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**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

Wednesday 30 September 2020

House of Commons

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The House met at half-past Eleven o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Virtual participation in proceedings commenced (Order, 4 June).

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

Speaker's Statement

Mr Speaker: I remind colleagues that deferred Divisions will take place today on two statutory instruments in the Members' Library between 11.30 am and 3.30 pm. Members will cast their votes by placing the completed Division slip in one of the ballot boxes provided. I remind colleagues of the importance of social distancing during the deferred Divisions and ask them to pick up a Division slip from the Vote Office and fill it in before they reach the Library, if possible. The result will be announced in the Chamber as soon as possible after the Divisions are over.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

The Secretary of State was asked—

Internal Market: Northern Ireland and Great Britain

Mr Mark Harper (Forest of Dean) (Con): What progress his Department has made on ensuring unfettered access to the internal market for goods moving between Northern Ireland and Great Britain after the end of the transition period. [906624]

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Brandon Lewis): We have committed to delivering unfettered access for Northern Ireland businesses to the whole UK market. We continue to discuss our approach to the protocol with the European Union, and we have put in place a safety net to ensure that qualifying goods do not face exit procedures upon leaving Northern Ireland for the rest of the UK, delivering our promise of unfettered access.

Mr Harper: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for that answer, and I welcome the UK Internal Market Bill being passed by the House, because it does indeed put in place the benefit for Northern Ireland businesses that he describes. Can he say a bit more about how businesses based in my constituency, for example, can export to Northern Ireland without restrictions and how we will ensure that businesses and constituents in Northern Ireland get unrivalled access to the whole United Kingdom market?

Brandon Lewis: My right hon. Friend makes a good point. There is a difference with businesses in Great Britain trading with Northern Ireland. We are determined to give them the certainty that they want and need. That is an important part of delivering on the protocol, which says that it

“should impact as little as possible on the everyday life of communities”.

That means ensuring good free trade. The protocol makes it clear that there will be some changes for goods movements into Northern Ireland from Great Britain. We are consulting businesses in Northern Ireland and working with our partners in the European Union to deliver on that, and there will be a slimmed-down Finance Bill that includes all the commitments we have made to the people of Northern Ireland that are outstanding at that point.

Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson (Lagan Valley) (DUP): I echo the comments made by the right hon. Member for Forest of Dean (Mr Harper). Our concern is also about goods travelling from Great Britain to Northern Ireland, and that includes products used in the manufacturing process for goods that are then sent back to Great Britain. Can the Secretary of State assure us that the Finance Bill will contain specific definitions in relation to goods not deemed at risk that are for consumption exclusively in Northern Ireland, or are part of the manufacturing process in Northern Ireland?

Brandon Lewis: The right hon. Gentleman makes a good point. At the heart of our approach is our determination to ensure that trade flows freely, so that businesses trading in and with Northern Ireland can continue to trade properly. We will make full use of the provisions in the protocol to deliver on that, and we will continue to discuss this with the European Union. As I say, there are still issues that we are discussing as part of the free trade agreement and through the specialist Joint Committee, but we will ensure that all the commitments made by myself, the Prime Minister and other colleagues at the Dispatch Box are delivered through a slimmed-down Finance Bill later this year.

Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson: My hon. Friend the Member for Upper Bann (Carla Lockhart) and I have been meeting businesses in the agrifood sector, and they are particularly concerned about the definition of qualifying businesses and qualifying goods for the purposes of the movement of goods from Northern Ireland to GB and vice versa. I understand that the Government are preparing a statutory instrument on that. Can the Secretary of State update us on the progress made to bring about such a definition?

Brandon Lewis: Yes. The withdrawal agreement includes provision for the Government to define the qualifying status for goods and businesses in Northern Ireland, as part of ensuring that they benefit from unfettered access. We are also engaging with businesses, as the right hon. Gentleman and his colleagues are. I have been engaging with businesses—and will do so again later today—in Northern Ireland and with the Executive to work through the means for delivering that qualifying status. There will be an ability for us to deliver that, and we will do it by secondary legislation under the withdrawal Act before the end of the year.

Kirsten Oswald (East Renfrewshire) (SNP): Just like their counterparts in Kent and Scotland, Northern Irish businesses need clarity on the looming post-Brexit reality. The Secretary of State must know that the last-minute shambles of the internal market Bill delivers the exact opposite and fails to provide much-needed reassurance. Does he appreciate the damage that this lack of clarity is doing to Northern Irish businesses?

Brandon Lewis: Northern Ireland businesses responded very positively to the Command Paper and the guidelines we set out earlier in the summer. The UK Internal Market Bill delivers on that and on the key objective of guaranteeing unfettered access. I think it is a bit rich for the hon. Lady to talk about this. We are delivering unfettered access—something the SNP wants to block by putting another border between Scotland and the rest of the UK.

UK Internal Market Bill: Effect on the Union

Sarah Atherton (Wrexham) (Con): What discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential effect of the UK Internal Market Bill on Northern Ireland's place in the Union. [906625]

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr Robin Walker): The UK's internal market has functioned seamlessly for centuries. As the transition period ends, we will ensure that the most successful Union of nations in the world continues to thrive, and we will do this while maintaining the Belfast/Good Friday agreement and the gains of the peace process. The Secretary of State and I regularly meet Cabinet and other ministerial colleagues across Government on this point, including through the Cabinet Committee on Union policy implementation, which is driving forward the Government's Union strategy.

Sarah Atherton: To continue a theme, Wrexham has one of the largest trading estates in the UK, and trading with Northern Ireland via Holyhead port is vital for Wrexham's future growth. Will the Minister give us reassurances that from January, seamless trade around the UK will continue, as it is essential to our Union's growth and prosperity?

Mr Walker: Yes, I can. That is why the Government are very pleased that the Bill has completed its passage through the House this week. The provisions in the Bill ensure that there will be no new checks, controls or administrative processes on goods moving from Northern Ireland to Great Britain and provide a power for Ministers to disapply or modify the requirement for export declarations or other export procedures on such movements.

Louise Haigh (Sheffield, Heeley) (Lab): It is very welcome to hear that a slimmed-down Finance Bill is coming later in the year, but not a single clause in the internal market Bill changes the fact that new requirements on trade between Britain and Northern Ireland will be coming into force in 13 weeks' time. Why is a coalition of business groups still waiting for answers on 60 of the 67 basic questions that it put to the Secretary of State in June on how the protocol will work? Why is there still no border operating model? Why has the necessary infrastructure been described by the permanent secretary for environment and agriculture as undeliverable? Is it

not time for both the EU and the UK to act in Northern Ireland's interests and deliver the certainty that businesses are crying out for?

Mr Walker: The hon. Lady rightly calls for certainty, but in making the criticism that she does, she appears to be criticising the protocol that her Front Benchers have been arguing that we cannot interfere with. It is essential that we deliver on the protocol and deliver certainty for businesses, and the steps that we have taken in the UK Internal Market Bill help us to do so. I am not going to take lectures on upholding the integrity of our Union from a party that refuses to rule out backing a divisive second independence referendum in Scotland.

Louise Haigh: Those are absolutely ridiculous comments from the Minister. We have been supporting the protocol and the implementation of it, and it is the divisive, lawbreaking UK Internal Market Bill that has undermined the implementation of the protocol. While criticism from five former Prime Ministers, the leaders of three Northern Ireland parties and the Speaker of the US Congress and the resignation of the Government's most senior Law Officer may not have concerned the Government, I wonder whether the comments of the Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland have. Sir Declan Morgan said that the threat to break the law may have undermined public confidence in the legal system. I wonder whether the Minister now regrets the comments made by the Secretary of State and the actions of Governments over the past fortnight.

Mr Walker: We have been repeatedly clear through the passage of the Bill that we are respecting and delivering on the protocol. We remain absolutely committed to the peace process, to the Good Friday agreement and to acting within the UK's constitutional set-up, and that is what we will continue to do.

Northern Ireland: 100-Year Anniversary

Marco Longhi (Dudley North) (Con): What steps his Department is taking to mark the 100-year anniversary of Northern Ireland. [906626]

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr Robin Walker): In August, the Prime Minister visited Northern Ireland, announcing the establishment of a centenary forum and centenary historical advisory panel, ensuring that we listen to diverse perspectives as we create a bold and ambitious centenary programme. As well as being the centenary of Northern Ireland, it is the centenary of the United Kingdom as we know it today. We are committed to delivering our programme that will allow the public to engage with the history of the centenary while supporting Northern Ireland businesses and its tourism industry, and promoting Northern Ireland on the world stage.

Marco Longhi: Does my hon. Friend agree that next year's important anniversary for the UK as we know it today is also a fantastic opportunity to mark Northern Ireland's future and its diverse people, business and culture?

Mr Walker: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, and it is an opportunity to look ahead towards a bright and prosperous future for Northern Ireland. It is a chance

for people across the British Isles and abroad to celebrate the progress made while showcasing the people and places that I have so enjoyed getting to know since my appointment last year.

Ian Paisley (North Antrim) (DUP): The Minister will be aware that I put a written proposal to the Treasury about a commemorative celebratory coin for Northern Ireland in its 100th anniversary year. Perhaps the Minister will take the opportunity to elaborate on what progress has been made on that celebratory coin for our nation, and will he elaborate on what the Treasury has told me, which is that the Government will use this opportunity to promote Northern Ireland on the world stage and celebrate its people, culture, traditions and enterprise because we have made such a vital contribution to this United Kingdom?

Mr Walker: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman and I are in firm agreement that we should mark this historical centenary in a way that facilitates national recognition and international awareness. Specifically regarding a commemorative coin, this is a matter for the Treasury. It is a proposal that I have shared with ministerial colleagues previously, and I am very happy to explore it with them further. On the international dimension, he is absolutely right. We will be working with the Department for International Trade and our colleagues at the Foreign Office to ensure that promoting Northern Ireland around the world is an opportunity that is taken during this centenary.

Tourism Industry

Mr Laurence Robertson (Tewkesbury) (Con): What recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on supporting the tourism industry in Northern Ireland. [906627]

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr Robin Walker): I continue to work closely with colleagues across the Government and the Executive to support the tourism industry in Northern Ireland. The industry has benefited from financial support provided by the UK Government, including through the job retention scheme and the extension of the 15% VAT cut for the hospitality and tourism sectors. I welcome the new UK-wide Escape the Everyday campaign, promoting domestic tourism and promoting Northern Ireland across the UK as a great place to visit.

Mr Robertson: I thank the Minister for that response. Indeed, the lower VAT is helpful, but will he discuss with Treasury colleagues the potential benefit to Northern Ireland of extending that lower rate even further?

Mr Walker: I absolutely recognise the point that my hon. Friend is making. The extension of the 15% VAT cut for hospitality and tourism to the end of March next year will provide vital support for the tourism industry through these challenging times. The approach taken by this Government is already one of the most generous and comprehensive globally, but we will continue to monitor the impact that the measures are having, to provide the necessary support for businesses and individuals. I know the Secretary of State will be meeting representatives of the hospitality industry later today.

Paul Girvan (South Antrim) (DUP): In relation to Northern Ireland tourism, may I say that it has to compete not only on a world stage, but with the market from the Republic of Ireland and its predatory actions? It has been fast and loose in terms of using the opportunity of state aid, but in relation to air passenger duty, it has sucked the life out of our international trade to our international airports. What can be done in relation to using APD as a tool to help our tourism industry?

Mr Walker: I absolutely recognise the competitive pressure that Northern Ireland faces, and it is something that I have discussed with hospitality and, indeed, the aviation industry in Northern Ireland. As the hon. Gentleman will know, the Treasury is looking into what can be done on the APD front, and we will certainly take on board the views of Northern Ireland businesses.

UK Internal Market Bill: Good Friday Agreement

Chris Stephens (Glasgow South West) (SNP): What recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential effect of the UK Internal Market Bill on the Good Friday Agreement. [906628]

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Brandon Lewis): This Government will always make sure that the Belfast/Good Friday agreement is protected. I speak regularly with my colleagues on that very issue. We will not allow anything to shake our steadfast commitment to it.

Chris Stephens: I thank the Secretary of State for his answer. He will be aware that the Good Friday agreement encourages co-operation across the island of Ireland, including on security. He will know that, last week, the Northern Ireland Minister for Justice said that, to prepare fully, she needed clarity on negotiations and on the delivery of the protocol. What guarantees can he give us that the vital sharing of intelligence and information will continue after Brexit?

Brandon Lewis: As I am sure the hon. Gentleman will appreciate, the co-operation has been shown to work exceedingly well, as we have seen in the past few weeks with the quite phenomenally successful operation between the Police Service of Northern Ireland and its partners in the Garda in arresting terrorists. That operation highlights how well that co-operation works on the ground. Obviously, we are very keen to ensure that that kind of co-operation continues after we leave the European Union, and I know that our partners are keen on that as well.

Covid-19: Economic Recovery

Andrew Griffith (Arundel and South Downs) (Con): What recent discussions he has had with businesses in Northern Ireland on the recovery of the Northern Ireland economy from the effects of the covid-19 outbreak. [906630]

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr Robin Walker): The Secretary of State and I have engaged extensively with Northern Ireland businesses and have been impressed by their resilience and adaptability. This Government will do everything they can to help people

and businesses through this extraordinary time. Businesses in Northern Ireland will benefit from the job support scheme, VAT reductions being extended and the extension of bounce back loans.

Andrew Griffith: Will the Minister join me in welcoming the latest package of measures in the Government's winter economy plan? Those measures will ensure that we continue to protect jobs and help businesses through the uncertain difficult months ahead to ensure that Northern Ireland not only recovers but has the opportunity to prosper as part of the United Kingdom.

Mr Walker: I absolutely will. I join my hon. Friend in welcoming the comprehensive winter economy plan. The Government are providing support for businesses and employees throughout the United Kingdom with an unprecedented series of grants, loans and support schemes. We are steadfast in our commitment to strengthening the Union and levelling up opportunities for Northern Ireland to prosper, and that includes our investments in the city and growth deals programme, which covers the whole of Northern Ireland.

Abortion Services

Ruth Jones (Newport West) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the adequacy of provision for women seeking access to abortion services in Northern Ireland. [906633]

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr Robin Walker): In March this year, the Government made the Abortion (Northern Ireland) (No. 2) Regulations 2020, which set out the new law on access to abortion services in Northern Ireland. Since then, we have been dealing with the response to covid-19. However, I am pleased that some service provision has commenced on the ground in Northern Ireland through existing sexual and reproductive health clinics across all the health and social care trusts. I hope that longer-term services can be commissioned as soon as possible so that access is available locally in all cases set out in the regulations. The Government stand ready to provide whatever support we can to Northern Ireland's Minister of Health and his Department to assist them in this regard.

Ruth Jones: We all know that the time for debate about the need for abortion services for the women of Northern Ireland is long gone. These women deserve equality of access to these vital services without having to travel to the mainland. What discussions has the Minister had on the funding needed for the UK Government to commission and sustain new abortion services for the women of Northern Ireland?

Mr Walker: The regulations deliver equivalent outcomes, in practice, to the rest of the UK so that women and girls can enjoy similar rights in accessing abortion services in Northern Ireland going forward. We are in constant dialogue with the Executive about their overall funding settlement. As the hon. Lady will recognise, there have been substantial increases in their funding, thanks to the Barnett consequentials of funding across the UK, including in health.

Karin Smyth (Bristol South) (Lab): I listened very carefully to the Minister's answer. In this pandemic, it is even more important that women do not make risky journeys. Despite the clear indication of this Parliament, women's rights are still being denied in Northern Ireland because of the difficult local politics—which we understand. What discussions is he having about specific funding for wider abortion services, and is he considering a legal duty to provide?

Mr Walker: I think that we all recognise the importance of this issue. I understand that sexual and reproductive health clinics are providing some services consistent with the regulations. I am pleased that an interim solution has been reached on the ground in Northern Ireland so that the health and safety of women and girls can be protected by access to services locally. We all want the Executive to be able to move forward with formal commissioning of further services, and we will continue to support them in doing that.

Carla Lockhart (Upper Bann) (DUP): The Minister will be aware that tomorrow marks the commencement of Down's Syndrome Awareness Month, when we celebrate Down's syndrome, raise awareness and promote inclusivity within our society. With that in mind, what assessment has he made of the impact of the Government's decision to allow for termination to birth for diagnosis of Down's syndrome in Northern Ireland? Does he agree that many people see this as disability discrimination within the womb that would be illegal outside the womb?

Mr Walker: Let me first join the hon. Lady in commenting all those living with and supporting people with Down's syndrome. There is absolutely no intention whatsoever of any form of discrimination. As I repeatedly made clear in the debate on the regulations, they do not list specific conditions but rather ensure that we have complied with what CEDAW—the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women—requires. These are complex decisions. It is only right that women can make individual, informed decisions, following medical assessments, clear provision of information and proper support from medical professionals. That support should be there in cases where they choose to take their pregnancies to term even in cases of severe foetal impairment. We will continue to support the Department of Health and the Executive to deliver on this issue.

Northern Ireland Protocol

Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab): What recent representations he has received on the implementation of the Northern Ireland protocol. [906635]

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Brandon Lewis): We continue to engage regularly with stakeholders from across Northern Ireland and beyond on the implementation of the protocol. We have heard loud and clear the need for further clarity and certainty to ensure that we are all ready for the end of the transition period. Some of the steps we have taken over the past few months are about delivering on that. We are committed to implementing the protocol, as our recent work on the sanitary and phytosanitary checks, for example, highlights. We have been working hard to ensure that this is done in

a way that delivers in full on our commitments to the people of Northern Ireland, including our commitment to deliver unfettered access to Northern Ireland businesses to the whole UK market.

Kevin Brennan: I am not sure that the Secretary of State told me what representations he had received, which is what I actually asked. He conceded earlier that there would be some changes to the movement of goods as a result of the protocol. Can he tell us what that will look like in practice, because that is the clarity that businesses want?

Brandon Lewis: I thought that I had actually answered the hon. Gentleman's point. I am meeting businesses on a regular basis. The business engagement forum talks to businesses across a range of sectors in Northern Ireland. In fact, this very afternoon, I will be meeting more business representatives in Northern Ireland to talk about a range of issues—not only recovery from covid, but delivering on the protocol and what happens after the end of the implementation period. What these businesses have consistently wanted is certainty about unfettered access, which the United Kingdom Internal Market Bill delivers. We will continue to focus on seeking an agreement through the specialist Joint Committee and through the free trade agreement to deliver that. We have also been clear that there will be some checks—particularly, for example, SPS checks for live animals and agrifoods. We are delivering on that with the Northern Ireland Executive. These checks are building on the checks that have been in place since about the 19th century. We are determined to deliver in a way that works for people and businesses in all communities in Northern Ireland.

Stephen Farry (North Down) (Alliance): The businesses of Northern Ireland urgently need to see the detail on the border operating model down the Irish sea. This was promised previously by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster by the end of July. It is not essential that we see the outcome of the Joint Committee, so can the Secretary of State clarify when that will be published, because it is so urgent?

Brandon Lewis: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's point about businesses wanting as much certainty as they can get. We are still working through things with the specialist Joint Committee, but we are also engaging with those businesses. As I say, we are having regular weekly meetings with businesses—a range of businesses—across Northern Ireland to ensure that we deliver what works best for those businesses in Northern Ireland.

New Decade, New Approach: Implementation

Robbie Moore (Keighley) (Con): What progress his Department has made on the implementation of the proposals in the “New Decade, New Approach” document published in January 2020. [906636]

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Brandon Lewis): Despite the need to focus on covid-19, quite rightly, good progress has still been made in a number of areas in delivering on the new decade, new approach agreement. We have been releasing money from the £2 billion of funding set in the deal, changing the family migration rules for the people of Northern Ireland,

holding the first joint board meeting, announcing the appointment of a veterans commissioner and, indeed, setting out our intentions for marking the centenary of Northern Ireland next year.

Robbie Moore: I welcome the tremendous progress that my right hon. Friend has made in delivering on the new decade, new approach deal, including appointing a veterans commissioner, as he has just pointed out, but also holding the first meeting of the joint board. Does he agree that this demonstrates that the deal signed earlier this year is working well?

Brandon Lewis: Yes. My hon. Friend makes a very good point. The deal is a good example of ensuring that the Northern Ireland Executive are able to function and flow. They have worked very well through the difficulties and the challenges of the covid period, and they continue to work well. It is good to see all five parties working across the Assembly and across the Executive to deliver for people right across all communities in Northern Ireland.

Simon Hoare (North Dorset) (Con) [V]: Covid and Brexit are of course the headline acts—my right hon. Friend is right—but the NDNA cannot be forgotten. The Government response to our Northern Ireland Affairs Committee report was, possibly understandably, thin. Can he assure me that delivering the NDNA in full has his energy and commitment, because he knows how important that agreement is for progress and peace?

Brandon Lewis: Yes. My hon. Friend makes a very good point. He is absolutely right about delivering on that in full both in the legislation we will need to pass in this House, which we will bring to this House in due course, and in making sure that things are being delivered across the NDNA—whether the independent fiscal council, which I have spoken to both the First Minister and Deputy First Minister about, or continuing the joint board meetings, the leaders' meetings and the whole range of things that we need to do. Working together, these are the issues I discuss with the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, generally on a weekly basis at least, to make sure that we continue to deliver.

UK Internal Market Bill: Political Party Discussions

Tonia Antoniazzi (Gower) (Lab): What discussions he had with Northern Ireland political parties prior to the publication of the United Kingdom Internal Market Bill. [906637]

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Brandon Lewis): We are committed to working closely with the devolved Administrations. I want to thank the Executive for their engagement to date, including their response to our consultation on the Bill. I can confirm that I did speak to Northern Ireland's party leaders about the UKIM Bill ahead of its introduction, and I look forward to continuing to engage with the Executive as we progress towards the end of the year.

Tonia Antoniazzi [V]: Given that the leading member of the United States Congress, the Democrat nominee for President, the Trump-appointed special envoy to Northern Ireland, the Irish Government, the Lord Chief

Justice of Northern Ireland and three of the five parties of the Executive have all condemned the Secretary of State's juvenile lawbreaking boasts in this House, does he now accept that he has done more harm than good?

Brandon Lewis: I would just respectfully say that the hon. Lady may want to have a look at exactly what I said in this House, which was giving a straight answer to a very direct, straight question and making a statement of the position. It is a position that will ensure that this Government deliver on our overriding promise to deliver unfettered access for Northern Ireland businesses, and ensure that we are protecting the Good Friday agreement.

Legacy Investigations: Cross-community Support

Mary Kelly Foy (City of Durham) (Lab): What steps he is taking to help ensure that Northern Ireland legacy investigations proceed on the basis of cross-community support. [906638]

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Brandon Lewis): The Government have been clear that we will bring forward legislation to address the legacy of the troubles, which focuses on reconciliation, delivers for victims and ends the cycle of investigations that have failed both victims and veterans alike with vexatious claims. We are committed to making progress on this and, indeed, to engaging with the Irish Government, the Northern Ireland parties and stakeholders from across the community on this issue.

Mary Kelly Foy: The Stormont House agreement was agreed by the overwhelming majority of political parties in Northern Ireland, was endorsed by the British and

Irish Governments, and had cross-community support. Will the Secretary of State recommit to the principles of Stormont House and reconfirm the central involvement of victims' groups in any legacy proposals?

Brandon Lewis: Yes, as I outlined at the time of the written ministerial statement, we absolutely do follow through and we intend to follow through on the principles of Stormont House. It is hugely important that we are all working with all communities, and particularly the families and the victims who suffered so much through the troubles. I was so pleased that we were finally seeing the victims' payment scheme going forward. It is a hugely important step for all those people in Northern Ireland.

Colum Eastwood (Foyle) (SDLP): Some Members of this House want an amnesty for veterans who served in Northern Ireland. In 1976, Majella O'Hare, who was 12 years old, was walking with her friends to church. She was shot twice in the back, and killed, by a British paratrooper. Does the Secretary of State believe that that paratrooper should be immune from prosecution?

Brandon Lewis: The hon. Gentleman will know that I am unable to comment on any particular cases, but we all recognise the sensitivities, difficulties and complexity of all the issues that come through the troubles, which people in Northern Ireland have been dealing with for a very long time. We have made a commitment through NDNA, and as I did in the written ministerial statement earlier this year, to find a way to work through this, working with all parties and all communities in Northern Ireland, and we are still determined to deliver on that.

Speaker's Statement

12.1 pm

Mr Speaker: I wish to make a statement about this House's scrutiny of delegated powers during the pandemic, and on the selection of amendments to the motion relating to the Coronavirus Act 2020 later today.

The way in which the Government have exercised their powers to make secondary legislation during this crisis has been totally unsatisfactory. All too often, important statutory instruments have been published a matter of hours before they come into force, and some explanations of why important measures have come into effect before they can be laid before this House have been unconvincing; this shows a total disregard for the House.

The Government must make greater efforts to prepare measures more quickly, so that this House can debate and decide upon the most significant measures at the earliest possible point. The use of made affirmative statutory instruments under the urgency procedure gives rise to particular concern. I will give very sympathetic consideration to applications for urgent questions or emergency debates in such cases, requiring Ministers to come to the Dispatch Box to justify the use of such powers.

I hope that all hon. Members will have a chance to express their views through substantive amendable motions on scrutiny of delegated powers, or on the operation of the Coronavirus Act 2020, or both.

I turn now to the motion to be considered later today, which invites the House to make a narrow, binary choice as to whether the temporary provisions of the Coronavirus Act 2020 should or should not expire. Unfortunately, as it is only a 90-minute debate as a proceeding under an Act under Standing Order No. 16, I cannot give additional time to discuss the issues. I am disappointed and I know some Members will be disappointed.

When I became Speaker, I made it clear that I would take decisions on matters relating to procedure guided by professional advice. I have concluded, on the basis of advice that I have received, that any amendment to the motion before the House risks giving rise to uncertainty about the decision the House has taken. This then risks decisions that are rightly the responsibility of Parliament ultimately being determined by the courts. Lack of clarity in such important matters risks undermining the rule of law. I have therefore decided not to select any of the amendments to the motion.

As I hope my earlier comments show, I have not taken this decision lightly. I am looking to the Government to remedy a situation I regard as completely unsatisfactory. I now look to the Government to rebuild the trust with this House and not treat it with the contempt that they have shown.

Oral Answers to Questions

PRIME MINISTER

The Prime Minister was asked—

Engagements

[906854] **Jason McCartney** (Colne Valley) (Con): If he will list his official engagements for Wednesday 30 September.

The Prime Minister (Boris Johnson): I know the whole House will want to join me in expressing our deepest sympathies to the family and friends of Sergeant Matt Ratana, who was tragically killed in Croydon on Friday. It is a reminder of the huge debt we owe to those who put their own lives at risk to keep us safe every day.

Tomorrow sees the start of Black History Month. For generations, countless people of African and Caribbean descent have been shaping our nation's story, making a huge difference to our national and cultural life and helping to make Britain a better place to be. This is a fantastic moment to celebrate their contribution to our country.

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

Jason McCartney: The events sector, which includes weddings, festivals, conferences and music events, supports nearly 1 million jobs and is worth more than £30 billion to the UK economy. It has been devastated by covid: revenue is down 90% since last year. Will the Prime Minister look at financial support, focusing on grants and not just loans, especially for freelancers, including musicians and performers? Will the Government support proactive, covid-secure testing events to boost confidence and start to allow the events industry to support itself?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to champion the sector in the way that he does. The £1.57 billion culture recovery fund is clearly intended to support the organisations and freelancers he mentions. The vision he lays out, in which people can be tested before they go to events, is absolutely right, and I hope that when that day comes, the public will show their support for this vital sector by visiting theatres as they reopen.

Keir Starmer (Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab): May I join the Prime Minister in sending my deepest condolences to the family and friends of Sergeant Matt Ratana? This was a truly appalling incident. I have to say that every time I contemplate the circumstances, I shudder, and I suspect I am speaking for a lot of people when I say that. It reminds us of the huge debt that we owe to all our police officers and of the risks that they take every day to keep us safe.

More than 16 million—around one in four—people are now living under local restrictions. In recent months, 48 areas in England have gone into local restrictions, but only one has ever come out and stayed out—Luton. Why does the Prime Minister think that is?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is absolutely right to draw attention to the importance of local lockdown measures. I can tell him and the House that since I last updated the House, as he is absolutely right to say, there is now a serious and growing problem with the resurgence of the virus, which is why we brought forward the package of measures that we did last week. The reason for the success of Luton is that local people pulled together to depress the virus—to follow the guidance. That is the way forward for the entire country, that is what we did before, in March and April, and I have no doubt that that is what we are going to do again.

Keir Starmer: When local restrictions were introduced, the Prime Minister described them as a “whack-a-mole” strategy. That implies that at some stage the mole goes down and restrictions are lifted, but in fact, in some lockdown areas infection rates are still going up, and in towns such as Bradford, Bury and Oldham restrictions have now been in place for months. For many of those communities that are affected, things feel like they are getting worse, not better, so I ask a question on their behalf: what is the Prime Minister’s strategy for bringing these places out of restrictions so that people can see their families again?

The Prime Minister: Nobody wants to impose restrictions of this kind, whether in Bradford or anywhere else in the country. We work very closely with local authorities to ensure that we have the right mix in the approach that we adopt. Frankly, when we have the virus going up in the way that it now is in some parts of the country, we have to take strong local action. One important difference between the way the virus is behaving this time and how it behaved in the spring is that it does appear, at the moment, as though the illness is more localised. That is why we need direct local action of the kind that we are taking, in addition to the strong national measures that we announced last week, which the right hon. and learned Gentleman supported and whose effect we hope to see in the coming days and weeks.

Keir Starmer: One of the major problems, as we have seen in the last 24 hours, is widespread confusion about the local restrictions, and I do not just mean the Prime Minister not knowing his own rules. Having sat opposite the Prime Minister at PMQs every week, that did not come as a surprise to me. But let me quote to him the Conservative council leader in Bolton, who said that the Government’s handling of restrictions was “breeding resentment” and:

“It’s become too complex, too complicated...People feel very let down, they feel frustrated...very forgotten”.

If the Prime Minister does not understand the rules and his own council leaders are complaining about mixed messages, how does the Prime Minister expect the rest of the country to understand and follow the rules?

The Prime Minister: Actually, I think the people in this country do understand and overwhelmingly follow the rules, in spite of the Leader of the Opposition’s efforts continually to snipe from the sidelines and to undermine what we are trying to do.

On the restrictions in the north-east, I cleared that matter up as fast as I could: it is very clear that people should not mix indoors either at home or in a hospitality

setting and should avoid socialising outdoors. We need to apply that in the north-east, because that is where the virus is spiking. I think people do understand why we are doing that; I think people get it. I think people want us to defeat this virus, and they want to see us doing it together. Sometimes the Leader of the Opposition backs the Government, sometimes he snipes from the sidelines. May I ask him to be a little bit consistent and show some support. Let’s hear him try to instil some confidence in the British people in the measures that he supports.

Keir Starmer: The idea that anybody who asks the Prime Minister a question at Prime Minister’s questions is undermining the Government effort is wearing a bit thin. We have openly supported the restrictions, but it is perfectly reasonable to ask why they are not working. I spoke to the leader of Newcastle City Council yesterday. He said the other big problem, apart from Government messaging, is the lack of economic support being provided to local communities under restrictions. Newcastle City Council indicates that by the end of the year 10,000 jobs in hospitality will have been lost. Many businesses are forced to stay closed. Prime Minister, but for these extraordinary restrictions, these are viable jobs. These businesses are doing the right thing. Why have the Government decided that these jobs are not worth saving?

The Prime Minister: As I have said repeatedly, we are putting our arms around the whole of the UK economy. We will do everything we can to save every job. I must say that I saw the Labour leader of Newcastle and I was rather surprised by his comments because, to the best of my knowledge, they were calling for the measures that we put in. The best way to protect our jobs and our economy is to continue to work together, to comply with the measures, to drive down the virus, to keep our children in education—which is an absolute priority for this country—and to keep the economy moving. That is what we want to do. That is the strategy; that is the approach that the Leader of the Opposition supported last week. He now both simultaneously attacks and does not attack the restrictions. Which is it? He has got to make up his mind. If he supports the Government’s policy—if he supports these restrictions—will he say so now?

Keir Starmer: I support the restrictions. I have done so every single time the Prime Minister has introduced them; he well knows that. Because of the restrictions, lots of people’s jobs—in Newcastle, it is 10,000 people’s jobs in hospitality—are at risk. I support the restrictions, but the question I asked the Prime Minister is: can the economic support go in for those who will lose their jobs? He did not answer that. There are 10,000 people who wanted an answer to that last question, because they are going to lose their jobs by Christmas. Prime Minister, you really should have answered it.

The reality is that the Chancellor has made a political choice to reduce economic support just when the new health restrictions are coming in. If the Prime Minister does not accept that from me, maybe he will listen to the following example from the Chancellor’s own constituency. This is a business owner. Prime Minister, you might want to listen to what he has to say:

“We own a wedding venue in Richmond, North Yorkshire”.

The Chancellor’s latest plan

“does nothing to help us...We cannot employ people to work events which the government are not allowing to take place. Our events team are therefore looking in the face of redundancy as we

simply cannot afford to pay wages when events are in lockdown... The jobs are viable if only the Government would allow us to return to work."

He goes on to say:

"My events team are talented and fantastic and it is an insult to suggest their jobs are not worth saving."

This is not about supporting restrictions, Prime Minister; it is about what the Prime Minister has to say to those who are at risk of losing their jobs and businesses. What, on behalf of the Chancellor, does he say to that business owner?

Mr Speaker: Order. May I just say that it is very important to remind everybody that it is Prime Minister's questions, not Opposition questions? Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: I am very grateful, Mr Speaker.

I think the answer is very clear. Last week, the Labour party supported the package—the winter economic plan—that the Chancellor put forward. I think most people, looking at the £190 billion that we have invested in supporting our people across this country, will recognise that. The furlough plan alone is far more generous than that of any other European country. I think most people around the world can see that the Government are putting their arms around the people of this country and helping them through it. We will help. I know that the wedding sector has had a particularly tough time, and of course I feel for the gentleman in Richmond in Yorkshire to whom the right hon. and learned Gentleman refers, who wants his business to go ahead, but the best way forward for him and for all other businesses in the country is for us all to pull together now, get the virus done, and keep the economy moving. In the meantime, yes of course this Government are able to supply the support that is needed, which by the way is only possible because we have had a prudent, sensible, one nation Conservative party in power over the past 10 years. The Labour party would have bankrupted the country.

Keir Starmer: It is refreshing to hear the Prime Minister try to dig the Chancellor out of a hole for a change, but I do not think that will wash. The Prime Minister just does not get it. The problem with his argument is this: these are viable jobs, Prime Minister, but for the restrictions. The vacancies for new jobs just do not exist and the training scheme the Prime Minister announced yesterday does not start until April. There is a gap here, and the Prime Minister should not be so tin-eared to those whose jobs are at risk.

Finally, tomorrow marks the start of Black History Month. As well as celebrating the huge contribution black people have made to the UK, we must reflect on the present, and the structural inequalities and discrimination that sadly persist. For example, black women in the UK are five times more likely to die in pregnancy and childbirth. That is truly shocking. Will the Prime Minister commit to addressing that and launch an urgent investigation into the issue?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman knows full well that the Government have launched an urgent investigation into inequalities across the whole of society. We will certainly address them in a thoroughgoing way. I am amazed that he seems ignorant of that fact, absolutely amazed.

It is a quite extraordinary state of affairs. The right hon. and learned Gentleman's general line of questioning is that one moment he is supporting the restrictions, the next moment he seems to be opposing them. One day the Opposition are theoretically marching side by side with the rest of us trying to defeat coronavirus, the next minute they are off in the undergrowth firing from the sidelines. I must repeat it: it was the hon. Member for Stretford and Urmston (Kate Green), the shadow Education Secretary, who really revealed what Labour is all about. She said that this was a "good crisis" that they intended to exploit. We see this as a moment for the nation to come together, and that is what we are doing. We are taking the tough decisions that will take this country forward: not just the lifetime skills guarantee, which the right hon. and learned Gentleman was kind enough to mention, but the huge investments we are making in the NHS, in our policing, in affordable housing. This is the Government and this is the party who are taking the tough decisions to take this country forward, while, I am afraid, once again all they want to do is snipe from the sidelines.

[906855] **David Mundell** (Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is essential that the iniquitous tariffs the US has placed on Scotch malt whisky be removed during the current presidential term? So that that can happen, will he commit the Government, as a matter of urgency, to reaching a bilateral agreement with the US on the Airbus-Boeing dispute?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for raising that important matter, which I have raised several times myself with President Trump and others in the US Administration. We will continue to take a very robust line. It cannot be right that American consumers should continue to pay over the odds for Scotch, or that this discrimination should continue. We will fight it every step of the way.

Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): May I associate myself with the remarks of the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition on the murder of Sergeant Matt Ratana? It was a truly shocking incident. We should applaud the efforts of our police and all our emergency services, who do a wonderful job keeping the rest of us safe. Our thoughts are with Matt's family, friends and colleagues. I also associate myself with the Leader of the Opposition's remarks on Black History Month and the responsibility we all have to eradicate inequality.

Yesterday, the Scottish social attitudes survey revealed that just 15% of people trust the UK Government to work in Scotland's interest. Last night, Scotland's MPs voted overwhelmingly against the Tory power grab Bill, but the Prime Minister forced it through anyway, in the biggest attack on our Scottish Parliament in the history of devolution. If the Prime Minister cares to listen—it is not a difficult question—why does he think the people of Scotland have no trust in him or his Government?

The Prime Minister: I am afraid the right hon. Gentleman is completely wrong in what he says about the United Kingdom Internal Market Bill. Perhaps the people of Scotland deserve to hear from him a clearer account of what it does. After all, the Bill, which I believe the

Leader of the Opposition supports, actually devolves power back to Scotland—it gives power back to Scotland. Not only does it enable Scotland to take back control of its spectacular fisheries, but it opens up markets for Scottish agriculture around the world. I can tell the House that today is an historic day: after 23 years in which every successive Government have failed, this Government have managed to lift the ban on British beef in America. Scottish beef will be going to the United States, thanks to the efforts of the British Government. That is a fact of which the right hon. Gentleman might, with advantage, inform his electorate in Scotland.

Ian Blackford: I do not know what that was, but it certainly was not an answer to the question. After that performance, it is little wonder that trust in the Government is at 15% and falling. Here we go again—yapping, bumbling, mumbling, but no answer. Since he cannot answer a straight question, I will tell the Prime Minister—*[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. I expected the Prime Minister to be heard; I certainly want to hear the leader of the Scottish National party.

Ian Blackford: Thank you, Mr Speaker. We are very used to Scottish voices being shouted down by Tories in this place. A Tory Government who casually and arrogantly break international law and break devolution have shattered any remaining trust in this broken Westminster system. Last night was a defining moment. If the attack on devolution fails to gain the consent of the devolved Parliaments in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, will the Prime Minister withdraw the legislation, or will he force it through against our wishes? Is not the Prime Minister demonstrating yet again that the only way to defend our Parliament and its powers is by Scotland becoming an independent country?

The Prime Minister: I think the right hon. Gentleman demonstrates once again that his ambition is simply to foment grievance where no grievance should exist. All the Bill does, in fact, is devolve power back from Brussels to Edinburgh; it gives powers back to Edinburgh, which he should welcome. More important than the powers is the fact that the people of this country are not really interested in wrangling between parties. What the Bill does is protect jobs, protect growth and protect trade in the United Kingdom. That is the most important thing and that is why he should support it.

[906856] **Dr Ben Spencer** (Runnymede and Weybridge) (Con): Despite the many challenges of the covid pandemic, one unexpected relief to many of my constituents has been reductions in noise and air pollution from the M25 during lockdown. Runnymede and Weybridge greatly benefits from the connections that our motorways provide, but that comes at a cost. Does my right hon. Friend agree that, as we build our economy, we must ensure that our infrastructure—the backbone of our country—is sustainable and minimises the impact on our communities?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely spot on. He talks about noise and pollution from the M25, and the Government have a vision: we want to accelerate the introduction of electric, zero-emission and quieter vehicles in order to reduce not just pollution but noise. That is what we are going to do.

Liz Saville Roberts (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC): Diolch yn fawr, Lefarydd. From tomorrow, 2.3 million people in Wales will not be able to travel out of county without good reason, yet people from lockdown areas in England can still visit rural Wales. Travelling from Betws-y-Coed to Beddgelert could land someone with a fine, but Rochdale to Rhosneigr is no problem. I raised that with the Prime Minister last week. Leisure travel from lockdown areas has to stop. Will he make good on that today?

The Prime Minister: There are different measures in place, as we have discussed already this afternoon. Overall, the UK is proceeding with the same approach. I am very grateful to Mark Drakeford and everybody else in the Welsh Government for the way we are working together to defeat the virus. Yes, there will be some differences and some seeming illogicalities, but that is inevitable in tackling a pandemic. I am grateful for the right hon. Lady's co-operation.

[906859] **Rob Butler** (Aylesbury) (Con): My constituents in Wendover will be worst affected by the construction of phase 1 of High Speed 2, according to the House of Lords. The best mitigation for the village would undoubtedly be a bored mined tunnel, but that has been refused. Does my right hon. Friend agree with that decision? If so, will he ensure that HS2 Ltd and its contractors works constructively with the Wendover HS2 Action Group to minimise noise pollution and avoid damaging the aquifer by other means?

The Prime Minister: As the Prime Minister, I totally support HS2 and the ambition of linking up our country better. As a local MP, I feel my hon. Friend's pain and I understand exactly where he is coming from. I have been assured in my conversations with HS2 that it is having extensive engagement with the Wendover group. I know Wendover well, as he knows. I will ask the relevant Minister to make contact with him.

[906857] **Munira Wilson** (Twickenham) (LD): The Prime Minister has reportedly said that improving the lives of disabled people is a personal mission, but his Coronavirus Act 2020 has watered down the right to care for the most vulnerable—particularly the disabled, children with special needs and those struggling with mental ill health. How does renewing the Act today in full stack up with his personal mission, never mind his conscience? Will he finally commit to working across parties to replace these draconian laws to ensure that we protect our most vulnerable and safeguard our liberties?

The Prime Minister: We are making sure that everybody in our society gets all the protections they need. I am aware of the easements in the Care Act 2014 that the hon. Lady refers to. It was necessary to put them in temporarily, and we now need to make sure we give everybody the protection that they need. That is what this Government will do.

[906860] **Jacob Young** (Redcar) (Con): I welcome the Prime Minister's announcement of the UK's first hydrogen transport hub in Teesside, which will see the UK embrace a hydrogen-fuelled future and put Redcar and Cleveland at the heart of developing that vital new energy source. Does he agree that that is exactly how we will build back

better and greener under this Government, creating new jobs and putting Britain at the forefront of this world-leading industry?

The Prime Minister: I am hearing a lot of good stuff from the Government Benches about the clean, green future—the green industrial revolution that this country is embarked on. I am delighted that Tees Valley will be the UK's first hydrogen transport hub, and I look forward to joining my hon. Friend there before too long.

[906858] **Tommy Sheppard** (Edinburgh East) (SNP): The Prime Minister will know that next May there are elections to the Scottish Parliament, and I am sure he will agree that the question of how Scotland is governed will be central to that campaign. I know that he is a keen student of the democratic principle, so may I ask him this: if the Conservative party and other Unionist parties were successful in that election in securing a majority of seats in the Scottish Parliament, would he regard that as a mandate for the Union? A simple yes or no would suffice.

The Prime Minister: I am a keen student of democratic principles, as the hon. Gentleman rightly says, and I recall that there was a referendum in 2014 in which the people of Scotland—the people of our country—voted overwhelmingly, or by a substantial majority, to keep the Union. It was a once-in-a-generation event, as the then leaders of the Scottish National party acknowledged. I think they were right then, and we should stick with that.

[906861] **Harriett Baldwin** (West Worcestershire) (Con): The Prime Minister and I were both elected on a manifesto pledge to increase home building and to level up our country, and there is lots to welcome in the planning White Paper, but the formula that has been used to allocate the homes seems to be doing the opposite. It has overshot in terms of numbers, and the investment is concreting down rather than levelling up, so will my right hon. Friend commit that, when the consultation closes tomorrow, he will pledge to change some of the elements of this—dare I say it—algorithm?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I can tell her that we are going to ensure that we have a planning system that is fit for purpose and that allows us, for the first time in a generation, to give young people the chance of home ownership, which millions of people are currently shut out from. That is what we want to do, but we think we can do it in such a way as to avoid desecrating our beautiful countryside and our green belt. That is what we are going to do, and I hope very much that she supports it.

[906863] **Debbie Abrahams** (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab) [V]: With over 7,000 new cases and 71 deaths from covid yesterday, and a seven-day case average of 183 per 100,000 in Oldham, will the Prime Minister tell my constituents what he thinks his biggest mistake has been to date? Is it locking down too late, or lifting the lockdown without a fully operational test, track and isolate system? Is it the billions wasted in backroom deals with the private sector on personal protective equipment that does not fit, on test and trace that does not work, and more? Or is it all of the above?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the hon. Lady. There will of course be plenty of time to go over all the decisions that the Government have made—for which, as I have said repeatedly, I take full responsibility—but she is right to draw attention to the incidence in her constituency of 183 per 100,000. That is a serious increase. The position is not the emergency of March, but it is serious, and that is why I hope she will encourage her right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition to support more actively—or perhaps more consistently; I will put it that way—what the Government are doing. I hope she will also encourage her constituents to bear in mind that the best thing we can all do is to follow the guidance: hands, face, space; get a test if they have symptoms; and where local measures need to be in place, look at the website and follow that advice.

[906862] **David Simmonds** (Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner) (Con): My right hon. Friend and I have the privilege of representing areas with an honourable history of supporting refugees. What plans does he have to mark the successful conclusion of the five-year Syrian resettlement scheme, which is regarded as giving the UK the international gold standard for refugee resettlement, providing safe legal routes to the UK and bolstering our efforts to deter human trafficking?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for his question. The UK can be incredibly proud of what we have done to resettle Syrian refugees. We have resettled more than 25,000 through safe and legal routes directly from conflict zones, and we will continue to meet our obligations to those fleeing persecution and war around the world.

[906866] **Janet Daby** (Lewisham East) (Lab) [V]: The hospitality sector has already suffered hugely as a result of this crisis and is now facing further damage because of the Chancellor's decision to withdraw support. Nearly 200,000 jobs in the hospitality sector across London are now at risk, including more than 800 jobs in my constituency of Lewisham East. Working people deserve a Government who work for them. Instead, they are being told that their jobs are unviable. Why do the Chancellor and the Prime Minister feel that these jobs are not worth saving?

The Prime Minister: We are doing everything we can to save every job in the country. That is why the Chancellor set out the winter economic plan and why we have the job retention bonus at the end of January. But, of course, things are tough. As the Chancellor has said, alas, we cannot save every job, but we have the kickstart funds, with £2 billion to support young people into work, plus we now have a lifetime skills guarantee to ensure that people can retrain for the jobs that are going to be created by this economy.

[906864] **Darren Henry** (Broxtowe) (Con): As co-chair of the midlands engine, all-party parliamentary group I am determined to champion the midlands engine and make sure that the midlands, the largest regional economy outside London, is not left behind in the Government's levelling-up agenda. Will the Prime Minister commit to investing in the heart of our country and fire up the midlands engine?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is completely right in his support for the midlands engine. That is why we are investing another £200 million from the getting

building fund in the midlands engine region. I will be happy to write to him in the next few days about what we are doing for levelling up in the midlands.

Mick Whitley (Birkenhead) (Lab): Last week, the Chancellor made the political choice to write off 1 million jobs as unviable. There are more than 1,000 jobs at risk in my constituency of Birkenhead, and 141,000 jobs at risk in the north-east. This would be unemployment on a scale even worse than under Thatcher. Why do the Prime Minister and the Chancellor think that it is a price worth paying?

The Prime Minister: That is completely to misrepresent what the Chancellor is trying to do. As I have just told the House, we have already put £190 billion into supporting livelihoods, people and families. We are going to continue to put our arms around the people of this country. The most important thing is to get the economy moving and get people into work, and, at the same time, to keep kids in school, but we can only do that if we suppress the virus in the way that the Government have set out, with the local lockdown measures that we have announced and the national measures that, I hope, are the subject of cross-party support.

[906865] **Mr Laurence Robertson** (Tewkesbury) (Con): Does the Prime Minister believe in the value of local accident and emergency units, and will he work to ensure the return of the A&E at Cheltenham General Hospital? The local hospitals trust has said that it will return, but can he try to ensure that it does so sooner rather than later?

The Prime Minister: Yes, indeed. I am assured that the closure to which my hon. Friend refers is only temporary, and I remind him that this is the Government who are putting in the record—the biggest ever—capital investment into the NHS, £34 billion, to say nothing of the investments we have made just in the last nine months.

Mr Speaker: And hopefully he can do Chorley at the same time.

Neil Coyle (Bermondsey and Old Southwark) (Lab): In January, the Government were still pretending that there were only 5,000 rough sleepers across the whole country. During the lockdown, 15,000 rough sleepers were supported under the Everyone In programme. Will the Prime Minister ensure that the homelessness charities, councils and others who stepped up and provided accommodation in the crisis are funded for every single person they helped?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman raises a very important point. One of the consolations of this crisis was that we were able to prevent so many rough sleepers from succumbing in the way that, alas, happened in other countries. That was a great effort by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the charities, working together. Of course, we will continue to do what we can to support those vital charities, to prevent rough sleeping and homelessness.

[906867] **Jane Hunt** (Loughborough) (Con): The rotary club of Loughborough Beacon would like me to pass on its thanks to the UK Government for being one of the top donors to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, which has made Africa free from wild polio. Will the Prime Minister join me in congratulating Rotary and its supporters on their monumental contribution to this effort? They have contributed more than \$2 billion and helped to vaccinate more than 2.5 billion children around the world.

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon Friend, because that is a classic and fine example of the philanthropy and public spirit of the British people, which has been shown clearly throughout this crisis.

Navendu Mishra (Stockport) (Lab): I know that the Prime Minister refused to recognise my figures last week, but my local housing provider, Stockport Homes, has a waiting list of more than 7,000 households. With Shelter saying that 200,000 renters are at risk of imminent covid eviction, will he reinstate the ban upon evictions to prevent an even bigger housing crisis in Stockport this winter?

The Prime Minister: We have changed the law to ask landlords to provide tenants with at least six months' notice before eviction. We are not going to have evictions in lockdown areas, there will not be any enforcement of evictions over Christmas and we are putting £180 million into discretionary payments for local authorities to help hardship cases. We are also embarking on a huge programme to build hundreds of thousands more homes, particularly affordable homes, which I hope the hon. Gentleman's constituents will want to buy and to part-buy.

[906868] **Jerome Mayhew** (Broadland) (Con): The A47 Acle Straight is the main road—in fact the only road—that links Great Yarmouth to the great city of Norwich. It is a bottleneck and it is notoriously dangerous, and there has been a campaign to dual it for at least 30 years, yet the highways authority has just announced that it has no plans even to consider it for upgrade until 2030 at the earliest. What can my right hon. Friend do to give hope to the people of Broadland, and of Norfolk more widely, that this inexplicable decision will be reconsidered?

The Prime Minister: I appreciate the temporary disappointment that my hon. Friend is experiencing, but this Government are immensely ambitious for the improvement of our transport infrastructure, and active consideration is now being undertaken of that project again. I understand that parliamentary colleagues are meeting Baroness Vere, the roads Minister, this week to discuss the options for additional schemes from 2025 onwards.

Mr Speaker: In order to allow the safe exit of hon. Members participating in this item of business and the safe arrival of those participating in the next, I am suspending the House for three minutes.

12.42 pm

Sitting suspended.

Professional and Amateur Sport: Government Support

12.45 pm

Tracey Crouch (Chatham and Aylesford) (Con) (*Urgent question*): To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport if he will make a statement on Government support for professional and amateur sport.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Nigel Huddleston): I thank my hon. Friend for her question. Her passion and dedication to the sporting sector are well known and appreciated, and on behalf of the whole House I wish her the very best for a speedy recovery and a swift return to this place.

Like my hon. Friend, the Government believe that sports clubs are the beating heart of their communities. Were we to lose them, we would lose so much more than sport. That is why, to help community clubs through this crisis, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport funding body Sport England announced a £210 million emergency fund, and why earlier this year the Government stepped in to protect rugby league from the imminent threat of collapse. Both those interventions were on top of the multi-billion pound package of business support from the Treasury that enabled many of our sports clubs to survive.

We have also made sure every step of the way to try to enable as much grassroots sport as possible. Being active and healthy is essential in our national battle against the virus. Reinstating elite sport and, of course, grassroots sport in a covid-secure way was a major achievement, and I pay tribute to all those who made that possible. Behind-closed-doors matches have enabled vital broadcast revenue to flow into elite sport, as well as bringing joy to millions of fans. The Government ensured that Project Restart was shared with everyone by getting premier league football on the BBC for the first time ever.

However, I know that we all want our fans back in stadiums as soon as possible. Sport without fans is poorer in so many ways. We trialled the return of fans with 12 successful pilot events, but rising infection rates across the country meant that the Government had to act, and we could not proceed on 1 October as planned. We have to contain the virus, and, given the backdrop of rising infection rates, we had to press the pause button. I assure the House that we are working at speed, alongside the Treasury, with sports governing bodies and clubs across the country to understand what support they need as a result of the decision to postpone the 1 October return.

For football, we are asking the Premier League to support English Football League clubs—the higher end of the football pyramid. Yesterday, we also provided the national league with assurance that financial support from the Government will be forthcoming so that it can start this season this Saturday. We have asked for detailed financial returns from all major spectator sports to see what support they need. We expect those returns by the end of today, and any club in immediate financial distress should alert its sports governing body.

Sports clubs have proved themselves to be bedrocks of their communities during this pandemic, hosting test centres, looking after vulnerable people, organising food deliveries and so much more. Sports clubs have had our backs during this pandemic. We will have theirs in return.

Mr Speaker: We are all with you as well, Tracey. We are wishing you well.

Tracey Crouch [V]: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank my hon. Friend for his response. I know that his officials are working their socks off behind the scenes, so I thank them for what they are doing, too.

The question relates to all professional sport, because there are fires raging around the whole sector and, to be honest, it has been difficult to see precisely where the support is coming from, but its urgency relates to the national league starting on Saturday. Therefore, the reassurances are welcome, but it is disappointing that there is no specific announcement as yet about what the league will receive or when. However, because it does appear to be coming, will the Minister confirm that the distribution formula will be based on lost gate receipts, and not simply on step? Can he give more details on plans to return fans to stadiums for football and other sports?

While we are talking about fans, can the Minister explain why a step 2 away fan cannot attend an FA cup game against a step 3 club this weekend, but a step 3 away fan can go to another step 3 club for the same type of game? Surely the more we can allow clubs to sustain themselves—[*Inaudible*]—then it is a bizarre decision—[*Inaudible* .]

One final question on football: while I appreciate that there is a general view that the Premier League should provide assistance to the EFL, the Premier League, with higher standards of governance, stricter financial controls and its own challenges, would, as would the taxpayer, be cautious about giving money to clubs with poor governance. Will the Minister therefore urgently bring forward the fan-led review of football governance, which may in turn give the Premier League greater confidence in bailing out clubs elsewhere in the pyramid?

Rugby league, rugby union, cricket and swimming are all in a perilous situation, losing millions of pounds in revenue, but so much more in the value that each sport brings to those engaged with it. What discussions has the Minister had with other sports about a support package for them? Given that many use their stadiums for conferences, meetings and dinners to raise revenue, what plans does he have to support the events industry, which is also within the Department's remit, to return to operations?

Finally, it is always important to remember that professional sport is not the totality of sport, and that millions of people play sport and get active every week. Alongside supporting the professional sports that inspire others, will my hon. Friend ensure that adequate support is provided to keep the nation active in grassroots clubs and leisure centres across the country, at a time when it has never been needed more?

Nigel Huddleston: I thank my hon. Friend for that comprehensive list of questions; I shall try to address as many as I can. She is absolutely right that the Government support needs to go to those in most need. Therefore,

[Nigel Huddleston]

the criteria—which, as she recognised and accepted, are being developed by a fantastic team at DCMS literally as we speak—will be based on those most in need and will absolutely be focused on gate receipts. The purpose of the financial support is to help those who are most impacted by the 1 October decision. Therefore, that will obviously drive the criteria.

My hon. Friend is absolutely right as well that this goes way beyond football. Immediately after the Prime Minister made his announcements last Tuesday, the Secretary of State and I had conversations with 12 of the major spectator sports, which will definitely be included. We are asking for information about where the most exposure is. Again, I cannot give the details today because—I am afraid this may be a recurring theme—we are working on them as I speak.

My hon. Friend raised many other issues, including the involvement of the Premier League. We have had constructive conversations with the Premier League and the EFL, which recognise their responsibility. They are at the top of the pyramid, and it is perfectly fair and reasonable that those with the broadest shoulders carry the biggest burden. They understand and accept that, and we are working on the details at the moment.

My hon. Friend also raised the important issue of grassroots sport, much of which can of course continue. We pressed pause on the plan to roll out elite sport, but we want to get back to it as soon as possible.

Mr Speaker: I hope the Minister will ensure that the House hears it first.

Alison McGovern (Wirral South) (Lab): I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch) for tabling this urgent question. We miss her in this place, and I for one miss her by my side on the football pitch, playing for the parliamentary football team. I also thank you, Mr Speaker, for allowing this urgent question. In today's *Daily Telegraph*, the chief executive of Chorley FC, Terry Robinson, says that he has to be careful about the future of his club. Nobody knows what matters to your constituents more than you, Mr Speaker, so it is no surprise that you have allowed this question. Sport matters, does it not?

Let me ask the Minister a few specific questions. First, on the principles that should guide us when getting sport through this very difficult situation, does he accept that the test, trace and isolate system needs to work? This issue is affecting every aspect of our life and stopping us getting on with the sport we love. What representations has he made to the Department of Health about the impact on sport?

Secondly, do we not need targeted support, rather than wasteful initiatives? Given the letter to the Prime Minister from 100 sporting organisations asking for help, what representations has the Minister made to the Treasury and to the Prime Minister asking them to prioritise targeting help to sport? Does he agree that our principle should be that no one should lose a much-loved sports club just because of this deadly virus? Will he stick to that principle?

Unfortunately, I do not think that the Minister answered the questions from the hon. Member for Chatham and Aylesford properly. She explained that non-league football

is in a mess. It is hard to understand why supporters of different clubs in different steps are able to attend when others are not. Will the Minister explain that system to us, and tell us why the mess persists? We all want the fan-led review of football—it will give everyone confidence. Will he announce at the Dispatch Box today when that review will commence and who will lead it? At the grassroots, whether rugby, tennis or athletics, so many sports want to know what the plan is. Having unanswered questions hanging over them does not build sport's confidence in this Government.

What is the plan for sport? Will the Minister explain how it will work? We need a plan that is coherent and easy to understand and that will provide financial stability over the year to come. The Minister says that the Department is working at speed but for months, all across the summer, it should have known that this situation might arise.

Other colleagues will have specific questions about different sports, but all sports are united in wanting to know: what is the plan? If the Minister wants the help of the official Opposition in creating that plan, we stand ready, but we just want to know that the Government will bring it forward now.

Nigel Huddleston: I thank the hon. Lady for her questions. We have a fair degree of overlap in the intent of what we want to achieve. We want to return as soon as possible to the plan as articulated for months, but I hope she recognises that we have to press the pause button at this moment. We will return to opening as soon as it is safe to do so, based on medical advice. I do not think that that is too difficult for our constituents to understand.

On the broad principles, I repeat: those with the broadest shoulders will be expected to carry the greatest burden, which means that where possible we expect them to contribute to the financial support for clubs lower down, particularly in football. On other innovations, the hon. Member for Wirral South (Alison McGovern) will be aware that we have established the so-called STIG, the sports technology and innovation group, which is looking at some of the potential technologies to open sport perhaps sooner than having a vaccine. We will not pursue wasteful initiatives; we are very conscious of the need to ensure that public money is spent carefully. I assure her that we have conversations with the Treasury about those very topics.

On the issue of which sports can have fans in stadiums, the hon. Lady will be aware that the Football Association has produced guidance, and it updated some of that guidance only yesterday. The issue is to do with what is elite support and what is not elite—that can be taken broadly as a proxy for what is professional and what is non-professional. There is clear guidance there: non-elite sport can take place, and fans can go into those grounds, with restrictions of course—it is not an unlimited number. The guidance is for the governing bodies to produce, in this case the FA.

On the fan-led review—I am sorry that I forgot to respond to my hon. Friend the Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch) earlier—yes, we wish to pursue it. It is a manifesto commitment and one of my top priorities. As soon as we are able to pursue it—we have had conversations before about this—we will do so. Unfortunately, events have got in the way.

Julian Knight (Solihull) (Con): The money for the national league, reported to be £20 million—I do not know whether that is correct, so some clarity would be helpful—and any funds that may flow to other sports are extremely welcome, in particular for my local club, Solihull Moors. Mr Speaker, I hope that the invitation is still there when mighty Chorley FC visits Solihull in happier times.

As with the earlier theatre and cultural support package, however, such funds feel like a sticking plaster over a gaping wound. Does the Minister agree that a short, a medium and a long-term plan need to be in place, including a new target date to plan for getting crowds back, rapid testing, tax reliefs to help sports re-market themselves to local communities, and even guarantees for business interruption insurances?

As stated, we urgently need the fan-led review, which I believe should focus on the economics of football. This virus has exposed many fissures in our society, none more so than in our national game.

Nigel Huddleston: I thank my hon. Friend for his questions and the work that he and his Committee have done over the last few months. I always value his contributions, and my door is always open to suggestions and ideas for innovations in terms of tax and other issues. With regard to the bigger picture, I agree that we cannot divorce the issues of governance and finance in sport. When we get the review going, I look forward to having further conversations with him and his Committee, because the two are intimately and intricately linked.

Gavin Newlands (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP) [V]: It is great to hear from the hon. Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch). We very much wish her well.

I have often spoken in this place about the power of sport. The truth is that many of our amateur and semi-professional sports clubs—be they football, rugby, shinty or anything else—play a crucial and binding role in their local community, but given the current situation, many of them are under threat. Many clubs, such as Renfrew football club in my constituency, rely heavily on match-day income to survive—particularly in Scotland when it comes to football, where significantly more people attend matches per capita than anywhere else in Europe.

In recent days, the highland league in Scotland joined the national league in announcing a postponement to the start of its season. I welcome the Minister's comments regarding the national league. What steps is he taking to ensure that all English sport and sports clubs operating outwith the very top tiers are given the support they need to weather the covid storm, which would generate Barnett consequentials to enable the Scottish Government to do likewise? Given that sport is devolved, will he commit to further engagement with the Scottish Minister for Sport, Joe FitzPatrick, on this very important issue?

Nigel Huddleston: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his focus on the power of sport; I agree completely with him about that. He is correct that sport is a devolved matter, but we work closely with the devolved Administrations. I believe I am meeting my counterpart this Thursday to discuss some of those issues. As I said, we are working on the details of the package of support.

If it is a package where there are Barnett consequentials, there will be Barnett consequentials, but it depends on the package, and I am afraid I cannot give him any more details at the moment.

John Howell (Henley) (Con): I agree totally with the Minister's assessment of the role that sport plays in this country. He will be aware that the Henley regatta was cancelled in July. Will he assure me that he is doing all he can to ensure that that and other iconic events will take place next year?

Nigel Huddleston: Rowing is also a very important sport in my constituency, with lots of raving fans. My hon. Friend is right: these iconic events do so much for the local constituency and have a knock-on impact on tourism and so many other sectors that we want to get going. As I say, we want to open these sectors as soon as it is feasible to do so, working with local authorities, which are taking their responsibilities very seriously. We will endeavour to get the Henley regatta and other sporting events going as soon as it is safe to do so.

Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): I compliment the Government on the work that has been done regarding football coverage on the BBC. What discussions has the Minister had with broadcasting companies about extending that coverage into the weeks and, sadly, possibly months ahead for fans who are unable to attend matches but would wish to do so?

Nigel Huddleston: The hon. Gentleman is right to stress the importance of sport. Of course, we want as many people as possible to see sports in the absence of going to stadiums. We have had success in the past—for example, having the premier league on the BBC for the first time—and we continue to have conversations with the broadcasters. There is a balance to be struck, but those conversations continue, and we appreciate his input.

David Johnston (Wantage) (Con): It has been a difficult time for sports clubs across my constituency, but two individuals have provided a spot of light. Charles Walker, who is 62, ran 28 half-marathons, and Lincoln Callaghan, who is five, cycled 100 km—in stages, I should add—to raise money for Didcot Town football club. They raised several thousand pounds. That is obviously not a substitute for the club's income, but it is a welcome lifeline. Will my hon. Friend join me in congratulating them and encouraging others who are thinking about raising money for a good cause to remember their community clubs?

Nigel Huddleston: I am absolutely delighted to congratulate and applaud Charles Walker and Lincoln Callaghan for those efforts. What better example could there be of sport's pivotal role in the community and the power of sport? They have set fantastic examples and will give hope and inspiration to many more.

Dame Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab) [V]: Events at last week's Hull City match at West Ham were another illustration of how the chaotic handling of covid is adding to the problems faced by our major national sports and local sports clubs. In the north, football league and rugby league clubs are an essential part of our communities and significant employers, and they are currently seriously worried about their futures.

[*Dame Diana Johnson*]

What more can the Minister tell us about the fan-led review of football that was promised at the election? Will he pay attention to the needs of rugby league clubs, which rely so heavily on gate money?

Nigel Huddleston: The hon. Lady raises the vital importance of the money that comes through the gate, which is pivotal to the survival of so many sports. Of course, we did provide a financial support package for the Rugby Football League earlier in the year, but I am aware that it faces ongoing consequences and ongoing struggles. I assure the hon. Lady that we will work as soon as possible with the review, and all the factors that she brought up will be under consideration.

Jacob Young (Redcar) (Con): Redcar racecourse is one of just 60 racecourses in the UK and is a huge contributor to Redcar and Cleveland's local economy. With no paying crowd since March and no further hope of one for the next six months, what support have the Government made available thus far? Will the Minister consider using this time to reform the horserace betting levy to include international racecourses, and keep British racing world-class?

Nigel Huddleston: My hon. Friend and I have had many conversations about sports, and specifically racing, over the past few months, and I am sure we will continue to do so. I appreciate his input. I should make sure he is aware that we are in conversations with the British Horseracing Authority; we are aware that it has made many suggestions and they are all under consideration.

Margaret Ferrier (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (SNP) [V]: I am fortunate to have several brilliant local sports clubs, among which are Blantyre Victoria, Cambuslang Rangers, Rutherglen Glencairn, Rutherglen Girls FC, Rutherglen lawn tennis club and Blantyre soccer academy. They play a vital role in keeping my constituency fit, active and healthy. Will the Minister commit to supporting not only large, commercial sports clubs and organisations but the small community clubs that are so important for local health?

Nigel Huddleston: I think the hon. Lady wins the award for name-checking clubs—that was fantastic. She showcases the length and breadth of the importance of sport in our community. I assure her that the intent is to make sure that we cover the long tail to the extent that we can. As I have said repeatedly, we expect those at the higher ends to do what they can support themselves.

Martin Vickers (Cleethorpes) (Con): Aficionados of pub quizzes will know that my local team, Grimsby Town, always plays away in Cleethorpes, where the ground, Blundell Park, seats around 8,000 people. When spectators are allowed into grounds again, I urge the Minister to consider whether a temporary lifting of the restrictions on the unused former terraces, allowing a few extra standing spectators, might boost the income of league two clubs such as Grimsby.

Nigel Huddleston: My hon. Friend makes some valid points about being practical and sensible as we reopen. Those are exactly the kinds of conversations that we

will be having, and I am sure he will be having, with the Sports Grounds Safety Authority and others when it comes to opening up. I thank him for his ideas.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Slough) (Lab): The Government's chaotic handling of the pandemic has had major consequences for sports clubs, with some already having been wound up. Clubs such as Slough, which has been in existence for more than 100 years, are much more than a football club; they are a community—a family—providing entertainment, social interaction and community cohesion and supporting people's mental and physical wellbeing. Despite some last-minute support announced last night, there is still no clear Government plan to enable fans to return, to some extent, to sporting events. That will no doubt bring even more to the brink of collapse. What is the Government plan?

Nigel Huddleston: The hon. Gentleman has articulated the pivotal role of sport in our community and its importance to both physical and mental wellbeing. As I said earlier, we hope to get back to the plan that we already have: we did not get to stage 5, although we went through so many other stages. This is a pause; we want to open as soon as it is safe to do so, but not before. We are working on other initiatives—I have mentioned the STIG initiative and others—to see whether other innovations can help to open up sport.

Stephen Metcalfe (South Basildon and East Thurrock) (Con): It has been extremely heartening for both fans and participants to see the return of sports such as cricket, rugby, football and other fixtures across Basildon and Thurrock. Therefore, although we must always be mindful of the rate of covid-19 infection, can my hon. Friend update the House on what plans there are to ensure that these activities, whether viewed by fans or not, continue, despite the risk of covid-19?

Nigel Huddleston: I thank my hon. Friend for pointing out that, although we have a strong focus on football today, there are so many other sports. The governing bodies have done a fantastic job, working with the Government and health advisers, to come up with amazingly forensic guidance in order to ensure that we can conduct sport at grassroots level safely. I encourage everybody to play their part and abide by that guidance, and then we will be able to continue participating with sport to the greatest extent possible at both elite and non-elite levels.

Chris Evans (Islwyn) (Lab/Co-op): Community ownership of sports clubs comes in all shapes and sizes. It can be a lifeline for a local sports club to have fans who have not only a financial stake, but a say in how the club is run. When we were campaigning in Islwyn to save Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre, it was particularly helpful to have that community ownership element as an option for people to take over the running of the leisure centre. I hope the Minister will look at ways of expanding that scheme. Community ownership can go wider—I am thinking here of football. Has the Minister thought of more innovative ways of raising finance by creating some sort of community trust in which we ask the top earning 100 footballers in this country—some are earning £350,000 to £500,000 a week—to donate

just one week's wages to a trust, which can then be distributed among those struggling clubs to ensure that communities can still enjoy their football?

Nigel Huddleston: Both now and in the future, I encourage all stakeholders in sports to do the right thing and play their part. The hon. Gentleman makes some good points about voluntary donations, as well as what we will be requiring and expecting from sport at various levels. He also highlights some innovative models and business models, which, again, I think should be looked at very carefully indeed. He raises the issue of leisure centres, and we are in discussions with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Treasury. He is right that they are vital to our communities, but we are well aware that not all of them are open yet.

Christian Wakeford (Bury South) (Con): Although it is positive to see the return of fans to grassroots and non-league football, the ongoing battle against the coronavirus has meant that a return to live audiences for elite sport has regrettably not been possible. So although I was fortunate enough to join Radcliffe for their first home game of the season—the results were not to my liking—we do need to think about the wider sport. Can my hon. Friend confirm that he will continue to work with the sector to get families back as soon as it is safe to support not only our clubs, but our communities?

Nigel Huddleston: I thank my hon. Friend for that comment. We have had many conversations about sport, so I know that he is a fantastic champion for sport in his constituency and more broadly across the country. Indeed, we will work together—with him and others—to ensure that we move as fast as possible on reopening sport. I also understand his point about there being winners and losers in sport. I was not Mr Popular in Norwich when I visited earlier this year.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the Minister for his assurances. Can he confirm what amount will filter through to the smaller clubs, specifically to the youth teams, especially bearing in mind the phenomenal 5-2 victory of Leicester City over Man City, which starred Northern Ireland-born Jonny Evans and Jamie Vardy? Both started out in small teams; Jonny Evans started at Greenisland. My own team is Ballywalter Rec, where young boys and girls aspire to play football in the premier league. Will the Minister say whether that money will be designated for small local clubs to give them a chance?

Nigel Huddleston: The hon. Member makes an absolutely pivotal point that, particularly in football, there is a pyramid. The top of the pyramid is absolutely reliant on the lower parts of that pyramid. I have to say that the Premier League does understand that. It gets that responsibility, and recognises that people flow through the lower leagues and then rise up, and it wants to help out, and that is its obligation. Therefore, as I have said, we are looking for the Premier League to play its part, particularly with the EFL, and then the Government money will be focused on those that are desperately in need.

Mary Kelly Foy (City of Durham) (Lab): I start by congratulating Durham Women FC on its new ground at Maiden Castle. Although Project Restart allowed men's football to return, women's football was forgotten about, with the top tiers of the game unable to finish their seasons. Will the Minister assure me that, if coronavirus restrictions increase, the Government will provide the necessary support to women's football to allow its seasons to continue in line with the men's game?

Nigel Huddleston: The hon. Lady shares my passion for women's sport. I have had many conversations, not only in football but in other sports, to say that I expect and require women's sport to get the priority that it deserves. I will continue those conversations, and certainly, if public money is being distributed, I expect women's sport to get its fair share.

Mr Laurence Robertson (Tewkesbury) (Con): Contrary to popular belief, horse racing is not a wealthy sport, and redundancies were announced just yesterday. Racecourses rely on paying spectators coming in for almost 50% of their income. It is the second most popular spectator sport in the country, so it either needs a return of paying spectators or it needs help from the Treasury. I know that the Minister has already been working on this, but will he take it up with renewed vigour because the situation is becoming very serious?

Nigel Huddleston: My hon. Friend and constituency neighbour is a huge supporter and advocate of racing, and I completely understand his concerns. I can give him the assurance that we are talking to the British Horseracing Authority and others, and we will do what we can to support the racing sector as well.

Lilian Greenwood (Nottingham South) (Lab): May I use this opportunity to issue another plea on behalf of UK ice hockey? As the Minister knows, the professional season has already been cancelled, as have all the leagues right down to grassroots for juniors. The latest restrictions on indoor sports put local clubs such as Nottingham City Cyclones at risk of shutting down. Not only would that be devastating news for its members, but it would add to the financial pressures on the National Ice Centre. What is he doing to save ice hockey? It is the UK's most watched indoor sport and it matters to thousands of spectators and participants, not just in Nottingham but across the country.

Nigel Huddleston: I assure the hon. Lady that the DCMS team and I are engaging with many sports across the board—we liaise with more than 100 sports governing bodies. We do not exclude anybody. We are having the dialogue. She points out the particular challenges where indoor restrictions have come into place. I assure her that we understand the issues and concerns, and we will do what we can.

Mr Speaker: As we have no stacking, we are going straight to Bob Blackman.

Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con) [V]: Thank you, ground control.

In March, Wealdstone football club celebrated being promoted to the national league. The team currently play in my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's constituency. As part of their promotion, they were

[Bob Blackman]

required to improve their ground, and they spent more than £100,000 on providing capacity for up to 4,000 people. They are totally dependent on gate receipts and money taken at the bar and other refreshment facilities. On Saturday, they play their first game and, as a result, that initiates the contracts to pay the players for the entire season. Given that they have no income and they have spent all that money, will my hon. Friend ensure that any money that is given to the national league recognises the clubs that have paid out for ground improvements and have a surety that they can pay their players during the entire season?

Nigel Huddleston: I thank my hon. Friend for his comments. He makes a detailed but perfectly fair and reasonable point. As I said, because we are currently working on the details, I am unable to give him the assurance that he is looking for, but these were exactly the kinds of factors that we were looking at when we made the request for information to the sports entities.

David Linden (Glasgow East) (SNP): I am very lucky to count Celtic Park in my constituency, and its 60,000-seater stadium. I commend to the Minister the report from the Fraser of Allander Institute about the economic contribution of Celtic football club, and implore him, when he is having conversations with the Treasury, to be mindful of the fact that this is about not just sport but the impact on the local hospitality sector. When he is having those discussions with the Treasury about financial support, I ask that there is a real focus on the local economy, as well as the club itself.

Nigel Huddleston: The hon. Member makes an important point about the multiplier effect—the broader economic impact of sport on its local communities. We are all sport fans here, but it is also a major contributor to an economy that employs tens of thousands of people and contributes a huge amount to the Treasury every year in tax generation. He is making a perfectly valid point, and those are exactly the considerations that we are looking at now.

Derek Thomas (St Ives) (Con): People of all ages play sport, and they often do so at a leisure centre. We know from covid-19 that it is important that people keep fit and keep well, because those who are not well and fit are at much greater risk of this dreadful disease. The truth is that St Ives leisure centre still has not opened—although we believe that we have now got it opened. Will the Minister meet me and work out how we can keep these vital leisure centres open so that people of all ages continue enjoying each other's company, keep fit, keep well and contribute to the local community in that way?

Nigel Huddleston: I thank my hon. Friend for his comments and enjoyed visiting his constituency earlier this year. I would be delighted to meet him to discuss this issue further, and, as I said in response to an earlier question, we are aware of the issues with leisure centres, talking to the MHCLG and others. We want as many of them to open as possible. They play a pivotal role in the mental and physical health of our constituents.

Cat Smith (Lancaster and Fleetwood) (Lab): Will the Minister join me in congratulating Barrow AFC on its recent return to the football league? With no clear path for spectators to return to sporting events, however, the financial pressure on local clubs is huge, so can he reassure my constituents, many of whom support other fine Lancashire football teams, that no club will cease to exist because of coronavirus?

Nigel Huddleston: Of course I join the hon. Lady in her congratulations. In terms of the support package, we want to help absolutely as many clubs as we can. As I have said, our focus is on those that have particularly suffered from the 1 October cancellation and the inability to get fans into stadiums. There is a whole host of other global financial issues and considerations for football; our focus at present is on the return of fans and the issues the delay to that has caused, but the hon. Lady raises the point that many other clubs across the country are struggling for a whole variety of other reasons as well.

David Simmonds (Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner) (Con): I would like to associate myself with the remarks about Wealdstone FC from my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow East (Bob Blackman); it has many fans in my constituency also. Does my hon. Friend the Minister share my disappointment at the lack of leadership shown by the Mayor of London in getting Londoners back to sport—in particular, football—and does he welcome the efforts by many community organisations and local authorities in ensuring that sport, especially children's sport, is being reopened, so people have the best opportunities to access that as we recover from covid?

Nigel Huddleston: My hon. Friend raises a couple of important points. First, on children's sport, I agree absolutely, and I had a good conversation with the Education Minister with responsibility for school sport the other day. We are absolutely committed to get school sport up and running, and leisure centres and grassroots sport play a vital role in getting our children active, so I agree exactly with his comments on that. Also, when people are not showing that they are sports fans, I, like him, am disappointed in their comments.

Gareth Thomas (Harrow West) (Lab/Co-op): I share the concern that non-league clubs—major community assets such as Harrow Borough, Rayners Lane and, indeed, Wealdstone football club—will face a very difficult financial future without urgent financial support. The financial vulnerability of all but elite clubs underlines the need for wholesale reform of football financing, so is it not now time to impose a levy on the TV rights income premierships clubs receive, to support long-term investment in sport in all our communities?

Nigel Huddleston: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his comments, and as I said earlier, we will be conducting the grassroots review of sports governance, and that will include some financial considerations.

Richard Drax (South Dorset) (Con): The iconic Weymouth and Portland National Sailing Academy on Portland in my constituency is being adversely affected by this pandemic, as are all other sporting venues.

Its rateable value is so high that it does not get Government grants. Even with the discretionary rate relief, which brings it within the threshold, the Government criteria mean it still cannot get this desperately needed money. Will my hon. Friend look at this case as a matter of priority?

Nigel Huddleston: As is clear from the name, the discretionary funds were, of course, largely discretionary, and I am aware that there were some anomalies, with some areas of the country being awarded in certain circumstances while others were not, but I will follow up with my hon. Friend the particular point he raises.

Kim Johnson (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab): Liverpool has a very proud history of producing champion boxers, and Liverpool, Riverside has some notable boxing clubs, including Salisbury, Rotunda, Marybone, Golden Gloves and the Belve, providing exceptional support to constituents in some of the most deprived wards in the country, improving physical and mental health, confidence and self-esteem. The Prime Minister has championed the benefits of an active lifestyle, so when will the Government move from rhetoric to reality and provide some funding to support this sector?

Nigel Huddleston: I actually met the all-party parliamentary group for boxing this morning. The hon. Lady makes an important point about boxing in terms of social mobility and the importance of inspiring physical and mental wellbeing. I am happy to continue these conversations with her.

James Sunderland (Bracknell) (Con): Forestry England has just launched a public consultation on recreational access to its land. Does my hon. Friend agree that British motor sports have a proud history in our forests and that continued access is fundamental to our world-leading £10 billion motor sports industry?

Nigel Huddleston: My hon. Friend makes a range of points. Absolutely, we have to think very creatively about where our sports and recreational facilities where we can be active are—they are not always in the areas or owned by the people we expect. I am glad that such stakeholders take their responsibilities seriously, and I encourage them to open up as much as possible.

Seema Malhotra (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op): With no clear path from the Government for spectators to return to sporting events safely, the financial pressure on football, including my local team and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Ruth Cadbury)—Brentford football club—is huge. Detailed plans were in place, with the local safety advisory groups and the Sports Grounds Safety Authority having worked together to bring reduced numbers of fans back safely, but now Brentford's new stadium sits empty. How much and how quickly are the Government working with experts on safe spectator return, and when will the Minister bring forward an update? Fans will feel that he is penalising responsible football when football can contribute so much to the wellbeing of our nation.

Nigel Huddleston: I join the hon. Lady in thanking the SAGs and the SGSA for the work that they do. They have done immense work before and during

coronavirus, and they will do so afterwards. They play a vital role in ensuring the safety of grounds; they will continue to do so; and we will continue to work with them.

Simon Fell (Barrow and Furness) (Con): I thank my hon. Friend for his welcome words of support for the sector, and I echo the words of the hon. Member for Lancaster and Fleetwood (Cat Smith). Barrow AFC was promoted into the football league after 48 years away. It should be on the up and celebrating, but instead it is facing a loss of three quarters of a million pounds this year. That would be worse if it were not for the supporters who have stuck by it and bought season tickets. We need to remember that these clubs are not just about 90 minutes of football—they are about the employees and the work they do in the community. When my hon. Friend looks at support for this sector, can he confirm that it will not just be about keeping these clubs on life support, but about supporting the work they are doing in our communities, too?

Nigel Huddleston: My hon. Friend raises a really important point. I join him in thanking those who have bought season tickets, showing their commitment, both in the short and the long term, to their clubs. We applaud what they have done and thank them for that commitment. In terms of short-term and long-term support, that is exactly what we are looking at through immediate financial support but also with the review of governance.

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): If I have not yet, I will be purchasing a season ticket for Maryhill FC. Partick Thistle, my constituency next-door neighbour, has, through its charitable wings, helped to provide over 25,000 free meals to some of the poorest and most vulnerable members of the local community. Does the Minister recognise that any support the UK Government can provide consequential to the Scottish Government's investment in sport does not just help the sport and fans, but, in many cases, leads to inclusion and help across the wider communities that these clubs are part of?

Nigel Huddleston: I applaud the hon. Gentleman in recognising, acknowledging and thanking all the clubs for the amazing community work that they have done. We have seen them at their best during coronavirus, but for decades—over 100 years in some cases—they have played a pivotal role in their communities through charitable efforts and so on. As I said, we are working on the details of the support package. Until we get those details sorted out, I cannot comment further on Barnett consequentials.

Robbie Moore (Keighley) (Con): Across my constituency, we are blessed with many fantastic sports clubs that all contribute massively to our wider community wellbeing. Thinking about rugby, we have Keighley and Ilkley rugby union clubs, as well as Keighley Albion, and not forgetting the mighty Keighley Cougars. They all need help because their income streams are desperately strained, as they predominantly rely on ticket sales, bar income and the rental of facilities, which are not happening. What additional support can my hon. Friend provide?

Nigel Huddleston: I thank my hon. Friend for his comments. Again, I know he is a huge sports fan; we have spoken many times. It is very important that the

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clubs look at the existing support measures to make sure they take full advantage of them. Obviously, there is the furloughing scheme and other measures, such as loans and other aspects—for example, some clubs are able to take advantage of the VAT reduction aspect of hospitality and leisure offerings. I would say that all clubs should please take full advantage of the full suite out there, and of course we are developing an additional package now.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): I am all for common-sense measures to restrict the transmission of coronavirus in sporting activities, including among the young, but is the Minister as perplexed as I am by the decision of the Welsh Rugby Union to say that junior, youth and mini teams will not be training at all at the moment? This is purely bonkers. It is somebody's decision, and in the back of their heads they have decided that they have to dot every i and cross every t. Would it not make far more sense to have all the kids in Tylorstown, Ferndale, Maerdy, Pen-y-Graig, Treorchy and Treherbert playing sport, because that is good for them—and it is outdoors, for heaven's sake?

Nigel Huddleston: I certainly agree with the principle the hon. Member has articulated: if sport is allowed and we are confident it can be done safely, please make sure it goes ahead. However, it is up to individual governing bodies to give specific guidance and recommendations. We do of course work with them, at the DCMS and elsewhere, on that guidance. I would applaud any sports entity or body that, if it is confident it can do so safely, goes ahead. We need those activity levels up.

Karen Bradley (Staffordshire Moorlands) (Con): I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch) for securing this urgent question. She is truly a doughty supporter of all sports, professional and amateur.

The Minister perhaps is not as aware of Leek Town as he should be, but it is a fantastic local community club, run by volunteers and the community, and it really does deliver for the community. We have youth teams, juniors, lots of girls and a great women's first team, as well as the men's first team; they did not perform as well as we would have liked yesterday, but they are still doing very well. Thanks to support from Staffordshire Moorlands District Council and the Football Foundation, Leek Town has managed to keep its head above water and, as a step 4 club, it is able to welcome up to 400 spectators, but it does need to start to do other things, such as expanding the hospitality offer, and it would like to be able slowly to introduce more fans into the stadium, which has plenty of space. Will my hon. Friend make sure, when looking at increasing the number of fans and looser hospitality, that we do not have a one-size-fits-all formula, but instead use the common sense that is right for each club?

Nigel Huddleston: I thank my right hon. Friend for her comments. Indeed, I know from her previous work in the Department that she is a huge champion of this sector, and obviously locally as well. We will of course work with the Sports Grounds Safety Authority and, indeed, the governing bodies of sport—in this case, the FA and other football authorities—to make sure that

when we can increase the numbers, we do exactly that, because of the pivotal role of ticket sales in revenues for clubs. She makes the point that other revenue sources are available, and I encourage them to pursue them to the greatest extent possible.

Elliot Colburn (Carshalton and Wallington) (Con): Carshalton and Wallington is also home to some excellent local sports teams—including Mitcham and Carshalton rugby club, which is co-hosting its ground with the fabulous South London Stags at the moment, and Carshalton Athletic football club—some of which I have had the pleasure of visiting in the last few months. Community sport is so important not just for the physical but for the mental health of players and, indeed, of fans. Can the Minister assure me that we will do all we can to keep these local clubs going to ensure that we are looking after these people's mental and physical health during covid?

Nigel Huddleston: My hon. Friend makes the really important point that sport is so much more than a game. The game bit is really important—we all love it—but it contributes directly and indirectly to the mental-health wellbeing and indeed physical wellbeing, as well as the financial wellbeing, of so many people. That is precisely why we recognise its importance today with the plans to provide additional financial support.

Matt Western (Warwick and Leamington) (Lab): I attended Warwick racecourse more or less a week ago, and I was really impressed by the safeguards it has put in place. Some 500 racegoers attended, and it could easily have accommodated 1,500 to 2,000 very safely. However, the point I want to come on to is about general sport, but also about football, which affects so many communities. The Leamington Football Club supporters trust—Brakes Trust, as it is known—wrote to me at the beginning of the week and highlighted the support it needs. The Government have announced such support, and it is welcome, but can the Minister explain how much Leamington FC will get and when it will get it?

Nigel Huddleston: The hon. Member is correct to highlight the importance of the successful pilots, which proved that sports grounds and racecourses take their responsibilities incredibly seriously. They did a great job of making sure that hygiene, social distancing measures and so on were in place. However, given the backdrop of rising infections, we could not move forward at this stage. Unfortunately, we are unable to do so. Again, I am afraid I cannot give him details, because we are working on the details of the package as we speak.

Charlotte Nichols (Warrington North) (Lab): The scrapping of pilot crowds in rugby league has been described as a hammer blow for clubs like Warrington Wolves. The £16 million package of support in May was welcome, but the longer rugby league clubs are without matchday revenue the more significant the financial hardship, which could ultimately prove fatal, will be. What additional measures will be taken to support rugby league through winter?

Nigel Huddleston: We have had some conversations on this issue. I recognise—I think we all recognise—the vital role that rugby plays in its communities. That is

precisely why we took the measures we did back in May. We understand, though, that the financial pressures continue. Conversations are continuing. I am afraid I cannot give any details today, because we are working on the current measures.

Lia Nici (Great Grimsby) (Con): Last week, I provided the Prime Minister with a Grimsby Town football shirt to match his woolly hat. The reason I did that was to highlight the plight of lower league teams such as Grimsby Town. Will the Minister please tell me what steps are being taken to allow the safe and speedy return of dedicated football fans like the Mariners back to the stands where they belong?

Nigel Huddleston: I notice that I do not have a Grimsby Town shirt yet, but I am sure it is coming. My hon. Friend makes a really important point. As I said and will repeat, we have had to pause the plans for further reopening, but we have not abandoned them. We want to get back to that as soon as possible—the whole country does—and we will do so in consultation with medical advisers, the Sports Grounds Safety Authority and other bodies, including the governing bodies of each sport. We all want fans back in stadiums as soon as possible. If we get fans back in stadiums, there will be less need for financial support from the Government. That makes sense for the Government and it makes sense for sport.

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): Cas Tigers is at the heart of Castleford. In normal times, the whole town turns out to support the club and the club always supports the whole community. Those are the values of rugby league. The first supporters were due back tomorrow, but of course that now cannot happen. The loans earlier in the year were welcome, but can I urge the Minister to do more now to support our rugby league, to talk with me further about Cas Tigers and the support all our rugby league clubs might need, and to give us a guarantee that none of our important rugby league clubs will end up going under because of covid? Rugby league is vital to our towns.

Nigel Huddleston: The intervention in May was made in recognition of the important role that rugby league plays in its communities, and the fact that it was facing an existential crisis. We are well aware that the problems are far from over. Rugby league, along with many other sports, faces many challenges. I have regular meetings with sports governing bodies and others. I will continue to do so, and I am happy to speak to the right hon. Lady separately.

Dean Russell (Watford) (Con): Throughout the pandemic, Watford football club has done the right thing: it helped the community and our local hospital, and it followed the guidance. I speak regularly to Glyn Evans, the operations director at Watford football club. He shared the frustration that, despite following all the guidance and all the rules put forward to it over the past few weeks and months to ensure it can get crowds back in the stadium, it is now unable to do so. He and I would like to know whether my hon. Friend will ensure that any new measures take into account the work already done to ensure that crowds can get back into the stadium safely, and that he does not have to undo all the work that has been done over the previous months.

Nigel Huddleston: I know my hon. Friend is a huge fan of sports and we have talked about this issue. He is absolutely right that many clubs went to enormous efforts to put social distancing, hygiene and other measures in place in anticipation of opening. Those efforts will not be wasted. We want to start again as soon as possible. We did not want to stop clubs opening; we had to in the face of the increase in infections. We want to get back to business as soon as possible.

Barbara Keeley (Worsley and Eccles South) (Lab) [V]: The AJ Bell stadium in my constituency is home to both Sale Sharks rugby union club and Salford Red Devils rugby league club. Sale Sharks is the only premiership rugby club in the north-west. It has a women's team. It employs over 100 people, with hundreds more local jobs reliant on its match days. Covid-19 poses an existential threat to clubs like Sale Sharks, to their women's teams and to premiership rugby. Will the Minister therefore seek a targeted funding package to support them as a matter of urgency, and continue with the extra support to rugby league clubs like Salford Reds?

Nigel Huddleston: Other recognition of the important role that clubs play in their local community, way beyond just the sport, is precisely why we are looking at these measures and the broader economic multiplier impact. Again, I am afraid that I cannot give the hon. Lady details today, but her comments are received and understood.

Richard Fuller (North East Bedfordshire) (Con): One of the most significant ways in which people volunteer is as coaches for youth sports teams, including many netball, rugby, cricket and football teams in my constituency and across Bedfordshire. I was moved by some of the efforts being made by Biggleswade athletics club to provide a safe environment for coaching. So will the Minister liaise with the Prime Minister, as he seeks to build on the volunteerism in this country as we emerge from covid, to ensure that that coaching for youth clubs is supported?

Nigel Huddleston: I wish to join my hon. Friend in applauding the work coaches do, often voluntarily, right across the country in so many sports. I will be happy to work with him in communicating this to the Prime Minister, who I am sure is already aware of the important role that they play. My hon. Friend raises an important point and I am happy to continue the conversation with him.

Conor McGinn (St Helens North) (Lab): I was delighted to welcome the Minister to Blackbrook rugby club in my constituency. He will know from that visit just how important grassroots sports are in St Helens, but with St Helens rugby league club and Haydock Park racecourse we also have the thrill of elite spectator sports, which not only add to the colour of the borough but provide jobs and a contribution to our economy through visitors. We cannot just say to these sports, "Wait and see." So will the Minister, who I know is committed to doing this, bring forward, in a timely manner, a strategy and a plan so that we can get fans back and our can communities thrive again?

Nigel Huddleston: I do not doubt the hon. Gentleman's commitment to sport; I have seen it at first hand, and it was a pleasure to go to his constituency earlier this year

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to meet his fantastic constituents. I am afraid that I cannot give him any more details today—as I said, we are working on the details. As soon as we are able to do so, we will announce the support package. Again, I completely understand the points he has raised.

Dehenna Davison (Bishop Auckland) (Con): As we know, one of the most brilliant things about football is seeing young talent rise through the ranks from great clubs such as Bishop Auckland, Shildon and West Auckland. The Premier League relies on this young talent; we know that more than 45% of starting line-ups have their origins in the English Football League. What steps is my hon. Friend taking to encourage the Premier League to provide more support for lower league clubs, particularly in these very challenging times?

Nigel Huddleston: My hon. Friend raises the important issue of the pyramid structure of football and the pivotal role that the Premier League plays at its top. Others put huge value into the pyramid, playing a pivotal role in developing talent across the board, in the numbers that she has explained. It is therefore vital that the Premier League understands that it has responsibilities. It is at the top of the pyramid and we expect and require it to help further down the pyramid. I have to say that that is exactly what the Premier League seems to understand, and I am confident that it will play its part and we will have an announcement very soon.

Tom Tugendhat (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con): Does my hon. Friend agree that national league south sides such as Tonbridge Angels, of whom I am sure he is a huge fan, are at the centre of the community but simply cannot survive without matches being played and fans allowed in? Longmead, the Angels' stadium, has, I am sorry to say, plenty of room for the normal matchday crowd and could host even more, including with all the social distancing required. I know that that will change as soon as he comes to support the Angels and brings a whole new team of fans with him, but for the moment he could do this. Will the Government work with the Football Association and the national league to ensure that fans can return to grounds now where there is enough room to socially distance, in order to support the work that clubs such as Tonbridge Angels do?

Nigel Huddleston: My hon. Friend makes an important point. Tonbridge Angels and many other sports clubs across the country have shown their pivotal role in their communities during coronavirus and much before. We will continue to work with all relevant stakeholders. We are continuing to have ongoing dialogue, we have working groups and we have day-to-day dialogue through Department officials—all the things he raises about making sure that all stakeholders work together so that we can come to a conclusion and get out of these difficulties as soon as possible. I completely agree, and I assure him that we are doing just that.

Carol Monaghan (Glasgow North West) (SNP) [V]: Gymnastics clubs such as Drumchapel gymnastics club in my constituency play a huge role in developing good habits for young people, particularly girls. They set up life habits and do a huge amount to tackle things such

as obesity. However, they are struggling at the moment due to limited numbers and the fact that they still have to pay rent in indoor facilities. What support will the Minister provide for clubs such as Drumchapel, and others, which play a key role in improving the life chances of our youngsters?

Nigel Huddleston: The hon. Lady makes an important point about the value of clubs, which help with education, confidence, and physical and mental wellbeing. We are encouraging all sports clubs to take advantage of the full suite of opportunities in the Government's support package. We are constantly talking to all the relevant governing bodies about their plight. I will hopefully be able to make announcements at some point, but we cannot give further details at this stage.

Edward Timpson (Eddisbury) (Con): Recent data published by Sport England and the Youth Sport Trust shows that the level of women's and girls' sport and physical activity, which was rising, has fallen significantly during covid. I encourage my hon. Friend to lead a national push to get the grassroots going again and engage the likes of the Premier League to play their part. Will he back the development of a groundbreaking women's and girls' football centre of excellence in Winsford in my constituency?

Nigel Huddleston: We have spoken previously about the Winsford facility. It sounds like a great idea, and we would like to do what we can to back it. As I have said previously, women's involvement in sport is a top priority for me. I say again that I expect any entity receiving Government money to ensure that a fair share goes to women's sport. It is absolutely vital that we put a great deal of emphasis on women's sporting facilities in this country.

Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): Like many other Members across the House, I have been doing what I can to support and listen to the concerns of the likes of my beloved Bluebirds, the Cardiff Devils ice hockey team, my local boxing clubs and the City of Cardiff swimming club—I had the pleasure to see its covid-safe procedures a few weeks ago.

The Minister will be aware that today is National Sporting Heritage Day, and Black History Month starts tomorrow. This morning, I had the honour to sit and listen to some remarkable legends of rugby league who originated in my constituency, in places like Tiger Bay, Splott and Grangetown, and went north to play rugby league—the likes of Billy Boston. A huge campaign has been launched to honour and recognise their pioneering work not only in their sport but in breaking down racial discrimination and the barriers that were faced at the time. Will the Minister back that campaign? Will he agree to come and meet those supporting it? Will he say what he is doing to support grassroots rugby of both codes?

Nigel Huddleston: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his comments and I applaud his engagement. I will be happy to talk to him further about where I can get involved. Any and all activities that ensure that sport truly is for all are important. I also applaud the work of Sport England and other bodies, whose initiatives ensure

that sport is indeed open to all. That will continue with direct non-financial and financial support. I would be happy to talk to the hon. Gentleman further.

Damian Collins (Folkestone and Hythe) (Con) [V]: As the Minister knows, it is one thing to say that the Premier League should help clubs in the Football League that face financial difficulties, and it is another to say that it should be solely responsible and pay for all the assistance that those clubs need. Is he saying that there will be no Government support—no public support, including financial support—for clubs in the Football League, and that it will be left entirely to the Premier League to deliver it? The chairmen of many clubs in the Football League have to make very difficult decisions because of the distress that they are in, and they need to know where they stand.

Nigel Huddleston: I thank my hon. Friend for his ongoing commitment to sport. He is very knowledgeable in this field. I cannot comment on the details of the plan because it is currently being developed, but I can say that we expect and require the Premier League to work with the EFL carefully and closely and to make sure that they act sensibly and take their responsibilities seriously. I encourage the EFL and other bodies in all sports to take full advantage of all the other Government support measures. Although I cannot answer my hon. Friend's question directly today, we are working on all those details as we speak.

Virtual participation in proceedings concluded (Order, 4 June).

Point of Order

1.49 pm

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Government is by consent in this country, and especially so when civil liberties have to be impinged upon, whether for good reasons or any other. I think that the vast majority of Members of this House think that 90 minutes to discuss the continuation of enormous changes in the way we do our business in this country is absolutely ludicrous and does no favours to the reputation of this House. I fully understand that Standing Order No. 16 says that a motion brought forward under an Act can only get 90 minutes; however, it has been the custom of the Government on many other occasions to table a motion to allow the House more time, so that we can debate things properly. There are 62 Members of the House who want to take part in the 90-minute debate; clearly, not half of them will have the opportunity to speak—[*Interruption.*] No, I am not taking time away from that debate, because it has not started yet.

What I am asking, Madam Deputy Speaker, is whether you can confirm that the Government, had they wanted to, could have allowed more time, so that more people could express their opinion on behalf of their constituents about the things that they do support and the things that they do not; and, furthermore, that the Government could have, had they wanted to, allowed an amendable motion, so that the views of the elected Members of Parliament, speaking on behalf of their constituents, could be heard fully.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): On the first point that the hon. Gentleman makes, I can confirm that, not surprisingly, he is correct in his interpretation of Standing Order No. 16. It is normal that a motion under an Act has 90 minutes for debate on the Floor of the House. That is normal, but as Mr Speaker made clear in his statement to the House earlier, he very much regrets that many people who have applied to be called to speak in the debate this afternoon will not be called.

I can answer the hon. Gentleman's question quite directly. He asks whether the Government could have tabled a motion that allowed for a longer debate. The simple answer is yes, the Government could have tabled a motion that would have allowed for a longer debate. Mr Speaker said quite clearly earlier that he would welcome other opportunities for the House to consider these important matters through amendable motions, distinct from the narrow statutory purpose of today's motion. Today's motion is very narrow and Mr Speaker's interpretation of it is absolutely clear.

Not every Member was in the Chamber earlier when Mr Speaker made a statement in which he set out clearly his concerns. The hon. Gentleman has echoed those concerns, which I feel are indeed echoed from every part of this House and every party here in the Chamber. Mr Speaker's statement has been circulated to all Members, so anyone who did not hear what he said just before Prime Minister's questions will have a written version of it. I thank the hon. Gentleman for raising such an important point of order.

[Madam Deputy Speaker]

In order to allow the safe exit of hon. Members participating in this item of business and the safe arrival of those participating in the next, I shall now suspend the House for three minutes.

1.53 pm

Sitting suspended.

Business Standards

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

1.56 pm

John McDonnell (Hayes and Harlington) (Lab): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to establish an accreditation scheme for businesses that meet standards regarding the treatment of workers, the payment of taxes and environmental practices; and for connected purposes.

The pandemic has made us all think about what we value in life and reassess how our society and our economy operate. Of course our main focus has been on how we tackle and get through the pandemic, but there has been a view expressed by many, including the Prime Minister, that lessons should be learned from the crisis, and he and others have said that, as we come through the pandemic, we must build back better. This Bill is part of that process of building back better. Within our economy the pandemic has exposed much of what is good but also, regrettably, some of what is just not acceptable. I want to cite some examples of companies such as Warburton's and Richer Sounds, and contrast them with British Airways and Amazon.

Two years ago, the bakers' union and Warburton's secured a groundbreaking agreement. It provided the workers with job security, ongoing skills development and better wages and conditions of employment and, as the company and the union both said, put people at the heart of the business. The agreement provided the company with the skills and flexible working needed to compete in a tough market. To deal with the crisis, the company has set up a safety committee, involving union reps, to monitor and review safety, and Warburton's has paid company sick pay to all those shielding—all those who need to isolate. Or take Richer Sounds, whose owner, Julian Richer, has promoted a good business charter and shared its ownership with its employees. Now they are working hard together in a tough environment to preserve jobs while paying a decent level of sick pay to workers shielding. Of course it is tough, but people are working together to get through as best they can.

Contrast that with boohoo. A recent independent report uncovered, in its supply chain factories, people working excessive hours on illegally low pay of £3.50 an hour, working without face masks in cramped conditions that were described as "life-threatening." Or take British Airways in my constituency, which has taken taxpayers' money for furloughing and drawn upon Government lending facilities, while it has used the crisis to introduce a policy of fire and rehire to cut wages and undermine terms of employment, and while its parent company IAG is buying up competitors and awarding its outgoing chief executive £800,000 in a golden goodbye.

Or take Amazon, notoriously exposed this month in another independent report for its oppressive, intensive working practices and for endangering warehouse workers put at risk of contracting covid-19, and then retaliating against the workers who spoke out against those working conditions. A fortnight ago, it was revealed that Amazon paid only £290 million-worth of tax in the UK, despite a 26% surge in its sales, up to £14 billion.

If we are to learn the lessons and build back better, as the Prime Minister has urged us to, we need a system that recognises and celebrates good practice in our

economy, and one that certainly does not lend support to those that fail to live up to basic business standards and undercut others that do. This Bill seeks to introduce a system for exactly that by accrediting businesses on their behaviour in a number of key areas: the treatment of their employees; their impact on the environment; and their payment of taxes.

The aim of the accreditation process is to enable the acknowledgement and celebration of good business practice and good businesses. At the same time, it will provide the basis for judging whether a business is upholding its responsibilities to its employees and the community.

It is proposed that an independent good business commission should be established, on the model of the Low Pay Commission, comprising representatives from businesses, trade unions, the major environmental voluntary organisations, and the tax justice campaign. The good business commission will have responsibility for determining the criteria by which a business will be assessed as a good business: its employment practices, its environmental policies and the payment of its taxes.

The intention, of course, is that businesses would be encouraged to seek accreditation. The award of good business status has the potential to significantly enhance the reputation of a business and confidence in its standing. The failure of a business to apply for accreditation, or to achieve it, would tell its own story.

In determining good business practice, the good business commission would examine, on employment, for example, whether the business recognised a trade union, paid a real living wage, banned zero-hours contracts, had gender pay parity, addressed equal-pay gaps for all protected characteristics, provided for worker representation on the board, or had a pay ratio between the highest and the average paid. It would assess, on environmental impact, whether the company had adopted a strategy for achieving net zero emissions within 10 years, and on tax, whether the company was paying its taxes or whether it was engaged in the use of tax havens and clear tax avoidance schemes.

The Bill also charges the good business commission with bringing forward proposals for how the business accreditation scheme could be used to incentivise compliance with good business practice and so establish

thresholds on business standards that would determine access to Government financial support and tax reliefs—thresholds that would be capable of being drawn upon by other bodies in their award of support, access or status to businesses, such as listing on the London stock exchange.

During the covid pandemic, the Government have introduced a number of schemes to help businesses to cope financially with the downturn in the economy resulting from the lockdown and social distancing protective measures. Across the House, we have welcomed those schemes; sometimes we have argued that they have not gone far enough, but we have welcomed them in principle. However, concerns have been expressed across the House about the lack of conditions attached to much of that aid.

As a result, there has been no attempt to influence the behaviour of companies—in particular their treatment of their employees. The behaviour of some—yes, they may be a limited some—has been unacceptable, as they have used the pandemic crisis as an excuse to implement sometimes long-held strategies of cutting wages and undermining terms and conditions of employment. A business accreditation scheme would be an effective basis for conditionality in the award of Government support—yes, for those schemes established for the pandemic, but also in determining future Government support schemes.

This Bill is the start of a discussion about business standards that I think we all recognise, given some of the examples that we have seen, we really need to have if we are genuinely going to build back better. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Ordered.

That John McDonnell, Zarah Sultana, Bell Ribeiro-Addy, Kate Osborne, Claudia Webbe, Apsana Begum, Rebecca Long Bailey, Kate Osamor, Dawn Butler, Richard Burgon, Ian Byrne and Lloyd Russell-Moyle present the Bill.

John McDonnell accordingly presented the Bill.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 27 November, and to be printed (Bill 190).

Non-Domestic Rating (Lists) (No. 2) Bill*Second Reading*

2.5 pm

The Minister of State, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (Luke Hall): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

This Bill delivers on an important Government commitment and addresses ratepayers' concerns by setting in law the date of the next business rates revaluation at 1 April 2023. By doing so, we can ensure that future business rates bills will better reflect the exceptional impact of the coronavirus outbreak on the commercial property market.

Business rates bills are based on the rateable value of a property, which, broadly speaking, represents its annual rental value. Rateable values, in combination with the business rates multiplier and reliefs, determine rates liabilities and are assessed by the Valuation Office Agency independently of Ministers. Since the current system of business rates was introduced in 1990, the Government have had frequent revaluations of rateable values to ensure that they remain up to date. Those revaluations ensure that the amount paid in business rates is fairly distributed among all ratepayers, having regard to the value of the property they occupy.

At the revaluation, all rateable values are based on the rental property market at a set date called the valuation date. The valuation date is set prior to the revaluation taking effect, so that the Valuation Office Agency has time to prepare the valuations. For example, at the last revaluation in 2017, the valuation date was 1 April 2015, which means that current rateable values are based on the market at 1 April 2015.

The next revaluation was scheduled to take effect from 1 April 2021 and would have been based on rental values at 1 April 2019. That was decided in spring 2018 and was the right thing to do at the time, but given what we now know about the coronavirus outbreak and its potential to affect the rental property market, it would not be right to continue with the 2021 revaluation. Continuing to implement the next revaluation on this schedule would have created additional uncertainty for ratepayers at an already uncertain time. It would also have meant that the underlying basis for bills would not have reflected the impact of the outbreak on the commercial rental market.

The Government therefore took the exceptional step of postponing the implementation of the next revaluation in order to give certainty to ratepayers and ensure that the next revaluation reflects the changes to market conditions as a result of the pandemic. The Bill will therefore set the date for implementation of the next revaluation in England and Wales at 1 April 2023. The revaluation will be based on rents at 1 April 2021, a date that we have already set using existing powers in secondary legislation.

The Bill will also change the latest date by which the Valuation Office Agency must publish draft rateable values in the lead-up to the revaluation. That date will be changed from 30 September to 31 December in the preceding year, which will allow us to align the publication of the draft rateable values with decisions normally made at any autumn fiscal event on the multipliers and transitional arrangements for the revaluation.

Kevin Hollinrake (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): I understand the reasons why we have postponed revaluations on a number of occasions since 2010. Does that not illustrate the changing nature of the commercial world and the need to move to a different system that is more responsive to the realities of trading on our high streets?

Luke Hall: I thank my hon. Friend for his point. We are currently undertaking a fundamental review of business rates, and as part of that exercise we are considering the frequency of future revaluations. When deciding whether to have more frequent revaluations, we need to strike the right balance between more up-to-date assessments, which would flow from such a reform, and the uncertainty it could create, with more regular changes to bills, while also taking into account the time it currently takes to process changes and the impact that any changes that might be required would have on the current system. I certainly understand, however, the point that my hon. Friend has continually made about annual revaluations and how that could further improve the system. I am sure that will be considered.

Sarah Olney (Richmond Park) (LD): I have listened carefully to what the Minister has said about the revaluation moving from April 2021 to April 2023, but I wonder whether there is a danger that those properties that might have a substantial revaluation downwards will be paying over the odds on their rates for two further years, at what we all know is going to be an incredibly tough time. I am thinking in particular of retail businesses and a very challenging trading environment. Will he consider changing the date from April 2023 to later in 2021, particularly given the comments he has just made about the need for more regular revaluation?

Luke Hall: I thank the hon. Lady for her point. I know it is a matter in which she takes a personal interest and that she has raised it with Ministers. The point stands that we have to have a system that takes into account the impact of the pandemic and, as is the case with the current system, the time it takes the VOA to go through the process. We think that this is the measure required at this time.

We took the step to postpone the implementation of the next revaluation so as to give certainty to ratepayers and to ensure that the next revaluation reflects the changes in the market conditions as a result of the pandemic. The Bill will therefore set the implementation of the next revaluation date in England and Wales as 1 April 2023. On revaluation based on the rents of 1 April 2021, we have, of course, already set that out in secondary legislation.

Business rates are a devolved policy area, but with agreement from the Welsh Government the Bill does also apply to Wales. As in England, the next revaluation in Wales will be implemented on 1 April 2023, and the date of publication of Welsh draft rateable values will also be changed to 31 December. Entirely different legislation applies in Northern Ireland, which has only recently implemented a revaluation from 1 April 2020, and Scotland, where I understand the Scottish Government have also committed to implementing their next revaluation on 1 April 2023. There is, therefore, a good degree of agreement across the UK that the next business rates revaluation should be moved, to better reflect the impact of the coronavirus. Notwithstanding some of the points raised, I hope that is accepted across this House.

As I have said, this is an exceptional step and the Government remain committed to frequent revaluations of business rates. The fundamental review of business rates will look at not just the frequency of revaluations but how they are done, and will report on those aspects of the business rates system in spring. However, this is a step that we can take now to improve business rates bills, and that is why we have brought this Bill forward so quickly.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the Minister for bringing forward the Bill. He has set out why it is essential—I and others in this House believe it is, too—in the current economic situation. We need to do all we can to support our businesses and see them through this so that we can reap the rewards in the years to come. When businesses are better off, they are able to help the local economy and pay their taxes and national insurance to Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs and council pockets. Rather than seeing this as a bail-out, as some do, I see it as a very sensible investment for the future.

Luke Hall: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his point. He is right that the Bill's provisions form only part of the support that we have provided to ratepayers as a result of the pandemic. We have already ensured that eligible businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors will pay no business rates at all in 2020-21. This is a relief worth £10 billion, which, when combined with the businesses receiving small business rate relief, means that more than half the ratepayers in England will pay no rates this year. This forms part of the business rates measures introduced in England since 2016, which, when taken together, will be worth more than £23 billion over the next five years. These include the doubling of small business rates relief, changes to the threshold, which mean that 700,000 small businesses—occupiers of a third of all properties—now pay no business rates at all, and switching the indexation of business rates from the retail price index to the consumer prices index. That switch alone will save businesses £6 billion over the next five years.

This Bill forms a critical part of the package of reforms and support that we are introducing to business rates, which will result in a property tax that better reflects coronavirus-related challenges in the commercial rental market and provide support to those who need it most, and which is simple and easy for businesses to administer. I commend it to the House.

2.15 pm

Kate Hollern (Blackburn) (Lab): I thank the Minister for bringing back to Parliament a Bill that will hopefully give greater certainty to businesses and local authorities during this pandemic. Given the existential crises they face, Labour thinks this Bill is a common-sense response to the virus that does not, fortunately, break any laws in specific or limited ways. For those reasons, we will be supporting the Bill.

This is the Government's third attempt at such a Bill. Unlike the first and second attempts, this Bill makes no changes to the length of time between business rates revaluations. The previous Bill would have replaced the existing five-year cycle with a three-year cycle, which would have implemented commitments made by the Government in their 2017 and 2018 spring statements. The Chancellor, then the Parliamentary Under-Secretary

of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, saw the Government's first attempt through the House, and in doing so made it clear that a five-year cycle had not been responsive enough to changes in the rental market. This Bill contains no such provision, and while I recognise that the Government are considering more frequent revaluations as part of the business rate review, which I will come to in a moment, I would like to place it on record that, outside these extraordinary times, Labour in principle supports regular revaluations.

I would be grateful if the Minister shared the Government's plans to deal with the Valuation Office Agency's backlog of appeals. According to the latest valuation tribunal statistics, there are still 50,000 unsolved appeals from 2010, and councils have had to divert more than £3 billion from services to deal with those appeals—money that could have been spent elsewhere, on schools, social care and keeping our streets clean. None the less, these are not normal times, and we recognise that, in circumstances where the rental value of properties has fallen, businesses may actually benefit come 2023, if they survive.

Historically, postponing revaluations has created serious issues for businesses. Some have faced huge, sudden increases in business rates, rather than more regular, smaller increments. It is far easier for businesses to assume the cost of smaller increases as a result of more frequent revaluations. Also, the Valuation Office Agency will base the valuation on rental values at 1 April 2021, which is curious, because the chief medical officer has been crystal clear that the virus will be with us for at least six months, and April 2021 is less than six months away. Organisations such as Revo, which supports the whole of the retail property market—owners, occupiers and local authorities—are seriously concerned. Given that the economy is likely still to be significantly affected next year, will the Minister please share with the House the rationale behind his decision to base the valuation on rental values in April 2021?

Beyond those points, there is a much wider issue at play here, as I have said. The business rate system is not fit for purpose. It is broken, and Labour has long called for a root-and-branch review of business rates to make the system fair, to help bricks-and-mortar retailers to compete with online tech giants, and to help to protect our high streets. Can the Minister assure the House that the fundamental review of the business rate system will be delayed no longer than necessary once it is concluded next spring, with the interim report expected as early as this autumn?

Many people working in shops, restaurants, pubs and beyond feel that their jobs are hanging by a thread. The job of the Government is to support businesses to survive and to help them to thrive. This Government are already bringing in big changes under permitted development rules for retail premises, which I am sure we will hear much more about later. That will also have a negative impact on high streets. Getting the business rate system right is essential, and more so now than ever. The Government have been intransigent and too slow to support businesses in the recovery efforts. They must not make the same mistake by being too slow to reform business rates. The system for assessing rates is complex, costly and time-consuming, and businesses have made it clear that reform is overdue.

[Kate Hollern]

Before I finish, I would like to turn to local government. Local government finance has been hit hard throughout this pandemic, and Blackburn has been hit harder than most with the extended restrictions. Alongside council tax, business rates represent the largest source of income for councils. Retained business rates contribute around a quarter of their core spending power, and it cannot be right that the Treasury considers support for businesses and local authorities a closed book. Local authorities have been heroic in their efforts throughout the pandemic, despite the black hole in funding that the Government have so far failed to fill. Councils have lost £953 million from business rates income between March in July this year alone, which accounts for more than a quarter of income losses for councils over the same period.

At the Government's daily press conference at the beginning of May, when asked what his message to council leaders was, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government said that

"we will stand behind them and ensure they have the resources that they need".

So far, the Government have failed to live up to that promise. The comprehensive spending review is an opportunity for them to keep that promise. If they do not get local funding right, older people will not get the care they need, young people will be put at risk and, critically for democracy, people will question why they are paying more tax for fewer services. We will support the Bill, but the Government need to stop tinkering around the edges and fix the broken business rate system. They need to support businesses and the millions of workers who are in desperate need, and they need to resource councils that are on a financial cliff edge.

2.23 pm

Duncan Baker (North Norfolk) (Con): This is a sensible Bill, given the pandemic, and one that I fully support. Basing revaluations on property values at 1 April 2021 rather than 1 April 2019 reflects far better the impact of covid-19 on property values and on businesses that pay business rates. I am pleased that the Government have listened, in order to end the uncertainty, and that the revaluation date for non-domestic rates will now not be until 1 April 2023. It is also right to put on record that the package of measures to help businesses that pay business rates has probably been one of the best in the world, with almost £10 billion in rates relief throughout the pandemic. I know that many in my constituency, which has a particularly high number of leisure, hospitality and retail businesses, are extremely appreciative.

However, while the Bill might not attract the same level of interest as what is coming later today, I want to draw attention to what the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors has had to say about it. Since the last revaluation to date, RICS has called constantly for measures that offer improved certainty, consistency and stability. As has been echoed today, rather than tinkering around the edges, we should commit to a full reform of business rates.

That cuts to the crux of what I wish to talk about briefly—business rates and retailing in particular. Approximately £8 billion in business rates is collected by the Treasury from the high street, but in just months this pandemic has changed many of those businesses

forever. Coupled with declining footfall in city centres especially, and the acceleration of shoppers buying online, we now have to think about the bigger picture—rather than just delaying a rates revaluation, reform is very much needed.

I welcome entirely the Chancellor's efforts to increase the business rates retail discount to 100%, which we have seen. It has been a lifeline for so many, as I mentioned. What happens next, however, is really critical. Traditional business rates are an enormous burden to many who are already seeing footfall decline and much tougher trading conditions. For those on the high street in particular, the rates and rent burdens are often the largest fixed cost base for them to contend with, so we now need to think about new, innovative ways to help the high street. In my view, a fundamental overhaul of business rates is altogether part and parcel of what we need to see.

Business rates must be not just responsive to economic conditions, but fit for purpose in a retailing landscape that is structurally changing in an extremely fast manner. If our high streets continue to deteriorate at the current rate, businesses will cease to trade, with far-reaching adverse implications for, literally, millions of employers, employees and suppliers connected to and dependent on this sector.

High streets provide many more benefits than purely economic ones. They provide a community, and I think we all agree that in this pandemic, community is one of the most robust things to come together. Many towns and cities are shaped by an identity stemming from the vibrancy of their high streets. That is why, as the high street changes, business rates as a blunt cost for occupying a unit need to adapt as well. If we get that right and we reduce the cost base of paying rates—at the moment, we take it for granted that rates are part and parcel of operating from a traditional bricks-and-mortar store—we will be able to put the high street on a more equal footing, and encourage high streets to adapt and flourish as technological shifts change.

Flexible rent schemes—why not even flexible rate schemes?—encouragement of pop-up shops to help vacant space before signing leases, and support for smaller retailers who perhaps started online but want a physical presence must all be ideas that we nurture, support and back. We must look at business rates reform and the success of the high street in tandem, bearing in mind a couple of facts before I end.

Last July, the proportion of shops that were empty reached over 10%, the highest level since January 2015. All the indications that we read show that high street footfall is declining at an accelerating rate from 2% year after year. More worryingly, post covid, many consumers have got used to shopping online. That is being exacerbated as people desert our high streets and in particular our city centres. Recent news showed that, pre-pandemic, £1 in every £5 was spent online; during the pandemic, that rose to £1 in every £3. I implore that we use this opportunity to look at business rates in conjunction with how we support our high streets into the future. Never before has reform needed to come far sooner than perhaps we all expected.

2.29 pm

Sarah Olney (Richmond Park) (LD): I value this opportunity to raise the issue of business rates and their impact on the retail sector. The hon. Member for North

Norfolk (Duncan Baker) raised many similar points, but I wish to talk in particular about the value of retail during this incredibly difficult time.

Our retail sector has been essential in helping many members of my community through this difficult period, which has shown the value of a strong retail sector in every town centre to the building of communities. Many of us who have been holed up at home for an extended period have valued the opportunity to get out and about and have face-to-face contact again. I think more of us value it than ever before. For that reason, although this is a very difficult time for the retail sector, I believe it has a strong future, because we cannot replace the value of that face-to-face contact with an online purchase; it is a tremendous boost to one's wellbeing. We have all become much more aware of the issues of isolation, people living alone, and how the town centre helps to build a strong local community.

Another point that I wish to make about the retail sector is that it has always been a strong source of employment for many people—local employment is so important for many people who find it difficult to access city centres. I draw the Minister's attention to the fact that the retail sector is a major employer of female workers; that is so important. Research shows clearly that having more women in employment has a strong impact on reducing the number of children in poverty. That is why it is so important to support the sectors that support female employment.

The rates holiday has been essential to helping retailers survive during the pandemic. Like all Members, the Liberal Democrats have welcomed those measures from the Treasury, but I urge the Government to take the opportunity presented by the Bill to reform the existing structure of rates to better reflect the underlying trading environment that many in the retail sector are having to face. Yes, we should push the revaluation back for the relevant businesses, but perhaps to later in 2021 rather than 2023. We might assume that more businesses to be found in, for example, the north and the midlands will face a reduction in the value of their properties. It would be better for them to take advantage of the reduction in rates sooner rather than later, especially given the challenging trading conditions everybody is going to be facing. I echo what the hon. Member for Blackburn (Kate Hollern) said about more regular revaluations and how that would support our retail industries in a fast-moving property market.

As the hon. Member for North Norfolk said, this is a critical point for the retail industry, and it would be great to see whether we could take the opportunity to rebalance the burden of business rates away from high streets, in recognition of the fact that the retail market is changing in favour of digital outlets, which militates against those retailers that are still based on our high streets. I mentioned the value of high-street shops and maintaining our high streets; we need to see the Government reflect and support that in their rates policy.

I welcome the business rates review, to which we plan to contribute, but I hope it can be done speedily so that we see rates reform take place sooner rather than later, to better support all those businesses that are relying on rates reform to help them through. Will the Minister consider a reduction in the uniform business rate from 50p to 30p, to better reflect how much lower is the volume of retail going through our high streets as people move to digital and online?

Kevin Hollinrake: That kind of change to the multiplier would probably cost around £12 billion a year. Does the hon. Lady have any idea of where she would get the money to fill that gap?

Sarah Olney: That is an important point and I very much hope that the business rates review will look at it. There is no doubt that online retailers are not currently paying their fair share. Lots of solutions to that problem have been proposed, although I do not think this is the right forum to debate them. There are pros and cons in respect of proposed digital sales taxes, but nevertheless it is a policy area that seriously demands to be looked at. I am sure the hon. Gentleman would agree that high street retail businesses having to bear the brunt of property taxes when they no longer get the lion's share of the retail market is a situation that cannot continue.

Finally, I just wanted to make the point that we are all expecting a major economic dislocation as a result of the unwind of the furlough scheme and the other measures that the Government have put in place. We are anticipating high levels of unemployment, but one way to mitigate that is through people starting up their own businesses. There are opportunities in the retail sector for those who are looking to start up their own businesses, particularly in constituencies such as mine. We have seen a rise in home working, which has meant that, for the high streets in Richmond Park, there has been a rise in footfall, as people are now at home during the day, instead of perhaps travelling into the city, which is what they would have done previously.

Certainly, speaking to local retailers, I have been quite surprised to find how many of them have thrived over the past few months. They have diversified and found new ways to get their goods to customers. Certainly, the trading conditions are quite strong on our local high streets and, as I say, I believe that that represents opportunities for those who may find themselves out of work in the near future, but I urge the Government to do what they can to lower the barriers to new entrants to the retail markets, so that we can really make the most of these opportunities for new retail businesses on our high streets. That is why I urge the Government to do what they can to address the current rate structure for new businesses.

2.35 pm

Marco Longhi (Dudley North) (Con): What businesses often say they need most is stability and certainty. The current system for revaluation of non-domestic rates has sometimes given rise to sudden changes in business rates payable to reflect how local economic conditions may have changed, so although it can happen that business rates go down, a growing economy will more likely result in an increase in rates. If the time period between valuations is high, then this can result in sudden and sometimes destabilising increases in business rates.

The Treasury, as we know, has been heroic in its support of businesses across the United Kingdom. The downturn that we have seen would have been much worse without it. We also know of the Treasury's call for evidence for the consultation on the fundamental review of business rates, as well as the call by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors for the Government to commit to full reform of the system.

[Marco Longhi]

There is, therefore, demand for change. However, it is clear that the best thing that we can do at this uncertain time is provide additional stability. I have no doubt that companies such as Thomas Dudley, all the businesses in the Trident and Churchill shopping centres in Dudley, and, of course, businesses across the country would welcome the postponing of the revaluation date to the 1 April 2023, as indeed would—probably—the Mayor of the West Midlands, Andy Street.

2.37 pm

Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): Obviously, this proposal is an understandable one and one that we broadly support, although I share the concerns of my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond Park (Sarah Olney) that its late implementation only exacerbates a problem that is rife. If we are desirous of creating greater equity in this country—the party in power refers to levelling up—we should have dealt with this years ago, and the imbalance in terms of property and land values. My party would go further and say that business rates are more than just not fit for purpose; they are ripe for abolition and replacement with a commercial landowners' levy. We can operate that in a way that would not only be fairer, but would motivate the owners of land to use that land for the best and most appropriate purposes. Therefore, if we are levelling up, we should implement this sooner, though I understand that the assessment is delayed for all the correct and reasonable reasons that the Minister set out.

I have two quick points, which are strongly related to that. Members from all parts of the House have talked about the benefits to struggling businesses of the business rates deferral scheme. That exemption has been renewed by the Chancellor for a further six months, which is hugely welcome and will make a massive difference. Of the businesses surveyed, 42% said that it made the difference between being able to continue and collapsing, so it is a welcome support.

However, I will not be the only Member present who has been lobbied regularly by people who are not helped by that. I am talking about a range of people who, under the banner of the excluded, have received no help from the Government whatsoever. That list is lengthy, and it includes people who have been self-employed, but for less than 18 months now. It includes people who are managing directors of small, limited companies—taxi drivers, personal trainers, hairdressers and many other small companies—and people who were just unlucky and did not get themselves on to the payroll cut-off just at the right moment in March this year. Many of those people are without any support whatsoever, and have had to live off what few savings they might have or have overrun credit cards to pay their rent or mortgage and feed their kids. While the exemption from and extension of the business rate relief is massively welcome, will Ministers please give thought to the, we believe, 3 million people, including 4,500 in my constituency, who have not been helped?

Finally, this is surely a moment for the Government to consider other amendments to business rates and alterations in their structure. This would be the moment for the Government to do something about an issue that they have sought to engage with for some time

now: the loophole that allows people who own a second home—I am not talking about a holiday let, but a second home—to avoid paying any form of taxation. In my constituency, it is estimated that about 3,000 to 4,000 second home owners use the loophole so that the property technically qualifies as a holiday let. However, they are not letting out the property at all. They are not breaking the law; they are taking advantage of a loophole. That means that those people are not paying council tax and, as a small business, they are paying no business rates either. A quick “back of the fag packet” estimate for my constituency is that it costs the council tax payers of South Lakeland £6 million a year to subsidise very wealthy people who can afford to have a second home.

If we add that to the Government's unintentional, but nevertheless given bung of £10,000 each through the stamp duty relief extension the other month, we have a picture where, in communities such as mine, where excessive second home ownership robs those communities of community life and demand for local schools, local shops and bus services so that those services end up being under threat and sometimes closing, the Government are encouraging an excess of second home ownership. That is particularly the case in rural communities such as the lakes and the dales, where they should be doing the opposite. I urge the Government to do what the Welsh Assembly Government have done and close that loophole.

The Government had a consultation on this, to give them credit. They closed that consultation in January 2019. Twenty months on, is it time, maybe, for us to find out what they are planning to do? Will they stop playing into the hands of those who have plenty, thereby disadvantaging communities such as mine in the south lakes who do not have enough?

2.42 pm

Kevin Hollinrake (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): I draw the House's attention to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests. I have quite significant interests in the business rates system, in terms of my own business, so hon. Members should take that into account.

To touch on the comments from the hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Tim Farron), I absolutely agree with his point about the business rates loophole for holiday cottages, and I hope that the Treasury is listening to that. It is an obvious loophole to close, and it affects North Yorkshire as it affects the Lake District.

I very much support the Bill. I sat on the joint Treasury Committee and Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee inquiry into business rates. We looked very carefully at the frequency of revaluation. We took evidence from a number of different sources. Some nations do the revaluation annually, not three-yearly, and that would be better from a business perspective. It would give a more current perspective on the trading environment, although we should bear in mind that all business rates revaluations are fiscally neutral. Some people would benefit from a reduction in their business rates valuation, but that would have to be made up elsewhere by the multiplier changing to come back to the £30 billion a year that business rates raise.

I do not know whether hon. Members have a solution to that problem. I have heard a couple of speeches from Opposition Members who have said that the business

rates system is not fit for purpose, yet only one solution, from the hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale. He suggested, potentially, a land value tax, but that has other inherent difficulties because it is, again, a value-based tax. Business rates are a valued-based tax. It has a correlation with the rental value of a property, which is, of course, inherently tied to the capital value of the premises. As Ronald Reagan once said, “There are simple solutions, but there are no easy solutions.” We might all want reform, but finding reform that works and is fair is difficult. I will, however, suggest something before I sit down. The other issue with the current system is that reliefs and changes brought in as a transitional phase mean that those who should benefit from the revaluations do not do so for some time, in order to try to help with people who are “going up in value”. It is far from a perfect system at the moment.

My first hustings took place in the village I have lived near all my life. One question from the audience was about a good local electrical retailer where many of us had shopped—Craggs, a white-goods retailer also selling TVs and the like. It had just closed down after many years in that community. Mrs Craggs was in the audience and the questioner said, “Mrs Craggs’s business has just had to close down because of the situation. She cannot pay her business rates. It is just unaffordable. What are the Government going to do about it?” The reality is that Mrs Craggs’s business was closing down not because of Government business rates, but because of the different shopping trends of all the people in that room; all those people were applauding and saying we should take some action, but the reality is that fewer and fewer of us are buying that kind of stuff from shops. So it is not about what the Government are or are not doing; it is about shopping trends.

As my hon. Friend the Member for North Norfolk (Duncan Baker) mentioned, before the crisis 20% of shopping was done online, but that figure has risen rapidly to 35%, which is making the whole system difficult. Most businesses look at the rent and the business rates when they first take on a premises, and then plug that into their cash flow and decide what they can afford to pay. That is what a good businessperson should do. It is not that the business rates system is anachronistic; the pace of change is the problem. At some point in future, when all this has settled down, businesses will say, “We can afford to pay this rent and these rates”, but the difficulty is being caused by the pace of change.

Sarah Olney: I am listening carefully, and I bow to the hon. Gentleman’s expertise on this subject, as I know he has studied it long and hard. We have talked a bit about the divide between digital and high street retail. Does he agree that there is a social good to be achieved in supporting high street retail and that the Government should perhaps express a preference for it over digital through the tax system?

Kevin Hollinrake: Yes, I absolutely agree with that. Community is very important to me and our shops are part of those communities. It is dangerous when the Government start picking winners—I do not think that should happen. The forces of free markets and a market economy are the best things to ensure that prices are kept low and levels of services are high for consumers.

That is what is most effective. So what we have to try to do, of course, is create a fair and level playing field, and let businesses come in to fill that gap and provide services that people want. That is what we should be looking to do.

In its review of business rates, the Treasury talks about different options, including an increase in VAT, changes to corporation tax and an online sales tax. It seems to land on the online sales tax as the solution, so let me talk about a couple of things that it sets out in that consultation. It sets out not that an online sales tax will replace business rates, but that it will exist alongside them—that is a key thing to understand—and that it will potentially lead to a reduction for retail. So there will be two systems coming together.

I have heard a few Members talk about retail in this debate, but the changes in consumer behaviour are not just about retail. Uber Eats and Deliveroo, for example, deliver to people’s houses often not from takeaway premises on the high street but from mini-establishments off the high street. Travel agents, insurance brokers, banking—all those things are changing because of consumer habits; people do not visit shops anything like as much as they used to. Looking at the problem purely from a retail perspective is wrong; to do so is not to understand the problem.

Another issue is, what is online? One of my fantastic local butchers in Thirsk is Johnson’s, an order-in butcher’s, which has wonderful meats, but does not seem particularly the type of business that would go online. I visited them during the crisis, because they had set up a delivery service and offer click and collect, as well as traditional shopping. They have even set up a little bot from which you can order, which talks to you using artificial intelligence—very clever stuff and really innovative, which was great; but how would you assign an online sales tax to those different categories? It would be hugely complex for a business to work out what was bought purely online, what was bought on click and collect, and what was bought by customers walking into the store. It would make the system more complicated. The more we try to simplify the tax system, of course, the more complicated we make it. There are some inherent flaws in an online sales tax; it is so very difficult. The problem of distinguishing between online, click and collect and physical shopping is inherent in lots of different businesses, John Lewis being an obvious example. It is not clear how such a tax would operate without making the system more complex.

Simple and easy are two different things. The simple solution, which will not be universally popular, is to look at sales tax. We already have a sales tax; it is called VAT. The simplest thing to do would be to raise VAT. We could not just put a hole in the business rates system—some 30 billion quid—without replacing it with something, certainly not given where the public finances are today. Putting 2p on VAT would raise £12 billion a year; 4p on VAT would raise £24 billion a year. We could also look at the threshold system of VAT, which is a real deterrent for businesses to grow. If we want a simple solution that is effective and crosses all the different sectors, it is there. It is fair and would keep the tax system as simple as possible.

I urge my very good friend the Minister on duty, the Under-Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, my hon. Friend the Member

[Kevin Hollinrake]

for Rochester and Strood (Kelly Tolhurst), and the Treasury to think about the full extent of the problems, as well as the potential quick wins. When compared with an online sales tax, VAT is a much better system to operate.

2.52 pm

Robbie Moore (Keighley) (Con): I too refer the House to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests.

Business rates have been discussed very many times in this Chamber, and I am sure that many of us have had multiple conversations with many businesses across our constituencies. The debate around business rates—how they should be implemented, whether we should have a complete revamp and overhaul of them, or even whether they should be adopted at all—has been going on for a significant period. Business rates impact many, many businesses, both large and small, across my constituency of Keighley and Ilkley and throughout the country. I mentioned the impact on small businesses because, as we all know, business rates relate to the size of the property that the business occupies rather than its turnover, or any other fiscal measurable that relates to the financial performance of that business.

Under the current system, the valuation office should regularly review rateable values to ensure that they are broadly in line with prices paid in the rental market by the businesses that pay business rates, to provide more certainty over bills, but I must say, having had some knowledge as a chartered surveyor over the past 12 years, that the review process can be slow, bulky and inefficient in its delivery. I very much welcome the fact that, since the last revaluation delay, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors has consistently called for measures that offer improved certainty, consistency and stability to the UK property market. Instead of continuing to tweak the rating system and introducing impromptu delays, we need to start thinking about much more of a full reform and a complete overhaul of the system, to provide consistency through a fairer property taxation system, which works better for businesses and is targeted at offering, and able to facilitate, extended business planning. Of course, it must work for our friends over at the Treasury.

I am pleased that this Conservative Government moved incredibly swiftly and presented the Non-Domestic Rating (Lists) (No. 2) Bill to Parliament earlier this year, and I welcome the immediate support to business owners provided through that relief. Across Bradford district, about 5,000 premises will benefit from that rate relief, and of course many of them are based in Keighley and Ilkley. That is a pure demonstration that our Government are on the side of hard-working businesses right across the country. I thank my hon. Friend the Minister and other colleagues in Government for moving swiftly.

Although I support this Bill and the relief that it provides for many businesses, I would like to see a revolutionary approach to the business rates structure that revamps and overhauls business rates so that we have a nimbler and fairer system. I do not want the business rates structure to be removed altogether, but it must adapt much more to the property and business market, which continues to change drastically.

2.55 pm

Felicity Buchan (Kensington) (Con): I welcome this short Bill and the change that it makes to the revaluation date. It means that business rates payable from 2023 to 2026 will be based on post-pandemic property prices, as of April 2021. Clearly, it makes sense. I also welcome the Treasury's fundamental review of business rates, which I believe is essential. High streets in my constituency are suffering very hard. They were suffering pre-coronavirus as a result of the very high burden of business rates and, as has been mentioned, the move towards online shopping.

Kensington pays a very heavy burden of business rates. Two small boroughs in central London—Kensington and Chelsea, and Westminster—account for a whopping 10% of all national business rates. Greater London accounts for a third of national business rates, but has only one sixth of the total properties. In the last reappraisal, rateable values in England as a whole went up by 9.6%, but in London they went up by 23.7%. My high streets simply cannot tolerate that burden, which has clearly got worse as a result of coronavirus. In central London, we feel that particularly acutely because footfall has yet to return. The survey of footfall that was carried out a few weeks ago showed that London was bottom of the list for the uptick in footfall.

Many central London businesses did not benefit from the £25,000 Government grant for retail, leisure and hospitality because it was based on rateable value, not on profitability or cash flow. The rateable values in my constituency are three times the average, so many businesses in Kensington did not get the grant, whereas equivalent businesses elsewhere in the country, even some of a greater size, did. Clearly, my businesses did benefit from the business rate holiday, and for that I am grateful.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Thirsk and Malton (Kevin Hollinrake) implied, we cannot be naive here. Business rates are important to the Exchequer—they provide more than £25 billion to it annually—but I believe that the high street is bearing an unacceptable burden. While I welcome the Bill, I look forward to the Treasury's review of business rates, and I believe that we need a fundamental review.

3 pm

David Simmonds (Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner) (Con): The reform of business rates and revaluation has been in a holding pattern for many years, and those of us who have spent time in local government will be conscious that the expected impact of that reform on local authority finance has been hotly debated. I think that we are still of the view that business rates in their current form are the worst possible solution to financing local government, with the exception of all other available choices. My hon. Friend the Member for Thirsk and Malton (Kevin Hollinrake) made that point strongly in describing the hard choices we need to make in identifying alternative sources of finance. It seems clear that, in the Treasury, the business rates billions remain a key building block of our national budget. As a consequence, there has been a long-held reluctance to tinker with them, for fear of the wider impact on the bigger fiscal picture.

Business rates have been in existence for a long time. For many of our citizens, they used to walk in lockstep with residential rates, long abolished. Even today, the variation in business rates income at local authority level is reflected in the grant funding—the traditional

revenue support grant that was the basis of most local authority funding—and in things such as school funding. When schools were first set up as a local authority responsibility, local authorities funded them according to their incomes from business rates and domestic rates, and that differential has been carried forward into the funding rates of our schools today. That long-standing impact and the fiscal picture across government of linking day-to-day expenditure on these services to the income we can rely upon coming through business rates remain in place. This goes to the heart of the point that a number of colleagues have made about the need for reform, but we need to address it as part of that complex formula.

I would like to add my voice to the request from many colleagues for greater flexibility in the way that business rates are deployed. I am fortunate to represent a constituency that has a great diversity of local businesses and very vibrant high streets. Many of those new businesses have grown up to take the place of more traditional activities, some of which have seen their departure mourned by local residents, and others perhaps less so. For example, a sports club has closed and been replaced by a children's soft play area, because the baby boom means that there is now a much greater market for that kind of activity. The bank that I used to be responsible for is now a bookshop and coffee shop on Pinner High Street, reflecting the fact that our high streets can remain vibrant.

This is not about saying that the Government or the local authority need to pick the businesses that they think should be winners on the high street. It is about reflecting the fact that the challenge of online versus bricks and mortar retailing, the changing nature of the high street and our ability to keep it vibrant on behalf of our communities mean that we need flexibility.

Kevin Hollinrake: My hon. Friend makes a good point. He alluded to the point I made earlier. If we had a business rates system that purely provided discounts for retail premises, what would we do with premises that were not retail and became retail or were retail and became another business category?

David Simmonds: My hon. Friend reinforces the point robustly. I declare an interest, as a father of young children. The development on our high streets of more community-focused business opportunities, due to there now being many more young children in my part of the world looking to access soft play, clothing retail and other things, is a reflection of the fact that our communities change—they are vibrant. That is what their nature should be, and those market forces are a welcome part of responding to the changes in our communities.

When we see challenges that come along, whether they reflect the national economic position or indeed wider issues on a local level, we need to be able to respond effectively. A really good illustration of that is the impact on the local authority that serves most of my residents and Heathrow airport—the London Borough of Hillingdon. Heathrow is the largest single payer of business rates within the Greater London area, but the challenge for the local authority that collects those business rates is that the revenue it collects and the proportion retained locally is far less than the cost to the local authority of dealing with the consequences of having the airport in its local area.

That brings me to my final plea to Ministers as we begin to look to what the future of business rates may be beyond this revaluation. Too often, there is little or no upside for local authorities in supporting the development and growth of businesses, because so much of the money goes into the central pool and the community sees the disbenefits such as congestion and pollution—sometimes, in the case of airports, in the form of air pollution—and needing to provide services to people such as refugees and those who find themselves stranded at the airport. All those are direct costs to local taxpayers as part of the statutory frameworks; they simply are not met by the share of the income that lands locally.

We need to have a much broader discussion about how we ensure that local authorities that see these opportunities to develop local businesses, jobs and a vibrant local economic strategy can see the benefit of doing that coming directly into their local community. In the United States, for example, it is a very common part of considerations of any infrastructure development that local politicians can say to the local community, “Yes, you will have to put up with a downside, but you will see this enormous benefit as a consequence of this development or this project going ahead.”

We need to see this as part of a much broader and more strategic review of the way in which we fund public services in this country. The hon. Member for Blackburn (Kate Hollern) pointed to the impact on local authorities of a reduction in revenue support grant. That is part of this complex picture, but over the same period, we have seen significant growth in levels of business rate income that have been retained by local authorities. When the Ministry makes its calculation of spending power, a reduction in spending power does not simply reflect a reduction in the revenue support grant: it then needs to add back into the calculation the additional revenue that is coming from other sources.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Thirsk and Malton explained so clearly, this is not simply a matter of being able to offer everyone out there who would like to see a reduction in their business rates such a reduction, because if we do that, we need to decide which other taxes will go up to pay for it. We must make sure that we consider that decision fully in this House before it is made, because we have a responsibility to local authorities and residents to make sure that the services we commit to providing for them are financially sustainable.

3.8 pm

Kate Hollern: It is wonderful to hear so many Members recognise the need for reform of business rates—and of course, in fairness, right across the patch. I want to return to two points very briefly.

There are many ways that the Government can support businesses, and making the next business rates valuation a smoother transition for them, as this Bill does, is one way to do it. However, as the Government know all too well—the shadow Chancellor, my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford East (Anneliese Dodds), has spoken about it at length from this Dispatch Box—they have consigned businesses and jobs to the scrapheap. The Government are failing to give businesses that could be viable, although they have been closed for a few months, the support they need. If we are to rescue businesses, there is an urgent need for the Government to support them through this difficult time. Tens of thousands of jobs are at risk.

[Kate Hollern]

We are talking about rates and how people pay into the system. If people are unemployed, of course there is a cost to that as well, not only financially but emotionally and socially.

Kevin Hollinrake: The hon. Member makes a very good point. On the jobs at risk and the Government support she is criticising, if this is such a big issue for her party, why are no Labour Back Benchers willing to speak on this very important issue that affects millions of businesses around the UK?

Kate Hollern: I am sorry that the hon. Member does not understand that this debate is for today. There have been a number of debates on the lack of support for businesses from this Government, and quite a few Conservative Members have recognised that some businesses have had absolutely no support at all, so perhaps we do need another debate on that subject.

On local government funding, councils face a multimillion-pound funding gap. Of course, local government works hand in hand with local businesses to create a sense of place to create vibrant town centres, as well as to encourage community sites and economic growth. I do recognise that the Government are covering 75% of the income loss incurred by councils, but that still leaves them hugely out of pocket and less able to support businesses.

The Bill is a first step to supporting businesses and local authorities, but everyone who has spoken agrees that business rate reforms need to be an urgent priority for the Government. If we are to protect jobs in high streets, this must be dealt with fairly and quickly. I hope that Ministers and their Department will keep these comments in mind as we look ahead to the comprehensive spending review.

3.11 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Kelly Tolhurst): I thank all hon. Members for their contributions to this debate, but also for the ideas and the clear passion that Members across the House have on this issue.

I want to pick up just a few points, because I know time is short. While I have great respect for the hon. Member for Blackburn (Kate Hollern) from our previous dealings, this country has been facing one of the most significant pandemics, and the response from this Government in support of business has been significant. Over the next five years alone, there will be over £23 billion in support for businesses. We have taken steps quickly and in an agile way, and we have been able to protect those jobs, as our constituents quite rightly look to us to do.

I would like to touch on retail, which has been mentioned a lot today. Quite rightly, when people think of rates and when people think of our communities, they look at our town centres and our high streets. Of course, in my previous role, where retail was very much a focus, this issue was not lost on me. One of the things we need to recognise is that, during the pandemic, we were able to double the amount of retail relief. The Chancellor expanded this to 100%, enabling more retail, hospitality and leisure businesses to make use of those discounts.

We also need to recognise, as hon. Members have highlighted, the changing nature of our high streets. Of course, my Department has launched the £1 billion future high streets fund, particularly to work with local authorities to make sure we can take our high streets to the next phase. We are working with local authorities and communities to develop the thriving high streets that we sorely need.

The Bill may be narrow and technical in scope, but in practice it does deliver on an important Government tax commitment by setting in law the date of the next business rate revaluation on 1 April 2023. Business rates are a local tax, rather than a national tax, which is why this small Bill is necessary. However, for many businesses, this Bill is as important as a national tax measure. We hear from ratepayers that the accuracy of rateable values is important to the fairness of the business rate system. Frequent valuations ensure that business rates bills are up to date, and accurately reflect rental values and relative changes in rents. That is why we remain committed to frequent revaluations, and why we had previously decided to have the next revaluation in 2021. That revaluation would have been based on the rental market at 1 April 2019, before coronavirus. I trust hon. Members understand the exceptional circumstances in which we decided to no longer proceed with the 2021 revaluation, and I very much welcome the support that has been expressed from across the House.

I would like to pick up a point made by the hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Tim Farron). We recognise the issue he raises relating to holiday lets. We have consulted on possible changes to the criteria which could enable more holiday lets to be registered for business rates. We will set out a Government response once we have considered that in more detail.

I also want to pick up a point made by many hon. Members today about the fundamental review of rates. The Treasury has set out the scope and launched a call for evidence. It has been great to hear from hon. Members in this debate, including my hon. Friends the Members for Thirsk and Malton (Kevin Hollinrake), for Keighley (Robbie Moore) and for Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner (David Simmonds), the hon. Member for Richmond Park (Sarah Olney) and my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley North (Marco Longhi). I very much hope they participate fully in the call for evidence and feed in their ideas, so that the Treasury can evaluate them. The scope of the fundamental review includes reducing the overall burden, improving the current system, and considering more fundamental changes in the medium and long term. Hon. Members have rightly called for that. We do hear in our constituencies that the burden of that single bill is large for so many of our businesses.

These measures are particularly important for local authorities. My Department has held discussions with representatives of local government, including the Local Government Association. For local authorities, we intend to make any adjustments to the rates retention scheme that are necessary to ensure that locally retained income is, as far as practicable, unaffected by the revaluation. That will give them the assurance they need regarding locally retained income and revaluations. We will also ensure that they have what they need to issue the new bills in a timely manner.

The Bill sets the next revaluation in 2023, but ratepayers do not have to wait until then to benefit from the reforms we have made to the rating systems. They are benefiting now from the small business rates scheme, which has removed 700,000 small businesses from the rating, and from a £10 billion package targeted on the businesses most affected by the pandemic, which means that more than half of all ratepayers in England will pay no rates at all this year.

I thank colleagues for their contributions to the debate and look forward to the House supporting the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

NON-DOMESTIC RATING (LISTS) (NO. 2) BILL (PROGRAMME)

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

That the following provisions shall apply to the Non-Domestic Rating (Lists) (No. 2) Bill:

Committal

(1) The Bill shall be committed to a Committee of the whole House.

Proceedings in Committee, on Consideration and up to and including Third Reading

(2) Proceedings in Committee, any proceedings on Consideration and any proceedings in legislative grand committee shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion two hours after the commencement of proceedings in Committee of the whole House.

(3) Proceedings on Third Reading shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion three hours after the commencement of proceedings in Committee of the whole House.

(4) Standing Order No. 83B (Programming committees) shall not apply to proceedings in Committee of the whole House, to any proceedings on Consideration or to other proceedings up to and including Third Reading.

Other proceedings

(5) Any other proceedings on the Bill may be programmed.—(*Eddie Hughes.*)

Question agreed to.

NON-DOMESTIC RATING (LISTS) (NO. 2) 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 Non-Domestic Rating (Lists) (No. 2) Bill, it is expedient to authorise provision for, or in connection with, changing the dates on which non-domestic rating lists must be compiled.—(*Eddie Hughes.*)

Question agreed to.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): In order to allow the safe exit of hon. Members participating in this item of business and the safe arrival of those participating in the next, I shall now suspend the House for three minutes.

3.20 pm

Sitting suspended.

Coronavirus Act 2020 (Review of Temporary Provisions)

3.23 pm

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Matt Hancock): I beg to move,

That the temporary provisions of the Coronavirus Act 2020 should not yet expire.

When we introduced the Act in March, I said that coronavirus was the most serious public health emergency that the world had faced in a century. Now, six months later, it is still the most serious public health emergency that the world has faced in a century. We have worked hard, overwhelmingly across party lines and sometimes at great pace, and come together to slow the spread of this virus. With the help of this Act, we protected the NHS, we built the Nightingale hospitals, and we welcomed thousands of clinicians back to the frontline. The Act helped people to get more appropriate care, faster; it helped the NHS and social care to harness technology like never before; and it has allowed the Government to deliver unprecedented economic support in troubled times. Although we have made huge strides in expanding testing and huge progress toward a vaccine, with the virus still at large, the Coronavirus Act 2020 and the measures within it remain as important as then.

Our strategy is to suppress the virus while protecting the economy, education and the NHS until a vaccine makes us safe. The Act is still needed to keep people safe. I understand that these are extraordinary measures, but they remain temporary, time-limited and proportionate to the threat that we face. Some of the measures we seek not to renew; some have, thankfully, not been used, but it is imperative that we maintain the ability to use them if needed; and some have proved critical to our response, and are now used to keep people safe every day. To stand down the Act now would leave Britain exposed at a time when we need to be at our strongest.

This virus moves quickly, so we need to have the powers at our disposal to respond quickly. It is deeply important to me that we strike the right balance between acting at pace and proper scrutiny. I believe in the sovereignty of Parliament, I believe that scrutinised decisions are better decisions, and I believe in the wisdom of this House as the cockpit of the nation.

This has been an unprecedented time. This House has had to do many unprecedented things, many of which have been uncomfortable. I have listened to the concerns raised about scrutiny. As you pointed out earlier, Mr Speaker, there have been times when this pandemic has challenged us all and we have not been able to do this as well as we would have liked. I therefore propose that we change the approach to bringing in urgent measures. I am very grateful to all colleagues we have worked with to come forward with a proposal that will allow us to make decisions and implement them fast, yet also ensure that they are scrutinised properly.

Today, I can confirm to the House that our significant national measures with effect in the whole of England or UK-wide, we will consult Parliament; whenever possible, we will hold votes before such regulations come into force. But of course, responding to the virus means that the Government must act with speed when required, and we cannot hold up urgent regulations that are

[*Matt Hancock*]

needed to control the virus and save lives. I am sure that no Member of this House would want to limit the Government's ability to take emergency action in the national interest, as we did in March.

We will continue to involve the House in scrutinising our decisions in the way my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister set out last week, with regular statements and debates, and the ability for Members to question the Government's scientific advisers more regularly, gain access to data about their constituencies, and join daily calls with my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General. I hope these new arrangements will be welcomed on both sides of the House, and I will continue to listen to colleagues' concerns, as I have tried my best to do throughout.

Sir Graham Brady (Altrincham and Sale West) (Con): I thank my right hon. Friend for being prepared to listen and for the constructive conversations that we have had over the last couple of weeks. As he said, Members on both sides of the House understand the importance of Ministers having the freedom to act quickly when it is necessary, but we are grateful that he and other members of the Government have understood the importance of proper scrutiny in this place and the benefits that that can bring for better government.

Matt Hancock: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I agree with him on the point about scrutiny. I am very glad that we have been able to find a way to ensure that we can have that scrutiny and that colleagues on both sides of the House can have the opportunity to vote, but in a way that still does not fetter the Government's need to act fast to keep people safe from this virus.

Mr Steve Baker (Wycombe) (Con): I am extremely grateful to my right hon. Friend for what he has set out and the manner in which he has done it, and I thank him very much indeed. He said earlier that he would not be renewing some of these provisions. May I just invite him to say something about mental health, and also something about schedule 21 relating to potentially infectious persons?

Matt Hancock: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. We have been working together to try to find a way through this that works both for the House and for the circumstances. There has been a change in the way that schedule 21 is used, and I believe that has reduced some of the concerns in this area, but we will continue to keep it under review.

I will say something about mental health later in my speech. There are measures on mental health in the Act that have not been used and that we are not seeking to renew. I hope that reassures colleagues that we take a proportionate approach to these measures and that although we want to make sure we have the measures we need, when we do not need them we will set them aside.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the Secretary of State for all he has done. I have spoken to him many times about these issues. I am sure that he, like me, has received lots of emails outlining concerns about the stripping back of health and social care. The Government must ensure that such powers can be used only when

absolutely necessary and not to save funding while leaving people without appropriate care. Will the Secretary of State please reassure the House as to how the power will be regulated, and reassure us that people's health and social care rights will be protected?

Matt Hancock: Yes. The powers in the Act have allowed us not only to ensure that people get the care that they need and that that care is targeted where necessary, but to allow people to get better and faster access to care when they are in hospital and have to leave, by ensuring that a care package is there. In their totality, the measures on care in the Act have without doubt helped us both to protect the NHS and to support social care, and crucially to support the patients who need that care. We will therefore of course take them forward, because of that positive overall effect.

Ed Davey (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD): Has the Secretary of State seen the evidence that many disabled people and people who need care have not received the care that they need? If he listens to the organisations that represent disabled people, he will hear that they are extremely worried about schedule 12 in particular and the easements on the duties of local authorities to assess and meet care needs. Is he telling the House that the Government are not renewing that schedule—yes or no?

Matt Hancock: Yes, we are renewing that schedule, because it is very important to ensuring that we prioritise care for those who need it most. The concerns that the right hon. Gentleman raises now were raised during the passage of the Act, when we had a good discussion on the subject. I believe that the way the Act has worked has, overall, improved access to care for people both in hospital and in our social care system, which has, of course, been an area of great scrutiny throughout the pandemic.

Steve Brine (Winchester) (Con): I thank the Secretary of State very much for the sensible measures the Government have taken today on the involvement and ongoing consent of the House. There is widespread public concern out there about consent and the measures we are imposing on people's lives. We should make it clear for the public, and some sectors of the media, watching this debate that many of the restrictions that we are reluctantly having to place on our constituents' lives do not come through the Coronavirus Act 2020; they come through many other pieces of legislation, but primarily the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984.

Matt Hancock: Yes. What I have said relates to measures to do with the pandemic response. As my hon. Friend says, the vast majority of the measures in respect of social distancing restrictions were introduced under the 1984 Act; only a minority were introduced under the Coronavirus Act. Nevertheless, the point about scrutiny is an important one no matter what the origin of the statutory instrument. In essence, we have managed to innovate with parliamentary procedure to find a way that we can move both quickly and with the proper scrutiny of Parliament. That is what we have been seeking to do. In these unprecedented circumstances, many innovations have had to be made, not least in Parliament, and this is another one. There were two contrasting needs—the need for proper scrutiny and the

need for very speedy action—and I am really pleased that we have been able to find a way through which, I hope, commands the support of the whole House.

Mr Mark Harper (Forest of Dean) (Con): I thank my right hon. Friend and the business managers for the work they have done in reaching this solution, and I hope, Mr Speaker, you will think that, following your stern words earlier, the Government have listened and come forward with some measures that are an appropriate response.

May I just press the Secretary of State? He said that the Government would hold votes, in advance of the measures coming into force, on national measures covering the whole of England or the whole of the UK. Obviously, some of the measures that have come into force so far have been quite significant, covering large parts of the country and millions of people. I accept there is a judgment to be made here; can he say a little more about where the line will be drawn as to what is brought to the House in advance?

Matt Hancock: In a way my right hon. Friend, who has huge experience in these matters, answers his own question, because of course there is a judgment to be made. We have made a very clear commitment to the process that we will follow, and I hope that over the weeks to come we will demonstrate through our actions and through what we bring forward that we are true to that commitment, which essentially will become a new convention.

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): Given the number of cases in which schedule 21 has been inappropriately used, can the right hon. Gentleman explain to the House what the definition is of a “potentially infectious” person? How is a police officer meant to know who is potentially infectious, and in the middle of a pandemic does that not include every single one of us, and are not the powers that the police have been given to detain us really quite worrying? Will he undertake to look at this again?

Matt Hancock: The right hon. Gentleman will know that the guidance has been looked at again, and the Crown Prosecution Service has issued new guidance that has remedied the concerns raised at the start. I am satisfied that that new guidance is appropriate and proportionate, and therefore I am satisfied that we should renew schedule 21, because—to answer his point—it is crucial that in circumstances where it is necessary to act to keep people safe we have the powers to do so, but they must be proportionate, and I think that the guidance has responded to that.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Matt Hancock: If I may, I will make a bit of progress, because otherwise I will take the whole 90 minutes myself.

The central point is that we need to ensure that we strike a balance so that we get the scrutiny right and also meet the need to act fast. The vote tonight is about whether to renew the Coronavirus Act, and I emphatically urge Members on both sides to vote in favour of that Act because of the broad range of powers without which it would simply be impossible to have an effective response to this virus.

First, the Act has helped us boost the health and social care workforce. One of the achievements in this crisis is that we are able to protect the NHS, and one of

the reasons we were able to do that was that we were able to support people on the frontline. This Act allowed the emergency registration of health and social care professionals—nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers—who wanted to return to the national effort. Skilled and experienced staff were able to return to work and add capacity at a time of emergency.

Secondly, this Act does not just support the NHS frontline: the second part of the Act protects all public servants who keep the UK running safely and securely. Over the past few months we have seen huge changes in the way our public services have operated. This Act allows for remote working and for moving meetings online, and it is about acting quickly to prioritise essential activities. The Act supports vital temporary measures that have allowed public services to keep their work going. This includes courts keeping running in a covid-secure way through the use of virtual hearings; up to 65% of hearings each day now involve somebody joining remotely, so it is integral to maintaining the rule of law that we keep these measures in place. The measures have also kept local democracy going by allowing councils to hold their meetings virtually. These are sensible and pragmatic steps that have helped us keep vital institutions operating in the midst of the pandemic.

The Act gives the Home Secretary powers to close and suspend operations at UK ports and airports if there are insufficient staff to maintain border security. This is one of the powers that have not yet been used, and I hope we will never have to use it, but it remains an important tool at our disposal.

Ms Nusrat Ghani (Wealden) (Con): I welcome my right hon. Friend’s earlier statement. My constituents are incredibly concerned about the powers given in this Act, but I would argue that this debate is not only about scrutiny and allowing the House to debate and vote; it is also about giving the Secretary of State the credibility to continue the work he is doing. It also exposes the difficult decisions and trade-offs he has to make, balancing the spread of the virus against all the restrictions we have to face, so I welcome the opportunity for further debates—much longer, I hope—and votes, too.

Matt Hancock: We are absolutely open to further and longer debates—like, for instance, the debate we had on Monday. Under the Standing Orders of the House, this debate is for 90 minutes, and neither the Speaker nor we had the choice over that, but we introduced a full day’s debate on Monday, and there will be many more debates to come.

I turn to a measure that we will not be renewing. I have said that we will keep measures in place only for as long as is necessary, and I can tell the House that in one area we will revoke a power that was part of the original Act. When creating the Act, we included provisions to modify mental health legislation to reduce from two to one the number of doctors’ opinions needed to detain someone under the Mental Health Act 1983 and to extend legal time limits on the detention of mental health patients. These were always powers of last resort, and I was not persuaded, even in the peak, that they were necessary, because our mental health services have shown incredible resilience and ingenuity. I have therefore decided that these powers are no longer required in England and will not remain part of the Act. We will shortly bring forward the necessary secondary legislation to sunset these provisions.

[*Matt Hancock*]

The third part of the Act contains measures to suppress the virus. As a nation, we have succeeded in suppressing the virus once, thanks to so many sacrifices by so many people, but with cases on the rise, we know that more needs to be done, and we need to do it together. Our central strategy of suppressing the virus while protecting the economy, education and the NHS until a vaccine arrives is underpinned by this part of the Act. It gives us stronger powers to restrict or prohibit events and public gatherings, and where necessary to shut down premises. It gives police and immigration officers the power to isolate a person who is or may be infectious, and it allows us to close educational settings or childcare providers. Again, these are not measures that anyone wants to use, but we must keep them in place for the moment, because we need every weapon in our arsenal to fight this virus, and these are a proportionate response.

Marco Longhi (Dudley North) (Con): As the virus clearly behaves according to how each and every one of us behaves, will the Secretary of State join me in condemning what we saw on the news this morning at Coventry University, where some students were behaving in a shameful way, up close and personal, partying?

Matt Hancock *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. Let me just say that the Secretary of State said that the time could not have been extended. Yes, it could, and I would have agreed to it.

Matt Hancock: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

My hon. Friend's comments are absolutely right. The need for all of us to exercise responsibility in a world where the virus can pass asymptotically, without anybody knowing that they have it, is sadly a feature of life during the pandemic, which I hope will be over sooner rather than later.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): I am very grateful for the correspondence that the Secretary of State and I have had on a specific issue relating to local restrictions in Wales—which have quite rightly been imposed by the Welsh Government—that do not allow people to travel outside their county borough area except for a reasonable excuse, which does not include going on holiday. That means that lots of people have lost every single penny on their holiday, because lots of companies have refused to pay out on insurance or change the date of their holidays. They say that Welsh Government rules are just guidance and do not have the full force of law. I hope the Secretary of State can stand at the Dispatch Box now and say very clearly to those companies that they should be reimbursing people because those restrictions have the full force of law. The Welsh Government are of course the legitimate body that makes the rules in terms of the local measures in place in Wales. That is the devolution settlement, as we have discussed many times in the last six months, and people should respect that.

Matt Hancock: Of course the companies involved should be making recompense where that is appropriate, and I hope that we can come forward with a resolution to this issue sooner rather than later.

Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Matt Hancock: May I just make some progress?

The fourth part of the Act contains measures for managing the deceased. This is a devastating virus that has caused pain and suffering for many and, tragically, has taken away many loved ones before their time. We have worked hard to treat them with the utmost dignity, along with protecting public health and respecting the wishes of the families of the bereaved.

The Act expands the list of people who can register a death to include funeral directors, and sets out that coroners only have to be notified when a medical professional is not available to sign a death certificate. It allows death certificates to be emailed, instead of physically presented, removes the need for confirmatory medical certificates in order for a cremation to take place, and relieves coroners of the need to hold inquests with a jury in suspected covid-19 deaths. Over the past few months, those powers have eased pressure on coroners, reduced distress to the bereaved and allowed funerals to take place without delay. We therefore propose to keep them.

Finally, the fifth part of the Act includes measures to protect and support people through this crisis. The financial support provided by the Government has proved to be a lifeline for so many. These measures in the Coronavirus Act made that support possible. The Act provides for the furlough scheme, the temporary increase in working tax credits, and making statutory sick pay payable from day one. Without the Act, we would not have furlough or the job support scheme. The Act also includes measures to protect both business and residential tenants by delaying the point at which landlords can progress evictions.

I know the burdens that the virus has placed on the livelihoods of so many, and we have worked to give as much protection as possible. I think that the whole House will want to keep these powers in place so that we can continue to help people in future. Without the passage of this motion, the financial support for people that is provided for and legally underpinned in this Act would not be legally possible. I understand that many colleagues may have concerns about individual parts of the Act, but a vote for the power to Act allows many of the necessary legal powers that have been required, including underpin the financial support that has kept so many people afloat during the crisis.

Tim Farron: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for giving way. Will he agree, though, that the inconsistent and sometimes nonsensical application of some of the rules is doing damage to some of the businesses that he talks about? In particular, I am thinking of the wedding industry and the many families who have been affected by that. The rule of six can surely apply so that a place that can take many multiples of six could host weddings and give people their special day, and so that it does not kill a vital industry not just in the lakes and the dales, but across the country.

Matt Hancock: I think we have shown throughout that we are always willing to try to improve the way the rules operate in a way that is safe. At weddings, of course people tend to come together physically. It is a time of celebration of love, and that is in its nature, so we make restrictions with huge regret, but we always keep an open mind on the public health evidence.

Dawn Butler (Brent Central) (Lab): If the Coronavirus Act were voted down today, would the Minister not have 21 days to bring forward to the House another Act, to which the House could then agree?

Matt Hancock: The principle of the Coronavirus Act is that it underpins so many of the actions that are necessary. To vote down the Act and not to renew it would lead to an undermining of the actions that we need to take to keep this country safe.

Mr Andrew Mitchell (Sutton Coldfield) (Con): I have a lot of sympathy with what the Secretary of State is saying, but may I also support what was said by the hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Tim Farron), not only about the wedding industry but about the exhibitions and events industry? Will my right hon. Friend at least bear in mind that good sense from careful people who seek to be covid-sensible and compliant would enable him to exercise some flexibility in the very inflexible rules that currently govern those two important industries, which are flat on their backs?

Matt Hancock: We are always happy to look at the evidence on how these things can be done—absolutely. I would be very happy to talk to my right hon. Friend about how we can take this forward.

Edward Timpson (Eddisbury) (Con): On the 15-person limit at wedding venues, it would help a lot of those in the industry, which is struggling desperately, if they could see the public health evidence and anything else taken into consideration in coming to that judgment. The difference between them and the rest of the hospitality industry does stand out, and they are going to be in a further desperate state for the next six months.

Matt Hancock: I will ask my right hon. Friend the Business Secretary to take up that point. The Business Department is responsible for making sure that the business rules are right, and I know that it looks at them very carefully.

The Coronavirus Act remains as fundamental as it was when introduced to this House six months ago. We will beat the pandemic, but we are not there yet. I urge the House to approve this motion, so that we can keep responding with speed and with strength. As we have heard during the opening of this debate, we are always looking to listen, learn and improve the response as much as possible, but without this Act our response will be harmed very significantly. At a time when this nation is being tested like never before in peacetime, I commend the motion to the House.

Mr Speaker: I remind Back Benchers that, unlike Front Benchers, they will have three minutes each.

3.51 pm

Nick Thomas-Symonds (Torfaen) (Lab): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in this debate, having taken the Bill through its Committee stage back in March.

We come to the House today to debate the renewal of the provisions of the Coronavirus Act, in the gravest of circumstances. Here in the United Kingdom, we have seen over 42,000 deaths, lives altered in ways unimaginable a year ago, and our economy facing one of the worst

recessions on record. We accept the challenge that that presents, which is why we have recognised that, in a pandemic, any Government need extraordinary powers to be available, and why, with a heavy heart, facing this highly unsatisfactory circumstance of an all-or-nothing motion, we will not block its passage.

We have supported the Government when it has been right to do so, and the British people, who have sacrificed so much in the national effort to address this virus, deserve nothing less. But today we say to the Government that things cannot go on as they are. The incredible efforts of the British people have not been matched with competence and grip by the UK Government. Announcements about measures have been made overnight, with no proper notice and no proper power of review, and Government Ministers have appeared on national media with absolutely no idea of what the rules are. The public are being let down on a grand scale.

The Government have had virtually all the resources and brilliance of our remarkable country on demand for over six months. They have been able to call on the UK's remarkable frontline workers, who have shown incredible skill and bravery through this crisis. Yet we have ended up with one of the highest death rates in the world and on the threshold of one of the deepest recessions.

At the same time, the road ahead is anything but clear. Our testing system is inadequate, at the very moment we need it most, and this is having a devastating impact. Losing control of testing means losing control of the virus. It is that loss of control that makes further restrictions necessary. It is restrictions that are having a devastating effect on families and businesses up and down the country. This dire situation was not inevitable; it is the result of a chronic failure of government. Today we must take stock of where we are, and the urgent need for the Government to get a grip.

Mr Kevan Jones (North Durham) (Lab): Does my hon. Friend agree that the Government are attempting to shift blame on to local councils? The councils quite rightly want restrictions, but what is happening is that they are asking for things but not being given them. There is also no consultation at all on how the restrictions should be implemented locally, which is leaving the councils with the confusion that we have had over the last few—

Matt Hancock *indicated dissent.*

Mr Jones: The Secretary of State shakes his head, but in the north-east, that is exactly what has happened. Does my hon. Friend agree that if councils ask for things, there should be a joint approach, rather than just a diktat from Whitehall?

Nick Thomas-Symonds: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. The UK Government need to get a grip and work with the other Governments and local councils around the United Kingdom on an equal basis.

Right at the start of the pandemic, the World Health Organisation said that we should “test, test, test”, and it was clear that that would be a vital element in regaining any form of normality. The Government had the country's full resources on hand, and on 20 May the Prime Minister promised a “world-beating” test, track and isolate system by 1 June. I am not asking for a world-beating

[Nick Thomas-Symonds]

system; an effective one would do just fine. But shamefully, this has not been achieved all these months later. Is not this the problem with the Prime Minister? He always promises a better tomorrow, but he never delivers today.

Mr Steve Baker: I said on Monday that I was actually quite pleased with the app. I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman is pleased with the app, and whether he has installed it and switched it on.

Nick Thomas-Symonds: Yes, I have indeed installed the app. It has taken a significant time and a significant amount of wasted money for it to actually appear, but it has finally appeared and I would encourage all hon. and right hon. Members to download it.

Chris Bryant: I would like to point out to the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr Baker) that the app actually works better in Wales, because all the tests can be properly downloaded in Wales, unlike in England. And while my hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen (Nick Thomas-Symonds) is at it, can he just point out that the so-called concession that the Government have given to Members such as the hon. Member for Wycombe, with whom I agree on many of these issues today, is nothing? It is not worth the paper it is not written on. We would like to see something in writing about what the consultation with the House will really look like.

Nick Thomas-Symonds: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The lesson with promises from this Government is that we always need them in writing, and even then they are not necessarily delivered.

Matt Hancock: He will be able to read it in *Hansard* in the morning.

Nick Thomas-Symonds: Moving swiftly on.

In England, the number of tests, the availability of tests and the turnaround time simply are not good enough. So dire is the situation that the Prime Minister is arguing with the Health Secretary over whether testing even matters. The Health Secretary has said that

“finding where the people are who test positive is the single most important thing that we must do to stop the spread of the virus”, and I agree with him. I agree with the Health Secretary. The shame is that the Prime Minister does not appear to, because he has said the complete opposite. The Prime Minister has said:

“Testing and tracing has very little or nothing to do with the spread or the transmission of the disease.”—[*Official Report*, 22 September 2020; Vol. 680, c. 822.]

Yet again, the Prime Minister refuses to take responsibility for his own actions and his own failings.

The testing of care home residents and staff is critical to saving lives, yet in England there have been repeated delays to the roll-out of testing, and people have waited days for their results. We are also witnessing chaotic scenes at our universities as students are locked down for the want of testing. The Prime Minister has been talking about a “moonshot”, but it is time he stopped looking up at the sky in vain hope and focused instead on what is happening in the everyday lives of families and businesses up and down the country. The failure to

show that grip and strategic leadership has severely hampered the way in which the UK Government work with other Governments, as my right hon. Friend the Member for North Durham (Mr Jones) said. Some have not even been properly informed of lockdown plans for their own areas. Let us take yesterday as an example, when we had the chaos of the Prime Minister himself unable to outline what additional restrictions his own Government were implementing for the north-east of England. It is, frankly, an embarrassment, and people deserve better. If the Prime Minister actually bothered to communicate with some of the devolved Governments, he might learn something. In Wales, the tracing system is significantly better. The percentage of contacts that has been reached has been consistently higher than in England, and the Prime Minister ought to follow that best practice.

Let me turn to some of those most at risk in our society. The Health Secretary claimed to have thrown a “protective ring” around care homes in England. If that is what the Government call the shambles they presided over, I would hate to see what they consider a mess to be. Again, the Prime Minister tried to shift the blame, insultingly suggesting that

“too many care homes didn’t really follow the procedures”,

and that was when the Government’s own advice at the start of the pandemic said that people in care homes were “very unlikely” to be infected. The truth is that too many care homes were left high and dry. There was not enough support, insufficient personal protective equipment and a lack of testing. I am sorry to say that some of the most vulnerable paid the price and, sadly, paid the ultimate price. Yet again, care workers, who should be lauded by the Government, were denigrated.

That failure on care homes is particularly relevant as we discuss and debate this legislation and its renewal, because the Act contains provisions that allow for the so-called “easement” of legal safeguards. The Health Secretary said that he thinks those are still necessary, but why are they still necessary? I read carefully the analysis that he published, which did not answer the question. He tried in his speech to make a positive case for it on the basis of prioritisation, but he must realise that that does not deal with the deep concern there is about the situation in our care homes, and he must surely understand that every vulnerable person, throughout this pandemic, must have the standard of care that they need.

We also have significant concerns about the curtailment of the use of GPs to sign death certificates. Again, the Health Secretary said that he wanted to continue with that provision. What assessment has been made about the use of this power? Why does it need to continue? Will he also tell us what its impact has been? Ministers have no excuse for being caught unawares, as they have had months to get to grips with this. We cannot afford for action to protect our care homes and other services to be as slow and chaotic as it was at the start of this pandemic.

On a more positive note, I welcome what the Health Secretary said about the easements under the Mental Health Act; they have not been used and I welcome his assurance that they will not now be used. But what about the easements under the Children and Families Act 2014? He did not mention that Act, and I assume from the silence that they will be continuing. He must

bear in mind those with special educational needs and vulnerable children, whose rights should not be rolled back as a consequence of this pandemic. Some of the most vulnerable people have borne the brunt of this virus and this Government's failings.

We have also seen, across our communities, that the impact has not been evenly felt. Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities have been some of the worst hit by the virus itself and by the economic fallout. Disabled people and those with underlying health conditions have made up 59% of the covid deaths to date. Despite that, the Government have not done enough work on equality impact assessments of measures or made the necessary evidence available so that we can openly debate and vote to address these deep inequalities. Today, we are faced with an all-or-nothing motion, but let me put the Government on notice that we will not tolerate any discrimination in our society as a consequence of the implementation of these measures. That is why I say to the Government today that they should not be waiting another six months; they should be publishing a monthly review of the impact of this virus on individuals and groups, together with those detailed impact assessments. If the Government continue with the easements under the Care Act 2014, as they say they will, or those under the Children and Families Act 2014, they must report regularly to this House about the impact of what they are doing,

Karin Smyth (Bristol South) (Lab): I hope my hon. Friend agrees that the way the Secretary of State has approached this matter today is disappointing. Many of us sit on Select Committees and have scrutinised the way in which this Act has come forward, and are willing to spend more time doing that properly. That is our job as legislators. The approach has been most unsatisfactory, so I completely support my hon. Friend when he says that we need it to be better. There are recommendations in many Select Committee reports, and my hon. Friend should press the Secretary of State to take note of them.

Nick Thomas-Symonds: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. She saves me from coming to another part of my speech. Quality scrutiny is available across the House on a cross-party basis, and we have had no credible explanation of why this debate is limited to 90 minutes.

The rights that I have referred to, relating to the easements that the Government are pushing forward, protect vulnerable people—those who need care, those with mental illness, and children with special educational needs across the country. We cannot simply put their rights to one side.

On rights, there is a real issue with schedule 21. My right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) put his finger on it: the power to detain “potentially infectious persons”, which, as far as I can make out, could include virtually anybody. So far, it has been used for 141 prosecutions, each and every one of which was found to be unlawful when it was reviewed. I cannot think of any other piece of legislation in parliamentary history that that could be said about. All the Health Secretary said was that the guidance had changed and he would keep it under review. With a provision like that, he needs to speak to the Home Secretary and the Justice Secretary and do so much better. A provision that has resulted in 141 unlawful prosecutions cannot be right.

I say to the Health Secretary that the Government have to be transparent and accountable. They must come back not in six months' time, as set out in the Act, but every month to answer for the use of these powers.

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): I agree that 141 unlawful prosecutions—100% unlawful prosecutions—is completely unacceptable. In Scotland, the police have not been using the powers in schedule 21, so we have not had the same problem. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that we need fewer widely drawn powers, and that schedule 21 needs to go?

Nick Thomas-Symonds: The hon. and learned Lady is absolutely right. The problem comes with “potentially infected persons”. It is a very poorly drafted schedule, and that is why we are seeing these consequences. I urge the Health Secretary again to look at it.

As we tighten restrictions and ask for more sacrifices from people, the economic support is being lowered. The Government claim that jobs are unviable, but the reality is that the restrictions made necessary by their failure on testing are causing the problem. The jobs crisis was caused in No. 10 and No. 11 Downing Street. The support offered is inadequate. It cannot be right that it is easier to retain one worker full time than two on a part-time basis. Frankly, the Chancellor is offering a cocktail umbrella for the pouring rain.

I say this to the Government: work with the Opposition in the national interest. Create new targeted support that can replace the job retention scheme and prevent devastating mass unemployment, keep workers safe by protecting workers' rights, boost sick pay, make workplaces safe, and give our NHS and care services the resources they need.

Mr Speaker, you gave a very clear direction earlier about the role of Parliament. Across Parliament there is, quite rightly, a desire for more parliamentary scrutiny. Six months ago, I raised the issue that the motion is unamendable for precisely that reason. I said to the Paymaster General in that debate that it should be amendable so that we would not be in the position we are in today, but she simply said:

“We do not wish to do that.”—[*Official Report*, 23 March 2020; Vol. 674, c. 134.]

Today, we find ourselves with 90 minutes to debate this unprecedented set of powers. There is no credible reason whatever why that could not have been extended. The Government may not wish to face scrutiny, but they need to accept that they will make better laws for everybody if they do accept scrutiny.

I heard what the Health Secretary said about votes, but it was qualified because he said “when possible”. He needs to realise that, with such strong powers on the statute book, the need for accountability is even more acute than it would be in ordinary times, not less. A strong Government would come to Parliament. A strong Government would accept the need for votes. A weak Government would run away from scrutiny and hide their own incompetence, which is precisely what the Health Secretary and the Prime Minister are doing.

The British people are making an incredible contribution to tackling this virus. Our country has huge resources, brilliant scientists, our NHS and our remarkable frontline workers. They have all been at the disposal of this

[Nick Thomas-Symonds]

Government, yet six months after this Act was last considered in this House, we find ourselves in a perilous situation, critically undermined by the failures of this Government. I say to the Government: get a grip on test and trace—there is no excuse at all for not having a fully functioning system now; communicate well with the public, because the mixed messaging helps nobody; and act to prevent mass unemployment now, because the British people can no longer afford to pay the price for this lack of strategy and grip. Frankly, they deserve so much better.

Mr Speaker: As I have said, there will be a three-minute limit, starting with Sir Graham Brady.

4.11 pm

Sir Graham Brady (Altrincham and Sale West) (Con): Mr Speaker, may I begin by thanking you? Although you gave your reasons earlier for not selecting the amendment in my name and those of 80 other colleagues across the House, you also made your expectations of Government crystal clear. No one could doubt your commitment to upholding the Standing Orders of this House, Mr Speaker, and nor have you left any doubt about your resolve in defending parliamentary democracy and the right of this House to scrutinise and hold Ministers to account.

I am also pleased to be able to thank my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. Throughout my discussions with him, he has accepted the need to find a better approach to scrutiny and parliamentary approval of coronavirus measures. The new procedure that he has committed the Government to follow shows a genuine understanding of what has been wrong in the past and a real promise of transparency and engagement in the future. I believe the outcome we have reached is in the interests of Parliament and of better government, and, most important, it gives the British people reassurance that measures that restrict their liberty, interfere with their family life, and very often threaten their livelihoods will not be implemented without important questions being asked and answers given in advance.

Mr Harper: Because it is not necessarily clear outside the House, will my hon. Friend agree that what the Secretary of State has effectively confirmed at the Dispatch Box with just the one change of the word “practicable” to “possible” is exactly what he proposed in his amendment, which we understand, for very good reasons, the Speaker was unable to select?

Sir Graham Brady: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that intervention, because it is important to say that those of us on both sides of the House who put our names to that amendment were seeking to be eminently reasonable and accept the difficult constraints under which the Government are operating, and it is important that the Government accepted that in those terms. We believe that it was in good faith, and we will, of course, hold the Government to that.

It is also important, following this change of approach signalled by the Secretary of State, that the public—the people whom we represent—will rightly be in a position in the future to judge us, as Members of this House, on

the balance that we seek to strike in the protection of their liberty, the safety of the public and their ability to support themselves and their families.

Mr Mitchell: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend, who has done an extremely good job, and a great service to our constituents, in the work that he did in respect of his amendment. Will he confirm that the aim of this amendment was not to confront the Government in any way, but to try to ensure that the Government use the wisdom across this House in tackling this very serious problem?

Sir Graham Brady: I absolutely agree. Those were two wonderful interventions from former Chief Whips; I wonder whether there are any more in the House. That is precisely the point: it is our belief that this House can work with the Government, and that our collective knowledge and the difficult questions we will ask will improve the quality of the Government’s actions and governance.

Chris Bryant: Can the hon. Gentleman tell us what this new procedure is?

Sir Graham Brady: The hon. Gentleman is an expert on procedure, and he will soon get to grips with it. It is the made affirmative procedure, which entails the setting of a commencement date in the future for measures, which will allow for a debate and vote to take place in advance of commencement. The House will therefore have that crucial ability to refuse consent.

Chris Bryant: But the Government decide.

Sir Graham Brady: These things will be brought forward. We have had the assurance, and we will hold the Government to it. The hon. Gentleman will see it very soon.

I will close by thanking those Members across the House who, by supporting my amendment publicly or privately, have helped to achieve what I believe will be an important step forward for all of us.

4.15 pm

Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): I regret the fact that this is only a 90-minute debate. The Government should have ensured that a more appropriate amount of time was given. In that context, I will not do what I normally do; I apologise to Members, but because of time, I will not be taking interventions. [HON. MEMBERS: “Hooray!”] That is utterly pathetic.

In preparing my contribution for the debate, I revisited the remarks that I made when this legislation was introduced in March. It seems a long while ago, but it is worth remembering the shock of the initial wave and the speed with which all our lives were changed. As we all know, that sudden shift in our collective lives was accompanied by the tragedy of losing too many of our citizens far too soon. Talk of a new normal has set in fast since the virus first took its grip, but at times, it is important to reflect on the scale of the sacrifice and the adjustment that all of us have been asked to make necessarily because of the pandemic. Even back in March, on the eve of lockdown, it was clear that the fight against this virus would not be temporary and

would not be short. We knew then that we were only in the foothills of what is a mountainous challenge. Back then, just as now, there remained a long way to go.

Setting out that context is crucial as we reconsider the powers in the Act. Many things have changed since March. A new normal has evolved. Society and people have adapted and shown remarkable resilience. We should be grateful that, in the main, the public have followed Government guidance throughout these islands. For all the sacrifices that folk have made, they should have our thanks and appreciation. Sadly, one thing remains very much the same since March: the virus remains in our midst, and it remains as deadly as ever. It is worth noting that we are considering these measures in the week that humanity has reached a terrible milestone: 1 million covid-related deaths worldwide, and that is only those officially defined as covid-related deaths.

The emergency and the extensive powers in this legislation have naturally and rightly raised questions and concerns. The nature and the imposition of measures that significantly alter individual liberties deserve full and frank scrutiny no matter what the context. In that regard, it is really unhelpful that we have been given only a 90-minute debate today. My party has always made clear our serious concerns about the lack of scrutiny of the powers in the UK Government's Coronavirus Act. That is why, on the Bill's Second Reading, we raised our concerns alongside others in this place. The UK Government need to listen to those concerns, voiced long before Tory Back Benchers started having trouble with the Government's moves.

These six-monthly reviews cannot be a rubber-stamping exercise. They must have the teeth to provide meaningful scrutiny, to protect human rights and to promote public health. It is vital that this elected House has its say on these measures, which impact all our constituents. That is the proper way to maintain trust, in order that we can have stronger regulations in place to tackle the biggest health emergency that any of us have seen in our lifetimes.

We fully acknowledge and appreciate that all elements of this Government and every Government are under huge pressures as a result of the pandemic. This deadly virus presents unparalleled challenges to all of us entrusted with governmental powers, but that is all the more reason why these decisions need the insight of scrutiny and the legitimacy of parliamentary oversight. No one, at least no one on the Opposition side of the House, is calling for the scrutiny to hamstring the UK Government on essential public health measures, but it is right that the House is afforded the democratic means to have its say.

The recognition of such a need and the steps to address it occurred early on in the Scottish Parliament. The Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 contains a range of measures to ensure scrutiny of decisions made by the Scottish Government. Scottish Ministers have responsibility under section 15 of that Act to publish two-monthly reports for the Scottish Parliament on the use of emergency powers. There is a recent requirement of the Scottish Parliament to consider regulations to extend the expiry date of part 1 of both that Act and the Coronavirus (Scotland) (No.2) Act 2020 from 30 September to 31 March 2021. Scottish Ministers also have a duty to report on all Scottish statutory instruments made for a reason relating to coronavirus. As part of debating this motion today, we are calling on the UK Government to consider how similar scrutiny and accountability processes can be introduced in this House.

It is right to reflect on the principles of democratic accountability and transparency, but today it is equally important that we collectively remind ourselves of the principles of protecting our people for however long this pandemic inflicts itself upon us. We must stick rigidly to the principles that we all set out to uphold when this virus became a reality in our everyday lives—protecting our NHS, protecting livelihoods and, most important, saving lives. The health regulations under this Act and their impact on the economy cannot be separated, and we have all seen that each has a fundamental effect on the other.

It is crucial that we press the Government on these issues today. Back in March, the UK Government promised the public that, no matter how severe the economic effect, no one would be left behind. Only six months later, this UK Government are now completely failing to uphold the principle of supporting livelihoods and jobs. It is now the shameful policy of this Tory Government that, just as health restrictions are strengthened, they are weakening economic support. They cannot claim to save lives and protect people by imposing additional public health measures on people, while at the same time allowing unemployment and deprivation to soar.

This week, expert after expert has been queuing up to warn that the Chancellor's significantly less generous replacement for the furlough scheme will not prevent mass redundancies. The Resolution Foundation warned that it will

“not significantly reduce the rise of unemployment”.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies warned:

“It is clear that many jobs will be lost over the coming months”.

The Association of Independent Professionals and the Self-Employed described it as “woefully inadequate”, and the Scottish Tourism Alliance warned:

“The reality we must all face now is that within the coming days and weeks, businesses owners will lose their livelihoods, thousands will lose their income and the effects on the economy and people's lives will be nothing short of devastating.”

That is the reality.

It is a disgrace that millions of families now face a bitter winter of rising unemployment and squeezed living standards. This is all the direct result of the Tory Government's reckless decision to scrap the furlough scheme and impose an extreme Brexit during a second wave of coronavirus.

Matt Hancock *indicated dissent.*

Ian Blackford: I can see the Secretary of State frowning, but, Secretary of State, that is the reality. People are going to lose their jobs and their livelihoods, and this Government are not prepared to do what they promised—to put their arms around those who were going to be affected.

The Tories have made a deliberate choice—a political choice—to let unemployment soar, just like Thatcher did in the early 1980s. Just like back then, the scars of that economic inequality will ruin and last a generation. Either the Tories have not learned from the devastation of the Thatcher years, or they simply do not care. It appears they are willing to inflict the Thatcher years all over again.

Mr Harper: You're obsessed by it.

Ian Blackford: The right hon. Gentleman should reflect on the damage that the 1980s did to communities. I used to live in Lanarkshire, where the steel and coal industries were devastated, and many of those communities have never recovered from the devastation that was visited upon them by Thatcher and her Government at that time.

This Tory Government are repeating the failures of the 1980s and they simply do not care. They do not care about what is going to happen to people and businesses as a result of the measures that have been put in place.

The Government's renewal of these health regulations today while failing to renew economic support simply is not acceptable. If the Tories continue with this policy, many good businesses will be forced to close or reduce their activity, through no fault of their own. Millions will face the dole. We already know that 61,000 Scottish employees face the risk of unemployment, given the Tories' removal of the furlough scheme. For many looking on, it is the same old story from the Tories. Yet again, Westminster is proving that it cannot be trusted to act in Scotland's interests. The Government are withdrawing support for jobs, blocking the devolution of financial powers and threatening to impose a low-deal or no-deal extreme Brexit in the midst of a pandemic. If the Government and the Chancellor are to abide by the promises that they made in March when the Act was passed, they need to think again. They need to reinstate a full job protection scheme and devolve the powers that Scotland needs to protect our economy. Only then can we collectively get on with the job of protecting public health while also protecting jobs and livelihoods.

4.25 pm

Jeremy Hunt (South West Surrey) (Con): I will support the Government today because, although I fully understand the concerns about parliamentary scrutiny eloquently expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale West (Sir Graham Brady), the biggest threat that we face as a country is not the erosion of liberty but the explosion of the virus. We now know, as we go into a second wave, that for every death directly caused by covid there is at least one death indirectly caused by the disruption of cancer services, the interruption of emergency care and people being discharged early from hospital.

I wish to ask the Government about measures that could reduce such indirect deaths, particularly the introduction of routine weekly testing of NHS staff, which we have discussed many times in the House—I see the shadow Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Leicester South (Jonathan Ashworth) smiling. In fairness to the Government, they have moved on this issue. In July, Chris Whitty told the Health and Social Care Committee that he supported the routine testing of asymptomatic NHS staff in hotspots. I would like there to be such testing everywhere, including in my constituency, where recently we seem to have seen live cases trebling, but even in the hotspots it is not currently happening with any consistency. That is a worry, because up to a fifth of staff in hospitals got the virus during the first wave and up to 11% of deaths of coronavirus patients were caused by patients' having caught the virus in their own hospital. That is the context.

I recognise that some hospitals are trying to do routine testing, but it is very difficult for them to do it on a weekly basis when they cannot access pillar 2 testing, so will the Secretary of State ask all hospitals to make weekly testing happen, under their own steam if they can, or with the support of NHS Test and Trace supplying the reagents, or using pooled testing?

Ms Ghani: Does my right hon. Friend agree that when we talk about NHS staff and testing, we need to focus on the most vulnerable—those BAME NHS workers who are dying at a much faster rate? We need data and they need support.

Jeremy Hunt: My hon. Friend has done a lot of campaigning to highlight that issue, as have Select Committee members from all parties. The Select Committee will publish a report tomorrow that considers that very issue and will be coming back to it.

The Government's own figures show that at least a thousand additional cancer patients died because of the interruption caused by the pandemic. As we go into a second wave, it does not have to be the same again. The Government have rightly introduced weekly testing for people in care homes; the arguments are exactly the same for our hospitals. Patients need to know that their NHS hospital is safe and NHS staff need to know that they are not infecting their own patients. As we go into this very difficult period, please will the Government act and make this happen?

4.29 pm

Clive Efford (Eltham) (Lab): The lack of scrutiny throughout this pandemic has led to sloppy decision making on the part of the Government. That is demonstrated in the U-turn after U-turn that we have seen. We have another example today at the Dispatch Box from the Secretary of State, who seems to have scabbled together a deal with his Back Benchers.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leyton and Wanstead (John Cryer) is the second signatory to the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale West (Sir Graham Brady) and has lobbied many Labour Members to put our names to it, to put pressure on the Government. Did the Secretary of State consult my hon. Friend or any other Labour Member? Does this deal that he has got together have support across the House? Who did he consult? Will this House have the opportunity to stop Government decisions that it does not agree with before they are implemented?

We have seen the Government making decisions and implementing them, and then we in this House—maybe, if there is a statement—are given an opportunity to ask questions after the event. That has just not been good enough. We need to be able to influence what is taking place before the Government act, because lack of accountability enables them to make up the rules as they go along. They make snap announcements; then they need not worry about the implications because they can make another announcement and move on, and tomorrow's headlines will cover their tracks.

It is small wonder the Prime Minister does not know whether he can come and go, with how many people, or whether it is indoors or outdoors. But one "gotcha" moment for the Prime Minister is not the issue. We are seeing a pattern. Throughout September, the Government

have been unable to answer questions on testing of domiciliary care workers. *The BMJ*, back in April or May, concluded in a report that as many deaths were taking place among people who were receiving domiciliary care as were taking place in care homes, yet we never hear anything from the Government on this issue. Then there is the lack of involvement of local authorities in track and trace, where local knowledge could be used to track and deal with people who need to be isolated. These are issues that we could have raised in this House had we had the proper opportunity to scrutinise the Government. It is time the Government listened.

4.32 pm

Sir Bernard Jenkin (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): Yesterday, as Chair of the Liaison Committee, I signed a letter to the Prime Minister to focus the scrutiny of the various Select Committees on two issues: one was the need to galvanise test and trace, and the other was the need to improve the scrutiny of coronavirus measures that we are discussing today. The latter point reinforces the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale West (Sir Graham Brady). I am grateful to the Government for at least making some gestures in the direction of better scrutiny. The Government have nothing to fear from scrutiny; good scrutiny improves government, as my hon. Friend said.

I wish to make only one other point, apart from drawing attention to the role that the Liaison Committee can play in improving scrutiny. The Government have made something of a rod for their own back by heaping a certain amount of derision and contempt on what Parliament is for, what we can do and what we can contribute to this. I do not suggest for a moment that that comes from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, or even from the Prime Minister, but there are some people around the Prime Minister who do not seem to value what Parliament has to offer, and, indeed, what Parliament's function should actually be. I do not believe at all that this is a Cromwellian Government who want to abolish Parliament, but there should be some lessons learned from this in that there is a fundamental principle in our politics that the Government cannot govern without the consent of the House of Commons.

I would go further, on a slightly more party political point. The Prime Minister cannot lead his parliamentary party unless he has its consent, and therefore will find the act of governing very much more difficult and complicated if the consent of the party in office, among Members of Parliament, is not gathered together and led. I think the Prime Minister has gone to some lengths to bring back some consultation with the parliamentary party in recent weeks, but let there be some lessons learnt from the previous attitude that seemed to be coming from the team around the Prime Minister.

4.35 pm

Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP): In the face of pictures from hospitals in Italy and reports from China of the number of people who were dying from this disease, this House gave the Government untrammelled power in this Act to take action to protect the public; but I have to say, Minister, that that power has been used in a way that has frustrated many people across the country. Their ability to work, to socialise, to go to

school and to travel has been affected. Often the measures taken have been seen as illogical, inconsistent, contradictory and unnecessarily damaging.

Jim Shannon: Very quickly, one of the issues that has come to my attention—the number of emails has been enormous—is to do with the enforcement of vaccines on those people who do not wish to have them. I personally would take such a vaccine, but others will not. Does my right hon. Friend agree that when it comes to vaccines, it should be by choice only?

Sammy Wilson: Well, of course, that is an issue that the Government will have to address in the future, if ever a vaccine is found.

The important thing is the frustration that many in the public are experiencing at present. It might not have been totally wiped out, but I believe there certainly would have been far more scrutiny if this House had not just had the ability to listen to statements or ask questions, but had actually had the real sanction that if the Minister did not make a consistent and competent case for the measures that he was introducing, they could be voted down. That is why the demand that there be effective scrutiny by this House is important.

We have listened to what the Minister has said, but I am not convinced that we will see that effective scrutiny; because if I heard him right, first, it would only be for matters that are significant. Now, who will make the judgment on whether the issue is significant? I can tell the Minister that, if I own a business and it is decided that it could be closed down, that is significant; yet we do not know who will make that final decision.

The scrutiny will be only for issues that are national. Sixteen million people are currently affected by a range of local decisions and local restrictions. That, to me, is as bad—half the nation, half the country, is affected—yet according to the Minister's definition today, it would not be covered because that would not be a national decision. And, of course, scrutiny will happen where possible. I suppose if the Government wished to escape scrutiny they could always say, "But this has suddenly emerged," even though the data could have been collected days and days before. So who will decide whether it is possible to have the time to do this?

Craig Mackinlay (South Thanet) (Con): As ever, my right hon. Friend makes the most powerful points. Does he agree that perhaps a special committee to decide what is significant—do lots of locals make a national?—would be a good way forward, so that we could decide what should be debated in this House and what can be left properly to Ministers to decide on a regular and rapid basis?

Mr Speaker: Order. It is significant to me to try and get as many Members in as possible. Please let us try to make sure we leave time for others.

Sammy Wilson: It certainly should not be left to those who have wanted to rush through decisions and those who in the past have wanted to escape scrutiny because the decisions have been illogical and inconsistent, and people cannot understand them, and even some of those who have made the decisions do not understand them and sometimes have a different interpretation.

[Sammy Wilson]

This is not just about MPs having a sense of their own importance. This is important if the measures are to have acceptance among the public, because with that kind of scrutiny, with a final vote, at least if we were not convinced that the measures were necessary, if we were not convinced that they would not have disproportionately damaging effects, if we were not convinced that they would actually work, if we were not convinced that the public would understand them, we would have the right to say, “Minister, you cannot proceed with them,” and have the opportunity to vote them down. I do not think we have had a convincing assurance from the Secretary of State today about when we would have that kind of role, and if we do not have that kind of role, I do not think that we should support the continuation of these kinds of measures.

4.40 pm

Andrea Leadsom (South Northamptonshire) (Con): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for his concession today of greater scrutiny in this place. All Front Benchers have been working flat out at an incredibly difficult time since March, and I have supported all the measures that we have taken so far, but the fact is that we are no longer in that first flurry of panic; we know much more now than we did then.

I gently say to the business managers that I wish they had given more time for this discussion. I totally sympathise with you, Mr Speaker; I love this place, and annoying as many of my beloved honourable colleagues right across the House are, nevertheless we have already heard, just in this short debate, some things that we all have in common. There is no monopoly on good ideas.

The one thing that I came here wanting to say, which I have heard hon. Members from every single party say in their own words, was “events and weddings”. I just want to give an example. My constituent Jerry Stephenson runs an events business in South Northamptonshire specialising in hosting weddings. Since March, it has held two small weddings with up to 30 people, and everyone else postponed until next year. Since we went back to 15, they have all been cancelled and postponed. The Government need to answer the question: what is different between a wedding and a funeral? My constituents have a right to know the answer.

In this House, we can bring forward suggestions about how to make things easier and more logical for our constituents. Importantly, when we bring questions forward and get answers, we can stand up and be counted, and tell our constituents, “I know why this is happening, and it is justifiable and in the best interests of the nation.” There just is not a monopoly on good ideas, no matter how hard the Government are working—and they are working very hard.

Finally, I want to raise the fact that it is so frustrating for all of us in this place because so few of us can be in the Chamber. We have to ballot for every single question we put in for. As individuals, we get very few opportunities to speak or intervene, so it is more important than ever that the Government and the business managers enable us to contribute to these incredibly important debates. I thank my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for

listening, but I urge him to listen as much as possible not to the party political points, but to the real wisdom and questions of our constituents.

4.42 pm

Ed Davey (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD): I refer the House to my entry in the Register of Members’ Financial Interests; I am a patron of the Disability Law Service.

This pandemic is taking an enormous toll on people across our country. The pandemic is hitting everybody. That is why Liberal Democrats have worked constructively with Ministers, backing every measure to keep people safe, from lockdowns to face coverings. In March, when the Coronavirus Bill was rushed through, we were willing to take Ministers at their word that the Bill was essential, despite reservations about its impact on people’s wellbeing, freedoms and rights, but with the benefit of six months’ experience of the Act, we must today oppose its renewal.

As I said on Second Reading in March and to the Prime Minister two weeks ago, this legislation undermines the rights to care of disabled people, the rights to care of some of society’s most vulnerable people, and the rights to care of children with special needs and disabilities. That is wrong, and it breaks international law. We know that the Conservative party does not care about breaking international law. The fact that the Act breaches our legal obligations under the United Nations convention on the rights of persons with disabilities may not matter to Conservative Members, but it should. How a country treats its most vulnerable people in an emergency is one of the most critical tests of its character.

I am pleased, but not surprised, that polling shows the true character of the British people. Two thirds of the public believe that the Act’s social care reductions are unacceptable. Liberal Democrats agree, as do more than 150 organisations campaigning for the rights of disabled people that have called for those sections of the Act to be withdrawn. It is no good Ministers saying that these powers have rarely been used. The experience of disabled people during the pandemic should shame this Government. Inclusion London has published a report, “Abandoned, forgotten and ignored—the impact of Covid-19 on Disabled people”. It contains horrifying reports from disabled people across the country about cuts in their care packages, food shopping not done, personal washing not done and vital care at home not done. Speaking as the father of a disabled child, I know that huge numbers of parents of disabled children have been hit. A survey by the Disabled Children’s Partnership showed that for 76% of families with disabled children, vital care and support previously relied on had been stopped altogether. This House should speak up for those families, for those carers and for disabled people, and vote against this measure tonight.

4.45 pm

Sir Charles Walker (Broxbourne) (Con): I first thank the Secretary of State for everything he has done to get us to this stage tonight, but 90 minutes to debate the renewal of an Act that has fundamentally changed the nature of the relationship between the state and citizens is not good enough. If this is the portent of the promises to come, it is not good enough. I need, at some stage, more than three minutes to discuss the fundamental

hardships that are going on in my constituency—the jobs that are being lost, the opportunities that are being lost, the young people struggling to find work, to get back to university and to come back from university. Ninety minutes is an utter, utter disgrace. It is actually disrespectful to this House and it is disrespectful to colleagues.

I am sorry, Secretary of State, if I sound—actually, I am not sorry that I am angry, because a lot of people in this place are angry. We want to see this virus beaten, of course we do, but it would be nice—just nice—if this House were shown some respect.

Mr Speaker: Rebecca Long Bailey, you have one minute—sorry about that.

4.46 pm

Rebecca Long Bailey (Salford and Eccles) (Lab): I have listened to the Secretary of State's comments and the revocations that he has set out have been welcome, but they are cosmetic and they certainly do not go anywhere near restoring the safeguards that those suffering from mental health problems, disabled people and those in need of care deserve. As for his promise of parliamentary scrutiny, frankly, it is nothing more than a gentlemen's agreement.

The Act in its current form allows clumsy and asymmetric authoritarianism. Powers to restrict mass gatherings might well have been necessary, but broad police powers under schedule 21 to detain potentially infectious people have led to unlawful prosecutions 100% of the time. Where were the extra powers—the resources to inspect or restrict unsafe workplaces or to requisition private lab space, healthcare or other facilities for mass testing? Where were the powers to take charge of food supply in the event of future lockdowns to avoid further panic buying and ensure that shielding and vulnerable people receive the food that they deserve?

The Government demand that citizens give up their liberties and livelihoods in the pandemic, yet they do not stand beside them. The Secretary of State's comments today certainly do not deal with the issues that many of our constituencies face, and some of us begin to worry that the Government's confused and often contradictory public messaging is not mere incompetence, but a studied chaos, designed to blame ordinary people instead of taking democratic political responsibility for some of the worst pandemic management in the world. The Government are at real risk of squandering public sentiment and public good will, and, at the very least, they must set out to revoke the most insidious parts of this Act tonight.

4.48 pm

Matt Hancock: I thank colleagues on both sides of the House for their contributions to this debate, and I would like to reinforce once again my statement that we will keep listening to and working with the House and put in place, in good faith, the procedures that I outlined earlier and that were welcomed by my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale West (Sir Graham Brady) and others.

Let me respond to some of the points of substance. I strongly agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for South West Surrey (Jeremy Hunt), the Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee, that control of the

virus will lead to better and more life-saving cancer care. Sometimes this has been reported and discussed as if controlling the virus hinders cancer care. On the contrary, controlling the virus helps us to deliver better cancer care. He was quite right about that. We will continue to expand testing capacity, which came up from a number of quarters.

I agree with what my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich and North Essex (Sir Bernard Jenkin) said in support of the Government's strategy. I welcome his comments on the changes we are proposing today to how Parliament operates.

I listened with care to the right hon. Member for East Antrim (Sammy Wilson). I urge him to support the Coronavirus Act this evening, not least because he knows, from the commitments I have given, that there will be further chances for both scrutiny and votes on measures in future thanks to the discussions we have had today.

I am grateful for the comments from my right hon. Friend the Member for South Northamptonshire (Andrea Leadsom). I commit to her to listen as much as possible to the views she expresses and to work with her.

Finally, I want to reassure those who might have been concerned by the comments made by the leader of the Liberal Democrats, the right hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton (Ed Davey). Under the Coronavirus Act, local authorities are required to follow the European convention on human rights, so the point he made about international law is wrong. The Coronavirus Act delivers a stronger package, in a pandemic, for the support of those who need care.

I put forward to the House the need to vote to approve this motion to put ourselves in the strongest possible position to defeat the virus, and to keep protecting lives and livelihoods and the things that we love. I commend the motion to the House.

Question put.

The House divided: Ayes 330, Noes 24.

Division No. 121]

[4.51 pm

AYES

Adams, Nigel	Baron, Mr John
Afolami, Bim	Baynes, Simon
Afriyie, Adam	Bell, Aaron
Ahmad Khan, Imran	Benton, Scott
Aiken, Nickie	Beresford, Sir Paul
Aldous, Peter	Berry, rh Jake
Allan, Lucy	Bhatti, Saqib
Amess, Sir David	Blackman, Bob
Anderson, Lee	Blunt, Crispin
Anderson, Stuart	Bottomley, Sir Peter
Andrew, Stuart	Bowie, Andrew
Ansell, Caroline	Bradley, Ben
Argar, Edward	Bradley, rh Karen
Atherton, Sarah	Brady, Sir Graham
Atkins, Victoria	Braverman, rh Suella
Bacon, Gareth	Brereton, Jack
Bacon, Mr Richard	Bridden, Andrew
Badenoch, Kemi	Brine, Steve
Bailey, Shaun	Bristow, Paul
Baillie, Siobhan	Britcliffe, Sara
Baker, Duncan	Brokenshire, rh James
Baker, Mr Steve	Browne, Anthony
Baldwin, Harriett	Bruce, Fiona
Barclay, rh Steve	Buchan, Felicity

Buckland, rh Robert
 Burghart, Alex
 Burns, rh Conor
 Butler, Rob
 Cairns, rh Alun
 Carter, Andy
 Cartlidge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Cates, Miriam
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, Alex
 Churchill, Jo
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clarke, Mr Simon
 Clarke, Theo
 Clarke-Smith, Brendan
 Clarkson, Chris
 Cleverly, rh James
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse
 Colburn, Elliot
 Collins, Damian
 Costa, Alberto
 Courts, Robert
 Coutinho, Claire
 Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey
 Crabb, rh Stephen
 Crosbie, Virginia
 Crouch, Tracey
 Daly, James
 Davies, David T. C.
 Davies, Gareth
 Davies, Dr James
 Davies, Mims
 Davis, rh Mr David
 Davison, Dehenna
 Dinenage, Caroline
 Dines, Miss Sarah
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Docherty, Leo
 Donelan, Michelle
 Dorries, Ms Nadine
 Double, Steve
 Dowden, rh Oliver
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Drax, Richard
 Drummond, Mrs Flick
 Duddridge, James
 Duguid, David
 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
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Frazer, Lucy
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 Fysh, Mr Marcus

Gale, rh Sir Roger
 Garnier, Mark
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gibson, Peter
 Gideon, Jo
 Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
 Glen, John
 Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Gray, James
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Green, Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Griffith, Andrew
 Griffiths, Kate
 Grundy, James
 Gullis, Jonathan
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hammond, Stephen
 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
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Holloway, Adam
 Holmes, Paul
 Howell, John
 Howell, Paul
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hudson, Dr Neil
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, Jane
 Hunt, rh Jeremy
 Hunt, Tom
 Jack, rh Mr Alister
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jenkinson, Mark
 Jenkyns, Andrea
 Jenrick, rh Robert
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnston, David
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Fay
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Jupp, Simon
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Kearns, Alicia
 Keegan, Gillian
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian
 Kruger, Danny

Lamont, John
 Langan, Robert
 Leadsom, rh Andrea
 Levy, Ian
 Lewer, Andrew
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Loder, Chris
 Logan, Mark
 Longhi, Marco
 Lopez, Julia
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Mackrory, Cherylyn
 Maclean, Rachel
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mangnall, Anthony
 Mann, Scott
 Marson, Julie
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Mayhew, Jerome
 Maynard, Paul
 McCartney, Jason
 McCartney, Karl
 Menzies, Mark
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Millar, Robin
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, rh Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Mohindra, Mr Gagan
 Moore, Damien
 Moore, Robbie
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morrissey, Joy
 Morton, Wendy
 Mullan, Dr Kieran
 Mumby-Croft, Holly
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Neill, Sir Robert
 Nici, Lia
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norman, rh Jesse
 O'Brien, Neil
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Parish, Neil
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Philp, Chris
 Pincher, rh Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, Victoria
 Pritchard, Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Randall, Tom
 Redwood, rh John

Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
 Richards, Nicola
 Richardson, Angela
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Mary
 Ross, Douglas
 Rowley, Lee
 Russell, Dean
 Rutley, David
 Sambrook, Gary
 Saxby, Selaine
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec
 Simmonds, David
 Skidmore, rh Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Greg
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Spencer, Dr Ben
 Spencer, rh Mark
 Stafford, Alexander
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, Jane
 Stewart, Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunderland, James
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Thomas, Derek
 Timpson, Edward
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Trevelyan, rh Anne-Marie
 Trott, Laura
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Tugendhat, Tom
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Vickers, Matt
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Wakeford, Christian
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Wallis, Dr Jamie
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Webb, Suzanne
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whittaker, Craig
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John
 Wild, James
 Williams, Craig
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wood, Mike
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Young, Jacob

Tellers for the Ayes:
James Morris and
Maggie Throup

NOES

Bone, Mr Peter
Butler, Dawn
Cooper, Daisy
Davey, rh Ed
Davies, Philip
Farron, Tim
Farry, Stephen
Hobhouse, Wera
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Jardine, Christine
Jones, rh Mr Kevan
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lucas, Caroline
McVey, rh Esther

Moran, Layla
Olney, Sarah
Spellar, rh John
Stone, Jamie
Stringer, Graham
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Twigg, Derek
Walker, Sir Charles
Wilson, Munira
Wragg, Mr William

Tellers for the Noes:

**Mr Alistair Carmichael and
Wendy Chamberlain**

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the temporary provisions of the Coronavirus Act 2020 should not yet expire.

The list of Members currently certified as eligible for a proxy vote, and of the Members nominated as their proxy, is published at the end of today's debates.

Mr Speaker: I will now announce the results of the deferred Divisions. On the motion relating to the draft Immigration (Health Charge) (Amendment) Order 2020, the Ayes were 348 and the Noes 250, so the Ayes have it. On the motion relating to the draft Restriction of Public Sector Exit Payments Regulations 2020, the Ayes were 347 and the Noes were 249, so the Ayes have it.

[The Division lists are published at the end of today's debates.]

In order to allow the safe exit of hon. Members participating in this item of business and the safe arrival of those participating in the next, I am suspending the sitting for three minutes.

5.6 pm

Sitting suspended.

5.9 pm

On resuming—

Business without Debate**SENTENCING BILL [LORDS]**

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 58), That the Bill be read a Second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, That the Bill be not committed.—(David T.C. Davies.)

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read the Third time and passed, without amendment.

Town and Country Planning

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): We now come to the three motions on town and country planning, which will be debated together.

5.10 pm

Mike Amesbury (Weaver Vale) (Lab): I beg to move,

That the Town and Country Planning (Permitted Development and Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020 (S.I., 2020, No. 632), dated 23 June 2020, a copy of which was laid before this House on 24 June 2020, be revoked.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this we shall discuss the following motions:

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) (Amendment) (No. 2) Order 2020 (S.I., 2020, No. 755), dated 20 July 2020, a copy of which was laid before this House on 21 July 2020, be annulled.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) (Amendment) (No. 3) Order 2020 (S.I., 2020, No. 756), dated 20 July 2020, a copy of which was laid before this House on 21 July 2020, be annulled.

Mike Amesbury: I thank the Minister for finding time for this debate in response to the prayer motions that Her Majesty's official Opposition have laid against these regulations.

I will start by telling Members a story, one that is real and with which some across the Chamber will be familiar. It does not have a happy ending, and given the Secretary of State's radical extension of permitted development, it is about to get a whole lot worse for many people in many communities up and down this nation.

Over the weekend, the Minister may have read an article in *The Observer* about permitted development. It began by talking about the experience of a woman, Katya, who lives in a block of flats created under the existing permitted development regulations. All Katya wants, like many of us, is a place to call home, to bring up a young family and to feel secure, space for her children to play safely, somewhere to shelter during this pandemic and to be able to travel to work from, and some communal green space. Yet Katya is one of thousands of residents who are crammed into former offices and industrial units that were not built for human habitation. Some have no or few windows, some are as small as 10 square metres—the average car parking space is 11 square metres—and many are on the outskirts of towns, with few amenities such as shops and schools.

Katya is not alone. Up to 60,000 units have been built under the previous extension of permitted development, many of which are unfit for human habitation. I am certain that neither the Housing Minister nor the Secretary of State would like to find themselves or their families in them.

This debate is about three further ways in which the Government want to create poor-quality housing by bypassing the local community, local democracy and local control: by adding new units on top of flats; by allowing developers to demolish and rebuild empty buildings; and by allowing people to add multiple floors to their homes in a village, town or city near you.

[Mike Amesbury]

Let me take Members on a visual journey up north to Leeds, where Abbey, a young professional, bought her leasehold flat only to discover that it had been clad with flammable material. She is one of many thousands affected. She cannot sell it. It is zero-rated for a mortgage and she has to pay thousands in wakening watch and insurance fees. There are also massive problems, with which the Minister and the Secretary of State are very familiar, with the EWS1—external wall survey—forms.

What is the Government's solution? Instead of building back better, safer, healthier and greener for Katya and communities up and down our nation, the Secretary of State will go down in history not only for his unlawful planning direction in Tower Hamlets, with the Westferry affair, but as Bob the bad builder, coming to wreck a village, town or city near you. Instead of having a relentless focus on making people like Abbey safe in a clad building, he has rammed through a negative statutory instrument to lob an extra two storeys on blocks of flats, overnight giving some freeholders and overseas investors a multi-million pound windfall of up to £42 billion.

At the same time, this very SI has added an additional cost for leaseholders who may want to buy the freehold. No need for donors to attend the Carlton Club dinner circuit any more and exchange chummy texts—just sneak the windfall through Parliament via an undebated instrument. What does that instrument deliver a year? Just 800 flats per year; that is 8,000 over a decade.

To make matters worse, because permitted development bypasses the planning system, we could have a ludicrous situation where high-rise buildings extended by two floors do not go through gateway 1 of the draft building safety Bill. Have the Government learned nothing just three years on from Grenfell? Oversight, regulation and rules protect lives.

Kevin Hollinrake (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mike Amesbury: In a moment.

In the spirit of cross-party co-operation, I happily quote the hon. Member for Worthing West (Sir Peter Bottomley), who strongly advised the Prime Minister to get a “better housing adviser”. I find it difficult to disagree. Permitted development has been disastrous for our towns and cities since its introduction by the coalition Government in 2013 and things are about to get a whole lot worse. That is not me saying that—it comes from the Government's own advisers. In fact, on the day that the Secretary of State laid two of the three statutory instruments that we have prayed against, his own commission's review of permitted development was published—and it was damning.

The review found that only 22% of permitted development dwellings met the Government's own space standards, fewer than 4% had access to a private amenity space and a vast majority had only single-aspect windows. These are not beautiful homes—in the words of another Government commission report—these are the slums of now, the slums of the future.

The Royal Institute of British Architects president, Alan Jones, put it like this:

“The arrogance and lack of understanding is breathtaking.”

It is not just RIBA that thinks the extensions of permitted development are a bad idea; they are opposed by the Royal Town Planning Institute, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, the Chartered Institute of Building, the Chartered Institute of Housing, the Town and Country Planning Association and many more. Aside from some developers looking to make a quick buck out of shoddy housing, who supports these pieces of legislation?

With a slight nod to the fact that windows for people in flats might be a step forward, all three SIs allow councils to challenge developers if there is inadequate lighting provision.

Kevin Hollinrake: I am surprised at the hon. Gentleman's tone. He and I got on very well as co-members of the Select Committee, and he will know from his experience on that Committee that the problems with Grenfell, which he lays at the Government's door, were decades old in the building regulations system. This is not something he can lay at the door of this Government—there were decades of failure. The issue in relation to the £40 million Westferry windfall for the developer is factually incorrect; there would simply have been a reduction in the amount of affordable housing on that development. On the space standards, as the hon. Gentleman will be aware, today the Government set out clearly that space standards will be included in future permitted development rights.

Mike Amesbury: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. In terms of Grenfell, I referred to the draft building safety Bill and gateway 1. Certainly in terms of planning permitted development, there is an issue there—it is an issue that we will undoubtedly discuss beyond the debate today. With regard to the concession to the rebels, and the fact that we have laid the motions today, of course we welcome baby steps; finally, there is a concession that actually people deserve space as well as windows. That is a step forward, undoubtedly, but major problems remain with permitted development.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I declare an interest, as chair of the all-party parliamentary group for healthy homes and buildings. We carried out an inquiry two years ago and made recommendations. The hon. Gentleman is talking about the importance of homes having the heating, quality of life and lighting correct, and having environmental amenities throughout. A home is not just four walls; it is much more than that. Does he agree that that has to be part of what the Government put forward?

Mike Amesbury: I wholeheartedly agree with those powerful and pertinent points.

The quality of housing—the minimum standards required from Government—should be guided by a moral compass, one that puts health and wellbeing at the heart of housing provision, rather than the profit margins of some of the more unscrupulous developers in our country. Rather than bypassing local residents and councils, why not resource and fund local planning authorities properly and maximise that civic voice to create healthy communities and housing that people are proud to call their home? Ministers wax lyrical about the need for more affordable housing, yet this massive

extension of permitted development bypasses the requirement for section 106 contributions and in many cases community infrastructure levy payments too, robbing communities of decent affordable housing and local infrastructure. The Conservative-led Local Government Association estimates that 3,500 affordable homes have been lost due to the current regime of permitted development. This centralisation of our planning system is a Stalinist power grab, bypassing local democracy and creating a developers' charter, while vandalising the character of our villages, towns and cities, hollowing out our high streets, flattening industrial estates and concreting over green space. It is ideological claptrap with bells on. I worry that the Secretary of State is spending far too much time with his Russian oligarch friends—*Private Eye* is even referring to him as “Moscow Bob”.

If these statutory instruments are passed today, when more of these unplanned monstrosities start to appear in our communities, residents will no longer be able to voice their concerns to local councillors, their MPs or the local planning departments.

John Penrose (Weston-super-Mare) (Con): On the point about local democracy, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be as pleased as me to note that the plans for local development codes and local style codes, which have to be drafted by local councils—set by them, with local standards—ensure a valid local voice; it is just being one in advance, rather than retrospectively. Surely he must accept that his points about a lack of local democracy are without foundation.

Mike Amesbury: Labour and Conservative councillors, parties of all political persuasions, are expressing major concerns about this. The Tory shires are on the march about it. It is a fundamental attack on democracy. It hands too much power to unscrupulous developers—that is a fact and we will consistently challenge on it. When MPs vote on these measures today, I know that Katya, Abbey and many thousands more who desperately need decent, safe and affordable homes will be looking at us all to know which side we are on. A vote to annul these SIs and to stop this chaotic vandalism coming to a town or city near you is a vote to stop this power grab from our local communities, which will create a bad developers' charter.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): Order. A number of colleagues want to get in on this debate. I will start by calling two speakers with a limit of five limits and then reduce the limit to four minutes in an attempt to get as many people in as possible.

5.24 pm

Sir Peter Bottomley (Worthing West) (Con): I have an email from someone from a constituency outside my own who bought a flat 13 years ago and has received a letter saying that two more storeys are going to be put on top. He is living in a block of 15, and it is going to be a block of 25, with apparently no consideration for the leaseholders whatever.

If I were part of a Government, rather than just a supporter, who said they were for the many, not the few, how could they possibly put a four-year blight on every

leaseholder in virtually every one of the 1.2 million flats? It is possible for more homes to be built in four years' time under a statutory instrument that has “coronavirus” in it, as though it will have a short-term impact on the construction industry. It will not.

During the time of my speech, I invite the Secretary of State—through his colleague the Minister for Housing my right hon. Friend the Member for Tamworth (Christopher Pincher), I invited him to Worthing to see how he could invent more land between the South Downs and the sea—and the Minister to say why the impact assessment does not have a section on leaseholders. The Government consulted on that two years ago and then went in for technical consultations with the public and the industry, but not with the leaseholders. Did they invite the all-party parliamentary group on leasehold and commonhold reform, led by the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Justin Madders), me and the Liberal Democrat, the right hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton (Ed Davey)? No. Could they have done? Yes. Did they not think of it or did they forget about it?

In St Andrews Gardens in Tarring in my constituency, the tallest building is the church and the second tallest is a 1960s block that should not have been built, which is three storeys high—higher than any other house. An application to put an extra floor on it a year ago was turned down flat by the council, and flatter by the inspector. I ask the Secretary of State, through the Minister and you, Madam Deputy Speaker, to look at what the inspector said and then write to me to say: if the developer, which has had their second application turned down, appeals again, the inspector has the same power to say that it is totally unsuitable for the neighbourhood.

My point, really, is this. Let us not be concerned about leaseholder blocks that are owned by the leaseholders—they are freeholders, as I am in my small block in Worthing. Let us take the ones that are not. If the leaseholders want to form a recognised tenants association—another place where the Government can make an improvement—any freeholder or their agent should recognise that. The property baron William Astor, with his Long Harbour, spent years and years resisting this. The Tchenguiz interest in housing, which has done things that many would describe as crooked and others would describe additionally as improper, has been given a gift of tens of millions—potentially billions—of pounds, and who is paying? The leaseholders. Absolutely nobody else can.

The occupants of 6 million lease-rented homes own nothing except the responsibility to pay for cladding removal and other things—although I am grateful for the help that the Government are giving on that. Any benefits go to the landlord and freeholder; none go to the ordinary people who are probably on their first home. We can talk about the people whose homes are blighted by cladding, but think what it is like for those who have a home blighted in a block where they can be pretty sure the developer will not get around to getting the permission or doing the building for five or six years, and they cannot sell until the work has been done.

How did this happen? If I were on the Front Bench, my face would be red, and I would stand up at the end of this debate and say, “We apologise—we got it wrong.” The Town and Country Planning (Permitted Development and Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020 is one of the worst things that have got through Government in my time here, which has

[Sir Peter Bottomley]

been quite long. I say to the Government: revoke it. Even if they do not lose the vote today, they should put in a provision so that, if there is to be an application, a condition is that the freeholder landlord gives the freehold to the leaseholders, and they can decide whether to go for the application. The Government could also add a requirement that means that, in going to the local authority for pre-approval, the landlord shows what they are prepared to give to the leaseholders whose lives will be blighted, at least during the time of uncertainty and building.

This House should rise up and say to the Government, “Come with us. If not, we are going to make you, if not today, then in the days and weeks to come.” Six million households and 10 million voters are losing a great deal of money and who gains? It is not that many homes, but it is an incredible amount of money for the people the Government are trying to make an improvement for in the leasehold reforms.

Have the Law Commission reports been enacted? Not yet, and they need to be. How about getting the property tribunal to work properly? How about getting the Leasehold Advisory Service to work in the interests of leaseholders? We need to do better, and I ask the Government to join me in doing it.

5.29 pm

Mr Clive Betts (Sheffield South East) (Lab): The planning system is there so that individuals and organisations can develop sites and buildings appropriately. It is also there to protect the community from inappropriate development. Permitted development rights confer rights on some individuals but take away rights from others to have their say on developments. They take away community rights to object and to have an application turned down. That is a very important and serious issue that we all ought to be addressing.

I want to talk about space standards. Shortly after the Government produced their independent review of conversions under permitted development, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Weaver Vale (Mike Amesbury) drew attention, I asked the Prime Minister at Prime Minister’s questions whether it was reasonable that flats of 16 square metres were allowed to be built, which was 1 square metre larger than the footprint of his car. Clearly, it is not a reasonable size for properties. The Prime Minister’s response to my question, which was welcome, was that the Government will

“give people the space they need to live and grow in the homes that we will build.”—[*Official Report*, 22 July 2020; Vol. 678, c. 2149.]

Given that response, I wrote to the Housing Minister on behalf of the Select Committee on 4 August to ask what he was doing to put the Prime Minister’s commitment into effect. I have not had a reply to that letter. I thought the Minister had either forgotten about it or was waiting to reveal a significant change of policy. It appears that it is the latter. At least on that issue, we now have some recognition that local authorities can take into account the issue of space standards, along with the right to light and the impact on the wider environment from permitted development applications. That is welcome, because properties of 16 square metres or even smaller are nonsensical and not fit in the modern age for anyone to live in.

In terms of section 106, this is a serious matter. If the Government are seriously going to allow more development without 106 commitments, that will simply mean we have fewer affordable rented homes built, because the reality today is that the majority of affordable rented homes come through 106 commitments. That will have a significant impact on communities up and down the country. Why are the Government excluding permitted development from that obligation? I have not seen any justification for it. That is what happens, and it is important, so we ought to take account of it.

The Select Committee produced a report in 2019 on the future of the high street, “High streets and town centres in 2030”, which we are going to update in the light of the covid situation. We looked at permitted development. There are some odd properties that had been for retail use and can be converted for residential use perfectly reasonably, and those should be encouraged and helped. That can be done through the planning system now, if the development is appropriate. The problem is that some of our high streets and town and city centres need more radical reconstruction. They need to be redeveloped significantly and cleared. That is why we called for improved compulsory purchase order powers for councils in our report. However, we can find in a couple of years’ time that the local plan proposing the clearance of a derelict and underused retail area is made more difficult to construct and implement, because it seeks to get a CPO and demolish derelict retail properties that have just been made into residential homes. Trying to put together rights to convert—and properly convert—in the light of wider local planning situations simply is not taken account of.

Our 2019 report therefore said:

“The Government should suspend any further extension of PDRs, pending an evaluation of their impact on the high street.”

Other organisations have gone further. The Town and Country Planning Association, the Royal Town Planning Institute, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, the Royal Institute of British Architects, and the Chartered Institute of Housing have all called for an impact assessment of the PDRs that have been allowed and changed over the last few years and those proposed for the future. Indeed, the Select Committee first called for an impact assessment back in 2012. If the Secretary of State and the Minister believe there are just benefits and no disbenefits from expanding PDRs, why will they not commit now to do a full impact assessment of the changes made previously and the changes proposed now?

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): Order. We are now moving to a four-minute time limit.

5.35 pm

Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con): I believe in liberalising planning regulations in the sense that I want more affordable housing for my constituents in Harlow, where we do have some exemplary PDR conversions—Edinburgh House has been developed to an extremely high standard—but, as the House will know, Harlow has paid a high price for the prior extension of PDRs. Office blocks never intended for residential dwellings have been bought up on the cheap by developers and converted rapidly into rabbit-hutch housing.

Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that quality is just as important as quantity?

Robert Halfon: My hon. Friend is right, and that is the kernel of my argument today. What has happened is that the homes, some of them smaller than my office in the House of Commons, and the relatively inexpensive rent charged by property management companies have proved an attractive and lucrative model for social housing, and, I am sorry to say, it is predominantly London's Labour borough councils that have seen this as an opportunity for what can be described as social cleansing: moving vulnerable residents from their own boroughs into our town of Harlow.

The redevelopment of Terminus House in particular is a blight on our town centre. Antisocial behaviour has sky-rocketed. Essex police have attended 238 recorded incidents at or near the site. Another office block, Templefields, has been converted in an isolated part of town on an industrial estate with no proper transport links or amenities for residents.

The crucial issue is how we avoid this in the future. I have had long meetings with the Minister and have been reassured that today's extension of PDRs, allowing for additional storeys to be built on top of purpose-built flats, will not have the same consequences for my constituency, particularly because the Government have announced that they are putting a stop to matchbox houses. All new homes developed under PDRs must meet the nationally prescribed space standard. A one-bedroom apartment will need to be a minimum of 37 square metres.

Andrew Griffith (Arundel and South Downs) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is important that the 300,000 dwellings per year target is indeed delivered, and that, as part of that, some innovation in the planning system, with the right controls, is needed? Does he also agree that we would not be in such a challenging situation if it were not for the failure of the Mayor of London to deliver housing in the centre of London, and our businesses are paying a terrible price for the failure to make London a proper live-work city?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): Order. We need interventions to be short. Lots of Members want to speak, and they will not be able to do so if there are lots of interventions, and long ones.

Robert Halfon: I go back to my previous argument: we need quality housing. We need a lighter planning regime, because I want affordable houses for my constituents, but I want them in the right place. I therefore welcome what the Secretary of State said to me in our meeting yesterday: the introduction of a prior approvals process for these new rights, and local planning authorities and the community will now have a say over any new redevelopment, with the ability to object to plans. Local authorities can also now consider the external appearance of the building and the development's impact on transport and neighbouring premises, as well as the provision of adequate natural light.

I understand—I would welcome the Minister's confirmation of this—that a time-limited PDR allowing for the conversion of warehouses and buildings on industrial estates lapses today and that the Government

will not be renewing this right. It was noted by the shadow Minister that the rights introduced today are so limited that this is just to deliver around 800 homes per year.

On the basis that the Secretary of State is putting an end to rabbit-hutch housing and creating a level playing field by prohibiting unwanted through-the-back-door developments, I will support the Government. However, as I have said previously to my right hon. Friend the Minister, I ask that the Government hold to account those councils that are socially cleansing their boroughs by moving people to strange areas without any links to their families and friends. If councils must make out-of-area placements, they should contribute financially to the receiving councils' associated costs, so that Harlow does not bear the brunt financially.

Extended PDRs have caused irreparable damage to Harlow's landscape, social cohesion and reputation. There are unintended consequences to the drain on our local resources, which is why I strongly welcome the Secretary of State's moves. I note that we will be able to repair some of the damage because of our £25 million bid for the Government towns fund, and I very much welcome the £1 million of accelerated funding for Harlow, announced last week, to regenerate our town centre and make sure that what has gone wrong in the past can never happen again.

5.41 pm

John Penrose (Weston-super-Mare) (Con): I follow that excellent speech by my right hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Robert Halfon) by saying that I am worried that the tone and tenor of this debate have assumed that quantity and quality cannot come together. We should put that false dichotomy aside, because it is perfectly possible. We should take together not just the three statutory instruments before the House but the whole raft of the Government's planning reform proposals, because that is what we should get and what I expect we will see.

I say all that because, as I mentioned in an intervention, the development codes will mean that we end up with good-looking local development that is locally appropriate, uses local styles and materials and is set by local councillors and local councils, meaning that local democratic voices are properly heard. Taken together with space standards that were reaffirmed today, that means we can have good-looking and high-quality housing while at the same time opening the floodgates to a far higher overall rate of housing construction than we have ever managed under any Government of any particular political persuasion for decades and decades in this country.

Ultimately, the quantity of new housing, whether to buy or to rent, is what will dictate, over the medium term, the affordability of housing to buy or to rent. That is the long-term answer. The fundamental problem we have had in this country over decades is that we just have not been building enough homes of any kind of tenure. That is what has driven up housing costs to their current unaffordable levels.

I welcome the total package of reforms, of which the three SIs form part, simply because it resolves this dichotomy—this false choice—between quantity and quality. However, I make one plea. A number of us—many Members from all parties, I suspect—will be getting all sorts of concerned emails from residents and councillors alike who are worried about what someone colourfully

[John Penrose]

called the mutant algorithm that is being used to calculate the number of homes that need to be built in each local authority area. I have written to the Housing Minister with a suggestion about how we might be able to resolve this important local democratic concern: if we can allow large numbers of permitted development rights for homes built under high-quality development codes in town and city centres right the way across the country, we should allow the permissions that have thus been created and the homes that will therefore be built to count against the housing targets.

The average height of buildings in a town such as Weston-super-Mare, in my constituency, is roughly two storeys. If we allow them to go up to four storeys, it will take years of steady construction and conversion to get there. We will end up with good-looking local terraces, crescents and mews homes and mansion blocks, every bit as good as the best in any part of this country, but they will have local character and, more importantly, we can create thousands and thousands of new homes. It makes no sense not to allow a proportion of those thousands and thousands of new homes to be set against the new housing targets. With that will come far greater local democratic acceptance of the overall package, including some of the concerns about the overall housing-build rate.

5.44 pm

Kim Johnson (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab): When I raised concerns about the permitted development rights at Prime Minister's questions a couple of weeks ago, the Prime Minister waved away my concerns with the promise that they would result in "beautiful" houses on brownfield sites for young people. We do not have to look far from Westminster to find that the opposite is true. In Balham, a developer has turned a two-storey commercial building on an industrial estate into 26 flats measuring as little as 18 square metres. That is smaller by more than 3 square metres than a typical Premier Inn hotel room. Four of the flats have no windows, just a skylight. All of the flats fall far short of the national space standards that say that the minimum floor area for a new one-bedroom, one-person home, including conversions, is 37 square metres, and for a one-bedroom, two-person home it is 50 square metres. That is not the only example. Are they really the beautiful homes that the Prime Minister said the rights would bring: no windows, no outdoor space, no room to swing the No.10 cat let alone to bring up a family?

Removing the requirement for planning permission to convert offices into residential properties will produce uninhabitable rabbit hutches. In the five years from 2013 to 2018, the number of such living spaces, which are below the minimum recommended size, has increased five times. The UK can now claim the dubious title of having the smallest rooms and the second smallest homes to be found across all of Europe, with some micro-developments as small as a single garage at 8.3 square metres, and others without windows or ventilation.

Research conducted by University College London and the University of Liverpool found that only 22% of dwellings created through permitted development met the nationally described space standards, compared with 73% of units created with full planning permission. Even the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local

Government's own report just months ago acknowledged that there were considerable negative differences in space standard, adequacy of natural light into homes, and access to amenity space, and that the immediate locations of homes built under permitted development are less likely to meet basic minimum requirements than those that went through the existing planning process.

My city, Liverpool, is a university city. It is home to four universities, three of which are in my constituency, and to more than 60,000 students, many of whom live out in the community in their second and third years. There is great demand in some parts of Liverpool, Riverside for student homes, and the local planning lists are dominated by requests for extensions to allow houses to be registered as homes in multiple occupation to house students.

My fear and the fear of Liverpool city councillors is that permitted rights to allow two-storey-high extensions on what are primarily terraced houses as well as extensions to the side and rear will create poor-quality housing for the occupants, as well as overcrowding and the environmental problems created by more people living there than the houses were originally designed for. It may give a windfall to landlords and developers, but it will distort the housing market by pricing out local people and families. Yes, Liverpool desperately needs new homes for 30,000-plus people on the waiting list, but the answer is to invest in good-quality homes that are genuinely affordable. I am proud that Liverpool City Council is building its first tranche of council housing in more than 30 years.

Back in 2015, this Government promised 200,000 affordable starter homes for young people. They have built none. Shoeboxes are not the answer. What we need and what the people of this country deserve are 100,000 genuinely affordable, decent quality homes built every year. Permitted development rights will undermine that.

5.48 pm

Theresa Villiers (Chipping Barnet) (Con): The scrutiny provided by the local planning process is a core part of our democracy and a vital means for people to have a say over their local environment. The process should never be disappplied by permitted development rights unless proper safeguards are in place. I recognise the need for new homes. Indeed, the borough of Barnet, where I live and part of which I represent, has been delivering more new homes than almost any other London borough, but the Government's rush to build must not come at the expense of our environment, or at the expense of the quality of homes produced.

I accept and welcome that Ministers have listened to the concerns that I and others have put to them strongly about these statutory instruments. I very much welcome the concession that legislation will be brought forward to ensure that space requirements apply to homes created under PD rights. This is much needed, as are the provisions on entitlement to natural light. It is also a relief that the new right to add two storeys will be subject to a prior approval process that requires neighbours to be notified and allowed to object.

The new process does not cut out the council scrutiny process altogether, but I want to ask the Minister whether the provisions in paragraph 3.2 of condition AA.2 on the external appearance of upwards extension will allow prior approval to be denied where bulk and massing

mean that the plans are inconsistent with the character of the surrounding neighbourhood. That is a crucial protection. I also hope the Minister will confirm that people who are allowed to add two storeys under these provisions cannot turn them into a separate dwelling without planning permission. I also urge him to find a solution for leaseholders, a need that was highlighted by my hon. Friend the Member for Worthing West (Sir Peter Bottomley).

With the concessions that Ministers have made, I am sure many of us will feel comfortable abstaining rather than backing the Opposition motion today, but we also want to see real change in relation to other planning reforms, particularly the housing algorithm. The new algorithm would more than double the housing target in my constituency and require the equivalent of a small new city somehow to be crammed into outer London. That would see the suburbs change forever. There is simply no way the algorithm's numbers would be achievable without the major urbanisation of the suburbs, and in the covid era, when the importance of homes with gardens and space to breathe has become ever more apparent, do the Government really want to be cramming East Berlin-style tower blocks into thousands of neighbourhoods across the country? We do not want future generations to look back on this era in the same way that we look at the architectural disasters of the '60s, which left many people living in poor-quality homes in blighted communities. So today I am asking the Government to act in the way they have on the statutory instruments, to listen to the concerns, and to drop their housing algorithm in the same way as they dropped their A-level one.

5.52 pm

Matt Western (Warwick and Leamington) (Lab): I rise to oppose these plans. What have we learned since the war? When we think back to the new towns developed in Hertfordshire, Essex and elsewhere, and the great planning that went into them, we realise that we really did some fantastic stuff. These statutory instruments would remove the ability of people in Warwick and Leamington and across the country to have their say in how their neighbourhood is being developed—we have seen a degree of that over the past 10 years—and instead hand over power to the big housing developers while communities and councils are emasculated. Shelter, the Local Government Association, Crisis, the Campaign to Protect Rural England, the Royal Institute of British Architects and the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors are among the bodies to have expressed serious misgivings about these changes.

SIs 632 and 755 have been spoken about around the Chamber, so I will not dwell on them. It is actually SI 756 that most concerns me. Developers will be able to demolish housing and offices and rebuild them as denser and taller blocks of flats—as tall as six storeys and containing up to 60 or 70 flats—without making a full planning application. We already know that the previous permitted development regulations, which allow for the conversion of empty office blocks into new homes, have led to modern-day slums. This was forcefully exposed by BBC "Panorama" earlier this year, and the Government's own report has concluded that

"permitted development conversions do seem to create worse-quality residential environments than planning permission conversions in relation to a number of factors widely linked to the health, well-being and quality of life of future occupiers."

There is also a lack of control over where the homes are placed. Naturally, many previous PDR developments have ended up on industrial estates and other unsuitable places. This leaves residents without essentials such as access to public transport, local services, shops and amenities. Whatever happened to our communities and town planning? It beggars belief, therefore, that the Government are seeking to expand these rights at the cost of the most vulnerable members of our society and our communities, who will end up living in these appalling homes. It is the developers who are gaining significantly. I think about the multimillionaires and billionaires who have made so much money out of development in south Warwickshire, south of Warwick and Leamington, but they have provided no amenities or facilities there.

One of the most serious problems running through all the statutory instruments is that they allow developers to avoid obligations to build affordable housing. Last year, just 6,300 new social homes were built in England. When sales and demolitions are accounted for, we lost more than 17,000 social homes over the course of last year. We have had only 21 new social rented council homes built in Warwick district since 2010—and we wonder why we have a housing crisis. Section 106 obligations are now the main way to get new social rented homes built. According to the most recent year's stats, 10 times as many social rented homes were built through section 106 as were built with money from Government grants. These SIs mean that developers are not obliged to contribute to affordable housing through section 106.

Instead, the Government must make building social rented council homes their No. 1 priority. Look at places such as Goldsmith Street in Norwich: built under a Labour council, it shows us what social rented housing can be—beautiful, well designed and environmentally friendly; reminiscent of the great developments in the post-war period. We know that building social rented homes is popular: 268,000 people have signed George Clarke's petition to build 100,000 council homes a year for the next 30 years.

These statutory instruments will strip away power from local communities in favour of big housing developers. They will lead to poor-quality unaffordable homes. I am afraid that these changes are a foretaste of the full reforms proposed in the planning White Paper. They are a developers' charter, giving developers sweeping power to build poor-quality homes and, importantly, avoid commitments to build truly affordable social rented homes.

5.56 pm

Apsana Begum (Poplar and Limehouse) (Lab): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for calling me to speak in this important debate, secured by my Front-Bench colleagues.

As others have laid out, the regulations have been subject to widespread criticism. The House of Lords Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee raised concerns that they would result in a lighter-touch prior approval process and that the changes could lead to the construction of low-quality housing. In fact, there has been report after report, piece after piece of evidence, in that regard. Even the Government's own research, published in July, shows that permitted development rights lead to lower-quality development, worrying impacts on space and overcrowding. It noted that only 22.1% of dwelling

[Apsana Begum]

units created in this way would meet the nationally prescribed space standards, compared with 73.4% of units created through full planning permission. Furthermore, in January, the Local Government Association found that thousands of affordable homes had been lost through permitted development rights. It called for permitted development rules to be scrapped and for local communities to have a vital say on new developments in their area.

It is obvious that the consequence of removing the requirement for planning permission results in the removal of the requirement for affordable housing at the worst possible time—all in the name of the Government's planning reforms, which have already been aptly described as a developers' charter. Many are concerned about the watering down of what some perceive to be already limited requirements for developers to build affordable housing, known as section 106 requirements. The housing and homelessness charity Shelter points out that the majority of social homes being built now are being built under those requirements and warns that we desperately need to build more social homes, not to put the already pitiful trickle at risk.

What the Government call red tape is what housing experts recognise as important protections against unsafe and low-quality housing. Will the Minister explain why he has seen fit to pursue measures, such as the regulations before us today, that are likely to result in poorer-quality housing and a reduction in affordable housing?

It is no surprise that the planning reforms were announced just weeks after the controversy surrounding the Westferry Printworks development in my constituency, which many saw as further evidence that the Government are more interested in serving billionaires than serving the interests of local people. Tax haven-using Northern & Shell's ongoing clash with Tower Hamlets Council has shown that the system is not fit for purpose and that we need more transparency and accountability in planning processes, not the deregulation that the measures today represent.

Although approval for the Westferry Printworks development has been withdrawn, I understand the case remains live and is to be decided soon. Will the Minister commit to publishing viability assessments in future relevant cases where affordable housing and site values are contested? Will he commit to do so for the Westferry Printworks development before the case is decided by another Minister, and confirm that he will not simply let companies do their own viability assessments, untested?

Local people really need assurances. Many people in Poplar and Limehouse cannot understand why luxury development after luxury development continues to pop up, given the local housing crisis and the fact that the borough is so overcrowded and densely populated. It is utterly incomprehensible that, at this juncture, the Government are further empowering developers at the expense of local people.

When will the Government ensure that developers make their buildings safe, given that there are still 300 high-rise residential and publicly owned buildings with unsafe cladding, including some in my borough, and do not offload costs unfairly on to residents and leaseholders? Perhaps the Minister can explain how on earth recent history has led to the decision that further deregulation of the housing sector is needed, along with

less scrutiny of developers. I would also like the Minister to explain to me how these regulations will impact on the BAME community in particular.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): Order. I need to ask the hon. Lady to bring her remarks to a close now, I am afraid.

6 pm

Siobhain McDonagh (Mitcham and Morden) (Lab): I invite all Members, especially the Ministers, to come and have a look at an example of permitted development that is probably the worst and most shocking that I have ever seen over my 40 years working in housing and then as an MP. It is a warehouse in the middle of an industrial estate, where the neighbour is a tip yard, a skip lorry site or a factory that processes food. It is a warehouse converted into 86 flats in the middle of one of south London's busiest industrial estates—far from the train, far from the buses and nowhere near a school. These flats were never intended for people who had an alternative. These flats were always intended for homeless families as temporary accommodation, and they were intended as bait for desperate councils. I say to the right hon. Member for Harlow (Robert Halfon), whom I greatly admire, that councils are not housing people in these places because they want to cleanse them; they are doing it because they are desperate and they have nowhere else to put people.

If Ministers would like to see permitted development at its worst, they should come with me to Connect House. They should come and see the flats, which are so small that babies cannot learn to walk because they simply do not have the space, and children have nowhere to play because outside is the car park of the factory opposite. Ministers should come and watch the juggernauts run up and down the main streets of this industrial estate. If they have children, they would be terrified at the prospect of their children being on that street, and it is no different for any of the families forced to live in Connect House. The developers will tell them, "We were allowed to do this, and therefore it must be okay." They should come and have a look, and see if they think that it is okay.

It does not matter what planning regime Ministers have, for if they do not have a view about how people live and where they should live, it is not going to work. I am not a nimby, but I would like to suggest to Ministers that they start considering building on the un-green green belt. I know it is easy for a Back Bencher to say that, because we are not going to take the abuse that Ministers will take, but there are plans where they could build up to 1 million new homes on old green-belt land, close to London train stations, to give people the real opportunity of a home to buy or a home to rent.

The only way this Government or any Government will ever meet the target of 300,000 homes is by ensuring that at least half of them are built by councils and housing associations. We have not met that target since 1964, when half were social housing units. That is not just my rabid, Labour view, but the view of Sir John Armitt, chair of the National Infrastructure Commission. Why would the private sector build 300,000 homes when it cannot sell them and when property values have

fallen? If the Ministers want to see the numbers, they have to intervene, and if they intervene, it has to be with homes they would be willing to live in.

6.4 pm

Kevin Hollinrake (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): I draw the House's attention to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests.

The hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Siobhain McDonagh) made some very fair points on space standards that we looked at in the Select Committee when I was a member. She will be aware that the Government have brought forward these new proposals to make sure that there are space standards in permitted developments. That is why I support the proposals in principle, although there are one or two points of detail that I would like to raise.

The hon. Lady painted one side of the picture, but I have seen many developments in my constituency and just outside it that are conversions of redundant office buildings that are not being used any more into perfectly adequate, nice apartment blocks for young first-time buyers. Clearly there is a lot of merit behind permitted development, which has delivered 60,000 homes in the past few years in terms of additional stock. That is partly how this Government have doubled housing delivery since the lows of 2009. There is a lot to commend in the Government's action on this.

Statutory Instrument No. 755 seems to say that any two-storey property, pretty much anywhere in the country—there is no geographic restriction, as I understand it—be it a three-bed semi in Thirsk, Malton, Harrogate or wherever else, can have two more storeys put on top of it as long as it is no more than 3.5 metres higher than the neighbouring property. I worry about the street scene in that situation. It is the same for terraced houses as well. It may be appropriate in some parts of London where it would not impact adversely on the local street scene, but I wonder whether it would be appropriate in some other parts of the country. I urge Ministers to consider whether more controls should be put in place in relation to certain parts of the country where it would not be appropriate.

Similarly, paragraph AB.2 allows a commercial property such as a takeaway or shop of two storeys to have two more storeys put on top of it, with, again, the 3.5 metre height restriction. Again, that could impact the street scene in certain parts of our towns, cities and suburbs. Another point is that lot of these kinds of properties are owned in self-invested personal pensions. They are commercial properties. Ministers will be aware, as I have raised this on a number of occasions, that residential property, even a rented property, cannot be put as a separate dwelling on top of a commercial property if it is owned in a personal pension and held in a pension wrapper, which is restricting supply in many towns and cities. We should change that to allow it to be the case as long as the properties were delivered for social rent at half market value to encourage development of such properties on their upper floors. If I look down the streets in Thirsk, I will see lots of instances where this is the case. This is a real opportunity to deliver more housing above shops in our city centres.

On the other planning reforms that are being brought forward, I very much support the zoning element. I do worry about some of the underlying assumptions, though,

which are driving the high number of properties in certain locations with low affordability, and therefore expensive house prices. I am not convinced that simply building lots of houses in expensive areas is going to lower prices to the degree that Ministers obviously want.

6.8 pm

Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): This set of SIs is an answer to a massively important question about how we build more homes that are fit for communities, but the answer is blindingly obviously the wrong one. There is no evidence that planning logjams such as those to which the SIs are meant to be a solution are the problem. Some 40% of homes with planning permission over the past 10 years have not been built.

We need to look instead at some of the other reasons we are not building the houses that we need. It is about, for example, the lack of funding for local authorities—the lack of understanding that we need to directly intervene through council housing and social rented housing to provide the homes that we need. It is also about the fact that the price of land is so utterly prohibitive. It would be much more sensible in this time of rapid and urgent legislation to tackle the Land Compensation Act 1961 and reduce the value of land as a whole so that we get more houses built that are affordable.

The relaxation of permitted development rights has, as we heard from the hon. Member for Weaver Vale (Mike Amesbury), already reduced quality. The Government's own commission reported that seven out of 10 buildings built under the existing rights lacked adequate light and ventilation, and were, as the hon. Gentleman said, creating the slums of tomorrow.

That was not always the way the Conservative party approached social rented housing, by the way. Harold Macmillan, when housing Minister, did tremendous work. He was the one behind the Parker Morris standard: really good quality council houses, with lots of good space around them. Council houses can be good houses, and that is what they need to be. *[Interruption.]* If I have got something wrong there, I will give way.

Mr Betts: Macmillan homes, built after the Bevan homes in the 1950s, were actually built to smaller space standards. I know that because I was actually brought up in one.

Tim Farron: I am delighted to take the correction. And there was me praising a Conservative! What Macmillan did do was build numbers, and the estates of the '50s were certainly better than the estates of the '60s, but I do indeed stand corrected.

The biggest concern I think many of us will have is the undermining of democracy: communities having what will be done to them dictated to them, without their having the ability to contradict or to say otherwise. If you are somebody who represents two national parks, the lakes and the dales, and the wonderful communities within them—Grange, Kendal and others—you will be particularly worried about what that means. We are not nimby, by the way.

Andrew Griffith: As someone who also represents an area of national beauty, may I ask where, if we do not build houses in brownfield sites where dwellings already are, the hon. Gentleman thinks we will build those homes?

Tim Farron: I am grateful for the intervention, because I am about to talk about that.

[Tim Farron]

The key point is simply this. South Lakeland District Council, a Liberal Democrat majority authority, has built well over 1,000 social rented homes. What we are talking about is not saying no to development; we are talking about saying yes to the right kind of development, and being able to have power and community control over where those houses are built and what kind of houses are built. Local control means better quality.

That is what worries me most about not just these proposals today, but the suite of proposals they sit alongside in the White Paper. We need to be able to build the homes we need. It is absolutely infuriating that we have to say yes to private developments of executive homes that we do not need in order to crowbar in a handful of affordables. The average house price in my constituency is £260,000. The average household income is £26,000. It is obvious why we lose a third of our young people. Our communities, our council, our national parks want to be able to build houses, but build the right houses so that there are homes for local people in the lakes, the dales and the rest of the south lakes. The replacement of section 106, as proposed separately by the Government, risks, as has been reported to me by our local housing associations, at least 50% of their developments. That will not do anything to meet the needs of people in my communities.

There is also a particular concern—I will finish with this—that the Government are planning to say that developments of up to 50 units would not have to take any affordables as part of that proposal. I can tell hon. Members that in our communities we very rarely get developments of larger than 50 units. This set of proposals would lead to the removal of any affordable homes being built in the south lakes for the foreseeable future. It seems to me that there are many stakeholders the Government could have listened to when bringing forward these and similar proposals. The only stakeholders they have listened to appear to be the biggest of the developers. They have carved out our communities and caved into the big developers.

6.13 pm

Sir Robert Neill (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con): I refer to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests.

I start by endorsing what was said by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Theresa Villiers). We both represent London suburban seats. I give the Ministers credit for having moved to meet some of our concerns in a number of areas, but I have to say that they have not gone far enough. There is a real problem here and a broad-brush approach does not meet the needs of the particular pressures faced by many London suburbs. I welcome, for example, that we are limiting this to post-1948. That is some protection for the between-the-wars semis and terraces, which are a great feature of much of suburban London and many other cities, but there are still many streets with good-quality post-war developments that could be damaged, as my hon. Friend the Member for Thirsk and Malton (Kevin Hollinrake) said, so we still have further to go. That is why, although I will not oppose these measures, like my right hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet, I cannot join the Government in the Lobby tonight to support them either, because we have concerns.

The big rub will be that we cannot go down the route of linking these measures to the wholly unacceptable growth in the housing requirement, be it through an algorithm or a formula. Bromley is already building to its current requirement and simply cannot take the wholly unrealistic numbers that are proposed. My concern is that diminishing local control will not assist in that.

I was glad to see the reference to Harold Macmillan. I am a great Macmillan fan—after all, he was MP for Bromley for the second half of his career—and he got it right in building 300,000 houses. I gently say to the Secretary of State that Harold did that while respecting the local rights that were provided for in the Housing Act 1949. He did not do it by relaxing development controls; he did it through other means and determination, so this is not the route we have to go down. That is why I think that the extension of permitted development is a false route for us to be taking. It has its place, but it needs careful constraints, and I do not think we have quite achieved that.

I also endorse what my hon. Friend the Member for Worthing West (Sir Peter Bottomley) said about the serious failure—from my point of view, perhaps the most serious—of these SIs, which offer no protection for leaseholders in flats. Constituents of mine in Northpoint, which I have raised in the House on a number of occasions, suffer from having the freehold owned by an offshoot of the Tchenguiz property empire, whose behaviour towards those people has been disgraceful. The idea of enriching them is, I am afraid, simply not something that I can countenance. I cannot support a set of orders that do not yet give adequate protection to leaseholders.

What we really need in Bromley is affordable family housing. That is where the pressure is. People want to move to the London suburbs—they will endure the commute in and out—because they want space for their kids, gardens, and easy accessibility to parks and so forth. The trouble is that these SIs are making it easier to build yet more flatted units, which is not what we need to maintain the proper social mix in outer London suburbs such as ours.

I welcome the fact that the Minister has moved on space standards. I give credit for that, but again there is still a real concern about whether the prior approval regime will be sufficient to maintain high standards, because in both Bromley and Beckenham town centres we have seen too many instances of low-quality development. I have a real problem with the idea of taking a semi-detached house and putting two storeys on top, as a separate, self-contained dwelling. That is creating a separate house effectively, turning it into flats in all but name, which should not be done through a waiver of the permitted development process. There should be a proper planning application for that.

6.17 pm

Matt Rodda (Reading East) (Lab): I want to address my remarks briefly to both the SIs and the wider changes that the Government propose to make to planning policy. I also endorse the concerns raised by the hon. Member for Bromley and Chislehurst (Sir Robert Neill) about some unscrupulous developers.

My first concern is about the proposals to increase the number of houses that can be built in many parts of England, which could lead to a significant growth in unwanted developments on green land, such as the countryside near Woodley and Earley in my constituency.

I should add that, as other Members have pointed out, there is a plentiful supply of brownfield land in many towns and cities, including in the Thames valley, and in Reading there is a great deal of brownfield that could be developed.

The sheer size of the increase in house building numbers in the countryside could cause significant problems for our community, from both the loss of green spaces and the knock-on effects, in terms of increased traffic and pollution, and pressure on schools, doctors' surgeries and other local services. Some of these problems are indeed all too obvious already in Woodley and Earley, where there has been a great deal of development.

Secondly, to make matters worse in the longer term, the Government have announced that they want to deregulate the planning system, making it far easier for developers to build exactly what they like. These SIs include a foretaste of exactly those measures, as my hon. Friend the Member for Warwick and Leamington (Matt Western) mentioned earlier. I am particularly concerned about the measure to allow two-storey redevelopments without planning permission, which my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Kim Johnson) mentioned. Just imagine the likely impact of that on neighbours in terraced streets in Victorian neighbourhoods around the country, where there will be serious concerns about people being overlooked and their whole quality of life turned upside down by unwanted development led by the needs of developers, not local people. Surely that is why we have planning in the first place—to give everybody a fair say and to let local people raise reasonable concerns about planning, not to allow developers to ride roughshod over residents.

Thirdly, in my opinion, the Government are not doing anywhere near enough to encourage the right mix of development, and Berkshire is a prime recipient of that poor mix. There are far too many executive flats and expensive houses, and there is a limited supply of family housing, which has been mentioned by colleagues from across the country. I believe that there should be a major programme of investment in council house building and in other forms of affordable rented properties and homes to buy, and that renters should be protected from the unscrupulous nature of some landlords to ensure proper standards of quality and affordability.

These three areas of policy where the Government are letting the public down amount to a serious failure for residents in Reading and Woodley and, indeed, across the country. I am afraid that the Government are simply heading in the wrong direction, and I urge Ministers to think again.

6.20 pm

Ruth Cadbury (Brentford and Isleworth) (Lab): I rise to oppose these three SIs. The planning system exists specifically to address and balance often conflicting demands: public versus private; local community versus national requirements; environment versus the economy; and financial capital versus human need. Every planning application is judged against clear policies and clear demands, and every planning decision considers quality as well as quantity. It is a transparent and accountable process that enables community involvement. Permitted development rights were introduced to reduce bureaucracy in specific, clearly understood circumstances, but these SIs drive a coach and horses through the normal system of judging and determining a proposed development.

I had 30 years of involvement in the town planning system before being elected to this place, and these instruments give me a terrible sense of *déjà vu*. In 2013, the Government introduced an extension of permitted development rights; then, as now, there was cross-party and cross-sector opposition. Why? Because extending PDRs created, and will create, new slums of substandard housing, over which local planning authorities have little or no control and there is little or no opportunity for community input.

Now the Government have come back for more, ignoring the conclusions of their Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission. Although they have conceded, after a lot of pressure, on minimum light and space standards, there are still major concerns about issues such as neighbour impact, access, parking, play and amenity space, and of course the proposals remove section 106 contributions from larger developments to the community on things such as affordable housing, traffic and transport improvements. As a member of the all-party parliamentary group on leasehold and commonhold reform, I also share the concerns of my Front-Bench colleague, my hon. Friend the Member for Weaver Vale (Mike Amesbury), and of the hon. Member for Worthing West (Sir Peter Bottomley) about the implications for leaseholders.

Where is the evidence that these SIs will deliver more homes? There are 318,000 homes granted planning permission between 2011 and 2018 that remain unbuilt. The Government say that these measures will provide affordable housing for younger people, but there is no evidence that suggests they will. In my west London constituency, even a substandard rabbit hutch would still be affordable only to a young person working on a City of London salary who had a chunky deposit from the bank of mum and dad. As usual, families on UK average and below-average incomes remain invisible to Ministers.

There is, of course, inconsistency between the high-falutin' intentions in the White Paper about sustainability and quality, and what will actually happen when these SIs are implemented. Speculators and owners will be able to use these regulations to avoid all the normal conditions that are to be expected when someone goes through the normal application process, which are there to address the principles of planning that I listed at the start of my speech, and of course they will avoid community engagement.

If the Government think that we are worried unnecessarily about these issues around standards and that it will all be all right, why do this in the first place, when we have a perfectly adequate planning system? We will see yet more homes that are bad for those living in them now, bad for their neighbours, and bad for those living in them in the future.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): I call Rachel Hopkins—I need you to sit down at 6.27 pm.

6.24 pm

Rachel Hopkins (Luton South) (Lab): I will do my best, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I speak as a local councillor in Luton, and I and many of my constituents have considerable concerns about the impact of permitted development rights on housing in Luton, and the Government's proposed changes,

[Rachel Hopkins]

which mean the problems will only proliferate. Whether we are talking about a young person trying to get on the housing ladder, a family on the council housing waiting list, or a renter stuck in an unfit flat, the plans to extend permitted development rights will not improve their situation. These statutory instruments, alongside the planning White Paper consultation, amount to a developers' charter that will give developers increased powers to build poor-quality housing, permanently remove shops from high streets, change the shape of our town centres and build towering extensions, all at odds with the interests of local people.

We do need to increase the quantity of housing, but that should not be at the expense of the quality of housing. I have heard much said about beautiful terraces and crescents. Well, look at what has happened already. I was very taken with the description from my hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Siobhain McDonagh) of children not being able to play. That happens in my constituency. Children kick a ball down the high street because that is the only place they can go. That is not good enough for the children in my constituency, which is why I am here today.

Bypassing planning permission and section 106 obligations means that local communities are unable to object to inappropriate developments, and developments can escape any contribution to the delivery of affordable housing and local infrastructure needs. In fact, the Local Government Association stated this year that 13,500 affordable homes were lost through office conversions. We are in the midst of a housing crisis, and expanding PDRs is not the antidote. Today's motion demonstrates that the Government do not understand how PDRs are impacting on our communities. Reforms are leading to the wrong homes in the wrong places. In Luton, a number of office buildings have been converted into temporary accommodation, housing a variety of individuals with complex needs, within an air quality management area along a four-lane inner ring road. This was allowed only under PDRs, and it will only increase if we can then freely expand by two more storeys, and that is not good enough.

The Government should listen to the report that they commissioned, which stated that

“permitted development conversions do seem to create worse quality residential environments than planning permission conversions in relation to a number of factors widely linked to the health, wellbeing and quality of life of future occupiers.”

If they will not listen to their own report, they should listen to the local councillors on Luton Borough Council, from three parties, who all voted unanimously to oppose PDRs.

6.27 pm

The Minister for Housing (Christopher Pincher): I am grateful for this wide-ranging and interesting debate and to the hon. Members on both sides who have contributed to it. I hope that I shall be able to cover most of the points raised, but I am always happy to discuss the points that colleagues wish to raise beyond the Chamber.

In June, the Prime Minister announced the most radical reforms of our planning system since the second world war, making it easier to build better homes where people want to live. The regulations that we are debating

tonight are important levers in our ambitions to build, build, build as we recover from the economic effects of covid-19. They encourage developers and property owners to see the opportunities that already exist to increase housing delivery by the more imaginative use of existing buildings. That includes building in airspace or demolishing and rebuilding vacant buildings.

During these difficult times, we want to ensure that the construction industry continues to increase the delivery of the new homes that our country so sorely needs. We cannot sit back, as the Opposition seem so fond of doing, and just wait. We have to be fiercely proactive in helping communities and developers to bring forward these much-needed new homes through carefully controlled permitted development rights. Removing red tape from the application process will encourage developers to step up and build out, providing a real boost for the construction industry while also delivering new homes in our existing towns and cities.

The three statutory instruments introduced new permitted development rights to allow the upward extension of buildings, creating new homes and extra living space, and they came into force in August. They also allow for the demolition and rebuild of vacant commercial, light industrial and residential buildings, enabling decaying properties to be redeveloped for a new generation of good-quality housing. This builds on our national planning policy to boost housing density and make effective use of existing land and buildings without the need to use and build on greenfield sites. We encourage these moves toward gentle densification.

Bob Stewart: I am really worried that in my constituency, lessening red tape also lessens approval from the local community, and it is very important that we do not lose the approval of the local community.

Christopher Pincher: Through the prior approval process, communities and local authorities will have rights to say yes or to say no, and I shall say more about that. Existing permitted development rights for the change of use to residential properties already make an important contribution to housing delivery, helping us meet our ambitious plans for 300,000 new homes per year, but we have no intention of renegeing on that ambitious commitment. That is why, in June, we introduced rights to allow an additional two storeys to be added to free-standing residential blocks of flats, and in July we extended that to allow for two storeys to be added to a range of existing buildings in both commercial and residential use to create new homes.

It should be remembered that landlords, including registered providers and local authorities, are able to use that right to add additional homes to their existing blocks, making it easier to increase the supply of affordable housing as well as market-rate homes. That will unlock over 8,000 new homes—not 800 but 8,000—every year: 8,000 new dream homes for their residents, every one of which Labour is planning to oppose. By speeding up and simplifying the planning process, the permitted development rights will green-light schemes that might not otherwise come forward.

However, we must all acknowledge that not all existing buildings will be suitable for conversion, and so, to make it easier to reuse sites occupied by redundant and vacant buildings, we have introduced the new permitted

development right to allow such buildings to be demolished and rebuilt as residential blocks of flats within the existing footprint, and to make better use of the site. The right also allows an additional two storeys to be added to the height of the original building. That right will support regeneration by delivering additional homes and redeveloping vacant, unused and unloved brownfield sites, which blight local communities. New homes, new opportunities, new dreams—hopes that will be dashed if Labour votes against these measures tonight.

Helen Hayes (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab): Will the Minister give way?

Christopher Pincher: I will not give way.

As a further safeguard, the local planning authority must advertise the prior approval applications and consult the owners and occupiers of any block being developed, as well as adjoining premises, to ensure that local voices are heard. We recognise, however, that further local consideration of all these proposals is needed, so the rights require prior approval by the local authority on a number of key planning matters before permitted developments can proceed. That ensures that local amenity effects can be considered. The look and the design of the new additions are also taken into account. The age of the building can be taken into account. In these cases, the rights provide for the local authority to grant or refuse prior approval. Conservation rights, listed buildings and scheduled monuments, areas of outstanding natural beauty and national parks are also excluded from these rights.

Theresa Villiers: My right hon. Friend refers to the right to refuse prior approval on the basis of the external appearance of what is planned. Does that include the right to turn down developments that are considered to be out of character with the surrounding neighbourhood? That is a key pillar of the planning system, and if it were part of the prior approval process, it would provide a lot of reassurance for people who are worried about what is proposed.

Christopher Pincher: Character and aspect are important, and if the proposed building were to be out of character with what is already there, the local authority would be quite within its rights to deny prior approval.

To ensure that homes delivered under permitted development rights are of the quality that people want and expect, the regulations we have introduced include a requirement for adequate natural light to be provided in all habitable homes.

Sir Peter Bottomley: Will the Minister give way?

Christopher Pincher: If my hon. Friend will forgive me, I will carry on, but I am always happy to speak to him beyond the Chamber, as I have done on several occasions in the recent past. If I have time, I will give way to him at the end of my remarks.

While independent research by my Department shows that the vast majority of homes built through permitted development rights are no different in terms of quality from those that come through ordinary planning applications, I have heard powerful representations from Members across the House—including my right hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Robert Halfon) and

my hon. Friend the Member for Finchley and Golders Green (Mike Freer), who have been tireless advocates on this issue—that there are a small number of developers who abuse these rights to build homes that are unacceptably small.

Those bad developers are damaging the credibility of these rights, which are crucial for regenerating brownfield land across our country. That is why I am pleased to confirm today that the Government will stamp this out once and for all. We will legislate so that all homes built through permitted development rights must meet space standards. They will be required to meet the nationally described space standards that the Government have already published, which will mean that permitted development rights can no longer be seen as a route to undercut housing standards. This Government will fight for increased standards and improved quality of design. We want to build more, we want to build better and we want to build beautiful.

We want to support local authorities through this change. That is why we have separately introduced a fee for new homes created under these rights of £334 per unit. The hon. Member for Weaver Vale (Mike Amesbury) knows that, because he sat opposite me when we debated the SI, and he did not say no to it. The money is there to help local authorities.

It seems that Labour has already decided—it has decided to say no. It is turning its back on the people it used to represent. It does not want to build homes for hard-working, aspirational owners and renters because it failed to build them, and it is ashamed to admit that. Look at the failure of Mayor Khan in London. Look at the failure of the Labour Administration in Wales, where in 2018 they built just 57 council homes. Could they do worse? Yes, they could: last year, they built just 12—not even enough to house a Welsh rugby team. That is the failure of the Labour party to build decent homes for people in this country.

We will not follow Labour's route. We will continue to support and build the homes that this country needs with an unwavering commitment and priority. We will build homes for first-time buyers. We will build affordable homes for renters. We will reimagine and rebuild our brownfield sites and town centres. These regulations are an important tool in helping us drive up delivery by simplifying and speeding up the planning system. I call upon the House to reject the negative views of the Labour party and support our determination to build and build and build again for the people of this country, who deserve good homes.

6.39 pm

Mike Amesbury: I thank Members from across the House for all the powerful contributions made today. I am sorry that I cannot acknowledge them all, but I am limited by time.

Although we recognise the Government's last-minute concession on space, resulting from our motion, and the work of campaigners from across the country in the housing and planning sector, the fact remains that this is a developers' charter. It will enrich them, freeholders and overseas investors to the tune of billions. As has been said eloquently by Members throughout the House, it will create vandalism in our streets, communities, villages and high streets; lobbing two storeys on semi-detached houses and on flats—flats clad with flammable

[Mike Amesbury]

materials—is a nonsense. It is not building back better, building back safer—it is a nonsense. As for affordable housing, 6,400 social houses last year—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must resume his seat.

6.40 pm

One and a half hours having elapsed since the commencement of proceedings, the Deputy Speaker put the Questions (Order, 24 September).

The House divided: Ayes 208, Noes 329.

Division No. 122]

[6.40 pm

AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
Abrahams, Debbie
Ali, Rushanara
Ali, Tahir
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Amesbury, Mike
Anderson, Fleur
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Ashworth, Jonathan
Barker, Paula
Beckett, rh Margaret
Begum, Apsana
Benn, rh Hilary
Betts, Mr Clive
Blake, Olivia
Blomfield, Paul
Bottomley, Sir Peter
Brabin, Tracy
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brennan, Kevin
Brown, Ms Lyn
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burgon, Richard
Butler, Dawn
Byrne, Ian
Byrne, rh Liam
Cadbury, Ruth
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Carden, Dan
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Champion, Sarah
Charalambous, Bambos
Clark, Feryal
Cooper, Daisy
Cooper, Rosie
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Coyle, Neil
Creasy, Stella
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Cummins, Judith
Cunningham, Alex
Daby, Janet
Davey, rh Ed
David, Wayne
Davies, Geraint
Davies-Jones, Alex
De Cordova, Marsha
Debbonaire, Thangam

Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Dodds, Anneliese
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Dromey, Jack
Duffield, Rosie
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eagle, Maria
Efford, Clive
Elliott, Julie
Elmore, Chris
Eshalomi, Florence
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Farron, Tim
Farry, Stephen
Fletcher, Colleen
Foxcroft, Vicky
Foy, Mary Kelly
Furniss, Gill
Gardiner, Barry
Gill, Preet Kaur
Glindon, Mary
Green, Kate
Greenwood, Lilian
Greenwood, Margaret
Griffith, Nia
Gwynne, Andrew
Hamilton, Fabian
Hardy, Emma
Harman, rh Ms Harriet
Harris, Carolyn
Hayes, Helen
Hendrick, Sir Mark
Hill, Mike
Hillier, Meg
Hobhouse, Wera
Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hollern, Kate
Hopkins, Rachel
Howarth, rh Sir George
Huq, Dr Rupa
Hussain, Imran
Jardine, Christine
Jarvis, Dan
Johnson, Dame Diana
Johnson, Kim
Jones, Darren
Jones, Gerald
Jones, rh Mr Kevan
Jones, Ruth

Jones, Sarah
Kane, Mike
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz
Khan, Afzal
Kinnock, Stephen
Kyle, Peter
Lammy, rh Mr David
Lavery, Ian
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Lewis, Clive
Lloyd, Tony
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lucas, Caroline
Lynch, Holly
Madders, Justin
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Mahmood, Shabana
Malhotra, Seema
Maskell, Rachael
Matheson, Christian
McCabe, Steve
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonagh, Siobhain
McDonald, Andy
McFadden, rh Mr Pat
McGinn, Conor
McGovern, Alison
McKinnell, Catherine
McMorrin, Anna
Mearns, Ian
Miliband, rh Edward
Mishra, Navendu
Moran, Layla
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, Grahame
Murray, Ian
Murray, James
Nandy, Lisa
Nichols, Charlotte
Norris, Alex
Olney, Sarah
Onwurah, Chi
Oppong-Asare, Abena
Osamor, Kate
Osborne, Kate
Owatemi, Taiwo
Owen, Sarah
Peacock, Stephanie
Pennycook, Matthew
Perkins, Mr Toby
Phillips, Jess

Phillipson, Bridget
Pollard, Luke
Qureshi, Yasmin
Rayner, Angela
Reed, Steve
Rees, Christina
Reeves, Ellie
Reeves, Rachel
Reynolds, Jonathan
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
Rimmer, Ms Marie
Rodda, Matt
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Shah, Naz
Shannon, Jim
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheerman, Mr Barry
Siddiq, Tulip
Slaughter, Andy
Smith, Cat
Smith, Jeff
Smith, Nick
Smyth, Karin
Sobel, Alex
Spellar, rh John
Starmar, rh Keir
Stevens, Jo
Stone, Jamie
Stringer, Graham
Sultana, Zarah
Tami, rh Mark
Tarry, Sam
Thomas, Gareth
Thomas-Symonds, Nick
Thornberry, rh Emily
Timms, rh Stephen
Trickett, Jon
Turner, Karl
Twigg, Derek
Vaz, rh Valerie
Webbe, Claudia
West, Catherine
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitley, Mick
Whittome, Nadia
Wilson, Munira
Winter, Beth
Yasin, Mohammad
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:

**Liz Twist and
Matt Western**

NOES

Adams, Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Ahmad Khan, Imran
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
Baker, Duncan
Baker, Mr Steve
Baldwin, Harriett
Barclay, rh Steve
Baron, Mr John
Baynes, Simon
Bell, Aaron
Benton, Scott
Beresford, Sir Paul
Berry, rh Jake
Bhatti, Saqib
Blackman, Bob
Bone, Mr Peter

Bradley, Ben	Everitt, Ben	Johnston, David	Pow, Rebecca
Bradley, rh Karen	Farris, Laura	Jones, Andrew	Prentis, Victoria
Brady, Sir Graham	Fell, Simon	Jones, rh Mr David	Pritchard, Mark
Braverman, rh Suella	Fletcher, Katherine	Jones, Fay	Pursglove, Tom
Brereton, Jack	Fletcher, Mark	Jones, Mr Marcus	Quin, Jeremy
Bridgen, Andrew	Fletcher, Nick	Jupp, Simon	Quince, Will
Brine, Steve	Ford, Vicky	Kawczynski, Daniel	Randall, Tom
Bristow, Paul	Foster, Kevin	Kearns, Alicia	Redwood, rh John
Britcliffe, Sara	Francois, rh Mr Mark	Keegan, Gillian	Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
Brokenshire, rh James	Frazer, Lucy	Knight, Julian	Richards, Nicola
Browne, Anthony	Freeman, George	Kruger, Danny	Richardson, Angela
Bruce, Fiona	Freer, Mike	Kwarteng, rh Kwasi	Roberts, Rob
Buchan, Felicity	Fuller, Richard	Largan, Robert	Robertson, Mr Laurence
Buckland, rh Robert	Fysh, Mr Marcus	Leadsom, rh Andrea	Robinson, Mary
Burghart, Alex	Gale, rh Sir Roger	Levy, Ian	Rowley, Lee
Burns, rh Conor	Garnier, Mark	Lewer, Andrew	Russell, Dean
Butler, Rob	Ghani, Ms Nusrat	Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian	Sambrook, Gary
Cairns, rh Alun	Gibb, rh Nick	Loder, Chris	Saxby, Selaine
Carter, Andy	Gibson, Peter	Logan, Mark	Scully, Paul
Cartledge, James	Gideon, Jo	Longhi, Marco	Seely, Bob
Cash, Sir William	Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl	Lopez, Julia	Selous, Andrew
Cates, Miriam	Glen, John	Lopresti, Jack	Shapps, rh Grant
Caulfield, Maria	Goodwill, rh Mr Robert	Lord, Mr Jonathan	Shelbrooke, rh Alec
Chalk, Alex	Gove, rh Michael	Loughton, Tim	Simmonds, David
Churchill, Jo	Graham, Richard	Mackinlay, Craig	Skidmore, rh Chris
Clark, rh Greg	Grant, Mrs Helen	Mackrory, Cherilyn	Smith, Chloe
Clarke, Mr Simon	Grayling, rh Chris	Maclean, Rachel	Smith, Greg
Clarke, Theo	Green, Chris	Mak, Alan	Smith, Henry
Clarke-Smith, Brendan	Green, rh Damian	Malthouse, Kit	Smith, rh Julian
Clarkson, Chris	Griffith, Andrew	Mangnall, Anthony	Smith, Royston
Cleverly, rh James	Griffiths, Kate	Mann, Scott	Spencer, Dr Ben
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey	Grundy, James	Marson, Julie	Spencer, rh Mark
Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse	Gullis, Jonathan	May, rh Mrs Theresa	Stafford, Alexander
Colburn, Elliot	Halfon, rh Robert	Mayhew, Jerome	Stephenson, Andrew
Collins, Damian	Hall, Luke	Maynard, Paul	Stevenson, Jane
Costa, Alberto	Hammond, Stephen	McCartney, Jason	Stewart, Bob
Courts, Robert	Hands, rh Greg	McCartney, Karl	Stewart, Iain
Coutinho, Claire	Harper, rh Mr Mark	McVey, rh Esther	Streeter, Sir Gary
Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey	Harris, Rebecca	Menzies, Mark	Stride, rh Mel
Crabb, rh Stephen	Harrison, Trudy	Mercer, Johnny	Stuart, Graham
Crosbie, Virginia	Hart, Sally-Ann	Merriman, Huw	Sturdy, Julian
Crouch, Tracey	Hart, rh Simon	Metcalfe, Stephen	Sunderland, James
Daly, James	Hayes, rh Sir John	Millar, Robin	Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Davies, David T. C.	Heald, rh Sir Oliver	Miller, rh Mrs Maria	Syms, Sir Robert
Davies, Gareth	Heapey, James	Milling, rh Amanda	Thomas, Derek
Davies, Dr James	Heaton-Harris, Chris	Mills, Nigel	Throup, Maggie
Davies, Mims	Henderson, Gordon	Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew	Timpson, Edward
Davies, Philip	Henry, Darren	Mohindra, Mr Gagan	Tolhurst, Kelly
Davis, rh Mr David	Higginbotham, Antony	Moore, Damien	Tomlinson, Justin
Davison, Dehenna	Hinds, rh Damian	Moore, Robbie	Tomlinson, Michael
Dinenage, Caroline	Hoare, Simon	Mordaunt, rh Penny	Tracey, Craig
Dines, Miss Sarah	Holden, Mr Richard	Morris, Anne Marie	Trevelyan, rh Anne-Marie
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan	Hollinrake, Kevin	Morris, David	Trott, Laura
Docherty, Leo	Hollobone, Mr Philip	Morrissey, Joy	Truss, rh Elizabeth
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.	Holloway, Adam	Morton, Wendy	Tugendhat, Tom
Donelan, Michelle	Holmes, Paul	Mullan, Dr Kieran	Vara, Mr Shailesh
Dorries, Ms Nadine	Howell, John	Mumby-Croft, Holly	Vickers, Martin
Double, Steve	Howell, Paul	Murray, Mrs Sheryll	Vickers, Matt
Dowden, rh Oliver	Huddleston, Nigel	Nici, Lia	Wakeford, Christian
Doyle-Price, Jackie	Hudson, Dr Neil	Nokes, rh Caroline	Walker, Sir Charles
Drax, Richard	Hughes, Eddie	Norman, rh Jesse	Walker, Mr Robin
Drummond, Mrs Flick	Hunt, Jane	O'Brien, Neil	Wallace, rh Mr Ben
Duddridge, James	Hunt, rh Jeremy	Opperman, Guy	Wallis, Dr Jamie
Dunne, rh Philip	Hunt, Tom	Parish, Neil	Warburton, David
Eastwood, Mark	Javid, rh Sajid	Paterson, rh Mr Owen	Wayman, Matt
Edwards, Ruth	Jayawardena, Mr Ranil	Pawsey, Mark	Watling, Giles
Ellis, rh Michael	Jenkin, Sir Bernard	Penning, rh Sir Mike	Webb, Suzanne
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias	Jenkinson, Mark	Penrose, John	Whately, Helen
Elphicke, Mrs Natalie	Jenkyns, Andrea	Percy, Andrew	Wheeler, Mrs Heather
Eustice, rh George	Jenrick, rh Robert	Philp, Chris	Whittaker, Craig
Evans, Dr Luke	Johnson, Dr Caroline	Pincher, rh Christopher	Whittingdale, rh Mr John
Evennett, rh Sir David	Johnson, Gareth	Poulter, Dr Dan	

Wiggin, Bill
Wild, James
Williams, Craig
Wood, Mike
Wright, rh Jeremy

Young, Jacob
Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
David Rutley and
James Morris

Jardine, Christine
Jarvis, Dan
Johnson, Dame Diana
Johnson, Kim
Jones, Darren
Jones, Gerald
Jones, rh Mr Kevan
Jones, Ruth
Jones, Sarah
Kane, Mike
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz
Khan, Afzal
Kinnock, Stephen
Kyle, Peter
Lammy, rh Mr David
Lavery, Ian
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Lewis, Clive
Lloyd, Tony
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lucas, Caroline
Lynch, Holly
Madders, Justin
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Mahmood, Shabana
Malhotra, Seema
Maskell, Rachael
Matheson, Christian
McCabe, Steve
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonagh, Siobhain
McDonald, Andy
McFadden, rh Mr Pat
McGinn, Conor
McGovern, Alison
McKinnell, Catherine
McMahon, Jim
McMorrin, Anna
Mearns, Ian
Miliband, rh Edward
Mishra, Navendu
Moran, Layla
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, Grahame
Murray, Ian
Murray, James
Nandy, Lisa
Nichols, Charlotte
Norris, Alex
Olney, Sarah
Onwurah, Chi
Oppong-Asare, Abena
Osamor, Kate
Osborne, Kate
Owatemi, Taiwo

Owen, Sarah
Peacock, Stephanie
Pennycook, Matthew
Perkins, Mr Toby
Phillips, Jess
Phillipson, Bridget
Pollard, Luke
Qureshi, Yasmin
Rayner, Angela
Reed, Steve
Rees, Christina
Reeves, Ellie
Reeves, Rachel
Reynolds, Jonathan
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
Rimmer, Ms Marie
Rodda, Matt
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Shah, Naz
Shannon, Jim
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheerman, Mr Barry
Siddiq, Tulip
Slaughter, Andy
Smith, Cat
Smith, Jeff
Smith, Nick
Smyth, Karin
Sobel, Alex
Spellar, rh John
Starmer, rh Keir
Stevens, Jo
Stone, Jamie
Stringer, Graham
Sultana, Zarah
Tami, rh Mark
Tarry, Sam
Thomas, Gareth
Thomas-Symonds, Nick
Thornberry, rh Emily
Trickett, Jon
Turner, Karl
Twigg, Derek
Vaz, rh Valerie
Webbe, Claudia
West, Catherine
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitley, Mick
Whittome, Nadia
Wilson, Munira
Winter, Beth
Yasin, Mohammad
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:
Liz Twist and
Matt Western

Tellers for the Ayes:
Liz Twist and
Matt Western

NOES

Adams, Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Ahmad Khan, Imran
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
Baker, Duncan
Baker, Mr Steve
Baldwin, Harriett
Barclay, rh Steve
Baron, Mr John

Question accordingly negatived.

The Deputy Speaker then put the Questions necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded at that time.

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING

Motion made, and Question put,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) (Amendment) (No. 2) Order 2020 (S.I., 2020, No. 755), dated 20 July 2020, a copy of which was laid before this House on 21 July 2020, be annulled.—(*Mike Amesbury.*)

The House divided: Ayes 207, Noes 329.

Division No. 123]

[6.55 pm

AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
Abrahams, Debbie
Ali, Rushanara
Ali, Tahir
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Amesbury, Mike
Anderson, Fleur
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Ashworth, Jonathan
Barker, Paula
Beckett, rh Margaret
Begum, Apsana
Benn, rh Hilary
Betts, Mr Clive
Blake, Olivia
Blomfield, Paul
Brabin, Tracy
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brennan, Kevin
Brown, Ms Lyn
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burgon, Richard
Butler, Dawn
Byrne, Ian
Byrne, rh Liam
Cadbury, Ruth
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Carden, Dan
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Chamberlain, Wendy
Champion, Sarah
Charalambous, Bambos
Clark, Feryal
Cooper, Daisy
Cooper, Rosie
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Coyle, Neil
Creasy, Stella
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Cummins, Judith
Cunningham, Alex
Daby, Janet
Davey, rh Ed
David, Wayne
Davies, Geraint
Davies-Jones, Alex
De Cordova, Marsha
Debonnaire, Thangam
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Dodds, Anneliese
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Dromey, Jack
Duffield, Rosie
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eagle, Maria
Efford, Clive
Elliott, Julie
Elmore, Chris
Eshalomi, Florence
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Farron, Tim
Farry, Stephen
Fletcher, Colleen
Foxcroft, Vicky
Foy, Mary Kelly
Furniss, Gill
Gardiner, Barry
Gill, Preet Kaur
Glindon, Mary
Green, Kate
Greenwood, Lilian
Greenwood, Margaret
Griffith, Nia
Gwynne, Andrew
Hamilton, Fabian
Hardy, Emma
Harman, rh Ms Harriet
Harris, Carolyn
Hayes, Helen
Hendrick, Sir Mark
Hill, Mike
Hillier, Meg
Hobhouse, Wera
Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hollern, Kate
Hopkins, Rachel
Howarth, rh Sir George
Huq, Dr Rupa
Hussain, Imran

Baynes, Simon	Eastwood, Mark	Hunt, Tom	Parish, Neil
Bell, Aaron	Edwards, Ruth	Javid, rh Sajid	Paterson, rh Mr Owen
Benton, Scott	Ellis, rh Michael	Jayawardena, Mr Ranil	Pawsey, Mark
Beresford, Sir Paul	Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias	Jenkin, Sir Bernard	Penning, rh Sir Mike
Berry, rh Jake	Elphicke, Mrs Natalie	Jenkinson, Mark	Penrose, John
Bhatti, Saqib	Eustice, rh George	Jenkyns, Andrea	Percy, Andrew
Blackman, Bob	Evans, Dr Luke	Jenrick, rh Robert	Philp, Chris
Bone, Mr Peter	Evennett, rh Sir David	Johnson, Dr Caroline	Pincher, rh Christopher
Bottomley, Sir Peter	Everitt, Ben	Johnson, Gareth	Poulter, Dr Dan
Bradley, Ben	Fabricant, Michael	Johnston, David	Pow, Rebecca
Bradley, rh Karen	Farris, Laura	Jones, Andrew	Prentis, Victoria
Brady, Sir Graham	Fell, Simon	Jones, rh Mr David	Pritchard, Mark
Braverman, rh Suella	Fletcher, Katherine	Jones, Fay	Pursglove, Tom
Brereton, Jack	Fletcher, Mark	Jones, Mr Marcus	Quin, Jeremy
Bridgen, Andrew	Fletcher, Nick	Jupp, Simon	Quince, Will
Brine, Steve	Ford, Vicky	Kawczynski, Daniel	Randall, Tom
Bristow, Paul	Foster, Kevin	Kearns, Alicia	Redwood, rh John
Britcliffe, Sara	Francois, rh Mr Mark	Keegan, Gillian	Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
Brokenshire, rh James	Frazer, Lucy	Knight, Julian	Richards, Nicola
Browne, Anthony	Freeman, George	Kruger, Danny	Richardson, Angela
Bruce, Fiona	Freer, Mike	Kwarteng, rh Kwasi	Roberts, Rob
Buchan, Felicity	Fuller, Richard	Largan, Robert	Robertson, Mr Laurence
Buckland, rh Robert	Fysh, Mr Marcus	Leadsom, rh Andrea	Robinson, Mary
Burghart, Alex	Gale, rh Sir Roger	Levy, Ian	Rowley, Lee
Burns, rh Conor	Garnier, Mark	Lewer, Andrew	Russell, Dean
Butler, Rob	Ghani, Ms Nusrat	Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian	Sambrook, Gary
Cairns, rh Alun	Gibb, rh Nick	Loder, Chris	Saxby, Selaine
Carter, Andy	Gibson, Peter	Logan, Mark	Scully, Paul
Cartledge, James	Gideon, Jo	Longhi, Marco	Seely, Bob
Cash, Sir William	Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl	Lopez, Julia	Selous, Andrew
Cates, Miriam	Glen, John	Lopresti, Jack	Shapps, rh Grant
Caulfield, Maria	Goodwill, rh Mr Robert	Lord, Mr Jonathan	Shelbrooke, rh Alec
Chalk, Alex	Gove, rh Michael	Loughton, Tim	Simmonds, David
Churchill, Jo	Graham, Richard	Mackinlay, Craig	Skidmore, rh Chris
Clark, rh Greg	Grant, Mrs Helen	Mackrory, Cherylyn	Smith, Chloe
Clarke, Mr Simon	Grayling, rh Chris	Maclean, Rachel	Smith, Greg
Clarke, Theo	Green, Chris	Mak, Alan	Smith, Henry
Clarke-Smith, Brendan	Green, rh Damian	Malthouse, Kit	Smith, rh Julian
Clarkson, Chris	Griffith, Andrew	Mangnall, Anthony	Smith, Royston
Cleverly, rh James	Griffiths, Kate	Mann, Scott	Spencer, Dr Ben
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey	Grundy, James	Marson, Julie	Spencer, rh Mark
Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse	Gullis, Jonathan	May, rh Mrs Theresa	Stafford, Alexander
Colburn, Elliot	Halfon, rh Robert	Mayhew, Jerome	Stephenson, Andrew
Collins, Damian	Hall, Luke	Maynard, Paul	Stevenson, Jane
Costa, Alberto	Hammond, Stephen	McCartney, Jason	Stewart, Bob
Courts, Robert	Hands, rh Greg	McCartney, Karl	Stewart, Iain
Coutinho, Claire	Harper, rh Mr Mark	McVey, rh Esther	Streeter, Sir Gary
Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey	Harris, Rebecca	Menzies, Mark	Stride, rh Mel
Crabb, rh Stephen	Harrison, Trudy	Mercer, Johnny	Stuart, Graham
Crosbie, Virginia	Hart, Sally-Ann	Merriman, Huw	Sturdy, Julian
Crouch, Tracey	Hart, rh Simon	Metcalfe, Stephen	Sunderland, James
Daly, James	Hayes, rh Sir John	Millar, Robin	Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Davies, David T. C.	Heald, rh Sir Oliver	Miller, rh Mrs Maria	Syms, Sir Robert
Davies, Gareth	Heapey, James	Milling, rh Amanda	Thomas, Derek
Davies, Dr James	Heaton-Harris, Chris	Mills, Nigel	Throup, Maggie
Davies, Mims	Henderson, Gordon	Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew	Timpson, Edward
Davies, Philip	Henry, Darren	Mohindra, Mr Gagan	Tolhurst, Kelly
Davis, rh Mr David	Higginbotham, Antony	Moore, Damien	Tomlinson, Justin
Davison, Dehenna	Hinds, rh Damian	Moore, Robbie	Tomlinson, Michael
Dinenage, Caroline	Hoare, Simon	Mordaunt, rh Penny	Tracey, Craig
Dines, Miss Sarah	Holden, Mr Richard	Morris, Anne Marie	Trevelyan, rh Anne-Marie
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan	Hollinrake, Kevin	Morris, David	Trott, Laura
Docherty, Leo	Hollobone, Mr Philip	Morrissey, Joy	Truss, rh Elizabeth
Donelan, Michelle	Holloway, Adam	Morton, Wendy	Tugendhat, Tom
Dorries, Ms Nadine	Holmes, Paul	Mullan, Dr Kieran	Vara, Mr Shailesh
Double, Steve	Howell, John	Mumby-Croft, Holly	Vickers, Martin
Dowden, rh Oliver	Howell, Paul	Murray, Mrs Sheryll	Vickers, Matt
Doyle-Price, Jackie	Huddleston, Nigel	Nici, Lia	Wakeford, Christian
Drax, Richard	Hudson, Dr Neil	Nokes, rh Caroline	Walker, Sir Charles
Drummond, Mrs Flick	Hughes, Eddie	Norman, rh Jesse	Walker, Mr Robin
Duddridge, James	Hunt, Jane	O'Brien, Neil	Wallace, rh Mr Ben
Dunne, rh Philip	Hunt, rh Jeremy	Opperman, Guy	

Wallis, Dr Jamie
Warburton, David
Warman, Matt
Watling, Giles
Webb, Suzanne
Whately, Helen
Wheeler, Mrs Heather
Whittaker, Craig
Whittingdale, rh Mr John
Wiggin, Bill

Wild, James
Williams, Craig
Williamson, rh Gavin
Wood, Mike
Wright, rh Jeremy
Young, Jacob
Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:

**James Morris and
David Rutley**

Harris, Carolyn
Hayes, Helen
Hendrick, Sir Mark
Hill, Mike
Hillier, Meg
Hobhouse, Wera
Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hollern, Kate
Hopkins, Rachel
Howarth, rh Sir George
Huq, Dr Rupa
Hussain, Imran
Jardine, Christine
Jarvis, Dan
Johnson, Dame Diana
Johnson, Kim
Jones, Darren
Jones, Gerald
Jones, rh Mr Kevan
Jones, Ruth
Jones, Sarah
Kane, Mike
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz
Khan, Afzal
Kinnock, Stephen
Kyle, Peter
Lammy, rh Mr David
Lavery, Ian
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Lewis, Clive
Lloyd, Tony
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lucas, Caroline
Lynch, Holly
Madders, Justin
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Mahmood, Shabana
Malhotra, Seema
Maskell, Rachael
Matheson, Christian
McCabe, Steve
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonagh, Siobhain
McFadden, rh Mr Pat
McGinn, Conor
McGovern, Alison
McKinnell, Catherine
McMahon, Jim
Mearns, Ian
Miliband, rh Edward
Mishra, Navendu
Moran, Layla
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, Grahame
Murray, Ian
Murray, James
Nandy, Lisa
Nichols, Charlotte
Norris, Alex
Olney, Sarah

Onwurah, Chi
Oppong-Asare, Abena
Osamor, Kate
Osborne, Kate
Owatemi, Taiwo
Owen, Sarah
Peacock, Stephanie
Pennycook, Matthew
Perkins, Mr Toby
Phillips, Jess
Phillipson, Bridget
Pollard, Luke
Qureshi, Yasmin
Rayner, Angela
Reed, Steve
Rees, Christina
Reeves, Ellie
Reeves, Rachel
Reynolds, Jonathan
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
Rimmer, Ms Marie
Rodda, Matt
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Shah, Naz
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheerman, Mr Barry
Siddiq, Tulip
Slaughter, Andy
Smith, Cat
Smith, Jeff
Smith, Nick
Smyth, Karin
Sobel, Alex
Spellar, rh John
Starmer, rh Keir
Stevens, Jo
Stone, Jamie
Stringer, Graham
Sultana, Zarah
Tami, rh Mark
Tarry, Sam
Thomas, Gareth
Thomas-Symonds, Nick
Thornberry, rh Emily
Timms, rh Stephen
Trickett, Jon
Turner, Karl
Twigg, Derek
Vaz, rh Valerie
Webbe, Claudia
West, Catherine
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitley, Mick
Whittome, Nadia
Wilson, Munira
Winter, Beth
Yasin, Mohammad
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:

**Liz Twist and
Matt Western**

NOES

Adams, Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Ahmad Khan, Imran
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Amess, Sir David
Anderson, Lee
Anderson, Stuart
Andrew, Stuart
Ansell, Caroline
Argar, Edward

Question accordingly negated.

The list of Members currently certified as eligible for a proxy vote, and of the Members nominated as their proxy, is published at the end of today's debates.

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING

Motion made, and Question put,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) (Amendment) (No. 3) Order 2020 (S.I., 2020, No. 756), dated 20 July 2020, a copy of which was laid before this House on 21 July 2020, be annulled.—(*Mike Amesbury.*)

The House divided: Ayes 205, Noes 333.

Division No. 124]

[7.9 pm

AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
Abrahams, Debbie
Ali, Rushanara
Ali, Tahir
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Amesbury, Mike
Anderson, Fleur
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Ashworth, Jonathan
Barker, Paula
Beckett, rh Margaret
Begum, Apsana
Benn, rh Hilary
Betts, Mr Clive
Blake, Olivia
Blomfield, Paul
Brabin, Tracy
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brown, Ms Lyn
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burgon, Richard
Butler, Dawn
Byrne, Ian
Byrne, rh Liam
Cadbury, Ruth
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Carden, Dan
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Chamberlain, Wendy
Champion, Sarah
Charalambous, Bambos
Clark, Feryal
Cooper, Daisy
Cooper, Rosie
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Coyle, Neil
Creasy, Stella
Cruddas, Jon

Cryer, John
Cummins, Judith
Cunningham, Alex
Daby, Janet
Davey, rh Ed
David, Wayne
Davies, Geraint
Davies-Jones, Alex
De Cordova, Marsha
Debbonaire, Thangam
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Dodds, Anneliese
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Dromey, Jack
Duffield, Rosie
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eagle, Maria
Efford, Clive
Elliott, Julie
Elmore, Chris
Eshalomi, Florence
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Farron, Tim
Farry, Stephen
Fletcher, Colleen
Foxcroft, Vicky
Foy, Mary Kelly
Furniss, Gill
Gardiner, Barry
Gill, Preet Kaur
Glendon, Mary
Green, Kate
Greenwood, Lilian
Greenwood, Margaret
Griffith, Nia
Gwynne, Andrew
Hamilton, Fabian
Hardy, Emma
Harman, rh Ms Harriet

Atherton, Sarah	Dines, Miss Sarah	Holden, Mr Richard	Morris, Anne Marie
Atkins, Victoria	Djanogly, Mr Jonathan	Hollinrake, Kevin	Morris, David
Bacon, Gareth	Docherty, Leo	Hollobone, Mr Philip	Morrissey, Joy
Bacon, Mr Richard	Donelan, Michelle	Holloway, Adam	Morton, Wendy
Badenoch, Kemi	Dorries, Ms Nadine	Holmes, Paul	Mullan, Dr Kieran
Bailey, Shaun	Double, Steve	Howell, John	Mumby-Croft, Holly
Baillie, Siobhan	Dowden, rh Oliver	Howell, Paul	Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Baker, Duncan	Doyle-Price, Jackie	Huddleston, Nigel	Nici, Lia
Baker, Mr Steve	Drax, Richard	Hudson, Dr Neil	Nokes, rh Caroline
Baldwin, Harriett	Drummond, Mrs Flick	Hughes, Eddie	Norman, rh Jesse
Barclay, rh Steve	Duddridge, James	Hunt, Jane	O'Brien, Neil
Baron, Mr John	Dunne, rh Philip	Hunt, rh Jeremy	Offord, Dr Matthew
Baynes, Simon	Eastwood, Mark	Hunt, Tom	Opperman, Guy
Bell, Aaron	Edwards, Ruth	Javid, rh Sajid	Parish, Neil
Benton, Scott	Ellis, rh Michael	Jayawardena, Mr Ranil	Paterson, rh Mr Owen
Beresford, Sir Paul	Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias	Jenkin, Sir Bernard	Pawsey, Mark
Berry, rh Jake	Elphicke, Mrs Natalie	Jenkinson, Mark	Penning, rh Sir Mike
Bhatti, Saqib	Eustice, rh George	Jenkyns, Andrea	Penrose, John
Blackman, Bob	Evans, Dr Luke	Jenrick, rh Robert	Percy, Andrew
Bone, Mr Peter	Evennett, rh Sir David	Johnson, Dr Caroline	Philp, Chris
Bottomley, Sir Peter	Everitt, Ben	Johnson, Gareth	Pincher, rh Christopher
Bradley, Ben	Fabricant, Michael	Johnston, David	Poulter, Dr Dan
Bradley, rh Karen	Farris, Laura	Jones, Andrew	Pow, Rebecca
Brady, Sir Graham	Fell, Simon	Jones, rh Mr David	Prentis, Victoria
Braverman, rh Suella	Fletcher, Katherine	Jones, Fay	Pritchard, Mark
Brereton, Jack	Fletcher, Mark	Jones, Mr Marcus	Pursglove, Tom
Bridgen, Andrew	Fletcher, Nick	Jupp, Simon	Quin, Jeremy
Brine, Steve	Ford, Vicky	Kawczynski, Daniel	Quince, Will
Bristow, Paul	Foster, Kevin	Kearns, Alicia	Randall, Tom
Britcliffe, Sara	Francois, rh Mr Mark	Keegan, Gillian	Redwood, rh John
Brokenshire, rh James	Frazer, Lucy	Knight, Julian	Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
Browne, Anthony	Freeman, George	Kruger, Danny	Richards, Nicola
Bruce, Fiona	Freer, Mike	Kwarteng, rh Kwasi	Richardson, Angela
Buchan, Felicity	Fuller, Richard	Largan, Robert	Roberts, Rob
Buckland, rh Robert	Fysh, Mr Marcus	Leadsom, rh Andrea	Robertson, Mr Laurence
Burghart, Alex	Gale, rh Sir Roger	Levy, Ian	Robinson, Mary
Burns, rh Conor	Garnier, Mark	Lewer, Andrew	Rowley, Lee
Butler, Rob	Ghani, Ms Nusrat	Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian	Russell, Dean
Cairns, rh Alun	Gibb, rh Nick	Loder, Chris	Sambrook, Gary
Carter, Andy	Gibson, Peter	Logan, Mark	Saxby, Selaine
Cartledge, James	Gideon, Jo	Longhi, Marco	Scully, Paul
Cash, Sir William	Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl	Lopez, Julia	Seely, Bob
Cates, Miriam	Glen, John	Lopresti, Jack	Selous, Andrew
Caulfield, Maria	Goodwill, rh Mr Robert	Lord, Mr Jonathan	Shapps, rh Grant
Chalk, Alex	Gove, rh Michael	Loughton, Tim	Shelbrooke, rh Alec
Churchill, Jo	Graham, Richard	Mackinlay, Craig	Skidmore, rh Chris
Clark, rh Greg	Grant, Mrs Helen	Mackrory, Cherylyn	Smith, Chloe
Clarke, Mr Simon	Grayling, rh Chris	Maclean, Rachel	Smith, Greg
Clarke, Theo	Green, Chris	Mak, Alan	Smith, Henry
Clarke-Smith, Brendan	Green, rh Damian	Malthouse, Kit	Smith, rh Julian
Clarkson, Chris	Griffith, Andrew	Mangnall, Anthony	Smith, Royston
Cleverly, rh James	Griffiths, Kate	Mann, Scott	Spencer, Dr Ben
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey	Grundy, James	Marson, Julie	Spencer, rh Mark
Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse	Gullis, Jonathan	May, rh Mrs Theresa	Stafford, Alexander
Colburn, Elliot	Halfon, rh Robert	Mayhew, Jerome	Stephenson, Andrew
Collins, Damian	Hall, Luke	Maynard, Paul	Stevenson, Jane
Costa, Alberto	Hammond, Stephen	McCartney, Jason	Stewart, Bob
Courts, Robert	Hands, rh Greg	McCartney, Karl	Stewart, Iain
Coutinho, Claire	Harper, rh Mr Mark	McVey, rh Esther	Streeter, Sir Gary
Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey	Harris, Rebecca	Menzies, Mark	Stride, rh Mel
Crabb, rh Stephen	Harrison, Trudy	Mercer, Johnny	Stuart, Graham
Crosbie, Virginia	Hart, Sally-Ann	Merriman, Huw	Sturdy, Julian
Crouch, Tracey	Hart, rh Simon	Metcalfe, Stephen	Sunderland, James
Daly, James	Hayes, rh Sir John	Millar, Robin	Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Davies, David T. C.	Heald, rh Sir Oliver	Miller, rh Mrs Maria	Syms, Sir Robert
Davies, Gareth	Heappey, James	Milling, rh Amanda	Thomas, Derek
Davies, Dr James	Heaton-Harris, Chris	Mills, Nigel	Throup, Maggie
Davies, Mims	Henderson, Gordon	Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew	Timpson, Edward
Davies, Philip	Henry, Darren	Mohindra, Mr Gagan	Tolhurst, Kelly
Davis, rh Mr David	Higginbotham, Antony	Moore, Damien	Tomlinson, Justin
Davison, Dehenna	Hinds, rh Damian	Moore, Robbie	Tomlinson, Michael
Dinenage, Caroline	Hoare, Simon	Mordaunt, rh Penny	

Tracey, Craig
 Trevelyan, rh Anne-Marie
 Trott, Laura
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Tugendhat, Tom
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Vickers, Matt
 Wakeford, Christian
 Walker, Sir Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Wallis, Dr Jamie
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles

Webb, Suzanne
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whittaker, Craig
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Wild, James
 Williams, Craig
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wood, Mike
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Young, Jacob
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
David Rutley and
James Morris

Question accordingly negated.

The list of Members currently certified as eligible for a proxy vote, and of the Members nominated as their proxy, is published at the end of today's debates.

Business without Debate

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, in respect of the Social Security (Up-rating of Benefits) Bill, notices of Amendments, new Clauses and new Schedules to be moved in Committee may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bill has been read a second time.—(*Rebecca Harris.*)

PETITIONS

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): We now come to the presentation of public petitions. There are four petitions on the same subject, so I ask each Member to speak for no more than a minute. I remind the second and subsequent hon. Members that they do not need to read or summarise the text of the petition if it is in the same terms as the petition already presented.

Nestlé's relationship with Fairtrade

7.23 pm

Holly Lynch (Halifax) (Lab): As the co-chair of the all-party parliamentary group for Fairtrade, alongside the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Jason McCartney), I rise to present a petition to the House of Commons from the residents of the UK. The presentation of this petition coincides with the presentation of a petition signed by nearly 300,000 people, which will be presented directly to Nestlé tomorrow by Fairtrade Yorkshire co-ordinator Joanna Pollard.

The petition states:

The petition of the residents of the United Kingdom,

Declares disappointment in Nestlé's decision to end its ten year relationship with Fairtrade, switching sugar and cocoa sourcing for KitKat from Fairtrade to Rainforest Alliance accreditation; notes that up to 27,000 farmers in Côte d'Ivoire, Fiji and Malawi stand to lose their Fairtrade Premium; and further declares that these farmers will have less say on how money from that Premium is spent, at a time when those producers are facing unprecedented uncertainty.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to reaffirm its commitment to Fairtrade and urges Nestlé to ultimately reconsider their decision, in order to provide support to producers during a period of considerable uncertainty due to the Coronavirus Pandemic.

And the petitioners remain, etc.

[P002600]

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): Many residents of Glasgow North agree with the sentiments expressed by the hon. Member for Halifax (Holly Lynch). Their petition also requests that the House of Commons urge the Government to reaffirm their commitment to Fairtrade and urges Nestlé to ultimately reconsider its decision, in order to provide support to producers during a period of considerable uncertainty due to the coronavirus pandemic.

A petition in similar terms was presented.

The petition of the residents of the constituency of Glasgow North

[P002601]

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): I rise to present this petition concerning Nestlé's relationship with Fairtrade. The nation's favourite chocolate snack, the KitKat, is manufactured in the chocolate city and fair trade city of York, providing vital jobs for my constituents. When sugar and cocoa were produced according to Fairtrade standards, we knew that farmers and their families were paid and treated well. I thank the GMB and Unite for negotiating a two-year maintenance of terms parallel to the Fairtrade standard. The nearly 284,000 online petitioners join those who have signed this petition in calling for all these standards to continue long into the future. We cannot let the bitterness of poor treatment of cocoa farmers spoil the sweetness that we have come to expect from Fairtrade chocolate.

A petition in similar terms was presented.

The petition of the residents of the United Kingdom

[P002602]

Jason McCartney (Colne Valley) (Con): I rise to present a petition of the same nature on behalf of the residents of the United Kingdom. As co-chair of the all-party parliamentary group for Fairtrade, alongside the hon. Member for Halifax (Holly Lynch), I welcome the Government's financial support for the Fairtrade Foundation as it supports agricultural producers and garment workers in developing countries during the coronavirus pandemic. Grants have come from a new £6.85 million vulnerable supply chains facility, which helps vulnerable workers and suppliers overseas to tackle the economic and social shocks of covid-19 and helps keep popular products such as chocolate and flowers on high street shelves in the UK. We now need Nestlé to do its part as well.

A petition in similar terms was presented.

The petition of the residents of the United Kingdom

[P002604]

Restructuring of Warwickshire County Council

Matt Western (Warwick and Leamington) (Lab): I rise to present a petition on behalf of the residents of Warwickshire.

The petition states:

The petition of residents of Warwickshire,

Declares that the proposed restructuring of Warwickshire County Council represents a naked power grab by the Council; notes that Warwickshire is currently run by a two-tier system, with borough and district councils taking responsibility in local areas for some services, while Warwickshire County Council runs other services across the wider area; further notes that the proposed new arrangement would see a single, unitary authority replace this system; further notes that there has been no other options for local government structures proposed by the county that reflect

possible hybrid structures between borough/district councils and the county council; and further declares that there has been a lack of public consultation about these plans or any other.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to engage with Warwickshire County Council and halt their proposed plans, and works to create a public forum, such as a People's Assembly, to oversee a review process whereby local district and borough councils, and the county council submit their proposals for the future structuring of local Government in Warwickshire.

And the petitioners remain, etc.

[P002603]

Flooding Preparedness: Yorkshire

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(*Rebecca Harris.*)

7.28 pm

Dan Jarvis (Barnsley Central) (Lab): It is a particular pleasure to see you in the Chair this evening, Madam Deputy Speaker, not least because you have been such a long-standing champion for Yorkshire, but also because I know you take a close interest in the issue of flooding.

In November last year, I was standing in Lang Avenue in Barnsley. I had often been there before, but this time was different. In the freezing cold, around 70 homes had been flooded. Among the residents there was the quiet desperation of having been made effectively homeless in the middle of winter, of having lost precious possessions, of seeing Christmas plans lying in ruins.

There were many scenes like that last winter. Very early one morning I arrived in Fishlake, near Doncaster. That quiet village had the feel of a disaster movie, with waters running perilously high, the Army on the streets, and the emergency services working tirelessly to save lives and homes. I remember one couple who had lived there for 50 years; they were ferried out of the village on a tractor, their house waist deep in water. The husband was fighting cancer, and as they struggled with hospital appointments, they also had to deal with endless complication and delay from their insurance company. It was many months before work on their house even began.

I remember visiting a house in Bentley with my right hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster North (Edward Miliband) and the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, all of us standing together in the home of an 83-year-old woman, with her ground floor flooded and almost everything destroyed. Her insurance had been cancelled through no fault of her own. She had lost her husband not long before, and now she was faced with losing much of what was familiar and precious to her.

Edward Miliband (Doncaster North) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing the debate. He is making an eloquent, passionate and moving speech. Does he recognise that, for many of my constituents who have been affected by the floods, 10 months on, this is not something they have recovered from because they are still fighting with their insurance companies? Even if they are back in their homes, they are worried about what the future will bring; in particular, they are concerned that although £170 million has been announced for flood projects, not one of them is in Doncaster. They are deeply angry about that. Does he share their anger and recognise that they want the Government to show that they understand the need to help them, not just last November, but now, and to secure better protection for them?

Dan Jarvis: My right hon. Friend is completely right to raise his constituents' concerns, which I absolutely do share. What his constituents require is a plan, and we are doing a lot of work at local and regional level, but what we need is support from national Government. I will say a bit more about what I think that should involve.

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): My hon. Friend is making a chilling speech. It is a reminder of Storms Desmond and Eva, in which my constituency experienced significant flooding, as it did in February this year. Five years on, those residents are still waiting for their property level resilience to be put in place. Does he agree that that is completely unacceptable and that we need a better system in place to support residents ahead of floods arriving again?

Dan Jarvis: I absolutely agree. My hon. Friend is right to make that point, which will form the basis of the remarks I am about to make.

We need to acknowledge the scale of the problem. About 1,000 homes in South Yorkshire and 565 businesses were directly affected by November's floods, but the impact of flooding goes far beyond the material and economic damage. It carries a human cost—lives disrupted, homes abandoned, futures made uncertain and full of hardship. This is a growing threat: a once-in-a-lifetime disaster in South Yorkshire was followed weeks later by further flooding in West Yorkshire. Calderdale, for example, has suffered three major floods in the last eight years. Hull was badly hit in 2007, and York—my hon. Friend's constituency—was hit in 2000, 2015 and again earlier this year, as she just described. Other parts of the UK from Scotland to Cornwall have suffered from flooding.

We are lucky to be a rich country with the means to help people and to respond to this danger, but that requires us to recognise the challenges we face, to deploy our resources as we need to, and to confront the longer-term causes of the crisis. I deeply regret that this Government have so far failed to do that. It is not that they have done nothing—indeed, I acknowledge and appreciate the efforts the Minister and her Department have made; the Environment Agency in particular has done sterling work in Yorkshire—but it was only yesterday that the Government gave a date for the flooding summit we discussed with them back in November last year.

Holly Lynch (Halifax) (Lab): I congratulate and commend my hon. Friend on the leadership he has shown on this issue. I also commend him on having secured the South Yorkshire flood summit. If I am not mistaken, though, a Yorkshire-wide flood summit was promised, not least following the devastating flooding that we experienced in Calderdale, which he has mentioned, as well as in areas of North Yorkshire. Although I really welcome the progress my hon. Friend has made on the South Yorkshire summit, does he agree that we need the same conversation for the rest of the region?

Dan Jarvis: I absolutely do agree with my hon. Friend, who makes an important point. The original concept was that the flooding summit would cover the county of Yorkshire. I work closely with the Yorkshire Leaders Board and know that there is a real desire to work closely with the Government on this issue. I would appreciate the Minister's clarifying precisely what the attendance at the summit will be. If it is just for South Yorkshire, what are the plans to ensure that the rest of Yorkshire gets the support that it needs from the Government?

To be fair to the Minister and to the Government, of course we understand the disruption that covid has caused. But the people of Yorkshire should not have

had to wait all this time for this meeting. To quote Lord Stark from "Game of Thrones"—not from the other place—"Winter is coming", and there is every possibility that floods could strike again. If they do, potentially amid a second wave of covid infections and challenges relating to the Brexit transition, the effects of that flooding will be even more devastating.

It is not that the summit will be a silver bullet—of course, it is no substitute for the hard strategy and funding commitments that we need—but it will be an important way of focusing minds and bringing the Government and stakeholders together to co-ordinate a coherent long-term response. That is why I very much hope that the Prime Minister will accept the invitation, which I warmly extend to him again today, to take part in person. His presence would be an important sign to the people of Yorkshire that he recognises the scale of the threat and is working to address it.

As I said, the substance of the response is ultimately what matters, most immediately in relation to the ongoing aftermath of 2019, because 10 months on many people are still in temporary accommodation. Kilnhurst Primary School in Rotherham remains closed until the new year, with families facing additional stress on top of the difficulties caused by covid. We need to get communities the help that they need, and the Government must play their part. Councils have faced extraordinary costs at a time of hardship, and existing support has not filled the gap. Many of the people affected will face problems with insuring their homes, even when they move back into them.

The Blanc review is rightly considering this issue, and I trust that Ministers will act following its imminent completion, but we need to prevent the next flood, not just react to the last one, and that requires investment. In collaboration with local authorities throughout South Yorkshire, we have developed a detailed £271 million priority flood-resilience programme, to protect more than 10,300 homes and 2,800 businesses. The projected return on this investment, just in terms of avoided damage, is £1.7 billion, but funding for the plan remains in doubt. The grant in aid allocated to it under the Government's medium-term plan has yet to be confirmed. Assuming that it is, and taking other sources into account, there is still a shortfall of £125 million.

As another flooding season begins, we do not have the resources that we need to protect our region. I ask the Government not just to confirm the current draft MTP, but to provide an exceptional boost above and beyond it to fully fund our proposals. That would follow the precedent of the £115 million in exceptional funding that Yorkshire received after the 2015 floods. I hope the Government will go beyond that and give local authorities the revenue—not just the capital—that they desperately need to get flood-prevention projects shovel ready.

This is not just about money; we need to fundamentally change not just the amount that we invest but the way that we do flood prevention. We need to shift away from engineering solutions towards natural flood management and a catchment-wide approach, which can reduce the threat of flooding at its sources, rather than shifting it from one place to another. Our priority programme includes £2 million to support catchment-wide modelling as an essential step towards that approach. We warmly

welcome the Environment Agency's support for nature-based solutions in South Yorkshire and the draft MTP's inclusion of almost £38 million for those schemes in the Don catchment.

We cannot, however, build our way out of this with concrete. Working with nature, rather than against it, will ultimately be much more effective and affordable, and will allow us to preserve and expand critical habitats such as wetlands, moors and forests. The pioneering work of the Environment Agency, with the Woodland Trust and others, shows just how effective this slowing the flow can be. I have partnered with the Woodland Trust as part of an ambitious wider programme to plant millions of trees in South Yorkshire, with flood prevention a key goal of a plan that will also help communities, wildlife and our climate. I hope that the Government will back the effort—I say that in good faith to the Minister—and adopt my amendment to the Environment Bill to require a dedicated tree strategy for England.

As floods like last year's become increasingly common, natural flood management must be not just one tool among others, but the core of our strategy across the whole country. The Government need to make that shift as a matter of urgency. The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has spoken in favour of natural flood management. He needs to ensure that it is rolled out quickly and comprehensively. That needs to come hand in hand with greater flexibility. I hope that the Minister will heed the Local Government Association's call for a more flexible funding model for flood prevention and for capital and revenue funding to be devolved into a single place-based pot to allow greater local control. We must also further reform the Green Book to allow a wider set of values to carry weight in investment decisions and end the dominant focus on residential properties and property values.

Those flooded houses in Lang Avenue, Bentley, Fishlake and right across Yorkshire are connected to a much wider crisis. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimates that climate change could increase the annual cost of flooding in the UK almost fifteenfold within 60 years in high-emission scenarios. A portion of the hundreds of millions of pounds we are asking the Government for is part of the cost of our collective inaction on climate change over the past decades. This is a small taste of just how false an economy that inaction was. The idea that it costs too much for us to decarbonise is madness. The only thing worse than not having acted then would be not to act now.

The Government have promised a green recovery from covid. We appreciate that intent, but so far they have not delivered anything resembling the transformational change that we should be aspiring to in this once-in-a-generation moment, a moment when massive public investment is not only possible but essential to save our economy. To take just one example, the £3 billion allocated nationally for building retrofits, one of the most obvious and essential ways to decarbonise, as well as to create skilled jobs, is roughly what we need for retrofitting South Yorkshire alone.

The Committee on Climate Change is unequivocal: we are not making adequate progress. The Government have agreed a 2050 target for net zero, but they are not yet doing what is needed to reach it. The challenge of course is real, but so far their actions do not reflect the catastrophic threat that we face. For my part, we have a

plan for South Yorkshire to reach net zero by 2040 at the latest, and immediate proposals to plant millions of trees, transform our public transport and carry out £200 million of green infrastructure investment, but we need Government support if we are to make more than a fraction of those plans a reality.

To conclude, we have the opportunity to act now on flooding in Yorkshire, on natural flood prevention right across the UK and on global climate change. I ask the Government to respond to the threat highlighted so powerfully last November in a way that reflects its scale and its urgency and the fact that it is at once a local, national and global challenge, and at every one of those levels to make the investments now that will ultimately save us from paying a much greater price in the future.

7.44 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Rebecca Pow): I thank the hon. Member for Barnsley Central (Dan Jarvis) for securing this very important debate. He knows how seriously I take flooding. He spoke passionately, as he always does, for his constituency. However, he will know that we have spoken a number of times over the past few months, so he cannot say that I have not engaged with him—nor, indeed, can other Opposition Members. I have definitely been listening. He will know already that that letter has gone out, inviting hon. Members to the said event to discuss flooding in South Yorkshire. I hope he welcomes that. I worked hard with the Secretary of State to press for it. He also knows that we were hit with an election and then, when we came back, the coronavirus pandemic. He knows that that really is the reason for not having fixed the date yet. It is now firmly in the calendar and I am very much looking forward to discussing properly many of the issues he raises. It will be on 8 October.

Rachael Maskell: I appreciate the Minister's giving way, but the Secretary of State was in my constituency when he made the announcement that the event would be for Yorkshire. He certainly made a commitment to my constituents, the local authority and others that we would be part of the flood summit. What has happened to that commitment? Are we expecting another flood summit for the whole of Yorkshire, or one for North Yorkshire?

Rebecca Pow: I will come on to talk about much of the funding that has gone to the rest of Yorkshire. We have had a great deal of engagement with colleagues and MPs, and I will cover that in my remarks.

What I want to say at the outset is that flood and coastal management is a very high priority for the Government. I am acutely aware of the impact on businesses and individuals, as the hon. Gentleman clearly pointed out. Coming from Somerset, I really am aware of exactly how it affects people.

I want to go back over the long recent history of flooding that Yorkshire has suffered. There have been a number of significant flooding events, notably in 2007 and 2012. There was the tidal surge of 2013, and then, in 2015, about 40,000 properties flooded. Sadly, people were affected. Very sadly, some people have died. This is very serious, and we take it very, very seriously. I will come on to highlight some of the different parts of Yorkshire that have suffered incidents and how we have dealt with them.

[Rebecca Pow]

In November 2019, South Yorkshire, which obviously includes Sheffield, Doncaster and Barnsley, saw rainfall of more than twice the monthly average. That resulted in widespread damage, the majority of which was in Doncaster, Bentley and Fishlake, as the right hon. Member for Doncaster North (Edward Miliband) has highlighted to me a number of times. In just 48 hours, about 150% of the average November rainfall fell over the River Don. Overall, the river levels rose to, and in some locations exceeded, the previous record which occurred in 2007.

In West Yorkshire in February, the impacts of Storm Ciara were felt most in the Calder valley, with over 800 properties severely affected. River levels rose to their highest or second highest recorded levels at Hebden Bridge, Mytholmroyd and Dewsbury, and at Gargrave on the River Aire.

About three weeks later, East Yorkshire—Yorkshire is a huge place, as we all know—was affected. The River Aire catchment area received over three and a half times the normal amount of rainfall for that time of year, and 100 properties were flooded in Snaith and East Cowick. February was the wettest on record for Yorkshire. At this point, and on behalf of the House, I must pay tribute to the emergency services, the Environment Agency, the local authorities, the Army, Government officials, and everyone who helped and responded in those very difficult times.

As I said, the Government are absolutely committed to investing in flood risk management, with £2.6 billion in flood defences committed between 2015 and 2021 to better protect 300,000 properties. As hon. Members will recall, at the Budget we confirmed the doubling of Government investment in flooding and coastal defences in England to £5.2 billion over the next six years from 2021. That will better protect a further 336,000 properties, including 290,000 homes. I think the hon. Member for Barnsley Central will agree that that is not insignificant.

In July, we published a long-term flood policy statement, which I really hope the hon. Gentleman has read because a great deal of effort went into it. We have had a real rethink of our direction on flooding, and that statement touches many of the things that are important to him and us. It includes five ambitious policies to accelerate progress and better protect and prepare the country, and 40 supporting actions, so I urge him to have a look at it. Alongside that, the Environment Agency has published a long-term flood and coast erosion risk management strategy for England, which dovetails with Government thinking.

Partnership funding, which the hon. Gentleman touched on, will continue to play a key part in delivering our £5.2 billion capital programme. DEFRA's partnership funding policy will help communities to be clear about what they can expect from DEFRA and what levels of partnership funding they need to enable projects to go ahead. The hon. Gentleman touched on that, and those details are quite clear about the partnership funding that has to go hand in hand with Government funding.

In 2019-20, the Government are investing more in Yorkshire than elsewhere in the country. Over time, Yorkshire has actually been very successful in securing Government funding and attracting partnership funding. The 2015-16 severe flooding in West Yorkshire, in Calderdale, Leeds and Bradford—I went up there on a

visit—and in York and North Yorkshire, drove major investment in complex and innovative schemes, in particular in Leeds, the Calder valley and even York. I say to the hon. Member for York Central (Rachael Maskell) that York has received £45 million of central Government flood funding to protect 700 homes, and £32 million for the Foss barrier to protect another 1,100 homes. That is a clear commitment.

Since 2015, the Yorkshire Regional Flood and Coastal Committee, which represents 12 local authorities, has received investment of £671 million, £496 of which is from the Government, to better protect 66,000 properties from flooding and coastal erosion. We can debate the hon. Lady's intimation that the Government have neglected to fund Yorkshire for a long time, but I have given some facts and statistics that clearly show that the Government are committed to Yorkshire.

East Yorkshire has had £42 million invested in the Hull river defences. I have mentioned North Yorkshire already, so let me come to South Yorkshire. Sheffield City Council is leading on a number of schemes, including Sheffield's lower Don valley, where the completed £19 million scheme has better protected 250 homes and key businesses. For Sheffield's upper Don valley, a £23 million investment will reduce the flood risk for more than 400 homes. That was recently awarded in the £170 million to which the right hon. Member for Doncaster North (Edward Miliband) referred.

Edward Miliband: I know that the hon. Lady cares deeply about this issue and did so even before she was a Minister. She mentioned the £170 million, but does she recognise the anger of my constituents, which I highlighted to my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley Central (Dan Jarvis), about the fact that those projects were not in Doncaster? My constituents in Bentley were flooded in 2007 and again in 2019. Does she recognise the need for action to minimise the risk that they are flooded again?

Rebecca Pow: The right hon. Gentleman makes a sound point. We have many schemes, grants and funds, but that has to be calculated. When we are working with the people who allocate the grants, it has to be done on the basis of the number of homes and properties protected. He knows that there is a formula for that. I urge him to continue to work with the EA, the Government and the local resilience forums so that the schemes that will help his people and communities can come forward.

In West Yorkshire, phase 1 of the Leeds flood alleviation is now complete, and phase 2 is well under way. That is a £94 million investment.

Looking ahead to the next six years, the Government will be investing over half a billion pounds in Yorkshire, with partnership funding making the overall figure significantly higher, reducing flood risk to approximately 22,000 homes. I have touched on the £170 million fund that has just been handed out to a whole range of projects that had been affected particularly during the coronavirus pandemic to help communities there. Indeed, £50 million of that went to Yorkshire, with £16 million going to the Sheffield upper Don Valley and the upper Don catchment natural flood management scheme to better protect 19,000 jobs and 665 businesses.

The hon. Member for Barnsley Central touched on natural flood management. I totally agree that this is one of the tools that have to be engaged with. Many projects

are already coming forward and there are many more to come. We are committed through our new flood policy statement to many more of these nature-based solutions.

Dan Jarvis: I really welcome what the Minister says about natural flood solutions, and I welcome the response that she is giving. However, it would be a terrible shame if we ended the debate without clarity about the summit. Hon. Friends have raised important points about the extent to which all of Yorkshire will be involved in this particular gathering. It would be really useful if she could clarify whether it is just for South Yorkshire or for the wider Yorkshire county area. If it is just for South Yorkshire, what plans are in place to ensure that the other constituent parts of the county get the support that they so urgently need as well?

Rebecca Pow: The hon. Member has been assiduous in pressing me. The meeting that the letter has gone out for is for South Yorkshire, and a raft of MPs have been invited to it. The Secretary of State and I very much want to discuss the issues that have been flagged up to me over the summer—actually, over all the months since I stepped into this role—and that is what we are going to discuss. We have had a great deal of engagement with other MPs. I can list for him all the constituencies, if he wants me to go back over that, all the people we have engaged with in our Department, and the flood schemes that the Environment Agency and DEFRA are engaged with.

Returning to nature-based solutions, this is a really important tool going forward, for a raft of reasons—not just for flood control, but to help with our climate

change mitigation and our policies on reaching net zero and carbon capture and storage. It has multiple benefits, and it is one of the tools that we will be using. The Government have committed a component of our capital programme to natural flood management and we have provided specific funding, in addition, for specific schemes. I hope that the hon. Member will welcome that, and that we will see more of these projects coming forward in Yorkshire in general.

On the tree front, I, too, am very keen to plant a great many trees. We have our tree strategy, which I hope the hon. Member has looked at, read and contributed to, because it is now closed. We will be summarising it shortly. It will inform the Government's commitment to plant 30,000 hectares per year across the UK by 2025. It sounds as if he is going to be playing his part in helping us to do that, which I very much welcome. Funding from the nature for climate fund will go towards helping with tree planting.

I think that we and the hon. Member have much in common: green recovery, climate change, and nature-based solutions. He needs to learn a lot more about what we are doing in DEFRA, because all these ideas are coming through, not least in the Environment Bill and the Government's commitment to a green recovery. I look forward to the meeting that is coming up on 8 October, and thank him very much, again, for raising this issue tonight.

Question put and agreed to.

7.58 pm

House adjourned.

Members Eligible for a Proxy Vote

The following is the list of Members currently certified as eligible for a proxy vote, and of the Members nominated as their proxy:

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy	Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney North and Stoke Newington)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy	Janet Daby (Lewisham East)	Chris Elmore
Debbie Abrahams (Oldham East and Saddleworth)	Chris Elmore	Geraint Davies (Swansea West)	Chris Evans
Tahir Ali (Birmingham, Hall Green)	Chris Elmore	Alex Davies-Jones (Pontypridd)	Chris Elmore
Dr Rosena Allin-Khan (Tooting)	Chris Elmore	David Davis (Haltemprice and Howden)	Stuart Andrew
Tonia Antoniazzi (Gower)	Chris Elmore	Martyn Day (Linlithgow and East Falkirk)	Patrick Grady
Mr Richard Bacon (South Norfolk)	Stuart Andrew	Marsha De Cordova (Battersea)	Rachel Hopkins
Siobhan Baillie (Stroud)	Stuart Andrew	Martin Docherty-Hughes (West Dunbartonshire)	Patrick Grady
Hannah Bardell (Livingston)	Patrick Grady	Nadine Dorries (Mid Bedfordshire)	Stuart Andrew
Mr John Baron (Basildon and Billericay)	Stuart Andrew	Steve Double (St Austell and Newquay)	Stuart Andrew
Margaret Beckett (Derby South)	Chris Elmore	Peter Dowd (Bootle)	Chris Elmore
Scott Benton (Blackpool South)	Stuart Andrew	Jack Dromey (Birmingham, Erdington)	Chris Elmore
Sir Paul Beresford (Mole Valley)	Stuart Andrew	Philip Dunne (Ludlow)	Jeremy Hunt
Jake Berry (Rossendale and Darwen)	Stuart Andrew	Mrs Natalie Elphicke (Dover)	Maria Caulfield
Bob Blackman (Harrow East)	Stuart Andrew	Florence Eshalomi (Vauxhall)	Chris Elmore
Kirsty Blackman (Aberdeen North)	Patrick Grady	Dr Luke Evans (Bosworth)	Stuart Andrew
Olivia Blake (Sheffield, Hallam)	Chris Elmore	Sir David Evennett (Bexleyheath and Crayford)	Stuart Andrew
Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough)	Stuart Andrew	Michael Fabricant (Lichfield)	Stuart Andrew
Steven Bonnar (Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill)	Patrick Grady	Marion Fellows (Motherwell and Wishaw)	Patrick Grady
Andrew Bridgen (North West Leicestershire)	Stuart Andrew	Margaret Ferrier (Rutherglen and Hamilton West)	Patrick Grady
Deidre Brock (Edinburgh North and Leith)	Patrick Grady	Colleen Fletcher (South Ribble)	Chris Elmore
Ms Lyn Brown (West Ham)	Chris Elmore	Stephen Flynn (Aberdeen South)	Patrick Grady
Richard Burgon (Leeds East)	Zarah Sultana	Vicky Foxcroft (Lewisham, Deptford)	Chris Elmore
Conor Burns (Bournemouth West)	Stuart Andrew	Mr Mark Francois (Rayleigh and Wickford)	Stuart Andrew
Liam Byrne (Birmingham, Hodge Hill)	Chris Elmore	George Freeman (Mid Norfolk)	Bim Afolami
Amy Callaghan (East Dunbartonshire)	Patrick Grady	Marcus Fysh (Yeovil)	Stuart Andrew
Dan Carden (Liverpool, Walton)	Chris Elmore	Sir Roger Gale (North Thanet)	Caroline Nokes
Andy Carter (Warrington South)	Katherine Fletcher	Preet Kaur Gill (Birmingham, Edgbaston)	Chris Elmore
Sarah Champion (Rotherham)	Chris Elmore	Dame Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham)	Stuart Andrew
Douglas Chapman (Dunfermline and West Fife)	Patrick Grady	Mary Glendon (North Tyneside)	Chris Elmore
Feryal Clark (Enfield North)	Chris Elmore	Mrs Helen Grant (Maidstone and The Weald)	Stuart Andrew
Simon Clarke (Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland)	Stuart Andrew	Peter Grant (Glenrothes)	Patrick Grady
Damian Collins (Folkestone and Hythe)	Stuart Andrew	Neil Gray (Airdrie and Shotts)	Patrick Grady
Rosie Cooper (West Lancashire)	Chris Elmore	Margaret Greenwood (Wirral West)	Chris Elmore
Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy	Nia Griffith (Llanelli)	Chris Elmore
Ronnie Cowan (Inverclyde)	Patrick Grady	Andrew Gwynne (Denton and Reddish)	Chris Elmore
Angela Crawley (Lanark and Hamilton East)	Patrick Grady	Fabian Hamilton (Leeds North East)	Chris Elmore
Stella Creasy (Walthamstow)	Chris Elmore	Greg Hands (Chelsea and Fulham)	Stuart Andrew
Tracey Crouch (Chatham and Aylesford)	Caroline Nokes	Neale Hanvey (Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath)	Patrick Grady
Judith Cummins (Bradford South)	Chris Elmore	Emma Hardy (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle)	Chris Elmore
		Ms Harriet Harman (Camberwell and Peckham)	Chris Elmore
		Sir Oliver Heald (North East Hertfordshire)	Stuart Andrew

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Sir Mark Hendrick (Preston)	Chris Elmore
Drew Hendry (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey)	Patrick Grady
Simon Hoare (North Dorset)	Fay Jones
Dame Margaret Hodge (Barking)	Chris Elmore
Mrs Sharon Hodgson (Washington and Sunderland West)	Chris Elmore
Adam Holloway (Gravesham)	Maria Caulfield
Paul Holmes (Eastleigh)	Stuart Andrew
Sir George Howarth (Knowsley)	Chris Elmore
Dr Neil Hudson (Penrith and The Border)	Stuart Andrew
Imran Hussain (Bradford East)	Mohammad Yasin
Ranil Jayawardena (North East Hampshire)	Stuart Andrew
Dame Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North)	Chris Elmore
Marcus Jones (Nuneaton)	Stuart Andrew
Alicia Kearns (Rutland and Melton)	Stuart Andrew
Barbara Keeley (Worsley and Eccles South)	Chris Elmore
Afzal Khan (Manchester, Gorton)	Chris Elmore
Sir Greg Knight (East Yorkshire)	Stuart Andrew
Ian Lavery (Wansbeck)	Kate Osborne
Chris Law (Dundee West)	Patrick Grady
Clive Lewis (Norwich South)	Lloyd Russell-Moyle
Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger (Bridgwater and West Somerset)	Stuart Andrew
Tony Lloyd (Rochdale)	Chris Elmore
Mr Jonathan Lord (Woking)	Stuart Andrew
Kenny MacAskill (East Lothian)	Patrick Grady
Angus Brendan MacNeil (Na h-Eileanan an Iar)	Patrick Grady
Karl McCartney (Lincoln)	Stuart Andrew
Andy McDonald (Middlesbrough)	Chris Elmore
Stewart Malcolm McDonald (Glasgow South)	Patrick Grady
Stuart C. McDonald (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East)	Patrick Grady
Anne McLaughlin (Glasgow North East)	Patrick Grady
Rachel Maclean (Redditch)	Stuart Andrew
Anna McMorrin (Cardiff North)	Chris Elmore
John Mc Nally (Falkirk)	Patrick Grady
Khalid Mahmood (Birmingham, Perry Barr)	Chris Elmore
Shabana Mahmood (Birmingham, Ladywood)	Chris Elmore

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Ian Mearns (Gateshead)	Chris Elmore
Mark Menzies (Fylde)	Stuart Andrew
Johnny Mercer (Plymouth, Moor View)	Stuart Andrew
Carol Monaghan (Glasgow North West)	Patrick Grady
Anne Marie Morris (Newton Abbot)	Stuart Andrew
David Morris (Morecambe and Lunesdale)	Stuart Andrew
James Murray (Ealing North)	Chris Elmore
Ian Murray (Edinburgh South)	Chris Elmore
Gavin Newlands (Paisley and Renfrewshire North)	Patrick Grady
John Nicolson (Ochil and South Perthshire)	Patrick Grady
Dr Matthew Offord (Hendon)	Rebecca Harris
Brendan O'Hara (Argyll and Bute)	Patrick Grady
Guy Opperman (Hexham)	Stuart Andrew
Kate Osamor (Edmonton)	Nadia Whittome
Mr Owen Paterson (North Shropshire)	Stuart Andrew
Sir Mike Penning (Hemel Hempstead)	Stuart Andrew
Toby Perkins	Chris Elmore
Dr Dan Poulter (Central Suffolk and North Ipswich)	Peter Aldous
Yasmin Qureshi (Bolton South East)	Chris Elmore
Christina Rees (Neath)	Chris Elmore
Ellie Reeves (Lewisham West and Penge)	Chris Elmore
Andrew Rosindell (Romford)	Sir Graham Brady
Mr Virendra Sharma (Ealing, Southall)	Chris Elmore
Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield)	Chris Elmore
Alec Shelbrooke (Elmet and Rothwell)	Stuart Andrew
Tulip Siddiq (Hampstead and Kilburn)	Chris Elmore
Alyn Smith (Stirling)	Patrick Grady
Sir Gary Streeter (South West Devon)	Stuart Andrew
Mel Stride (Central Devon)	Stuart Andrew
Jon Trickett (Hemsworth)	Ian Byrne
Karl Turner (Kingston upon Hull East)	Chris Elmore
Dr Jamie Wallis (Bridgend)	Stuart Andrew
Claudia Webbe (Leicester East)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Dr Philippa Whitford (Central Ayrshire)	Patrick Grady
Hywel Williams (Arfon)	Liz Saville Roberts

Deferred Divisions

IMMIGRATION

That the draft Immigration (Health Charge) (Amendment) Order 2020, which was laid before this House on 21 July, be approved.

The House divided: Ayes 348, Noes 250.

Division No. 119]

AYES

Adams, Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Ahmad Khan, Imran
Aiken, Nickie
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Amess, Sir David
Anderson, Lee
Anderson, Stuart
Andrew, Stuart
Ansell, Caroline
Argar, Edward
Atherton, Sarah
Atkins, Victoria
Bacon, Gareth
Bacon, Mr Richard
Badenoch, Kemi
Bailey, Shaun
Baillie, Siobhan
Baker, Duncan
Baker, Mr Steve
Baldwin, Harriett
Barclay, rh Steve
Baron, Mr John
Baynes, Simon
Bell, Aaron
Benton, Scott
Beresford, Sir Paul
Berry, rh Jake
Bhatti, Saqib
Blackman, Bob
Blunt, Crispin
Bone, Mr Peter
Bottomley, Sir Peter
Bowie, Andrew
Bradley, Ben
Bradley, rh Karen
Brady, Sir Graham
Braverman, rh Suella
Brereton, Jack
Bridgen, Andrew
Brine, Steve
Bristow, Paul
Britcliffe, Sara
Brokenshire, rh James
Browne, Anthony
Bruce, Fiona
Buchan, Felicity
Buckland, rh Robert
Burghart, Alex
Burns, rh Conor
Butler, Rob
Cairns, rh Alun
Campbell, Mr Gregory
Carter, Andy
Cartlidge, James
Cash, Sir William
Cates, Miriam
Caulfield, Maria
Chalk, Alex

Churchill, Jo
Clarke, Mr Simon
Clarke, Theo
Clarke-Smith, Brendan
Clarkson, Chris
Cleverly, rh James
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse
Colburn, Elliot
Collins, Damian
Costa, Alberto
Courts, Robert
Coutinho, Claire
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
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
Graham, Richard
Grant, Mrs Helen
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
Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Heapey, James
Heaton-Harris, Chris
Henderson, Gordon
Henry, Darren
Higginbotham, Antony
Hinds, rh Damian
Hoare, Simon
Holden, Mr Richard
Hollinrake, Kevin
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Holloway, Adam
Holmes, Paul
Howell, John
Howell, Paul
Huddleston, Nigel
Hudson, Dr Neil
Hughes, Eddie
Hunt, Jane
Hunt, rh Jeremy
Hunt, Tom
Jack, rh Mr Alister
Javid, rh Sajid
Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenkinson, Mark
Jenkyns, Andrea
Jenrick, rh Robert
Johnson, Dr Caroline
Johnson, Gareth
Johnston, David
Jones, Andrew
Jones, rh Mr David
Jones, Fay
Jones, Mr Marcus
Jupp, Simon
Kawczynski, Daniel
Kearns, Alicia
Keegan, Gillian

Knight, rh Sir Greg
Knight, Julian
Kruger, Danny
Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
Lamont, John
Largan, Robert
Leadsom, rh Andrea
Levy, Ian
Lewer, Andrew
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Lockhart, Carla
Loder, Chris
Logan, Mark
Longhi, Marco
Lopez, Julia
Lopresti, Jack
Lord, Mr Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Mackinlay, Craig
Mackrory, Cherilyn
Maclean, Rachel
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, Kit
Mangnall, Anthony
Mann, Scott
Marson, Julie
May, rh Mrs Theresa
Mayhew, Jerome
Maynard, Paul
McCartney, Jason
McCartney, Karl
McVey, rh Esther
Menzies, Mark
Mercer, Johnny
Merriman, Huw
Metcalf, Stephen
Millar, Robin
Miller, rh Mrs Maria
Milling, rh Amanda
Mills, Nigel
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Mohindra, Mr Gagan
Moore, Damien
Moore, Robbie
Mordaunt, rh Penny
Morris, Anne Marie
Morris, David
Morris, James
Morrissey, Joy
Morton, Wendy
Mullan, Dr Kieran
Mumby-Croft, Holly
Mundell, rh David
Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Neill, Sir Robert
Nici, Lia
Nokes, rh Caroline
Norman, rh Jesse
O'Brien, Neil
Offord, Dr Matthew
Opperman, Guy
Paisley, Ian
Parish, Neil
Paterson, rh Mr Owen
Pawsey, Mark
Penning, rh Sir Mike
Penrose, John
Percy, Andrew
Philp, Chris
Pincher, rh Christopher
Poulter, Dr Dan
Pow, Rebecca

Prentis, Victoria
 Pritchard, Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Randall, Tom
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
 Richards, Nicola
 Richardson, Angela
 Roberts, Rob
 Robinson, Gavin
 Robinson, Mary
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Ross, Douglas
 Rowley, Lee
 Russell, Dean
 Rutley, David
 Sambrook, Gary
 Saxby, Selaine
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shannon, Jim
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec
 Simmonds, David
 Skidmore, rh Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Greg
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Spencer, Dr Ben
 Spencer, rh Mark
 Stafford, Alexander
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, Jane
 Stewart, Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel

Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunderland, James
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Thomas, Derek
 Throup, Maggie
 Timpson, Edward
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Trevelyan, rh Anne-Marie
 Trott, Laura
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Tugendhat, Tom
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Vickers, Matt
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Wakeford, Christian
 Walker, Sir Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallis, Dr Jamie
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Webb, Suzanne
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whittaker, Craig
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Wild, James
 Williams, Craig
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, Mr William
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Young, Jacob
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Daby, Janet
 Davey, rh Ed
 David, Wayne
 Davies, Geraint
 Davies-Jones, Alex
 Day, Martyn
 Debbonaire, Thangam
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin
 Dodds, Anneliese
 Doogan, Dave
 Dorans, Allan
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Dromey, Jack
 Duffield, Rosie
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Eastwood, Colum
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Elmore, Chris
 Eshalomi, Florence
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Farry, Stephen
 Fellows, Marion
 Ferrier, Margaret
 Fletcher, Colleen
 Flynn, Stephen
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Foy, Mary Kelly
 Furniss, Gill
 Gardiner, Barry
 Gibson, Patricia
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Glendon, Mary
 Grady, Patrick
 Grant, Peter
 Gray, Neil
 Green, Kate
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Griffith, Nia
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hanna, Claire
 Hanvey, Neale
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hayes, Helen
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hendry, Drew
 Hill, Mike
 Hillier, Meg
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hopkins, Rachel
 Hosie, Stewart
 Howarth, rh Sir George
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Jarvis, Dan
 Johnson, Dame Diana
 Johnson, Kim
 Jones, Darren
 Jones, Gerald

Jones, rh Mr Kevan
 Jones, Ruth
 Jones, Sarah
 Kane, Mike
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Khan, Afzal
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Kyle, Peter
 Lake, Ben
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Law, Chris
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Linden, David
 Lloyd, Tony
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lynch, Holly
 MacAskill, Kenny
 MacNeil, Angus Brendan
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Maskell, Rachael
 Matheson, Christian
 Mc Nally, John
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McLaughlin, Anne
 McMahan, Jim
 McMorris, Anna
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Mishra, Navendu
 Monaghan, Carol
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Murray, Ian
 Murray, James
 Nandy, Lisa
 Newlands, Gavin
 Nichols, Charlotte
 Nicolson, John
 Norris, Alex
 O'Hara, Brendan
 O'Leary, Sarah
 Onwurah, Chi
 Opong-Asare, Abena
 Osamor, Kate
 Osborne, Kate
 Oswald, Kirsten
 Owatemi, Taiwo
 Owen, Sarah
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Penningcook, Matthew
 Perkins, Mr Toby
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pollard, Luke
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rayner, Angela
 Reed, Steve

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
 Abrahams, Debbie
 Ali, Rushanara
 Ali, Tahir
 Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
 Amesbury, Mike
 Anderson, Fleur
 Antoniazzi, Tonia
 Ashworth, Jonathan
 Bardell, Hannah
 Barker, Paula
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Begum, Apsana
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Black, Mhairi
 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

Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Bryant, Chris
 Burgon, Richard
 Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, Ian
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Callaghan, Amy
 Cameron, Dr Lisa
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan
 Carden, Dan
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Chamberlain, Wendy
 Champion, Sarah
 Chapman, Douglas
 Charalambous, Bambos
 Cherry, Joanna
 Clark, Feryal
 Cooper, Daisy
 Cooper, Rosie
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Cowan, Ronnie
 Coyle, Neil
 Crawley, Angela
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon

Rees, Christina
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, Rachel
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Rodda, Matt
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Saville Roberts, rh Liz
 Shah, Naz
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Sheppard, Tommy
 Siddiq, Tulip
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smith, Alyn
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, Nick
 Smyth, Karin
 Sobel, Alex
 Spellar, rh John
 Starmer, rh Keir
 Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo
 Stringer, Graham
 Sultana, Zarah

Tami, rh Mark
 Tarry, Sam
 Thewliss, Alison
 Thomas, Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick
 Thompson, Owen
 Thomson, Richard
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twist, Liz
 Vaz, rh Valerie
 Webbe, Claudia
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitford, Dr Philippa
 Whitley, Mick
 Whittome, Nadia
 Wilson, Munira
 Winter, Beth
 Wishart, Pete
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Churchill, Jo
 Clarke, Mr Simon
 Clarke, Theo
 Clarke-Smith, Brendan
 Clarkson, Chris
 Cleverly, rh James
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse
 Colburn, Elliot
 Collins, Damian
 Costa, Alberto
 Courts, Robert
 Coutinho, Claire
 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
 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
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 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
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Heapey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Henderson, Gordon
 Henry, Darren
 Higginbotham, Antony
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Holden, Mr Richard
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Adam
 Holmes, Paul
 Howell, John
 Howell, Paul
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hudson, Dr Neil
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, Jane
 Hunt, rh Jeremy
 Hunt, Tom
 Jack, rh Mr Alister
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jenkinson, Mark
 Jenkyns, Andrea
 Jenrick, rh Robert
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnston, David
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Fay
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Jupp, Simon
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Kearns, Alicia
 Keegan, Gillian
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian
 Kruger, Danny
 Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
 Lamont, John
 Langan, Robert
 Leadsom, rh Andrea
 Levy, Ian
 Lewer, Andrew
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Lockhart, Carla
 Loder, Chris

Question accordingly agreed to.

The list of Members currently certified as eligible for a proxy vote, and of the Members nominated as their proxy, is published at the end of today's debates.

EMPLOYMENT

That the draft Restriction of Public Sector Exit Payments Regulations 2020, which were laid before this House on 21 July, be approved.

The House divided: Ayes 347, Noes 249.

Division No. 120]

AYES

Adams, Nigel
 Afolami, Bim
 Ahmad Khan, Imran
 Aiken, Nickie
 Aldous, Peter
 Allan, Lucy
 Amess, Sir David
 Anderson, Lee
 Anderson, Stuart
 Andrew, Stuart
 Ansell, Caroline
 Argar, Edward
 Atherton, Sarah
 Atkins, Victoria
 Bacon, Gareth
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Badenoch, Kemi
 Bailey, Shaun
 Baillie, Siobhan
 Baker, Duncan
 Baker, Mr Steve
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barclay, rh Steve
 Baron, Mr John
 Baynes, Simon
 Bell, Aaron
 Benton, Scott
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Berry, rh Jake
 Bhatti, Saqib

Blackman, Bob
 Blunt, Crispin
 Bone, Mr Peter
 Bottomley, Sir Peter
 Bowie, Andrew
 Bradley, Ben
 Bradley, rh Karen
 Brady, Sir Graham
 Braverman, rh Suella
 Brereton, Jack
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Brine, Steve
 Bristow, Paul
 Britcliffe, Sara
 Brokenshire, rh James
 Browne, Anthony
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buchan, Felicity
 Buckland, rh Robert
 Burghart, Alex
 Burns, rh Conor
 Butler, Rob
 Cairns, rh Alun
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Carter, Andy
 Cartledge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Cates, Miriam
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, Alex

Logan, Mark
 Longhi, Marco
 Lopez, Julia
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Mackrory, Cherilyn
 Maclean, Rachel
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mangnall, Anthony
 Mann, Scott
 Marson, Julie
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Mayhew, Jerome
 Maynard, Paul
 McCartney, Jason
 McCartney, Karl
 McVey, rh Esther
 Menzies, Mark
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Millar, Robin
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, rh Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Mohindra, Mr Gagan
 Moore, Damien
 Moore, Robbie
 Mordaut, rh Penny
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Morrissey, Joy
 Morton, Wendy
 Mullan, Dr Kieran
 Mumby-Croft, Holly
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Neill, Sir Robert
 Nici, Lia
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norman, rh Jesse
 O'Brien, Neil
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Paisley, Ian
 Parish, Neil
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Philp, Chris
 Pincher, rh Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, Victoria
 Pritchard, Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Randall, Tom
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
 Richards, Nicola
 Richardson, Angela
 Roberts, Rob
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Gavin

Robinson, Mary
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Ross, Douglas
 Rowley, Lee
 Russell, Dean
 Rutley, David
 Sambrook, Gary
 Saxby, Selaine
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shannon, Jim
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec
 Skidmore, rh Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Greg
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Spencer, Dr Ben
 Spencer, rh Mark
 Stafford, Alexander
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, Jane
 Stewart, Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunderland, James
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Thomas, Derek
 Throup, Maggie
 Timpson, Edward
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Trevelyan, rh Anne-Marie
 Trott, Laura
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Tugendhat, Tom
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Vickers, Matt
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Wakeford, Christian
 Walker, Sir Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallis, Dr Jamie
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Webb, Suzanne
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whittaker, Craig
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Wild, James
 Williams, Craig
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, Mr William
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Young, Jacob
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
 Abrahams, Debbie
 Ali, Rushanara
 Ali, Tahir
 Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
 Amesbury, Mike
 Anderson, Fleur
 Antoniazzi, Tonia
 Ashworth, Jonathan
 Bardell, Hannah
 Barker, Paula
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Begum, Apsana
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Black, Mhairi
 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
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Bryant, Chris
 Burgon, Richard
 Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, Ian
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Callaghan, Amy
 Cameron, Dr Lisa
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan
 Carden, Dan
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Chamberlain, Wendy
 Champion, Sarah
 Chapman, Douglas
 Charalambous, Bambos
 Cherry, Joanna
 Clark, Feryal
 Cooper, Daisy
 Cooper, Rosie
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Cowan, Ronnie
 Coyle, Neil
 Crawley, Angela
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Daby, Janet
 Davey, rh Ed
 David, Wayne
 Davies, Geraint
 Davies-Jones, Alex
 Day, Martyn
 Debbonaire, Thangam
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin
 Dodds, Anneliese
 Doogan, Dave
 Dorans, Allan
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Dromey, Jack

NOES

Duffield, Rosie
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Eastwood, Colum
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Elmore, Chris
 Eshalomi, Florence
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Farry, Stephen
 Fellows, Marion
 Ferrier, Margaret
 Fletcher, Colleen
 Flynn, Stephen
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Foy, Mary Kelly
 Furniss, Gill
 Gardiner, Barry
 Gibson, Patricia
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Glindon, Mary
 Grady, Patrick
 Grant, Peter
 Gray, Neil
 Green, Kate
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Griffith, Nia
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hanna, Claire
 Hanvey, Neale
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hayes, Helen
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hendry, Drew
 Hill, Mike
 Hillier, Meg
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hopkins, Rachel
 Hosie, Stewart
 Howarth, rh Sir George
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Jarvis, Dan
 Johnson, Dame Diana
 Johnson, Kim
 Jones, Darren
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, rh Mr Kevan
 Jones, Ruth
 Jones, Sarah
 Kane, Mike
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Khan, Afzal
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Kyle, Peter
 Lake, Ben
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Law, Chris
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Linden, David
 Lloyd, Tony
 Long Bailey, Rebecca

Lucas, Caroline
 Lynch, Holly
 MacAskill, Kenny
 MacNeil, Angus Brendan
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Maskell, Rachael
 Matheson, Christian
 Mc Nally, John
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McLaughlin, Anne
 McMahon, Jim
 McMorris, Anna
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Mishra, Navendu
 Monaghan, Carol
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Stephen

Morris, Grahame
 Murray, Ian
 Murray, James
 Nandy, Lisa
 Newlands, Gavin
 Nichols, Charlotte
 Nicolson, John
 Norris, Alex
 O'Hara, Brendan
 Olney, Sarah
 Onwurah, Chi
 Oppong-Asare, Abena
 Osamor, Kate
 Osborne, Kate
 Oswald, Kirsten
 Owatemi, Taiwo
 Owen, Sarah
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Mr Toby
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pollard, Luke
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rayner, Angela
 Reed, Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, Rachel
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bell

Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Rodda, Matt
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Saville Roberts, rh Liz
 Shah, Naz
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Sheppard, Tommy
 Siddiq, Tulip
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smith, Alyn
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, Nick
 Smyth, Karin
 Sobel, Alex
 Starmer, rh Keir
 Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo
 Stringer, Graham
 Sultana, Zarah
 Tami, rh Mark
 Tarry, Sam
 Thewliss, Alison

Thomas, Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick
 Thompson, Owen
 Thomson, Richard
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twist, Liz
 Vaz, rh Valerie
 Webbe, Claudia
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitford, Dr Philippa
 Whitley, Mick
 Whittome, Nadia
 Wilson, Munira
 Winter, Beth
 Wishart, Pete
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Question accordingly agreed to.

The list of Members currently certified as eligible for a proxy vote, and of the Members nominated as their proxy, is published at the end of today's debates.

Written Statements

Wednesday 30 September 2020

CABINET OFFICE

Boundary Commission for Wales: Appointments

The Minister for the Constitution and Devolution (Chloe Smith): I should like to inform the House that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office (Michael Gove) has made the following appointments under schedule 1 to the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986, following a competition run in accordance with the governance code on public appointments:

Huw Vaughan Thomas, appointed as a member of the Boundary Commission for Wales, effective from 5 October 2020 until 4 October 2025; and Sam Hartley, appointed as a member of the Boundary Commission for Wales, effective from 5 October 2020 until 4 October 2025.

[HCWS481]

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act: Section 46 Report

The Minister for Asia (Nigel Adams): My hon. Friend, the Minister for South Asia and the Commonwealth (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon), has made the following written statement:

Section 57(3) of the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018 (“the Act”) provides that, if any report required by the Act is not laid before Parliament at the relevant time, the appropriate Minister must publish a written statement explaining the reasons.

On 11 April 2019 the Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Dominic Raab) laid before Parliament the Sanctions (EU Exit) (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2019 (S.I. 2019/843) (“the correction regulations”) to correct minor errors in a number of sanctions regulations that had been made under the Act during March 2019.

In making the correction regulations, the Minister was required by section 45(2)(b) of the Act to consider in respect of each discretionary purpose (i.e. a purpose which is not in compliance with a UN or any other international obligation) of the sanctions regulations being amended by the correction regulations: that carrying out that purpose would meet one or more of the conditions in paragraphs (a) to (i) of section 1(2) of the Act, that there are good reasons to pursue that purpose, and that the imposition of sanctions is a reasonable course of action for that purpose.

The Minister was further required by section 46(2) of the Act to lay a report before Parliament at the same time as the correction regulations explaining why he was of that opinion that the discretionary purposes had been met.

In this case, the Minister reached the conclusions in respect of section 45(2)(b) for substantially the same reasons as set out in the statutory reports that the Minister had laid before Parliament, in the preceding month, alongside the following statutory instruments:

on 7 March in respect of the Iran (Sanctions) (Nuclear) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (S.I. 2019/461) (available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2019/461/pdfs/ukxi020190461_en.pdf); on 8 March in respect of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (Sanctions) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (S.I. 2019/411) (available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2019/411/pdfs/ukxi020190411_en.pdf); on 15 March in respect of the Counter-Terrorism (International Sanctions) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (S.I. 2019/573) (available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2019/573/pdfs/ukxi020190573_en.pdf).

However, due to a regrettable administrative oversight in the Department, the report required by section 46(2) of the Sanctions Act was not laid before Parliament. The responsible Department has amended its practices to ensure that all statutory reports are laid before Parliament as required.

[HCWS479]

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Obligations of Undertakings) (Amendment) (England) Reg

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Nadhim Zahawi): On 26 March 2020, the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020 came into force, imposing restrictions on people’s movements and gatherings, and requiring the closure of certain retail and public premises, in the interest of public health in light of the coronavirus pandemic. A review of these regulations must take place at least every 28 days to ensure the restrictions remain necessary. Those regulations are now referred to as the No.2 regulations, given amendments made. They were last amended on Thursday 24 September 2020. Separately, BEIS’ regulations: the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Obligations of Hospitality Undertakings) (England) Regulations 2020 came into force on Saturday 18 September, where hospitality sector business had placed on them obligations which had previously only featured in HMG guidance.

Taking into account scientific advice, and taking into consideration the Government’s assessment, we now require further amendments to the regulations to give effect to changes as announced by the Prime Minister on 23 September 2020 to take effect at midnight on Sunday evening-Monday morning 28 September 2020.

The changes coming into effect are:

That where relevant premises are identified by the Health Protection (coronavirus, wearing of face coverings in a relevant place) (England) regulations 2020, that businesses will have to display signage or use other means to remind people of their legal obligation to wear face coverings;

That in cafés, restaurants, bars and public houses, that singing, dancing and loud music are not permitted, save for specific exceptions being permitted;

That provisions which were included in BEIS original coronavirus regulations regarding respecting the rule of six in relation to taking bookings, admitting parties or allowing mingling of groups, this has been extended beyond hospitality as it was originally drafted, to mirror the scope of the Health Protection (coronavirus, collection of contact details etc and related requirements) regulations 2020.

These regulations should come into force after midnight on 28 September 2020. The hope was to have laid before Parliament on 25 September 2020 but we were timed out as Parliament rose at 15:00hrs.

These regulations follow the made affirmative procedure. These changes are being made under the emergency procedure, approved by Parliament, because it is necessary for Government to respond quickly to the reduced rate of transmission and our assessment of the current situation. While any restrictions and requirements imposed by law place a significant burden on business, the rising R number in England, and other more restrictive measures elsewhere, mean that it is incumbent on Government to act swiftly to prevent more onerous restrictions or closures being required.

The provisions outlined in these new regulations are necessary to prevent, protect against, control or provide a public health response to the incidence or spread of infection in England with the coronavirus. These additional restrictions offer an opportunity for businesses to operate with restrictions, rather than close. These amendments have been prepared urgently. In order to provide urgent clarity and certainty to the public and businesses of the changes being made and what activity is and is not allowed, I have decided that it is necessary for these regulations to come into force on 28 September 2020 and to then be laid before Parliament forthwith.

Under section 45R of the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984, the relevant instrument may be made without a draft having been laid and approved by Parliament if it contains a declaration that the person making it is of the opinion that, by reason of urgency, it is necessary to make it without a draft being so laid and approved.

I have included such a declaration in these amending regulations.

I hope you understand why we proceeded in this way, and stand ready, as ever, to answer any questions you may have.

Publicly available Government guidance on www.gov.uk is being updated to ensure it fully corresponds with the amended regulations. These remain strict measures, but they are measures that we must take in order to protect our NHS and to save lives.

[HCWS478]

Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Paul Scully): I am today announcing final terms of reference for the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry. The inquiry follows the conclusion of the group litigation involving postmasters and Post Office Limited (Post Office Ltd) in December 2019, the Prime Minister's commitment on 26 February 2020 and my written statement of 10 June 2020.

The Horizon dispute and court case has been ongoing for many years and has had a hugely negative impact on affected postmasters and their families. In his judgments in the "Common Issues" and "Horizon Issues" trials, Mr Justice Fraser identified significant failings at Post Office Ltd and with the Horizon IT system over a number of years.

The Government have formed this inquiry to fully understand these events, gather available evidence and ensure lessons have been learnt so that this cannot occur again. Having listened to affected postmasters, the Government have expanded the scope of the inquiry to ensure they get answers to questions that postmasters and others are seeking. The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), my right hon. Friend the Member for Reading West (Alok Sharma) has therefore invited Sir Wyn Williams FLSW to conduct an inquiry following the judgments of Mr Justice Fraser in the Bates versus Post Office Group Litigation into Post Office Ltd's Horizon IT system and other related issues arising from the findings of Justice Fraser and the settlement reached following this trial.

To reflect the additional focus of Sir Wyn's work to that announced in June, it will be called an inquiry, rather than a review. Following commitments from both Post Office Ltd and Fujitsu UK to co-operate with the inquiry, the inquiry will be run on a non-statutory basis and have the following terms of reference:

Government want to be fully assured that through the inquiry there is a public summary of the failings that occurred, which were associated with Post Office Ltd's Horizon IT system. The inquiry will draw on the findings made by Mr Justice Fraser from the Bates versus Post Office Group Litigation (in particular Judgment (No3) "Common Issues" and Judgment (No 6) "Horizon issues") and other evidence, listen to those that have been most affected, understand what went wrong, and assess whether lessons have been learned and concrete changes have taken place or are underway at Post Office Ltd.

The inquiry shall:

A: Understand and acknowledge what went wrong in relation to Horizon, leading to the Group Litigation Order, by drawing on evidence from the Horizon judgments and affected postmasters' experiences and identify what key lessons must be learned for the future;

B: Build upon the findings of Mr Justice Fraser, by obtaining all available relevant evidence from Post Office Ltd, Fujitsu and BEIS to establish a clear account of the implementation and failings of Horizon over its lifecycle;

C: Assess whether Post Office Ltd has learned the lessons from the criticisms made by Mr Justice Fraser in the "Common Issues" and "Horizon Issues" trials and those identified by affected postmasters and has delivered or made good progress on the organisational and cultural changes necessary to ensure a similar case does not happen in the future;

D: Assess whether the commitments made by Post Office Ltd within the mediation settlement—including the historical shortfall scheme—have been properly delivered;

E: Assess whether the processes and information provided by Post Office Ltd to postmasters are sufficient; to enable both parties to meet their contractual obligations; and to enable postmasters to run their businesses. This includes assessing whether Post Office Ltd's related processes such as recording and resolving postmaster queries, dispute handling, suspension and termination are fit for purpose. In addition, determine whether the quality of the service offer for postmasters and their relationship with Post Office Ltd has materially improved since the conclusions reached by Mr Justice Fraser; and

F: Examine the governance and whistleblowing controls now in place at Post Office Ltd and whether they are sufficient to ensure that the failings that led to the Horizon case issues do not happen again.

The inquiry will consider only those matters set out in the preceding sections A-F. Post Office Ltd's prosecution function, matters of criminal law, the Horizon group damages settlement, the conduct of current or future litigation relating to Horizon and or the engagement or findings of any other supervisory or complaints mechanisms, including in the public sector, are outside the inquiry's scope.

The inquiry will be led by Sir Wyn Williams FLSW, as the Chair of the inquiry. He will be supported by up to four independent advisers. These independent advisers will support Sir Wyn Williams by providing advice on the sources, content and interpretation of evidence received as appropriate. They may also provide independent scrutiny and challenge in relation to emerging findings and recommendations.

The inquiry should make any recommendations it sees fit, including actions that may, in its view, be appropriate as a result of its findings. The inquiry will aim to submit its findings to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy at the latest by summer 2021. The final report will be published by the Secretary of State and the Government will respond in due course.

In order to understand the range of issues fully and provide constructive challenge, the inquiry will undertake engagement with significant stakeholder groups, including current and former postmasters, Post Office Ltd, Fujitsu UK, BEIS and other third parties to identify information that is relevant to and within the scope of the inquiry.

[HCWS477]

HOME DEPARTMENT

Windrush Lessons Learned Review Response

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel): Today we are publishing the Home Office's comprehensive improvement plan, in response to the Windrush lessons learned review. We have worked closely with community leaders and the cross-government Windrush working group to get this important work right, and I am pleased to have the backing of co-chair Bishop Derek Webley on the steps we are taking. I am also grateful to independent reviewer Wendy Williams for the help she has given in shaping our approach.

The Windrush lessons learned review, published in March, exposed unacceptable failings in the Home Office over many years and an "institutional ignorance and thoughtlessness towards the issue of race and the history of the Windrush generation". I have already accepted Wendy Williams's important findings and repeated my heartfelt apology for the suffering that members of the Windrush generation endured.

The comprehensive improvement plan sets out the action we are taking to put this right and to ensure the mistakes of the past can never be repeated.

It details the work taking place across the Department under the five themes I previously laid out.

Righting the wrongs and learning from the past

We are determined to ensure the Windrush generation have the full help and support they deserve. More than £2.5 million has now been offered through the Windrush

compensation scheme and over 13,300 documents have been provided to over 11,500 individuals confirming their status or British citizenship. We are doing more to reach those affected and encourage them to come forward, via a new national communications campaign.

Every member of Home Office staff will also undertake mandatory training on the history of migration and race in the UK so that they better understand the impact of departmental decisions, including when developing and applying immigration policy.

An inclusive workforce

We have relaunched our race action plan to help improve the diversity of staff in senior roles and ensure the Home Office reflects the diverse communities it serves. The permanent secretary has commissioned an overhaul of how performance is managed to better support black, Asian and minority ethnic colleagues. To provide robust challenge to our plans to make the Home Office more diverse, external experts will also be invited to join the refreshed strategic advisory board we have established.

Openness to scrutiny

I have directed my officials to engage with community leaders, civil society and the public throughout the policy-making process to understand real-life impacts. It is crucial that the Department is receptive to outside challenge, so I am creating a new community and stakeholder engagement hub at the centre of the Home Office. This will draw on best practice to build knowledge and skills across the Department.

We recognise the particular circumstances of those who travel to this country to work and live and so we are consulting with the cross-government Windrush working group to recommend how best to engage with migrant communities directly and facilitate their feedback into our policy development and operational activity.

In addition, we are overhauling the Department's risk management framework to ensure all staff have the knowledge and responsibility to act upon risks that are identified.

Inclusive and robust policy making

We are improving how we assess the effect of our policies on people from different backgrounds, including by carrying out more training for staff on how to do this well. We have worked with the Equality and Human Rights Commission on its investigation into how the Department fulfilled its public sector equality duty on policies affecting the Windrush generation. Following the publication of its report, we will work with it to ensure this important duty is fully considered in all our work.

We are also putting in place a set of policy tests to ensure the key findings from the Windrush lessons learned review are applied as new policy is developed.

A more compassionate approach—people not cases

This theme is the crux of the cultural change the permanent secretary and I want to see. The Home Office must embrace the human impact of its work and empower staff throughout the Department to do the same. To support this, I have launched a new mandatory "Face Behind the Case" training course for all UK visa and immigration staff, with plans to expand this to

other areas. A young people's board is being established to gain crucial insight from those who have recently experienced the immigration system. We are also making rapid progress on the new vision for the Home Office, consulting staff on the core values we all want to embody.

I have already committed to a full review and evaluation of the compliant environment. While it is right that the Department acts against those who are in the UK illegally, we continue to look closely at how innocent people were wrongly caught up in policies designed to target law breakers. The system must be strong, but it also must be just, so if problems are found, I will fix them.

The comprehensive improvement plan will help transform the Home Office and deliver the lasting and meaningful change the Windrush generation deserve. We will monitor our progress and welcome Wendy Williams's return in September 2021 where I am confident she will see the start of a genuine culture shift.

More detail is available in the comprehensive improvement plan, which has been laid before Parliament (CP 293), available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/windrush-lessons-learned-review-responsecomprehensive-improvement-plan>.

Copies are also available from the Vote Office.

[HCWS480]

Ministerial Correction

Wednesday 30 September 2020

EDUCATION

Students' Return to Universities

The following is an extract from the statement by the Secretary of State for Education, the right hon. Member for South Staffordshire (Gavin Williamson) on 29 September 2020.

Gavin Williamson: It is essential that we continue to allow our students to have face-to-face teaching wherever possible, as part of a blended learning approach. I have heard the Opposition call for all learning to move online. Although online learning is a highly effective part of the learning experience, many courses, including medicine and dentistry, as well as the creative arts,

require a face-to-face element. That is why our guidance, published on 11 September, set out a tiered approach in higher education.

[Official Report, 29 September 2020, Vol. 681, c. 158.]

Letter of correction from the Secretary of State for Education, the right hon. Member for South Staffordshire (Gavin Williamson):

An error has been identified in the statement I made to the House on 29 September 2020.

The correct statement should have been:

Gavin Williamson: It is essential that we continue to allow our students to have face-to-face teaching wherever possible, as part of a blended learning approach. I have heard the Opposition call for all learning to move online. Although online learning is a highly effective part of the learning experience, many courses, including medicine and dentistry, as well as the creative arts, require a face-to-face element. That is why our guidance, published on 10 September, set out a tiered approach in higher education.

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**not later than
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