transport team, so that we can deliver this vital piece of local infrastructure, which will connect Silsden and Steeton in my constituency?

Steve Barclay: I am happy to continue to liaise with my hon. Friend on this important issue. He will know that, in addition to the £2 billion for walking and cycling, we also announced at the Budget £4.2 billion for long-term local transport. His authority, West Yorkshire Combined Authority, will be able to benefit from that.

Gareth Davies: I thank the Treasury team for their leadership throughout this crisis. As they look at ways to stimulate our economy, will they consider issuing a UK green gilt as a specific way to fund local transport infrastructure and to affirm this Government's commitment to climate change?

Steve Barclay: My hon. Friend raises an important point. Although at present we have no plans to do as he suggests, he will be well aware, from the green finance strategy, that the Government remain open to the introduction of new debt instruments, and I am happy to continue to discuss the issue with him.

Business Rates Relief

Anthony Mangnall (Totnes) (Con): If he will take steps through the Government's Business Rates Review to tackle exploitation of business rates relief. [902691]

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Jesse Norman): The Government have committed to undertake a fundamental review of business rates and published the terms of reference at the Budget. The review will be comprehensive and look at the effectiveness and operation of different reliefs and compliance with the tax. The call for evidence will be published in the coming months; stakeholders will be invited to contribute their views throughout the review, and I will welcome any thoughts or ideas my hon. Friend may wish to add.

Anthony Mangnall: I welcome the Government's wholesome package of support for the business sector and the hospitality and tourism sector, showing that we

are a Government for the many, not the few. Would the Minister meet me to discuss how we might close the loopholes that may be used by those who would opportunistically exploit current business rates?

Jesse Norman: If there are people who are illegitimately taking advantage of loopholes in the rates, I am of course happy to discuss that. I remind my hon. Friend that there may well be circumstances in which people are in fact complying with the rules. It is a fiddly area, and I want to be certain that we are going after the people we should be going after.

Covid-19: 2019 Loan Charge

Mr David Davis (Haltemprice and Howden) (Con): What assessment he has made of the potential merits of suspending the 2019 loan charge during the covid-19 outbreak. [902696]

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Jesse Norman): My right hon. Friend will know that taxpayers with loan charge liabilities can already defer submission of their tax return until 30 September this year. Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs has always worked very hard to support taxpayers who may need to help to managed their disguised remuneration liabilities, and this is no exception. HMRC will continue to offer people the time they need to settle, and of course that also applies to those who are affected by issues related to coronavirus.

Mr Davis [V]: In September this year, we will be in the middle of the recession that we are about to face. Given the hundreds of billions of pounds that the Treasury has already committed to supporting business to get us out of this recession, it would take a relatively trivial amount to write off the damaging loan charge policy. Originally, the Treasury forecast that it would raise £3.2 billion from the policy, and less than £2.5 billion from employees. What does the Minister estimate he will now raise?

Jesse Norman: The Treasury will have published its estimate at the time the original tax information was published. I understand the passion that my right hon. Friend brings to the issue, but I would remind him that 99.8% of taxpayers do not engage in disguised remuneration schemes, and the fact that we are supporting people across the country in their jobs and their livelihoods is not, in and of itself, a reason to let people who owe tax off the tax that is due.

Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme

Daniel Zeichner (Cambridge) (Lab): What recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the effectiveness of the coronavirus business interruption loan scheme. [902702]

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen): The Treasury is working closely with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to monitor the uptake and effectiveness of the coronavirus business interruption loan scheme. The scheme has already helped thousands of businesses since its launch on 23 March and is continuing to ramp up. As of 10 May, almost

36,000 facilities with a value of over £6 billion have been approved through the CBILS. SMEs now have a choice of over 60 lenders offering finance under CBILS, and further announcements on numbers will happen later this week.

Daniel Zeichner [V]: Despite that, the uptake of the coronavirus business interruption loan has been disappointing, leading to the bounce-back loans. Could we have much more accurate reporting on this, much more like the health statistics and perhaps also by region, so we can see what is actually happening?

John Glen: We are looking very carefully at the figures and we publish them on a weekly basis. I am having conversations with banks on a regular basis, and we are having a roundtable this week to monitor progress. We will look to make further interventions should that be necessary, but absolutely it is important that the loans get out quickly, as they have been designed to do.

Business Rates: Small Companies

Cat Smith (Lancaster and Fleetwood) (Lab): What recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the number of small companies that pay business rates collectively through landlords that have been able to access cash grants through local authorities during the covid-19 outbreak. [902707]

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen): The Government have recently allocated up to an additional £617 million to local authorities to enable them to give grants to businesses excluded from existing schemes. That will enable many thousands of businesses in the situation described by the hon. Member to receive cash grants.

Mr Speaker: We go over to the wonderful county of Lancashire and Cat Smith.

Cat Smith [V]: Will the Minister ask local authorities to report on the extent to which landlords are passing on the grants to tenants, because it is not just in Lancaster and Fleetwood that we are seeing widespread evidence that that is not occurring?

John Glen: The hon. Lady makes a reasonable point. We are monitoring the effectiveness of all these schemes, and the way that local authorities are using their discretion in giving out those grants, but this is a matter that we will continue to examine carefully.

Covid-19: Regional Economies

Kate Green (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on regional economies. [902687]

The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (Kemi Badenoch): The Government are closely monitoring the impact of covid-19 on local communities across the UK. We are engaging with local authorities, local enterprise partnerships and mayoral combined authorities, and remain committed to levelling up opportunity all over the UK.

Kate Green [V]: The public transport infrastructure will be essential to Greater Manchester's economic recovery, and funding has been provided to help Manchester Metrolink, but it is insufficient and the situation will be exacerbated because social distancing will mean that it can carry fewer passengers for the foreseeable future. Will the Treasury commit to fully funding Metrolink so that it can help to get the city region back on its feet?

Kemi Badenoch: I have been in conversation with the Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, and the Treasury is well aware of this issue. At the moment, we have provided £630 million for councils. We have provided some funding to Metrolink and we will continue to explore the issue further.

Hydrogen Technology

Jacob Young (Redcar) (Con): What fiscal steps he is taking to incentivise funding in hydrogen technology. [902689]

The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (Kemi Badenoch): My hon. Friend is right that hydrogen could play an important role in our transition to net zero, which is why we are investing up to £121 million to support a range of projects to explore and develop the potential of low-carbon hydrogen technology.

Jacob Young [V]: Does my hon. Friend agree that incentivising low-carbon technologies such as hydrogen and carbon capture and storage will aid us in our recovery, help the Government to reach their net zero targets, and level up across all regions of the UK?

Kemi Badenoch: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Budget 2020 announced at least £800 million to develop carbon capture and storage infrastructure, and my hon. Friend will of course know that Teesside is one of four sites under consideration for support through that funding.

TRANSPORT

The Secretary of State was asked—

Covid-19: Repatriation of British Nationals

Stephen Metcalfe (South Basildon and East Thurrock) (Con): What steps his Department has taken with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to repatriate British nationals stranded overseas as a result of the covid-19 pandemic. [902641]

John Howell (Henley) (Con): What steps his Department has taken with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to repatriate British nationals stranded overseas as a result of the covid-19 pandemic. [902644]

The Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps): We estimate that more than 1.3 million people have returned to the UK via commercial routes, the majority through our work to keep the vital routes open.

Stephen Metcalfe [V]: It is hugely welcome that 1.3 million people have been brought home by commercial airlines. Will my right hon. Friend assure me that he continues to work with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to ensure that support and guidance is available for those people who are struggling—there are many of them—to find commercial routes home?

Grant Shapps: Yes, I can absolutely provide my hon. Friend with that reassurance. The UK has close links with Nigeria and elsewhere, and I am pleased that we have been able to support charter flights, thereby enabling around 1,700 British travellers to return home since 18 April.

John Howell [V]: I thank my right hon. Friend for helping, with other Departments, to bring so many of my constituents home safely. Can he tell me, in my role as the Prime Minister's trade envoy to Nigeria, what the situation is there with regard to the availability of aircraft? How many more repatriation trips are we looking to make?

Grant Shapps: My hon. Friend's great work as a trade envoy is known throughout the House. Some commercial routes are still available, we are keeping the international travel advice under constant review, and we are still, on a daily basis, organising charter flights to bring the remaining overseas British nationals home. I think there are around 20,000 still to repatriate.

Covid-19: Aviation Sector Workers

Claire Coutinho (East Surrey) (Con): What steps the Government are taking to support aviation sector workers during the covid-19 lockdown. [902647]

The Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps): We are speaking regularly to companies across the aviation sector to encourage them to draw on the Government's various different packages of cross-economy financial support.

Claire Coutinho: With Gatwick on my doorstep, a lot of my constituents work in the aviation sector. Will the Secretary of State outline what support he is giving to airlines to make sure that they are employing people and continuing employment where they can? What support will he give to aviation workers who will need to transition into other forms of employment?

Grant Shapps: My hon. Friend is absolutely right: we are making available a huge amount of support, including things such as the coronavirus large-business scheme—in other words, the coronavirus job-retention furloughing scheme—and various other business-interruption schemes, but it is true to say that airlines and the aviation sector in general are facing a particularly hard time. They were first into this crisis and we think there will be quite a long tail to their coming out of it. I am therefore working closely with my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department for Work and Pensions to support workers who lose their jobs as well.

Gavin Newlands (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP) [V]: The Scottish Government have given full business rates relief to the aviation sector; by contrast, the UK Government promised sectoral support for aviation before renegeing. Last week, Willie Walsh floundered before the Transport Committee when trying to justify the cull of 12,000 British Airways employees—including many from BA CityFlyer, which is based at Edinburgh—despite having access to €10 billion of liquidity, the vast majority of which was generated by British Airways

profits. What are the Government actually doing to prevent tens or even hundreds of thousands of job losses in the sector?

Grant Shapps: Not only do we have the Bank of England scheme, which enables companies that would not ordinarily have the ability to raise money through a paper route; we also have the business interruption loan scheme for different-sized businesses, the time to pay flexibility, financial supports to employees and the VAT deferrals. We also have a special process in place, available only to the aviation sector, so that when it runs out of those other options, it can talk to us about it. That request needs to be made formally in writing to me. I then discuss it with the Treasury, and many aviation-oriented businesses are in the process of doing that.

Mike Kane (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab) [V]: British aviation is in freefall. BA, Ryanair, Virgin Atlantic and now the Emirates are set to lay off tens of thousands of staff. The job retention scheme is becoming the job restructuring scheme. We cannot allow that. With the added difficulty and confusion of the Government's travel quarantine measures, will the Secretary of State urgently bring forward an aviation support package for the sector, matching Labour's commitment?

Grant Shapps: It is a very welcome change, actually, because ordinarily I stand at this Dispatch Box and from my opposite numbers hear a lot of attacks on the aviation sector. I absolutely will bring forward enormous amounts of support to aviation businesses, including all those schemes I just mentioned. There are 43,500 furloughed staff right now from the airlines alone and another 2,600 from airports. I am acutely aware of the job losses and proposed job losses, about which we are very concerned, which is why we have the additional scheme, the Birch process, with the Treasury. Although I cannot go into details of individual cases, for reasons of confidentiality, I can assure the hon. Gentleman that that work is very much ongoing.

Covid-19: Transport Sector

Anne McLaughlin (Glasgow North East) (SNP): What steps his Department is taking to support the transport sector during the covid-19 pandemic. [902661]

The Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps): The Government have announced financial support measures worth £350 billion and are working with the sector to overcome specific challenges.

Anne McLaughlin [V]: We have heard about the challenges of the aviation industry, including the threat of 12,000 BA redundancies, but the entire transport industry is worried. Haulage is seeing volumes dropping and revenues plummeting, the coaching sector faces imminent ruin, and holiday companies have no idea if the Government will stand by them and their customers. What specific action is the Secretary of State taking to ensure we actually have a transport industry left when all this is over?

Grant Shapps: The answer is a multi-billion pound programme that rescued our railways; £400 million used to keep our bus services going; and a multi-million

pound plan for critical freight routes, which enabled us to keep 16 routes available, with 17 different contracts in place, ensuring vital food and supplies to this country.

Huw Merriman (Bexhill and Battle) (Con) [V]: The Secretary of State will be aware that the aviation industry is a sector in need of support. Will he consider airbridges so that those entering the UK from countries where the infection rate is below one would not be subject to quarantine? This would boost confidence in aviation travel and target safety where it is most needed.

Grant Shapps: In answer to a previous question, I should say that final details of the quarantine scheme will be released soon and come in early next month. We should indeed consider further improvements—for example, airbridges enabling people from other countries that have achieved lower levels of coronavirus infection to come to the country, but those are active discussions that go beyond what will initially be a blanket situation.

Mr Speaker: I call Minister Andrew Stephenson to answer the substantive question tabled by Kevin Hollinrake. Minister—my word!—Minister Andrew Stephenson.

English Regional Transport Infrastructure

Kevin Hollinrake (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): What steps he is taking to increase spending on transport infrastructure in the English regions. [902634]

The Minister of State, Department for Transport (Andrew Stephenson) [V]: It is a great joy to join you from sunny Pendle, Mr Speaker.

We are investing in transport infrastructure to level up the United Kingdom, with £500 million to reverse the Beeching cuts and £5 billion extra support for buses and cycling.

Kevin Hollinrake: Some of us do not have those hair problems, Mr Speaker.

Will the Minister confirm his commitment to investment right across the north—not just the big projects, such as northern powerhouse rail, from the east coast through the west coast, but the smaller but no less important projects, such as the dualling of the A64 in my constituency?

Andrew Stephenson: I am happy to provide my hon. Friend with that reassurance. The integrated rail plan is looking at various transport investments in the north, and we very much intend that still to report by the end of this year. On the dualling of the A64, I can assure him that that is now officially in the road investment strategy 3 pipeline, and it will be investigated carefully as we prepare to make decisions for the next strategy.

Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab) [V]: It is so good to see so many cities and towns now putting in place infrastructure to support active travel, particularly cycling, but not everyone can work or cycle to work, not everyone has a car and no one wants the new normal to be cars clogging up the streets and despoiling the clean air. Why are the Government not working with city regions and other councils on a safety-led scaling up of passenger transport, why did they not talk to local leaders about public transport before urging a return to work and why is there a support package for Transport for London but not for other major cities?

Andrew Stephenson: We are working closely with all the metro Mayors and the devolved mayoral combined authorities to get this policy right. It is incorrect to say that we have provided support only for Transport for London. As was talked about in Treasury questions, we have already provided significant support for things such as the Manchester Metrolink and other schemes. It is right to say, though, that we need to ensure that inclusive travel is at the forefront of this, and there is a huge amount of work under way in the Department to ensure that disabled people particularly, are able to return safely to work and use the public transport network that so many depend on.

Covid-19: Public Transport Workers and Key Worker Rail Users

Bambos Charalambous (Enfield, Southgate) (Lab): What recent steps he has taken to protect (a) public transport drivers and (b) other public transport workers during the covid-19 outbreak. [902638]

Clive Lewis (Norwich South) (Lab): What recent steps the Government have taken to help prevent key workers who (a) work on and (b) use the rail network contracting covid-19. [902645]

Julie Elliott (Sunderland Central) (Lab): What recent steps he has taken to protect (a) public transport drivers and (b) other public transport workers during the covid-19 outbreak. [902650]

The Minister of State, Department for Transport (Andrew Stephenson) [V]: I pay tribute to all public transport drivers and workers, who have been working incredibly hard to ensure that those on the frontline can get to work. New safer transport guidance was published on 12 May, and we are working closely with transport operators across the sector on its implementation.

Bambos Charalambous: Last week's figures from the Office for National Statistics show that public transport drivers have one of the highest covid-19-related death rates compared with other professions. With the Government encouraging people to go back to work and many workers having no choice but to use public transport, what extra measures have the Government taken to protect drivers and other public transport workers?

Andrew Stephenson: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his question. The safety of public transport workers is of course paramount for the Government, and we have been working with operators to ensure that additional measures are put in place. These include risk assessments, looking at who should be at work, social distancing and face coverings, workforce planning, queue and passenger flow management, and the way that emergency incidents are dealt with, in addition to cleaning ventilation, communications and other forms of training.

Clive Lewis [V]: [*Inaudible.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. I am afraid we cannot hear Clive Lewis.

Julie Elliott [V]: I thank the Minister for his answer. To protect public transport workers' safety, they need job security. The Government's funding arrangement

runs out with the Metro and Nexus on 9 June, so it is fine that risk assessments are taking place, but we need the trains to run. Can the Government tell me when the arrangements will be made with the Metro and Nexus to allow our crucial Metro system to carry on running?

Andrew Stephenson: We continue to work with the metro Mayors to look at these issues, and we work closely, in conjunction with Treasury Ministers, to ensure that the funding necessary is provided and that we can support public transport networks right across the length and breadth of the United Kingdom.

Mr Speaker: We now come to Jim McMahon. I congratulate him on his new job.

Jim McMahon (Oldham West and Royton) (Lab/Co-op): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. May I start by paying tribute to our frontline transport workers, and may I offer my condolences to the families of those who have lost their lives through covid-19?

The latest advice from the Government now explicitly rules out providing personal protective equipment, such as face masks, to drivers, instead reserving them for health and social care workers. The response on this is that the health advice apparently does not support it. If the evidence says that masks will not save them, gloves will not save them and banning the handling of cash will not save them, that begs the question: what will save them, given that transport workers, including bus drivers, are more likely to die from covid-19 than the general population? Can that evidence be provided to the House of Commons Library so that it can be properly looked at and investigated? We cannot allow transport workers on the frontline, working to keep our country moving, to face a greater risk than the general population.

Andrew Stephenson: I start by welcoming the shadow Secretary of State to his position. It continues to be Public Health England advice that face masks are not necessary outside clinical settings or where Health and Safety Executive employer risk assessments suggest that it would be necessary to protect against non-covid-19 risks. However, workers should refer to the guidance, which I mentioned, when considering whether wearing a face covering would be appropriate and they should consider using a face covering when social distancing is not possible.

LNER: Grimsby to London Service

Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con): What recent discussions has his Department had with LNER on a direct rail service between Grimsby and London. [902640]

The Minister of State, Department for Transport (Andrew Stephenson) [V]: Recent analysis by LNER indicates that such a service could be viable and the Department is exploring this further.

Mr Speaker: We now go, with audio only, to Sir Edward.

Sir Edward Leigh [V]: Mr Speaker, I am sorry that you do not have a picture because the broadband in rural Lincolnshire is so bad. That is why it is even more important that we get our through train from Grimsby

and Cleethorpes down to London, which we have been promised again and again. It is a huge catchment area. All the Government have to do is to kick-start this project. Given that they are spending £100 billion on HS2, if they just give us £1 million, LNER will give us the through train. Will the Government fulfil their promises and kick-start the through train to London from Grimsby and Cleethorpes?

Andrew Stephenson: My right hon. Friend has lobbied me on this several times already. I know that the rail Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Chris Heaton-Harris), is looking very closely at what my right hon. Friend says, and hopefully he may have some good news in due course.

Covid-19: Financial Loss to Rail Passengers

Gareth Johnson (Dartford) (Con): What steps he has taken to protect rail passengers from financial loss during the covid-19 outbreak. [902636]

Andrea Jenkyns (Morley and Outwood) (Con): What steps he has taken to protect rail passengers from financial loss during the covid-19 outbreak. [902648]

The Minister of State, Department for Transport (Chris Heaton-Harris): We have extended refunds to all ticket types and made claiming refunds easier to ensure that passengers do not lose out financially.

Gareth Johnson: What discussions has the Minister had with rail operators such as Southeastern over season ticket holders who have just a couple of months left on their season ticket, and who, because of the virus, have been unable to travel but are ineligible for a refund? These commuters have suffered quite considerably and it would be welcome news if some assistance were available for them.

Chris Heaton-Harris: The Government have been talking to train operators throughout this whole process, as my hon. Friend would expect, but we do not have plans to extend season tickets. Season ticket holders are already entitled to request a refund in accordance with the National Rail conditions of travel. Over 100,000 season ticket holders have already claimed refunds totalling £150 million in the current covid travel restriction period.

Andrea Jenkyns [V]: Mr Speaker, you may hear my toddler chuntering away in the background.

It is crucial that people who are doing the right thing and avoiding public transport are not left out of pocket. Will my hon. Friend therefore confirm that passengers in Morley and Outwood who have purchased their advance tickets—as well as those with season tickets, which he has already mentioned—will be able to receive a refund without any charge for any unused travel during the outbreak?

Chris Heaton-Harris: We have worked with the rail industry to temporarily extend refunds to all ticket types. These changes reflect the exceptional circumstances and the Government's advice to avoid unnecessary travel. Anytime off-peak and super off-peak tickets can be refunded as usual, and since 17 March all admin fees have been waived. Advance tickets purchased before

23 March for travel from that date onwards are eligible for a fee-free refund, whether the train is cancelled or not. Unused carnet tickets can be refunded or extended depending on the train operator, and season tickets, including station car park season tickets, are already refundable, so we have not changed that policy. A £10 admin fee remains for season ticket refunds.

Mr Speaker: Well, you have made your husband very happy.

Rail Services: West Sussex

Andrew Griffith (Arundel and South Downs) (Con): What steps his Department is taking to help improve rail services in West Sussex. [902642]

The Minister of State, Department for Transport (Chris Heaton-Harris): I am sorry, Mr Speaker—I was worried about my husband for a moment there. Problem or opportunity, whichever way you take it.

The Government are investing around £48 billion in maintaining and upgrading the rail network between 2019 to 2024, focused on increasing reliability and punctuality for passengers, including in West Sussex.

Andrew Griffith: I thank my hon. Friend for his reply and for the significant extra investment that the Government are making in rail transport. As we seek to regrow the economy, may I ask him to consider the investment project known as the Arundel chord, which would enable trains to turn east near Arundel and travel directly to Horsham, significantly improving the resilience of rail services for my constituents in Arundel and South Downs?

Chris Heaton-Harris: Network Rail has recently concluded a study of services in the West Sussex area, produced in consultation with local authorities and stakeholders. While the Arundel chord might have value as a diversionary route, its capacity would be limited and it would cause a negative impact on existing Arun Valley and West Coastway services. However, the study has suggested numerous beneficial changes involving train services and infrastructure, which my Department will take forward with Network Rail and which will benefit all my hon. Friend's constituents.

Rural Mobility and Supported Bus Services Funds

Daniel Zeichner (Cambridge) (Lab): How many applications have been made to the (a) rural mobility fund and (b) supported bus services fund since February 2020. [902635]

Jane Hunt (Loughborough) (Con): What support his Department is providing to help ensure that bus services continue to operate during the covid-19 outbreak. [902639]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Rachel Maclean) [V]: The Government are providing significant funding for the bus industry at this time. Our covid-19 funding package for England's buses totals £397 million. As part of this, local authorities have access to a £30 million supported bus services fund.

To date, 46 bids have been received. No bids have yet been received for the rural mobility fund because the deadline is 4 June.

Daniel Zeichner [V]: Of course, hydrogen-powered buses have a much longer range, making them more suitable for rural routes and rural areas, and we have some of the leading hydrogen-powered bus manufacturers in the world. The Government have introduced the all-electric bus town scheme. Where is the equivalent for hydrogen?

Rachel Maclean: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that we are focusing on new all-electric bus towns, which is an exciting part of the money that the Prime Minister has announced to support buses up and down the country, but it is not right to say that we are not focusing on hydrogen buses. We have actually allocated £4.36 million to hydrogen buses and supporting infrastructure.

Jane Hunt: The Government have recently published the safer transport guidance for operators, which is very welcome indeed, but I wonder whether the Minister could set out what steps are being taken to ensure the financial viability of bus services while maintaining social distancing.

Rachel Maclean: I can tell my hon. Friend that we are working urgently to provide further support to bus operators so that they can run service provision as people return to work and at the same time observe social distancing.

Covid-19: Active Travel (Local Authorities)

Ruth Cadbury (Brentford and Isleworth) (Lab): What support the Government are providing to local authorities to promote active travel among people returning to work as the covid-19 lockdown is eased. [902643]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Rachel Maclean) [V]: On 9 May, the Government announced a £2 billion package of support for active travel. This includes £250 million of funding this financial year to support people to take up cycling and to enable local authorities to make their roads and pavements safer.

Ruth Cadbury [V]: I welcome the £250 million funding so that cycling and walking improvements can be rapidly installed ahead of the expected tidal wave of traffic as people go back to work, but when will the Government finally publish their long-awaited revised design guidance on cycle-friendly infrastructure and the evidence that they commissioned back in 2018 on the amount of funding needed to meet their targets to double cycling and increase walking by 2025?

Rachel Maclean: I recognise that the hon. Lady is a really keen cyclist. We want to boost cycling across the country. The schemes that she refers to are being worked at, and we can provide further details of those in due course.

Covid-19: Food Delivery Drivers

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): What discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on protecting the health of food delivery drivers during the covid-19 outbreak. [902649]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Rachel Maclean) [V]: Ministers have been in discussion with Cabinet colleagues about measures to protect the welfare of delivery drivers, including those carrying food.

Mr Sheerman [V]: At a time in this crisis when many of us are very dependent on home delivery, there is growing evidence that children as young as 16 on a provisional licence are wobbling on to the road, holding a mobile phone with Google Maps on it in one hand, to make deliveries. That is a very dangerous situation. Is the Minister not aware of the large number of reports of young people being killed and seriously injured because they are not qualified to drive and are doing a very dangerous task?

Rachel Maclean: Of course the Government would be concerned by the incidents that the hon. Gentleman mentions. Ensuring the safety of drivers making deliveries is of paramount importance, and the Government do not want anyone to feel unsafe or unsure about whether they have the necessary equipment to work safely. That is why detailed guidance has been issued to all transport workers, in conjunction with our colleagues in the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

British Airways

Munira Wilson (Twickenham) (LD): What recent discussions his Department has had with representatives of British Airways on its planned restructuring. [902637]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Kelly Tolhurst) [V]: The Department and I are working with airlines, airports and unions to understand the full impact that covid-19 is having on the sector and its workers.

Munira Wilson [V]: Many of my constituents are long-serving members of British Airways staff, yet they face redundancy or being stripped of their terms and conditions, despite BA furloughing some 23,000 staff. Does the Minister think that is responsible behaviour by Britain's flag carrier? What pressure is she bringing to bear on the company? Will she guarantee that any bail-out will come with stringent and binding conditions on reducing carbon emissions?

Kelly Tolhurst: I understand that it is a worrying time for airline staff and their families. I have been speaking regularly with companies across the sector to encourage them to draw down on the unprecedented support package. Terms and conditions of employment are for negotiation between the employee and the employer, but we in the Department stand ready to support any workers affected.

Gosport Ferry Service

Mr Stephen Morgan (Portsmouth South) (Lab): What steps he is taking to support the Gosport ferry service. [902653]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Kelly Tolhurst) [V]: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, my officials and I are working with the company and the councils, alongside the extensive financial packages announced by the Chancellor.

Mr Morgan [V]: I thank the Minister for her reply. I know that when the Secretary of State met council leaders last week he spoke positively about the Government providing a package of support to secure the future of the ferry service. I look forward to the Department achieving that. The continuation of the Gosport ferry after this crisis is vital to the connectivity of communities along the south coast, but so too is tackling the climate crisis. As the fourth most congested city in the UK, Portsmouth faces some of the worst air pollution outside London. The Pompey Street Space campaign aims to give pedestrians and cyclists priority, widen narrow pavements and create commuter cycle routes to allow people to travel safely. What steps will the Department take to—

Mr Speaker: Order. We are going over to the Minister to answer.

Kelly Tolhurst: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his question, although I missed his last point. Absolutely, the Gosport ferry provides an important service for the local community to navigate their way around the peninsula. That is why my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I met the council leaders. We have spoken to the organisation, and my officials are working with the councils to find a suitable support package for the operator in order to maintain that service.

UK Aviation Sector

Amy Callaghan (East Dunbartonshire) (SNP): What discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the future of the UK aviation sector. [902655]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Kelly Tolhurst) [V]: We are working across Government and closely with the sector on establishing a clear vision and objectives for the recovery of the sector.

Amy Callaghan [V]: The day prior to the announcement of BA CityFlyer redundancies at Edinburgh airport, Willie Walsh gave evidence to the Transport Committee in which he did not mention that once. It is inconceivable that he was not aware of the announcement. Does the Minister share my frustration that that lack of transparency simply prevents Parliament from performing effective scrutiny?

Kelly Tolhurst: The aviation sector is so important for the UK economy, which is why it has been able to draw down on an unprecedented support package. The Department and I have set up a restart and recovery unit to work with industry, including unions, ground handlers, airlines and airports, in order to come up strong measures to aid the recovery and restart of the aviation sector.

Covid-19 Response

Mr Speaker: We now come to the statement by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. In order to allow more Back Benchers to participate during the limited time available, I have asked the Secretary of State to keep his initial statement to eight minutes, with matching reductions for other Front Benchers.

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Matt Hancock): With permission, Mr Speaker, I will make a statement on coronavirus. This is the most serious public health emergency in 100 years, but through the combined efforts of the whole nation, we have got through the peak. Let us not forget what, together, has been achieved. We flattened the curve, and now the number of people in hospital with coronavirus is half what it was at the peak. We protected the NHS, and the number of patients in critical care is down by two thirds. Mercifully, the number of deaths across all settings is falling.

This Mental Health Awareness Week is an important reminder that we need to look after ourselves, as well as each other. If someone needs support with their mental health, the NHS is there for them. This is particularly important for frontline staff, and we have supported all NHS trusts to develop 24/7 mental health helplines.

Our plan throughout this crisis has been to slow the spread and protect the NHS. Thanks to the resolve of the British people, the plan is working, and we are now in the second phase of this fight. I will update the House on the next steps that we are taking as part of that plan. First, we are protecting the nation's care homes, with a further £600 million available directly to care homes in England. We have prioritised testing for care homes throughout, we made sure that every care home has a named NHS clinical lead and we are requiring local authorities to conduct daily reviews of the situation on the ground, so that every care home gets the support it needs each and every day. All this amounts to an unprecedented level of scrutiny and support for the social care system, and a level of integration with the NHS that is long overdue.

Secondly, the four UK chief medical officers have today updated the case definition to include a new symptom. Throughout this pandemic, we have said that someone who develops a new continuous cough or fever should immediately self-isolate. From today, we are including anosmia—losing one's sense of smell, or experiencing a change in the normal sense of smell or taste—which can be a symptom of coronavirus, even where the other symptoms are not present. So from today, anyone who develops a continuous cough or fever or anosmia should immediately self-isolate for at least seven days, in line with the guidelines. Members of their household should self-isolate for 14 days. By updating the case definition in line with the latest science, we can more easily recognise the presence of the virus and more effectively fight it.

Thirdly, we are expanding eligibility for testing further than ever before. Over the past six weeks, this country has taken a small, specialised diagnostics industry and scaled it at breathtaking pace into a global champion. Yesterday, we conducted 100,678 tests. Every day, we create more capacity, which means that more people can be tested and the virus has fewer places to hide.

Today, I can announce to the House that everyone aged five and over with symptoms is now eligible for a test. That applies right across the UK, in all four nations, from now. Anyone with a new continuous cough, a high temperature or a loss of, or change in, their sense of taste or smell can book a test by visiting nhs.uk/coronavirus. Anyone who is eligible for a test but does not have internet access can call 119 in England and Wales or, in Scotland and Northern Ireland, 0300 303 2713. We will continue to prioritise access to tests for NHS and social care, patients, residents and staff, and as testing ramps up towards our new goal of a total capacity of 200,000 tests a day, ever more people will have the confidence and certainty that comes with an accurate test result.

Fourthly, I want to update the House on building our army of contact tracers. I can confirm that we have recruited more than 21,000 contact tracers in England. That includes 7,500 healthcare professionals who will provide our call handlers with expert clinical advice. They will help to manually trace the contacts of anyone who has had a positive test, and advise them on whether they need to isolate. They have rigorous training, with detailed procedures designed by our experts at Public Health England. They have stepped up to serve their country in its hour of need and I thank them in advance for the life-saving work that they are about to do.

The work of those 21,000 people will be supported by the NHS covid-19 app, which we are piloting on the Isle of Wight at the moment and will then roll out across the rest of the country. Taken together, that means that we now have the elements that we need to roll out our national test and trace service: the testing capacity, the tracing capability and the technology.

Building that system is incredibly important, but so too are the basics. We need everyone to self-isolate if they or someone in their household has symptoms. We need everyone to keep washing their hands and following the social distancing rules. We need everyone to stay alert, because this is a national effort and everyone has a part to play. The goal is to protect life and allow us, carefully and cautiously, to get back to doing more of the things that make life worth living. That is our goal and we are making progress towards it. I commend this statement to the House.

Mr Speaker: I call the shadow Secretary of State for Health, Jonathan Ashworth, who has four minutes.

3.37 pm

Jonathan Ashworth (Leicester South) (Lab/Co-op): On symptoms, the right hon. Gentleman will know that many healthcare specialists were making these warnings eight weeks ago, so can he explain why there has been a time lag in updating the case definition?

I note what the right hon. Gentleman said about social care, but he will be aware that more than 12,500 people have sadly died in care homes because of covid-19. Last week, he said that he had put a protective ring around care homes from February, but yesterday a care home provider wrote in *The Sunday Times*:

“Elderly people weren't a priority”

They also wrote:

“The government was asleep at the wheel.”

Is the reality not that there was no early lockdown of care homes when needed, and there was no testing of people transferred from hospital to care homes until

[Jonathan Ashworth]

mid-April, seeding the virus? Personal protective equipment was requisitioned from care home staff and given to the NHS because of wider shortages. There was guidance suggesting that infection was unlikely, and that guidance was still in place when there was community transmission.

We still do not have full testing of all residents and care home staff 12 weeks later. No wonder Age UK has said that this is “too little, too late”. I note that the right hon. Gentleman said that testing will be expanded. Can he bring forward the date by which all care home residents and staff will be routinely tested? The document last week says that it will be by 6 June. Why can the date not be sooner?

Has this crisis not shown that our care sector is staffed by exceptional, dedicated people, and that migrant care workers are not low skilled but immensely able? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the Home Office should acknowledge that, and praise such potential workers, not penalise them?

I welcome the wider roll-out of testing. The right hon. Gentleman did not mention the antibody test. Could he update the House on that front? It has also been reported today that 20% of hospital patients got covid while in for another illness. Two weeks ago, he suggested to me in the House that he planned to roll out screening of all healthcare workers, whether symptomatic or not. Can he update us on that front?

On tracing, I have long argued that the safe way to transition out of the lockdown is by having a test, trace and isolation strategy in place, but it depends on a quick turnaround of test results. Can the right hon. Gentleman tell us the current median time for test results to be received by someone when carried out by the Deloitte and other private sector testing facilities, and how soon do directors of public health and GPs receive those results?

The right hon. Gentleman knows that I believe he should be making better use of local public health services. None the less, he is pressing ahead with the national call centre delivered by Serco. Can he tell us by what date that tracing service will be operational? Will it be operational by 1 June?

The right hon. Gentleman did not talk about isolation as one of his key elements of the test-trace strategy. Many poorer people will not be able to self-isolate. Will he look at providing facilities for such people, such as empty hotel rooms so they can quarantine? Will those in insecure work be guaranteed sick pay if they are asked to isolate for seven or 14 days?

On the R number, will the right hon. Gentleman guarantee that every easing of restriction, such as asking children to return to school, is accompanied by a Government statement on the expected impact on the R number and the underlying prevalence of infection? If R rises to be greater than one in a region or local area, how will the Government respond?

As the right hon. Gentleman says, this is Mental Health Awareness Week. We are very fearful of a growing burden of mental health issues, especially in children, as a result of the lockdown. What extra investment is he putting into mental health services, particularly children's health services? NHS staff, who are threatened not only by exposure to the virus, but the trauma, emotional

distress and burnout associated with working on the frontline, need support as well. They need PPE, they need fair pay, they need mental health support. Those care workers who are caring for us need us to care for them and we should thank them again in Mental Health Awareness Week.

Mr Speaker: I now call Secretary Matt Hancock for a concise reply.

Matt Hancock: I will keep it concise, Mr Speaker—your instruction.

The hon. Gentleman is right to ask detailed questions about care homes, because making sure that we have that ring of protection around care homes is important. Of course, the majority of care homes have not had an outbreak at all. We should thank those running care homes for the incredible hard work and infection control they put in place, meaning that in 62% of all care homes there has not been an outbreak. Where there has been an outbreak, there has been rigorous infection control and a huge amount of work has gone into that. We have, as he said, now got testing for all. That started with testing throughout for people who had the first symptoms in a care home. Now, it is for all staff and all residents, whether symptomatic or not.

There was no large-scale removal of people from hospital into care homes towards the start of the crisis, as has been implied by some. In fact, the number of people moving from hospital into care homes has fallen throughout the crisis and those movements have been done with care. But I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the crisis has shown that there are many lessons for reform in the social care sector, not least the much closer integrated working with the NHS that we have seen in these crisis days.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the roll out of contact tracing. We now have the people in place. The app is successfully being piloted, and we are ready and preparing for rolling out that system.

The hon. Gentleman asked for the median time for a test to get back. The median time is, as far as I understand it, under 48 hours. He made a rather uncharacteristic dig at private sector businesses which are helping us to deliver that. None of the testing capability—not a single test—would be possible without the private sector. His attempt to divide people between private and public sector is entirely wrong. I think he should remember that that bit of the Labour party left the shadow Cabinet a couple of months ago. I thought good sense had returned.

The hon. Gentleman asked about local public health services. It is incredibly important that local public health services are involved. We have brought in Tom Riordan, chief executive of Leeds City Council and a brilliant public servant, to lead the work on engagement with local public health services, which the hon. Gentleman rightly—I totally agree with him—says are an incredibly important part of getting this right.

We of course keep R under review. We keep watching it and we keep surveying to find out what it is. We have said that, if it rises above one and we see an outbreak in an area, we will be perfectly prepared to take action in that area. Indeed, if it goes dangerously high nationally, we would be prepared, as we were before, to take the necessary action.

Finally, the hon. Gentleman talked about the importance of mental health services across the board. The support is there in the NHS for all NHS staff—in fact, it is there across the board. One of the interesting things in this crisis is that paediatric mental health services have discovered that many services are better received, especially by children, via computer than face to face. In some cases, therefore, the service is better provided at a distance, over a screen, than face to face, but he is absolutely right to highlight the importance of mental health services in this crisis and beyond.

Mr Speaker: We now go across to the Chair of the Select Committee on Health, who I understand is audio only.

Jeremy Hunt (South West Surrey) (Con) [V]: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would like to ask the Secretary of State for three pieces of data, all of which are essential for this strategy. First, what level of new daily infections do we need to be down to before contact tracing happens for all new infections? Secondly, how many daily tests will the test and trace system need? Thirdly, if we are going to introduce weekly testing for all NHS and care-home frontline staff, when will our testing capacity be sufficient to deliver that on top of test and trace?

Matt Hancock: With 21,000 contact tracers now employed, we think that that is capacity for the current level of new cases that have been demonstrated by the Office for National Statistics surveys, but I am perfectly prepared to hire more to make sure that we have spare capacity within contact tracing.

On the number of tests needed daily to service test and trace, it depends on exactly how many new cases there are. It depends on the relationship between the symptoms and the number of positive cases. There are many more people with symptoms than there are positive coronavirus cases, but the number is falling because we are moving away—well away now—from the flu season, and at this time of year the number of positive symptoms, including coughs and fever, tends to fall, because other non-coronavirus communicable diseases such as flu are falling. There is not a specific answer to that question, because it changes over time. On weekly tests, we are looking to put together a plan to ensure that we cut in-hospital transmission, which will include appropriate, regular testing of the right staff in the NHS. I shall write to my right hon. Friend with more details as and when that policy is fully announceable.

Mr Speaker: We have a technical problem with Dr Philippa Whitford, whom we will return to shortly. We will go to Sir Desmond Swayne.

Sir Desmond Swayne (New Forest West) (Con) [V]: The regional dental hubs offer little more than extractions—but I want to keep my teeth. When will dentists be able to treat their own patients?

Matt Hancock: My right hon. Friend rightly points out that we have urgent dental hubs, so anyone who needs urgent dentistry can get a dentist's appointment through their GP. Many people have asked how, in an emergency, they can see a dentist. Dentistry is there and available—it is an important message for all our constituents. However, we are also working on the restart of dentistry more broadly. I understand the challenges, especially for those who want to see their own dentist and for

dental practices. With NHS contracts, we continue to keep the funds flowing, but of course many dentists rely on their private income as well, and we support the mixed market in dentistry. What we need to do is get dentistry up and running when we can, but it has to be safe.

Mr Speaker: I am pleased to say that we have reconnected with the SNP spokesperson, Dr Philippa Whitford, who has 90 seconds.

Dr Philippa Whitford (Central Ayrshire) (SNP) [V]: I welcome that eligibility for testing is being widened to all symptomatic cases as the first step towards a test, trace and isolate approach, but does the Secretary of State agree that the system should have been in place before lockdown was eased? Without it, how can he know that the crowded public transport systems that we saw last week are not already leading to a rise in infections? The Secretary of State prides himself on having ramped up testing, but we know that many thousands of those are just in the post, so will he clarify whether those tests are counted again when they are actually carried out?

The Royal College of GPs has highlighted the difficulty in getting test results back from the Deloitte regional test centres. As it is contact tracing and isolation that stop the spread of the virus, how will the Secretary of State speed up results and ensure that they are fed back to GPs and public health teams, who are critical to detecting and controlling local outbreaks? The UK still has more than six times the number of new cases per day than when the lockdown was brought in. Does he not think that that is still too high to be sending people back to work and school?

Matt Hancock: We have been working very closely with the SNP Scottish Government on testing, so I am slightly surprised at some of the questions from the SNP spokeswoman. Of course the tests are not double-counted. There has been a ramp up in testing capacity. I am very glad to see in Scotland that testing capacity is now starting to rise—in the latest figures, it was up to around 5,000. I work very closely with my SNP opposite number on making sure that everybody has the very best capacity. The contact tracing system was also stopped in Scotland. The reason was that the number of cases right across the UK became very high. We needed social distancing to bring that number down. Now that that number is coming down right across the UK, contact tracing is once again effective. That is the reason we are bringing it in now, and I am pleased that we have hired 21,000 contact tracers in England to ensure that we can get it going. Therefore we are on track for the current proposed 1 June changes. That date is dependent on making sure that everything is right, and that it is safe to make the changes then.

Daisy Cooper (St Albans) (LD) [V]: The Minister has just confirmed that there will be thousands of contact tracers who are not medically trained, but who will be handling highly sensitive patient information and issuing clinical advice given to them. Will he bring forward primary legislation to govern the collection and any potential misuse of data, whether that is via an app, by qualified health professionals or by the non-medical call handlers, so that members of the public can have confidence that all strands of his data collection plans are effective and safe?

Matt Hancock: I have looked at this proposal and it is clear that primary legislation is not needed, because the Data Protection Act will do the job.

Andrew Rosindell (Romford) (Con): I thank the Secretary of State for his unstinting dedication to protecting the health of our nation during this crisis. First, will he update the House on when the roll-out for antibody tests will be revealed, so that we can start to get back to normality? Secondly, in last Friday's statement, he spoke about the reform of health and social care. When will the Government bring forward a lasting care funding solution to stop people in constituencies such as Romford from being forced to sell their family homes to fund long-term care?

Matt Hancock: I think the whole country celebrated when there was the announcement last week that antibody testing that fits the bill and does the job had been approved by our Porton Down labs. We are in the closing stages of commercial negotiations to ensure that those tests are widely available, and I will let my hon. Friend know just as soon as I can when that roll-out will be, but I do not want to prejudice the commercial negotiations, which I am sure he will understand.

On the second point, I strongly agree with my hon. Friend that this crisis has demonstrated just how important social care reform is, just how important social care is and how we must maintain the benefits and improvements in delivery and working practice that happened because of the crisis and happened through the heat of the crisis. We must maintain and strengthen that close working relationship. The financial changes that we put through have proved very effective at bringing the two systems closer together, but there is much, much more to do.

Navendu Mishra (Stockport) (Lab) [V]: A recent survey by Unison North West found that eight out of 10 care workers would not receive full pay if they were ill, self-isolating or shielding because of covid-19, receiving at most £95 per week statutory sick pay, with workers putting their lives on the line to look after us. Will the Government provide increased funding and direction to ensure that all care workers receive full pay when absent due to covid-19?

In addition, given the current failings of our fractured—

Mr Speaker: I call the Secretary of State.

Matt Hancock: That is an incredibly important question, and one of the purposes of the £600 million extra that we are putting into the social care system and that will go direct to the frontline—local authorities are not allowed to use it for other purposes—is to ensure that when social care staff need to be away from work for infection control purposes, they are not penalised for doing so.

Philip Dunne (Ludlow) (Con) [V]: I join my hon. Friend the Member for Romford (Andrew Rosindell) and my right hon. Friend in welcoming approval of an antibody test for use in the UK. I understand my right hon. Friend cannot elaborate on the timetable for its introduction, but can he tell us whether he is preparing for individuals to be able to input the results of an

antibody test into the NHS covid app to help demonstrate their immunity and improve our understanding of the prevalence of this wretched virus?

Matt Hancock: It is not through the covid app, but we have a process for people inputting whether they think they have had the virus. As and when we manage to land an agreement on antibody testing the proposition my right hon. Friend makes is a very good one. After all, at the moment the science is not clear as to the level of immunity and the risk that we pose of transmitting to others if we have antibodies, as many of us who have had the virus hope that we have, but as the science becomes clearer, so we will also be able to be clearer with our guidance to people who have a degree of immunity on what they can do.

Stella Creasy (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op) [V]: Two weeks ago, 1.8 million people in this country who are currently shielding were told that they would have to shield for an extra two weeks until 30 June. Can the Secretary of State confirm what protection there will be for them and their families, so that they do not face the threat of redundancy or sanction for not going to work or not going to school in order to follow that medical advice?

Matt Hancock: We have put in place extensive protections for people who are shielded, and those protections will of course continue to apply until 30 June. Shielding is not something that we do lightly, because we understand the very significant impact it has on those concerned and their families, but it is necessary in a pandemic like this.

Gareth Davies (Grantham and Stamford) (Con): Lincolnshire is fortunate to have good supplies of PPE, a relatively low infection rate and excellent capacity in our hospitals at this time. Will the Secretary of State join me in thanking our NHS staff across Lincolnshire, who have been intensely dedicated to treating covid-19 patients, but who are also increasingly aware of the needs of non-covid patients?

Matt Hancock: Yes, I will. The NHS restart is incredibly important in Lincolnshire and across the country. I know Lincolnshire well, and it is very important that we restart other services that have had to be paused for understandable reasons. Not only is Lincolnshire the home to many dedicated health and social care staff—I pay tribute to all those who work in the NHS in Lincolnshire—but my grandmother was a nurse at the Pilgrim Hospital in Boston and our great deputy chief medical officer, Professor Jonathan Van-Tam, is himself a resident of Lincolnshire. Lincolnshire has many great things to offer in the sphere of health, and we must ensure that that is about not just covid but health services across the board.

Mary Kelly Foy (City of Durham) (Lab) [V]: The Office for National Statistics has reported that covid-19 mortality rates in the most deprived areas of England are twice those in the least deprived. Once again, this virus has reminded us of the extreme health and social inequalities in our society; although it can affect anyone, from any background, those from the poorest communities have the highest risk of severe illness and death. Here in the north-east, we have some of the highest levels of deprivation in the country, as well as the highest rates of infection.

What do the Government intend to do to reduce health inequalities, both during the covid-19 lockdown and as part of our recovery from the impact of the virus?

Matt Hancock: The hon. Lady is absolutely right; this is an incredibly important subject, both, as she says, during the crisis and thereafter. We have a study under way, which Public Health England is conducting, on the impact of all sorts of different conditions on the likelihood that covid-19 will hit someone hard. It is true that there is a link to levels of deprivation, in the same way as one of the strongest factors, other than age, is obesity—that needs to be investigated. We have also seen a bigger impact on people from minority ethnic backgrounds. All these things need to be studied. Levelling up and closing that health inequality gap is an incredibly important part of the Government's agenda for recovering from this terrible disease.

Jeremy Wright (Kenilworth and Southam) (Con) [V]: As my right hon. Friend has said, due to the hard work of the entire health and social care system we can now look beyond this crisis. As we do that, may I ask him to say more today, and in the coming days, about how we intend to balance the need to address a substantial backlog of more routine and elective work, which, as he says, has been understandably pushed aside by covid-19, with the need to make sure that NHS staff, who have been through an extremely stressful period, have the time to recover?

Matt Hancock: That is one of the many balances we will have to strike in the months and years to come as we recover from covid-19. There are, immediately, three things we are doing on that. The first is that we have brought in more staff, especially retired staff, and we want to keep them. They have been absolutely brilliant and a huge help to the NHS during the crisis. The second is providing more support to staff. I mentioned the mental health support, but this involves all sorts of other, wider support to staff right across health and social care. The third thing is making sure that we rebuild the NHS, gaining from the improvements that have been made in the eye of this storm, because there have been improvements to ways of working. Huge strides forward have been taken on the use of technology, and we have found areas where that has made a very big positive impact. Although there are, of course, parts of this crisis response that we want to roll back, there are other parts we want to pick up and take forward.

Olivia Blake (Sheffield, Hallam) (Lab) [V]: My constituent Rebecca's mother tragically died from coronavirus while working as a nurse in a Rotherham care home. The care home did not have access to the personal protective equipment she needed to keep safe. Rebecca wants to know: how will the PPE available to health and care professionals who have died in service be recorded and considered? Will accepting the £60,000 death-in-service payment prevent her family from making a negligence claim? And who signed off on the Government's strategy of sending untested patients to care homes?

Matt Hancock: As I have said, in care homes we put in place infection control procedures as much as was possible at the start of this crisis, and there was not an increase in the number of people going back to care homes. But my heart goes out to the family of the hon. Lady's

constituent, who died working in social care, joining, I am afraid to say, many others who gave service during this crisis and died as a result of it. I am very happy to look specifically into her constituent's case. We do look into the death of any health or social care worker and make sure we get to the bottom of all the lessons that can be learned, and I am very happy personally to do that in the case of the constituent that the hon. Lady has rightly raised.

Lee Anderson (Ashfield) (Con) [V]: Care homes in Ashfield such as Wren Hall, with an outstanding rating, and Sutton Manor, which is in the top 20 care homes in the east midlands, face a difficult future. With empty beds due to covid-19 comes a dramatic loss of income, which has a significant impact on their business. Could my right hon. Friend advise me what safeguards are in place to ensure that our care homes are supported to keep their doors open and continue to provide this exceptional level of care?

Matt Hancock: I want to congratulate Wren Hall, because getting an outstanding rating is not easy, and it has done that. I congratulate every single member of staff, and I thank my hon. Friend for being a champion for them and bringing to my attention Wren Hall's outstanding rating when it was received. The funding, of course, is a critical part of this. We put in £600 million extra on Friday, and as I said, that will all go direct to care homes—it is not to go into local authority budgets for onward consideration of passing to care homes; it is to get to the care homes. That will help with infection control, but we also have to ensure that funding is sustainable for the future.

Jonathan Edwards (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (PC) [V]: Yesterday, the British Government announced in their daily briefing that they hope to have 30 million vaccines ready for use by September, yet on the same day, the Prime Minister wrote in *The Mail on Sunday* that there may never be a vaccine. Considering the way that Wales has been undermined by the British Government over the distribution of PPE and testing, what confidence can the people of Wales have that we will have our fair share of vaccines if one is developed?

Matt Hancock: It is not quite fair to say that Wales has not been served on PPE or testing. I have worked very closely with the Welsh Labour Government, and although the number of tests declared per day in Wales is low—it is only just over 1,000—there is access to UK-wide testing capabilities, such as home testing and the drive-through centres.

On the hon. Gentleman's substantive point about the vaccine, I am delighted that we have been able to come to an agreement with AstraZeneca. If the science behind the Oxford vaccine works, it is likely to be one of the first available in the world, and we then have an agreement to ensure that 100 million doses are available for the UK, the first 30 million of which will be right at the start for the most vulnerable. That is a UK-wide policy—we will deliver it right across these islands. We should pay tribute to the work and the ingenuity of our scientists in Oxford and to the industrial might of AstraZeneca, who together, should they manage to pull off the science, will be able to deliver this vaccine to our population as we need it. Vaccine science is an uncertain business.

[*Matt Hancock*]

That is why we cannot ever be 100% sure that there will be a safe and effective vaccine, but we are putting everything we can into making sure that we give them the best possible chance for every citizen of the whole United Kingdom.

Scott Benton (Blackpool South) (Con) [V]: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that, thanks to the actions that this Government have taken and the brilliant response of the British people, we have prevented the NHS from being overwhelmed at any point during the current crisis, which has meant that ordinary people have been able to receive a fantastic standard of care when they needed it?

Matt Hancock: Yes, that is absolutely right. Two months ago, the people of Blackpool were told that it would be difficult to get through this without the NHS being overwhelmed across the country. Through the hard work of people who have done their bit by staying at home and staying alert, and through the NHS expansion, we have managed to ensure that every single person with coronavirus could get access to NHS treatment. I think the whole country should be proud of that.

Helen Hayes (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab) [V]: As a co-chair of the all-party parliamentary group on adult social care, I have been speaking with social care providers across the country every single week since the start of this crisis. Not a single one would recognise the Secretary of State's description last week of a "protective ring" having been thrown around them. They had no access to PPE, no access to testing and, in some cases, were told that ambulances would not take their residents to hospital. Now the sector is clear that they need access to testing on a weekly basis for all staff and residents, with prompt access to results, so that they can act to maintain infection control. Can the Secretary of State say when that essential measure will be in place?

Matt Hancock: We absolutely did a throw a protective ring around social care, not least with the £3.2 billion-worth of funding we put in right at the start, topped up with £600 million-worth of funding on Friday. Further to that, the hon. Lady does know, I think, that testing has been carried out in care homes throughout. Of course there is always more that we should and will do, but we have been working very hard and closely with the adult social care sector. Towards the start of this crisis, I was meeting the leaders of adult social care in Downing Street with the Prime Minister. We have been working very hard to tie together our response in what is a very diverse sector.

Joy Morrissey (Beaconsfield) (Con) [V]: Will my right hon. Friend join me in praising the work of local initiatives such as Makers 4 the NHS in Beaconsfield, who have volunteered their time and money to help to contribute and deliver PPE to the NHS and care homes? Following the announcement of the new guidelines surrounding PPE production, will my right hon. Friend ensure that local groups like Makers 4 the NHS are not excluded from delivery of PPE, and will he meet me to discuss how we can support local businesses who are already supporting the NHS and local covid-19 responses?

Matt Hancock: Yes, I would be very happy to meet my hon. Friend, possibly via Zoom—other videoconferencing services are available—to discuss what Makers 4 the NHS and other voluntary organisations and groups of volunteers have come together to deliver with regard to PPE: it is absolutely fantastic. I pay tribute, too, to the *Daily Mail's* PPE campaign, which has raised an enormous amount to bring in PPE from China. But those who are making it here in Britain I salute and I thank.

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op) [V]: Does the Secretary of State remember that about a month ago I upset him by telling him that his Government's policy during this crisis was a shambles? I thought they were actually getting a grip on this crisis until last Sunday's disastrous performance by his Prime Minister. Now we have relaxed the advice to the country at a time when Yorkshire and the north-east is doubling its R rate. What is he going to do about that? Can he not get a grip? Can he not stand up to the Prime Minister?

Matt Hancock: The R rate has not doubled in Yorkshire or indeed anywhere else in the country. By contrast, as I said at the start of my statement, the good news is that things are progressing: the number of people in hospital is significantly down, and the number of people in critical care is down by two thirds. I think we should be thanking and supporting our NHS staff and others, and working together to get to the best possible outcome.

Sir David Amess (Southend West) (Con): I acknowledge that no Health Secretary has faced the scale of challenges that my right hon. Friend has. Will he join me in thanking all the staff at Southend University Hospital, and those who provide associated healthcare, for their heroic efforts during this time of national crisis, and will he reassure them all that we do have plans to deliver this vaccine?

Matt Hancock: Yes, absolutely. To deliver the vaccine, if the science comes off—and we hope as much as we possibly can that it will—we will have the plans in place to ensure that it can safely be delivered to those who will benefit from it. We have the agreement with AstraZeneca for the production of 100 million doses—30 million right at the start of the programme. I join my hon. Friend in thanking the staff of Southend University Hospital, who have done so much in such difficult times to make sure that all the community can get access to the support they need if they have got coronavirus, and who I know are working now on the restoration of other services so that people with any health need can get the support they need.

Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP) [V]: When it comes to "test, trace, isolate", the Scottish Government are expanding the resilience of the public health system. The UK Government are expanding outsourcing. While the private sector is part of an overall solution, surely the Secretary of State should be doing more to limit the profits of the likes of Serco and Deloitte.

Matt Hancock: On the contrary, one of things that we have learned in this crisis, as a nation, is that things are best delivered with people working together in the public and private sectors. I think this crisis has ended for good the idea that the public sector alone should deliver certain services. Actually, teamwork is the best option.

Darren Henry (Broxtowe) (Con) [V]: We are rightly tackling the global pandemic, covid-19, but there is a danger that the totally preventable diseases of measles, mumps and rubella will re-emerge if vaccinations are missed. Will my right hon. Friend reassure me and the parents in Broxtowe that it is safe and vital that scheduled vaccinations continue?

Matt Hancock: Yes, it is very important that the scheduled vaccination programme continues wherever possible, and we have protected it as much as possible. We must remember that, with the hope of a vaccine for coronavirus, so, too, will we have to redouble efforts to vaccinate children for MMR and for flu this autumn. Everybody will need to get a flu jab if they possibly can, and we will have more to say on that soon. It is really important that people vaccinate and that anybody who hears messages from anti-vaxxers stands up to them and says that what they say is wrong and harmful.

Rushanara Ali (Bethnal Green and Bow) (Lab): There are reports that covid-19 test results are coming in some 96 hours after testing. In that time, health workers and their families are at risk of catching the virus. Will the Health Secretary confirm whether there are enough reagents, specifically in acute settings, to perform all covid-19 tests within 24 hours?

Matt Hancock: Obviously, being able to perform all tests within 24 hours would be a great success. We are trying, as much as possible, to shorten the amount of time it takes. The average time is much, much shorter than 96 hours, and I will write to the hon. Lady with an exact figure of the time that it takes in acute settings. It is much shorter than the time that she mentions. All test results under 24 hours would be great. Sometimes it is just a matter of minutes or hours depending on how busy the test centre is.

Sir Graham Brady (Altrincham and Sale West) (Con): May I return to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Lee Anderson) and ask my right hon. Friend whether it is possible to give any specific support to care homes facing financial difficulties due to unusually high vacancy rates?

Matt Hancock: The answer that I tried to give at the end of my answer—perhaps too long an answer—to my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Lee Anderson) is that, yes, that is something on which I am working. It is not something that I am able to announce today, but I do recognise the concerns and the challenges that the social care sector faces.

Catherine McKinnell (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab) [V]: The number of daily new cases of coronavirus remains above 3,000 and the daily death rate higher than that of other countries, including Italy and Spain. We were slow to go into lockdown, but we now seem to be in a rush to come out, with restrictions relaxed before the test, track and trace system is fully in place, which may well be putting those numbers back on the rise. Does the Secretary of State understand why the public are anxious about the relaxation and the plans to reopen schools given the lack of systems in place now to minimise the risk of adding to the already devastating death toll?

Matt Hancock: We have set out the five tests that need to be met before relaxation. We will only do that cautiously and carefully. I would sign up to it only if it were safe to do so. The hon. Lady raises the issue of schools. It is very clear that the number of children who are badly affected by this disease is very, very, very small. It is a tiny proportion of the overall total. This disease reserves its power and its risk mostly for the elderly. The proposals that we have made for schools are safe and they are sensible. There clearly needs to be collaborative work to ensure that they can happen, because there are also risks to children, especially some of the most vulnerable children, of not going to school.

Suzanne Webb (Stourbridge) (Con) [V]: I thank my right hon. Friend for his incredible hard work and determination to get us through this crisis and for helping to save many lives in my constituency. Will he join me in thanking some of the amazing groups and organisations in my constituency of Stourbridge, such as staff at Russells Hall hospital, Mary Stevens hospice and our care homes, community pharmacists, volunteers, and all those unsung heroes who continue to work day in, day out, saving lives and supporting the most vulnerable?

Matt Hancock: I would be very happy and honoured to join my hon. Friend in thanking the staff at Russells Hall hospital and at Mary Stevens hospice, at the care homes and the community pharmacists, and indeed the volunteers of Stourbridge, who have come together. There have been many terrible things about this disease, but there have also been some heartwarming things. The dedication of staff and volunteers alike to coming to the aid of others is one of the things that the whole nation has been proud to see.

Andrew Gwynne (Denton and Reddish) (Lab) [V]: The Secretary of State will know the concerns across northern England about the Government's approach to easing lockdown, specifically those raised by the Greater Manchester Mayor and the combined authority about the risk of a second wave of coronavirus owing to different R values across our city region. What measures is he putting in place to ensure that, as lockdown is lifted across England, those areas behind London in the curve do not see all their hard work undone?

Matt Hancock: Of course we take the decision after looking at the information for the whole country, and we take into account the R rate and the level of new cases and all other data from right across the land when deciding what is the appropriate step to recommend and to take. We do this cautiously and carefully, and we make sure that everyone is taken into consideration. The safety of the whole population is right at the front of our mind.

Stuart Anderson (Wolverhampton South West) (Con) [V]: Wolverhampton has united throughout the coronavirus crisis and we have been testing for the virus at a rapid pace. Supplies of the reagent chemicals and swabs we have been using have reduced in the last week, which affects testing in care homes. Will my right hon. Friend address that as a matter of urgency, so that we can continue to test at the pace we need to?

Matt Hancock: Yes. This weekend, I was looking at how to make sure that there is enough testing capacity specifically in Wolverhampton. We are acting to ensure that everybody, right across Wolverhampton and the whole country, can benefit from the hugely expanding testing capability.

Nick Smith (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab): In south Wales and industrial towns, former miners with severe breathing issues are extremely vulnerable to covid-19. Those miners deserve recompense for years of dangerous work, but this is only possible after death if industrial disease is also noted on the death certificate. Will the Secretary of State please ask his officials to work with the mineworkers union to ensure that industrial diseases as well as covid-19 are considered as causes of death, so that grieving families can access the support they need?

Matt Hancock: Yes. I am from mining stock myself—in Nottinghamshire rather than south Wales—so I entirely understand the impact mining has on breathing and respiratory disease, and of course I understand the impact in turn of respiratory disease on the likelihood of having a bad response to coronavirus. I am happy to take up the point the hon. Gentleman makes, to contact those in the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy who I believe are specifically responsible for redress for miners, and to write to him.

Mark Menzies (Fylde) (Con) [V]: In April, 16 residents of a care home in Fylde died. They represent about half of those in the home. Six of the remaining residents are displaying symptoms, but they are being told that they will have to wait until mid-June for further tests, following errors made by Radox a few weeks ago. Can the Secretary of State please investigate and work with me to resolve this important issue?

Matt Hancock: Yes, of course I can. I will take that up immediately and we will try to get a resolution. Thankfully, we have the testing capacity to be able to resolve such problems.

Mohammad Yasin (Bedford) (Lab) [V]: One of my constituents has written to me as a worried grandmother and the mother of a teacher. When scientists are divided over the coronavirus risk for children and how they might spread the virus, is this grandmother not right to ask me why Parliament is virtually empty due to social distancing measures, but her grandchild, who is least able to socially distance, is expected to return to school?

Matt Hancock: We have taken a cautious, balanced and safety-first approach to restarting schools. That is why we have taken the approach of just three years being proposed for return in the first instance, to ensure that there can be more social distancing at schools. Of course, as the father of three small children I get that that is more challenging than among adults, but it is necessary. The approach that we propose is safe and is signed off by medical advisers as safe. Of course, because there is hardly any impact on children of this disease—a very small number of children are badly affected—that means that parents can be confident that if they send their child to school, it is a safe environment for them.

Andy Carter (Warrington South) (Con) [V]: During Mental Health Awareness Week, will the Secretary of State agree with me that local volunteer-led mental

health groups meeting regularly on Zoom here in Warrington South, such as Offload Rugby League Cares and Man Talk, are providing an absolutely vital service for men during these unprecedented times, and that they really should continue to receive the Government's full backing?

Matt Hancock: I pay tribute to Man Talk, to Offload Rugby League Cares and to all those who are working to support the mental health of others during this difficult crisis.

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab) [V]: Many teachers and school staff are anxious about a return to class, especially those who have medical conditions or who are living with someone who is shielding. I understand that it will not be a requirement, but can the Secretary of State clarify whether if, for reassurance, staff at times want to wear face coverings and/or visors, they are perfectly free to do so?

Matt Hancock: They are not advised to do so. What staff do within a school is a matter for their head.

James Sunderland (Bracknell) (Con): May I please ask the Secretary of State whether the NHS is taking full advantage of the military logistics expertise currently available, and is there greater value to be had?

Matt Hancock: And some! The military have been unbelievably helpful in this crisis, right across the extraordinary things that my teams and the whole NHS have had to do in terms of logistics and delivery on the ground—literally boots on the ground. The military, just like the private sector that we were discussing earlier, have made the testing capability possible. They have supported care homes and they have done an amazing thing. They have really risen to the challenge.

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP) [V]: Most countries have imposed some form of public health measures on international travellers in order to limit imported cases of the virus. The United Kingdom has been out of step on that since the middle of March, and today we heard that details of a quarantine scheme will not be published until next month. As Health Secretary, will he publish the detailed scientific advice on which the United Kingdom's approach has been based in this matter since the middle of March?

Matt Hancock: We are working on a four nations approach, and trying to make sure that the approach that we have to international travel is aligned across all four nations, including with the Assembly Government in Edinburgh. We have, of course, based those decisions on scientific advice, and we will make sure that, as and when that advice is updated as we move through this pandemic, so the decisions continue to be based on that advice.

Miriam Cates (Penistone and Stocksbridge) (Con) [V]: Fortunately, coronavirus presents an extremely low risk to children, and I am delighted that schools are able to plan to reopen from 1 June. We will need to monitor closely the effects of that on numbers of covid-19 infections. Can my right hon. Friend reassure parents and teachers that every effort is being made to ensure test, track and trace will be available in time for schools reopening?

Matt Hancock: That is right, and my hon. Friend makes an incredibly important point. The number of children who have died is sadly more than none, but very, very low compared to adults, and it is absolutely right that getting test and trace up and running is important. I am delighted that today we have recruited 21,000 contact tracers, ahead of the goal I set that by today we would recruit 18,000—7,500 of them medical professionals—to make sure that we can deliver safely on the opening of schools, which is so important to so many.

Sarah Olney (Richmond Park) (LD) [V]: On the subject of those 21,000 contact tracers, what is being done to support, supervise and train them in what will be an incredibly sensitive job, dealing with not only the individuals affected but their data and other privileged information?

Matt Hancock: The hon. Lady is absolutely right, and that training is under way.

Felicity Buchan (Kensington) (Con): I have a big BAME community in my constituency of Kensington; will the Secretary of State assure me that Public Health England will look into the effect of ethnicity on outcomes?

Matt Hancock: Yes. Kevin Fenton, who is the London lead for public health in Public Health England, is undertaking exactly the review for which my hon. Friend asks. We propose to publish it in the coming weeks.

Clive Efford (Eltham) (Lab) [V]: The Government have promised to carry out routine testing in care homes, yet my local authority tells me that there is a shortage of the home-test kits needed to do that and fears that such kits will be diverted to fulfil another of the Government's pledges on tracking and tracing as more become available. Yet again, the Government have made a claim that is not borne out by the situation in our care homes. By what date will we have enough home-test kits to carry out routine testing in care homes?

Matt Hancock: I am happy to ensure that my team contacts the hon. Gentleman's local authority, not least to explain that home testing is only one of the avenues available. In fact, much more testing in care homes is done through the mobile testing units, with the mobile unit going to the care home, or by the satellite units, from which a whole batch is taken to the care home, than through the home-testing channel, which is designed for sending an individual test or a small number of tests to an individual house.

Rob Butler (Aylesbury) (Con) [V]: An unheralded aspect of the comfort that has been brought to patients in the coronavirus crisis has come from hospital radio stations, such as the one at Stoke Mandeville. Will my right hon. Friend join me in thanking the volunteers who have provided the only company available to covid patients when they have not been allowed to have visitors? Will he do all he can to support hospital radio stations in the months and years ahead?

Matt Hancock: My hon. Friend should be proud to represent Stoke Mandeville hospital and Stoke Mandeville hospital radio. He is right: hospital radio is always

important, but at times like this, when visitors have not been able to go into hospitals, it is even more important. I am pleased that he raised it.

Ben Lake (Ceredigion) (PC) [V]: The Secretary of State has mentioned that both the R rate and the level of new cases are important factors in determining the Government's decision making, but will he clarify whether the way in which those factors differ throughout the UK will be considered in future planning, including in respect of financial-assistance programmes?

Matt Hancock: Yes.

Mr Speaker: We go next, with audio only, to Dan Jarvis.

Dan Jarvis (Barnsley Central) (Lab) [V]: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Inequality is nothing new—[*Inaudible.*] The mortality rate for the poorest 10% is around double that of the most affluent. Does the Secretary of State agree that we must tackle this disparity? Will he commit to building a healthier country as we emerge from this crisis?

Mr Speaker: I think the Secretary of State got that.

Matt Hancock: Yes, I will.

Dr James Davies (Vale of Clwyd) (Con) [V]: It is widely believed that the impact of covid-19 in the UK has been greater because of high levels of obesity. Does my right hon. Friend agree that we must do more to tackle the causes of obesity in our society?

Matt Hancock: Yes. It is true that the early evidence shows that obesity is a major factor in covid-19's impact on an individual. One early study by Dr Ben Goldacre implied that serious obesity is one of the greatest factors, after age. We must make sure that we tackle obesity across the nation, and I very much look forward to working with the Prime Minister to bring forward plans to tackle obesity.

If I may, cheekily, Mr Speaker, I wish to thank all community first responders for the work that they are doing, because I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Goole (Andrew Percy) wanted to ask about them.

Mr Speaker: I am now suspending the House for 15 minutes, until 4.49 pm.

4.34 pm

Sitting suspended.

4.49 pm

On resuming, the House entered into hybrid substantive proceedings (Order, 22 April).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE (18 MAY)

Motion made,

That—

(1) The following arrangements shall apply to today's business:

Business	Timings	Remote division designation
Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination Bill: Second Reading	Up to two hours and 15 minutes; suspension; up to two hours	Remote division
Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination Bill: Programme	No debate (Standing Order No. 83A(7))	Remote division
Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination Bill: Money	No debate (Standing Order No. 52(1)(a))	Remote division
Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination Bill: Ways and Means	No debate (Standing Order No. 52(1)(a))	Remote division

(2) At the conclusion of the debate on the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination Bill the Speaker shall put the Question, That the Bill be now read a second time.—(*Michael Tomlinson.*)

The Speaker declared the Question to be agreed to (Order (4), 22 April).

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): Four items of business are designated for remote Division. Mr Speaker's provisional determination is that remote Divisions will take place on the Second Reading of the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill, and on a reasoned amendment if selected. Mr Speaker has not selected the reasoned amendment. The following will not be the subject of a remote Division: the programme motion, the money motion and the ways and means motion.

Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill

Second Reading

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): I must inform the House, as I have just done in the previous item of business, that Mr Speaker has not selected any of the reasoned amendments. I am delighted to call the Home Secretary to move Second Reading. The Home Secretary is asked to speak for no more than 20 minutes.

4.51 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

We meet here today in extraordinary circumstances. Our way of life has changed beyond anything we could have imagined just a few months ago. The British people are making extraordinary sacrifices as we pull together to combat this deadly pandemic. Coronavirus is the biggest crisis this nation has faced in my lifetime, and we must do everything in our power to control the virus as we reopen society and support the United Kingdom's recovery. Our national recovery will reflect many new norms, including how we look to the future as a confident, outward-facing, global Britain, open to the world now that we have left the EU.

The Bill will play a vital role in our future recovery plans. It will end free movement and pave the way for our new points-based immigration system: a firmer, fairer and simpler system that will attract the people we need to drive our country forward through the recovery stage of coronavirus, laying the foundation for a high-wage, high-skill, productive economy; a system that works in the interests of the British people, allowing us to attract the very best talent from right around the globe; a system that will revolutionise the operation of the UK border, tightening security and keeping criminals out while also making the experience of coming to the UK transparent, smoother and simpler; a system that, for the first time in decades, allows us, as an open and democratic country, to set our own controls and to count people in and out; a system that will attract the most talented people from around the world to boost our economy and support our public services to rebuild and thrive, including our outstanding NHS.

Since publishing the details of the new points-based system in February, our world has undoubtedly changed, but what has not changed is the Government's unwavering support for our NHS and its incredible professional staff. They are the very best of Britain. That is why we are introducing a new fast-track NHS visa, to prioritise the qualified staff needed to provide high-quality and compassionate professional care. During these exceptional times, it is right that policies that affect our NHS workers are kept under review, including the immigration health surcharge. That is why I recently announced a free automatic one-year visa extension for those with six months or less left to stay on their visas. Our EU settlement scheme enables EU citizens who made our country their home to continue to build their lives here, including those working in the NHS.

As Britain fight back against coronavirus, controlling the virus to save lives remains the Government's top priority, but it is also our duty to continue to serve the

public by delivering on the people's priorities so that when these darker days are behind us, we can focus on building a brighter future—a brighter future for people in cities, towns and villages across all four nations—and, as we have promised, on levelling up right across the country, especially in those areas that have been left behind in economic renewal in the past and communities that placed their trust in us back in December last year.

It is almost four years since the British people voted for independence from the European Union. This Government have already delivered that sovereignty, and we have been clear that there will be no extension to the transition period with the EU. We promised the British people that we would end free movement, take back control of our borders and restore trust in the immigration system. This Bill delivers on that.

The story of immigration in the UK is woven into our national fabric. It is at the core of our national character and has defined many traditions and characteristics of our country. It is a testament to British society that, notwithstanding the past struggles of race, ethnicity and class, today in this very House so many descendants of migrants are now representing every region of the United Kingdom. Equally, our national fabric continues to be enriched by EU citizens who have made the UK their home. From day one, despite scaremongering from those in the Labour party, we have been clear: we say to EU citizens in the UK—to all of them—“We want you to stay”.

Our successful EU settlement scheme has now seen over 3.5 million applications, with over 1.3 million concluded. This is a fantastic example of a digital and data-led project delivering real results, despite many of those who have sought deliberately to campaign against the scheme and undermine public trust and confidence in protecting the rights of EU citizens in the UK.

This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reform our immigration system, and we are determined to get it right. Through our extensive engagement programme, we have consulted the British people, business leaders, employers, civic groups, local government, academia and specialist organisations such as those working with vulnerable migrants. Our proposal to lift the cap on skilled workers has been supported by the CBI. The decision to widen the threshold for skilled workers has been welcomed by the Construction Industry Training Board, and the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry has spoken favourably about the plans for the salary threshold.

This responsive, people's Government have listened to the evidence and designed an immigration system that meets the needs of our businesses, our economy and our country. To ensure that it works from the start, our extensive engagement programme continues. We are working with employers to make it a success for them. We are supporting them every step of the way to ensure that their economic needs and business needs are supported, so people know that global Britain is open for business. The Government will work with employers to develop a UK-wide labour market strategy, enabling businesses to move away from their reliance on the immigration system as an alternative to investing in the domestic labour market, and encouraging employers to invest in people, their skills and development, leading to an economy that is fit for the future, with higher productivity and wider investment in technology and skills.

The current crisis has shone a light on how we value those who provide compassionate care across health and social care. The Government's long-term solution for social care is focused on investing in those who deliver that compassionate and high-quality care. An additional £1.5 billion has already been allocated for adult and children's social care in this financial year, and the Government are working with the sector on a plan for the long-term recruitment, investment and training of those who are dedicating their careers to care. As the Migration Advisory Committee identified in its own report published earlier this year, the immigration system is not the sole solution to the employment issues in the social care sector.

I will now set out for hon. Members exactly what this Bill does. First and foremost, the purpose of this Bill is to end free movement. From 1 January 2021, all EU and non-EU citizens will be treated equally. The Bill repeals all EU immigration legislation retained under the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, as amended by the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020. This means that European economic area citizens, including EU and European Free Trade Association citizens, and their family members will become subject to UK immigration law, and they will require the same permission to enter and remain in this country as people from the rest of the world—levelling the playing field and giving everybody the same opportunity to come to the UK regardless of which countries they come from.

A great deal has changed over the last four years, but the one thing that has remained stable is the Labour party's refusal to support the end of free movement. The leader may have changed, but the dogged determination to deny the will of the people has not. From Bolsover to Blyth Valley, Darlington to Stoke-on-Trent South, and beyond, the message to this House from the British people at the ballot box was clear: they voted to end free movement and for a firmer and fairer points-based immigration system, with control over who comes into our country based on the skills they have to offer, not where they come from.

We are enormously proud of our deep and historical ties with Ireland, and of the contribution Irish citizens have made to the UK over many years, which is why the Bill will protect the rights of Irish citizens. The long-standing arrangements between our countries ensure that Irish citizens benefit from specific rights in the UK—the same rights that British citizens enjoy in Ireland—including the right to work, to study, to access healthcare and social security benefits, and to vote. The Bill makes it clear that once free movement ends, Irish citizens will continue to be able to come to the UK to live and work as they do now, regardless of where they have travelled from. There will remain limited exceptions, where Irish citizens are subject to deportation orders, exclusion decisions or international travel bans. But the wider rights enjoyed by Irish citizens in the UK that flow from the common travel area arrangements will remain, as was reaffirmed in the memorandum of understanding signed by the UK and Ireland last year. Both Governments are committed to preserving the unique status and special rights in each other's countries enjoyed for over 100 years.

Thirdly, the Bill makes an important power to ensure UK legislation remains coherent once free movement ends. The power permits amendments to primary and secondary legislation that become necessary after the

end of free movement, which means we can align our treatment of EEA and non-EEA citizens and deliver a system in which everyone is treated equally.

Finally, the Bill will enable us to make any necessary changes to our social security system as we align access to benefits for EEA and non-EEA citizens. It will also contain powers to allow the Government or a devolved authority to amend the retained EU social security co-ordination rules from the end of the transition period. We have been clear that any future arrangements on social security must respect Britain's autonomy in setting its own rules. Social security co-ordination arrangements will change—for example, the right to export child benefits will end, as was announced in the Budget. The Bill will enable us to deliver on this commitment.

The Bill is integral to our plans to simplify and reform the immigration system. The current system has expanded over decades. It has become inefficient and difficult to navigate for those who want to come to this country. We are seizing this opportunity to change the entire system, end to end, for the better, with simple, clear and transparent routes, which is why I welcome the Law Commission's recent report on simplifying the immigration rules, and why I have accepted many of its recommendations. Cutting through the complexity and streamlining processes will be at the heart of the new immigration system, with new, clear, consistent and accessible rules. Of equal importance will be our ability to act against those who break our rules, including through illegal migration, and our ability to remove those who abuse our hospitality by committing crime.

There are many across the House who care passionately about immigration issues, from the right hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr Lammy), who has strived to get justice for the Windrush generation, wronged by successive Governments, to the hon. Member for Glasgow Central (Alison Thewliss), who speaks passionately about immigration and asylum, and my hon. Friend the Member for South Leicestershire (Alberto Costa), who regularly raises the issue of citizenship and the rights of EU nationals, as he did this weekend with me. These are vital issues and they have all had their time on the Floor of this House, but all these issues fall outside the simple Bill before us today.

The Bill is a simple one that delivers on the promise we made to the British people. It ends free movement. It takes back control of our borders. It gives the Government the powers needed to deliver an immigration system that is firm, fair and fit for the future: the points-based system the public voted for; a system that will support our economic recovery by prioritising jobs for people here in the UK while continuing to attract the brightest and best in terms of global talent; a system that will make it cheaper, easier and quicker for global medical professionals to work in our brilliant NHS; and, as we come through coronavirus, a system that will send a message to the world that global Britain is once again open for business. I commend the Bill to the House.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): I call Nick Thomas-Symonds, who is asked to speak for no more than 15 minutes.

5.5 pm

Nick Thomas-Symonds (Torfaen) (Lab): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I would like to start by thanking the Home Secretary for our briefings in recent weeks,

which have been very important throughout this crisis. I look forward to them continuing in the weeks and months ahead. We meet today during a public health emergency that has shone a light on deep inequality and unfairness in our society, and that has shown the extraordinary value of what so many workers do for our families and our communities.

The Bill fell at the general election and has now been brought back to the House for the second time. Looking at the text of the Bill, we see that little has changed—it now has nine clauses rather than seven—but what has changed dramatically are the circumstances in which we debate it.

On a Thursday evening at 8 o'clock, we clap for our carers. Millions of people come to their doorsteps to say thank you. Quite rightly, we are showing our appreciation for our NHS workers, our care workers and all our frontline workers—police, fire, all our emergency services, those in our shops and those out on our roads driving supplies up and down the country—who are putting themselves in harm's way day after day to keep us safe. They are making sacrifices in order to help others. We are rightly proud of them and we honour their bravery and courage, yet in the midst of this crisis, the Government are putting forward an immigration system containing a salary threshold of £25,600. That sends a signal and tells people that anyone earning less than that is unskilled and unwelcome in our country.

We on the Opposition Benches know that people are not being paid the value of what they do, and that what our frontline workers earn does not reflect what they contribute to our society. Many of us did not need reminding of that, but it seems that the Government do need reminding. Those who clapped on Thursday are only too happy to vote through a Bill today that will send a powerful message to those same people that they are not considered by this Government to be skilled workers. Are our shop workers unskilled? Our refuse collectors? Our local government workers? Our NHS staff? Our care workers? Of course they are not. Government Ministers who were out clapping for the 180,000 EU nationals in the NHS and the care sector on Thursday night are sending a message tonight that they are no longer welcome. That is not fair, and it is not in the national interest.

A labour force survey by the Institute for Public Policy Research found that 69% of EU migrants who currently work in the UK would not be eligible for a visa under the Government's new immigration system. It found that 66% of EU workers in the whole health and social work sector and 90% of EU workers in transport and storage would be ineligible—the very people who are keeping this country running right now. Four in five EEA employees working full time in social care would be ineligible to work in the UK under the skills and salary threshold the Government want to impose. The average salary for care workers is £19,104, leaving many short of the cap, and there are 115,000 workers in our care system who are EU nationals.

I will give Members an example. This is somebody who did not want her name mentioned, but these are her details. She is an EU migrant, and she is 62. She came to the UK in 2013 and has been working as a live-in carer ever since. She is a 24-hour live-in carer for a 96-year-old lady with dementia. On her earnings last year, she would have no chance of coming to the country under the

Government's new rules. Are we to believe that a 24-hour live-in carer is in low-skilled work? That is what the Government want us to believe.

The care sector in England was not properly prepared going into this crisis and it seems that no lessons are being learnt from that lack of resilience and that lack of proper preparation before the crisis began. One would think the Government would have learned the lesson about not leaving people vulnerable in our care homes, but it seems they have not. Indeed, they want to create conditions where the situation could become even worse. In England alone, 66,000 NHS workers are EU nationals and there are 40,000 nursing vacancies, which will be exacerbated by the income threshold.

The Home Secretary talks about a fast-track visa, but it is not on the face of the Bill and, in any event, it does not include social care. No wonder the Royal College of Nursing says that the Government's current proposals for the immigration system will exclude some health and care workers from entering the UK, primarily social care staff, and will have a devastating impact on the health and social care sector. No wonder the British Medical Association says:

"Any changes to the UK immigration system, which could deter those who may want to work in the UK, risks having significant implications for the staffing of health and social care services, quality of care and patient safety in the future."

The truth is that the Government have not won the trust of our most vital service at this crucial time, yet rather than reflect on that they are attempting to rush this through Parliament and ask that we trust they will do the right thing by the health service. We all know that you cannot trust the Conservatives with the NHS. When it comes to the health service, if asked to choose between the RCN, the BMA and Unison on the one hand, and the Conservatives on the other, I know who I would choose every time.

Let us be clear: the Bill allows the Government to create a new system through statutory instrument. Ministers are asking this House for a blank cheque, for the trust of Members to go away and implement a new system, and for an Executive power grab that reduces the role of this House in shaping it. The Lords' Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee report on the 2017-19 Bill expressed concerns about the wide scope of the powers:

"We are frankly disturbed that the Government should consider it appropriate to include the words 'in connection with'. This would confer permanent powers on Ministers to make whatever legislation they considered appropriate, provided there was at least some connection with part 1, however tenuous".

The words "in connection with" are in the new version of the Bill and the situation is unchanged.

In recent weeks, we have seen the confusion and chaos caused when the Government act like they are giving Executive orders outside Parliament without proper scrutiny. The Government should not make the same mistake again when it comes to an issue as important as our future immigration system. Scrutiny makes for better Government decisions and should be welcomed, not shunned.

Let me take this opportunity to say that the 1.2 million British-born people living in the EU27 should be protected and that the 3 million EU citizens living in this country are welcome and are valued here: our families, our friends, our neighbours. They are a central part of our communities

and our society. They have brought great benefits and make us a richer, more diverse society. But I am only too aware that warm words are not enough. The deadline for the EU settlement scheme will fast approach. The default position is that anyone who has not applied by the deadline will lose their legal residence status here in the UK unless they have a good reason not to have applied. The Government must act, be open on the impact of the coronavirus crisis on the system, and do all they can to ensure that those who are eligible for the scheme apply and have their applications swiftly processed.

The Government plan for the future immigration system was first set out in the White Paper published in December 2018. How different things were then. The Government talk of a points-based system; what they actually propose is an income-based system. Salary is not a proxy for the level of skill and a salary-based system will not work for incentivising high-skilled migration.

The Government have deliberately held down public sector wages for a decade, and if they do so again, the gap between what people are paid and the value of their contribution to our society will only widen. This does not reward work and is unfair. Try telling the careworkers in my constituency or, indeed, any in the land that their work is unskilled.

Fairness will be at the heart of the amendments that the Opposition will press in Committee. We know what happens when a Government lose sight of fairness and the national interest in our immigration system. Wendy Williams's "Windrush Lessons Learned Review" was published only a short time ago. The Home Secretary referenced the work of my right hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham (Mr Lammy). That review makes for sobering reading, saying:

"Members of the Windrush generation and their children have been poorly served by this country. They had every right to be here and should never have been caught in the immigration net. The many stories of injustice and hardship are heartbreaking, with jobs lost, lives uprooted and untold damage done to so many individuals and families."

Never should we let something like that happen again. Indeed, there is such mistrust that the 3million and other campaign groups want physical proof of settled status for EU citizens because they simply do not trust the Government's assurances about everything being digital.

Where the system is not working as it should, the Government must act. Take, for example, looked-after children in local authority care. Currently, there have to be applications for pre-settled or settled status on behalf of eligible children by hard-pressed local authorities that are dealing with the coronavirus crisis. Given those pressures, the Government should just do that automatically, and I urge the Home Secretary to consider that. On immigration detention, we will be putting forward proposals for fairness, including an all-important time limit of 28 days.

In my first letter to the Home Secretary last month, I raised the issue of the injustice of continuing with the policy of no recourse to public funds during the coronavirus crisis for victims of domestic abuse. The Government must look at the issue of those left with no recourse to public funds. We are in a public health emergency—it is in the interests of all of us that people get the help they need.

[*Nick Thomas-Symonds*]

There are also issues around NHS charges during this crisis. Nobody should have barriers placed in front of them when their work is essential in helping us all. I was appalled by the revelation over the weekend that, after all, NHS staff will not be exempt from these charges, despite their hopes having been raised by the Home Secretary, who mentioned a review. The issue has been mishandled by this Government from the start of the crisis. Additional fees for NHS staff to access the very healthcare that we are thanking them for providing is no way to mark their extraordinary service throughout this crisis. I ask the Home Secretary to think again about that review.

Having left the EU, and with the transition period coming to an end, we must have an immigration system that is fair and in the national interest. Handing over sweeping powers to the Government to create a system that labels so many of those workers who are keeping our country running day by day as unskilled is the wrong thing to do. If the Government are confident in their arguments, they should not be afraid of parliamentary scrutiny of their proposed new system. If they truly value what our frontline workers do, they will not send out a powerful signal that those who earn below £25,600 are unskilled and unwelcome. Instead, they should think again, and that is why we will vote against the Bill tonight.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): I call Caroline Nokes, who has five minutes.

5.18 pm

Caroline Nokes (Romsey and Southampton North) (Con) [V]: It is a pleasure to be able to speak in this debate from a more nuanced perspective than I would have been permitted just 12 months ago. I welcome the hon. Member for Torfaen (*Nick Thomas-Symonds*) to his new role. The last time he and I debated immigration, it was in a debate on the previous iteration of this Bill, when he had the opportunity to intervene on me frequently—an opportunity denied to him today.

The hon. Gentleman said that we are rushing the Bill but also pointed out that it is just two clauses different from the previous Bill, which we well debated. I argue that we are not rushing the Bill. It is something that we must complete before the end of the transition period on 31 December this year. He also commented on the use of statutory instrument to change the immigration rules. That has ever been the case and often can be used for good; I highlight the example of Afghan interpreters, on which I remind my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary there is still more to be done.

Returning to the iteration of the Bill in front of us, there is no doubt that we must turn off free movement. We must uphold the outcome of the 2016 referendum, as my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary rightly pointed out, but I would argue that we must do that with caution, and a phased approach might give us more flexibility. This time last year, matters were very different. I was an immigration Minister seeking to find a route through a minefield at a time of record employment. I have grave fears that my right hon. Friend will find herself doing it at a time of record unemployment. Perhaps those roles that British workers have been able to choose not to do over the past 10 years will be more attractive than they were, but the omens do not look good.

We heard calls for a British land army that were repeated yesterday by Waitrose, and many thousands have responded, but few have chosen to pursue the option. One in six of the brave care workers on the frontline of the battle against coronavirus are non-UK nationals. I commend the Home Secretary on her commitment to extend visas to doctors and nurses, but what of care workers? Are they to be the Cinderella service, forgotten once again? What of ancillary staff in our hospitals, who are crucial in a war against the virus in which repeated deep cleaning is an absolute imperative. We cannot open hospitals if we cannot clean the loos.

Many in the House have experience of the Home Office—I think that no fewer than six immigration Ministers since 2016 have had a hand in trying to introduce a Bill to end free movement—but it is a machine that moves slowly. Sometimes the best laid plans to revolutionise our immigration system do not work well when introduced in a big-bang style. That is in the best of times; we are not in the best of times. We know from Home Office press releases that there are backlogs in the settled status scheme; that visa application centres are closed; and if someone wishes to renew their indefinite leave to remain, or obtain a new biometric residence card they cannot do so currently. The Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, my hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (*Kevin Foster*) responded to me on 16 March that the Home Office was planning an engagement programme for employers that would start that month, explaining that those who were not already tier 2 sponsors should consider “applying now”.

Small businesses that have no experience of the visa system need to become registered sponsors by January, or they will not be able to sponsor the visas of new employees. That includes care homes—the people on the frontline of this crisis. I wonder whether that engagement programme, which was supposed to begin in March, did indeed do so, or has it understandably been delayed? We know from news emanating from the Home Office that it is very much not business as usual, so can care-home owners, freight transporters, retailers, food processors, au pairs and childcare providers have confidence that their applications will be processed, even if they know that they need to apply “now”—that is the Minister’s word, not mine?

I hope that the Home Office has in place the resources needed to process the many thousands of applications to become sponsors that may be made by businesses that have never had any previous contact with the system whatsoever, but I would ask what bandwidth the care-home manager, frantically trying to put a ring round her home to keep residents and staff safe, has suddenly to think, “I had better apply to become a sponsor—just in case.” This is a crucial Bill, but I would like more than two words from the immigration Minister on how it can be delivered in a big-bang fashion in just seven months’ time, when history has proved that that is perhaps not the best way to deliver bold, new immigration systems.

Madam Deputy Speaker: We now go to *Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East and Stuart McDonald*, speaking for the SNP, who has 10 minutes.

5.23 pm

Stuart C. McDonald (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP) [V]: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am afraid to say that this is a dreadful

Bill that will destroy opportunities for future generations and will split even more families apart. It will result in many thousands of EU nationals losing their rights in this country overnight; it will extend the reach of the hostile environment still further; it will drown thousands of businesses and key industries in red tape and massive fees; and it will deprive our public services of talented and desperately needed workers. It will push different nations and regions of the United Kingdom towards depopulation and drive a wedge between us and our European neighbours. In short, it brings to an end the one part of the UK migration system that works well—the free movement of people. Instead, it expands the reach of the UK's domestic rules—a complicated mess of burning injustice and bureaucracy—and that is why the SNP, without any hesitation, will be voting against this awful Bill. But this awful Bill was made even worse by its appalling timing. Pushing ahead with it in the midst of a public health and economic crisis, and without paying heed to the recent Windrush review, is spectacularly misjudged and shows that the Home Office remains totally out of touch with reality, and completely out of touch with public opinion.

I turn first to the coronavirus pandemic and I join others in paying tribute to those on the frontline. I pay particular tribute to the migrant workers who are there, including too many who have lost their lives—consultants from Sudan, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Egypt, Uganda and Pakistan, a hospital porter from the Philippines, doctors from Germany and Iraq, nurses from Zimbabwe, Trinidad and South Africa, support workers from India and Ghana, and many, many more. Each and every one deserves our tributes and our gratitude, but the more fitting tribute would be a coherent and robust response to the crisis—one that genuinely seeks to ensure that we are all in this together and doing whatever it takes, but that is not what the Bill provides.

We should have had a Bill that makes it easier, instead of harder, to recruit the NHS, social care and other staff we need, and not one that uses an ill-considered financial threshold as a poor proxy for skill, talent or contribution. It is right that the Home Office has ditched its earlier rhetoric about cheap, low-skilled labour, but it is now time to drop the accompanying policies, too. We should have had a Bill setting out a comprehensive and generous system of visa extensions for those frontline workers and their families, not the piecemeal, back-of-the-envelope scheme that the Home Office has so far cobbled together.

We need a Bill that scraps the minimum income requirements for family visas and suspends other financial thresholds, acknowledging that migrant families and workers have had their incomes slashed, just like too many others. More than 100,000 NHS workers and a huge percentage of care workers are prevented by Home Office financial requirements from being able to sponsor their husbands, wives and children to join them here in the UK. Is it not quite outrageous for the Home Office to say, “Thank you for your hard work, but no thanks to bringing your family”? There is absolutely nothing fair about that.

We need a Bill that uprates the pitiful sums of money that we are providing to asylum seekers in this time of crisis and which ensures that, whatever stage of their asylum journey they are at, they can be properly protected. We need a Bill that ensures that all migrants have at least some form of temporary status and which ends the

no recourse to public funds rules that deprive people of the support and accommodation they need to get through this crisis. It is impossible for someone to self-isolate if they do not have a roof over their head or food to eat.

We need a Bill that automatically protects all who are at risk of accidental overstaying until coronavirus is over, that gets people out of immigration detention, and that ends data sharing with the Home Office so that the NHS and other vital services are not places that people in need are afraid to attend. We need a Bill that recognises the absurdity of the NHS surcharge and scraps it for good. We need a Bill that postpones any new immigration system until this pandemic is over and we know the reality of the huge economic challenges ahead.

Employers are justifiably aghast at the fact that the Home Office is attempting to foist a whole new bureaucracy on them now, in the middle of a public health and economic crisis. The Government took four years to finalise their immigration proposals, yet they are giving employers little more than four months to adapt—four of the most difficult months imaginable. The Bill undermines, rather than helps, our response to the coronavirus.

However, it is not just the public health crisis that the Home Office has totally ignored in the Bill—staggeringly, it pays no heed to Windrush either. The Windrush lessons learned review is an incredible indictment of the Department. It talks of Ministers failing to “sufficiently question unintended consequences.” It refers to “an institutional ignorance and thoughtlessness towards the issue of race”

that reveals a Department that does not listen to contrary opinions or learn lessons, and where the political culture and pressure to be tough has caused harsh treatment, poor decisions and an absence of empathy for individuals. The Windrush case studies presented by Wendy Williams are enough to make people shake with anger, yet the Bill has not a single trace of recognition of Windrush in it and there are alarming signs that the Department has failed to learn lessons. Its crass and insensitive defence of the discriminatory right-to-rent policy almost makes me wonder whether the review has actually been read. Meanwhile, many of the same voices that warned about Windrush are warning about the fate of tens or possibly hundreds of thousands of EU citizens—old people, young people, looked-after children, care leavers and others—who may not appreciate the need to apply for settled status.

If they truly have learned the lessons of Windrush, the Government should protect EEA nationals properly. They should provide them with automatic rights, not rights contingent on their applying by a certain date; they should provide all with fully settled status and abandon the precarious pre-settled status; they should provide EEA citizens with a physical document as proof of their rights, and they must scrap the right to rent and other discriminatory hostile environment policies. Just as before, the Government seem to be ignoring the warnings; instead, the Bill seeks to give Ministers a blank cheque on future immigration policies. The last thing we should do is give the Home Office any more powers until the lessons of Windrush are properly learned.

There are so many other areas of immigration, asylum and nationality laws that need fixing. There is nothing in the Bill to address the injustices of nationality law, such

[*Stuart C. McDonald*]

as the disgraceful fees charged to children who simply want to register their British citizenship, to which they are entitled. There is nothing to fix our broken asylum system—the poverty support rates, the chaotic accommodation contracts, the shambolic move-on period, the ban on work, the restricted family reunion rights, and the loss of Dublin III participation. There is nothing here to address our addiction to immigration detention and the shame of being the only country in Europe without a time limit on detention. There is nothing to address the decimation of appeal rights and legal aid, which has contributed to many injustices, including Windrush.

Time and again, the Home Office has shown that it is so obsessed with numbers that it has totally lost sight of individual workers, students and family members, and the contributions that they make. More and more people will be asking, “Why did we leave immigration policy to the Home Office at all?”

Of course, on the question of who should make migration policy, with every single day of Home Office incompetence and injustice, the case for migration policy for Scotland being made in Scotland grows stronger. We have been reasonable, pragmatic and thorough in building the case, publishing papers and pointing to international best practice, but the Government simply refuse to engage in a grown-up discussion about migration policy being tailored for Scotland.

The risk of population decline and a shrinking labour force and tax base are real and grave issues for Scotland. The future system that this Government have designed is nothing short of a disaster for health and social care, tourism and hospitality, food and drink, agriculture, our universities, and many other key sectors of the Scottish economy. I recognise that it is not just Scotland that the Home Office is throwing under the bus, but other nations and regions of the UK too.

Instead of issuing soundbites and slogans about a system working for all, the Home Office must engage seriously. It must recognise that any system that has the express aim of reducing migration does not just fail to work for Scotland but actively works against Scotland’s interests. This is a rotten Bill, introduced with rotten timing. It is beyond repair and it does not deserve a Second Reading.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): I now have to introduce a formal time limit of five minutes on Back-Bench speeches. I should remind hon. Members who are speaking from home to have some way of ensuring that they do not exceed five minutes in case they cannot see the time on their computer or device while they are speaking, because I will have to enforce the five-minute limit very strictly.

5.33 pm

Alberto Costa (South Leicestershire) (Con) [V]: Parliament has an opportunity to seek a broader consensus on what immigration and citizenship means for our country. However, we must recognise that immigration is a question of balance. It may bring pressures, but it also brings significant gains. Finding that balance is crucial.

My party’s manifesto talked about control, which was a cornerstone of the 2016 referendum. However, a country’s having a sovereign say over its borders should

not be confused with its being anti-immigration; as my party’s manifesto set out, it is more about offering a balanced package of measures that are fair, firm and compassionate.

The importance of the new immigration system is to identify and welcome the skills our country needs. The proposed NHS visa is a good case in point. The ongoing health crisis has underscored the tremendous contribution and commitment that many healthcare workers from overseas make to our care; without them, our nation and our brilliant NHS could not cope.

Further, we have a commitment to the 3 million-plus EEA nationals who call Britain home. We have rightly made a promise that no one with legal status should lose out, and we likewise rely on an important reciprocal arrangement with our European friends that they safeguard the rights of over 1 million British citizens living and working on the continent. Only a few days ago, my friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster wrote to the European Commission to highlight the issues some of our fellow British citizens are encountering in seeking to guarantee their rights—issues that I reasonably foresaw and gave prior repeated warnings on to both successive UK Governments and the EU, for example during my meeting with Michel Barnier last July.

The immigration debate today also focuses on the new points-based system and visas for work immigration. That is, of course, a central and key part of the new immigration policy, but it is not the only aspect that warrants and deserves our attention. I encourage the UK Government to think more about what happens after the points-based system: what is in store for those who come here, who build their lives here, who pay their taxes here, who reside here and who make significant contributions here? Just as the Government’s points-based system draws on the experience of Australia and Canada, there is much to be learned from their respective approaches to citizenship. For example, the Canadian handbook for new citizens opens with a warm message of welcome from the Queen and has a positive tone throughout. We could simply and easily emulate that welcoming, positive tone. But how do the costs of becoming a British citizen compare with those of Canada or Australia? It is estimated that the cost to the Home Office to process a citizenship application is about £370, yet the fee charged to an applicant is £1,330-odd, the highest amount in the western world. The combined cost for citizenship in Australia, Canada, France, Denmark and the United States is still less than the cost of an application for one British citizenship. This serves to highlight the huge disparity between our nation’s costs and those of nations such as Canada and Australia, whose immigration systems we are about to emulate.

I am currently chairing an inquiry involving colleagues from across the House and experts outside it, with the highly respected non-partisan think-tank British Future. The inquiry seeks to promote a new, proactive, measured approach and making citizenship fully part of our new perspective on immigration, and some of the practical ideas that could make that a reality. Therefore, in supporting this Bill today, I make this very modest request of the Government: to conduct a review of citizenship policy, to assess the current policies and processes from the perspective of the value of integration and shared identity that can be gained by encouraging the uptake of British citizenship.

5.39 pm

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): The cross-party Select Committee on Home Affairs that I chair has repeatedly called for us to build a new, positive consensus on immigration in place of the polarisation of previous years, and this should be the time to do that: right across the country everyone can see the immense contribution of immigration to our nation and our public services, most of all our NHS and social care system. More than half of the NHS and careworkers who have died from coronavirus were born abroad; they could not have given more to this country, and we owe them so much.

We are also at a time when we need to move on from the old Brexit divides: Brexit happened in January and as a result European free movement rights end in December, so we need new legislation and the UK has to choose what to do next. We have to choose well and build a positive system that recognises and welcomes the contribution people coming to Britain have made for many generations and will make in future, too. We have to choose well and build a positive system that recognises and welcomes the contribution that people coming to Britain have made for many generations and will make in future, too. That means that the Government have to ditch the divisive rhetoric of recent years and recognise that the hostile environment, and the treatment of the Windrush generation as a result, demean us and can never be part of a new consensus. Meanwhile, Labour will need to make a start on the commitment we made in our 2017 manifesto to draw up new fair immigration rules for EU and non-EU migration in place of the EU free movement system.

I heard from Labour supporters concerned about the gulf, for example, between the rules for EU and non-EU citizens. I heard from others who opposed EU free movement, because they could see employers exploiting it to keep wages down, and who rightly pointed out that there is a difference between a free-market approach to immigration and a progressive approach to immigration. There are many different ways to draw up a left-of-centre, fair approach. It is time to look afresh at how we build a new positive consensus on immigration, but there are significant problems with the Government's approach.

First, this is only half a Bill. It removes the old system, but it does not set out a new one. It gives Ministers major powers. In fact, we should be rejecting the old approach through successive Governments of only doing things through secondary legislation by making things more transparent and putting the bones of a new system in primary legislation instead.

Secondly, by default, the Bill extends rather than repeals the hostile environment. As we have seen from the Windrush scandal, that shames us. The hostile environment should be repealed rather than extended in this way.

Thirdly, there will be considerable problems with the Government's White Paper proposals for social care. A quarter of a million careworkers have come from abroad—half of them from Europe—and we should be supporting them, yet the Government's £25,000 salary threshold for overseas workers will turn those people away. Those careworkers should be valued and paid more, and I will campaign for them to be so, but the Government must heed the warning from the Health Foundation, which said:

"The government's new immigration system looks set to make our social care crisis even worse."

We cannot do that at this time.

The Bill should also do more to support careworkers. Rightly, the Home Office has introduced free visa extension for overseas doctors and nurses and has also said that if they die from covid-19, their families will be given indefinite leave to remain, but why exclude careworkers? Why exclude NHS porters and cleaners—those who wash and clean sick residents, those who scrub the door handles and the floor and those who do laundry for the covid wards? It is also time to lift the NHS surcharge for NHS staff and careworkers, instead of charging families maybe £10,000 when they renew five-year visas, on top of their taxes, to fund the NHS they are already working incredibly hard for and, in some awful cases, giving their lives for, too.

I believe this Bill is flawed, but I recognise that legislation on immigration is now needed. As Select Committee Chair, I will table amendments that I hope will receive cross-party support. In that cross-party spirit, I will not vote against the Bill tonight, although if the Government's approach does not change, I expect to oppose it when it returns to the House, because it is immensely important that we try to build that new consensus. I urge the Government to do so, because they have the opportunity to do so now. There will always be disagreements on different aspects of immigration, but right now at this point, particularly in this coronavirus crisis, we should be looking for the areas where we can find agreement, and find a positive way forward.

5.43 pm

Mr David Davis (Haltemprice and Howden) (Con) [V]: It is always a privilege to follow the Chair of the Home Affairs Committee, and I will pick up on one or two of the things she said.

The core purpose of the Bill is to deliver on the 2016 mandate of taking back control of our borders, so it is no surprise that I wholeheartedly approve of that policy, although I say to those on both Front Benches that I have always presumed that control of our own borders allows us to create policies that protect the interests of sectors such as care homes and their dedicated workers, and I trust we will do that.

The House should also use this opportunity to put right some deep and long-standing injustices at the heart of our immigration system. As it stands, illegal migrants can be held and detained indefinitely in psychologically inhumane conditions. Detention is meant to facilitate deportation, but we routinely detain people for extraordinary lengths of time without deporting them. By the end of 2019, the individual detained for the longest period had been in a holding centre for 1,002 days—nearly three years. These people are detained without trial or due process, without oversight and without basic freedom, and they are carrying the destabilising psychological burden of having no idea when they will be released. This flies in the face of centuries of British civil liberties and the rule of law.

For the most part, these detainees are not hardened criminals—they are frequently the victims of human trafficking, sexual assault and torture—yet we treat them as criminals, with little compassion at all. Let me tell one story, that of Anna, a Chinese woman who speaks no English. She had fled her home in China after her husband was sentenced to death for drug offences. She was told that she was being taken elsewhere in China. After days of travel, when the doors of her vehicle

[Mr David Davis]

finally opened, she was not in China, but in rural Britain, where she was forced into prostitution and several years of unpaid work—slavery by another name—under threat of being reported to the immigration authorities. She was then arrested during a raid, taken to Yarl's Wood and held indefinitely. Anna's story is not an isolated case; as a country, we detain about 25,000 individuals each year for immigration purposes. Any situation in which the state strips people of their liberty requires the highest possible level of scrutiny and accountability. The purpose of any incarceration should be clear. Conditions and a time for release should be set. That is why I intend to table amendments limiting migrant detention to 28 days and providing robust judicial oversight. This was backed before, at the last turn of this Bill, by a cross-party group of MPs, as well as by the Select Committee on Home Affairs and the Joint Committee on Human Rights. I will finish by saying this simple thing: the UK has a proud tradition of civil liberties and the rule of law, and it is time to honour that by bringing an end to this damaging and unjust policy.

5.47 pm

Rushanara Ali (Bethnal Green and Bow) (Lab): If the covid-19 crisis has taught us anything, it is the value of key workers, so many of whom are immigrants to this country, as we see when we look at the names of the NHS and social care workers who have tragically died. They came from every corner of the globe to care for us and have given their lives for us. So many of the key workers in the UK are immigrants: about 180,000 workers in the NHS and social care sector are from the EU alone, and they are highly represented among the doctors and nurses in our NHS; and, of course, we also have the agriculture workers, food production workers and other key workers, who are keeping our country going at a time of crisis. For decades, we have undervalued them, but now we applaud them in the streets. When the applause dies, we cannot return to business as usual; we cannot go back to the hostile environment, the racism and xenophobia, the “go home” vans and the scandal of Windrush.

We understand that the world economy is about to fall off a cliff, so we must invest domestically, in skills, education and jobs for our constituents, to ensure that they do not face mass unemployment and hardship, but we will still need new immigrants to help us fill skill gaps, where they exist. Now is not the time to put up barriers because, as we have heard, if we do so, the NHS and social care system will be on its knees. The new global Britain must be open for business, welcoming those who want to roll up their sleeves and help us, just as previous generations did, including my parents' generation, who made a contribution to this country as new Commonwealth migrants. So let us not forget the proud history of supporting and encouraging immigration appropriately to rebuild after the post-war period. This Bill does not meet our economic needs after covid, nor does it protect the NHS or the social care system. The major flaw in the Bill is the conflation, as others have said, of skills and salaries. Lots of low-paid workers have a huge range of skills; yet the Government are setting a bar of more than £25,000, which, as we have heard, will block many NHS and social care workers.

Unison has predicted that we will need an extra 1 million careworkers by 2025. Many of them earn between £16,500 and £18,500. We should be recruiting an army of carers so that we honour the generations that raised us, who should be supported and cared for in their later years. That will be put even further at risk if we do not ensure that we meet the skills gap and shortages. We need to ensure that we have a pragmatic policy on immigration. The Bill provides nothing of the sort.

Finally, I want to turn to other areas where the Bill does not address the challenges. In other countries, such as Portugal and elsewhere, Governments are looking at how to ensure that undocumented migrants—we have some 800,000 to 1 million undocumented migrants—are given the healthcare that is needed during the pandemic, where there could be a wider risk.

When the Prime Minister emerged from hospital, he thanked staff, especially the two nurses from New Zealand and Portugal. Despite his praise, it is his Government's policies that are making them suffer. The proposed surcharge on NHS workers coming to the UK could be as much as £8,000 for a family of four on a five-year visa. That is a huge amount of money, and it is an absolute disgrace that the Government are considering that surcharge. I appeal to the Minister to ensure that that does not happen.

There are many flaws in the Bill, as others have pointed out, including the power grab by Ministers. Why should anyone trust Ministers who presided over the “Go Home” vans and the Windrush scandal? For those reasons, the Bill is not fit for purpose and does not recognise that we need a new settlement and a new consensus, having seen the contribution of migrants to our national health service in protecting and saving lives. The Bill is not fit for purpose, and for that reason I will vote against it.

5.52 pm

Matt Vickers (Stockton South) (Con): For decades, people in this country have talked about immigration. When it comes to EU migration, that national debate has been entirely academic, as the UK had so little control over it. In 2016, the British people were asked their view on membership of the EU. Some suggest that immigration was the main driver in making their decision to leave. I think that there were several reasons, but without doubt, immigration was clearly a key driver—the control of our borders and the ending of free movement.

A question was asked; a question was answered. Although too many Members of the last Parliament did not get it, today we can put the dilly, dally, dither and delay to an end. I understand that some are concerned by what they see as a bizarre concept: the end of free movement. To me, it is rather simple: a UK immigration system created and developed by the UK's elected Government; a system devised in our national interest, determined by the needs of our economy; a system that treats immigrants from every corner of the globe on the same basis, which is all about what they are bringing to our country rather than where they are coming from.

The Bill means that the nurses, doctors, engineers and scientists from the Philippines, Canada, India or the USA will be treated equally to those from Germany, Italy or France. The Bill is not anti-immigration; it is

about fair immigration. It will mean that applicants will be judged on their skills and talents, not just their country of origin. The European backdoor will be closed, but Britain will be very much open to the brightest and best, wherever they come from. It is absurd that someone from outside the EU might be denied access to this country based on criminality, while someone from the EU who met the same threshold would be free to enter. It is wrong and it must end.

Very often, the country has chosen to import huge segments of its workforce. Actually, we need to look at why we fail to find the right people with the right skills domestically. The success of this system will be determined by the adaptability and flexibility of the shortage occupation list, coupled with a renewed effort to train, incentivise and invest in our domestic workforce. At the same time, I am glad that the Government are working to welcome the migrants who make such a valued contribution to our NHS, extending the visas of frontline NHS workers and introducing a new NHS visa with fast-track entry and more generous terms.

I am happy to be talking about our borders because it is a subject that concerns many people in my constituency, but also because it is crucial at this time to secure our borders. I have discussed this issue with the Home Secretary and look forward to hearing her express our shared concern to deliver a swift and active solution. Let us give the people what they want and what they voted for: a country in control of its own borders, with a fairer, firmer points-based system that will welcome the brightest and the best based on what they can contribute to this country and not on where they come from.

4.55 pm

Richard Burgon (Leeds East) (Lab) [V]: Today, with this Bill, the Government are seeking to grant themselves powers to reshape our immigration system, with little scrutiny and with little regard for the rights of people who, sadly, they dismiss as low-skilled simply because they do not earn a high salary. These Government plans are built on the right-wing neo-liberal myth that people's salary determines their skills and their value. Well, the coronavirus crisis has shown all of us whose work actually is essential to keeping our society running, and many of those workers earn far less than the Government's proposed salary threshold of £25,600. Let us be clear: workers earning under the threshold are not low-skilled; they are low-paid. All of us have a moral responsibility to recognise their contribution, and not to introduce rules that restrict the rights of low-paid workers even further, because it will be our communities, and often the most vulnerable members of our communities, who will pay the price for this.

Our care system is facing an unprecedented crisis, and our Government, shamefully, are seeking to make it harder for careworkers to come to this country to contribute. The founder of our national health service, Aneurin Bevan, once remarked that we could manage without stockbrokers, but we would find it harder to do without miners, steelworkers and those who cultivate the land. The 21st-century equivalent is that our society could cope a lot longer without hedge fund managers, fat-cat landlords and billionaire tax avoiders and tax evaders than we could without bus drivers, bin collectors, supermarket workers, carers and other low-paid workers who under these rules will face tougher restrictions than the top earners.

Our approach to the Bill today cannot be divorced from the record of this Government over the past decade. This Government, with their hostile environment, have used their narrative on immigration as a way to scapegoat one part of the working class for problems the working-class as a whole face due to austerity, cuts and free market fundamentalism. This Government are wilfully scapegoating migrants to let off the hook those who are really responsible for the economic failings of the past decade.

Just the other week, an NHS physician in my constituency who came here from Egypt wrote to me distraught because, as he put it to me, if he were to die in service of our NHS due to coronavirus, his dependent family would be booted out of this country. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) said, the Government have shifted on this, but they should not have had to be asked in the first place—and why can they not extend that change in position to careworkers?

How can we trust a Government who oversaw the hostile environment? How can we hand over powers to the Government to create a new immigration system with far less scrutiny than previously? How can we trust that there will not be a second Windrush crisis affecting many thousands of EU citizens who came to make their life here but have not yet been granted settled status? How can we trust that, under political pressure, the Home Secretary and this Government will not make immigration policy that is designed not to serve the interests of working-class communities or diversity, but to chase headlines in the right-wing newspapers?

I was one of the sponsors of a reasoned amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Bell Ribeiro-Addy). It was not selected, but I nevertheless want to reiterate demands made in it. I want the Government to think again about this immigration Bill. We need the Government to think again and to protect the rights of British citizens to live, work and study in other EEA member states. We need the Government to think again and grant EEA citizens currently living here in the UK automatic permanent settled status. We need the Government to reflect long and hard on the history of the Windrush scandal and of “Go Home” vans touring estates, making a hostile environment for people in our communities. The Government need to reflect on that. They need to reflect on who really contributes to our society.

The Government also need to reflect on the need to end the scandal of indefinite detention, which makes us, in a very shameful way, stick out like a sore thumb in Europe—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): Order. The hon. Gentleman has exceeded his five minutes. We now go to Dr Jamie Wallis in Bridgend.

6 pm

Dr Jamie Wallis (Bridgend) (Con) [V]: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

It is clear that when some people in Bridgend voted for my party for the first time, they did so knowing that this Government would take them out of the European Union and that we were going to take back control of our borders. One of the loudest messages that some

[Dr Jamie Wallis]

of my constituents raised with me during the last general election campaign was that immigration needed to be under this Government's control. They rejected the plan on offer by the Opposition, and my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has shown that she is absolutely on the side of British people and their priorities.

Immigration is essential to our culture, economy and way of life. Immigrants have powered and often created many of our businesses. We should also thank them for their continued contribution to our great public services, and our appreciation should never waver, especially now, during the covid-19 crisis. But this is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to change the way our immigration system works for the better. For the first time in decades, the UK will have full control over who comes to this country and how our immigration system operates. I welcome the Government's commitment to build a fairer, single global immigration system that considers people based on their skills rather than their nationality. I also welcome the commitment to replace free movement with the UK's very own points-based system. This new system will prioritise those with the best skills and the more-needed talents, including scientists, doctors, nurses, engineers, academics and innovators.

I have always believed that the new system is about more than simply controlling the numbers. While I am glad that the Government are committed to reducing the overall levels of migration, I am more glad still of their commitment to attract the best and brightest from across the world. This will benefit businesses, including those within my Bridgend constituency. This process is about helping to create a high-wage, high-skill, high-productivity economy. I welcome this approach. Our country cannot become dependent on cheap labour and must focus instead on investment in technology and future industries, such as the space industry and clean energy.

The current covid-19 crisis will undoubtedly have a huge impact on the British economy, and it is imperative that our immigration policy facilitates those businesses looking to future industries as a way of supporting our recovery. We must ensure that our policy is focused on building a future where we level up Britain and focus on what is best for all our futures in the coming months. Our common aim should be to invest in and mobilise our UK workforce.

We also need to take into account the fact that within the United Kingdom we are going to have regional variations in demand for certain skills. Take Wales, for example: we have a high dependence on a limited number of sectors such as steel and manufacturing. Where there is a shortage of certain skills within specific industries, the Migration Advisory Committee should be set up to acknowledge and report on those differences.

Just before I close, let me say that the economy, especially during these uncertain times, has the potential to change quite dramatically over the next few years. We need to make sure that, rather than looking at the current output of certain industries, our immigration policy is looking to respond proactively to their potential. For example, sectors such as clean energy and robotics may make up a small part of Britain's economy today, but they have the potential to make a much larger contribution in the future. It is therefore important that

we have an immigration policy that is set up to support the future growth of these sectors in particular. By ensuring that we take this proactive approach, we can ensure that our immigration system can withstand significant changes to the way our economy may work in the future and that we continue to attract the brightest and the best in their respective fields.

Finally, stopping the unfair disadvantage that some people outside the EU face when trying to come to this country is a sound argument. I say that as someone who has parents and grandparents who were born outside the EU, but who made Britain their home and built their lives here. Talent is spread across the whole world and is not concentrated in any one region. That is why, with this fair immigration Bill, we will be able to ensure that our friends and partners across the whole world have the opportunity to come to this great country and help make a success of post-Brexit Britain.

6.5 pm

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney North and Stoke Newington) (Lab): Like my good friend the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper), I shall be voting against this Bill. It is a bad Bill. It is bad in principle, bad in practice and it sends a terrible message to migrants and the children of migrants. The Bill does indeed abolish freedom of movement—although once this country voted to Brexit, freedom of movement would have fallen in any event—but the Government are doing it in such a way and in such a manner that it seems to ignore the effect of this on around 890,000 British nationals in the EU. We feel that there was a better way of achieving the same effect.

The Bill gives the Government a blank cheque to construct a new immigration system through statutory instrument. Anybody that has had to deal with the immigration system knows that one of the problems is ill-thought regulation piled on top of ill-thought regulation. The idea that the Government can construct a new immigration system without proper parliamentary scrutiny will make anyone who has ever tried to help anybody with an immigration problem fear for the consequences.

The Bill is a slap in the face for the thousands of migrants, including EU migrants, who have been working so hard for the NHS and the care sector in this time of covid crisis. The idea put forward by Ministers that £25,600 is somehow a proxy level for skill is absurd. We know that the skills, the concern and the devotion that migrants are currently showing at this time of covid crisis cannot be measured by money, but Ministers seem to think that we can measure somebody's value to society by an arbitrary financial threshold.

EU migrants play a vital role not just in the NHS and the care sector, but in construction. In fact, they play a big role in construction, not because they are unskilled but because, as any developer would tell us, they have very important construction skills that developers are unable to recruit here. They play an important role in hospitality. They should have been granted settled status automatically. They should have physical documents, not a digital code, and we should not be moving towards extending the hostile environment towards EU migrants.

The Bill represents a missed opportunity. It is a missed opportunity on the NHS surcharge. It is quite wrong that migrants working for the NHS pay three times over: once through taxation; once through the surcharge;

and, in some cases, with their lives. It should have ended the no recourse to public funds system. It should have brought in a 28-day statutory time limit for immigration detention. It should have brought back legal aid for article 8 immigration cases, and it should have reformed the law on deportations so that people who came here as children cannot be arbitrarily deported.

When the House debated Wendy Williams' Windrush lessons learned review, there was a lot of hand-wringing on the Government side of the House about the Windrush scandal, but the review had some quite specific recommendations about immigration, including that the Home Secretary introduce a migrants commissioner; that the immigration department should re-educate itself fully about the current reach and effect of immigration and nationality law; that there should be a programme of training and development for all immigration and policy officials; and that Ministers should ensure that all policies and proposals for legislation on immigration are subject to rigorous impact assessments.

The Home Secretary has said that the Bill is about a brighter future. A brighter future for whom? For EU nationals, who face a period of great uncertainty? Is it a brighter future for the old, the sick and the infirm, because the institutions that they rely on will have enormous difficulty recruiting people when there is an end to freedom of movement? Is it a brighter future for society, when we pass a Bill that sends a signal to wider society—and to migrants in particular—that you are only as valuable as the amount that you earn, and that we will clap for you on a Thursday and put forward a Bill like this a few days' later?

6.10 pm

Dr Kieran Mullan (Crewe and Nantwich) (Con) [V]: I welcome the opportunity to speak in these proceedings, as they represent another important step in this Government delivering on what people in Crewe and Nantwich voted for, and that is for us to take back control. That is why the Bill is important. I relish the fact that we are now once again having a full and healthy debate about the details of our immigration policy—not just a yes or no to the freedom of movement. We are having these debates because our Government are once again fully accountable for immigration policy. The Opposition have every right to scrutinise and propose alternative approaches—that is how our democracy functions.

How did we ever think that on such a complicated issue we could simply tick a box saying yes? Deciding who can visit, work in and live in our country is a matter of fundamental importance that should never have been simplified to such an unsophisticated approach as freedom of movement. There are so many different factors that we need to balance—the needs of business in the short and long term; the goal of providing the best possible job opportunities for British citizens; the obligations we have to provide safe refuge to individuals in need; the impact on our housing market; and the effect of large-scale immigration on social cohesion. Those are just a few of the things we have to think about.

All of those factors will ebb and flow in importance over time, and any effective immigration system needs to be able to ebb and flow along with them. Instead, we have had a fixed policy, direct accountability for which sat offshore. A multifactorial issue became a binary

one. People were either pro freedom of movement or against it. I am afraid that that did not work, and was never going to work. It became a touchstone issue in relation to our EU membership, because voters could sense it was not right. That is fundamentally why I want freedom of movement abolished. It is policy making on the cheap, decision making without decisions—the multitude of views on all the different ways in which we should change our policy that we will hear in the Chamber today are a testimony to that.

I want to talk about what I think has been a shameless attempt to distort the meaning of the term “low-skilled”—a phrase that has been used cross-party across multiple Governments for many years. The last Labour Home Secretary referred on a number of occasions in this House to the low-skilled, and I cannot believe anybody would ascribe to him any disrespect to those he was referring to in his use of that term. The current shadow Home Secretary has spoken about high-skilled jobs in the House, and I do not imagine that anyone would argue that we can talk about high-skilled jobs without having to acknowledge the existence of low-skilled jobs. I do not in any way seek to diminish the prominence of the current post holder, but in 2014 the previous long-serving shadow Home Secretary, the right hon. Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) asked the then Business Secretary what steps were being taken to address the exploitation of low-skilled workers. In 2018, the right hon. Lady also agreed that it was logical to distinguish between high and low-skilled migrants when making immigration decisions. I find the deliberate attempt to inject disrespect into the current use of that term extremely distasteful, because it is an attempt to gain some short-term political advantage by hurting the feelings of people who at this minute are working hard for this nation. However, perhaps it would do no harm to review our language in this regard so that in future it cannot be exploited.

What do we really mean when we use the term “low-skilled”? What we are actually talking about is how readily a skill can be acquired. The person who cleans a cubicle so that I can see a patient is just as vital a member of the team as I am when it comes to looking after patients. If they were not doing their job, I could not do mine. But we can more readily train someone to do that job than we can train someone to be a doctor or nurse. That is a simple fact. It does not in any way demean the importance of the role or contribution of those whose skills are more easily acquired than others. Opposition Members know that full well, and that is part of the discussion we will have about salaries and how that works when we decide roles and who we want to come here.

When we consider whether we should allow people to come here to live and work, we inevitably prioritise individuals with skillsets that are not readily or easily acquired. That is what we are talking about when we talk about high and low-skilled jobs. Going forward, perhaps we could consider changing our approach to talk about readily acquired and non-readily acquired skills, so that we are saying exactly what we mean and there can be no doubt.

Of course, I expect the Government to look closely at how their policy approach will translate in the real world so that our public services have the staff who are needed and our economy is well resourced. We need to

[*Dr Kieran Mullan*]

find a way to recognise the important and valuable contribution that immigrant workers have made to the NHS during this crisis, but it is absolutely right that we should grow our home skill base whenever possible. I have felt very uncomfortable with our reliance on the immigration of healthcare professionals to this country over many decades, because we are sometimes taking staff who are desperately needed in their countries of origin, particularly outside the EU. That cannot be right—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): Order. Thank you. The hon. Gentleman has exceeded his five minutes.

6.16 pm

Jeff Smith (Manchester, Withington) (Lab) [V]: It is a pleasure to take part in this debate remotely. Last week, one Member described the hybrid system as “sub-optimal”, and that is undoubtedly the case, but it does at least allow everyone the chance to take part in debates safely.

If the Leader of the House is going to press ahead with his proposals for a physical Parliament after recess, I hope he will explain how we could debate this Bill any more effectively while only small numbers of Members can be allowed in the Chamber; how Members who are shielding or self-isolating could take part in this debate; how Members who have childcare responsibilities and kids off school during the crisis could take part in this debate; and how we could sensibly have a Division involving 600 people at the end of this debate, while social distancing. Perhaps he will also explain why the House of Commons should follow different advice from that given to the rest of the country.

Let me move on to the Bill. I agree with everything that my hon. Friend the shadow Home Secretary said about the EU citizens who are keeping our care system and our health service going at this most difficult of times. They are heroes, like the rest of the staff in our care and health sector and the other key workers in this crisis. They are highly skilled; they should be highly valued. I endorse what my hon. Friend said about the income threshold and our concerns about the risk to the future care sector under the Government’s proposals.

Three quarters of my constituents voted to remain in the EU, and the principles of openness, co-operation, internationalism and solidarity that led so many of them to do that have not changed. Yes, free movement brings challenges, but it also brings huge economic, social and cultural benefits. It will be a sad day when my constituents and other UK citizens will no longer have the ability to travel freely and to study, live and work easily across our wonderful continent.

I recognise that free movement is going to end as a result of the Bill, but the way the Government are going about it is unacceptable, most worryingly in the granting to the Executive of wide Henry VIII powers, which many of my constituents in south Manchester do not trust this Government with. Side-lining Parliament is ironic in the context of the arguments for taking back control to Parliament.

The House of Lords Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee produced a report on the almost identical 2017-19 Bill and expressed serious concerns about the wide scope of its regulation-making powers.

The Committee stated that it was “frankly disturbed” that the Government would attempt to confer permanent powers to Ministers

“to make whatever legislation they considered appropriate”

as long as it was loosely connected to clause 4 of that Bill. It is a serious report and I refer all Members to the concerns expressed in it.

Other Members have raised the important issues in respect of detention, unaccompanied vulnerable children and visas, so I shall not go over them again. I wish to use the brief time I have left to raise one specific issue for future consideration. As we design a future work and immigration system, and as we come out of this crisis, it is more important than ever to support our cultural industries, which have been hit harder than most by the crisis. Lots of my constituents in south Manchester work in the entertainment industry, many of them in the live music and performance professions. Loss of freedom of movement could have a seriously detrimental effect on the live performance industry. If we make it harder for EU artists to perform in the UK, we are vulnerable to measures that make it harder for our artists to perform around the EU. Winding up a Westminster Hall debate just four months ago, in January, the Minister, the hon. Member for Selby and Ainsty (Nigel Adams), said:

“It is essential that free movement is protected for artists post 2020.”—[*Official Report*, 21 January 2020; Vol. 670, c. 56WH.]

Organisations in the music industry are pressing for an EU-wide touring visa for musicians, performers, road crew, tour managers, sound and light engineers—all the people who make the industry such a vital contributor to our economic and cultural life. We need a passporting system with reciprocal arrangements, so performers can continue to tour easily after the transition period. A two-year, multi-entry touring visa that is cheap and easy to administer is a deliverable ask.

Music remains a low-earning sector, with musicians earning £23,000 a year on average. They would not meet the salary threshold under the Government’s proposal, so it is vital that the Government come up with a system that supports the live music and performance industries, which employ so many of my constituents and make all our lives richer and more rewarding.

6.20 pm

Sally-Ann Hart (Hastings and Rye) (Con) [V]: Importantly for this country, which has always welcomed immigrants, the Bill will enable the alignment of treatment of EU and non-EU citizens as part of our future immigration system. The Bill reflects the concerns of the British people and ends free movement, giving everyone the same opportunity to come to the UK, regardless of where they come from. In line with our manifesto commitments, there will be no automatic route into the UK for foreign workers with few formal qualifications. We can attract the talent and skills from around the world that our economy needs as we emerge from coronavirus. The new, fair immigration system will be flexible and in line with advice from the Migration Advisory Committee, which will keep the occupation shortage list under regular review to ensure that it reflects the needs of our labour market.

Immigration will no longer be used as a replacement for investment in the domestic British workforce. We have an abundance of talent and skills in this country,

which must be developed and utilised. Most of us, except for those who support open borders, believe that countries should have an unalienable right to decide who gets to enter their land for work. To seek and strive for such a right does not make us anti-immigrant—quite the opposite. The UK is made up of a rich tapestry of people, and as a country we are the better for it. It is right that people from all over the world are treated fairly and equally, so far as immigration into this country is concerned, under our rule of law. We have a rule of law allowing legal immigration from non-EU countries, but it has far too often been exploited by illegal immigrants and people smugglers and traffickers. It is not right that those who have arrived here illegally are seen by some to have a presumptive right. People who avoid the law are not acting within the law, and are therefore acting illegally.

I welcome the introduction, from the end of the transition period, of a single, consistent and firmer approach to criminality across the immigration system. In my constituency of beautiful Hastings and Rye, we have seen hundreds of migrants land on our shores in small boats from France, most recently at Pett Level at the weekend. They are not refugees, as some insist on calling them. They are migrants, who move for a variety of reasons but who generally make a conscious choice to leave their country to seek a better life elsewhere. They are free to return at any time if things do not work out as they had hoped or if they wish to visit family members and friends left behind.

Refugees are forced to leave their country because they are at risk of, or have experienced, persecution. Their concerns are of safety and human rights, not economic advantage, and as such they seek asylum in the first safe country that they arrive in. Many have experienced trauma or have been tortured, causing them to risk their lives in search of protection. They are not free to return to their homelands unless the situation that forced them to leave improves.

Worryingly, we have seen unaccompanied children arrive who are thought to be victims of trafficking. The people who have been landing on our beaches are coming over from France via unauthorised, illegal crossings, having paid thousands of pounds to a criminal—a people smuggler—to do so. I want to be clear: we must press down hard on those exploiting the vulnerable and using them as part of their human trafficking system. Those making the perilous journey across the English channel are risking their lives by doing so, and we must discourage these journeys. We must ensure that those caught up in human trafficking gangs and smuggling rackets are protected and that those orchestrating the journeys are stopped.

France is a safe country. They are not fleeing persecution. Under EU law—the Dublin regulation— asylum must be sought in the first country people arrive in. Furthermore, many have travelled through a number of safe European countries before arriving in France and then going on to UK. If we do not emphasise the difference between migrants and those seeking asylum or refuge, it promulgates misconceptions about the most vulnerable—the refugees, for whom we need to provide the best possible sanctuary. We need to safeguard and expand refugees' rights and protect them.

Ultimately, we need to ensure that the British public have trust in our immigration system and remain welcoming of legal immigrants and refugees. That can be achieved

with the new, robust, fair and independent migration system controlled by the United Kingdom, making sure that illegal migrants do not have not a presumptive right to stay—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): Order. The hon. Lady has exceeded her five minutes.

6.26 pm

Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD) [V]: It is a delight to follow the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Sally-Ann Hart). Two words dominate my thinking in this debate: disappointment and frustration. My disappointment is that we are presented with a Bill that seeks to end freedom of movement without offering a fair, compassionate and effective alternative, and that the bold words from the Home Secretary are not matched by bold actions in her Bill. I am afraid that I see no point in any level playing field if it is one on which no one is welcome to play. My frustration is with the fact that the Government do not appear to have listened to the many reasonable voices from across Parliament calling on them to rethink this potentially damaging Bill.

The Bill comes at a time when everything we thought we knew about our economy, our wellbeing, our health and how we live our lives every day has been thrown into doubt by the pandemic—a pandemic which demands that we take its actual and potential impacts into account in each step we take towards putting the crisis behind us. That is more relevant to this immigration Bill than to almost any other legislation before us.

Just this morning, a Cabinet Minister told the “Today” programme that the Government want to see people we need come to this country. Surely there is nobody this country needs more at the moment than the tens of thousands of doctors, nurses and other NHS staff, the hundreds of thousands of social care workers and the millions more in sectors hit hard by this crisis—from restaurants and hotels to construction and manufacturing—in every city, town and rural community in this country who are migrants. These are migrants who are putting their lives on the line to protect us, who will be crucial to creating economic growth and jobs as we recover from this crisis, and yet who are still expected to pay the surcharge for the NHS they work for, despite the false hope offered by the Home Secretary.

The Royal Society has warned that the end of freedom of movement could mean that other countries without restrictive visas and salary qualifications will benefit from the skills and knowledge available across Europe to which we will no longer have access. In the midst of this crisis, I find it beyond understanding that the Home Secretary is pushing ahead with her plans to make it much harder for employers to hire the very people I am talking about. Visa extensions and fast tracks for some are not enough. Many of these people are the very people we go out every Thursday to applaud for their efforts and sacrifice for us. Surely the Government's memory is not that short.

That is only part of why I believe that this House should refuse the Bill a Second Reading. Crucially, it also fails to protect the rights of British citizens to live, work and study in EU member states, and it does not fully guarantee the rights of UK citizens already living across the EU. While I am disappointed and frustrated that the Government refuse to respect the rights of EU citizens

[Christine Jardine]

who contribute to this country, I find it beyond comprehension that they do not recognise the need to protect the rights of our citizens either.

If the stated aim of this Bill is to establish an immigration system to replace free movement that will allow businesses and public services to recruit the workers they need, then it fails. What is needed by the people living in this country right now—people depending on our NHS right now and people struggling, right now, to see how their employer or the business they have worked decades to build will survive this—is an immigration system that will work for them. All of us need a system that will encourage not only those we need to come here, but those we need to stay, and one that will encourage them by creating a fair and compassionate system that will value them according to what they do, not just by a simple salary calculation. Many will also have no recourse to public funds in this crisis.

This Government, in asking Parliament to support a Bill that will give Ministers sweeping powers, would do well to take into account the words of US politician Daniel Patrick Moynihan:

“The central conservative truth is that it is culture, not politics, that determines the success of a society. The central liberal truth is that politics can change a culture and save it from itself.”

This Bill could have profound and, I believe, negative effects on our society and culture. Surely it is up to those of us with political power to save us from that, and that is why I will be voting against this Bill.

6.31 pm

Mr Gagan Mohindra (South West Hertfordshire) (Con): I rise in support of this Bill. First and foremost, I am a democrat. I stood on a manifesto saying that we will take back control of our immigration policies, and this Bill is part of that package. Brexit and covid-19 have shown how quickly the world changes, and we need an immigration system flexible enough to ensure that we attract the skilled workers that we need for tomorrow. February’s policy statement made it clear that we need to move away from cheap labour from Europe and more towards investment in technology and automation. I would add that perhaps we need to talk about increasing manufacturing to be making our country more self-sufficient.

The system proposed is a lot simpler. It really does incorporate a points-based system, with streamlined process times that I am sure businesses will welcome. The reality is that businesses need to adapt. They are currently having to change fundamentally the way they work because of the pandemic, and this will be part of their business decision making. My hon. Friend the Member for Stockton South (Matt Vickers) referred to the criminality, and how this reinforces and strengthens that policy, and I am fully in agreement with him.

As things stand today, we have a two-tier immigration system. With our leaving at the end of this year, we need to have a simple single immigration system, and this immigration Bill allows that to happen. We must be flexible, yet firm on our direction of travel. The Migration Advisory Committee has done some sterling work, and I urge Ministers to ensure that a regular review is fed back to them and perhaps to the Home Affairs Committee on the parameters it uses for the shortage occupation lists. In my view, that will be the key driver in ensuring that we have the skilled workers in the right place at the

right time. I welcome the proposal for the support of the agriculture sector, with the increase to 10,000 visas per year from the current 2,500.

It is probably worth remembering, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Southampton North (Caroline Nokes) mentioned, that this Bill is only two clauses different from that proposed in the previous Parliament. I urge all right hon. and hon. Members to continue to encourage their European nationals to utilise the EU settlement scheme, which is fundamentally very successful. Of the 3.147 million applications, 99% have either been granted as settled or pre-settled, with only 1% having other outcomes; only 640 have been refused, so it is obviously a system that works.

I will leave it there, Madam Deputy Speaker, because I know there are other colleagues wanting to be involved in this debate. Thank you for your time.

6.34 pm

Tonia Antoniazzi (Gower) (Lab) [V]: I find it extraordinary that, even in the midst of the current pandemic, the Government have not recognised, or do not care about, the implications of the Bill for those who are out there working to keep us alive, keeping the country moving, looking after our vulnerable people and supporting every aspect of our much-changed lives. Some on the Government Benches would like us to think of those people as low-skilled and low-value, but to be deemed low-skilled is in itself insulting. To value a person’s worth based on the amount of money they earn is offensive. It is particularly indecent now, when we see these key workers keeping Britain going. This is not what we teach our children in schools, and these are not the values of the communities of Gower that I represent.

The Home Secretary has said that the new points system will be a

“firmer, fairer and simpler system that will attract the people we need to drive our country forward...laying the foundation for a high-wage, high-skill, productive economy”.

In theory, it all sounds rather sensible, but the proposed system is more of an income-based system, and it is a blunt tool that masks the other skills and qualities that immigrants bring to the UK. George Bernard Shaw said:

“Between persons of equal income there is no social distinction except the distinction of merit. Money is nothing: character, conduct, and capacity are everything.”

But this is not just about the value of these workers at this time. Immigration should be valued and celebrated at all times. I said in my maiden speech nearly three years ago:

“The freedom of movement and opportunities afforded to my forefathers is close to my heart. I will fight for those rights to continue, not just for my child but for the children of Gower and Wales.”—[*Official Report*, 29 June 2017; Vol. 626, c. 817.]

By ending free movement, the UK will become less accessible to highly skilled EEA migrants who can work or study elsewhere in Europe without a visa. If the cost and burden of entering the UK become too high, it will be other countries that benefit from the transfer of knowledge, expertise, investment and culture.

The Government are ploughing through with the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill while the public are distracted. They continue to make meaningless gestures to the key workers

such as carers, shop workers and those in public services who are keeping the economy and society going throughout these really troubled times. A significant pay rise is what all key workers need, not another Thursday evening photo opportunity. If there was ever a time to recognise the contribution of immigrant workers in the NHS and other vital jobs, it is now, during this crisis. The Labour party stands up for all the people who have chosen to make the UK their home and who now find themselves, as essential workers, putting their lives on the line to keep the rest of us going.

As chair of the all-party parliamentary group on cancer, I share the concerns of cancer charities and others about the Bill undermining many of our already stretched public services. Analysis by Macmillan shows that the Government's plan for a points-based immigration system will have a real detrimental effect on our health and social care system, which is already under record pressure. To mitigate this, Macmillan is calling for a separate migration route for social care, and asking for social care workers to be included on the shortage occupation list and exempt from the visa salary threshold. Workers and employers need clarity about what specific measures will be put in place to protect the NHS and social care workforces, and they especially need further details of what the NHS visa and an equivalent social care visa would involve. The Home Secretary needs to set out what specific protections a specialist visa would afford, which staff are eligible to apply, and how and when they should apply.

More urgently, will the Home Secretary clarify why the Government have not offered to extend the visas of those working in social care in the same way that they have for those working in the NHS as a result of the coronavirus? The shortage occupation list is nowhere near dynamic enough to respond to workplace shortages within the desired timeframe, so what measures will the Government take to support the already dilapidated social care sector if this new immigration policy deters vital migrant workers from joining the sector? All this uncertainty is—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): Order. The hon. Lady has exceeded her five minutes. We now go to Sir John Hayes in South Holland and The Deepings.

6.39 pm

Sir John Hayes (South Holland and The Deepings) (Con) [V]: Migration is a feature of all advanced economies and free societies; some people come and others leave, and it has always been so. For the period from the 1930s—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not want to interrupt the right hon. Gentleman, but the sound quality is a bit of a problem. We are just seeing whether it can be improved. Let us try again. Sir John Hayes.

Sir John Hayes: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Migration is a feature of all advanced economies and free societies; people come and they leave, and that has always been so in our country. From the 1930s to the 1980s, migration was essentially in balance—some years, more people left the country; others, more people arrived—but from the mid-2000s, that changed dramatically. The level of net migration that this country has endured since that time is unprecedented.

Last year, about 640,000 immigrants arrived in Britain. That is 100,000 more than the populations of Manchester and Sheffield. When we take into account the number of people who left, the net figure was around 200,000, as it has been, year on year, for a considerable time. I just do not think that is tenable or practical. It clearly places immense demands on all kinds of services, particularly housing, and, frankly, the British people are not satisfied that that is the right way forward, which essentially is what they broadcast in the referendum. Of course that was about more than immigration, but for many, our inability to control our borders, and the consequent effects of large-scale net migration, was a salient factor in why they voted to leave the European Union and end free movement, which is what the Bill does.

The problem is exacerbated by the fact that too few people in the political establishment are prepared to face up to the sentiments I just described, which are widely felt by British people. Trevor Phillips, the former chairman of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, put it this way. He said that mass migration risks igniting the “flames” of racial conflict because of “liberal self-delusion” over its impact by leaders too “touchy”, “smug” and “complacent” or “squeamish” to talk about the issue.

Of course it is true that people who come to this country do much good—we have heard a lot about that, and I could obviously quote examples from my own constituency—but there are other effects of migration of people into low-skilled occupations. When we say “low-skilled”, it is not a pejorative remark; it is a statement of fact. Some jobs are more skilled than others.

The effects of large-scale migration into those jobs have been fivefold. It has displaced investment in technology, particularly in automation; it has held down wage levels, which has been undesirable both from the migrants' point of view and for people already here; it has encouraged under-investment in training and skills, and it has built an economy that is increasingly ossified by a dependence on relatively low-cost labour rather than the high-tech, high-skilled economy that we need to compete and thrive. But more than that, the unwillingness of successive Governments to tackle this issue has undermined public faith in the efficacy of Government and the willingness of Ministers to face the facts. Now we have a Home Secretary, the Minister on the Front Bench—who I see there now—and a Prime Minister who are willing to face the facts and take decisive action, which is what this Bill does.

I simply end by saying this: in the words of G. K. Chesterton, we should not take a fence down until we know the reason it was put up. The reason we have borders is because it is right that the British people and those they elect to represent them should decide who comes to our country, in what number and why. This Bill is a start, but I finish with these remarks, and a challenge to the Minister. First, we must deport more illegal immigrants. It is extraordinary that the recent Governments, the coalition and the Conservatives, are deporting fewer illegal immigrants than previous Labour Governments were. Secondly, we must be careful about the number of work visas issued. Thirdly, we must keep a watch on net migration as we go forward, so that what we do is in tune with what the British people are prepared to warrant.

6.46 pm

Imran Hussain (Bradford East) (Lab) [V]: Amidst the ongoing lockdown and social distancing, those of us abiding by these measures have not seen our friends or family in person for weeks. Yet while for most of us this experience is temporary and will last for just a few weeks or months more, it is what those families separated by borders under the UK's restrictive rules and conditions face all year round. It is just a taste of what these families, who must jump through the Home Office's complex hoops and over its changing barriers, endure.

The first of these barriers are the deeply discriminatory and restrictive minimum income requirements for families. Currently, someone wishing to bring their partner and children to the UK must have a combined income of £18,600 a year with an additional £3,800 for their first child and £2,400 for each additional child. However, this figure fails to take into account the significant divergence in living costs between different areas of the country. The median house price in my constituency is half the average for England and Wales. While applicants struggle to reach the £18,600-plus figure, particularly as the average yearly wage is around £6,000 less than the UK average, it does not mean that they cannot support a family, and they are unfairly penalised as a result. The Home Office's disgraceful "Go home" vans on immigration and the detention and treatment of the Windrush generation are the most visible aspects of the hostile environment, but we cannot overlook the huge impact of these deeply unfair rules that tell huge numbers of people they do not earn enough to be with the people they love.

The Bill also says nothing about the extraordinary rise in the cost of immigration health surcharges for those staying in the UK for more than six months, which this October are set to rise by more than 50% in one swift jump, having already doubled early last year. This must be paid for each year and for each person applying and it must be paid upfront along with the extortionate visa fees, creating huge costs for families in this country on work permits, and sending completely the wrong message to families around the world who want to come to this country. The charge also does not go directly towards funding our NHS where it is intended to go, but instead goes straight into the Treasury coffers and acts as a secondary form of taxation on migrants who already pay into our NHS through VAT, income tax, fuel duty and a host of other duties and regular taxes.

The Bill further fails to address the deeply institutionalised discrimination embedded in the Home Office that both I and my staff must navigate on a daily basis. One of the clearest examples of this is the poor decision-making process employed by UK Visas and Immigration. On numerous occasions I have found that the decision maker either does not fully understand the circumstances and situation or ignores documentation sent, claiming it has not been included. That means applications are being rejected for some of the most minor reasons, such as a missing page or bank document that could easily be requested, and which demonstrates the sheer pettiness of the Home Office and how embedded the hostile environment is.

Another example is the high number of refused visa applications: the applications of around nine in 10 of my constituents who reach out to my office for assistance with visitor visas for family and friends from Pakistan,

India or Bangladesh are refused. The Home Office states that these decisions are made by a computer system but it is clearly either broken or the Home Office has programmed it with an inbuilt racial bias as those applying have a good financial history and visitor history and are often visiting on compassionate grounds.

As a proud city of sanctuary, Bradford has for years welcomed people from all over the world with open arms, and offered them a new life. In this Bill and the Government's immigration system, however, the kindness and good will for which we in Bradford advocate so fiercely is tragically absent. As we debate the Bill, I implore the Minister to recognise the importance of family and to ensure that no child is separated from their parent, and to address the serious discrimination and malpractices in the Home Office and the immigration system, with the minimum income requirement, the immigration health surcharge and the decision-making process.

6.50 pm

Mark Fletcher (Bolsover) (Con): I rise to warmly welcome the Bill, which ends free movement, eliminates the unfairness between EU and non-EU migration, paves the way for a points-based immigration system and, most importantly, delivers on our pledge at last year's election.

I need no convincing that immigration is and has been a good thing for Britain. As my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said, it is woven into our nation's fabric, and we need to continue to attract the brightest and the best around the world. Uncontrolled immigration, however, has placed a great strain on many communities. We simply abandoned any expectation along the way of those who came here to integrate, to speak English and to commit to working and living by the same rules as everyone else. As Tony Blair relaxed the rules, the Labour party simply forgot about working-class communities across the country. It did not listen as those communities struggled for jobs, experienced the difficulties of getting school places and doctor's appointments, and lived with the consequences of divided communities, which were left to suffer in silence and, should they speak out, risked the wrath of the north London chattering classes who, for the third time in a row, are once again running the Labour party.

Today, the Government are proposing to right those wrongs, and are proposing a pathway to a fair immigration system. What do we hear from the Opposition? We heard the hon. Member for Leeds East (Richard Burgon) talk once again about austerity cuts. We heard a disingenuous blurring of the lines between those who are here already and those who may come here in future. We heard from the hon. Member for Torfaen (Nick Thomas-Symonds) that now is not the time, without any indication of when the time might be for a policy such as this. He spoke about lessons learned and the need for the Government to learn lessons, but the Opposition seem to have learned no lessons at all. A lot has been written about how Labour voters abandoned the party in the general election, but the truth is that the Labour party abandoned those voters and those communities many years ago. It is the Conservative one-nation Government who are righting those wrongs and standing up for those communities. I commend the Bill, and I welcome the Home Secretary's leadership on this matter.

6.54 pm

Stella Creasy (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op) [V]: Ending freedom of movement has become the loudest answer to everything we hear on the doorstep. No jobs? End freedom of movement. No housing, no doctor's appointment, no parking? Blame freedom of movement. In that noise, it is hard to talk about this issue without being called either a racist or a bleeding heart liberal, but the truth is that EU migration has benefited our economy. EU migrants contribute £2,300 more to the public purse each year than the average adult—and that is including the cost of their children being here, too. They are also less likely to use our public services, although they work in them. We are more likely to meet an EU migrant helping us in our hospitals than standing in front of us in a queue.

Over the past 20 years, immigration has been on a much larger scale than we have had in the previous 200 years, but, truthfully, however many people have come, this country has never been good at making it work. With every new wave of people, the UK has always been unwelcoming and always regretted it. Indeed, it was the same with the Huguenots, the wave of refugees that brought both my family and Nigel Farage's family here. When the Windrush generation came, they were met with "no blacks, no Irish, no dogs". Now we rightly honour their contribution to our communities. We have demonised those who have come from Europe for years. Now, as we clap for those who are saving our lives with one set of hands, this proposed legislation asks us to abandon them with another.

The problem here is not immigration; it is politicians talking about what we do not want, rather than what we need. This Bill is that problem written down: bringing to an end freedom of movement without providing for what comes next, because in our toxic political culture ending freedom of movement has been sold as a solution in itself. The only answer the Government are offering us about what replaces it is to expose everyone to the dysfunction that is the current immigration system—the same system that gave us the hostile environment, the Windrush scandal and the legacy system.

The former Home Secretary and former Member for Blackburn once told me there are two divides in Parliament: left and right; and those who have to deal with the UK Border Agency and those who do not. The truth is that the UKBA has been a fiasco for Governments of all colours. It makes us all hypocrites: locking up victims of torture and rape in Yarl's Wood, while claiming to be defenders of human rights. It is a system where, unlike in other countries in Europe, when we see refugee children, we do not seek to reunite them with their family members or provide them with safe passage to stop them being targeted by traffickers. Above all, it is a system that is just not very good at making decisions. Of the 25,000 people we locked in detention without any limit for how long, only 37% were eventually deported and yet we expect them to deal with this mess without any legal support. The only people who would be helped by this Bill will be us, because it absolves us of dealing with the problems it creates. It gives the Government Henry VIII powers to write immigration legislation without having to bring them back to this place and force us to address the damage that has been done. We already have a points-based system, so the question Ministers should

be answering is: what do we award points for? We know that skilled or valued worker does not necessarily mean well-paid worker.

We know 3 million of our EU citizens, who are our friends, our family and our neighbours, are now struggling with the paperwork that pre-settled status entails. There are 1 million Brits in Europe who need a good deal, too. So ask yourselves if you want your children to be able to work for companies who have offices in Berlin or Rome without them being penalised because they cannot travel there, or one that gives points out so that if you fall in love with your French exchange partner you can move to Paris or they can come to you in Barnsley. The benefits that came with freedom of movement mean that when you do not have it, you will end up wanting to invent it. Such freedoms will become more important, not less, in the coming years.

If we are to have a better quality of legislation, we need a better quality of debate about who is coming in and why. Take, for example, the immigrant who came to us having failed his exams with a patchy work history and no ties to the UK. His name was Albert Einstein. Even then, in the 1930s, the UK border authorities misplaced his papers. His landing card was only found in a trawl of old paperwork in Heathrow in 2011. Back then, the *Daily Mail* urged readers to avoid him and boycott his lectures raising money for other refugees from Nazi Europe. Back then, another MP, Oliver Locker-Lampson, tried to sponsor his British citizenship and help Jews fleeing the Nazis. Back then, we said no and we lost Einstein to America.

When it comes to immigration, our policies all too often meet Einstein's definition of insanity: doing the same thing over and over again, and expecting a different result. I will not be voting for the Bill, because it is another example of that phenomenon and my constituents—former, current and future—deserve better from us all. All the while, we as politicians continue to behave like this and debate like this. The problem is not immigrants, it is us.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): I suspend the House for 15 minutes until 7.14 pm precisely.

6.59 pm

Sitting suspended (Order, this day).

7.14 pm

On resuming—

Rob Butler (Aylesbury) (Con) [V]: Immigration is a good thing for the United Kingdom, but more than that, immigration has shaped many aspects of life in today's United Kingdom. People have come to this country from overseas for centuries, bringing their skills, ideas and cultures. For the last 40 years, however, people wanting to live here have been treated in different ways based not on what they can offer, share or contribute, but purely on whether or not they came from the European Union. Those from some of our oldest allies, such as the United States, and from our greatest friends in the Commonwealth, such as Australia, New Zealand, India and Pakistan, have all been treated differently. In fact, it has been worse than being treated differently—it has been discrimination. This Bill will end the discrimination and replace it with equality and fairness.

[Rob Butler]

In the referendum on the EU, along with 17.4 million people, I voted to leave because I wanted the UK to take back control of its laws, money and borders. But I did not want to close the borders and say no to immigration—far from it, I wanted to say, “We welcome the people who want to come to the UK to contribute, to make this an even better country.” If someone from Spain wants to come here to do that, excellent. If someone from South Korea wants to come here to do that, excellent. With this Bill, from now on they will both have an equal chance, a fair opportunity—a level playing field, if you will.

During this horrendous coronavirus pandemic, we have all seen the massive contribution to the NHS from thousands of staff who have come from overseas to settle in this country. At some time in our lives, each and every one of us is likely to have been diagnosed, treated or nursed by healthcare professionals who were born abroad. I want that to continue and for the NHS to have access to the best talent, the greatest minds and the most compassionate carers, wherever in the world they come from. Nothing in the Bill will change that.

Of course, immigration cannot be unlimited. No country in the world would be able to support that. What is more, the British people have made it clear that they want lower overall immigration and an end to free movement by citizens of the EU. The Bill delivers their mandate. It paves the way for deciding who should be allowed to live and work here, using a points-based system that delivers for our economy and society. It can be adapted and tailored to the UK’s needs. It will encourage businesses to focus on developing and training the British workforce in lower-skilled occupations while ensuring that they have ready access to the cream of the global skill and talent pool. The tradeable characteristics in the points-based system and ongoing reviews by the Migration Advisory Committee provide flexibility over salary and skills that will ensure that employers can hire the right people at the right time to boost our productivity and improve our public services. It is a system that is firm and fair, clear and coherent. Coming from a constituency with a large number of microbusinesses, I just ask that sufficient focus and attention are devoted to small firms to ensure that they have the guidance and support they need to implement these new measures at a time when they already face considerable challenges resulting from coronavirus.

I also welcome the benefits that the Bill will bring to our border security. Stricter controls will help to ensure that serious criminals cannot come to our country to commit offences and create more victims of crime. Can anyone really disagree with that? Too often as a magistrate, I saw criminals who had been able to come into the UK unchecked because of EU free movement. I am therefore pleased that in future, we will have the right automatically to reject EEA migrants with criminal convictions, and I look forward to seeing further details of the proposed mechanics of that later in the Bill’s progress.

Some people have said that this is the wrong time to introduce this Bill. I respectfully disagree. At a time when we are encouraging the country to try to go about its business while staying safe and alert, we in this House, too, should be going about our business, delivering the legislation that we promised in December’s election.

This is the right time for this Bill. It helps to set the shape of the country that we will become in the years and decades ahead, paving the way for a strong, dynamic recovery from a health crisis that has crippled the globe, welcoming the best and brightest, equally judged and free of favour, and unshackled from the EU, open to the world—the United Kingdom, rightly in control of its own borders.

7.19 pm

Bell Ribeiro-Addy (Streatham) (Lab) [V]: I will not be voting for this Bill. I do not believe it should even be permitted to proceed through this House, and I tabled a reasoned amendment to that effect. The Bill certainly should not proceed at this time, when we are in the midst of a global pandemic.

The Government’s approach is fatally flawed. In plain language, it puts the cart before the horse and post-Brexit immigration legislation before the legal, economic and trade relationship with the EU is in any way settled. Our relationship with the EU will remain our most important external economic relationship for years to come, and it is important to get that right. Our immigration system should fit into that, not the other way around. Worse still, the Bill is supplemented by a whole slew of Henry VIII powers.

My constituents did not elect me to this House to hand away the right to speak up for them and represent them on these issues. What does our democracy even mean if any Government are given the opportunity to make laws that so fundamentally affect people’s lives and the economy with little scrutiny and behind closed doors? That is essentially a constitutional power grab. No Government should be given a blank cheque that they can redeem any time they are in trouble or are tempted to whip up anti-migrant sentiment as a distraction. Who would trust this Government with these powers? Immigration policy brought in by this Government has been bad enough as it is.

This will be the second time in the past 10 years that a Conservative Government have retrospectively changed the rights of migrants after they have entered this country, lived here, settled here, had children here, opened businesses here and paid taxes here. The Government did it in 2014 to the Windrush generation, and we saw just how many suffered, but as they are pressing ahead with the Bill, it seems that no lessons were learned. The Government’s commitments on EU nationals’ rights are meaningless if not underpinned by primary legislation and if they are not granted automatic settled status. The Bill does neither.

We cannot continue to allow Governments to keep passing legislation like this. It leaves migrants and their children asking at what point their rights in this country—their home—are truly secure. Instead of giving reassurances and creating a migration system that is fair, respects human rights and benefits our economy, this Government have opted simply to subject EU nationals to the same failed and inhumane hostile environment policies that they have had for people from outside the EU.

Children born here and who have lived here their whole life are asked to pay more than £1,000 to be British. Families are split apart because of the arbitrary minimum income threshold. Data sharing with the Home Office makes the most vulnerable scared to use services.

The Government continue with no recourse to public funds, even though the courts have ruled it unlawful and the coronavirus has proved it inhumane. They detain people for months on end, even the victims of torture and trafficking—longer than any other country in Europe—only to eventually release nearly 70% of them, allowing private companies to profit from their misery. This Bill and the Government's points-based system end none of those things.

In fact, the Bill does not even help our work shortages. The Institute for Public Policy Research has shown that under the income threshold, 69% of EU nationals would not be eligible. To all those who call such workers “low skilled”, I say that those earning below the salary threshold are not low skilled at all. There is no such thing as low-skilled work; just low-paid work. All work is skilled when it is done well. Persisting down this line is a slap in the face to those many key workers who are low paid and who have been our backbone throughout this pandemic. How callous is it to bring forward the Bill without being sensitive to those matters?

We need a fair immigration policy that does not retrospectively strip people of their rights—an immigration policy that meets this country's needs and ultimately ends the hostile environment. The Government are not in any way attempting to do that. History proved right those brave few who voted against the Immigration Act 2014, and I urge all Members to vote down this disgraceful piece of legislation today.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): I remind every contributor who is not physically here to please have a timing device ready so that you know when you are coming towards the end of your speech. In the Chamber, Members have a clock at their disposal.

7.23 pm

James Sunderland (Bracknell) (Con): This is a key moment in British politics. For years, the issues of Europe and immigration have stretched Governments and divided parties, but here is a chance to lay those ghosts to rest. In December, Britain voted for a Government who promised to deliver Brexit and end uncontrolled immigration, so this Bill does exactly what it says on the tin. Not only does it allow the UK to take back control of its borders, but it also helps our territorial sovereignty in a way that has not been possible for more than four decades. For those politicians who dare to listen to the electorate, that is what we promised and what we will deliver.

In recent weeks, people have told me that the Bill is contentious, but it should be regarded for what it is, not for what others fear it to be. For a start, I was elected on the Conservative manifesto of 2019, which promised to end free movement across our borders and to restore trust in our immigration system. History is littered with examples of Governments failing to deliver, but here we are, on the road to delivery. Not only does the Bill fulfil the clear pledges that were made, but it allows our independent country to evolve in the post-Brexit era, as we would wish it to.

People have told me that the Bill flies in the face of what has been achieved by so many during the pandemic, notably in the NHS. A handful of constituents have even asked me to withhold my support for the Bill until it recognises the contribution of key workers. No one

should need any reminder of the respect, admiration and awe with which the British people regard those heroes. The contribution of our public sector employees, public servants and staff is the stuff of legend, and we will always be grateful. But we must be careful not to mix metaphors. Contrary to what we have heard, the Bill does not serve to detract from that, nor does it serve to demean anyone, irrespective of their creed, colour, faith or ethnicity. In fact, it bears no correlation whatever with that. It simply fulfils a promise to bring in a fairer system that allows the UK to welcome the brightest and best to our shores. To use logistical terminology, it will be on a demand-pull, not a supply-push, basis.

For the avoidance of any doubt, immigration has been good for the UK, and we have built a proud global nation on the back of our history, shared values and unrivalled diaspora and those who have come here from abroad. I have also been honoured to serve alongside many brilliant foreign and Commonwealth soldiers. We owe a debt of gratitude to them, and our shared wealth, prosperity and enviable trading relationships will only be enhanced further through our pursuit of new free trade agreements.

The blueprint for future success does not mean that we can write a blank cheque in the post-Brexit era for all those hoping to come here, as much as we might want to. In this competitive and conflicted world, it is no surprise that many seek to come to the UK, but that cannot be ad hoc. That has nothing to do with racism or xenophobia, and those who are confused about that are wrong.

The Bill promises a points-based immigration system that mirrors other countries of the free world. We do, however, need to be careful that it does not become a blunt instrument. The legislation must be flexible and agile enough to respond to the employment market at any given time, particularly in terms of the skills being offered. For example, there will be a need for seasonal labour, and we must be able to attract all those we need. Indeed, I welcome the fact that employers will be given sufficient notice to plan, but it is essential too that the UK Government do not cut off their nose to spite their face by inadvertently limiting those we need. I would certainly welcome some transitional arrangements in that respect.

Of course, none of that is sustainable if we allow free movement across the channel. We need to better provide law enforcement agencies with the power to intercept and return. As many hon. Members will testify, what is happening now in Dover is unsustainable, and we must disincentivise those who seek to exploit the misfortune of others with promises of asylum. We must also ensure that those entering the UK on student visas do not become lost to the system, and it is right that the legislation further enables changes to social security arrangements and visas.

As contentious as the Bill might be to some, it is what many in Britain have requested for the past four decades. It is what we voted for in 2019, and it is what the Conservative Government promised.

7.29 pm

Alison McGovern (Wirral South) (Lab) [V]: The Bill offers more questions than answers, it has so much missing from it. We do know, given the coronavirus crisis, that

[Alison McGovern]

how much someone earns is not related to how skilled they are; we have seen that with the careworkers in our country, but this Bill does not tell us anything about what the Government are going to do with that information. All we have heard so far about their immigration policy is that there will be a test that relies largely on how much people earn.

We do not know what will happen in our economy, or what the situation will be for the care sector, the construction sector, or the vital creative industries that make many of our cities vibrant and thriving. My hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Jeff Smith) talked about the importance of the music sector for Manchester; we do not know where that important sector will be when the coronavirus crisis is over. It is foolish to legislate as we are doing with this Bill, in reverse; rather, we should decide what kind of economy we want to have in this country and what kind of management we want to exercise in the labour market, and then decide where our immigration policy should fit in alongside those principles. Instead, the Bill gives the Government the right to make up the rules as they go along. That is my first argument against the Bill: it gives too much power to a Department of Government that we know already makes up the rules as it goes along—the Home Office.

Secondly, the Bill is foggy on the underlying causes in this debate. People have spoken about the political mess that we have got into on immigration. Some have argued that people coming to the UK to work have been used for low-paid work, but that misses what is actually going on in our country. In fact, immigration is what happens when the shape of a country's labour market is such that, with an ageing population, people are needed in that country who are able to do the jobs necessary to support the older and ageing population. The real question is how we manage that transition, how we create a proper skills system, so that people can get the jobs that they want, and how we have a workable immigration policy that means we can afford to support our country as a whole and provide the kind of social care, pensions and healthcare for older people that we aspire to.

Finally, I want to say a word or two on the politics of this debate. Pretty much everybody who has contributed has said that immigration is a good thing for our country, and it can be so. I am glad to hear people say that. The hon. Member for Bracknell (James Sunderland) said that the Bill would lay the ghost of the immigration debate to rest, but I have to tell him that he is wrong. The argument that underlies the Bill is as old as the hills, but as long as there are recessions and economic downturns, as long as there are economic problems in countries around the world, there will be politicians who are ready to blame foreigners. This Bill, however it is amended, and however many clauses are added, will not end that because that empty rhetoric cannot be beaten.

We have had the hostile environment and it has been shown that it will never work. There are always people ready to accuse politicians of betrayal when it comes to immigration, so I suggest that instead we concentrate on building a country where everyone is included and where there is a proper economic plan for all the people here. That is the way we will bring our country together.

7.33 pm

Tom Hunt (Ipswich) (Con): Is a pleasure to be back in the Chamber to speak on Second Reading of this Bill, which will end the EU freedom of movement and pave the way for a new points-based immigration system that treats everyone equally. Let me say at the outside that the Bill has my full support. Taking back control of our borders was one of the central reasons, if not the main reason, why millions of people up and down the country voted to leave the European Union almost four years ago. The Bill brings us one step closer to finally delivering on that historic verdict.

The desire to take back control of our borders is not to deny the immense contribution made by many people who have come here from overseas and will continue to do so in future; in fact, ending freedom of movement and building a points-based immigration system based on equality and individual merit will allow us to welcome more people from around the world who have so much to offer this country. On the contrary, taking back control is about ending the uncontrolled mass immigration that has disproportionately affected our working-class communities in recent decades. These communities have seen the increased pressure on their schools and hospitals, their wages have remained low, and there have been rapid cultural changes in the towns in which they live.

Although it is undoubtedly clear that the vast majority of those who have moved to our country under EU freedom of movement rules have made a positive contribution and integrated fully, the simple truth is that that has not been the case for everyone who has taken advantage of those rules, and many of our communities have been adversely affected because of that.

Today's Bill gives us a power to continue to welcome into our country all those who wish to make a positive contribution to not just our economy but our society, while allowing us to say, "No," to those whose impact is likely to be more dubious. That is the reality of the Bill, and it is a reality to be welcomed. For too long, those issues were known but locked inside the EU treaties. There was no way to address them through our traditional democratic process. Immigration was an issue snatched out of people's democratic control, undermining their confidence in our political system, as well as in our ability to execute our fundamental responsibility as a nation to decide who enters our country.

We have an unmissable opportunity to restore the public's confidence by building an immigration system that welcomes the best and the brightest from around the world while retaining democratic control and the consent of the people. Despite the clear support in the country for such reforms, the Labour party of today remains wedded to open borders and uncontrolled, mass immigration. During his leadership campaign, the right hon. and learned Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer) set out his full support for bringing back freedom of movement in the future, clearly disappointed that his attempts to reverse the decision of the 2016 referendum were not successful. If given the chance, it appears that he would do everything in his power to dilute and frustrate the decision instead. In other words, why set yourself against many of your party's traditional supporters once when you can do it twice? By voting against the Bill tonight, the Labour party takes yet another step in its long march away from the people it once faithfully represented.

When we debate the future of our immigration system, we need to touch on illegal immigration, although I appreciate that that will be dealt with in a separate Bill. For public confidence in the system today, tackling illegal immigration must be one of the key issues that we confront. While thousands of people continue to break our laws by operating outside of our legal immigration system, the public will not have full faith that we have control of our borders. I urge the Government to build on the important work in this Bill by giving further consideration to how we tackle illegal immigration over the coming weeks and months.

As I said at the start of my speech, the Bill has my full support because it ends freedom of movement, gets us ready for a new global immigration system and helps to restore public confidence in the integrity of our borders. There is still more work to be done, and we cannot count on the Labour party's support in doing it, but the era of uncontrolled and undemocratic mass immigration is certainly coming to an end, and that should be welcomed.

7.37 pm

Gavin Robinson (Belfast East) (DUP) [V]: It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Ipswich (Tom Hunt). I understand that there are no reasonable, reasoned amendments being taken this evening. Although I understand that there are those who will vote against the Bill, it is important that they not only hear and share their concerns but listen to Members such as myself, who share many of the frustrations about the omissions and areas for improvement in the Bill but recognise that it will pass in any event. I therefore encourage them, over the weeks to come, to collaborate with Members who share some of their concerns.

It is also right to recognise that controlling the borders of the United Kingdom was a fundamental reason why the majority of people in our country voted to leave the European Union. We support the principle of ending uncontrolled immigration and treating those wishing to enter the UK from the European economic area and the rest of the world fairly and equally. However, we are not ignorant of the impact that such a sharp and poorly tailored approach to ending free movement could have, particularly in Northern Ireland, on the growth of certain important economic sectors such as agriculture and hospitality, if current access to labour is not replicated in an appropriate way.

I welcome the elements of the Bill that reiterate the rights afforded to UK and Irish nationals to work, reside and access Government benefits in each other's jurisdiction. Such provision was enshrined in national law well before either country joined the EU and was never going to be threatened by the UK's exit from the EU.

We do, however, express concern at the Government's recent decision to amend the settlement scheme to allow family members of British and British-Irish citizens dual citizenship. This was intended to placate certain aspects where a spouse or partner was a British citizen as a result of being born in Northern Ireland and therefore was not eligible for a scheme explicitly for EU27 nationals. The reality is that citizens born in Northern Ireland under the Belfast agreement have the right to both Irish citizenship and British citizenship, but it is in addition to British citizenship, not instead of it. That issue strikes at the very heart of the principle of consent.

On the settlement scheme, we believe there is a duty on Government to honour the provisions of the citizens' rights chapter of the withdrawal agreement in good faith, with compassion and clarity. At the same time, we do not believe it would be helpful to use this Bill as a vehicle to reopen, replace or expand the terms of that chapter. EU citizens need clarity and continuity at this time, not uncertainty or false expectations. Much depends on the outcome of the negotiations on the future relationship. I ask that the Home Office steps up its efforts to fill any void with information in respect of the operation of the settlement scheme, including in terms of the effectiveness of appeals, how applications still pending on 31 June 2021 will be dealt with and how local authorities are proactively seeking to ensure that looked-after children are treated fairly and sensitively.

We need to ensure that EU citizens—many of whom have contributed to UK society on a level far surpassing the minimum requirements set out in the settlement scheme, including in the NHS and as careworkers during the current crisis—are not disadvantaged. Officials should be looking at reasons why status should be granted, as opposed to reasons why it should not be, and clarity is required on the reasonable grounds for missing an application.

The DUP supports a compassionate and open approach to refugees from communities in other countries affected by terrorism, war or persecution. We appreciate the need to review routes for individuals and believe that it would be best to get international co-operation outside the free movement debate. We believe that consideration should be given to mitigations for family members of EEA citizens who have been convicted of domestic abuse and whose status in the UK could be linked to their perpetrators.

In terms of the new points-based system, the intention to implement a single skills-based system of immigration in the UK, treating all migrant workers from anywhere in the world on a fair and equal basis, is a welcome development. As the Bill progresses, we will be seeking change, but we want to see a regime that is fair, sensible and will be to the benefit of our country and its contingent parts.

7.43 pm

Aaron Bell (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Con) [V]: It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Belfast East (Gavin Robinson). This Bill is one of many landmark Bills that the Government have introduced to establish Britain's new post-EU framework. We had the Third Reading of the Agriculture Bill last week and will debate the Trade Bill this Wednesday; I would be keen to speak in that debate too, if you could put in a good word for me, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Collectively, these new Bills represent a transfer of power, authority and, crucially, responsibility back to this place and back to the British people. If the British people decide they want a different approach in future to agriculture, trade or immigration, they can now vote for it at a general election. My neighbour, my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Dr Mullan), spoke brilliantly about this earlier. I wholeheartedly endorse his comments about the misrepresentation and weaponisation of the term "low-skilled" by some Opposition Members. I had hoped that the cynicism of Corbynism might depart with its figurehead, but clearly the new Leader of the Opposition cannot stop its momentum.

[Aaron Bell]

It is unsurprising that those who were always against leaving the European Union and sought to overturn the referendum result are now seeking to oppose these Bills. They did not listen to the people then, and they are still not listening. Even now, they are playing for time and hoping, like Mr Micawber, that something will turn up to derail the transition process. But we have left the European Union, which means that, for the first time in more than 40 years, we can deliver control of immigration by ending freedom of movement and replacing it with a considered and considerate approach that will command the trust of the British people. The Bill will introduce a new system that is fair and simple and that will level the playing field, attracting the brightest and best to live, work and make their lives here in the UK, regardless of where they are from. When we do that, we will give top priority to the skilled workers we need to boost our economy and support our public services.

We will continue to welcome doctors and nurses from around the world to support our NHS, which is particularly welcome at this moment of national emergency, as we deal with coronavirus. I pay tribute to all those NHS workers—immigrants or otherwise—who have gone above and beyond in these last few months in helping to respond to this terrible pandemic. The new NHS visa will offer fast-track entry to the UK for qualified overseas doctors and nurses and will provide three to five-year work visas with reduced up-front fees, and we have already removed doctors and nurses from the tier 2 visa cap.

Similarly, as a member of the Science and Technology Committee, I welcome the Government's intention to make it easier to attract leading scientists, engineers and mathematicians to come and work in the UK. More generally, I know that the Government are listening to advice to ensure that this new immigration system will be flexible enough to meet the needs of businesses and essential services. They have responded to the call from the independent Migration Advisory Committee to lower the general salary threshold, and they have tasked that same committee with keeping the shortage occupation list under regular review. This bodes very well.

It is also important that the Bill will protect the long-held rights of Irish citizens, recognising our deep, historic ties with the island of Ireland and the contribution that Irish citizens have made to the UK. Once free movement ends, Irish citizens will continue to be able to come to the UK to live and work, as they do now, regardless of where they have travelled from. The wider rights enjoyed by Irish citizens in the UK, which flow from the common travel area arrangements, will also be maintained.

The Bill and the new points-based immigration system obviously represent a significant departure for our country, but one that emphasises and reinforces a positive social change. We remain one of the most welcoming and tolerant countries in the world, and, as Ipsos MORI recently found, people are more willing than ever to say that immigration has had a positive impact on Britain, a sentiment I have always shared. Some see this as ironic, or as proof of a buyer's remorse with regard to the leave vote and the end of freedom of movement, but I believe it is quite the opposite. It is precisely that sense of control and democratic accountability that has driven this change.

It is absolutely clear that delivering control of our borders, with regard to both the total numbers coming and the skills they bring with them, was something that the British people, and my constituents in Newcastle-under-Lyme, were asking for in both the 2016 EU referendum and the 2019 general election. The Government set out in their manifesto at that election that they would deliver a new points-based immigration system to attract the best talent from all around the world, as the Bill enables. The British people have demonstrated in two historic votes that they want an approach that returns control of our borders to this House—to them. We are listening to them, and we are delivering what they asked for.

7.47 pm

Claudia Webbe (Leicester East) (Lab) [V]: I am afraid that the Bill is simply not fit for purpose, and I am proud to have co-signed the amendment calling for it not to be considered. The coronavirus crisis has shown that the people who really keep our society ticking are not billionaires or the super-rich but nurses, carers, cleaners, checkout attendants and many more essential frontline workers, yet these are the very people that the Bill brands as low-skilled. This reveals the fundamental hypocrisy of the Government.

It does not matter how many Cabinet Ministers applaud NHS staff in front of television cameras on a Thursday night if they then legislate to strip them of their dignity. Under this Government, citizenship rights have been deliberately obscured, and deportation and removal targets have taken precedence, yet the Bill makes no effort to end these hostile environment policies, which were found to be institutionally racist by the official inquiry into the Windrush scandal. It also will not end the abhorrent practice of indefinite detention, which has led to the inhumane treatment that has become routine in centres such as Yarl's Wood. I cannot believe that, even during this pandemic, we are picking people up from their homes in Leicester East and putting them in barbaric detention centres, leaving MPs like me spending time trying to get them released. It is not as if there are any planes going anywhere, so why is that happening?

As MP for one of the most diverse constituencies in the country, I know only too well the hurt that my constituents feel when the Government legitimise the dehumanisation and marginalisation of African, Asian and minority ethnic communities with their deport first, ask questions later approach. Some 43% of Leicester East residents were born outside the UK, as opposed to 10% nationally. Our residents hail from more than 50 countries around the globe. That is what makes our city special, yet it also means that my constituents are more vulnerable to the predatory aspects of this legislation. For instance, a recent study in the *Health Service Journal* found that 66% of NHS workers who have tragically died from the virus were not born in the UK. Our health service simply would not function without the sacrifice of people from across the world, yet if a migrant NHS worker tragically dies because of work-related illnesses, it is their belief that the future of their dependent family members living in the UK is not guaranteed. That means that vulnerable individuals could face deportation while grieving for their loved one. Why wait until they die? Guarantee now the indefinite leave to remain for family dependants of all migrant NHS workers who are keeping our society going. I have written to the Home

Secretary urging her to close this loophole in order to honour the dedication and sacrifice of all NHS workers, no matter their country of birth.

On that note, let me say how deeply disappointed I was that the Government have refused to reconsider the pernicious immigration health surcharge. Any charge that deters people from seeking medical treatment is not only inhumane but could exacerbate the spread of the virus. The Government have a moral and practical obligation to abolish the surcharge. I have also called on the Government to introduce an amnesty for all migrants, including residency rights, for the duration of the pandemic and to end the callous no recourse to public funds policy. At a time when hate crime has more than doubled since 2013, with more than 100,000 offences in 2018, it has never been more important for the demonisation of migrants to end. That means repealing the Immigration Act 2014, reversing the hostile environment, and shutting detention centres for good.

I will conclude with the worrying provision in the Bill that grants sweeping new powers to the Government to change immigration laws without proper scrutiny. This Government's systematic mistreatment of migrants over the past decade, from the hostile environment to the Windrush scandal, is the ultimate proof that they are undeserving of this unchecked power. It would be a monumental mistake, to the detriment of too many vulnerable people in Leicester East and across the country, for this House to grant that power to them. I will be voting against this Bill.

7.53 pm

David Johnston (Wantage) (Con) [V]: It is a pleasure to speak in this debate. During the election campaign, I was on a street stall in Wantage when a woman from Zambia came up to me wanting to talk about Brexit. Wantage and Didcot was 54% remain, so this conversation could have gone either way, but she was in favour of Brexit. She told me that she had been working in the NHS for nine years, but that she could not get settled status, yet if she had come from Europe and been here for five years she would have been able to do so.

It is right that we have a settled status scheme for those in the EU. The fact that 3.5 million people have already applied for it suggests that it is working very well. That lady's question to me was, "What about the Commonwealth countries? What about Britain's relationship with those?" I agree with her and think it is right that we now have an immigration system based on what we need rather than on whether someone is from Europe.

There has been quite a bit of discussion about the NHS and social care this afternoon, which is completely understandable. I welcome the Government's commitment to a fast-track visa for doctors and nurses, and their extension of the health worker visa by a year if it is to expire before 1 October. I also think it is absolutely clear to all of us now, if it were not so before, what a vital role those from other countries have been playing in our social care system. We knew that for decades, but it has been highlighted in recent months. Where I part company from some Opposition speakers is in their thinking that because of that, we should continue to import our care workers from overseas. The answer to social care is in a cross-party solution wherein we properly fund and structure it and it is seen as a well-regarded profession; it is not to keep on doing what we

have done for decades, because if we do, we will only put off into the future the solution that is really needed. It is worth saying that those from the EU who are currently working in our care system have probably already applied for settled status and are certainly entitled to do so.

I wish to make a similar but different point about higher education. I welcome our being a magnet for global talent. It is right that we continue to attract international students and that we have committed to a two-year work visa so that they can find work after they graduate, but I have watched with increasing despair as certain universities have chased a higher and higher proportion of international students, whom they can charge higher fees for low contact time, while those universities often neglect to widen access to their institution to young people who are under-represented in this country. Why are they so reliant on the international fee income and the international market? That is the fundamental question and it cannot be solved by changing the Bill.

I support the Government having lowered the income threshold from £30,000 to £25,600, and it is right that it is lower still for those occupations where we have a shortage of people. It is of great value that we are going to have a seasonal worker visa, which will be particularly important for a constituency like Wantage and Didcot, which has a lot of farming. It is completely correct that the House should continue to debate whether the income thresholds and occupation lists are right and whether we get the point system right, but the most important thing about the legislation is that these things will now be within our control. We will be able to adjust those income thresholds, occupation lists and points.

If one talks to the vast majority of British people, one will hear that they support immigration—they welcome it and can see the contribution that it has made to every aspect of our life—but they expect that the people they democratically elect should be able to control the flow and to increase or decrease it. Importantly, they expect that those people they elect will properly plan the infrastructure that needs to accompany immigration—that we will have the school places, GP appointments and houses we need. That is why they have supported the ending of freedom of movement and the move to the new system that we are going to have, and that is why I, too, fully support this change.

7.57 pm

Hywel Williams (Arfon) (PC) [V]: It is now nearly four years since the EU referendum, and in those four years so much has changed. I will not go through all the Government's gymnastics on this issue—I do not have all night and, of course, neither have you, Mr Deputy Speaker—but it is enough to say that where they are now is pretty far from those sunny, blustery days of promising the easiest deal in the world, that EU countries would come crawling to us with their prosecco and BMWs, and that they need us more than we need them.

So much now is so different. But of course some things never change, and one of them is the Conservatives' obsession with immigration. Despite their failure to meet their own targets; despite the public revulsion at the little vans driving around telling good citizens to go home, the nasty posters and the shameless vote chasing; and despite being way adrift of public opinion—despite all that—they are still obsessed with immigration.

[Hywel Williams]

In the past few months, so much more has changed again. No one imagined that leaving the EU would be pushed almost out of sight by the worst pandemic in living memory. Our attention has been nailed on the value of all our communities. All of us—or nearly all of us—now appreciate the bonds that support us; appreciate the people who sustain us, care for us and risk their lives daily for us; and appreciate that we need them more than they need us.

This crisis would persuade any sensible Government to think again, but are this Government sensible to public opinion when a new Ipsos MORI study shows that since last summer most people are saying that they want to see more doctors and nurses coming to the UK from the EU—more, not fewer? And it is not just health workers that matter so much—it is care workers, so shamelessly branded as low-skilled. The Government could use this opportunity to ensure that the new immigration system is fairer and more humane, not just for EU citizens but for people from all around the world. But instead of taking a step back—instead of thinking again—the Government are rushing to bring EU citizens under the same hostile environment as imposed on others. They should take this chance to build a new immigration system that is fairer and more humane, not just for EU citizens but for people from all around the world.

That is why later Plaid Cymru will be calling for a report on a new immigration system. This must include looking again at recourse to public funds, unfair NHS charges for migrants, the huge application fees and, crucially for us, the devolution of immigration policy to Senedd Cymru, the Scottish Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly so that our needs steer our policy. It should also look again at giving key workers who have put their lives on the line during this crisis the chance of free, automatic British citizenship.

Now, more than ever, we have seen the value brought to communities all over the UK by people who choose to make their home here. This Bill now looks like something from the dim and distant past. It simply cannot be passed as it is.

8.1 pm

Mr Richard Holden (North West Durham) (Con): I welcome this Bill as a sensible, measured approach that delivers on our manifesto commitments to the British people to take back control of our borders and deliver a fair immigration system that means that those who want to come to the UK are judged not by their country of origin or by the colour of their skin but by the contribution that they can make to our country. It is undoubtedly true that many immigrants have made a huge and positive impact on our communities, so I am glad that over 1.3 million European citizens in the United Kingdom have achieved settled status already, including many in my constituency, and that reciprocal arrangements have been agreed for British citizens settled in the EU.

I would like to address two fundamental issues. I agree with the Migration Advisory Committee. Many of my constituents work in the health and social care sectors, as do members of my own family, Mr Speaker, in your constituency. Immigration is not the solution to our care crisis; a cross-party consensus is, as is upskilling, training and, crucially, valuing our carers.

The fact that Labour Members still do not recognise that shows that they are unwilling to listen to and learn the lessons of the last general election. This is about the only thing that unites them at the moment. They are united against the views of communities such as mine that they took for granted for so long. They remain an uneasy coalition of citizens of nowhere and right-on Citizen Smiths: two sides of the same coin. All sides of the Labour party remain committed to open borders. While the Opposition stick to this, it will be clear to the citizens of my constituency, from Consett to Crook and from Willington to Wearhead, that they have no interest in the concerns of my community.

8.3 pm

Afzal Khan (Manchester, Gorton) (Lab) [V]: Let us be absolutely clear that, contrary to what we are being told, this Bill does not set out a blueprint for a new immigration system. It does not tell us who will be allowed to enter the country or under what circumstances. Instead, with this Bill, Ministers are asking us to hand them a blank cheque to do what they want, when they want and how they want. Ministers insist that the Henry VIII powers enshrined in the Bill are standard practice, but since when did any Parliament trust a Government, be it Conservative or Labour, to implement sweeping reforms of the immigration system without parliamentary oversight? I think most colleagues would agree that immigration is an area of policy where we should be seeking greater scrutiny, not less. Given what Ministers are asking, we would assume that they had a plan for what their new immigration system will look like, but as far as I can tell—I am happy to be corrected if I am mistaken—they do not have any such plan.

We are endlessly reminded of the Government's plan for an Australian points-based system, but are provided with no detail on what this would look like in the British context. Reliance on the reputation of the four buzzwords "the Australian points-based system" does little to allay many people's fears about the Government's intention. History demonstrates the callous attitude of numerous Conservative Home Secretaries towards immigrants in this country, and the creation of the hostile environment and the ensuing Windrush scandal epitomise this cruelty. Despite being forced to apologise to the victims of the Windrush scandal, we are yet to see any attempt to roll back the hostile environment that the right hon. Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May) and her successors created. This Bill presents an opportunity to do justice, yet rather than dismantling the hostile environment, this Government have chosen instead to subject a further 3.4 million EU citizens to the inhumanity of their existing policies.

The unprecedented crisis we are facing at the moment, brought on by coronavirus, has shone a light on the critical role migrants play in our society. We have seen a new appreciation of so-called low-skilled workers, redefined overnight as key workers, and the people occupying these undervalued and underpaid roles are often migrants. Indeed, the Prime Minister himself was cared for by nurses from New Zealand and Portugal during his time at St Thomas's. This crisis has shown that our country needs migrants, our health service needs migrants and our social care system needs migrants. The Government could and should use this legislation to recognise the service of migrants to our country, and ensure they are treated fairly and humanely by the Home Office.

Root-and-branch reforms of our immigration system are long overdue. It is high time we saw a 28-day time limit on immigration detention, a review of the health surcharge and visa costs, an expansion of refugee family reunion rules, and the protection of vulnerable and unaccompanied children to ensure that they are able to join family. However, the Bill does none of this. It is the wrong Bill at the wrong time. I hope Ministers will reconsider what they are asking of MPs and look again at this legislation.

8.8 pm

Steve Double (St Austell and Newquay) (Con) [V]: I welcome this Bill, and I am pleased to be able to speak in support of it. The Bill delivers on the commitment we made to the British people when they voted to leave the EU that we would end free movement of people and take back control of our borders. This is something that people voted for: we said we would do it and we are now delivering.

The Government are committed to delivering a new and revamped points-based immigration system that will work in the best interests of our economy and society. The Bill is seeking to establish a framework that will be the basis of our future immigration policy. Sadly, too many speakers today appear to be trying to rerun the whole Brexit debate of four years ago, but it really is time that this House moved on from that. The British people have voted for us to leave the EU—I would argue, far more than once—and the Bill is a major part in delivering on that decision.

It is also important to note that, since the 2016 referendum, the way in which we discuss immigration and the tone with which we do so have changed in this country. It is sad that too often that change is not reflected here. There is nothing racist about wanting democratic control of our own borders, and it is apparent that the Labour party has learned little in the last four years. Many of the British people have moved on and since the referendum there has been a much more constructive debate about the issue. The pros and cons of migration have been better understood, and there is now a broad coalition of people across the country in favour of a more balanced approach to immigration, where our system is not only effective and robust, but fair on individuals and families, and compassionate to those who most need our help.

It is important to note that this Bill does not end immigration—far from it. It is important that we move on from the rhetoric of “anti-immigration”. I am not, and have never been, anti-immigration. All reasonable people recognise that immigration can make a positive contribution to our nation; it has done for many decades. What I am against, as are many others, is the uncontrolled immigration of the EU. What I am in support of is this House and, through us, the British people being able to manage immigration. That is the purpose of the Bill. It re-establishes the democratic control of and accountability for immigration. It lays the groundwork for us to begin harmonising our two-track immigration system into one, such that we no longer favour one group of individuals simply because they are from the EU and discriminate against another because they are from outside the EU. It enables the Government to put in place a points-based system that will allow us to attract the people with the skills and experience we need. To suggest for a moment

that the Bill will be the end of our being able to attract the workforce our NHS and other services need is scaremongering of the worst kind. Importantly, the Bill enables us to have a flexible system that can respond to the changing needs of our economy, which is essential. Our immigration policy should not be set in stone; it needs to be able to flex and adapt as the economic and employment environment changes. The Bill enables that to happen.

One aspect of particular interest is our policy on so-called low-skilled workers. The current covid-19 crisis has demonstrated that many of those workers are essential workers for key parts of our economy. I am assured that, as the Home Secretary has stated, we will keep all aspects of our policy under review, and I am sure that we will reflect on the lessons we have learnt through this time. The coronavirus crisis is going to change the shape of our workforce in the coming months, and possibly years, but we trust and believe that we will recover from our current challenges. In the years to come, sectors such as tourism and hospitality, agriculture and food processing and retail are going to need access to labour that our own residents may well not be able to meet in the future. The Bill lays the framework to enable our future immigration policy to respond to our future needs, and I am very happy to support it this evening.

8.13 pm

Gary Sambrook (Birmingham, Northfield) (Con): I will be supporting the Bill today because it is about delivery. It is about delivery of a manifesto commitment we made. It is about delivery of legislation that reflects the mood of the nation. It is about delivering the end of freedom of movement. It is about delivery of a points-based system, for which many people across this country have called for many years, and they have been ignored by politicians. It is about this Government delivering on that promise.

Many seem to have forgotten about the political tsunamis that the referendum and the 2019 election caused. Many from the Opposition Benches and living rooms have forgotten about those two elections. They were about the concerns, views and problems of working-class people being ignored for generations. People who had voted for politicians who ignored them for decades decided that they had had enough and replaced those politicians with a new generation of politicians in this place. People voted Conservative for the first time in decades in many areas, including in working-class communities in constituencies such as mine.

People are often confused and say that the immigration debate is based on race and people’s country of origin. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is about jobs and services. I find it really frustrating listening to right hon. and hon. Members on the Opposition Benches and businesses when the only solution to workforce issues that they seem to be able to find is immigration. That is not the only way of solving workforce issues. Are we supposed to say that we are going to ignore the thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of people across this country who have talent and could contribute economically?

In my constituency there are more than 4,000 people who are economically inactive—people claiming out-of-work benefits—many of whom could contribute. Are we to tell them that we are going to completely ignore

[Gary Sambrook]

them—that they are beyond reach, that they cannot experience the benefits of work, that the security of a pay packet is beyond reach for them? I do not think so. Are some businesses and the Opposition really saying that we should not invest in the skills and the future of people across this country? I certainly am not. I see it as my duty as a Member of Parliament to ensure that we invest in skills and the contribution that people can make, and I think business has a key role to play in that.

Many people on the Opposition Benches would have us believe that the Bill is about closing the door to the world. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is about opening it up for the best and the brightest from around the world, not just the European Union. It is about a sensible and common-sense approach to immigration.

A number of constituents have contacted me about their concerns about channel crossings and illegal migration. I say to them: “I hear you and I agree with you.” I share those concerns. If it were not for the inability of the previous Parliament to make a decision, we would have been well on the road to solving that issue. I have faith that this Government and this Home Secretary will solve this problem.

Many on the Opposition Benches say they do not trust the Government to deliver on this. Well, I am afraid we were never asking for their trust. They gave the electorate their ideas; they had their manifesto, and it was roundly rejected across the country. It was the Conservative party whose ideas of ending free movement and installing a points-based system were supported by the majority of this country. That is exactly what we are going to do and why I am proud to support the Bill.

8.18 pm

Kate Green (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab) [V]: I draw the House’s attention to my entry in the Register of Members’ Financial Interests.

Rebuilding our economy will be vital to the post-covid recovery. Immigrants to this country have long had an important role in our economic success, and we will need their efforts and talents again. I recognise, of course, that we will be in a very different situation in the coming months from the tight labour market of recent years. None the less, we can expect that some sectors will continue to struggle to recruit from the domestic labour pool.

That includes key sectors in my constituency, such as social care, hospitality, and retail and food processing, for which the £25,600 threshold will likely lead to significant and ongoing labour shortfalls, yet those sectors are essential to our recovery and our return to normal life. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the Government’s proposed approach is causing concern to businesses in my constituency.

I particularly want to speak about the impact the Bill could have on children, starting with EEA national children who could be eligible for the EU settlement scheme. Home Office figures reveal that, at the end of March, 493,800 applications to the scheme for children had been received, 84% of which had been concluded. That is worryingly lower than the 90% of cases that have concluded overall and, very concerningly, includes only a small number of looked-after children who could

be eligible, only 11% of whom, according to the Children’s Society, have secured status. I accept that those cases can be complex, but it seems that, despite guidance from the Government and the Children’s Society, local authorities do not give sufficient priority to progressing applications for looked-after children in their care.

The Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit points to long delays for those children, even before an application has been submitted. Obtaining documents and securing advice is harder; contact with family members who confer the right to status may have been lost; during the covid crisis applications cannot be submitted by post; and the Government have warned that the crisis will create delays in processing them. Ministers have indicated that late applications will be accepted for children in such circumstances, but we need a guarantee that no child will be left without the legal status to which they are entitled.

I am concerned that more children will be subject to the “no recourse to public funds” condition as a result of a new immigration system, including some children born in the UK. Of course I recognise the support that exists under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, but that is insufficient. On 7 May, an eight-year-old British boy, supported by his migrant mother, won a ruling in the High Court that the policy denying families like his access to the welfare safety net breached article 3 of the European convention on human rights. The covid crisis has brought the vulnerability of families with no recourse to public funds into stark relief, and we need urgently to hear how the Government intend to respond to that ruling.

Finally, and harmfully to children’s wellbeing, too often the immigration system separates children from their parents. We know about the issue of family reunion and the way in which the income threshold keeps children apart from parents. Meanwhile refugee children cannot sponsor family members to join them in this country, and we are still waiting for certainty for separated children currently covered by the Dublin III arrangements, which enable children with family members in the UK to have their asylum claims transferred here to be considered. The Dublin arrangements will expire at the end of the year, and the Government have been indicating for some time that they want to replicate them post transition. We are none the wiser as to how they will do that, so I hope that tonight the Minister can update us.

I should like to make a point about clause 5. I simply do not see the justification for the sweeping powers that it gives to Ministers. If it is to rectify deficiencies and retain EU law, the Government already have the ability to do that under the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018. If it is to make new policy for the post-transition period, that will affect individuals’ expectations and rights, and have a potentially significant impact on labour mobility that should be debated and provided for in primary legislation. I therefore hope that Ministers will be prepared to reconsider clause 5 as the Bill continues its parliamentary passage.

8.22 pm

Jonathan Gullis (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Con) [V]: We are not in the business of limiting the potential of our country, which is exactly what our former immigration system did. As we solidify our departure from the European Union, I welcome the success of widespread

participation in the Government's EU settlement scheme. By protecting the rights of EU citizens in this country, we once again demonstrate that we are not leaving Europe, but rather the European Union. As many others and I have said, we wish to move forward and continue a close relationship with our European friends. We are levelling the playing field and creating an immigration system that does not discriminate on the basis of nationality, and instead rests on the foundation of skill and capability.

The Bill will enact the overwhelming will of the people of Stoke-on-Trent North, Kidsgrove and Talke in 2016 and, again, in December last year. The public want a more measured approach to immigration, and today we aim to deliver that. I would like to note, too, that immigrants contribute massively to our economy, as well as to our social and cultural fabric. The Bill in no way denigrates that but, rather, opens our country to the best and the brightest across the world.

We have been provided with an opportunity to rectify the disparity in access between nations, and make Britain truly global, by opening to people from nations who might previously have been overlooked or subject to greater bureaucracy merely on the basis of nationality. I reiterate the point that we want the best and the brightest, from wherever they may hail. I am proud to be part of a Parliament adapting to the times and altering legislation based on need. Covid-19 has presented us with an almost unimaginable reality, and I was pleased with the allowance of visa extensions announced in March for those seeking employment in our national health service. This will enable us to continue recruiting the very best from around the world, as we did in Stoke-on-Trent 18 years ago with Dr Chandra Kanneganti.

I further welcome the launch of the NHS visa. Applicants will see a large reduction in visa fees and will be fast-tracked, gaining a significant increase in points by offering to work for our NHS. I call on the Government to ensure that NHS recruitment remains protected and, wherever possible, to encourage and streamline those wishing to work in social care especially. With regard to those working or wishing to work in the social care sector, I stress that there must be as few limitations and restrictions as possible, including those pertaining to wages. As we have seen during this pandemic, social care workers are key workers and we must support them in every way we can. The Bill will allow the Government to identify understaffed sectors and make it simpler, easier and cheaper for workers in those sectors to start a life in the UK, which is a sensible balance and a mutually beneficial approach to workforce shortages.

This is an enormous change to the way in which our country works, and I completely appreciate the apprehension and uncertainty that some might feel. However, this is an excellent opportunity to broaden our horizons and make Britain a hub of innovation and development. I am confident that this system will attract the brightest minds, which is of special significance and importance to my constituency of Stoke-on-Trent North, Kidsgrove and Talke. By implementing a fast-track visa route for elite researchers and specialists in science, technology, engineering and maths, we are sending a clear message that this country is open to, and ready for, invention and scientific advancement. I have been a vocal advocate for silicon Stoke, and my hon. Friends the Members for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Jo Gideon) and for Stoke-on-Trent South (Jack Brereton) and I have

been busy liaising with universities, businesses, private investors, the council, tech start-ups and the local enterprise partnership to push forward tech advancements such as 5G provision and advanced ceramics. An influx of highly educated STEM specialists will propel the country and my constituency into the digital age and level up this country, as we as a party promised to do in December and as I promised to do when I entered this Chamber. I have full confidence in my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, and with the will of the people behind us, I shall proudly vote for the Bill this evening.

8.27 pm

Stephen Flynn (Aberdeen South) (SNP) [V]: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to take part in these proceedings tonight. As one of the final speakers in the debate, I have had the opportunity—or perhaps the misfortune—to sit patiently and listen closely to the arguments of the Secretary of State and her colleagues behind her on the Conservative Benches, and it is safe to say that I have rarely felt so disappointed or downhearted. I say that because we have heard Member after Member of this House rejoicing at the fact that they are going to end the ability of future generations to enjoy the same freedoms that we have all enjoyed to travel freely across the continent of Europe. Indeed, the Secretary of State listed all the constituencies where she believed that people voted for her Government in order to end free movement. Unsurprisingly, she did not mention a single Scottish constituency, probably because she has finally accepted that the people of Scotland do not support her Government's actions on this key issue.

Beyond that, we have heard an almost celebratory tone in respect of bringing to an end what the Government refer to as low-skilled migration. Such dog-whistle politics is unbecoming at the best of times, but given the fact that we are in the midst of a global pandemic, it is simply unforgivable. After all, it is those very migrant workers, whom the UK Government class as low-skilled, who have helped to prevent the UK from grinding to a halt. They are the people who have been working on the frontline in our care homes and our hospitals as nurses, cleaners and porters, and the people who have been working in our supermarkets and food processing plants and on our agricultural land. The reality is that they are the glue that has helped to hold our society together. They may be paid less than they deserve, but they deserve our respect and our appreciation.

The damage of this attack on immigration will be felt for generations to come, particularly in Scotland. I say that because, as things stand, Scotland faces a demographic time bomb. Our pension-age population is growing, while our working-age population declines. There are two solutions to this issue. The first is for people to have more children, and quickly. The second and slightly easier solution is that we increase inward migration. On that front, we have been clear that EU nationals are wanted and welcome in Scotland. Indeed, we have actively sought to encourage people to make Scotland their home. Aside from the obvious social and cultural benefits that they bring to our nation, the reality is that the average EU national living in Scotland adds £10,400 to Government revenue and over £34,000 to GDP each year. They contribute far more than they will ever receive.

[Stephen Flynn]

It is for those reasons that the Scottish Government have sought proactively to engage with the UK Government on immigration to find a solution that meets the needs of Scotland. The clearest example of that was a proposal to introduce a Scottish visa, an additional route through which we could attract workers to Scotland. Such immigration variance has worked in Canada and Australia, yet the proposal was dismissed out of hand in less than 20 minutes. That should not necessarily come as a surprise, as it has been clear for a long time that the policies of this UK Government on immigration are not driven by a desire to meet the needs of Scotland. They are driven by the desire to play the role of little Englander, but the consequences of their actions will be great.

Locally here in Aberdeen, we are proud of our international outlook. There can be no doubt that workers from across the EU have had a key role to play in our economic success. One such success story is John Ross Jr, a company that processes and hand-prepares Scottish smoked salmon using traditional brick kilns. The company exports to over 30 countries and its staff are predominantly Polish, Latvian, Czech and Estonian. Its CEO is Christopher Leigh. On 27 February, he wrote to me about the importance of EU nationals to his company. He stated:

“The reality is that if it were not for freedom of movement afforded by the European Union, John Ross would not be where it is today.”

He went on to say:

“Closing the door on European workers now would be a case of the UK cutting its nose off to spite its face. It would also be disastrous for businesses, devastating for the communities in which they operate and catastrophic for the UK economy.”

“Catastrophic”. Just one word, but a word that should weigh heavily on the minds of the UK Government.

Ultimately—I think we can all agree on this point—the scale of the economic recovery facing all corners of the United Kingdom is going to be unprecedented. If we do not have an immigration system in place that attracts workers and meets the needs of businesses, we clearly run the risk of doing further harm. So I say to the UK Government: continue down this route and the people of Scotland will neither forgive nor forget.

8.32 pm

Rob Roberts (Delyn) (Con): I must pick up on the comments made by the hon. Member for Aberdeen South (Stephen Flynn). We are not closing the door on anybody. We are opening the door for many millions of other people from non-EU countries.

The United Kingdom is a world leader in industries such as banking, pharmaceuticals, and research and development. It is important that we are able to support the people in those industries to continue to lead the way in their respective fields. That is why I am pleased to see that the Government are building an immigration system that is robust, but also designed to ensure that we continue to lead the world in vital areas of economic and social development. The Bill before the House today puts the United Kingdom on the path to a fairer, more modern and more equitable immigration system that enables the brightest and best to come to our country regardless of their nationality.

The Bill delivers on our historic exit from the European Union, our exit being a process rather than just one event. By ending free movement, we are securing and taking control of our borders, and creating an immigration system that works for us as well as those who come here. My Delyn constituency, like the majority of our country, decisively voted to leave. It is right that we continue to deliver on the result of the referendum and start to move towards a more inclusive points-based immigration system.

It is important to note that the new system has been built, based on the independent report from the Migration Advisory Committee, on a fair and adaptable points-based system. Based on those recommendations, the Bill will allow us to create a flexible system that can adapt to the changing needs of businesses and respond to shortages in our labour market. That will be hugely important as we tackle the effects of the coronavirus pandemic both now and in the future. I recognise the importance of the system remaining flexible and needing to adapt to changing needs at different times in the future. I also recognise that putting every detail of every rule into primary legislation allows for no flexibility. That would inevitably be to our detriment in the future when the difficult situation in which we currently find ourselves unfolds, as we would not be able to be immediately adaptable to the challenges that may lie ahead.

It is important, too, that we recognise the contribution immigration has made to our economy, our businesses and, at times like this, to our NHS. I am delighted that the Government are doing so through the Bill. The former shadow Justice Secretary, the hon. Member for Leeds East (Richard Burgon) was correct in what he said earlier. I recognise that those are words I never thought I would say in this House or beyond, but he was right—at least in a small part. He said that we should recognise those who keep things moving and who the real key workers are. It is right that we are prioritising a shining example of key workers in this Bill—the fantastic work of our frontline healthcare workers—by extending the visas of healthcare workers and their families and, more importantly, by creating the new NHS visa. The specialist fast-track visa for doctors and nurses will enable us to recruit the very best for our NHS from wherever we need to and to ensure our NHS staff are looked after and fairly recruited, as mentioned just now by my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent North (Jonathan Gullis). We welcome its inclusion in the Bill.

In the latest ONS report, non-EU net migration has continued to increase, with current levels at their highest since 2004. Therefore, it is important that we recognise talent and skills from across the world equally. Wherever you come from across the globe, if you are prepared to work hard and contribute to our economy and to our country, our immigration system should recognise and reward that. That is why I am pleased that the Bill makes changes to our statute book to ensure that we recognise equally those with the skills and talents who want to come here from the rest of the world, as well as those who want to come from the EU.

I wholeheartedly support the Bill, as it is a significant move towards creating a better immigration system, which will value the skills and talents of all. It will help to build an inclusive forward and outward-looking country that is ready to take on the opportunities and challenges of the 21st century and succeed.

8.36 pm

Kate Osamor (Edmonton) (Lab/Co-op) [V]: [*Inaudible.*]

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): We cannot hear Kate Osamor. We will move on to Natalie Elphicke and then come back to Kate.

8.37 pm

Mrs Natalie Elphicke (Dover) (Con) [V]: I welcome this Bill, which brings in a points-based immigration system to ensure that immigration is controlled and that we have the skilled workforce that we need not just from the European Union but from around the world. Yet, while it is important to gain immigration status for the people with the skills that we need, it is also important that we have effective border security, particularly when freedom of movement comes to an end.

Last December, I was pleased to accompany the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, the hon. Member for Torbay (Kevin Foster), the Minister on the Front Bench tonight, in our joint inspection of the Dover Border Force operations at the docks. I thank the men and women of our Dover Border Force together with all in Her Majesty's Coastguard and the RNLI for the sterling work that they do day in and day out, putting themselves in harm's way and saving lives.

As the sun sets this evening, I can look across the English channel and see the twinkling lights of Calais. France is fewer than 21 miles away—more than three times closer than London. France is our long-term ally, but it is also our nearest European border. Great Britain is an island, our waters are her moat, and the stretch that Dover guards to France is and always has been our most vulnerable point of entry. That is why Julius Caesar first tried to land at Dover, before he was repelled by doughty Dovorians of past times.

The challenges we face today are a different kind of army; it is the army of people traffickers—organised crime gangs who prey on the vulnerable and the less vulnerable, all of whom have made the decision not to use legal points of entry or to stay safe in France, and many other countries before France. These illegal entrants can pay the traffickers up to £4,000 to break into our country, knowing that there is little or no chance of being returned once they get in. This is an unacceptable situation and has been for a long time. I strongly welcome the robust work of the Home Secretary in working afresh with France to stop more boats leaving the French shores and seeking to return would-be illegal entrants to France. However, it is incumbent on us, as Members of this House, to give the Home Secretary the legal tools that will support her and the Government in their clear determination to put a stop to this criminal trade in people, and to ensure that we can attract the skills that our country wants and needs from across the globe.

This Bill is about restoring the legal powers to control our own borders, to set our own rules, to encourage and welcome those we invite to our country, and to send away those who engage in criminal activity, such as illegal entrants. In Dover, we know that it is only when people traffickers and migrants alike know that they will not succeed in breaking into Britain that we will bring an end to these small boat crossings—and bring an end to them we must. The Dover straits is one of the most important and busiest shipping lanes in the world.

There has already been loss of life in the English channel through this illegal activity. Every day longer that the activity continues, it risks further loss of life.

I welcome the Bill, which brings in a points-based immigration system to ensure that immigration is controlled and that we have the skilled workforce that we need, not just from the EU but from around the world, together with a framework for effective border security, to stop criminal activity and to save lives.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): We now go with audio only to Kate Osamor.

8.41 pm

Kate Osamor: I am really grateful to you for calling me, Mr Deputy Speaker. As chair of the all-party parliamentary group on no recourse to public funds—*[Inaudible.]* I will make three important points today. First, the Government should be using the Bill to bring an end to the—*[Inaudible]*—does the absolute opposite. It punishes carers, nurses and others who have kept this country going throughout the current crisis. Many who have no recourse to public funds—*[Inaudible]*—particularly unjust in the light of the coronavirus. The Government should be playing a key role in changing their immigration—*[Inaudible.]*

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): Kate, I am terribly sorry. We gave it a good go, but the audio kept coming and going. I should have a word with your broadband provider. I am terribly sorry. We really did want to listen to what you had to say, but I am afraid we are going to have to leave it there, because you were the final speaker. We will go straight on to the wind-ups. I call Holly Lynch.

8.43 pm

Holly Lynch (Halifax) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. It is a real shame that we could not hear the rest of the contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Edmonton (Kate Osamor). She chairs the APPG on no recourse to public funds, and I know that she has done a lot of really important work. We will have to hear the rest of her contribution on another occasion.

It is a pleasure to be back at the Dispatch Box on behalf of Her Majesty's official Opposition on such an important piece of legislation—important not just because of what it will do but what it paves the way for. It is historic, in that it starts its passage through the House of Commons for the second time during a crisis that we know will shape this country, and what we need from legislation like this, for years to come.

With that in mind, as so many others have said, this country has never been more aware or more appreciative of the contribution of migrant workers to the UK. We can all agree with the hon. Member for Bracknell (James Sunderland) that the efforts of key workers have been the stuff of legend. To those working in our NHS, care homes and research labs, and in our fields and factories, keeping food on the shelves—to all those working right across the key sectors—we are truly grateful for all that they are doing, and we need legislation that recognises that contribution. As we have said, we all go out and clap for our carers and our key workers every Thursday, but today the detail of the Government's approach says to them that they are not skilled enough and not paid enough to be valued in their proposed new

[*Holly Lynch*]

immigration system. It is not as though the Government are proposing to work with right hon. and hon. Members to shape a better policy. Instead, the Bill grants sweeping Henry VIII powers to Ministers, diminishing the role of Parliament and MPs.

I am incredibly grateful to all those who have taken part in this important debate. My hon. Friends the Members for Leicester East (Claudia Webbe), for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy) and for Streatham (Bell Ribeiro-Addy), and others, including the right hon. Member for Haltemprice and Howden (Mr Davis), made important points about indefinite detention, and we will be looking to work cross-party with all MPs on amendments to address some of those concerns. My right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) and my hon. Friends the Members for Manchester, Gorton (Afzal Khan) and for Wirral South (Alison McGovern) made the point that we are being asked to consider only half a Bill, with my hon. Friends the Members for Leeds East (Richard Burgon) and for Streatham and my right hon. Friend the Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) rightly saying that we cannot simply give the Government a blank cheque on immigration policy. They ask us to trust them on this, but the hostile environment is a very clear reason why I am afraid we simply cannot do that.

Several hon. Members, including my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford, my hon. Friends the Members for Leeds East, for Streatham, and for Wirral South, my right hon. Friend the Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington, and my hon. Friends the Members for Manchester, Withington (Jeff Smith) and for Stretford and Urmston (Kate Green)—and so many others—have raised concerns about the delegated powers contained in the Bill. The previous version of this legislation, which failed to complete its Committee stage because of the snap general election last year, contained an almost identical clause 4. As the shadow Home Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen (Nick Thomas-Symonds), said in his opening remarks, the Lords Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee report on that Bill articulated very clearly its concerns about this clause:

“We are frankly disturbed that the Government should consider it appropriate to include the words ‘in connection with’. This would confer permanent powers on Ministers to make whatever legislation they considered appropriate, provided there was at least some connection with Part 1, however tenuous; and to do so by negative procedure regulations”.

The Committee expressed “significant concerns” about clause 4(5), recommending that it be removed altogether “unless the Government can provide a proper and explicit justification for its inclusion and explain how they intend to use the power”, as it

“confers broad discretion on Ministers to levy fees or charges on any person seeking leave to enter or remain in the UK who, pre-exit, would have had free movement rights under EU law.”

This is bad not just for parliamentary democracy, but for our public services and the economy. Parliamentary scrutiny is the most effective way for stakeholders to work with MPs to shape legislation to respond to the needs of the country. It is not just Labour Members who are concerned about the delegated powers in the Bill, but the Immigration Law Practitioners’ Association,

the British Medical Association, London First, Universities UK, the National Union of Students, trade unions and the Children’s Society, as just a sample of the cross-section of organisations that share our concerns that a transfer of powers to the Executive is not the way to develop good-quality legislation. On that basis, we simply cannot sign off on this legislation.

So many others have said today that what we take exception to now more than ever is an approach that puts rhetoric ahead of the practical solutions that this country so desperately needs to find if we are to make it through the coronavirus crisis. Nothing is more important in this fight than the key workers in our NHS and in social care in particular. Given that some 29% of doctors working in our NHS hospitals and 12% of the overall health care workers in the UK are from overseas, the Bill has massive implications for the wellbeing and strength of the healthcare workforce.

The Government’s inability to address the systemic problems in the social care sector also extends, I am afraid to say, to their immigration policy. The Institute for Public Policy Research recently found that four out of five employees from EEA countries working full time in social care would be ineligible to work in the UK under the £25,600 salary threshold proposed in the Government’s immigration White Paper published in February. As much as hon. Members might talk about the ability to respond quickly through the shortage occupation list and the Migration Advisory Committee, special consideration for the social care sector in a future immigration system has already been ruled out, so how do the Government plan to respond to the shortage of workers, the impact of which we are already experiencing and which will only become more acute, given the demand for social care as a result of the crisis?

Across sectors, but particularly in the NHS, it is not just the NHS surcharge that does not seem fair: the immigration skills charge is another problem. It is paid by employers who recruit migrants on tier 2 visas and, come 1 January, employers will also have to pay for staff to come from EU countries as well as non-EU countries. The immigration skills charge is also paid by NHS trusts which, if they cannot find clinical specialists here in the UK, have no choice but to find them from overseas. I asked my local NHS trust, Calderdale and Huddersfield, how much the Government take back from it in immigration skills charges. In the last financial year, the trust had to pay Government just short of £163,000 out of its annual budget in immigration skills charges. So because we have clinical skills shortages in many specialist areas in the UK, and in the absence of any Government strategy to respond to that domestically, the NHS has to hire from overseas. The same Government then punish trusts for doing so by demanding those fees, taking much needed cash back from their budgets. That seems grossly unfair. It indicates not only that our immigration approach simply does not work for the NHS and social care, but neither does our domestic skills policy.

A number of other important points have been raised in this Second Reading debate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford East (Imran Hussain) spoke of his pride that Bradford is a city of sanctuary, and I share his pride as my constituency is part of a valley of sanctuary. My hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington, a great music lover, spoke

in his typically passionate speech of the contribution that migrants and visitors to the UK make to the music sector. My hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Tonia Antoniazzi) said that to assess a person based on what they earn is a blunt tool which masks their true value. My hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton reminded us that the Prime Minister himself understands the value of migrants working in the NHS, and my hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Bow (Rushanara Ali) made the powerful point that those who have died working in the NHS were from every corner of the world. My hon. Friend the Member for Stretford and Urmston is a passionate campaigner on the rights of children in particular and raised a number of important questions that we will return to in Committee.

In closing, I want to say to all those workers in the NHS who have had their visas extended for one year free of charge, it is not that the Government are doing them a favour—they are doing our country a massive favour by staying in our NHS and fighting on our frontline to save our lives. As others have said, we urge the Government to extend those visa extensions across the social care sector. We have heard the call from the hon. Member for Belfast East (Gavin Robinson) and we will very much play as constructive a role as we can in Committee, but we cannot support legislation that transfers powers to the Executive and away from Parliament alongside proposals that will only put even greater pressure on the NHS, social care and a number of other key sectors. That is why we will vote against the Bill this evening.

8.53 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Kevin Foster): It is a pleasure to formally welcome the new shadow immigration Minister to her post; I have not had the chance to do so before at the Dispatch Box.

The breadth of views expressed by Members today clearly demonstrates how important an issue this is, not only to our constituents but personally. Given the unusual circumstances in which we meet, I will not have time to give a detailed response to each point raised, but will seek to respond to the broad themes that have been brought out in the debate.

The Bill is before the House not only to deliver on our manifesto pledges, but to lay the framework for our new immigration system, which will be fairer because we will treat people from every part of the world equally, while respecting our historic links with Ireland and the Belfast agreement, and firmer, because we will have control of our own borders from 1 January and all migration policy will be in the hands of this Parliament. It will be skills led, because the system will be based on the skills, talents and qualifications that people can bring to this country, not two radically different systems based on where someone's passport comes from.

Let us be clear: this is a framework Bill, not an immigration shopping list. In response to some comments, especially from those who wish to build an economic version of Hadrian's wall, I emphasise that this Bill sets up the framework for a single, global points-based migration system, with the rights of Irish citizens protected and ensuring the ability of Ministers to respond to any agreement on social security co-ordination.

The detail of our migration rules will continue to be set in secondary legislation, to ensure that they remain flexible and able to respond to changing situations but always based on the key policy principles I have outlined. The reaction to the coronavirus emergency shows why that is necessary. Imagine our having to pass primary legislation to amend visa end dates, automatically renew NHS workers' visas, grant waivers to in-country route-swapping conditions or allow tier 4 sponsors to move courses online. Hence this Bill, in common with those on this subject that came before it, does not replicate the immigration rules in statutory form, and neither should the House regret its not doing so.

We have already moved to create the first part of our new migration system with the creation of our global talent route. I saw at first hand at Glasgow University what this could result in and the strong offer it presents, clearing the path for some of humanity's most complex problems, such as the fight against malaria, to be solved by teams recruited on a global basis and based here in our United Kingdom. The new graduate route, which will be introduced next summer, will help to retain some of the brightest minds coming out of our universities, giving a simple path to future residence and settlement. As our universities see an increasing number of international students arrive to study here, we know that more will be inspired to make their life and career in vibrant locations such as Glasgow, Belfast, Exeter, Cardiff and Coventry. Our immigration system should allow them to do so.

I hear the frustrations of those who see our migration and humanitarian protection system being abused by those who engage in human trafficking—as highlighted well by my hon. Friends the Members for Dover (Mrs Elphicke) and for Hastings and Rye (Sally-Ann Hart)—and the risks being run by those using small boats to cross the channel. A key part of ensuring a fairer system is to tackle that type of behaviour. My hon. Friend the Minister for Immigration Compliance and the Courts is leading work on that, which is benefiting from the input of my hon. Friends.

The Migration Advisory Committee report earlier this year provided a strong and evidence-based view for our future points-based migration system. We accepted its key recommendations: a reduction in the general salary threshold for the key skilled worker visa from £30,000 to £25,600; moving the skills threshold from degree to A-level, to ensure that we include those with significant skills levels, such as senior carers; and tradable points, with a salary floor of £20,480 for jobs on the shortage occupation list or where significant potential is shown by holding a relevant STEM-based PhD. We are working hard to bring the new system into effect, and I thank the teams in the Home Office who have continued doing this in the extraordinary circumstances we have found ourselves in over recent weeks.

We will continue to work closely with the Migration Advisory Committee and its interim chair, Professor Brian Bell. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has already commissioned the Migration Advisory Committee to advise on the future shortage occupation list. Its call for evidence has now been issued, and that will provide an opportunity to look at the skills needs of a range of sectors that Members have highlighted today. I encourage all businesses to take part and have their voice heard; no one should allow themselves to be silenced. Several Members have been keen to highlight

[Kevin Foster]

groups with whom I can speak about this. For example, I look forward to a video conference with seafood businesses in north-east Scotland arranged by my hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (David Duguid). I know he shares my passion for ensuring that the new migration system serves our whole Union and the skills needs of Scottish businesses, rather than the political aims of Scotland's separatists.

Talking of serving the needs of our nation, no organisation has done that more than our NHS and social care services over recent weeks. Our new system will not just allow but actively welcome a range of health professionals to the United Kingdom. This will be via not only the points-based system being based on national salary scales for roles such as doctors, nurses and physiotherapists, but an NHS visa, which includes discounted fees and fast-track application processes for those with a job offer from our NHS or for those providing services to it. This process will build on the dedicated team that the Home Secretary has already established in UKVI to process applications from those with NHS job offers. Our social care sector will benefit from simpler processes to recruit qualified medical staff and key roles such as senior carers on a global basis.

One area that has been regularly queried in the debate is our acceptance of the MAC's recommendation that there should be no general route for employers to seek to employ temporary or permanent employees on the legal minimum wage with limited training and no requirement to speak a basic level of English. I gently say to Members that if the lesson they have taken from the events of the last two months is that paying the legal minimum to those working in social care who migrate to the UK from low-pay economies is the right approach, they have drawn the wrong conclusion. Similarly, those who think that the migration system is the go-to option for recruitment issues in social care, rather than creating career paths and increasing the value of such roles, should read the MAC's specific rejection of this.

No one can deny the economic impact that the measures necessary to deal with the coronavirus will have. Many of our friends and neighbours will need to find new employment opportunities, and it is therefore vital that our migration system aligns with this goal, rather than providing an alternative to it. I have welcomed speaking to my hon. Friend the employment Minister about how we can ensure that our goals align and that those seeing migration as their first port of call are instead steered to the efforts being made to get UK-based workers back into employment and to the Disability Confident scheme, which helps to get unique talents into the workplace. There will still be some flexibility. For example, there is provision for the further expansion of our youth mobility schemes, through which 20,000 young people come to the UK for a period of work and travel each year, along with the adult dependants of those who come as skilled workers, who can also access the employment market. However, we will not create a minimum wage general migration route.

Alongside creating our new points-based global migration system, we are also taking the chance to work on a long overdue simplification of the immigration rules. I am grateful to the Law Commission for its thoughts on this

area of work, and we will take most of them forward as we create the new system. Many will not be headline-grabbers but changes that will make it easier for those who need to use our immigration system to both understand the requirements and to comply with them. This will sit alongside moves such as the abolition of the resident labour market test, which will make it easier for employers to recruit skilled labour, and will remove some of the bureaucracy and time associated with doing so.

Finally, it was predictable that some would use this debate to re-fight the battles of Brexit, despite the clear result in the recent general election. The Bill delivers one of the key commitments that the Government made: a single global migration system. However, we are also delivering on our pledge to protect those who have moved here and made their life here in good faith under the current arrangements. The European settlement scheme is the largest documentation of immigration status in UK history. More than 3.5 million applications have been received, with more than 3 million decisions made, and only a tiny number of refusals by comparison. I am afraid that those calling for systems where rights are granted but not recorded do not seem to have learned the lessons of the past. The European settlement scheme means those entitled can prove their status easily for the rest of their lifetimes, while also ensuring that those who arrive in years to come cannot abuse the scheme's provisions.

We recognise that immigration is vital to the social, cultural and economic life of this country. The new system will aim to create global equality of opportunity, giving everyone the same chance to live and work in this country. The Bill is the first step in ending free movement, establishing a fair and equal immigration system and upholding the scientific and commercial excellence of our country. Above all, it will help us to build a better future for this country and its people as we rebuild after the impact of covid-19. I therefore commend the Bill to the House.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): Before I put the Question, I confirm that my final determination is that the Question on Second Reading should be decided by remote Division. There is therefore no need for me to collect the voices, or for those present in the Chamber to shout Aye or No.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The House proceeded to a remote Division.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The remote voting period has now finished. I will announce the result of the Division shortly. As the next Question is contingent on the outcome of this Division, I will suspend the House for five minutes.

9.20 pm

Sitting suspended.

9.25 pm

On resuming—

Mr Deputy Speaker: I can now announce the result of the remote Division on Second Reading.

Question, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The House divided: Ayes 351, Noes 252.

Division No. 46]

AYES

Adams, Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
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, Gareth
Bacon, Mr Richard
Badenoch, Kemi
Bailey, Shaun
Baillie, Siobhan (*Proxy vote
cast by Eddie Hughes*)
Baker, Duncan
Baker, Mr Steve
Baldwin, Harriett
Barclay, rh Steve
Baron, Mr John
Baynes, Simon
Bell, Aaron
Benton, Scott
Berry, rh Jake
Bhatti, Saqib
Blackman, Bob
Bone, Mr Peter
Bottomley, Sir Peter
Bowie, Andrew
Bradley, Ben
Bradley, rh Karen
Brady, Sir Graham
Brereton, Jack
Bridgen, Andrew
Brine, Steve
Bristow, Paul
Britcliffe, Sara
Brokenshire, rh James
Browne, Anthony
Bruce, Fiona
Buchan, Felicity
Buckland, rh Robert
Burghart, Alex
Butler, Rob
Cairns, rh Alun
Campbell, Mr Gregory
Carter, Andy
Cartledge, James
Cash, Sir William
Cates, Miriam
Caulfield, Maria
Chalk, Alex
Chishti, Rehman
Churchill, Jo
Clark, rh Greg
Clarke, Mr Simon
Clarke, Theo
Clarke-Smith, Brendan
Clarkson, Chris
Cleverly, rh James
Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse
Colburn, Elliot
Costa, Alberto
Courts, Robert
Coutinho, Claire
Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey
Crabb, rh Stephen
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
Eustice, rh George
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
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Frazer, Lucy
Freeman, George
Freer, Mike
Fuller, Richard
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Gale, rh Sir Roger
Garnier, Mark
Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Gibb, rh Nick
Gibson, Peter
Gideon, Jo
Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
Girvan, Paul
Glen, John
Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
Gove, rh Michael

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
Hancock, rh Matt
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
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
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Javid, rh Sajid
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Keegan, Gillian
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Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
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Peacock, Stephanie
Pennycook, Matthew
Perkins, Mr Toby
Phillips, Jess
Phillipson, Bridget
Pollard, Luke
Powell, Lucy
Qureshi, Yasmin
Rayner, Angela
Reed, Steve
Rees, Christina
Reeves, Ellie
Reynolds, Jonathan
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Rimmer, Ms Marie
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Ali, Tahir
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Amesbury, Mike
Anderson, Fleur
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Ashworth, Jonathan
Bardell, Hannah
Barker, Paula
Begum, Apsana
Benn, rh Hilary
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Blackford, rh Ian
Blackman, Kirsty
Blake, Olivia
Blomfield, Paul
Bonnar, Steven
Brabin, Tracy
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brennan, Kevin
Brock, Deidre
Brown, Alan
Brown, Ms Lyn
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Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burgon, Richard
Butler, Dawn
Byrne, Ian
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Callaghan, Amy
Cameron, Dr Lisa
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Carden, Dan
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Charalambous, Bambos
Cherry, Joanna
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Shah, Naz	Thomson, Richard
Sharma, Mr Virendra	Thornberry, rh Emily
Sheerman, Mr Barry	Timms, rh Stephen
Sheppard, Tommy	Trickett, Jon
Siddiq, Tulip	Turner, Karl
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Smith, Alyn	Twist, Liz
Smith, Cat	Vaz, rh Valerie
Smith, Jeff	Webbe, Claudia
Smith, Nick	West, Catherine
Smyth, Karin	Western, Matt
Sobel, Alex	Whitehead, Dr Alan
Spellar, rh John	Whitford, Dr Philippa
Starmer, rh Keir	Whitley, Mick
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Stevens, Jo	Williams, Hywel
Streeting, Wes	Wilson, Munira
Tami, rh Mark	Winter, Beth
Tarry, Sam	Wishart, Pete
Thewliss, Alison	Yasin, Mohammad
Thomas, Gareth	Zeichner, Daniel
Thomas-Symonds, Nick	

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Speaker announced to the House earlier this afternoon his provisional determination that remote Divisions would not take place on the following Questions relating to the programme motion, the money resolution, and the ways and means resolution. This is also my final determination.

**IMMIGRATION AND SOCIAL SECURITY
CO-ORDINATION (EU WITHDRAWAL) BILL
(PROGRAMME)**

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, (Standing Order No. 83A(7)),

That the following provisions shall apply to the Immigration and Social Security Coordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill:

Committal

(1) The Bill shall be committed to a Public Bill Committee.

Proceedings in Public Bill Committee

(2) Proceedings in the Public Bill Committee shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion on Thursday 25 June 2020.

(3) The Public Bill Committee shall have leave to sit twice on the first day on which it meets.

Proceedings on Consideration and up to and including Third Reading

(4) Proceedings on Consideration and any proceedings in legislative grand committee shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion one hour before the moment of interruption on the day on which proceedings on Consideration are commenced.

(5) Proceedings on Third Reading shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion at the moment of interruption on that day.

(6) Standing Order No. 83B (Programming committees) shall not apply to proceedings on Consideration and up to and including Third Reading.

Other proceedings

(7) Any other proceedings on the Bill may be programmed.—*(Tom Pursglove.)*

Question agreed to.

**IMMIGRATION AND SOCIAL SECURITY
CO-ORDINATION (EU WITHDRAWAL) BILL
(MONEY)**

Queen's recommendation signified.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 52(1)(a)),

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of:

(1) any expenditure incurred by a Minister of the Crown, a government department, a person holding office under Her Majesty or any other public authority by virtue of the Act; and

(2) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable by virtue of any other Act out money so provided.—*(Tom Pursglove.)*

Question agreed to.

**IMMIGRATION AND SOCIAL SECURITY
CO-ORDINATION (EU WITHDRAWAL) BILL
(WAYS AND MEANS)**

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 52(1)(a)),

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill, it is expedient to authorise any fees or charges arising by virtue of the Act.—*(Tom Pursglove.)*

Question agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

9.26 pm

House adjourned without Question put (Order A(5), 22 April).

Written Statements

Monday 18 May 2020

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Contingencies Fund Advance

The Minister of State, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (Mr Simon Clarke): I hereby give notice of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's intention to seek an advance from the Contingencies Fund. The Department requires an advance of its cash requirement pending parliamentary approval of the main estimate 2020-21.

Parliamentary approval for additional resources of £1,415,000,000 will be sought in a main estimate for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £1,415,000,000 has been met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.

[HCWS239]

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Future Trading Relationship with the US

The Secretary of State for International Trade (Elizabeth Truss): Around 200 negotiators from the UK and the US held the first round of negotiations for a UK-US free trade agreement (FTA) between 5 and 15 May 2020.

More trade is essential if the UK is to overcome the unprecedented challenges posed by covid-19. New FTAs will be an important factor in facing that economic challenge, providing new opportunities for businesses and entrepreneurs who have faced significant challenges in this difficult period. An FTA with the US can help create opportunities for UK businesses, provide better jobs and boost the economy in every part of the country.

Both sides are hopeful that negotiations for a comprehensive trade agreement can proceed at an accelerated pace. Ambassador Lighthizer and I agreed that a second virtual round will take place in the weeks of 15 and 22 June, and that in advance of that negotiating teams will continue their work and meet virtually on a rolling basis, with meetings continuing throughout this week and beyond.

Negotiations over the past two weeks were conducted virtually but proceeded efficiently, with UK and US negotiators participating in extensive discussions in nearly 30 different negotiating groups covering all aspects of a comprehensive trade agreement. The discussions covered the following workstreams:

- Small and medium enterprises (SMEs)
- Legal group—disputes
- Trade remedies

- Rules of origin
- Investment
- Legal group—core text
- Technical barriers to trade
- Competition
- Digital
- Telecoms
- Economics
- Customs
- Sectoral annexes
- Cross cutting services
- Market access for goods, overarching and industrial goods
- Good regulatory practice (GRP)
- Financial services
- Sustainability, environment and labour
- General co-ordination
- Market access for goods, agriculture
- State owned enterprises
- Services sectors
- Intellectual property
- Procurement
- Sustainability, anti-corruption
- Market access for goods, textiles
- Sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS)
- Subsidies

The meetings were positive and constructive, reflecting the mutual commitment to secure an ambitious agreement that significantly boosts trade and investment between our economies, the first and fifth largest in the world.

Both sides recognised the unprecedented circumstances in which these negotiations took place, with significant emphasis placed on supporting the post-covid economic recovery.

During the meetings, the teams discussed their respective objectives and agreed on ambitious next steps for coming talks. Our preparatory work makes it possible for the UK and United States to quickly advance negotiations in a number of substantive areas that will shape our future bilateral trade relationship.

A number of areas showed particular progress, including where both teams identified positive alignment between respective negotiating positions. They identified a mutually high ambition for services, investment and digital trade, among other areas.

Both sides also set out a mutual commitment to creating new opportunities for businesses on both sides of the Atlantic and to delivering benefits for workers, consumers and farmers. This includes the confirmation that both sides will quickly pursue a standalone small and medium enterprises (SME) chapter and will continue the UK-US SME dialogue.

In the same manner as this negotiating round, discussions in the second round will cover all areas to be included in a free trade agreement.

The Government are committed to negotiating a comprehensive agreement with the US and we look forward to making further progress at the next round of negotiations. The Government will make a further statement on progress following the second round of talks.

[HCWS238]

TRANSPORT

Transport for London

The Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps):

It is vital that we take the necessary steps to protect the services which our critical workers, such as NHS staff, rely on—both in London and all across the country.

So far, we have invested billions into maintaining essential services across rail, buses, trams and ferries outside London, including £30 million over 12 weeks for light rail services in Sheffield, Manchester, West Midlands, Tyne and Wear, and Nottingham and almost £400 million to protect vital bus routes, and temporarily suspended rail operators' franchise agreements to transfer all revenue and cost risk to Government so that services continue to run.

This is alongside our wider agenda to level up transport networks across the whole country, including £5 billion for buses and bikes announced back in February, £4.2 billion for local transport settlements for eight mayoral combined authorities subject to negotiations, a £1.7 billion transport infrastructure investment fund to improve roads, repair bridges and fill millions of potholes; and the decision by Government to take over the Northern network to protect services, drive up performance and rebuild passenger confidence.

We will continue to work with metro mayors, local authorities and transport operators all across the country to ensure that public transport is available for those who need it, including any ramp up in services required as people slowly start to return to work.

In order to keep vital public transport services running in London and further ramp up services to support social distancing, the Government agreed on Thursday 14 May a package of support for Transport for London. It comprises £1.095 billion of new grant and a further loan facility of £505 million. The support can be increased by a further £300 million of grant and loan if revenue loss is higher than forecast at this time.

The settlement for TfL was needed for two reasons. Most important is the significant fall in revenue caused by covid-19. However, an important secondary factor was the pre-existing poor condition of TfL's financial position as a result of decisions made over the last four years. Combined with significant cost increases and delays to Crossrail, this left TfL in serious financial difficulty even before the public health emergency.

It is important to note that around half of all bus and rail journeys in England are made on its services and that London is by far the most public transport-dependent place in the UK. Almost half of all Londoners, more in inner London, do not have access to cars. London's

roads are the most congested in the UK; even with reduced passenger numbers and capacity, TfL's services are still essential to allow critical workers to travel and the city to operate.

Unlike local transport authorities in other towns and cities across England, TfL is responsible for London's bus network, principal road routes, various rail networks including the London Underground, London Overground, Docklands Light Railway and TfL Rail, as well as trams, cycling provision, and river services. To protect these services, it is important therefore that the rescue package takes steps to put TfL back on a sustainable footing while ensuring fairness for the wider British taxpayer. As a result, the Mayor intends to adhere to the proposal in TfL's own business plan that fares should increase by RPI plus 1% on all modes in January.

We have also set a number of other conditions, including: restoring services to 100% of pre-covid levels as soon as possible; requiring TfL to collect fares on buses while ensuring driver safety, which it had stopped doing during the crisis; easing congestion by the temporary suspension of free travel for over-60s in the morning peak and temporarily suspending free travel for under-18s all day. Disabled people will still be able to make use of their concession passes all day, and special arrangements will be made for those children who qualify for free travel to schools.

These conditions are needed to avoid crowding and reduce the exposure of vulnerable groups. The Mayor has subsequently announced that the Congestion Charge will increase to £15, with extended hours of operation and has withdrawn the residents' discount for new applications.

The Congestion Charge will continue to have exemptions for NHS and care workers and Blue badge holders. Local residents will continue to receive discounts.

To help avoid such drastic action in the future there will be an immediate and broad ranging Government-led review of TfL's future financial position and structure.

The decision to offer support was not taken lightly, but reflects the exceptional circumstances the country finds itself in. I consider it vital to keep services in London running to the maximum levels possible to allow safe transport of passengers. Our messaging remains that people should avoid using public transport and work from home wherever possible, but as measures are slowly lifted it is vital that Londoners who need to use TfL services feel safe and secure.

This deal will encourage, help and protect those who need to use public transport and help us move towards greener and healthier walking and cycling options. Importantly, it will also provide certainty and stability for London's transport services in the future.

[HCWS240]

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**not later than
Monday 25 May 2020**

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Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill [Col. 398]

Motion for Second Reading—(Priti Patel)—on a Division, agreed to

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Written Answers to Questions [The written answers can now be found at <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers>]
