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26 January 2021**

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**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**
(HANSARD)

Tuesday 26 January 2021

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The House met at half-past Eleven o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Virtual participation in proceedings commenced (Orders, 4 June and 30 December 2020).

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

Oral Answers to Questions

TREASURY

The Chancellor of the Exchequer was asked—

VAT Retail Export Scheme

Gavin Newlands (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP): What discussions he has had with representatives of the (a) retail and (b) aviation industries on the VAT retail export scheme and airside extra statutory concessions. [911349]

The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (Kemi Badenoch): During the consultation on duty free and tax-free goods carried by passengers in 2020, the Government engaged extensively with various stakeholders and carefully considered 73 consultation responses. I have continued to meet stakeholders, including retail and aviation representatives, following our announcement.

Gavin Newlands [V]: Given the deep trouble within retail and aviation, with Debenhams one of many chains disappearing from high streets with the loss of tens of thousands of jobs and, as the Minister will be aware with Stansted and its importance for employment in her constituency, aviation by and large grounded, does she not accept it was a mistake to scrap the VAT retail export scheme and the extra-statutory concessions, both of which brought much needed revenue to the retail sector at airports, which is now lost from the economy, possibly for good?

Kemi Badenoch: We do not accept that. The independent Office for Budget Responsibility set out its assessment of the fiscal impact of the withdrawal of the VAT RES scheme, factoring in a higher than usual elasticity to account for spending on luxury goods. Its estimate is that this will result in a significant Exchequer saving of about £400 million per year. On airports, we recognise the challenges the aviation sector is facing as it recovers from the impacts of covid-19. We have supported the sector throughout the pandemic and continue to do so. This includes the recently announced airport and ground operator support scheme, which will provide eligible firms with support of up to £8 million per claimant.

Financial Support Schemes: Equitable Access

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): If he will ensure that people who are unable to participate in work as a result of (a) home schooling and (b) following other Government covid-19 guidance have equitable access to financial support schemes. [911350]

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Jesse Norman): Since their introduction, the coronavirus job retention scheme and the self-employment income support scheme have been available to those unable to go to work because of caring responsibilities arising from covid-19, such as caring for a home schooling child or caring for a vulnerable individual. Those who are unable to work from home and have been told to shield have also been eligible for these support schemes, as well as for statutory sick pay and employment and support allowance.

Rachael Maskell [V]: The Chancellor has let the financial burden of covid-19 fall on women. They have undertaken twice as much home schooling as men. One in five have had to cut their hours. Some 78% of working mothers have not been offered furlough and 71% of those who asked for it have been refused. Will the Chancellor recognise that once again women have disproportionately paid the price of the inequality in his policies? Will he undertake an immediate equality impact assessment and set out in his Budget how he will offer redress for these widening gendered inequalities?

Jesse Norman: The truth is that this pandemic has had a desperately difficult effect for the whole of the UK economy, and for families and people across our country and regions. It is appropriate to recognise the totality of the difficulty we find ourselves in. It is true that many women have found themselves in the position of either caring for home schooling or vulnerable individuals. They are supported and protected through the schemes we have put in place. Of course, over and above those schemes, we have also put in place significant amounts of support for remote education, laptops and councils to help vulnerable individuals.

James Murray (Ealing North) (Lab/Co-op) [V]: Earlier this month, the shadow Chancellor successfully called on the Chancellor to make it clear that working parents and others can be furloughed owing to childcare responsibilities. Most employers will want to do the right thing, but where an employer is refusing to follow the guidance and offer a parent furlough for childcare reasons, can the Minister tell me who the parent should report that to and what action will be taken?

Jesse Norman: As the hon. Member will know, furlough is an arrangement reached between companies and their employees. Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs and the Government do not have direct involvement in that. What they say is that where an agreement can be reached between the two sides we will support them, as laid out in one of the most generous schemes available in any country around the world. As I said, that is just one part of a much wider panoply of support for people at risk through the pandemic.

Wholesale Food Service Sector

Carolyn Harris (Swansea East) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing financial support to wholesale food service sector businesses affected by covid-19 restrictions. [911351]

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen): Throughout the covid crisis, the Government have sought to protect people's jobs and livelihoods, and support businesses and public services across the UK. We recognise that food and drink wholesalers have been severely impacted by the necessary action we have taken to control the virus, but those businesses have been eligible for a number of our economic support schemes, including the job retention scheme, VAT deferral and bounce back loans.

Carolyn Harris [V]: Food service wholesalers have again seen their trade drop by 95% with hospitality businesses closing, yet they continue to supply our hospitals, schools, care homes and prisons at a financial loss. Many now are on the brink of collapse. What more are the Government going to do to help the industry, which is suffering a double whammy of lost stock and ongoing fixed costs?

John Glen: I thank the hon. Lady for her question, and, indeed, I met representatives of the sector in my constituency a few weeks ago. The Treasury is in regular discussion with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and they are assessing the systemic risks to the food supply chain of the fulfilment of those public sector contracts to schools, hospitals and prisons. We keep these matters under close review, but at the moment there is no threat to those supply chains and, as I referenced, the options that are available to those firms continue to be available.

Disused Coal Tips: Safety

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): What discussions he has had with (a) Cabinet colleagues and (b) the Coal Authority on funding for ensuring the safety and stability of disused coal tips. [911352]

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Steve Barclay): Treasury Ministers regularly speak to their ministerial colleagues on all matters of public spending. Remediation of coal sites is a devolved policy and responsibility lies with the devolved Administration through their Barnett funding.

Chris Bryant [V]: Well, that was a depressing start, because the truth is that 40% of all the disused coal tips in the whole United Kingdom are in Wales, which is much higher than the Barnett formula would normally allow for. Ninety per cent. of all the disused coal tips in England and Wales are in the poorest communities, so if the Government really stick to this policy of "It's down to the local authority, which has to find the funding for this", they are going to see the poorest communities in Britain pay for the legacy of an industry that made this country rich. I urge the Minister, please, to think again about how we can make sure that communities are safe and that the money and the funding are there to make sure that the coal slides,

which are likely to come more frequently, do not provide long-term financial and economic problems for those communities.

Steve Barclay: I am a little surprised by the hon. Gentleman's response because the last time that he raised this issue at Treasury questions, the UK Government responded extremely constructively, with £31 million of financial support, including £22 million to address the flooding of coal sites and £9 million for coal tip repairs, which I thought he might at least have welcomed. Notwithstanding that, at the request of the Welsh Government, the Coal Authority is supporting work to undertake a safety review of all the small tips in Wales, regardless of ownership, but he should also recognise that it is a devolved matter.

Sport and Wellbeing: Covid-19 Recovery Strategy

Tracey Crouch (Chatham and Aylesford) (Con): What plans he has to prioritise funding for sport and wellbeing as part of a covid-19 recovery strategy. [911353]

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Steve Barclay): Sport and wellbeing is of major importance to this Government as we manage the effects of the pandemic. That is why we announced the £300 million sport winter survival package to protect major spectator sports, why we have supported clubs through covid business support schemes, such as the furlough scheme, and why we have introduced the £100 million national leisure recovery fund to support publicly owned leisure facilities through this crisis.

Tracey Crouch [V]: The Chief Secretary shares my passion and enthusiasm for sport, and I know that he appreciates the consequences of good physical and mental health on the wellbeing of individuals, but he may also be aware that poor physical health and wellbeing cost the Treasury tens of billions of pounds per annum. Given that covid-19 has had a negative impact on both, does he agree that our recovery strategy should put sport, physical activity and wellbeing at its heart, and will he consider the merits of a wellbeing budget that looks at shifting the focus away from GDP as the only measure of economic growth?

Steve Barclay: I agree with my hon. Friend that sport and wellbeing should be at the heart of our recovery plans and pay tribute to the work that she has done not just on football but on sport and loneliness in championing these issues. There are lessons from other countries that we can look at as well. One of the areas that I am very keen to work with her on are the opportunities around social prescribing, where the role of sport and wellbeing—in terms of how we treat people with regard to mental health and recovery from covid—has a lot to offer, and I know that she will continue to champion that.

Living Standards in Scotland: UK Fiscal Policy

Stuart C. McDonald (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP): What discussions he has had with his Scottish Government counterpart on the effect of UK fiscal policy on living standards in Scotland. [911354]

David Linden (Glasgow East) (SNP): What discussions he has had with his Scottish Government counterpart on the effect of UK fiscal policy on living standards in Scotland. [911371]

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Steve Barclay): I have frequent discussions with the Scottish Government's Finance Minister, and may I take this opportunity to add my congratulations on the announcement yesterday of her engagement?

Stuart C. McDonald [V]: I think every Member will join me in congratulating Scotland's Finance Minister, Kate Forbes, on her happy news.

A decade of UK austerity delivered unprecedented declines in living standards and incomes, especially to those already struggling. Now even the OECD says that making cuts instead of investment after the financial crisis was the wrong approach. With the Scottish Budget set for Thursday, will the Minister confirm that this time the UK Government will invest to stimulate economic recovery, or will more Tory cuts put Scotland's recovery at risk?

Steve Barclay: It is a little odd, in a year when Scotland has received £44 billion through the Barnett formula, to be talking of cuts. The hon. Gentleman refers to the Scottish Budget, and he will be aware that there are opportunities with the powers that the Scottish Government have, whether that is to exercise their flexibilities on elements of universal credit, to top up benefits and create new ones, or to introduce new tax powers. The Scottish Parliament has powers, and we wait to see how the Scottish Government use them.

David Linden: In asking the public to stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives, there must be an understanding that in doing so consumers are running up higher electricity and gas bills. Does the Minister understand that 2.1 million people are behind in their energy bills at the moment, and that one way to help them would be to reduce VAT temporarily on home energy bills?

Steve Barclay: The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point; there are household costs. That is why my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, through the package of measures, has supported the incomes of the poorest. The distributional analysis from the Treasury shows that the poorest working households have benefited most from the measures introduced by my right hon. Friend. The best way of supporting those families is through schemes that the UK, with its broad shoulders, is able to offer, such as the furlough scheme and the self-employment income support scheme, which have supported so many jobs across Scotland.

Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP) [V]: The Chancellor's chaotic stop-start approach to furlough last autumn undoubtedly cost jobs. Failing to continue the £20 universal credit uplift and extend it to legacy benefits is set to plunge struggling families into hardship, and now the Conservatives are signalling tax rises and a return to austerity. To what extent does the Minister believe that that approach has contributed to 20 consecutive polls in favour of Scottish independence?

Steve Barclay: There is a factual error in the hon. Lady's question, in saying that there was a stop-start approach to furlough—

Alison Thewliss: There was!

Steve Barclay: It continued throughout; that is just a statement of fact. In terms of the wider package, I would refer the hon. Lady to the fact that the UK Government have provided £280 billion-worth of support and that bodies such as the International Monetary Fund have said that the UK's economic response has been one of the best examples of co-ordinated action globally. We are able to do that because we are working as one United Kingdom acting together and using the broad shoulders of the UK.

Support for Businesses: Covid-19

Lucy Powell (Manchester Central) (Lab/Co-op): What recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of financial support schemes for businesses during the covid-19 outbreak. [911355]

Joy Morrissey (Beaconsfield) (Con): What fiscal steps his Department is taking to support businesses affected by the covid-19 outbreak. [911363]

Caroline Ansell (Eastbourne) (Con): What fiscal steps his Department is taking to support businesses affected by the covid-19 outbreak. [911374]

Jake Berry (Rossendale and Darwen) (Con): What fiscal steps his Department is taking to support businesses in Rossendale and Darwen constituency. [911375]

Mary Robinson (Cheadle) (Con): What fiscal steps his Department is taking to support businesses affected by the covid-19 outbreak. [911379]

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Rishi Sunak): The Government recognise the significant impact of coronavirus on businesses across every region and nation of the United Kingdom, and that is why we have put in place an unprecedented series of measures to provide support, whether that is through the coronavirus job retention scheme, tax cuts, tax deferrals, Government-backed loans or cash grants.

Lucy Powell [V]: Business support that was originally designed for three months is now wholly inadequate for 12 or 18 months. Business debts and deferrals are mounting and now have to start being repaid, and the holidays are coming to an end, all at one big danger point in April. Cash grants are worth less and many still do not qualify for them. While the Chancellor might pat himself on the back, reports out this week show that nearly 250,000 businesses are likely to go bust this year, taking many jobs with them. Does he recognise that he cannot pull the plug all in one go in April, given that many businesses will not even have reopened at that point, and that with the effects of the vaccine around the corner, it makes no economic sense to allow businesses to go bust at this critical point, having supported them for so long?

Rishi Sunak: No one, least of all me, is patting themselves on the back while hundreds of thousands of people are losing their jobs and many businesses are seeing extreme dislocation as a result of what is happening in our economy. I have put in place a series of measures, but I have always said that we cannot protect or save every job and every business. The hon. Lady makes a fair point, which is why we have said that we will review all our economic measures to support people through coronavirus at the upcoming Budget, in the first week of March.

Joy Morrissey [V]: Many female business owners have found themselves working full-time jobs at home while bearing full-time responsibility for childcare and home schooling, all at the same time. May I thank my right hon. Friend for all the steps he is taking to alleviate the difficulties experienced by mothers who just want to work and contribute to the economy with their children safely back in school?

Rishi Sunak: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, and we owe mums everywhere an enormous debt of thanks for doing the enormously difficult job of juggling childcare and work at this tricky time. I know she will join me in being happy that early years settings have been open for a while, but she is right to say that the only way to sustainably solve this challenge is safely to reopen our schools as quickly as we can.

Caroline Ansell [V]: I have long believed that there was a compelling case for reducing VAT for the hospitality sector, and the pandemic-inspired cut helped to save the season between lockdowns. May I ask that my right hon. Friend, when he is looking at his Budget, considers making the cut permanent, to power the recovery across the UK, including in my destination town of Eastbourne, where one in four jobs depends on tourism?

Rishi Sunak: My hon. Friend is rightly a champion for her local tourism and hospitality businesses, and she is not alone; across the country, hundreds of thousands of these businesses employ 2 million people. Those businesses are particularly vital in constituencies such as hers, which is why we reduced the rate of VAT—it runs all the way through to the end of March. She will know that we have an upcoming Budget, where we plan to review all our measures of support.

Jake Berry [V]: As you know, Mr Speaker, many of our manufacturers here in Lancashire have worked through the pandemic. Will my right hon. Friend congratulate businesses such as J & J Ormerod plc, James Killelea and Co Ltd, WEC Group and Perspex, who not only have worked through the pandemic, but show that high-value manufacturing and the real economy need to be things the Chancellor fosters and supports in his forthcoming Budget?

Rishi Sunak: I am very happy to join my right hon. Friend in congratulating the businesses he mentioned. We know that many manufacturers, especially those in his area, have worked very hard, particularly with regard to ventilators and personal protective equipment at this country's time of need. He is right to say that that should play a part in our recovery. One initiative I would point to, which I believe will be in and around his

area, is the Made Smarter partnership between Government and high-value manufacturing, which seeks to foster innovation, digital adoption and the latest and greatest management processes. It seems to be working very well and I look forward to learning more about that initiative.

Mary Robinson [V]: Cheadle businesses that faced fines for failing to submit self-assessment returns by the end of this month will be relieved by yesterday's announcement of an extension until the end of February, as that will remove a great deal of worry and anxiety from business owners who are already under great pressure. With the original deadline only a week away, what steps will the Department take to ensure that all businesses are aware of these changes?

Rishi Sunak: As an accountant herself, my hon. Friend knows all too well the fantastic job that these people are doing, under enormous strain, at this current time. I know that, as she said, she warmly welcomes the announcement yesterday by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs to waive penalties until the end of February for late filers. She is right to say that we must make sure that everyone is aware of this, and we are doing everything we can, on all our channels of communication, to get this news to businesses. I ask other colleagues across this House to do exactly the same in their constituencies.

Mel Stride (Central Devon) (Con) [V]: There is a looming bloodbath for many businesses at the end of March, when the moratorium on commercial landlords taking action against tenants in arrears comes to an end. Does my right hon. Friend recognise that acute danger? What action might he consider taking to avoid it?

Rishi Sunak: My right hon. Friend knows that the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government is engaged with that issue and has worked with the industry to put in place various codes of practice to encourage good and constructive dialogue between landlords and tenants throughout a difficult situation. There are promising signs that that is happening.

Self-employment Income Support Scheme

Stephen Kinnock (Aberavon) (Lab): What steps his Department is taking to help ensure that the self-employment income support scheme equitably supports people whose tax payments have been affected by maternity or paternity leave. [911356]

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Jesse Norman): The self-employment income support scheme is one of the most generous in the world and has received claims from almost 2.7 million people so far, totalling more than £18.5 billion. The amount of the scheme grant is determined based on the applicant's average profits from self-employment in the previous three tax years, as reported through their tax returns. By calculating the grant on an average of three years of profits, the scheme supports people who saw a dip in profits for any reason, including pregnancy.

Stephen Kinnock [V]: The Chancellor likes to claim that the UK offers one of the most generous support schemes for self-employed people in the world, but self-employed women who have taken maternity leave in the past few years are not supported generously at

all—in fact, they have received a lot less financial support than their peers who have not taken maternity leave. The charity Pregnant Then Screwed reported that around 75,000 self-employed women have been subject to—*[Inaudible.]*

Mr Speaker: Did you get any of that, Minister Norman?

Jesse Norman *indicated assent.*

Mr Speaker: If you can get something out of it, please do.

Jesse Norman: If I may just say, the hon. Gentleman is wrong. We are not talking about a claim that is not validated by third parties; it is understood internationally that the scheme is one of the most generous in the world. He will be aware that the issue is subject to legal challenge, which limits what I can say, but I can tell him that the Government are well aware that some self-employed people found that their eligibility for the scheme was affected if they had taken time out of their trade in 2018-19, which is why, in June last year, the scheme's eligibility criteria were revised to ensure that people in that situation were able to claim self-employment income support.

Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP) [V]: Since the beginning of the pandemic, the UK Government have consistently failed to prioritise support for women on maternity leave. Despite the issue being raised by me and a host of others repeatedly in this House, the UK Government were taken to judicial review last week by Joeli Brearley and the tireless campaigners at Pregnant Then Screwed. Do the UK Government now accept that it is not a sabbatical, sick leave or a holiday—it is maternity leave? Will they end their discrimination against 75,000 self-employed mothers?

Jesse Norman: I am not sure whether the sound system was working but, as the hon. Lady will know from my previous remarks, the issue is subject to legal challenge so I cannot discuss it. I will say, though, that I met maternity groups as part of the excluded in early December, and we have taken steps to remedy the situation, where we have been able to do so, in relation to those who took time out in the year 2018-19.

Environmentally Sustainable Economic Growth

Andrew Griffith (Arundel and South Downs) (Con): What steps he is taking to promote environmentally sustainable economic growth. [911357]

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Rishi Sunak): The Government are clear that we will drive growth by investing in infrastructure, innovation and skills. In doing so, we will build back better and greener as we recover from the economic impact of coronavirus, starting, of course, with the Prime Minister's green 10-point plan.

Andrew Griffith [V]: I thank my right hon. Friend for his answer. Does he agree that the UK is exceptionally well positioned to prosper from the initiatives he referred to, and that this is another example of the Government's unleashing Britain's potential?

Rishi Sunak: My hon. Friend is absolutely right—our 10-point plan can create hundreds of thousands of jobs up and down the country. He is also right that we can lead the world in this journey. We have been one of the fastest countries to decarbonise over the past few years and are one of the leading countries not only in phasing out coal and internal combustion engine vehicles but in offshore wind and carbon capture and storage. Where Britain goes, hopefully the world can follow.

Bridget Phillipson (Houghton and Sunderland South) (Lab): This year, the UK Government have a chance to show global leadership on the climate emergency as the host of the UN climate change conference in Glasgow. Green gilts will be a vital part of the transition to a clean economy. Last year, the Chancellor promised to launch the first ones this year. Will he tell us when and why not yet?

Rishi Sunak: We are doing the technical work required to make sure that the launch of our green gilts is successful. I hope to provide an update at the Budget, but the hon. Lady can rest assured that we are working very hard at it. As I said, this will be the first step in building out a green curve. By doing that and making sure that the curve has fidelity in terms of confidence in where the money is going, we can unlock investment for the private sector across the economy. I know that she will join me in welcoming that progress.

Self-employment Income Support Scheme.

Alex Norris (Nottingham North) (Lab/Co-op): What fiscal steps he is taking to support self-employed people ineligible for the self-employment income support scheme. [911358]

Mike Kane (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab): What steps his Department is taking to support the newly self-employed during the covid-19 outbreak. [911361]

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Jesse Norman): The self-employment income support scheme was designed to target support at those who most need it while protecting the taxpayer against error, fraud and abuse. The Government recognise that some of the rules and criteria that have been vital to ensuring that the scheme worked for the vast majority have meant that, in some cases, people were not able to qualify. This is one reason why the Government put in place a much wider £280 billion support package, including increased levels of universal credit, bounce back loans, tax deferrals, rental support, mortgage holidays, self-isolation support payments and other business support grants.

Alex Norris [V]: It is understandable that, as support schemes were constructed at short notice, there would be gaps in them. It is less understandable why, a year later, those gaps have not been better closed. Many of my constituents are among the millions who have been excluded from support schemes so far, so, as we approach that anniversary, what message does the Minister have for them?

Jesse Norman: The message would be that the Treasury is doing everything it can to protect jobs, families and livelihoods in the face of the worst pandemic crisis that we have experienced in recorded history. It is important to say that, in the case of this scheme, we have spent

considerable time engaging with groups that have brought forward potential ways of addressing some of the gaps in support that may exist. As I mentioned, we have had meetings in December and evaluated suggestions all the way through last year, including a concrete suggestion in relation to the directors income support scheme, so we are heavily leaning into this issue.

Mike Kane [V]: I want to raise the case of my constituent, Teresa McGeough, who is a newly self-employed special educational needs expert. She has not been eligible for any financial assistance during the pandemic. Does the Minister think that the Government are doing enough to help people such as Theresa and others?

Jesse Norman: As I have said, the Government are doing everything they can and have been working round the clock for a year to address the full needs of the country across all the different aspect of our economy and society, including through support for the self-employed.

Abena Oppong-Asare (Erith and Thamesmead) (Lab) [V]: The self-employment income support scheme's third grant closes this Friday. The crisis has not ended, but the Chancellor has not provided many details on the future of the scheme. Will the Minister explain why he thinks it is right that employees can be furloughed until 30 April but self-employed people have no clarity about the future of support beyond the end of this week?

Jesse Norman: I think that it is well understood that the Chancellor will be setting out further plans in the March Budget. It is normal for this time of year for different decisions to be consolidated into that important fiscal event for well-known reasons.

Financial Services: Equivalence Recognition

Stephen Hammond (Wimbledon) (Con): What discussions he has had with his EU counterparts on equivalence recognition for financial services. [911359]

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen): Equivalence is an autonomous technical process that each side is undertaking separately. Officials have had a number of meetings with their counterparts in the Commission over the past 12 months to discuss each other's processes, and we remain open and committed to continuing dialogue with the EU about its intentions for equivalence.

Stephen Hammond [V]: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. Clearly, it would be disappointing if the EU could not follow the UK's offer on equivalence, given the relative starting positions. Will my hon. Friend comment on the Government's ambitions with regard to mutual recognition of professional qualifications? What are those ambitions and does he hope that they will be achieved by the signing of the memorandum in March?

John Glen: My hon. Friend has a lot of expertise in this area. He will know that, alongside the trade and co-operation agreement, we had a joint declaration to establish a structured regulatory co-operation for financial services and to discuss a whole range of matters around equivalence determinations going forward. The memorandum of understanding will be agreed in discussions between the EU and UK by March 2021.

That will establish a framework for that co-operation. It would not be appropriate for me to give a running commentary on that, but the plans will come to fruition over the coming weeks.

Mr Pat McFadden (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab) [V]: The Brexit deal was, in effect, a no-deal outcome for financial services. Already some trade has moved, and there is big uncertainty hanging over access to European markets for this vital UK sector. Can the Minister confirm that it is in fact a Government negotiating aim to secure equivalence recognition for UK financial services in the memorandum of understanding being discussed between now and the end of March?

John Glen: To clarify for the right hon. Gentleman, the equivalence granting process is an autonomous, separate process from the MOU discussion. The MOU is about a framework to evaluate the future direction of financial services across the EU and UK. I remain very ambitious for the financial services sector. The Chancellor and I are continuing to have a dialogue—with roundtables with representatives of the sector this week and next week, as well as one-to-one meetings—to ensure that we listen to the sector, and respond appropriately and ambitiously for the future.

UK-EU Trade and Co-operation Agreement: Regional Effect

Paul Blomfield (Sheffield Central) (Lab): What assessment the Government have made of the potential economic effect of the UK-EU trade and co-operation agreement on each region of the UK. [911360]

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Rishi Sunak): We have secured an unprecedented free trade agreement with the European Union—the first free trade agreement that the EU has ever reached based on zero tariffs and zero quotas. Across sectors and regions, it is a good deal that will protect jobs and investment.

Paul Blomfield [V]: The assessment conducted by the Treasury in 2018 concluded that there would be significant regional variation in the impact of any Brexit deal. We are certainly seeing that, with fishing fleets grounded, manufacturers hit with extra costs, and the Department for International Trade apparently advising businesses to move parts of their operation to the EU to avoid problems. It is clear that there will be a significant regional impact. Does the Chancellor agree that he needs to redress that regional damage from the Brexit deal? Alternatively, does he agree with the new Business Secretary's comments in "Britannia Unchained" that regional division is an "irrelevant" debate?

Rishi Sunak: No one can doubt the Government's commitment to uniting and levelling up across our United Kingdom, with an unprecedented infrastructure investment programme. Notably in the spending review, we announced something called the levelling-up fund, which will fund the infrastructure of everyday life in communities up and down the country, on top of our once-in-a-generation increase in infrastructure investment in road, rail and broadband that will benefit equally all parts of our United Kingdom.

Air Passenger Duty

Henry Smith (Crawley) (Con): When he plans to conclude his consultation on air passenger duty. [911362]

The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (Kemi Badenoch): The consultation on aviation tax reform has been delayed in recognition of the unprecedented circumstances that the aviation industry is currently facing. However, I will update hon. Members on the timing of the consultation in due course.

Henry Smith [V]: The United Kingdom charges the highest air passenger duty of any country in the developed world. Now that we have left the EU, domestic air passenger duty is something that we can alter. As we seek to recover from the covid-19 pandemic and take the advantages of a global Britain, can we have an early review of this tax, which is a pressure on our industry?

Kemi Badenoch: The Government recognise the important role that the aviation sector plays in the UK economy. The sector can draw on the wide range of support measures available, including the recently announced airport and ground operations support scheme, which will provide eligible firms with support of up to £8 million per claimant. However, I reassure my hon. Friend that we remain committed to delivering the consultation, and will look to proceed once the challenging circumstances that the sector is currently facing have eased.

NHS Funding: Wales

Mr David Jones (Clwyd West) (Con): What steps he has taken to help ensure adequate funding for the NHS in Wales. [911364]

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Steve Barclay): As healthcare is devolved, it is for the Welsh Government to ensure that the NHS in Wales has enough funding, using the over £20 billion of funding they receive from the UK Government through the Barnett formula.

Mr Jones [V]: The covid-19 vaccination programme in Wales is unfortunately lagging behind England, but despite that, the Welsh First Minister has announced that he intends to slow the release of vaccine to avoid, as he puts it, vaccinators “standing around with nothing to do”.

Can my right hon. Friend confirm that there are no financial constraints that he is aware of that would justify this perverse and irrational policy decision or prevent the Welsh Government from deploying the vaccine as quickly in Wales as in any part of the country?

Steve Barclay: I am happy to confirm to my right hon. Friend that there are not financial constraints. The UK Government have guaranteed that the Welsh Government will receive at least £5.2 billion in additional resource to deliver their coronavirus response, including the vaccine deployment activities.

Covid-19: Regional Economic Disparities

Graham Stringer (Blackley and Broughton) (Lab): What recent assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on regional economic disparities. [911365]

The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (Kemi Badenoch): The Government recognise the significant impact of covid-19 on every region and nation of the UK. I can assure hon. Members across the House that levelling up remains a key priority for the Government. That is why the spending review also announced longer-term measures to support every region and nation, including a new £4 billion levelling-up fund to invest in local infrastructure priorities.

Graham Stringer: It is good to hear that the Government are still committed to levelling up, but all the academic studies that have been done have shown that covid has disproportionately affected the regional economies, with Greater Manchester the third most badly affected region in the country. Those regions need more support, but Transport for the North and Northern Powerhouse Rail are being cut; is that not going in exactly the opposite direction?

Kemi Badenoch: I would dispute the hon. Gentleman's claims. We have taken unprecedented steps to support people and businesses around the country. We have supported 19,100 jobs in his constituency through the coronavirus job retention scheme. Greater Manchester Combined Authority has been allocated £54.2 million from the Getting Building fund for a wide-ranging package of projects. We have also provided over £170 million for the Greater Manchester-Preston city region and Liverpool city region to improve public transport. We have also supported the regeneration of 33 towns in the north-west through the towns fund. There is a lot that is happening on levelling up. If he would like me to write to him to explain everything that we have done in his region, I am happy to do so.

Government Financial Support: Low to Moderate Incomes

Mrs Maria Miller (Basingstoke) (Con): What comparative assessment his Department has made of the effect of Government financial support during the covid-19 outbreak on (a) women and (b) men on low to moderate incomes. [911366]

The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (Kemi Badenoch): The impact of tax and welfare policy is best analysed at the whole-household level. As the Institute for Fiscal Studies has said, because most people live in households with others and we do not know how incomes are shared, it is very hard to look at effects separately for many men and women. That is why the Government support has been targeted at the most vulnerable. Our distributional analysis published last year shows that the Government's covid-19 financial support protected the poorest households' incomes the most as a proportion of their income.

Mrs Miller [V]: The pandemic has been a difficult time for pregnant women in work, and one in four have faced discrimination, including being unlawfully singled out for redundancy—a problem not confined to the pandemic. Will my hon. Friend look again at how other countries tackle this problem and consider adopting Germany's approach of protecting pregnant women from redundancy, which would also give families much-needed financial stability at what can be a very challenging time?

Kemi Badenoch: We are aware of the difficulties that families are experiencing during the pandemic and we have put many measures in place to look at this, but if my right hon. Friend has examples of specific schemes happening across the world that she would like me to look at, I am happy to do so within my other role as Minister for Equalities.

Covid-19: Support for Local Authorities

Craig Tracey (North Warwickshire) (Con): What fiscal steps his Department is taking to support local authorities during the covid-19 outbreak. [911368]

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Steve Barclay): The Government have committed more than £10 billion to support local authorities in dealing with covid in this financial year and the next, including an unprecedented guarantee to compensate them for their income losses as a result of the pandemic.

Craig Tracey [V]: I welcome the considerable support that has already been given to local councils during the pandemic. However, I recently had discussions with leaders of North Warwickshire Borough Council, which is an incredibly well-run council, and they are still finding a shortfall of about half a million pounds against an annual budget of £10 million, due to a mix of lost revenue and providing additional services to residents, such as extra home waste collection services. What more can be done to ensure that we give councils the full backing they need to continue providing services?

Steve Barclay: North Warwickshire has received more than £1 million to meet its expenditure pressures this year, exceeding the expenditure pressures that it has reported to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. I urge my hon. Friend to express any further concerns to MHCLG at the earliest opportunity. As he recognises, a comprehensive package of support has already been provided, and that support continues.

Topical Questions

[911409] **Tracy Brabin** (Batley and Spen) (Lab/Co-op): If he will make a statement on his departmental responsibilities.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Rishi Sunak): Throughout this crisis, our overriding economic priority has been to support people's jobs and businesses through a range of measures worth more than £280 billion, including the furlough scheme, tax cuts, tax deferrals, loans and grants. There will be a Budget on 3 March, when we will set out the next steps in our economic response to coronavirus.

Tracy Brabin [V]: Last week the Chancellor received a detailed and costed policy proposal for a targeted income grant scheme, written by Rebecca Seeley Harris and supported by the gaps in support all-party parliamentary group. That scheme would be a vital first step in giving meaningful financial support to many of the millions who have been locked out of the current schemes and who are desperate, after nearly a year of the covid pandemic. Can the Chancellor tell us today whether he plans to progress with that proposal, or does he have another scheme in mind for the millions in need of support?

Rishi Sunak: I am happy to tell the hon. Lady that my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury met the authors of the report back in December and is considering it alongside all the other submissions that we receive at the Treasury.

[911411] **Mr Marcus Fysh** (Yeovil) (Con) [V]: What will my right hon. Friend do to make the UK a more attractive destination for investment and capital formation, to encourage the jobs and opportunities of the future that people rely on the private sector to provide?

Rishi Sunak: My hon. Friend is right about needing the private sector to drive growth and create jobs. I am pleased to tell him that the Prime Minister and I chaired the first meeting of the Build Back Better Business Council, where we outlined our plans to invest in infrastructure, innovation and skills alongside businesses. We have also established a new Office for Investment, led by Lord Grimstone, which is charged with securing high-value investment opportunities, and I look forward to hearing from him ideas that we can productively take forward.

Anneliese Dodds (Oxford East) (Lab/Co-op) [V]: In recent days, the Treasury has been at loggerheads with the Department for Work and Pensions, insisting on taking £20 a week from the pockets of 6 million families. It has also been at loggerheads with the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies, by claiming that financial hardship is not inhibiting self-isolation. Why is the Treasury putting our economic and health recovery at risk in this way?

Rishi Sunak: The hon. Lady should not believe everything she reads in the newspapers. The Treasury and this Government have put in place a comprehensive and generous set of support to help people get through this crisis, and the results show that we have protected those on the lowest incomes the most.

Anneliese Dodds: I was actually following the words of the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and of SAGE, but I appreciate the Chancellor's response. The kickstart scheme was much heralded, but yesterday we learned that it appears to be missing out around 99 of every 100 young jobseekers. What does the Chancellor say to them today?

Rishi Sunak: I am not entirely sure I know the figures that the hon. Lady is referring to. What I can say is that, since this scheme was announced at the beginning of July and opened for applications in September, it has created over 120,000 jobs for young people. That is, I think, an extraordinary achievement. I pay tribute to the team at the DWP for doing that. I am grateful to the thousands of businesses that are taking part in the scheme. They are working with us to provide hope and opportunity to a generation of young people so that they are not scarred by coronavirus, but can look forward to a brighter future.

[911413] **Jason McCartney** (Colne Valley) (Con) [V]: With the lockdown or some form of restrictions set to continue well into the spring, will the Chancellor please give some certainty to those businesses and individuals struggling financially by announcing an early extension to his various support packages, including help with VAT, business rates and stamp duty, the self-employment scheme and, of course, the universal credit uplift?

Rishi Sunak: My hon. Friend will I hope appreciate that the various things he just mentioned total about, I think, £20 billion or £30 billion, so he will understand it is reasonable that we consider all these things in the round at Budget, when we will set out the next stage in our economic response to coronavirus.

Meg Hillier (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/Co-op): The Office for Budget Responsibility estimates that HMRC will forgo around £800 million in customs income and VAT over the next year. Some is deferred, but much is forgone. Will the Chancellor tell us what he is doing to make sure that that number shrinks and that revenue comes in at a time when the Exchequer needs it really very badly?

Rishi Sunak: I will have to go and check the exact figures, if the hon. Lady will forgive me for not knowing the specific paragraph that she refers to. In general HMRC is providing easements over the next few months as we transition to a new set of trading relationships, but she can rest assured that we are always mindful of the impact on revenue and intend fully—very much so—to have a robust set of mechanisms in place. As she will know, there is a phased response for getting to that point between now and July, and hopefully we can work with her to make sure that that path is as seamless as possible.

[911417] **Chris Grayling** (Epsom and Ewell) (Con) [V]: The Chancellor has been widely praised for his work in recent months, but he has also been honest about difficult decisions ahead. I have had constituents raise concerns with me about capital gains tax. He will know that the current rates were set to optimise revenue from the tax. I know he cannot comment on individual measures, but can I seek his assurance that he will not take any steps to raise taxes without doing a proper assessment of the Laffer curve principle that higher rates do not always lead to higher revenues?

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Jesse Norman): I thank my right hon. Friend for his question, which tempts me into indiscretion. He may be aware of this, but HMRC publishes annual estimates to illustrate the impact of changes in tax rates in a document sexily entitled “Direct effects of illustrative tax changes”. It is worth saying, however, that these estimates are themselves uncertain, because of different levels of behavioural response to tax changes, the potential for wider macroeconomic impacts and, of course, the interaction with other measures.

[911410] **Christian Matheson** (City of Chester) (Lab): The pubs and hospitality sector so far has done everything that has been asked of it during the pandemic, but so far 46% of pubs have not received local restrictions support grants for November, let alone December, and 74% of pubs have yet to receive the Prime Minister's Christmas bonus of £1,000, so what will Ministers be doing to speed up these payments and when will the pubs and hospitality sector get its money?

Rishi Sunak: It is absolutely right that businesses get the funds as quickly as possible. What I would say is that central Government have disbursed that funding to local councils across the country, so it is actually for businesses to take up with their local authority why they

have not received the money. There are two sets of grants: there are of course our monthly grants, which have been going for a while now, and the one-off payments of up to £9,000 that we announced earlier this year. But the hon. Gentleman is right to urge urgency. I know my colleagues in the Business Department are doing exactly that with local councils, but ultimately the responsibility will lie with individual councils.

[911419] **Matt Vickers** (Stockton South) (Con): Teesside is on the up. It is a place with untapped potential, skills and expertise, and a place with boundless ambition that will play host to the biggest economic success story of the next decade. Can my right hon. Friend think of anywhere better to host Treasury North than one of the country's first freeports?

The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (Kemi Badenoch): I thank my hon. Friend for his question. He is a doughty champion for his region and he should know that we remain focused on the commitment we made at Budget 2020 to have 750 roles across the economic campus by the end of the Parliament. The Treasury is still considering a range of location options for the new campus. We want to ensure that the chosen location supports our wider levelling-up agenda, but we will certainly take his comments and representations into account.

[911412] **Lilian Greenwood** (Nottingham South) (Lab) [V]: The Government claim that their central economic mission is to level up. Can the Chancellor assure me that his Government will deliver HS2 in full, including the whole of the eastern leg, because this will be the litmus test of their real commitment to levelling up?

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Steve Barclay): The hon. Lady is right to draw attention to the commitment the Government have made to infrastructure, including in the forthcoming integration infrastructure plan, but the levelling up is not just about rail, as the Chancellor said; it is also about the £4 billion levelling-up fund and, most importantly, about the review of the Green Book. As Lord O'Neill and others have commented, that ensures that a whole range of projects better address the levelling up alongside the significant investment in rail and other transport infrastructure.

[911421] **Sarah Atherton** (Wrexham) (Con): Wrexham is a town partly founded on brewing. It is home to four breweries and 64 pubs; the figure pre-covid. The industry supports nearly 1,700 jobs and generates £11 million in taxes. While hospitality businesses such as the Magic Dragon Brewery Tap tell me that the UK Government's furlough scheme and wider support packages have been a lifeline, their future remains bleak as the pandemic rolls into a second year. Will my right hon. Friend the Chancellor in his forthcoming Budget consider deferring business rates and VAT payments even further, so pubs can have a fighting chance of pulling another pint and keeping the ales in Wales?

Kemi Badenoch: The Government understand that this is a very challenging time for the UK hospitality sector, and we are constantly reviewing the package of covid-19 support. In order to ensure that decisions are made to meet these challenges, we will outline plans for 2021-22 business rates relief early this year, but my hon.

Friend should let her constituents know that for existing tax liabilities the VAT deferral new payments scheme will allow businesses with deferred VAT to spread their payments over up to 11 equal payments to 31 March 2022 interest-free.

[911414] **Patricia Gibson** (North Ayrshire and Arran) (SNP): During the global health pandemic, it is worth noting that paid leave following a bereavement is entirely at the discretion of employers. Leave experienced by employees costs the UK economy £22 billion a year and the Treasury nearly £8 billion a year, with those in lowest-paid jobs much less likely to have paid bereavement leave. In his upcoming Budget what consideration will the Chancellor give to statutory paid bereavement leave for all workers who lose a close family member?

Rishi Sunak: I am happy to look at the specific question the hon. Lady raises, but she will know that in the last Budget we introduced a manifesto commitment to bring in neonatal leave, which was warmly welcomed and many had campaigned for, and I know will make a difference to families up and down the country.

[911422] **Mark Pawsey** (Rugby) (Con) [V]: We have heard many times this morning about the very welcome support the Chancellor has provided to hospitality businesses required to close during the pandemic. However, suppliers to the sector are dependent on its success, and many have seen dramatic falls in sales. Ahead of getting hospitality up and running again, is there any additional support he can provide at this particularly challenging time?

Kemi Badenoch: My hon. Friend raises a point mentioned by several Members about the difficulties businesses in the hospitality sector and their supply chain have faced during the pandemic. He can tell his constituents that £1.6 billion is being made available for local authorities to support businesses that are ineligible for closed business grants but that may still be impacted by restrictions, and local authorities have discretion to determine how much funding to provide to businesses and the flexibility to target local businesses that are important to their local economies, which could include businesses in the supply chains for retail, hospitality and leisure.

[911416] **Mr Virendra Sharma** (Ealing, Southall) (Lab) [V]: Some small businesses in my constituency cannot access the support they need to continue to employ staff and survive. The Government's incomplete guidance to local authorities has left that gap in support. Will the Minister fix that flaw in the system and commit to help small businesses today?

Rishi Sunak: The hon. Gentleman can write to me with the specific issue he has with the guidance, but in general the grants have been functioning, I think, very well and local authorities are getting them out to businesses. They also have access to discretionary funding. As the name suggests, although there are broad guidelines, ultimately that funding is to be at the discretion of individual local authorities.

[911423] **Scott Benton** (Blackpool South) (Con) [V]: The support packages that my right hon. Friend has made available to the hospitality and tourism industries over the course of this pandemic have proved invaluable to thousands of businesses in Blackpool; but as we look to reopen those sectors later on this year, will he commit to extending the reduction in VAT for tourism, hospitality and leisure businesses to help maintain thousands of jobs in my constituency?

Jesse Norman: As my hon. Friend says, and I thank him for it, the temporary reduced rate of VAT was introduced to support the cash flow and the viability of over 150,000 businesses and to protect 2.4 million jobs in the hospitality and tourism sectors. It was extended in September and extended again, and will now run until 31 March of this year. But the relief comes at a significant cost, and while the Government keep taxes under review, we have no current plans to extend it further. I remind my hon. Friend that there are many other aspects of our financial support that may be of assistance to his constituents.

[911424] **Ian Levy** (Blyth Valley) (Con) [V]: The Eat Out to Help Out scheme was seen by many in the hospitality industry as a lifeline for the survival of their business after the lifting of restrictions last summer. Will my hon. Friend assure me that his Department will carefully consider reinstating the scheme or something similar once we come out of lockdown?

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen): I thank my hon. Friend for his question. Across the pandemic, the Government have created a number of innovative responses, like eat out to help out. We will continue to examine very carefully what package of measures we need to intervene with, and the Chancellor has indicated that he will be coming forward at the Budget with an update to the House on that package in due course.

James Sunderland (Bracknell) (Con): Given the current imperative to forge new trade deals worldwide, and also to make the new EU trade deal work, what incentives are being considered by the Treasury to both attract new companies to the UK and retain those that are already here?

Steve Barclay: As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor set out a moment ago, the Office for Investment, led by Lord Grimstone, is focused on exactly that issue, working in tandem with the Build Back Better Business Council, which the Prime Minister and the Chancellor chair.

Mr Speaker: Order. I now suspend the House for three minutes to enable the necessary arrangements to be made for the next business.

12.33 pm

Sitting suspended.

UK Border: Covid Protections

12.36 pm

Nick Thomas-Symonds (Torfaen) (Lab) (*Urgent Question*): To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if she will make a statement on Covid protections at the UK border.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel): From January 2020, the Government have had a comprehensive strategy for public health measures at the border. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office swiftly discouraged all but essential travel to China and announced that anybody entering the UK from Wuhan should self-isolate for 14 days.

In February, advice from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies recommended that those from Thailand, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia and Macau, and those who were symptomatic, should also self-isolate, and regulations were introduced to allow officers to detain and direct individuals. In March, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office advised against all non-essential travel, initially for 30 days. On 23 March, the Prime Minister advised that everyone should stay at home and travel only for essential purposes.

A raft of measures followed in May, including 14 days' self-isolation, passenger locator forms and fines for those who failed to comply with those mandatory conditions. In July, the Government announced the introduction of the international travel corridors. The countries on those travel corridor lists were kept under constant review and removed as the risk of importing covid-19 increased.

However, as the safeguarding of the vaccine roll-out has become the Government's priority, we have introduced stricter controls. In December, following the identification of the new variant of the virus, we introduced a travel ban on arrivals from South Africa, later extending to a ban on South America and Portugal. We suspended travel corridors and required all passengers to show proof of a negative coronavirus test before they embark on their journey to the UK. Anyone arriving must also self-isolate for 10 days.

Those new measures are being robustly enforced to keep the public safe. Passengers must continue to fill in a passenger locator form, and those who fail to comply face a £500 fine. Carriers are under a legal obligation to check that each passenger has proof of a negative test, and are liable for a fine of £2,000 for not complying. To date, Border Force has checked an estimated 3.7 million passenger locator forms, issued more than 2,300 fixed penalty notices and referred more than 22,000 cases to the police.

The UK has a world-leading vaccination programme that should all be proud of. It is therefore right that the Government continue to do everything we can to protect the roll-out of the vaccine from new strains of the virus. We keep all measures under review and will not hesitate to take further action to protect the public.

Nick Thomas-Symonds: I am grateful to you, Mr Speaker, for granting this urgent question, and to the Home Secretary for her response. It is good to see her in her place, and I hope we will see her there again to answer questions about how 400,000 police records were deleted and give us the promised update on that matter.

The efforts of the British people and the hopes of the vaccine are being undermined by the Government's inability to secure our borders against covid. Conservative incompetence is putting our country at risk. Labour is calling for a comprehensive hotel quarantine system, with protections to secure us against new strains. It cannot be restricted to only a handful of countries, leaving gaping holes in our defences against different strains of the virus emerging around the world. The Government must also announce a sector support package for aviation.

The Government's proposals being briefed to the press are half-baked and will be ineffective. As ever, it is too little, too late. From the start of the pandemic, the Government's handling of measures at the border has been chaotic. There has not been the comprehensive strategy the Home Secretary suggested. Indeed, from January last year to 23 March, only 273 people were formally quarantined. I wrote to the Home Secretary in April and asked her to learn the lessons of that, but still by May the UK was an international outlier, with virtually no travel controls.

When formal quarantining was introduced in June, the policy was so badly handled that it was ineffective. It is not being properly enforced, and the Government's own figures show that only 3% of people are being successfully contacted to ensure that they are observing the quarantine. Even the introduction of mandatory testing was delayed because the Government could not get the structures in place.

On the briefed plans for hotel quarantine, can the Home Secretary confirm when formal plans will be introduced? Will they be comprehensive or limited to a few countries? If they are limited, how will that be acceptable when the quarantining system is in such disarray? Put simply, what confidence can the public have in the Government on this issue if Ministers are not prepared to learn from their own mistakes?

Priti Patel: Let me begin by saying that I welcome the hon. Gentleman giving us a chance to discuss these measures. He has also mentioned the police national computer, on which we will provide an update in due course; I can give him that reassurance.

There has been a comprehensive strategy across Government, and it dates back to 27 January last year. The hon. Gentleman will be fully aware and sighted of that. It started with travel advice from the FCO, followed by guidance from SAGE from 10 February last year. New statutory instruments, including regulations, were introduced, and there were new powers for the medical profession and the police to detain individuals carrying symptoms of coronavirus. Guidance was issued to airports in February last year around how to handle coronavirus, and there was a flurry of travel advice. That was supported by self-isolation measures and, in March, the Coronavirus Act 2020. There was a parcel of mandatory quarantine, passenger locator forms, shutting the border with Denmark when the new strain was identified, test and release, banning flights from South Africa, pre-travel tests and carrier liability.

This is a comprehensive approach and strategy. It is important to note that throughout, when it comes to coronavirus and measures at the border that involve other Departments, the measures set out have naturally come with logistical and operational challenges. I take this opportunity to thank our operational partners—our

[Priti Patel]

airports, in particular, and Border Force, which has been on the frontline day in and day out, checking passengers. I mentioned earlier the number of checks, and Border Force is now checking 100% of passengers arriving in the UK. We have the isolation assurance service, which is increasing the number of checks to 5,000 a day. The National Police Chiefs' Council is already surging capacity to provide those checks.

The hon. Gentleman has referred to newspaper reports and speculation. It would be wrong of me to speculate about any measures that are not in place right now, as policy is being developed. He spoke about quarantining, and he claims that the Labour party has been calling for tougher restrictions. If I may say so, his party should reflect on its position. In August last year, the hon. Gentleman himself called quarantine "a blunt tool". In July, the shadow Transport Secretary, the hon. Member for Oldham West and Royton (Jim McMahon), said that quarantine measures should be "lessened". In June last year, the Leader of the Opposition also said that the system was "a blunt instrument".

Measures are always under review, and it is right that the Government review all measures. As I have said, we have a world-leading vaccination programme. We are proud of that programme, and the Government will do everything that they can to protect that vaccine from new strains of the virus.

Damian Green (Ashford) (Con) [V]: I commend my right hon. Friend for her unwavering commitment to keeping our borders secure. In that context, she will know that in Kent we of course support that, but we also support the free flow of legitimate haulage traffic across the channel not just for the sake of the national economy but to keep our local roads flowing freely as well. Can she assure me that any new measures will not impede the flow of freight traffic through the tunnel and across the channel?

Priti Patel: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. I thank him, as a Kent MP, for the work he has been doing, particularly on flow and hauliers. We absolutely have throughout the last 12 months—through difficulties as well, if we recall back in December—protected the flow of freight and critical supplies. That will continue.

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP) [V]: It is simply not accurate to say that there has been a comprehensive strategy in place since January 2020, and it is really quite extraordinary that a Home Secretary previously so obsessed with stopping people entering the country and deporting those already here should have taken so long to properly address covid protections at the UK border.

As the Home Secretary knows, in April and May last year I wrote to her asking for comprehensive health protections at the border, and I referred to the measures that had been introduced in other countries in Europe and across the world. Last week, the Home Secretary admitted that we should have closed our borders earlier, so why did she fail to take precautions that she knew were needed? What stopped her? Was it her Cabinet colleagues? If so, why did she not resign and speak out, given the risk of increased transmission from people entering the country?

Finally, it is good that four-nations discussions are now taking place, but it is the Home Office that collects and holds passenger data, and the UK Border Force, as the Home Secretary explained, reports to the Home Office, a UK Government Department. Can she confirm that all proper co-operation will be afforded to the devolved Governments going forward?

Priti Patel: I think it is fair to say that the hon. and learned Lady and I will disagree on a number of things, including her opening remarks on the Government's strategy. I have already outlined them, so I do not need to run through the range of measures that have been undertaken, but I would just like to reflect on a point she made about co-operation across the four nations. She will be very well aware that co-operation has taken place from the outset through the introduction of travel corridors and through the work of the UK Border Force across the United Kingdom. If I may say so, it does that incredibly well at our ports and airports across the UK. In fact, earlier last year I visited many of our Border Force officers in Scotland, both at Edinburgh and Glasgow. The co-operation is incredibly strong. The dialogue always continues and does exist. That will continue as, potentially, measures may change, as they have done throughout the coronavirus pandemic.

Christian Wakeford (Bury South) (Con): I thank my right hon. Friend for her statement on the work being done by our Border Force. Does she agree that while our efforts to contain the original coronavirus strain were working, because of the increased transmissibility of the new strains it is right that we re-evaluate the work being done at our borders?

Priti Patel: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Throughout the pandemic, we should all reflect on the way in which it has changed all our lives, but also on how it has touched our lives in many, many ways, and sad ways. All our measures have been under review, and that will continue at the border and with regard to the vaccine roll-out, as my hon. Friend points out.

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab) [V]: The Home Secretary lifted all the self-isolation rules for travellers on 13 March last year. In the following 10 days, up to 10,000 people with covid arrived in the UK, making the pandemic worse. Lessons must be learned this time. Further delays in strengthening quarantine and testing are a serious problem. Can she tell me why we saw crowded scenes at Heathrow on Friday at the UK border—the very opposite of quarantine? Is it true that for months people have been waiting for hours in those queues in unsafe circumstances? Is it true that the Border Force lifted some of the checks that she just said were being applied to 100% of passengers, because those queues were unsafe?

Priti Patel: The Chair of the Home Affairs Committee will be aware, with regard to her comments about last year, that the advice from Government was to stay at home, and clearly the point of that was not to travel. She asked, rightly, about the scenes at Heathrow airport at the weekend, and the fact is that those queues materialised because of the compliance checks that Border Force had put in place. I would like to thank Heathrow airport, because, as she will also be aware, we—colleagues

in Border Force—work with the airport operators on social distancing measures at the airport. That is a joint piece of work that takes place, and all airports take responsibility for their work and how they manage their flows. Border Force, in particular, is there to enforce the checks, as it does now, achieving 100% coverage. It is also now working with London Heathrow airport's assistant organisation—its contractors—HAL, which is also working as a triage function to make sure that people are being checked. I think the British public and the travelling public would just like that reassurance and that welcome news that checks are in place. If that means queues, obviously, we are working with airport operators in terms of how they are supported and triaged as arrivals come into the airport.

Dehenna Davison (Bishop Auckland) (Con) [V]: Given the nature of the new variant and the unique challenges that it has presented, I am pleased that new measures have been introduced, such as covid testing at the border, to help keep people safe as we continue our excellent efforts in the vaccination roll-out. Does my right hon. Friend agree that of course it is right that border measures are kept under constant review as we battle this fast-changing virus, and that it is much easier to be in Opposition making loud and sometimes conflicting suggestions with the benefit of hindsight?

Priti Patel: I thank my hon. Friend for her question. Again, it is worth reflecting on the fact that we are in a global health pandemic and all measures must always be under review. She made the point as well about Opposition parties and the flip-flopping. At the end of the day, the Government have to make difficult decisions and choices, working with operational partners, and that is exactly what we have done from day one throughout this pandemic.

Zarah Sultana (Coventry South) (Lab) [V]: Hundreds of asylum seekers are being housed in decommissioned Army barracks in Kent and Wales. Locked in, residents of the Napier barracks camp in Kent are forced to sleep in dormitories of 28 people. Social distancing and self-isolation are therefore impossible. One hundred people in the camp—that is, one in four—have tested positive for covid. One in 20 are on suicide watch. These are disgraceful, inhumane conditions, and the Home Office has now belatedly said that it will move those with covid out of the Napier camp. Will the Home Secretary now respect the rights and dignity of these people, close these camps and provide good, safe and liveable housing instead?

Priti Patel: It is important for the hon. Member to understand that the accommodation facilities that we are using are military bases that are of a very high standard—so much so that they were housing and accommodating our service personnel, men and women, prior to the base being made available to asylum seekers. The reason the base was made available is that in line with Public Health England guidelines, because of coronavirus, we need space for social distancing, which has been absolutely in place. These accommodation sites are in line with PHE guidance—we have always checked guidance and worked with PHE throughout coronavirus when it comes to accommodation. *[Interruption.]* I can see the hon. Lady shaking her head—perhaps she would like to listen to the facts and

not some of the jaded views that she may hold herself. Alongside that, the reason we have removed a number of asylum seekers over the weekend is actually to protect others from catching coronavirus. That is absolutely the right thing to do, because public health and public safety are important, and that, of course, is in line with PHE guidance.

Dean Russell (Watford) (Con): I also pay tribute to my right hon. Friend for the work that she is doing to secure our borders. Given the current situation with a new, more transmissible virus, can I ask whether she agrees that we need to look again at our rules and guidance with regard to borders to make sure that we are limiting the amount of virus that comes through them?

Priti Patel: I thank my hon. Friend for his question. He is absolutely correct. We have an amazing vaccine programme. As we all know, the world is speaking about our vaccine roll-out programme, and we should be very proud about that. None the less, until the roll-out is advancing in the way that we would like it to, we need to take measures, and, as the House has heard me say several times now, all measures that we take throughout this pandemic are under review.

Mr Alistair Carmichael (Orkney and Shetland) (LD) [V]: Measures of this sort have been a feature of all the systems that have been most effective in tackling coronavirus around the world, so the question that most people will want to hear answered today is, why did it take so long to get here? Will the Home Secretary do a bit to bolster public confidence in her decision making by publishing the evidence on which she has based the day's decision, as well as the evidence that she has relied on to make different decisions hitherto?

Priti Patel: Throughout the pandemic, all decisions have been made by looking at scientific advice, and the right hon. Gentleman will be well aware of that, and it is no different when it comes to protective measures at the border. He heard me speak about shutting the border when the mutant strain from Denmark was prevalent, and taking action around flights from South Africa and other countries, which was absolutely right. That was based on scientific advice, much of which has also been put out in the public domain.

Mr Mark Harper (Forest of Dean) (Con): I recognise that the Home Secretary cannot talk about measures that are being discussed at the moment, but I hope that she can assure the House that, if decisions are taken today, as we expect, a Minister will be appearing at the Dispatch Box tomorrow to update the House on those measures. May I just ask her this: given that the chief scientific adviser has said that coronavirus will be with us “forever”, are the measures that are being contemplated expected to be permanent to deal with that permanent risk of a mutating variant of the virus that the vaccine cannot deal with, or temporary?

Priti Patel: I thank my right hon. Friend for his important question. First, all announcements were made both in the conventional way and to the House, as Mr Speaker would expect. Secondly, as my right hon. Friend will understand, measures are always under review. Decisions will be taken through the consultative process within Government based on evidence, based on discussions and based on a number of facts. The

[Priti Patel]

virus, of course, is changing, although it is still with us. The vaccine roll-out is a new element, a new consideration, in terms of the nature of the measures that are being taken. It is fair to say that there has been a layered approach with these measures. As we have seen, there has been escalation and de-escalation. Right now, we have escalated the measures through the banning of the travel corridors, so these measures will be under review. Naturally, as the roll-out progresses, new strains may or may not materialise internationally. We will obviously have to take everything into consideration when it comes to permanency or the timetabling of the application of certain measures.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP) [V]: I thank the Secretary of State for her answers today to the urgent question. She will be aware of the substantial concerns that exist around the Northern Ireland border with the Republic of Ireland as pertains to covid travel. Further to the announcement from the Republic of Ireland, can the Secretary of State confirm what, if any, contact has been made to ascertain the current situation and to share information regarding passengers' travel to the Republic of Ireland and, potentially, to Northern Ireland, which should not have been withheld at any stage? Furthermore, what steps will be taken to save lives by being sensible about our shared border?

Priti Patel: The hon. Gentleman makes a really important point. First of all, the advice is not to travel. It is to stay at home for the very reason that he has given: we are in a pandemic and we need to protect public health. He has highlighted some of the things that are taking place right now. Secondly, it is important for me to emphasise that this is a joint effort. Collaboration takes place in relation to the common travel area, the sharing of information and the sharing of data around passengers and flows. That has always been the case, and that will continue. None the less, I still emphasise that there is no need for individuals to travel. When it comes to the CTA and to the areas to which the hon. Gentleman is referring, we are also thinking predominantly about the movement of goods and hauliers, and, of course, there are checks in place for those particular examples.

Peter Gibson (Darlington) (Con) [V]: Can my right hon. Friend outline what support the Government will be providing to regional airports such as Teesside International to assist with these measures?

Priti Patel: I thank my hon. Friend for his question. Of course, we are speaking about current measures that are in place right now and have been put in place by the Government. My right hon. Friend the Transport Secretary is working constantly with airports across the country in constructive dialogue in terms of the measures, the impact on flow and changes in flow. Again I would like to emphasise, recognising that these are difficult times of course, that people should really not be travelling unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab) [V]: I also wrote to the Home Secretary in April on covid border measures, and the reply on her behalf from her Home Office colleague, Baroness Williams, said that "we have brought in the right measures at the right time",

but we now know that the Home Secretary did not believe that, because she recently said publicly that she had wanted the borders closed. Is it not the case that it is not only my hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen (Nick Thomas-Symonds) who believes that these new measures are too late, but that by her own admission she believes that herself?

Priti Patel: I have already outlined the comprehensive package of measures that we brought in from January last year. It is all very well to talk with hindsight about measures in the past, but there were many discussions that took place. Alongside that, the measures are clear on testing, on test to release, and now on banning various flights and on carrier liabilities. These measures are in place and they will continue to be in place, but as I have said, as evidence changes, the situation changes. The measures are under review and changes will be announced in due course.

Sir Desmond Swayne (New Forest West) (Con): Is it usual to bill prisoners for the cost of their incarceration?

Priti Patel: I refer my right hon. Friend to my statement earlier.

Charlotte Nichols (Warrington North) (Lab) [V]: As an island nation, there is absolutely no reason why we could not follow the lead of countries such as New Zealand, which had strict border measures in place from the start of the pandemic and where normal life has been able to resume. That is something that we are all watching with envy from lockdown 3. As we approach a year since the first covid case in the UK, can the Home Secretary tell the House why it has taken her so long to put in an effective strategy to stop covid—particularly the new strains of covid—entering the country, and what steps will be taken to prevent travellers from circumventing travel restrictions by flying through countries with no restrictions?

Priti Patel: I am intrigued by this new hindsight that everybody seems to have adopted rather quickly, when I have already outlined the position of the Opposition earlier in my remarks. The hon. Lady has heard my comments around the comprehensive approach, the list of measures that have been put in place, and the people that we have worked with in Government and out of Government in terms of operational partners. We have a comprehensive strategy that has been in place since January last year, but as I have said repeatedly, the measures will be under review as they have been throughout the entire pandemic, including health measures at the border.

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con) [V]: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on what she has been doing. Will she strengthen the law against people trafficking, which remains a worrying danger? Can she also ensure that the necessary travel controls do not stop essential work travel?

Priti Patel: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. First, on people trafficking, he has been assiduous on this and he has heard me speak a number of times about the measures that we are bringing forward in terms of legislation and plans around tackling people trafficking and smugglers. We have some good reports on the criminal penalties and sanctions that have been

levelled against individuals. Secondly, he is absolutely right about the fines that we are putting in place and the exemptions that are required in key areas such as goods, in particular, coming into the country.

Dr Philippa Whitford (Central Ayrshire) (SNP) [V]: Pacific countries that controlled their borders have suffered less economic harm from covid. With evidence growing that the South African and other variants are resistant to antibodies, which could undermine the vaccine programme, when will the Government introduce this more rigorous quarantine, and how will they support the aviation sector through 2021, when these measures are likely to be needed?

Priti Patel: I refer the hon. Lady to my statement and the comments I have made about measures being under review and announcements being forthcoming. It is not for me to give a timetable for what is taking place, because obviously there is a lot of work that takes place day in, day out across Government around border measures and the overall approach with regard to coronavirus.

Nigel Mills (Amber Valley) (Con) [V]: I welcome these proposed measures; clearly, at times of highest risk, we need the strongest measures. Will the Secretary of State agree to be transparent and publish the criteria that the Government will use for deciding which measures will be in place at what time between quarantine, self-isolation and travel corridors being allowed?

Priti Patel: My hon. Friend makes an important point. I do not want to speculate about new measures; he will bear with me, as he has heard me say this a number of times. There are processes around making decisions, and clearly, when changes come forward, the Government will announce the details in due course.

Andrew Gwynne (Denton and Reddish) (Lab) [V]: It is not hindsight. The Home Secretary knows that the Home Affairs Committee, on which I sit, took evidence from New Zealand and Singapore last year about what they were doing to successfully apply effective covid controls at the border. Ten months on, it feels that the Home Secretary is closing the stable door after the horse has bolted. I simply ask her this: why did our measures not work? Did they not go far enough, and does she take any responsibility for that?

Priti Patel: As a member of the Select Committee, the hon. Gentleman will be aware that in April last year, we discussed at the Select Committee health measures at the border and the work of the Government. In terms of the effectiveness of the measures, he will be very familiar with all the measures—the statutory instruments, the regulations and the directions to airports, Border Force and the ports. As I and other members of the Government have said throughout, and particularly today, all measures are under review, and that is the right thing to do.

Steve Double (St Austell and Newquay) (Con) [V]: The Home Secretary will be aware that the aviation sector has been one of the most adversely affected by the pandemic. While it is right that the Government take all appropriate steps to protect public health, she will also be aware that any further restrictions will have a damaging impact on the sector. Can she reassure me

that if any new restrictions on travel are brought in, they will only be in place for as long as necessary? Will the Government work with airports and airlines to find ways to safely allow flights to recommence as soon as possible?

Priti Patel: Let me give hon. Friend reassurance about the way in which the Government across the board have worked with the aviation sector. He is right about the impact that coronavirus has had on global travel, airlines and the people who work in the sector. Government will continue to work with stakeholders and partners in the sector. They are our operational partners. We work with them every single day at our key airports and our ports, and that will continue.

Kate Osborne (Jarrow) (Lab) [V]: I understand that the Home Secretary does not want to comment on any measures that are still to be confirmed, but if people are required to self-isolate on entering the UK, will the Government consider putting support in place to help those who cannot afford to finance their own quarantine but may be travelling due to, for example, a family emergency or bereavement?

Priti Patel: If I may, I will restate the point that I made earlier: I am not going to comment on speculation. All Members will have to be a little bit more patient and wait for formal details as and when announcements are made.

Caroline Nokes (Romsey and Southampton North) (Con) [V]: I am sure my right hon. Friend would agree that returning British citizens need certainty about what to expect at the border. Can she assure me that advance information to travellers will be as explicit as possible, so that nobody can turn up at the airport claiming that they did not know which test to get or when and what documentation they would need to prove it?

Priti Patel: I thank my right hon. Friend for her question, and she is absolutely right of course. The role of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the Department for Transport throughout this pandemic has been very clear in terms of advice, and that will continue.

Gerald Jones (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney) (Lab) [V]: Will the Home Secretary indicate whether she thinks it is appropriate that the isolation assurance service has been checking just three out of 100 people on quarantine compliance? Surely she realises that that is totally unsatisfactory and falls far short of what is required to keep our country safe.

Priti Patel: First, I pay tribute to our colleagues who are working on checks. The isolation assurance service has, throughout, increased its checks, and those numbers are wrong. It is right and vital to point out that the collaboration that takes place with not only the IAS and Border Force, but the police and others is right and vital—and it is working. As an organisation, the IAS has been stepping up the checks it has been undertaking.

Jacob Young (Redcar) (Con): As the MP for Redcar and Cleveland, I represent many of Teesside's offshore oil and gas workers. Will my right hon. Friend assure

[Jacob Young]

me that if any additional border restrictions are put in place, that important part of our economy will not be negatively affected?

Priti Patel: My hon. Friend is, rightly, a strong advocate for his constituency and this important sector in his constituency. There have been certain limited and restricted exemptions, but I repeat that if he bears with us on this and has patience, he will find that announcements will come in due course. He is, however, right to highlight his constituency interest.

Wendy Chamberlain (North East Fife) (LD): As is the case in relation to any covid restriction, what businesses, operators and the public want and need is clarity, certainty and notice. So if the Government are going down the route of border closures, and I note what the Secretary of State has said already, will she provide an indication as to how long any restrictions are likely to last and provide reassurance that the Government will give support if this means no 2021 season for inbound tourism operators and their supply chains?

Priti Patel: It is important at this stage to reflect upon the amount of support that the Government have put in to businesses throughout this pandemic. Of course the hon. Lady is right on certainty for businesses and others with regard to coronavirus restrictions. Nothing has changed on that, and of course we will work with all sectors, as we have done throughout this pandemic, when it comes to not only support, but giving them information up front.

Lee Anderson (Ashfield) (Con) [V]: Will my right hon. Friend please confirm that people should not be travelling in and out of the country unless absolutely necessary? Will she assure me that airports are fully aware that they too have a moral duty to ensure that social distancing is in place?

Priti Patel: I thank my hon. Friend for his question. He is right: we are in a global health pandemic. The daily numbers that we see of people being hospitalised and the impacts of covid are a sobering reminder of all of this. I wish to make a couple of points. Of course passengers are checked at the airports—we have just discussed that today. All airports across the UK are operational partners, and they have a responsibility to comply with those social distancing and covid-compliant measures. We will continue to work with them and support them to do so. As ever, my message again is: people should not be travelling; we are in a global health pandemic.

Richard Thomson (Gordon) (SNP) [V]: The Home Secretary will be aware that the Scottish Government cannot unilaterally close the border in Scotland to international arrivals. May I therefore ask: in the event that further restrictions on international arrivals are imposed, will she commit to offering the full resources of the UK Border Force, including funding, if required, to ensure that Scotland is able to operate effectively as part of a four-nations approach?

Priti Patel: The hon. Gentleman has made the case for a stronger United Kingdom and for the Union working together, which is absolutely right, and we have

been doing that, with Border Force in particular. I pay tribute to my Border Force colleagues across the country for the very strong work they are doing, in Scotland, Wales and across the UK, because they have been on the frontline every day.

Scott Benton (Blackpool South) (Con) [V]: Does my right hon. Friend agree that a key benefit of Brexit is that decisions on our immigration, national security and borders are now exclusively matters for Her Majesty's Government?

Priti Patel: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. He will know that in Britain post Brexit we are clear in terms of the powers and decisions that we are able to undertake. That is, of course, effectively what the Government are now doing, and my hon. Friend has highlighted some clear areas where that change has now happened.

Liz Saville Roberts (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC) [V]: The first covid case in Wales was recorded on 28 February last year, yet almost a year later the UK Government remain reluctant to follow the science wholeheartedly in relation to the health risks implicit in international travel. While today's answer is insufficient, the Government's measures will also be difficult to sustain in the long term. Given that health is devolved, what plans are in place for the UK Government and the Welsh Government to work together on a long-term plan to ensure that international travel is not again a threat to public health?

Priti Patel: If I may I will take the right hon. Lady back to January last year. She just mentioned travel measures, but travel measures were brought in in January last year. I am not going to run through again the various measures that have been undertaken. If I may say so, when it comes to the devolved nations, there is support and work in place, and calls take place on a near daily basis. It is absolutely right that we take a united approach to dealing with measures and restrictions, but also to tackling coronavirus. I absolutely urge Ministers across the four nations: if they have any particular issues in respect of joining up, speaking with one voice and being much more united, the Government's door is well and truly open because that is exactly what we have been trying to do over the past 12 months.

Antony Higginbotham (Burnley) (Con): I commend the Home Secretary for all the work that she and her Department are doing to keep our borders and people safe during this period. More than anything else, aerospace workers in Burnley need planes to be back in the air, so will the Home Secretary assure me that her Department is looking at what measures might be needed on the border in the long term to allow travel to resume in a safe and secure way?

Priti Patel: I commend my hon. Friend for speaking about the aerospace sector and the innovation that takes place within it. Of course, across Government we recognise that coronavirus has been very challenging for the aviation sector, so those discussions will always take place and have taken place, and support will continue to be part of that wider discussion. The Government are committed to that.

Dame Angela Eagle (Wallasey) (Lab) [V]: On the day that Office for National Statistics figures show that the UK now has the highest number of covid deaths per million population in the world, and given that currently the isolation assurance service does not check the vast majority of those required to isolate, how can the Home Secretary assure us that enforcement of these new rules will be adequate, and that they will not be more honoured in the breach than the observance?

Priti Patel: The hon. Lady has made a very important point. The number of deaths from coronavirus has reached 100,000. Every death is an absolute tragedy. I think that puts this discussion today into some context—a great deal of context, in fact—regarding not only measures but the fact that we are working night and day to reduce the spread of coronavirus. I have highlighted the checks done by the isolation assurance service, but it is not just about that service. It may reassure the hon. Lady to hear that Border Force is now fulfilling 100% of compliance checks, working with airport staff on triaging to bring in those checks and with airports and ports on queues and managing the flows coming in. Those are important measures, but it does come back to the need for compliance, which is why, again, I urge everyone who should not be travelling to please stay at home.

Jack Brereton (Stoke-on-Trent South) (Con) [V]: Given the huge efforts that everyone has made, which have now got infection rates back under control, and given the rise of new covid strains in a number of countries around the world, does my right hon. Friend agree that we cannot risk importing further new strains of the virus into the UK, which would undermine all that work?

Priti Patel: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I have spoken already about our incredible vaccine—our world-leading vaccine—which we are proud of. Our work and focus since the development of the vaccine have been about protecting that vaccine from new strains, hence the measures that we brought in in December—the pre-travel tests and the carrier liability for pre-travel tests as well. Those are important measures, and they are clearly linked to the vaccine, but also to stopping the spread of coronavirus.

Debbie Abrahams (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab) [V]: The Home Affairs Committee and the all-party parliamentary group on coronavirus—in our report following our inquiry last year—recommended tighter border restrictions to suppress the virus, reflecting the success of countries that followed a SARS/MERS pandemic model, rather than a flu pandemic model. It just is not credible for the Home Secretary to say that there were adequate protections at our borders. Given this, why have the Government been so slow to protect the country's public health and the economy via its borders?

Priti Patel: I am naturally going to disagree with the hon. Lady, and do so respectfully. As I have already said and as she will recall, last year at the Select Committee we had a lengthy discussion around coronavirus measures at the border and the number of people coming into the country, and I have highlighted the measures that are in place. These are stringent and strong measures, which have been put in place in a layered approach throughout the pandemic. When the situation has changed, when

the evidence has changed, and when new strains have materialised and developed, the Government have taken the right action at the right time.

Sara Britcliffe (Hyndburn) (Con): Many residents in Hyndburn and Haslingden have raised concerns about people entering our country and not following the isolation guidance when they arrive. Will the Home Secretary please reassure my residents that more stringent measures will be in place, if necessary, to control the virus?

Priti Patel: I reassure my hon. Friend and her constituents about the isolation assurance service. As I have said, that service is working with Border Force and the police around absolutely following through on compliance checks. The IAS is linked with Public Health England, so it clearly takes the lead on that. My hon. Friend's constituents should be reassured by the checks that we have in place, which are very clear; Border Force and others are working together to ensure that they are working.

Owen Thompson (Midlothian) (SNP) [V]: The Home Secretary said last week that she was an advocate of closing the borders last March. Given that she chose not to answer my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Edinburgh South West (Joanna Cherry) on this matter, could I ask again—why did she not make stronger public representations at the time? Or was she silenced within her own Department?

Priti Patel: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my earlier comments. I have been very clear about the measures that have been brought in since January last year. Any Member of this House saying that the Government have not taken action is completely wrong. I would be more than happy to write to him with the list of every single step and measure—from the Home Office, the Department for Transport and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office—that has been brought in at the border.

Stephen Crabb (Preseli Pembrokeshire) (Con) [V]: I know that the Home Secretary understands the importance of trade and the pressures facing many UK hauliers right now, so will she confirm that, regardless of what new measures are brought in at the border, hauliers will get all the support they need to keep vital trade flowing in and out of the country?

Priti Patel: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. The role of hauliers—for goods, freight and medical supplies—has been at the forefront of all our actions when it comes to keeping goods flowing. I point my right hon. Friend to the work and testing measures that he will have seen at our ports—at Dover. These are important measures that do exactly that; they help to keep goods moving, and that will continue.

Naz Shah (Bradford West) (Lab) [V]: On this tragic day, when, according to the Office for National Statistics, the number of UK covid-related deaths is about to surpass 100,000—many from poorer and working-class backgrounds—can the Home Secretary confirm that any upcoming plans on borders and hotel quarantining will not disproportionately affect the poorest while being a luxury for the richest in our society?

Priti Patel: The hon. Lady makes a very important point. First of all, I am not going to get into speculation around new measures and things of that nature. It is a tragic day, a sad day; it is a terrible, terrible, shocking reminder of how coronavirus has touched the lives of so many people. It is right, quite frankly, that all our measures are kept under review, and today's figures are a sobering reminder of why we do that.

Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con): This is a really miserable time for everybody involved in the travel industry. Yesterday, Hays Travel announced that it is going to close 89 of its 535 stores. At the moment, it is unclear whether that will impact on the four stores in Northamptonshire, including the shop in Kettering. Will my right hon. Friend ensure that if the Government tighten the border controls, they revisit the financial help available to the travel industry?

Priti Patel: I thank my hon. Friend, and I completely hear his comments. As I said, our operational partners and the people in the sector have had a torrid time. It is for my colleagues across Government to continue that work and dialogue. I should emphasise that dialogue always takes place with sectors and businesses. That is important, and it will absolutely continue.

Tonia Antoniazzi (Gower) (Lab) [V]: The Home Secretary pays tribute to border staff, but they face risks working in close contact with arriving passengers and clandestine arrivals, particularly since the end of the transition period, without commercial-grade masks or personal protective equipment. What additional measures have been put in place to protect the staff that she rightly speaks so highly of?

Priti Patel: I will always speak highly of my frontline partners in Border Force, who do exceptional work across ports and airports. From the start of this pandemic,

we have supported Border Force staff and resourced them with PPE and the equipment they have asked for and needed—[*Interruption.*] The hon. Lady shakes her head, but we absolutely have, and the head of Border Force, who I work with day in, day out, can testify to that. As I have already articulated, measures at the border are always under review. Those incredible staff are put under pressure, for example, when airports are very busy. They are there, and we have measures in place to protect them, including the way in which we rota them and keep them distant from travelling members of the public.

Andy Carter (Warrington South) (Con) [V]: I offer my support to the work that the Home Secretary has undertaken during the pandemic by reacting to the ever-changing challenge of this virus. As she knows, Warrington is getting used to having a more significant connection to UK ports, and to Ireland and the channel tunnel, with the recent addition of an inland border facility. Can she assure me that the new measures will not impact the flow of freight and cause issues with lorries queuing in my rural villages?

Priti Patel: My hon. Friend raises an important point. Obviously, as part of the end of transition, inland sites were created to assist with the flow of goods, as we have spoken about this afternoon. Again, Border Force is involved with inland sites, and that will absolutely continue. The measures are under review, and we are making sure we can operationalise them. That equally applies to the inland sites that he refers to.

Mr Speaker: I am now suspending the House for three minutes to enable the necessary arrangements for the next business to be made.

1.27 pm

Sitting suspended.

Educational Settings: Reopening

1.30 pm

Kate Green (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab) (*Urgent Question*): To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the Government's plan for the reopening of educational settings.

The Minister for School Standards (Nick Gibb): Throughout the pandemic, the Government have been clear that education is a national priority. We had worked hard to keep all schools, colleges and universities fully open, but the scientific advice we received in January meant that we had no choice but to close schools and colleges to all but vulnerable children and the children of critical workers, and to restrict in-person teaching in university to those studying to be future critical workers.

It is the Government's strong desire to reopen all schools, colleges and universities as soon as possible. We will prioritise the reopening of schools as we begin the process of lifting lockdown restrictions. We are acutely aware of the damage done to children's education and development, particularly for the most disadvantaged pupils, by being away from school, and of the increased burdens that are placed on parents. That is why we allowed early years providers to remain open throughout this lockdown.

The decision about when and how we can reopen has to be based on clear public health data and guided by scientific evidence and the advice of the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies, the Joint Biosecurity Centre, Public Health England and the chief medical officer, including on issues such as hospitalisation rates and mortality, the rate of vaccination, and the challenge of new variants. Ultimately, it was the pressure on the NHS that caused us to move into a national lockdown, and the Government are monitoring NHS capacity carefully as they review whether easing lockdown might be possible.

The Government recognise that headteachers, teachers, support staff, parents and carers need time to prepare for reopening. That is why the Secretary of State made it clear last week that we will give two weeks' notice to schools, colleges and universities so that they can prepare for a return to face-to-face education. We want to give two weeks' notice so that parents can make arrangements for the care of their children, and we will be making announcements in the next few days.

Until schools can reopen fully, it is crucial that they continue to provide high-quality remote education alongside the on-site provision for vulnerable children and the children of critical workers. I would like to take this opportunity to thank teachers and school leadership teams across the country for working around the clock to keep schools open for some while also rising to the challenge of providing remote education for the millions of children who are continuing their education from home.

However, remote education can never be a substitute for days spent in a classroom led by a brilliant teacher, or for children being with their friends. We want those days to return as quickly as possible, and with them this Government's continuing determination, made still more urgent by the pandemic, to raise standards in all our

schools to improve the life chances of every child and to transform the start in life for those children facing the toughest challenges.

Kate Green: I am pleased to see the Schools Minister at the Dispatch Box—I have more hope of receiving answers from him than I am used to from the Secretary of State—but even he has failed to give parents, students and staff the credible plan they deserve. We simply do not know what the Government's plan is for school reopening, other than what we read in the newspapers. In recent days, we have had reports that the Prime Minister wants pupils back before Easter, the Health Secretary saying he wants pupils back after Easter, and Public Health England saying overnight that primary schools are already safe to reopen. Which is it? What is the plan for full reopening?

The Schools Minister mentioned some metrics but was vague about the required performance against them. Can he give us some more clarity? Will schools return only if R is below 1? We have read reports that Public Health England believes that primary schools are safe to open. Are these reports accurate, and will he publish the scientific evidence? Will there be a credible testing plan in place as pupils return?

How will the Government get this chaotic system back on track? Can the Minister tell us in what order pupils will return to the classroom? Will it be exam years first, primary schools first, or a regional variation? What is the plan for the return of college and university students?

Why have the Government repeatedly ruled out the use of rotas to keep pupils in the classroom as a means of reducing transmission? What will be done to help pupils to catch up on the learning they have lost? Can the Minister guarantee that schools will be first to reopen when it is safe to do so, or will other restrictions be lifted if our children return to the classroom?

Parents need support and they need to be able to plan. They need answers to these questions and they need them now.

Nick Gibb: The hon. Lady asks for a plan. There is a plan. Schools were closed as part of the national lockdown, which was introduced to tackle the growing pressure on the NHS, and there are clear criteria for emerging from the lockdown, including hospitalisation rates and the other three criteria I mentioned in my opening comments. We have always been clear that schools will be the last to close and the first to open as we emerge from the national lockdown when on the criteria it is safe to begin to do so.

The hon. Lady asks about the safety of schools. We have always been clear that restricted attendances in schools are not because schools are unsafe but in order to reduce the overall number of social contacts in our community.

The hon. Lady asks about testing. Lateral flow device testing is taking place in our schools. We are testing staff twice a week to identify asymptomatic covid cases. Those pupils returning to secondary school, or in secondary school at the moment, will be tested twice as they return to school.

The hon. Lady says again, "Why aren't schools the first to open and the last to close?" Well, that is something we have been making clear all along. The problem with her is that she repeatedly calls for action that we are

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already taking. She is always two steps behind. The Opposition have no plans, no direction and no clarity on what is the biggest crisis facing this country and the world for nearly a century.

Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con) [V]: I thank all teachers and support staff for all the work that they are doing to try to teach children at this time.

My right hon. Friend will be aware that a number of paediatricians have written to *The Times* today about children's anxiety, depression and self-harm—all at frightening levels because of school closures. Parents are showing signs of psychological stress and breakdown as a result of the pressures of trying to home-school their children and sustain their jobs and businesses. We need to get our schools open again sooner rather than later. Why not open schools and colleges in the areas where covid cases and the R are significantly lower? Will he put mental health practitioners in all schools to help children and parents during this time? What discussions has he had with the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation on priority vaccinations for teachers and support staff so that we can help to put an end to the revolving door of learning that has characterised education this year? We just need to get our children back in school full-time as soon as possible.

Nick Gibb: My right hon. Friend is right to pay tribute to teaching staff in our schools. He is also right to point to the very difficult circumstances that both students and parents face when they are having to learn from home and are not with their friends. We all know that being in school is the best thing for young people rather than learning from home. All the decisions that we are taking are with the wellbeing of students at the forefront. We understand the disruption that the pandemic is causing to students' education and the impact that it may have had on their mental health. We remain committed to introducing the new mental health support teams for schools and colleges. To support the return to school, we have put in place a range of measures and guidance, and a new £8 million training initiative for school staff to support children's wellbeing. The health elements of the new RSHE—relationships, sex and health education—curriculum include teaching about mental health and wellbeing. The NHS continues to run 24-hour helplines for those people who have mental health problems.

My right hon. Friend asked about regional differences in infection rates. We will always be led by the science when making decisions about moving away from the lockdown conditions.

Finally, my right hon. Friend asked about vaccines. The JCVI advises that the first priority for the covid vaccination programme should be the prevention of mortality. For the next phase of the roll-out the JCVI has asked the Department of Health and Social Care to consider occupational vaccination, in collaboration with other Departments, including the Department for Education.

Carol Monaghan (Glasgow North West) (SNP) [V]: We are all acutely aware of the impact of school closures on our children, none more so than those of us who have children and are trying to juggle work and home schooling. Will the Minister assure the House, however,

that schools will reopen only when the scientific evidence indicates that it is safe to do so, not because of pressure from the Back Benches?

I hope that the Minister has a set of key targets that must be met before reopening. Can he share them with the House today? Is there a maximum R value that the Government are looking at if we are reopening? I echo the call from the Chair of the Education Committee, the right hon. Member for Harlow (Robert Halfon), for the JCVI to look at the prioritisation of teachers for vaccination.

Nick Gibb: As I said to the hon. Member for Stretford and Urmston (Kate Green), we have restricted attendance not because schools are unsafe, but in order to reduce the overall number of social contacts in our community. Both PHE and the Department of Health and Social Care confirm that the system of controls we have in our schools—the extra hand-washing, the hygiene, the ventilation, the one-way systems, the masks in communal areas and so on—create an inherently safer environment for children and staff, where the risk of transmission of infection is substantially reduced. This is about reducing transmission in the community, and it is one of the measures after tier 4 that we introduced to achieve that.

The hon. Member for Glasgow North West (Carol Monaghan) asked about the criteria for emerging from the lockdown. As I said at the beginning of this UQ, those criteria include hospitalisation rates, mortality, the rate of vaccination, and the challenge of the new variants, but I can assure the hon. Lady that we will be led by the advice of the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies, the Joint Biosecurity Centre, PHE, and the chief medical officer in any decisions we make regarding the reopening of schools.

Siobhan Baillie (Stroud) (Con): On the previous point, I hope the Back Benches get louder about that, because it is more important than ever. We need to hear about the Stroud dad who contacted me because he is so desperately worried about the mental health of his children who are at home all day, and the parents who are contacting me on Instagram. Instagram is for pictures of cats, but these parents are absolutely at their wits' end juggling childcare and work. Will my right hon. Friend reassure Stroud's parents that the reopening of schools is being treated as a national emergency? On his point about evidence, will he work with the six Gloucestershire MPs to see whether our falling covid case rates and the low transmission in schools will allow our primaries to reopen after half-term?

Nick Gibb: My hon. Friend is right; we take the mental health of pupils and parents, and indeed school staff, very seriously in all the decisions we make. Indeed, the Minister on the Front Bench beside me, my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Vicky Ford), is convening a mental health action group to look at the effects on children, young people and staff in the education system, and we will confirm the next steps on that as soon as we can. However, at every step we will be led by the scientific advice on when it is safe to reopen schools.

Dame Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab) [V]: Following the question from the Chair of the Education Committee, the right hon. Member for Harlow (Robert Halfon), for many months the Children's Commissioner, who leaves her post shortly and who is a

terrific advocate for young people, has highlighted the effect of school closures on children's mental health and wellbeing. Families in Kingston upon Hull North are struggling and as a nation we are storing up a time bomb of mental health issues for a generation. What discussions has the Minister had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care about real and additional support for schools, child and adolescent mental health services, and the voluntary sector groups helping children and families now?

Nick Gibb: The hon. Member will be aware of all the work that the Department for Education, Ministers and the Secretary of State have done in recent months, and for more than a year, on the children and young people's mental health Green Paper to ensure that we roll out, over the next few years, a serious series of support for mental health provision in our schools. It is a huge programme, which is designed to help children with serious mental health issues. It is also designed to alert us and to take action when there are early signs of mental health conditions in children. It is a huge project, and one we are continuing with. We have put in place a range of measures to help tackle the mental health concerns that the pandemic is throwing up, including the action group set up by the Under-Secretary of State for Education, my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford. The £8 million training initiative for school staff to support children's wellbeing is already up and running.

Felicity Buchan (Kensington) (Con) [V]: The majority of parents in Kensington would like to see their children return to school after the half-term break, especially with proper testing in place. The Prime Minister assured me in early January that there was a "cautious presumption" for children to return at that time. Since early January, rates in London have fallen significantly. Can my right hon. Friend assure me that everything is being done to get children back into school and that we have not ruled out a return after the mid-term break?

Nick Gibb: As a schools Minister, no one in the House—not even my right hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Robert Halfon) or, indeed, my hon. Friend—is keener than I am to see all schools back and open to all children and young people, but we will be led by the scientific advice when we make that decision, and that will be how we best tackle the transmission of this virus in our communities.

Rushanara Ali (Bethnal Green and Bow) (Lab) [V]: Parents and children have faced unprecedented pressures, in part thanks to the incompetence of this Government. We have had the failures with test and trace, we have had indecision about school closure and now schools opening, and we have also had huge issues with the distribution of laptops. In Tower Hamlets, we have 60% of children facing poverty—the highest in the country—and a shortage of 10,000 laptops. Can the Minister update the House on when my constituents can get the laptops so that they can get the education they need urgently while we are in lockdown? The Government have had nearly a year now, and we have children whose life chances will be damaged further if this is not sorted out immediately.

Nick Gibb: The hon. Member failed to mention of course that the Government have purchased hundreds of millions of doses of vaccine from a range of different

providers, and that we were one of the first countries to begin rolling out the vaccine process. She failed to point out that we have already purchased 1.3 million laptops for disadvantaged children in our schools who may not have a device, on top of the 2.9 million laptops and tablets that already exist in our schools. So far, we have delivered to the hands of children, local authorities and schools 876,000 laptops, purchased in a demanding global market, built from scratch, imported and distributed. It is an amazing logistical exercise, and it would have been nice if the hon. Member paid tribute to the work of hundreds of staff in Computacenter and the Department for Education for such an amazing achievement.

Mr Laurence Robertson (Tewkesbury) (Con) [V]: I am sure the Minister will join me in paying tribute to the two special schools in my constituency, Alderman Knight and Milestone, as they carry out such amazing work with pupils who are very challenged. Those pupils are less aware of social distancing requirements, and school staff need to work in close proximity and come into frequent physical contact with them because, for example, of the disabilities that some of the pupils may have. Does the Minister agree that vaccinating teachers and staff at all schools, and particularly at special schools, would bring great benefits?

Nick Gibb: My hon. Friend makes a very good point. I pay tribute to all staff who work in our special schools. They remain open for vulnerable children and do a wonderful job. For children with special educational needs and disabilities, attending their educational setting is crucial so that they can receive high-quality teaching and the specialist professional support they need. He makes an important point about vaccines. The priority for the first phase is mortality, but in the second phase the JVCI will be looking at different occupations. The Department for Education will be pressing the case for the education workforce.

Daisy Cooper (St Albans) (LD) [V]: For months, parents, teachers, unions, MPs and local authorities have been calling for: rotas in schools; school transport that is ring-fenced to a single school to reduce transmission; laptops and internet access for children; vaccinations for teachers; mental health funding for young people and the myriad costs facing schools; directly employing supply teachers for one-to-one catch-ups; and trusting local public health directors and schools to decide how best to reopen. The ideas are there on how to reopen schools safely, so why is there still no plan?

Nick Gibb: As I set out, there is a very clear plan for reopening schools, based on the fact that schools are part of the national lockdown. There are clear criteria for how and when we emerge from that national lockdown, which will depend on vaccinations, mortality and tackling new variants and, most importantly, on the pressure that the NHS is facing.

On all the other issues the hon. Member trotted out, we have been working on them. In May, we entered into a contract to purchase 200,000 laptops; we increased that in August, September, October, and November. These computers are built to order—there is a long lead time, but we anticipated and prepared for every contingency,

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which is why we have orders in place for 1.3 million devices, 876,000 of which are now in the hands of young people and schools.

On rotas, they are difficult for secondary schools to implement at the same time as providing full-time education for vulnerable children and the children of critical workers. Rotas do not prioritise exam years. We only ever restrict education as a last resort where transmission is exceptionally high, and rotas are a less effective means of reducing transmission risk than the approach set out in great detail in the contingency framework.

Paul Bristow (Peterborough) (Con) [V]: Yesterday, I took part in a mental health summit with Peterborough citizens, our local clinical commissioning group and many pupils from Peterborough secondary schools. Despite the best efforts of the Government, the mental health of many students has been impacted by school closures. Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating local students on raising these issues with me? I heard what he said about following scientific advice. When considering the right time to reopen schools, will he put the mental health impact on students at the very top of his priority list?

Nick Gibb: My hon. Friend is right to raise these issues. Mental health concerns are at the forefront of all our decision making on schools and reopening schools, and I pay tribute to those students who have taken these issues as seriously as they have. It is why we are, over the longer term, putting in place the recommendations in our Green Paper on children and young people's mental health. Once fully rolled out, I believe that they will transform the provision of mental health services for children in our schools.

Ian Mearns (Gateshead) (Lab) [V]: The Minister is insistent that there is a clear plan for reopening schools. Schools are largely open for those important children with additional needs and the children of key workers, but surely we must do more than hope for the best; we have to plan for the worst and let school leaders and governors know what these proposals consist of. If they do not know, they cannot plan and prepare for the eventuality of being told what the plan is by the Minister. Can we also have laptops delivered that are free of malware? All too many of the laptops delivered to schools in my vicinity—and not all schools have them yet, by the way—have had malware on them.

Nick Gibb: Of course we want to give schools the appropriate notice, which is why my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said last week that we would give schools, colleges and universities two weeks' notice. That is not just for the schools; it is for parents as well, who need to know precisely what their childcare arrangements will be. As for the malware issue, that occurred in a very small number of devices. They have been dealt with, and the virus has been removed.

Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con) [V]: I know that my right hon. Friend is as keen as everyone else to get schools fully open with children back in them. As we emerge from the national lockdown, it is likely that we will go back into some form of tiered approach. Can

he update the House on what the plan is? Will all schools of a particular type be fully open, or will it be based on the tier an area is in? That will be vital in terms of heads and senior staff planning for how they reopen their schools fully.

Nick Gibb: My hon. Friend is right to raise these issues, as he always does. We continually talk to stakeholders and advisory groups, and we discuss all options for how to open schools when the scientific advice says that it is safe to do so.

Derek Twigg (Halton) (Lab) [V]: I would like to put on record my thanks to the teachers and support staff in schools for the tremendous job they are doing at the moment. Some teachers who have covid-19 are absent for not just a few days but many weeks. Will the Minister ensure that when schools reopen, resources will be available to cover long-term staff absence, to ensure that children do not fall further behind?

Nick Gibb: The hon. Gentleman is right to pay tribute to the teachers and staff in our schools. Sunday was International Education Day, and we should be paying tribute to staff in our schools, further education colleges, universities and early years settings. We should also pay tribute to parents during this time and to the resilience of children and staff. We monitor staff absence rates in our schools, and the regional schools commissioners' offices will offer help and support to schools that are suffering excessive or high rates of staff absence due to covid.

Simon Jupp (East Devon) (Con) [V]: Getting our children safely back into school is clearly a priority for this Government, and it is right that reopening next month remains under review. I am sure that many parents in East Devon will be concerned by significant delays, as we all know that, although schools across Devon are going above and beyond to provide virtual learning, nothing beats the classroom. Could my right hon. Friend confirm that the Government will keep all options on the table for reopening schools, including reopening on a regional basis if the scientific evidence supports a phased return based on vaccinations and case rates in different parts of the country?

Nick Gibb: My hon. Friend is right that the Government want to see schools open. We believe that face-to-face education—being in the classroom, with their teacher—is best for the education of young people and their mental wellbeing, so we want to see schools open as soon as possible. As we have always said during the pandemic, schools will be the last to close and the first to open. We consult stakeholders and advisory groups about the options for reopening, and we keep all those issues under review.

Mohammad Yasin (Bedford) (Lab) [V]: There are children in Bedford and Kempston who still cannot access remote learning today because they do not have a digital device or broadband. So will the Government urgently tackle that inequality and put forward a long-term IT strategy for schools so that every child can learn from home and catch up after a year of disruption to their education?

Nick Gibb: Yes, I agree with the hon. Member. We have already purchased 1.3 million computers. They have been built to order, imported and distributed. We

have distributed 876,000 of those devices, but it is not just about devices; it is also about data. We have partnered with the UK's major mobile phone operators to provide free data for disadvantaged children to get online, as well as 4G wireless routers. I pay tribute to Three, EE, Tesco Mobile, SMARTY, Sky Mobile, Virgin Mobile, O2, Vodafone, BT Mobile and Lycamobile for working with us on this service-.

Dr Andrew Murrison (South West Wiltshire) (Con) [V]: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the public health risk of allowing schools, particularly covid-secure primary schools, to reopen is modest, particularly when set against the three quarters of covid-symptomatic people who are currently not self-isolating, with all the risk that that brings to public health?

Nick Gibb: My right hon. Friend raises an important point. He will know, given his background, that what matters is all of us obeying the rules that are set out very clearly and how, as a nation, we can manage the reduction in the transmission of this very deadly virus. It behoves us all to obey those rules. The more we do that, the quicker we can reduce infection in our society and move out of the lockdown position.

Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab) [V]: I echo the concerns of the right hon. Member for Harlow (Robert Halfon) and my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Dame Diana Johnson) about the warnings given by paediatricians and the Children's Commissioner today about children's mental health. In particular, I want to ask about children who have not yet been assessed for education, health and care plans and are now at home. What progress is being made in trying to ensure that they get their assessments, even though they are not in school, because we know that any delay in getting them assessed could have a serious impact on their educational and social development?

Nick Gibb: The hon. Member raises an important point. This is something that my hon. Friend the Minister is monitoring very closely with our expert advisers.

Mr Mark Harper (Forest of Dean) (Con): Before I ask my question, may I take the Minister back to something that he said in his statement? I think he said that schools were closed to stop community transmission. In evidence to us last week, Dr Jenny Harries, the deputy chief medical officer, said that it was the other way around—that there was no evidence that schools drove large-scale community transmission; it was community transmission that led to infections in school.

What I want to press the Minister on is what he said about the criteria for reopening schools. He mentioned a number of indicators: hospitalisation rates and so forth. What what level do those indicators have to get to in order to trigger the reopening of schools? These are decisions not for scientists, but for Ministers, and we want to know: what point do those measures need to get to for Ministers to take the decision to reopen schools to all children?

Nick Gibb: The reason why schools have been asked to restrict access to children other than vulnerable children and the children of critical workers is nothing to do with the safety of the schools themselves. It is

about reducing community activity. That in turn will help to reduce transmission risk in those communities. That is the reason behind adding school closures to the other closures in the economy that took place prior to that decision, which we were advised to take in January. My right hon. Friend rightly asks: what are the criteria that will determine whether and how soon we will move out of the national lockdown position? As he reminds me, I mentioned those in my opening comments about hospitalisation rates, mortality, the rate of vaccination and the challenge of new variants. We do rely on the advice of SAGE, the Joint Biosecurity Centre, Public Health England and the chief medical officer as well as the deputy chief medical officer, Jenny Harries, when those criteria are assessed and whether they believe that it is right to start to undo some of the national restrictions that we are now facing.

Kate Osamor (Edmonton) (Lab/Co-op) [V]: In Edmonton, almost 7,000 children live in poverty, and families living in multigenerational, crowded homes, experiencing food and job insecurity, are really struggling. What is the Minister doing to ensure that all vulnerable children are able to access the support and services that they need during this lockdown?

Nick Gibb: The hon. Member raises a hugely important issue that has been at the forefront of our decision making right from the very beginning of the pandemic. When we closed schools for the first time, we allowed vulnerable children and the children of critical workers to attend school, but the attendance rates were quite low—certainly compared with those children's rates of attendance today. We took action to ensure that local authorities and schools made contact with the families of those children to find out why they were not attending school—whether there were good reasons for that—and to encourage the most vulnerable children to attend school. That remains our position now.

Huw Merriman (Bexhill and Battle) (Con) [V]: I thank all the teachers who continue to work so hard to teach our young pupils. Given that by mid-February we should have vaccinated those accounting for 90% of mortality risk, why can pupils not return to their classrooms later that month? Surely by that time the risks from school attendance will be lower than they were last autumn, when the school gates were open to all.

Nick Gibb: My hon. Friend is right to raise those issues, and I agree with him to the extent that vaccination is an important criterion that will determine how and when we emerge from the national lockdown position, of which schools are an important part. But vaccination is only one of the criteria; hospitalisation rates and mortality rates are also important, as is the challenge of any new variants. We rely on the advice of the scientists to weigh up those different criteria and to advise us on when and how soon we can undo the national lockdown.

Kim Johnson (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab) [V]: I send my thanks and solidarity to all the teachers and support staff in my constituency of Liverpool, Riverside who are working through these very challenging times. The pandemic and school closures have widened the educational attainment gap for working-class black and white pupils. The catch-up funding is not sufficient to achieve the

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levelling up required. Will the Government review the progress made with the financial support allocated to schools and provide more funding where necessary?

Nick Gibb: The hon. Member is right. Everything that this Government have been seeking to do since 2010 has been about closing the attainment gap between children from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers, and we do not intend to let this pandemic divert us from that overarching objective. There is no question but that the pandemic has, during this period, widened the attainment gap, and our objective is to close that gap again as soon as we can. That is why we secured £1 billion of catch-up funding, of which £650 million is a catch-up premium for pupils. Some £350 million of that is funding the national tutoring programme, which is designed to help the most disadvantaged young people with one-to-one and small-group tuition, which is an effective way of helping children to catch up.

Mr Steve Baker (Wycombe) (Con) [V]: I refer to the declarations I have made relating to the Covid Recovery Group.

Will my right hon. Friend please either open schools or justify the decision to keep them closed by quantifying the harms and benefits of his policy?

Nick Gibb: I am always happy to debate these issues with my hon. Friend. The national lockdown was based on very clear criteria, and our emergence from the national lockdown will also be based on very clear criteria. The schools element of the national lockdown is very much part of that process. We continually talk to stakeholders and advisory groups, but ultimately we will be led in our decision making by the advice of the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies, the Joint Biosecurity Centre, the chief medical officer and the Department of Health and Social Care.

Debbie Abrahams (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab) [V]: We all want schools and other educational settings to reopen as soon as it is safe to do so, and it is absolutely right for the shadow Education Secretary to be calling on the Government to publish their plan defining the conditions for this safe reopening, given, once again, the confusing mixed messages from this Government. The Minister has said that NHS pressures and the level of covid circulating in the community are key criteria for determining lockdowns, including of schools. So what discussion has the Education Secretary had with the Transport Secretary about the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency outbreak and the impact that workplace transmissions are having on covid case levels?

Nick Gibb: These criteria are, of course, monitored the whole time, wherever there are outbreaks, in whatever segment of society or the economy increasing or decreasing transmissions take place; they are the criteria upon which the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies, the Joint Biosecurity Centre, the chief medical officer and Public Health England will advise us about when it is safe to reopen schools.

Michael Fabricant (Lichfield) (Con) [V]: Contrary to the mood of this urgent question so far, may I point out that today is the day we have surpassed 100,000 deaths

in the UK, that 37,000 people are currently in hospital with covid and that now is not the time to set arbitrary deadlines for the opening of schools, or arbitrary targets that mean that schools can then be opened? We must go by the medical advice. In connection with that, may I ask the Minister whether he thinks it is a good idea to vaccinate every adult who works in a school sooner rather than later, to stop public transmission of covid?

Nick Gibb: My hon. Friend is right to point to that tragic milestone. My thoughts, like those of everyone in this House, are with the families and friends of people we have lost during this covid pandemic. He is right, therefore, to point out that at the moment there are 37,000 people in our hospitals with the virus, which is higher than at the peak of the virus last year. That is why we have to take these decisions about the national lockdown very seriously, to rely on the advice of SAGE, the JBC and PHE and to look at the pressure on the NHS when reaching those decisions.

My hon. Friend is also right to highlight the issue of vaccines. The priority initially is mortality, which means that there is a focus on age and where the rates of mortality are higher. However, once we are through that phase 1, we will be looking at occupations and the Department for Education will certainly be making the case to the Department of Health and Social Care for staff in the education sector.

Meg Hillier (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/Co-op): I was one of those advocating for schools to stay open as long as possible, but I agree with the Minister that, given the height of the pandemic we are in now, this was the right thing to do—I say that very reluctantly. However, the longer it goes on, the worse it is for pupils, as we all know. There is a lot of fanfare about the national tutoring programme, but what serious consideration are he and the Department giving to providing proper catch-up summer lessons and so on, particularly for young people going into exam years, because they will not get that time back, no matter how good the online learning is?

Nick Gibb: The hon. Lady is absolutely right, and we are considering this issue the whole time. The £1 billion catch-up fund is important, as is the national tutoring programme, but of course we also have to take into account what we are going to do when children are back for the longer term to make sure that we help these young people to catch up. The older they are, the less time they have left in school before they leave. So we are giving this issue a great deal of thought as we plan further announcements in the near future.

Imran Ahmad Khan (Wakefield) (Con) [V]: Does my right hon. Friend agree that Scotland would be better served if the SNP bothered to care about more than its fixation on yet another independence referendum and, rather than callously exploiting the crisis, began prioritising the education of Scotland's children? The SNP shamefully continues to let them down through years of failing education policy due to the SNP's poverty of positive ideas and responsible leadership.

Nick Gibb: My hon. Friend is preaching to the choir when it comes to advocating prioritising education policy about all other policies in government—as a Schools Minister, I would say little else.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): I am not sure the Minister was the right person to ask that question of, but none the less, we will move on.

Ellie Reeves (Lewisham West and Penge) (Lab) [V]: Special schools in my constituency, including Brent Knoll, Riverside and Watergate, remain open. They are doing a tremendous job and often provide personal and medical care on top of teaching. I echo calls for making school staff a priority for vaccinations, but will the Minister also consider treating staff in special schools akin to frontline care workers and prioritising them for the vaccine without delay?

Nick Gibb: That is an important point. As I have said previously, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's priority is mortality, which is based principally on age, and it also prioritises those working for the national health service and in care homes. The second phase will be occupationally based, and we will be making the case for staff in special schools as well as other staff in the education sector.

Mary Robinson (Cheadle) (Con) [V]: Will the Minister join me in thanking teachers across Cheadle, who have educated vulnerable children and children of critical workers in school while managing the challenges of remote learning? When schools fully reopen and the Minister assesses the inevitable variation in children's learning throughout covid, will he look at the educational impact of regional covid restrictions? Our higher local case rates in the autumn caused pupils to lose even more time in the classroom. Will he consider additional targeted educational resources and teaching support to address any educational disadvantage as we move beyond covid?

Nick Gibb: I certainly join my hon. Friend in paying tribute to teachers in Cheadle. Combining teaching vulnerable children and critical workers' children full time in school with providing high-quality remote education to pupils at home is a huge challenge. Of course, teachers also have to maintain the safety measures that are in place to ensure that we minimise the risk of transmission in school. I am aware of the very real challenges that teachers face. Ensuring that children who have not coped as well with remote education as they would in the class are able to catch up as swiftly as possible when they return to school is a key priority for the Department, and we will be saying more about that in the weeks ahead.

Siobhain McDonagh (Mitcham and Morden) (Lab): Schools need a return plan, but what about the children who are unable to learn remotely in the meantime? The Government are slowly distributing laptops that are unusable without connectivity, but 1 million children have only mum's mobile as their connection and a further half a million have no connection at all and so cannot receive network data boosts. Nine months on, why has the Minister still not ensured that those children can connect from home so that they do not fall even further behind?

Nick Gibb: If I am allowed, I pay tribute to the hon. Lady for her assiduous work on remote education. We have purchased 1.3 million computers for children and young people in our schools and colleges at a time when there is huge global demand for those devices. They have been built to order, imported, shipped and distributed,

and 876,000 of them are now in the hands of schools and pupils. It is also right to point to data. We have partnered with the UK's major mobile phone operators to provide free data to disadvantaged children so that they can get online using, for example, their parents' smartphone. They will not have to pay data charges for downloading educational material.

Lia Nici (Great Grimsby) (Con) [V]: Will the Minister join me in thanking the teams at our schools in Great Grimsby for all their hard work? As Grimsby now has one of the lowest infection rates in the country and declining hospitalisations, will he consider allowing at least infants and primary schools to return in the town after the half-term break?

Nick Gibb: I am delighted to join my hon. Friend in paying tribute to the teachers in Great Grimsby for the work that they are doing in keeping schools open for vulnerable children and children of critical workers, as well as all the other work that they do in continuing to teach children while they remain at home. We take the advice of SAGE, Public Health England and the CMO on how and when we can remove the restrictions on access to our schools. It was part of the national lockdown decisions, and we will take their advice when we make those decisions.

Dr Rupa Huq (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab): Can the Minister tell me whether the PM's much trumpeted army of catch-up tutors from the first lockdown ever happened, or was it just Ealing that got left out? How will he fund, after a second year of disruption, not just the academic deficit but the emotional damage done, not just to pupils but to teachers? We expect them to be superhuman, with their own bereavements, bursting bubbles, kids and long covid, yet they have had no recognition in pay or vaccines, and child and adolescent mental health services had a two-year waiting list even before coronavirus.

Nick Gibb: The national citizenship programme is a big programme, which is overseen by the Education Endowment Foundation. There are 33 tutoring companies, 15,000 tutors are signed up and we intend to reach 250,000 of the most disadvantaged pupils. That is a very effective, evidence-based approach to helping catch-up. If there are particular circumstances that the hon. Lady wants to bring to my attention, I shall be delighted to have those details and I will take the matter up with the Education Endowment Foundation.

Jane Stevenson (Wolverhampton North East) (Con) [V]: I am increasingly concerned about the mental health of our young people while schools remain closed. I should like to thank Wolverhampton's Youth MPs, Tutsirai Rukarwa and Ruby Cochrane, for discussing that with me recently. Many young people are struggling with feelings of isolation and are worried about falling behind with schoolwork. They are anxious that that will impact their future exam success, their choice of university and their career path. What measures will the Government take to really support these people with their mental health?

Nick Gibb: The Government have made children's wellbeing and mental health a central part of our response to the pandemic. We have already set up the wellbeing for education return project, backed by £8 million,

[Nick Gibb]

to help support the wellbeing and resilience of pupils, parents and staff in light of the covid pandemic and lockdown. We are very aware and concerned about the impact that the pandemic has had on the mental wellbeing of so many children in our schools, or at home, trying to learn remotely.

Alex Cunningham (Stockton North) (Lab) [V]: Before the lockdown, children in the north had missed many more days than their counterparts in the south. Their schools have also suffered a financial crisis, as the pandemic has cost them eye-watering sums of money just to keep things safe. How will the Minister ensure that children in constituencies like mine in Stockton are not left behind, and that their schools will have the extra funding they need to ensure that regional attainment gaps will not be even wider than they were before the pandemic?

Nick Gibb: We did secure a very good three-year settlement for school funding with the Treasury, and that was confirmed in the spending review 2020, despite all the other challenges for the Treasury. In addition, we have secured £1 billion of funding for schools for catch-up, and there are also specific funds to help schools tackle and pay the additional costs that they have incurred due to covid—such as the costs incurred between March and July last year and extra staffing costs incurred in November and December last year and in January when the schools went back. Schools that are in difficult financial constraints are always able to talk to their local authority, or to the Education and Skills Funding Agency if they are an academy.

Tom Hunt (Ipswich) (Con): The Minister will be aware of a letter from HMC—Ipswich School is one of its schools, and it has shown great spirit in really rolling its sleeves up and saying, “We want to help. We think we can vaccinate all teaching staff within a very short period of time.” If the JCVI takes the decision that after all of the most vulnerable have had their first dose, teachers should be prioritised, would it not be the appropriate moment—at the point at which all of the most vulnerable and all teaching staff have had their first dose, which provides a significant amount of protection—to say that the harms and the dangers posed by schools’ remaining closed will become greater than any potential public health risks.

Nick Gibb: My hon. Friend makes an important point; I am sure that it will have been heard by the Department of Health and Social Care. I have a lot of responsibilities on my plate, as does my hon. Friend, but I am not responsible yet for the roll-out of the vaccine programme, which is going extremely well, with more than 6 million people vaccinated so far.

Stephen Timms (East Ham) (Lab) [V]: Kensington Primary School in East Ham is the Pearson national teaching awards primary school of the year. The school asked for 100 devices for children to learn, although it needs more than that. It has received 32 so far. When can it expect the rest? The Minister has indicated that there are about half a million devices that have been purchased but not yet distributed. When will they all be given, and will the Department be purchasing more?

Nick Gibb: I am very happy to look into why that particular school did not receive its devices, and I will be in touch with the right hon. Member. There is a lead time in all this, which is why we were putting in orders in August, September and October last year. We put in an order for 340,000 in November, and those devices are now being delivered. On 12 January, we put in another order for 300,000 computers, which will begin to come on stream shortly.

Dr Caroline Johnson (Sleaford and North Hykeham) (Con) [V]: As a paediatrician, I can see the damage that is being done to children’s mental health when they are not in school; as a constituency MP, I am hearing about the difficulties that families are facing when their children are trying to learn from home while they work from home; and as a parent, I can see some of these challenges for myself. With the vaccination programme steaming ahead and levels of covid falling—and in some cases lower than they were last term, when schools were open—does my right hon. Friend agree that the balance of risk is now in favour of reopening schools, and that they should reopen at February half-term at the very latest?

Nick Gibb: My hon. Friend, with her experience in the NHS and as a mother, is right to point to the importance of children being back in the classroom. It is right for their education and for their mental wellbeing. It is right for them to be with their friends. Education will be a national priority for this Government during this pandemic. Schools will be the last to close and the first to open, and that remains our position.

Paul Blomfield (Sheffield Central) (Lab) [V]: Teachers have taken on many additional tasks during the pandemic, as well as developing online learning, which is a substantial job in itself. Will the Minister therefore consider providing extra support to schools to deliver the testing that is needed? Will he also say a little bit more about plans to address lost learning, which affects all years, not just those with imminent exams?

Nick Gibb: The hon. Gentleman raises the issue of testing. We are testing staff in schools twice weekly to identify any asymptomatic cases. That is an important measure that we have taken. We are helping schools with the cost of rolling that out; there is £78 million of funding available for schools to employ agency workers and others to help them to deliver those lateral flow device tests. He is right to point out that lost education is important. That is why we are supporting the Oak National Academy, which was set up by a group of teachers. We have funded it with over £4 million. The academy has had 3 million individual users, and 32 million of its lessons have been viewed online.

Andrew Griffith (Arundel and South Downs) (Con) [V]: I welcome the Minister’s commitment that it is the Government’s absolute priority to reopen schools and get undergraduates back to university. I am reassured that he keeps open the option of returning after half-term. In the meantime, I would like to thank all the teachers and heads in Arundel and South Downs for their hard work during this crisis, and also the Minister himself for his help in getting free laptops to Upper Beeding Primary School after I raised the matter with his Department.

Nick Gibb: I am very happy to join my hon. Friend and neighbouring MP in paying tribute to the teachers in his constituency, and if I may, as he is a neighbour, I would like to add my thanks to all the teachers in Bognor Regis and Littlehampton for the sterling work that they are doing, as are his teachers, in supporting children during a very challenging period.

Vicky Foxcroft (Lewisham, Deptford) (Lab) [V]: Schools are currently doing a fantastic job of providing remote education and reaching out to vulnerable families, but inevitably some pupils will fall through the cracks. As our 2020 Youth Violence Commission report highlights, the links between young people disengaging from school and an increase in the likelihood of them being victims or perpetrators of serious violence are well established. Until our schools reopen, what extra support can the Minister put in place to ensure that schools are able to support those most at risk?

Nick Gibb: The hon. Member raises an important point. This is why we have kept alternative provision and special schools open, and it is why we keep schools open to vulnerable children to ensure that they are in a school where they can be protected. I share her view that the most important risk factor for young people, leaving aside the pandemic, is not being in school, so we need to do everything we can to help children remain in school in normal times. That is why we want to reopen schools for all pupils as soon as the science allows.

Neil O'Brien (Harborough) (Con) [V]: Will my right hon. Friend join me in paying tribute to the teachers across Harborough, Oadby and Wigston, who have done an incredible job in keeping schools open for key worker and vulnerable children during very difficult circumstances? Given the huge uncertainties about how fast infections will fall, the risks from new variants and the effects of the vaccine roll-out, does he agree that we have to make the decisions on schools reopening, which we are all desperate to see, based on scientific advice rather than on arbitrary deadlines?

Nick Gibb: Yes, I will join my hon. Friend in paying tribute to the teachers in his constituency, who, like teachers up and down the country, are working round the clock to ensure that the children in their schools have a safe and caring environment, and also helping to educate children while they are at home. I also pay tribute to my hon. Friend for the way in which he has analysed a lot of the scientific data and helped those of us who are less scientifically minded to understand the huge raft of data and science that is out there. He is absolutely right to say that, in all the decisions we take, we need to ensure that we are led by the science.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): I thank the Minister for responding to the urgent question for over an hour. He has answered 40 questions, of which 34 were remote, so let me also thank the technicians for making that possible. We will now suspend for three minutes for hygiene purposes.

2.32 pm

Sitting suspended.

BILL PRESENTED

ARMED FORCES BILL

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)

Secretary Ben Wallace, supported by the Prime Minister, the Attorney General, Secretary Priti Patel, Secretary Alistair Jack, Secretary Brandon Lewis and Secretary Simon Hart, presented a Bill to continue the Armed Forces Act 2006; to amend that Act and other enactments relating to the armed forces; to make provision about service in the reserve forces; to make provision about pardons for certain abolished service offences; to make provision about war pensions; and for connected purposes.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time tomorrow, and to be printed (Bill 244) with explanatory notes (Bill 244-EN).

Football (Regulation)

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

2.36 pm

Mrs Helen Grant (Maidstone and The Weald) (Con): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to establish an independent football regulator in England; to make provision for that regulator to license football clubs, distribute funds within football, review English Football League club finances, and reform the governance of the Football Association; to require the regulator to take steps in connection with football supporters' groups; and for connected purposes.

The governance of English football is broken. Our national game—the beautiful game—is in crisis. These issues are not new but have been laid bare and amplified by the covid-19 pandemic, during which, sadly, football has failed to speak with one voice. We have seen much-loved clubs go to the wall. Sadly, many more may well follow, and at the heart of this is broken governance, gross financial disparities between the rich clubs and the poor clubs, and unsustainable business models. It is staggering that the wage bills of championship clubs are equal to 110% of their revenues—just one example of the downward spiral as lower league clubs seek the financial nirvana that premier league promotion dangles. Ultimately, it is the loyal football supporters and communities up and down the country who suffer the most.

Football is different from any other sector of the economy. It is not just a business; this is our national sport. Our football clubs are societal assets at the beating hearts of towns and cities, making a huge contribution to the culture and identity of our nation. We in this place and the other place surely have a responsibility to protect them from maladministration, blinkered leadership and commercial suicide.

Football's failing governance has been clear for many years, but again and again, football has failed to reform itself. The conflicts that have dogged the game's integrity and financial probity have become more obvious under the current pandemic. In recent weeks, the authorities have failed to show decisive leadership on whether matches should be paused due to rising covid infections. The Football Association chairman resigned after using offensive language, showing himself to be out of touch with the modern players, the modern game and, indeed, modern Britain. We have also witnessed the tragically slow progress on addressing the link between dementia and heading footballs. For me, this demonstrates a failure that is tantamount to negligence.

Locally, too, working alongside Maidstone United in my constituency, I have witnessed the flawed distribution of emergency National Lottery funding to national league clubs. This botch, failing to account for lost gate receipts, has left many national league clubs in dire financial circumstances. These examples very sadly illustrate the fact that in England, no one is speaking for the football world with the independence and authority needed to address the big issues.

The Football Association, allegedly the governing body of the game, is outdated and out of touch. Its own governance leaves much to be desired. Frankly, it is not up to the mammoth task of driving through the reforms that football so desperately needs. Other powerful

stakeholders in the game are too invested and too self-interested to bring about the changes required. Even as I speak today, the Premier League is midway through a lengthy governance review of its own, but to me that feels like students marking their own homework. Does anyone seriously expect the Premier League to make the radical and fundamental changes that are needed across the wider professional and grassroots game? I think not.

Now is the time for fundamental reform—reform that can only be achieved through the creation of an independent football regulator. That was the central recommendation of “Saving the Beautiful Game: Manifesto for Change”, a recent report co-authored by a group, of which I was part, made up of experienced individuals with a deep interest in football. Such a step would not be unique. In France, for example, lawmakers intervened to make governance of football fairer by implementing rules around club ownership and player contracts. In Spain, the lawmakers again intervened to ensure fairness in the sale of La Liga broadcasting rights, and in Germany professional clubs already operate under a tough licensing regime.

A regulator appointed under this Bill would be absolutely independent. It would be funded from within football, not by public money, and it would not require Government to run the game. It would have the power and responsibility, among other things, to do the following: distribute funds in the interests of the wider game of football, introduce a comprehensive licensing system for professional football clubs, review thoroughly the causes of financial stress in the game, bring forward reforms to modernise and strengthen the FA, work with supporters' groups to advance the causes that really matter to them, and drive and promote diversity and inclusion—areas where football, from the coaching field to the boardroom, continues to fall well below the standards enjoyed in so many areas of modern British society.

Association football is the most popular sport in the entire world. It is played by over 250 million people in over 200 countries, and it was born in England 150 years ago. It is a huge part of community life across the length and breadth of our country, but if we want to protect and preserve that fabulous heritage for generations into the future, our football governance needs emergency surgery, and it needs that surgery now. Let us drive through the radical change required, create an independent football regulator and make governance of the beautiful game that we all know and love fit for the 21st century.

Question put and agreed to.

Ordered,

That Mrs Helen Grant, Damian Collins, Mrs Heather Wheeler, Dawn Butler, Jamie Stone, Christian Wakeford, Karl McCartney, Jason McCartney, John Cryer and Joy Morrissey present the Bill.

Mrs Helen Grant accordingly presented the Bill.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time tomorrow, and to be printed (Bill 245).

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): We will now suspend for one minute, in order for people to safely leave and to enter the Chamber for the next business.

2.45 pm

Sitting suspended.

Business of the House (Environment Bill: Carry-over)

2.47 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Rebecca Pow): I beg to move,

That—

(a) if, at the conclusion of this Session of Parliament, proceedings on the Environment Bill have not been completed, they shall be resumed in the next Session;

(b) paragraphs (9) to (14) of Standing Order 80A shall have effect in relation to the Bill as if it had been ordered to be carried over to the next Session of Parliament in pursuance of a carry-over motion under paragraph (1) of that Standing Order, except that paragraph (13) shall have effect as if the period on the expiry of which proceedings on the Bill shall lapse is two years from the date of its first reading in this House.

As Members on all sides of the House will be aware, the covid pandemic has upended the familiar procedures we are all used to following in this place, and indeed across almost every aspect of our life. The necessary changes we have had to make to our procedures in order to keep Members, the public, and of course staff safe have put extraordinary pressure on the parliamentary timetable, and I want to reassure all Members that the Government remain committed to getting this Environment Bill on to the statute book.

We committed in our manifesto to create the most ambitious environmental programme of any country on Earth, and this Bill forms the cornerstone of that commitment. Across all areas of the environment, the Bill will drive improvement, with cleaner air, greater biodiversity, a greater emphasis on nature, less waste, healthier rivers, more recycling, restoration of our precious habitats, less deforestation, and a ban on exporting polluting plastic waste to developing countries—all underpinned by new, legally binding targets and watched over by our tough new Office for Environmental Protection. Work on delivering these improvements will not pause: indeed, much is under way already, and will speed up apace. We are launching consultations, collating evidence, and driving forward implementation to restore and improve our environment as soon as we can. We have appointed the chair of the Office for Environmental Protection, Dame Glenys Stacey; we have published a policy paper on targets; and we will shortly be publishing our environmental policy statement.

I, like many other Members, want to see this Bill made law without delay. I hope that I have been able to provide some reassurance that both I and my Department, and indeed the whole Government, are working to implement these measures without delay. Even if the parliamentary passage of the Bill will take place in this Session and the next, this carry-over motion is absolutely essential to ensuring this flagship piece of legislation does not fall at the end of this session. The Environment Bill will resume early in the second Session—I make that absolutely clear—with Royal Assent by autumn. One

could say that by spreading it over two days, with a space in between, we will get two bites at this really important environmental cherry.

Question put and agreed to.

ENVIRONMENT BILL (PROGRAMME) (NO. 5)

Ordered,

That the Order of 26 February 2020 (Environment Bill: Programme) as varied by the Orders of 4 May 2020 (Environment Bill: Programme (No. 2)), 22 June 2020 (Environment Bill: Programme (No. 3)) and 28 September 2020 (Environment Bill: Programme (No. 4)), be further varied as follows:

(1) Paragraphs (4) and (5) of the Order shall be omitted.

(2) Proceedings on Consideration and up to and including Third Reading shall be taken in two days in accordance with the following provisions of this Order.

(3) Proceedings on Consideration—

(a) shall be taken on each of those days in the order shown in the first column of the following Table, and

(b) shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion at the times specified in the second column of the Table.

TABLE

Proceedings	Time for conclusion of proceedings
First day	
New clauses and new Schedules relating to Part 1; amendments to Part 1; new clauses and new Schedules relating to Part 2; amendments to Part 2.	Three hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion relating to Business of the House (Environment Bill: Carry-over).
New clauses and new Schedules relating to Part 3; amendments to Part 3; new clauses and new Schedules relating to Part 4; amendments to Part 4; new clauses and new Schedules relating to Part 5; amendments to Part 5; new clauses and new Schedules relating to clause 131 or Schedule 20; amendments to clause 131 or Schedule 20.	Six hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion relating to Business of the House (Environment Bill: Carry-over).
Second day	
New clauses and new Schedules relating to Part 6; amendments to Part 6; new clauses and new Schedules relating to Part 7; amendments to Part 7; new clauses and new Schedules relating to clauses 132 to 139; amendments to clauses 132 to 139.	Three hours after the commencement of proceedings on Consideration on the second day.
Remaining proceedings on Consideration.	Five hours after the commencement of proceedings on Consideration on the second day.

(4) Proceedings on Third Reading shall be taken on the second day and shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion six hours after the commencement of proceedings on Consideration on the second day.—(*Rebecca Pow.*)

Environment Bill

[1ST ALLOCATED DAY]

[Relevant documents: Eighteenth Report of the Environmental Audit Committee, Session 2017-19, Scrutiny of the Draft Environment (Principles and Governance) Bill, HC 1951; and Fourteenth Report of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, Session 2017-19, Pre-legislative scrutiny of the Draft Environment (Principles and Governance) Bill, HC 1893.]

Consideration of Bill, as amended in the Public Bill Committee

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): After Caroline Lucas, there will be a four-minute time limit on Back-Bench contributions.

New Clause 1

ENVIRONMENTAL PRINCIPLES: PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

‘(1) A public authority, must, when exercising their functions (including the making of policy and legislation), act in accordance with the environmental principles currently in effect.

(2) The duty in subsection (1) does not apply to policy relating to Wales.

(3) In this section, “legislation” means—

(a) an Act of Parliament; and

(b) subordinate legislation.’—(Caroline Lucas.)

This new clause would require public authorities to act in accordance with environmental principles when exercising their functions.

Brought up, and read the First time.

2.50 pm

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green) [V]: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following:

New clause 5—*State of nature target*—

‘(1) It is the duty of the Secretary of State to set a target to halt and begin to reverse the decline in the state of nature in England as soon as reasonably practicable and no later than 2030.

(2) The target in subsection (1) shall be known as the state of nature target.

(3) The Secretary of State must ensure that the state of nature target is met.

(4) A draft statutory instrument containing regulations that make provision for how progress toward the state of nature target will be measured must be laid before Parliament at least one month before the fifteenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

(5) Before laying before Parliament a draft of a statutory instrument under this section, the Secretary of State must obtain, publish and take into account the advice of relevant experts, including—

(a) The Environment Agency;

(b) Natural England;

(c) The Office for Environment Protection; and

(d) The Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

(6) In this section—

(a) the abundance and distribution of species;

(b) the risk of extinction; and

(c) the extent and condition of priority habitats.’

This new clause would place a duty on the Secretary of State to set

and meet a target to begin to reverse the loss of biodiversity in England no later than 2030. This timetable would align with the new Convention on Biological Diversity goals that are due to be agreed in 2021.

New clause 9—*Environmental objective and commitments*—

‘(1) In interpreting and applying this Act, any party with duties, responsibilities, obligations or discretions under or relating to it must comply with—

(a) the environmental objective in subsection (2); and

(b) the commitments in subsection (3).

(2) The environmental objective is to achieve and maintain—

(a) a healthy, resilient and biodiverse natural environment;

(b) an environment that supports human health and well-being for everyone; and

(c) sustainable use of resources.

(3) The commitments are—

(a) all commitments given by Her Majesty’s Government in the United Nations Leaders’ Pledge for Nature of 28 September 2020, including, but not limited to, the urgent actions committed to be taken by it over the period of ten years from the date of that pledge;

(b) any enhanced commitments given by Her Majesty’s Government pursuant to that pledge, any other pledge, and any international agreement; and

(c) all relevant domestic legislation, including, but not limited to, the Climate Change Act 2008, as amended from time to time.

(4) Without prejudice to the generality of the requirement in subsection (1), that requirement applies to—

(a) the Secretary of State in setting, amending and ensuring compliance with the environmental targets; preparing, amending and implementing environmental improvement plans; and performing all their obligations and exercising all their discretions under this Act;

(b) the Office for Environmental Protection and the Upper Tribunal in performing their respective obligations and exercising any applicable discretions; and

(c) all other persons and bodies with obligations and discretions under, or in connection with, the subject matter of this Act.’

New clause 11—*Environmental targets: plastic pollution*—

‘(1) The Secretary of State must by regulations set targets (“the plastics reduction targets”) in respect of the reduction of plastic pollution and to reduce the volume of non-essential single-use plastic products sold.

(2) The plastics reduction targets may, but need not, be long-term.

(3) The duty in subsection (1) is in addition to (and does not discharge) the duty in section 1(2) to set a long-term target in relation to resource efficiency and waste reduction.

(4) Section 1(4) to (9) applies to the plastics reduction targets and to regulations under this section as it applies to targets set under section 1 and to regulations under that section.

(5) In this section—

(a) the term “plastics pollution” means the introduction of plastic materials or plastic-containing products into the environment, and

(b) the term “non-essential single-use plastic products” means products intended to be used once then disposed of where their use is not essential for medical, environmental, health and safety, national security or other essential purposes as defined by the Secretary of State.’

This new clause would require the Secretary of State to set targets to reduce plastic pollution and reduce the volume of non-essential single-use plastic products sold.

New clause 14—*OEP function to consider housing targets*—

‘(1) The OEP will have the power to consider appeals on housing targets set by public authorities in England.

(2) An individual affected by the targets in subsection (1) will have the right of appeal to the OEP.

(3) In determining an appeal under subsection (1) the OEP may either—

- (a) reject; or
- (b) reduce the housing target set by the public authority.

(4) In dealing with the appeal set out in subsection (1) the OEP must have regard to the impacts the housing targets will have on compliance with the UK’s environmental targets.’

New clause 15—*Net zero carbon target as condition of planning permission*—

‘(1) The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is amended as set out in section (2).

(2) After section 70(2), insert—

“(2A) Any grants of planning permission for residential development in England must be subject to a condition to secure that a net zero-carbon target objective during construction and ongoing occupation of the building is achieved.”

New clause 17—*Strategy for new economic goals to deliver environmental protection and societal wellbeing*—

‘(1) Her Majesty’s Government must prepare a strategy for the adoption of new economic goals to deliver environmental protection and societal wellbeing.

(2) “Environmental protection” in subsection (1) means the protection of humans and the natural environment from the impacts of human activity as defined in Clause 44.

(3) The new economic goals must address—

- (a) the environmental targets in this Act,
- (b) the Climate Change Act 2008,
- (c) the UK’s commitments under international environmental agreements, laws and treaties,
- (d) the wellbeing of future generations,
- (e) the overseas environmental impacts of UK consumption and economic activity, and
- (f) the contribution of the UK’s consumption and production to the state of the global environment, in relation to nine planetary boundaries—
 - (i) Stratospheric ozone depletion,
 - (ii) Loss of biosphere integrity (biodiversity loss and extinctions),
 - (iii) Chemical pollution and the release of novel entities,
 - (iv) Climate change,
 - (v) Ocean acidification,
 - (vi) Freshwater consumption and the global hydrological cycle,
 - (vii) Land system change,
 - (viii) Nitrogen and phosphorus flows to the biosphere and oceans, and
 - (ix) Atmospheric aerosol loading.

(4) The strategy must—

- (a) set out how the new economic goals will replace growth in gross domestic product as the principal measure of national economic progress,
- (b) set out a vision for how the economy can be designed to serve the wellbeing of humans and protect the natural environment,
- (c) include a set of indicators for each new economic goal, and
- (d) set out plans for the application of new economic goals and indicators to central and local government decision-making processes including but not limited

to Central Government Guidance on Appraisal and Evaluation produced by HM Treasury (The Green Book).

(5) In drawing up the strategy, Her Majesty’s Government must obtain, publish and take into account the advice of—

- (a) experts in the field of ecological economics,
- (b) a nationally representative citizens assembly,
- (c) trades unions,
- (d) businesses,
- (e) statutory agencies,
- (f) representatives of local and regional government, and
- (g) any persons the Secretary of State considers to be independent and to have relevant expertise.

(6) The strategy must be laid before Parliament within 12 months of this Act receiving Royal Assent.

(7) The Government must lay before Parliament an annual report on progress towards meeting the new economic goals and their efficacy in delivering environmental protection and societal wellbeing.

(8) A Minister of the Crown must, not later than one month after the report has been laid before Parliament, move a Motion in the House of Commons in relation to that report.’

This new clause requires the Government to prepare a strategy for the adoption of new economic goals that are designed to deliver environmental protection and societal wellbeing and to report annually on these goals.

Amendment 21, in clause 1, page 2, line 4, at end insert—

‘(e) Public access to and enjoyment of the natural environment.’

This amendment is designed to require the Government to set legally-binding, long-term targets to increase public access to, and enjoyment of the natural environment.

Amendment 40, page 2, line 20, at end insert—

‘(10) In setting a target, the Secretary of State must take into account any targets set by Senedd Cymru.

(11) If the UK Government seeks to spend funds from the Shared Prosperity Fund on infrastructure in Wales, an impact assessment must be carried out and published on the effect of the infrastructure project on the target set by Senedd Cymru.

(12) If the impact assessment under subsection (11) finds that the infrastructure project would have a negative effect on the achievement of the target set by Senedd Cymru, the Secretary of State must seek and receive the consent of Senedd Cymru to that infrastructure spending.’

This amendment would ensure that the consent of Senedd Cymru would be required before the UK Government could use the financial assistance powers in the UK Internal Market Bill to spend via the Shared Prosperity Fund on infrastructure projects in Wales which would undermine environmental targets set by Senedd Cymru.

Amendment 2, in clause 2, page 2, line 24, leave out subsection (2) and insert—

‘(2) The PM2.5 air quality target must—

- (a) be less than or equal to air quality guidelines established by the World Health Organization in 2005; and
- (b) have an attainment deadline on or before 1 January 2030.’

This amendment is intended to set parameters on the face of the Bill to ensure that the PM2.5 target will be at least as strict as the 2005 WHO guidelines, with an attainment deadline of 2030 at the latest.

Amendment 25, page 2, line 24, leave out subsection (2) and insert—

‘(2) The PM2.5 air quality target must—

- (a) be less than or equal to 10 g/m³;
- (b) follow World Health Organisation guidelines; and
- (c) have an attainment deadline on or before 1 January 2030.’

This amendment is intended to set parameters on the face of the Bill to ensure that the PM2.5 target will be at least as strict as the 2005 WHO guidelines, with an attainment deadline of 2030 at the latest.

Amendment 5, in clause 4, page 3, line 31, at end insert

‘, and

(c) interim targets are met.’

This amendment places a duty on the Secretary of State to meet the interim targets they set.

Government amendment 6.

Amendment 28, in clause 7, page 5, line 12, leave out “may” and insert “must”

This amendment would require the Government to include steps to improve people’s enjoyment of the natural environment in its Environmental Plan.

Amendment 39, page 5, line 21, at end insert—

‘(7A) If an exemption is granted under Article 53 of Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council, concerning the placing of plant protection products on the market, which is likely to affect species covered by an environmental improvement plan—

- (a) a report must be laid before Parliament within one month of the exemption decision on the likely effects of the exemption on populations of—
 - (i) bees,
 - (ii) other pollinators, and
 - (iii) other species,
- (b) the scientific advice given to ministers relating to the exemption must be published as an addendum to the report, and
- (c) a Minister of the Crown must, not later than one month after the report is laid before Parliament under paragraph (8), move a Motion in the House of Commons in relation to the report.

(7B) The requirement in subsection (7A) shall apply retrospectively to exemptions granted within the last 12 months of the coming into force of this Act.’

This amendment places requirements on Ministers to allow parliamentary scrutiny of exemptions granted to allow plant protection products banned under retained EU law (such as neonicotinoid pesticides), where they are likely to impact bees and other species covered by an environmental improvement plan.

Amendment 4, in clause 16, page 10, line 15, at end insert—

‘(3A) When applying the precautionary principle, the policy statement must comply with the provisions of the regulator’s code and must include—

- (a) a procedure for identifying and recording risk; and
- (b) a procedure for identifying and recording the social, economic and cultural impacts of action and inaction.

(3B) The policy statement in subsection (3A) must also include instructions for taking into account all activities with an environmental impact on any area of land under consideration and a procedure for ensuring that any action taken—

- (a) is proportionate to the risk posed by each activity on the land being considered; and
- (b) balances short term impacts against the achievement of the land’s conservation objectives.

(3C) The precautionary principle should only apply in response to risks that are—

- (a) more than hypothetical in nature; and
- (b) serious and irreversible.’

This amendment sets out the definition of the precautionary principle when it is used in accordance with the provisions of this Bill.

Amendment 1, in clause 18, page 11, line 20, leave out from “benefit” to end of clause and insert—

‘(3) Subsection (1) does not apply to policy so far as relating to Wales.’

This amendment removes the proportionality limitation and the exceptions for armed forces, defence policy, tax, spending and resources from the requirement to have due regard to the policy statement on environmental principles.

Amendment 43, page 11, line 24, leave out paragraphs (b) and (c).

This amendment removes the exceptions for armed forces, defence and national security policy from the requirement to have due regard to the policy statement on environmental principles. It also removes the exceptions for tax, spending and allocation of resources.

Amendment 23, page 14, line 29, leave out Clause 24.

Government amendment 31.

Amendment 44, in clause 45, page 27, line 15, leave out paragraphs (b) and (c).

This amendment removes the exceptions for armed forces, defence and national security policy and the exceptions for tax, spending and allocation of resources from the definition of environmental law.

Government amendments 9 to 20.

Caroline Lucas: I am pleased to move new clause 1. This Bill could not be more important. It is 25 years since the last dedicated Environment Act was passed. During that time, the speed and scale of environmental destruction has increased dramatically. The UK is now one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world, and Ministers simply are not rising to that challenge. According to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the Government are failing to meet fully 17 out of 20 UN biodiversity targets.

Despite the Government’s aim to be

“the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we inherited it”,

this Bill has languished in Parliament for more than 200 days before Committee resumed. As a consequence, there is now a governance gap, with only interim measures in place where a fully fledged Office for Environmental Protection should have been. Worse, we now hear that the Bill is to be delayed by at least six months, because Ministers have apparently run out of time in Parliament.

Of course we understand the pressures that covid has put on the parliamentary timetable, but the Government have had more than four years since the referendum, two years since the draft Bill was published and one year since the UK left the EU to get these plans in place. Their failure to do so is utterly incompetent. Will the Minister give us a precise date for both the next Report stage and the missing policy statement that is linked to the environmental principles? It is to those principles that I now turn, because my new clause 1 and amendment 1 are on the environmental principles, and I plan to push new clause 1 to a vote.

Ministers promised that, post Brexit, environmental standards would be not only maintained but enhanced, yet this Bill does not even come close to making up for what we have lost by leaving the EU. It sets out five important principles, including prevention, precaution and polluter pays. Under EU law, it is a requirement that those are actually applied when law making and that they cover all public bodies, not just Ministers.

However, the Bill significantly weakens their legal status because they do not apply to public bodies, and there is no such duty on Ministers to act in accordance with the principles. Instead, there is only a duty to “have due regard” to a policy statement that the Government have not even bothered to publish yet.

The Minister has tried to persuade us that “due regard” is at least as strong as “in accordance with”, yet her case simply does not stand up to scrutiny. In 2018, the Lords Select Committee on the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 found that the duty to “have regard” to contained in that Act was

“weak, unenforceable and lacks clear meaning.”

Adding the word “due” in front of “regard” does not change that. There are plenty of examples of other legislation in which public authorities are required by statute to act in accordance with or to take actions to comply with—for example, the Marine Strategy Regulations 2010 or the Planning Act 2008.

We can only conclude that, in this instance, the Government deliberately intend to weaken these provisions and, as a consequence, to drive a coach and horses through fundamental EU protections. New clause 1 would extend the duty to all public authorities and broaden the scope of the principles. Crucially, it would strengthen the duty from “have due regard” to “act in accordance with”, and it would apply directly to the principles, rather than a non-existent policy statement.

Amendment 1 addresses further absurdities in the Bill—in this case, the exclusion of the Ministry of Defence, the Treasury, and indeed anyone spending resources within Government, from having to consider the principles at all. That really is ludicrous. My amendment therefore removes the proportionality limitation from the environmental principles, as well as the exclusions for the MOD and the Treasury.

New clause 17 is vital because it recognises that even if we do succeed in strengthening this Bill, efforts to protect and restore nature will ultimately fail unless we also address the underlying economic drivers of biodiversity and ecosystem destruction. The new clause therefore requires the Government to prepare a strategy for the adoption of new economic goals so that social and environmental gains sit at the heart of the Government’s economic plans and measurements. If we stick with the current economic rulebook, we will continue to see the hard work of DEFRA undermined by the overriding short-term economic priorities of the Treasury, and above all the pursuit of infinite GDP growth on a planet of finite resources. For decades, we have seen Ministers commit to environmental goals and targets only for those goals to be missed time and again. Nature’s dangerous decline continues apace, at a high cost to current and future generations. This time we need to do things differently. Some major business voices are also urging Government to do the same. Consider this from the Business for Nature coalition:

“Governments, companies and financial organizations would take better decisions if they used information ‘beyond short-term profit and GDP’ that includes impacts and dependencies on nature, as well as synergies and trade-offs informed by science and planetary boundaries.”

New clause 17 is all about better, more consistent decision making across Government so that the environmental ambition in this Bill is not undermined by conflicting

goals of other, more powerful Departments. While I will not be pressing it to a vote, I do hope that the Minister will commit to taking this forward with the urgency it requires.

Turning to amendment 21, green space has become more important than ever over the past 10 months, yet access to nature is far from equal. My amendment seeks to address that. Some 2.6 million people in the UK have no publicly accessible green space within walking distance, and one in eight British households has no access to a garden—an inequality that disproportionately affects those in black and minority ethnic communities. Currently the Bill states:

The Secretary of State may...set long-term targets”

on

“people’s enjoyment of the natural environment.”

However, because this is not a priority area, it risks being overlooked, with funding and resources being diverted elsewhere. My amendment remedies this omission by promoting access to and enjoyment of nature as a priority area for long-term targets. This change not only has the potential to equalise access to nature but would also come with wider benefits to physical and mental health.

Finally, I would like to indicate support for a number of other amendments, including amendment 23 on the Office for Environmental Protection. When it comes to enforcement, the OEP is being presented as a new, independent watchdog. In reality, it is more like a ministerial lapdog kept on a tight leash, with Ministers given the power to steer it by offering so-called guidance that the OEP is bound to consider. Since Ministers also control its budget and its board, it is entirely likely that such guidance will actually be felt, in practice, rather more as an instruction. The Minister has argued that the Government already routinely offer guidance to other non-departmental public bodies. While it is true that they do to some, they certainly do not have power to issue guidance in relation to bodies charged principally or partly with enforcing potential breaches of the law by other public bodies. That is a crucial difference. That is why I support the amendment that would delete this guidance, which was added to the Bill at a very late stage.

I also support amendments that intend to ensure that interim targets are legally binding. There are strong amendments to improve air quality, and to align our state of nature targets with those from the convention on biological diversity and with the objectives of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill, which I introduced in Parliament last year.

This is a hugely important Bill. It is unbelievable that we are seeing, yet again, a delay to its coming forward. The Minister must now undertake that in the extra time she is going to achieve, she will strengthen the Bill to make it fit for purpose so that it comes close to some of the aspirations that she and her fellow Ministers have expressed before.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): Before I call the Minister, let me say that, as I have indicated, there is a four-minute limit on Back-Bench contributions. The vast majority of contributions will be via videolink. Can I say to those who are contributing via videolink that there is a clock on the device you are using, so please keep an eye on it? There are no interventions on

[Mr Deputy Speaker]

you, so it should be straightforward as to when you finish your contribution. If you try to exceed that time, you will be automatically cut off. For those contributing in the Chamber, the clocks will be working in the usual fashion.

3 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Rebecca Pow): I would like to begin by setting out why this Environment Bill is so important. Members on all sides of the House agree that on the whole—despite, I must just say, some notable successes where farmers, Government and conservationists are working together—the desperate decline of our natural environment and biodiversity has gone on for far too long. We need to act to improve the quality and the quantity of habitats for our fellow species across the board, and we need to re-establish the equilibrium of the habitats and ecosystems.

Our UK indicator for farmland birds shows that we have had a decline of 50% in those birds since 1970. The lapwings I grew up with on the farm at home are no longer there, nor are the yellowhammers. Insect pollinators have declined by 30% since 1980, so in place of that hazy buzz we were all so used to there is now, in many places, silence. This matters not only because people treasure our species and habitats—and, goodness, we have really appreciated that in lockdown during the pandemic, have we not?—but because they underpin vital processes such as carbon storage or pollination. That is why we are laying the foundations for nature's recovery through this Bill, delivering the tools needed to drive the change we want to see.

Legally binding targets for environmental improvement across at least four priority areas must be set. Our ambitious targets across air quality, water, waste and biodiversity will drive long-term action. Through this Government now and future Governments, we will be held accountable by Parliament if progress lags. I know the House will also be particularly interested to hear that we will set not one but two legally binding targets to tackle harmful air pollution across the country. The Bill will require current and future Governments to produce an environmental improvement plan, which must be reviewed and reported on regularly. The Bill creates a tough new independent Office for Environmental Protection to hold all public authorities—from local authorities to central Government—to account on reaching these goals. It will enforce the delivery of all environmental law, including, for example, our net zero target.

Dr Rupa Huq (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab): First, will the Minister congratulate year 4 from Christ Church primary, who have sent me 100 different essays on exactly the topic she is talking about and on deforestation? Secondly, what does she say to our own Chemical Industries Association, which bemoans our leaving REACH—the registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals regulation—saying that it opens the door to harmful chemical pollution potentially to animals and humans, because it is the Government who are responsible for the replacement?

Rebecca Pow: Of course, I would be absolutely delighted to welcome those essays from Christ Church primary school. Indeed, if the hon. Member would like me to

send a letter from the Environment Minister, I would be delighted to do so. I am always very pleased to speak to our students and young children about what we are doing on the environment, and they are our future generations whom we are doing all this for, so I thank her for that. We are going to talk about REACH later—I engage very closely with the industry—so we will discuss that in the second grouping of amendments today.

Just before that intervention, I mentioned the new independent Office for Environmental Protection, and I would like to take this opportunity to provide the House with an update on the OEP. We want to ensure that this is located in a good long-term place and, trust me, there were an awful lot of contenders. After considering wider locations, we have decided that Worcester will be an excellent location for the headquarters of the OEP. This is part of the Government's commitment to ensuring that opportunities are spread fairly across the country. My heart goes out to people in the area who may have been flooded this week, but I hope the OEP's being based in Worcester gives a little bit of good news.

As the Prime Minister set out in the Government's 10-point plan to net zero, protection, restoration and enhancement of our natural environment are crucial. The Bill will play a key part in that mission. I thank the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas) for opening the debate by raising some important points on the environmental principles. The environmental principles will work together to protect the environment from damage by making environmental considerations central to the policy development process across Government. I am keen to hear views from across the House, and there are many references to the environmental principles in some of the other amendments, so I shall respond in more detail to some of her points on the principles and other important issues at the end of the debate. I reassure her, though, that we are working at pace: during the break between the two Report sessions, we will continue unstintingly to deliver measures in the Bill.

Before I go any further, let me mention some Government amendments, some of which make relatively technical changes that will improve and enhance the Bill. Government amendment 6, tabled by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, clarifies that both the terrestrial and the marine aspects of England's natural environment will be considered when conducting the significant improvement test in clause 6. That has always been our intention, as I explained in Committee, but the amendment puts it beyond doubt. I am delighted that the amendment spells out that marine is absolutely part and parcel of what we mean when we talk about the environment.

With regard to the Office for Environmental Protection, Government amendment 31, also tabled by the Secretary of State, is a technical amendment that simply serves to clarify that section 31(2A) of the Senior Courts Act 1981 does not apply on an environmental review, providing the courts with a full range of remedies for the OEP environmental review procedure. Government amendments 9 to 20, also tabled by the Secretary of State, align the clauses relating to the OEP's Northern Ireland enforcement functions with the amended part 1 provisions. Those amendments were personally requested by Northern Ireland Ministers.

I welcome the opportunity to hear from hon. Friends and Members on both sides of the House on this vital Bill, and I look forward to responding at the end of the debate.

Luke Pollard (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Lab/Co-op): I rise to speak to new clause 9 and amendments 25, 39 and 23 in my name and those of my hon. Friends.

Parliament declared a climate and ecological emergency on 1 May 2019. A year and a half has passed, and the need for more urgent action on the environment has only increased. If we are to avoid catastrophic climate change that would only destroy jobs, homes, biodiversity and our planet, we have just nine short years to cut carbon emissions and protect nature, according to the UN's experts on climate and biodiversity. As David Attenborough says,

"the living world is on course to tip and collapse. Indeed, it has already begun to do so".

This Bill is a cobbled-together set of disparate actions that is sinking under the weight of greenwash that has been applied by Ministers. It does not take the urgent action that is so desperately needed.

This legislation is not perfect by any means, but the Bill should already be law. The deliberate pausing of Report stage after today means that some amendments will not be debated by MPs until May, the Bill will not be in the House of Lords until just before the summer, and it risks not being on the statute book until the autumn. That means we could be waiting over six months more for an environmental watchdog, for powers to stop our children breathing unsafe air, and to regulate Ministers' actions. The Minister said that she did not want to see a delay in the Bill, while she was moving a motion to delay the Bill. That simply is not good enough. What a terrible message to send to the world in the year we are hosting COP26. It was supposed to be in law before Britain left the Brexit transition period and it is not. It was supposed to be bold and world-leading because of the urgency of the climate crisis and it is not.

This is a go-slow Government when it comes to environmental action. If we could solve the climate crisis with press releases then the planet would have nothing to worry about, but it is actions, not words, that we need. We need faster action to create the well-paid green jobs our communities need, and we need bolder action on improving standards and protecting habitats and species, so we can strengthen our economy and rebuild our country. If building back better after the pandemic is to be genuine, and not a smash and grab on the language of the environmental left, it must be underpinned by bold policy.

The Bill has a number of important issues, so let me deal with some of the main ones—first, air quality. The whole House remembers Ella Kissi-Debrah, a nine-year-old girl who tragically died following an asthma attack in London seven years ago. The coroner's court found that air pollution made a material contribution to Ella's death. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Vicky Foxcroft) for working with Ella's mum Rosamund in demanding bolder action. This Sunday would have been Ella's 17th birthday. As her mum wrote in *The Sun* on Sunday:

"Had WHO air pollution limits been in place and enforced then, according to the Coroner's report, she would still be here today."

Air quality is a matter of social justice, of equality and of poverty and requires fundamental change in the way we do business.

There are three amendments on air quality in the names of my Devon colleague the Chair of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish), and my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea West (Geraint Davies) and in my own name. All the amendments seek real action on air pollution. Labour will back all of them if they are put to the vote. According to figures published by NHS England, on average 5% of deaths in those over 30 can be attributed to PM_{2.5} air pollution. What that means is 40,000 deaths a year are caused by poor air—40,000 deaths. The Confederation of British Industry estimates that a £1.6 billion economic benefit to the UK could be released if we met WHO guidelines.

It is frankly bizarre that, faced with such mounting evidence of the unnecessary deaths caused by poor air, Ministers still refuse to put WHO air quality standards into law. I want to see the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs step up and hold Ministers' feet to the fire. That means taking the case for the toughest WHO air quality targets to force the Department for Transport, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and other Departments to radically up their game. If Ministers still refuse to accept our amendments, can the Minister confirm she will use the powers in the Bill to adopt WHO targets and exceed them if she can whenever the Bill eventually gets on the statute book? A Labour Government would adopt WHO targets because it is simply the right thing to do, so that everyone in all our communities has clean air to breathe.

Steve Brine (Winchester) (Con): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Luke Pollard: I will not for time's sake.

You cannot build back better if you are struggling to breathe.

Secondly, let me to turn to the Office for Environmental Protection. The Bill should have been passed by the end of the Brexit transition period, and the OEP should be up and running now. Labour offered to work with Ministers to ensure that that happened, but here we are with that date passed and the Bill still unlikely to become law until autumn, which is a year too late. That means the UK is now without an environmental watchdog, as the OEP has not yet been set up. We are concerned that it will be a weak watchdog with no real teeth. Calling it tough will in itself not make it tough. The OEP needs to be vigorously independent. That is why our amendment would delete a clause that would allow the Secretary of State to give guidance to the OEP and effectively let the Government mark their own homework. It is backed by the cross-party Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, which concluded that we should make sure that

"every step is taken to ensure the Office for Environmental Protection is as independent from the Government as possible".

Although I think many of us would have preferred an out-and-out environmentalist to be leading the OEP, the appointment of Dame Glenys Stacey is welcome and I hope the board members she is now recruiting will look a tad greener. But I must say to the Minister that, as a south-west Member of Parliament, I am deeply concerned that the Government have just robbed the

[*Luke Pollard*]

south-west of the Office for Environmental Protection. She will know it was announced in October 2019 that it would be going to Bristol. She knows that the expectation was that this would be a south-west-based regulator and she knows of the anger—the anger—that this will cause in the south-west on finding out it has been sent to somewhere that she claims is near Bristol. Worcester is nowhere near Bristol and that promise is nowhere near being met. The south-west has been robbed of a regulator and I think that is deeply, deeply worrying.

Let me turn briefly to bees and Labour's amendment to prevent the Government from lifting the ban on bee-killing chemicals. I am a fan of bees; my family keeps bees on a farm in Cornwall. Since 1900, the UK has lost 13 out of 35 native bee species. Bees are essential to the future of our planet, to pollinating our crops and to our rich tapestry of biodiversity, so bee health is non-negotiable. That is what MPs on both sides of the House say in good times, so I expect them to say it now. Labour's amendment would oppose the Conservative plan to lift the ban on bee-killing pesticides. If bee health really is non-negotiable, the ban must not be set aside just because it is convenient to do so now. There is no doubt that sugar beet farmers have been hit hard by crop blight, but lifting the ban is not the solution. Improved sugar contracts, compensation and accelerating blight-resistant varieties are a much better answer.

3.15 pm

Labour backs our British farmers. We stood with them against the Government over food standards, and we do so again in relation to the risk to small family farms from the new farm payment support scheme. Conservative Members will no doubt talk about how many European nations have also sought to lift the ban on bee-killing chemicals, but this is about England. It is about what we do as a country and whether we take the tough calls to address the ecological crisis or make excuses about going backwards. Today, Labour MPs will vote to save the bees, and the Government will whip Conservative MPs to allow the ban on bee-killing pesticides to be lifted. In the year that Britain hosts COP26, when we should be a showcase for environmental best practice and shine as a force for good—a beacon nation—we will be allowing more bees and pollinators to be killed by neonicotinoid pesticides. We should save the bees and back amendment 39.

Labour will not vote against the Bill today. We will not do anything to frustrate our fight against the climate and nature emergency. Even go-slow action is better than no action at all, but we will push our amendments to a vote because the Bill really should have been better and bolder. It should embed an insatiable drive and a green passion at the very heart of the Government, but it does not. I am proudly red on the outside and green on the inside. Instead of being a deep green, the Bill is merely a bland beige—necessary and needed, but pedestrian in its ambition. It needs more focus and priority than the Government have offered to date.

Labour will also be supporting amendments from my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) on the state of nature and the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas), with whom we

have common cause in the climate and ecological emergency. The Bill does not do enough, and neither is it fast enough. I genuinely want us to build back better, but if the Bill was insufficient before the pandemic, it is wholly inadequate now that the pandemic's horrors have been laid bare. I encourage the House of Lords to get the Bill to where it should be, and I urge Members of this House to put our planet, our precious habitats and our vulnerable species first and to vote for the amendments.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): With a four-minute limit, I call Neil Parish via video link.

Neil Parish (Tiverton and Honiton) (Con) [V]: I thank DEFRA Ministers for their hard work on the Bill.

The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee has looked at the Environment Bill over the past few years. We have given it prelegislative scrutiny and looked at the Office for Environmental Protection and issues such as plastic waste, tree planting and air quality. The Bill has come back to Parliament in several shapes and sizes, and I think that might be about to happen again. I hope that the Government are carrying over the Bill to the next Session because they want to amend it to include all my amendments on deforestation and air quality.

The Amazon is losing an area twice the size of Devon every year to deforestation. Government amendments to ban sales from illegal deforestation go some way, but we can go further still and target the finance behind that. I will speak about air quality in the second debate today; there is an environmental and public health emergency that needs swift action. I appreciate the Government's argument that we need more time to do work on the science, but we have known about the seriousness of the situation for many years, so it cannot be put off much longer.

We also need to ensure that the Bill comes back quickly in the summer, because we currently have an environmental governance gap. The Government and public authorities are not being adequately held to account over their compliance with environmental law, and it is not the best look. The court of public opinion is ultimately our judge, so I gently suggest that the Bill should be brought back immediately in the next Session to demonstrate its importance.

Now that we are outside the EU, we do not have the Commission to fine us and hold us to account. We are rating ourselves and we need a strong protection in domestic law in this Environment Bill. We also need a strong Office for Environmental Protection, and I welcome the appointment of Dame Glenys Stacey as chairman of the OEP. Through this process, I have called for the chair to have independence from Government. Dame Glenys Stacey's track record as an effective regulator through using both carrot and stick to hold public bodies to account means I have faith in her achieving that independence, but in common with other Government agencies the OEP needs resources and teeth to bite. The OEP will not be independent if it is constantly worrying about its budget. The Government and Ministers have excellent environmental credentials and I do not think they will water down protection in any way, but we need to act more quickly and should be a little bit braver when it comes to scrutiny.

We also have a duty now to set the right environmental laws and framework for future Governments and generations. The Prime Minister is taking up the green recovery and DEFRA Ministers also believe in a better environment, as do many in this House and across the country. We are fortunate to be hosting COP26 later this year; it is an exciting time for environmental policy in this country. Outside the EU we have a real opportunity to do better and show global leadership on issues of global importance; whether in air quality, water quality, soil health, tree planting, plastic waste or species protection, we should be ambitious with our environment policy.

This Environment Bill is a landmark Bill and the Government have put great effort into it over several years. With a few more tweaks and a firm commitment to bring the Bill back early in the next Session we can set a great example to the rest of the world and have a modern Environment Act of which we can all be proud.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): We now go to a video link, and it is a Front-Bench contribution from Deidre Brock; happy Australia Day, Deidre.

Deidre Brock (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP) [V]: Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker.

I shall speak to Scottish National party amendments 43 and 44. This Bill concerns England in the main; most of these policy areas are devolved and Scotland has its own environmental legislation, which, frankly, is light years ahead. This Bill has made its way rather painfully through the process, and it has seemed for far too much of that time that it was more about the UK Government trying to hide the fact that they have no real environmental ambition to speak of.

Only a few months after stepping in to overturn a council's planning permission for an opencast mine, the Government have chosen to stay out of the planning process for a deep coalmine near Whitehaven in Cumbria. Less trusting folk than me have suggested that that might have something to do with what happened in that constituency in December 2019, but such cynicism is surely unfounded.

The UK has made little or no progress in tackling the really big-ticket items—carbon emissions, air and water pollution, tree planting, and so on. In fact, one of the area's explicitly excluded from this Bill, the military, is one of the worst offenders. I have talked at great length about the environmental impacts that we know of, particularly the historical dumping of unwanted explosives, ammunition, ordnance, radioactive waste and so on into the sea, and we know that the area around Beaufort's Dyke between Scotland and Ireland has millions of tonnes of unsavoury stuff littering the sea floor, but we do not know what is down there, because the dump records have been mislaid and the Ministry of Defence appears to have no intention of seeking to clean it up.

Similarly, I have been told that the MOD has done environmental impact studies on its land estates, but they have not been shared. There was a report in May, however, by Scientists for Global Responsibility, which found that the carbon footprint of British military spending was around 11 million tonnes of CO₂-equivalent, some of it relating to arms exports but most of it from MOD operations.

That is not all: not one single nuclear submarine has been dismantled since the first one was decommissioned more than 40 years ago; four decades on and the UK has more redundant nuclear subs in storage than it has in use. I should add, too, the hundreds of nuclear safety breaches at the naval bases on the Clyde that I discovered through written questions, which are interestingly not matched by similar figures elsewhere.

It is clear that the environmental impact of military operations is more than substantial, even if it is not officially acknowledged. I would have thought that any Government who wanted to—in the Prime Minister's words—

“do extraordinary things on the environment”

would want to do something about that, so I assume that it was an error that led someone in Government to exempt defence, national security and the armed forces from the requirement to have due regard to the policy statement on environmental provisions, and from any consideration of environmental issues on tax, spending and allocation of resources.

I raised this issue in Committee, so Ministers have had plenty of time to consider it, and they should consider reversing their position. The procedural oddities of this place will not allow for everything to be considered, so this issue has taken a back seat for the moment to allow Labour's amendment on neonicotinoids to be voted on. That is a devolved issue and treated differently in Scotland, but it is of course important for England.

We have 10 months until COP26 takes place in Glasgow—pandemics permitting—and the UK Government really have to step up to the plate and start showing some real leadership. Talking about it is not enough. Painting the fence green is not enough. The Government actually have to become green, become environmentally friendly, and work for the future of the planet and of the human race. In the past year, we have seen how a virus can disrupt our world, but that would be nothing compared to the devastation that the climate crisis threatens. We all have a role to play in addressing that challenge, but there is little point in individual households doing what they can while the Government fail to do what they are capable of.

I think that this Bill will go down as a missed opportunity, but that does not mean that the Government are powerless to act. I look forward to a change in priorities and a move to action. This is not a time to delay, defer and dissemble; it is a time to move forward purposefully. The question for the Government is not whether they win or lose their battles today, but whether they really decide to lead over the next year and the coming years.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): The four-minute limit is now imposed again for all further Back-Bench contributions.

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (The Cotswolds) (Con) [V]: I will speak to my amendment 4. The precautionary principle is a whole new way for the Government to legislate on environmental matters which can be applied to a huge range of environmental principles. It could be used in the extreme—for example, to introduce policies such as stopping people driving motor cars on the basis that they damage the environment. In an increasingly legislative field, my amendment is important in ensuring

[*Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown*]

that the Government can clearly define the purposes for use of the precautionary principle, beyond those in the mere principles statements outlined in clauses 16 to 18.

The Minister said in a letter to me this morning: “I can confirm that Ministers of the Crown are only required to have due regard to the policy statement when making policy by virtue of clause 18(1). The environmental principles duty is not designed to apply to individual decisions or other public bodies.” In other words, the statement of principles is pretty nearly toothless.

My amendment would clearly constrain when and where the precautionary principle can be used. I ask the Minister, when she sums up, to go further than just going into the principles; I ask her to include some of my amendment in the Bill. A particularly important part is subsection (3C), which says:

“The precautionary principle should only apply in response to risks that are...more than hypothetical in nature; and...serious and irreversible.”

I cannot see any reason at all why that should not be in the Bill. If the Minister is not inclined to include it, I hope that their lordships will pick it up when the Bill goes to the House of Lords.

The precautionary principle is not consistently applied to different activity; it is frequently used to constrain certain activities where any impacts are deemed to be unacceptable. For example, Natural England is currently seeking to restrict game shooting around European protected sites. Due to evidence of damage in only five—a mere 1.5% of all sites—it wants to introduce a licensing system.

In summing up, can the Minister please bear in mind all the constraints that are in my amendments? Otherwise, this principle could well become oppressive to people’s freedom in the future, and we may well rue the day that we put the provision in the Bill. I am looking to the Minister to tell me why some or all of my constraints cannot be included in the Bill, because that is where they should be. The statement of principles, as written in the Bill, is pretty nearly toothless, and the precautionary principle gives the Minister, or any future Minister, a huge overwhelming power, which we may well live to regret.

3.30 pm

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab) [V]: I wish to speak to new clause 5 on the state of nature target.

There are few things that can lift our spirits as much as time spent with nature. Who does not feel a sense of awe and wonder at the astonishing biodiversity of our landscape, its creatures and its plants. As well as ensuring that that same sense of awe and wonder can be enjoyed by future generations, it should be self-preservation, frankly, that urges us to confront the threat of biodiversity and habitat loss. We should have respect for the soil from which we came—the soil that has given us everything that we can see around us: food, fuel, raw materials, medicines, and the ability to capture carbon. It is the soil to which we will, one day, all return—a reminder of our place in the natural order of things.

The truth is that we can no longer take all this for granted. Why? It is because we are destroying our natural world at an alarming rate. In the words of the Minister’s own Department:

“Much of England’s wildlife-rich habitat has been lost over the last century...and there has been widespread species loss.”

The latest state of nature report records a decline of 13% in the abundance of UK species since 1970. Some 15% of UK species are now endangered, including the red squirrel, the water vole, the ghost orchid, and the meadow clary. The number of moths has decreased significantly in the past 50 years and a third of British wild bees and hoverflies are in decline. A total of 97% of our wildflower meadows have been lost since the 1930s. This is a crisis caused by agricultural practices, pollution, urbanisation, habitat loss and climate change, and it requires action, and that is what this new clause seeks to do.

I welcome the Government’s commitment to binding targets, but I think that it can be strengthened to make a good Bill better by including a target to halt and begin to reverse the decline of habitats and species by 2030. That should not be too difficult in principle for the Minister, because this is exactly what the United Kingdom called for in drawing up the leaders’ pledge for nature, which commits to reversing biodiversity loss by 2030. But, of course, to reverse loss, one must first halt it. The problem is that the Bill’s timetable for setting targets does not fit in with the 2030 biodiversity pledge, so the new clause would place a requirement on Ministers to draw up, before the Conference of the Parties later on this year, a 2030 state of nature target to halt and begin to reverse the decline in species and habitats and to set out a plan to do so, including how the target would be measured. It would need to cover the abundance of species, their risk of extinction and the extent and condition of habitats, bearing in mind that widely accepted and reliable sets of indicators already exist to enable us to assess these things.

I accept that the target is ambitious, but if we are not going to be ambitious now, when will we be ambitious for the state of nature? It is not as if we do not know what works to bring about change for the better. We do. We just need a lot more of it. The truth is this: we have always known that the natural environment sustains our souls, but we have now come to understand that it also sustains our very existence. That is why it matters and that is why we should do now what we know in our hearts to be right. I hope the House will vote for the new clause.

Philip Dunne (Ludlow) (Con) [V]: I am pleased to be able to make a brief contribution to this important debate. It is a great relief to see the Bill come back to this House, but equally it is a great disappointment to learn that it will be back just for today and we will have to wait until the next parliamentary Session begins after Easter for the second allocated day. When the Minister responds to the debate, will she give some indication that she intends to ensure that the Bill receives Royal Assent as soon as possible and that procedures in the Lords conclude before the summer recess? We must go into the COP26 conference in November with clarity that this ground-breaking piece of legislation is on the statute book.

I wish to speak about two aspects of the Bill, the first of which is the Office for Environmental Protection. I am delighted to welcome the Minister’s announcement today that the OEP headquarters will be in Worcester in the west midlands, near my constituency. Worcester is, of course, on the River Severn, which is the largest river in the country and has recently been in flood through

my constituency. The whole Severn catchment area requires considerable attention and will get greater focus thanks to Dame Glenys Stacey's presence at the headquarters from time to time, in her new role.

Alongside the EFRA Committee, the Environmental Audit Committee did prelegislative scrutiny of the Bill, and we called for a greater degree of independence for the OEP. Having met Dame Glenys at our pre-appointment hearing in December, we took some comfort from our opinion that she is the right person to lead the organisation, but we are concerned about whether she has sufficient budget to recruit the number of people required and the experts she needs, and to reflect the OEP's responsibilities in helping to deliver the 25-year plan.

When the Environmental Audit Committee did prelegislative scrutiny, we were also concerned about the environmental improvement plans. We felt that the OEP should advise the Government on the establishment of targets, as was the case under the previous regulatory regime through the European Commission. We welcome the fact that targets are enshrined in the Bill but think it important that the body that will have part of the responsibility to monitor compliance with those targets is also involved in setting them. We would very much like to see confirmation from the Minister that the date for establishing the environmental targets can be confirmed with a statement of intent ahead of COP26.

The second aspect I wish to speak about is amendment 28, tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Richard Graham). It would require the Government to include in the environmental plan steps to improve people's enjoyment of the natural environment. As part of our inquiry into biodiversity and ecosystems, my Committee has repeatedly heard that central to restoring our greatly depleted natural environment—about which we have heard from other speakers—is building a better relationship between people and nature. It was called for in the Glover review; we would like to see it enshrined in the Bill and urge the Government to support amendment 28.

Geraint Davies (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op) [V]: I speak in favour of amendment 2, which was tabled by the Chair of the EFRA Committee, the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish), and would put into law the World Health Organisation air quality limits.

I speak as the chair of the all-party parliamentary group on air pollution. I introduced my own clean air Bill four years ago, in 2017, at which time the Royal College of Physicians had already reported that 40,000 people in Britain were dying prematurely every year, at a cost of £20 billion. The figure is now thought to be 64,000 people. Air pollution affects people's brains, hearts and lungs. The mental and physical health of unborn children is affected, as is young children's concentration. It can also affect people in terms of depression, anxiety and dementia—so the list goes on. In fact, the number of covid deaths is up 8% for each microgram of PM_{2.5}.

DEFRA claims that overall pollution has come down in the past 10 years, but the reason for that is that we have closed down our coal-fired power stations and exported our manufacturing. In urban environments, the deaths and the pollution are going up, and that is why we need these limits to be imposed universally. It is the poorest and most diverse neighbourhoods that are

suffering most from the pollution and hence from the greatest levels of covid deaths. It is no good the Government saying that they will have average concentrations, where they average the amounts of concentration in a rural environment with those in a toxic urban environment. Those limits would not have saved the life of Ella Kissi-Debrah, who tragically died. The coroner's inquest heard that the cause of death was the levels of air pollution that caused her asthma, which caused her to go into hospital 28 times in just three years before her tragic death. We want World Health Organisation universal limits applied so that thousands of children can be saved and protected.

It is everyone's right to have clean air, and it is the Government's duty to deliver that right. We therefore need amendment 2, which is a guiding light around which other targets can coalesce. It requires PM_{2.5} to be 10 micrograms per cubic metre by 2030. We need all Government Departments and public bodies to work together to achieve this, as set out in new clause 6. Unfortunately, the Government are just saying that they will have targets in 2022. Those targets will not be legally enforceable and they will be able to be changed. That simply is not good enough. For Ella's sake, for the sake of thousands of children up and down Britain, and for all of us, we need World Health Organisation standards in legislation, and I hope that that will be agreed today.

Finally, I turn to new clause 11, tabled by the hon. Member for West Dorset (Chris Loder). I sponsored a plastics Bill in 2018. The fact is that there will be more plastic than fish in the sea by 2050. UK supermarkets alone produce 114 billion pieces a year. We need the producers and the polluters to pay a tax on virgin plastic. I would certainly support that, because millions of birds and animals are dying. We are ingesting the microplastics that get into fish and inhaling plastic that is in our clothes and washing machines. In a nutshell, as we approach COP26 we should be showing leadership to the world in stopping our oceans choking, stopping our children choking, protecting our air, protecting our oceans and protecting our environment.

Tim Loughton (East Worthing and Shoreham) (Con): This is a ground-breaking Bill. There is much of merit in it, although you would not believe it to listen to some of the contributions from the Opposition Benches. There are many good amendments, and I would single out new clauses 14 and 15 from my right hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Theresa Villiers) about linking housing targets and planning permissions.

In the limited time available, I want to talk about my amendment 5 on interim targets. Setting targets is easy. Governments like to set headline-grabbing targets, but too often the small print belies the ambition of the target, and the target date is in the dim and distant future. That can instil complacency and lethargy, because there is plenty of time to hit the mark and there is therefore no need to panic. When it comes to climate change, however, there is every need, if not to panic, at least to put our foot on the gas, metaphorically, and to act with urgency and immediacy.

The 2050 net zero target is almost 30 years away, and it should be a "last possible date by which". It should be subject to a constant audit as to how quickly and by how far we can constantly bring that end date forward.

[Tim Loughton]

It must also be an end date for a clearly set out progression to reducing harmful emissions and creating a net carbon environmentally benefiting economy. We need things to show a marked improvement from today, and so it should be with the natural environmental improvement targets in this Bill. My amendment is simple. It adds just four words in an additional subsection to clause 4, making it the duty of the Secretary of State to ensure that “interim targets are met.” That amendment would guarantee continuous incremental improvements in the natural environment, helping to keep all things environmental high up the Government’s list of priorities. It would bring the Environment Bill target framework into line with the approach of the Climate Change Act 2008, where there are five-yearly legally binding targets as milestones to the long-term legally binding target of net zero by 2050.

At the moment, the only recourse for the Office for Environmental Protection, if the Government miss an interim target, will be to criticise them in its annual report. That could of course be ignored by Ministers and Governments until the long-term target was missed, when enforcement action would actually kick in. Frankly, the power of policing this has to have more teeth than the ability of the environmental policemen to shout, “Stop, or I’ll shout ‘stop’ again!” Friends of the Earth has said:

“If these targets are not binding upon the Secretary of State it would be a huge missed opportunity to ensure the EIP system drives sustained, tangible environmental improvement—and would undermine the rationale for setting such goals in the first instance.”

Steve Brine: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Tim Loughton: I do not think so, but my hon. Friend is very kind. It is only because Madam Deputy Speaker is looking daggers at me.

Five-yearly interim targets also need to be set in the environmental improvement plans. However, the environmental improvement plans are not legally binding—they are simply policy documents—and all the plans need to be reviewed and potentially updated every five years and reported on every year. This is not the same as legal accountability.

3.45 pm

There are many cases, I am afraid, where targets have not been met. The target set in 2010 for ending the inclusion of peat in amateur gardening products by 2020 will be missed. The targets set in 2011 for DEFRA to conserve 50% of England’s sites of special scientific interest by 2020 have been abandoned, so it is really important that interim targets must be legally binding to guarantee that they will be delivered on. It is vital that there is a robust legal framework in place that actually holds the Government and public authorities to account in the short term. Binding interim targets can provide near-term certainty for business, creating the sort of stable environment that encourages investment in the workforce and in green products and services. They would focus businesses on planning the trajectory towards long-term targets and help to drive innovation in the business model.

I am pleased to have business support for this amendment. I am particularly grateful to the Aldersgate Group for the supporting letter from a group of businesses published today. Clear, binding, interim targets that are legally enforceable can be good for certainty, good for business and good for the environment. Let us pass this amendment.

Jonathan Edwards (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (Ind) [V]: Diolch, Madam Deputy Speaker; it is a pleasure to speak briefly in this debate to the amendment in my name and in support of the many excellent amendments tabled by colleagues from across the House.

While they were open, my visits to schools were able to continue over Zoom; it has been one of the pleasures during this difficult lockdown. The common theme in these sessions is always questions about the climate crisis. The sense of urgency among young people is palpable, yet I fear that in decades to come, they will look back at the decision makers of today and ask why, despite all the warning signs, we did not do more when we had the chance. I want Wales to seize that chance and use our natural resources and innovation to fuel our recovery and transition to a sustainable economy. We have the capacity and capability to do it, but too often, our efforts are being hampered by Westminster. There has been the refusal to support the Swansea Bay tidal lagoon, the pitiful track record on rail investment, and a flat refusal to empower the Welsh Government with powers over energy policy or meaningful economic levers.

I fear greatly that the latest power grab will see any climate ambitions set by the Senedd actively undermined by Westminster. I am talking, of course, of the powers grabbed via the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020 to spend in devolved areas, which the British state intends to use to deliver the shared prosperity fund. It takes very little imagination to picture a scenario in which the British Government bypass the will of our democratically elected Senedd and pursue their Union Jack-plastered pet project in Wales without any regard for the environmental consequences.

Amendment 40 in my name seeks to defend Wales from Westminster intrusion. It would require that an impact assessment be carried out on the effect on environmental targets set by the Senedd of any infrastructure project that the British dare to seek to deliver in Wales via the shared prosperity fund or any other mechanism. Where the effect is found to be a negative one, my amendment would give the Senedd a veto on the project.

While I will not push this amendment to a vote this evening, I seek reassurances from the British Government. I want a guarantee that Wales will be free to not only set but achieve more ambitious targets on achieving net zero, improving air quality and reducing plastic waste, without any interference from Westminster. By introducing the Bill, the British Government have rightly made much of the importance of setting long-term environmental targets and establishing lines of accountability. Is it not only right that the Welsh Government are fully accountable for any decisions that affect Wales’s environmental targets?

I briefly pledge my support for new clause 17, which would require the UK Government to deliver a strategy setting out how the economic recovery can be designed to improve our wellbeing and environment. I also support new clause 9, which would ensure that anyone with

responsibility under this legislation must comply with the commitment to achieving a healthy, resilient, biodiverse natural environment. I welcome amendments that seek to strengthen, and hold the Government to account on, the promise to combat global deforestation, and to set targets for the reduction and replacement of animal testing for the purposes of chemicals regulation.

We do have an opportunity to make a difference, and the next time I talk to young people in my constituency, I want to be able to show them that we are taking it. *Diolch yn fawr iawn.*

Chris Grayling (Epsom and Ewell) (Con) [V]: I start by welcoming this Bill and praising the Government for bringing it before the House. I know it is disappointing that the Bill will not make it into law until the next Session, but it is a world-leading piece of legislation. Whether it is because of the scientific warnings about climate change, the loss of biodiversity, air quality issues, or the need to create a better environment around us all, the measures in this Bill represent a major step forward. Although there will be a lot of debate about whether the Bill should be enhanced and how, I hope that all who propose changes to it recognise what an important measure it is.

I shall seek to catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, when the Bill reaches the second day of Report, to move my amendment on the protection of the hedgehog and to speak about forest protection. Today, though, I want to focus on the first part of the Bill, particularly the requirements to prepare an environmental improvement plan and to set targets for improvements. The 25-year environment plan that the Government produced two years ago provides an essential and world-leading blueprint for the kind of change that is needed. It covers a whole range of issues, but in particular I want targets and updates of the plan to focus on habitat restoration and protection here, and I want tangible measures to incentivise and support the restoration and protection of habitats in other parts of the world. We have to be world leaders in protecting our species and encouraging other people to do the same.

The loss of biodiversity in the UK has been tragic. Whether we are talking about the disappearance of birds from our gardens and hedgerows, the decline in the numbers of much-loved species such as the hedgehog, or the challenges of our marine environment, it is the job of this generation to start to turn the tide. The decline is even more tragic in other parts of the world, with large numbers of iconic species in real danger of disappearing and with habitat being lost at an alarming rate. The implementation of this Bill, the targets that are set and the ongoing improvement plan must tackle this disaster in our country, and help to do so for our planet.

In other parts of the world, deforestation is a key part of the problem, and this Bill must play a part in ensuring that the UK says to the world, “Enough is enough.” We will come back to that next time. Here, the issue is not deforestation—we have more trees today than we have had for centuries, and we have ambitions to plant more—but we have intense development pressures. We do need new homes and we need to tackle some of our infrastructure challenges, but new developments must have a smart strategy for environmental protection alongside them, particularly to avoid the unnecessary destruction of habitats.

We need to grow more food here and stop importing so much from around the world, so we need a bigger and stronger farming sector, but it must protect biodiversity. The measures to do so in this Bill and in the Agriculture Act 2020 are very welcome. We need to take some tough decisions about invasive species, because we have to stop outsiders multiplying in a way that drives our native species to extinction. The targets set under this Bill must put biodiversity at the heart of our strategy, and the duties that it places on local communities must also strengthen biodiversity.

In the coming weeks, we will hear a lot of thoughts and ideas about additional things that could be done to improve our environment, but we must give the Government credit. This Bill can and will make a difference, and I look forward to it becoming law. Given the delay, however, the need to act on biodiversity starts now. Although I know that we must wait for the Bill to pass into statute, I want Ministers to make this a central part of their work now. The powers in this Bill will help them to do so in the future, but protecting our species and protecting biodiversity here, and encouraging others around the world to do the same, must start right now.

Theresa Villiers (Chipping Barnet) (Con): I rise to support my new clauses 14 and 15. The core principle of the Bill is that safeguarding the environment should be at the heart of decision making right across Government, and that must include the planning system. New clauses 14 and 15 would give the OEP the power to veto or reduce housing targets and require new developments to be consistent with our net zero carbon target. Of course, the environmental net gain provisions in the Bill will generate, via the planning system, a welcome flow of investment into nature. I also welcome the Government’s recent abandonment of their housing target algorithm, which generated impossibly high numbers, but for London that threat remains for the longer term.

We also have a planning Bill due soon. My fear is that the Government’s determination to “build, build, build” could compromise the environmental ambition of the Bill that we are considering. Let us face it, almost nothing has a greater physical impact on the landscape than the buildings we construct. Successive generations have been judged by the legacy of the built environment they have left behind. By giving environmental and climate concerns a greater weight in the housing and planning system, my new clauses are an appeal to Ministers not to repeat the mistakes of the ’60s and ’70s, which their algorithm makes me fear that they will.

Even with Ministers’ change of heart on the algorithm, the housing targets remain very high. That could mean a drive for ever denser, ever higher blocks consuming ever more of the green spaces we value so much, and never more so than in a time of covid. Local input into the planning system provides a formidable defence for the environment, and I ask the Government to drop their White Paper proposals to remove local decision making for areas designated for growth.

Despite the measures that I would like to see added to the Bill, Members should be in no doubt of my strong support for this legislation, which I introduced as DEFRA Secretary in its first iteration in the last Parliament. The Bill will mark a historic turning point as we establish a demanding and rigorous framework of legally binding

[Theresa Villiers]

targets, improvement plans and measures to protect biodiversity and crack down on waste and plastics pollution.

As many Members have said, we are at a crisis point for nature and for climate. We need urgent action to arrest the decline in habitats and the threat posed to thousands of species both here and overseas. We hold this earth in trust for those who come after us. If we are to have any chance of being the first generation to leave the natural environment in a better state than we found it, we need to make big changes to the way we do things in this country, and I am confident that this Bill will help us do that.

Mick Whitley (Birkenhead) (Lab) [V]: The ecological and climate crises will be the defining issues of the 21st century. In a few short years, climate breakdown is likely to transform the way we live. The floods that devastated communities across England last week provided a stark reminder of how incredibly high the stakes are. Now the heavy responsibility falls on those of us who serve in this place to ensure that future generations inherit a liveable planet. Through taking bold and decisive action now and driving forward change on the international stage, we can roll back the ecological crisis and build a fairer, greener economy in its wake, but I am afraid that the Government's ambitions fail to meet the scale of the challenge.

The Prime Minister has called for a green Brexit, but at the same time he is replacing the EU's comprehensive package of environmental protections with four simple targets that the Environment Secretary can change at will. That is why I urge Members across the House to support new clause 9, which would oblige anyone exercising responsibilities in relation to the Environment Bill to adhere to broader commitments such as the Climate Change Act 2008 and the United Nations leaders' pledge for nature.

I also support amendment 39, which would guarantee parliamentary scrutiny when the Government want to allow the use of plant production products that endanger bees and other pollinators. I know that I was not alone in being concerned by the Environment Secretary's decision to temporarily lift the ban on bee-killing pesticides. That decision flies in the face of the Government's own commitment to fight biodiversity loss and was made without consulting Parliament. Of course we all sympathise with farmers who are currently wrestling with crop blight, but those pesticides pose an existential threat to bee populations and other pollinator species, which play such a vital role in pollinating 70% of the crops we eat. I do not think it is hyperbolic to say that our future depends on bees.

I warmly thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) for tabling new clause 5, which would commit the Environment Secretary to tackling and reversing biodiversity loss in England by 2030. While I welcome the proposals to establish an Office for Environmental Protection, I am deeply concerned that it would lack the necessary powers and independence to truly do its job. I will therefore be supporting amendment 23.

The Government had the opportunity to use their Bill to put the environment at the heart of their policy making, but the Bill fails even to maintain existing environmental

standards, let alone make the UK a world leader in environmental policy. The fact that the Bill will now be delayed until later this year is yet another dispiriting sign that the Government, for all their rhetoric, simply are not serious about tackling the climate change and ecological emergencies.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): I want to try to accommodate everybody on the speaking list, so after the next speaker I will reduce the time limit to three minutes.

4 pm

Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con) [V]: The amendment in my name—amendment 28 to this important Bill, which has so much to celebrate—is supported by the Chair of the Environmental Audit Committee, my right hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Philip Dunne), the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas) and many others from different parties across this House. It would oblige the Government to include steps to improve people's enjoyment of the natural environment in their environmental plan, rather than simply give them the option to do so. It substitutes for a "may" a "must"—an addition of one letter to recognise the vital importance of green spaces to all our constituents. That is especially true during the pandemic and lockdown, when our parks, big or small, have literally kept many of us sane. The number of visitors is up sharply and some inequalities of access—such as for those living in cities, and many ethnic minorities—have been exposed.

It is estimated that for every £1 spent in a park, an extra £7 of value to wellbeing, health and environment is created. Eight out of 10 adults agree that visiting the countryside is good for physical fitness and mental wellbeing. Spending time in green spaces can help reduce heart disease and obesity, cancer and also stress, and in this time of lockdown we need all those things more than ever.

Many people in green spaces can and should also be a good thing, not a bad thing, for the environment. For example, in my constituency of Gloucester, we have the joy of a wonderful green space right in the heart of the city, the Robinswood Hill country park, which gives an opportunity for every child to have the experience of sitting on their mother or father's shoulders and watching for the first time, on the top of the hill, the sunset over the River Severn in the summer—one of the most beautiful things that anyone can do. That in turn stimulates enjoyment of our green places and also environmentally friendly behaviour, encouraging litter picking, as well as bringing more people into the parks.

In this short time I have, may I highlight the support of the Ramblers, who understand so clearly the importance of our enjoyment of green spaces, and highlight that the amendment is not purely about benefiting urban dwellers? For example, the National Trust estimates that people across Britain are missing out on 500 million park visits a year because of poorly equipped facilities. Basic upgrades, from loos and income-generating cafés to play areas, can hugely help accessibility. Natural England has reported that insufficient footpaths in the presence of busy or dangerous roads can easily prevent access and deter the use of parks. So there are aspects of the amendment that would benefit those living in the countryside and those living in the towns.

The Environment Secretary has always been supportive of many of these aims, and has said himself:

“Studies across the spectrum...remind us that it is in our best interests to look after nature. We know that a connection with nature contributes to wellbeing and improved health.”

So I hope that the Minister who is taking the Bill through the House—the Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton Deane (Rebecca Pow), whose career in the House of Commons has been dedicated to the environment—will share those feelings by recognising the opportunity to do more, and find measures that can be used as targets to enhance people’s enjoyment of our green spaces, so that the “may” does become a “must” in time, and the Government do report on the improvement of people’s enjoyment.

Florence Eshalomi (Vauxhall) (Lab/Co-op) [V]: I support all the amendments that Labour has tabled today, but will concentrate my remarks on those specifically related to air quality.

My constituency of Vauxhall contains some of the busiest and most polluted roads in London and the country. Clapham Road and Brixton Road are both major routes for journeying in and out of south London, as well as rat runs for the everyday journeys to work, school and shops made by Vauxhall residents. However, in making these journeys, those residents are constantly exposed to the dangerous pollutants emanating from cars and other vehicles. Brixton Road has made national headlines for exceeding the annual legal air pollution limits a few days into the new year; like many of my constituents, I walk along that road on a daily basis.

We know that these toxic pollutants can have a devastating impact on our hearts and lungs. In particular, we know that PM_{2.5} particles are able to get deep into our lungs and bloodstream, where they can have a significant impact on our overall health, both in the short and long term. PM_{2.5} can be very bad for the health of our children. Even before this pandemic, children in Vauxhall were regularly exposed to toxic and illegal levels of air pollution, and were having to wear masks to school.

We all have a role to play in reducing this pollution: we have to make fewer journeys by car, drive less polluting vehicles, and walk and cycle when we are able to do so. However, the Government have to play their part, too. Reaching the World Health Organisation limit on PM_{2.5} pollution is an achievable target. That is why I will be supporting amendments 2 and 25, to ensure that these strict targets for air quality will be reached by 2030 at the latest. This will take us a step closer to making our air completely safe, both for today and for future generations.

Chris Loder (West Dorset) (Con): It is a pleasure to speak in this debate, and I am very proud of the Government’s leadership on the environment. I commend the Minister for all the work she has done so far.

Madam Deputy Speaker, you would not think that my constituency of West Dorset has the worst place for air pollution in the entire country, but environmental issues affect us all. The village of Chideock, between Bridport and Lyme Regis, has the highest levels of nitrogen dioxide in the entire country from traffic on the A35. The pollution is more than double the Government limit.

This issue is not new—it has been ongoing for years—but urgent cross-departmental action is required, and I would welcome the Minister’s assurance that she will look at this issue in Chideock as a matter of priority with the new powers the Bill will provide.

Plastic was once seen as the saviour of the rainforests, but it has become the scourge of the sea. Half of all plastics ever made have been produced in the past 15 years. Less than a third of plastic in Britain is recycled, and British supermarkets still produce 114 billion items of single-use plastic. Those supermarkets are devoid of real environmental responsibility for plastic packaging once it leaves their stores, which is contributing to an environmental disaster.

Greenpeace has just released its “Checking Out on Plastics III” report, which ranks the UK’s biggest supermarkets on their plastics credentials, and is recommended reading. A reader will find out, for example, that on a per market share basis, Tesco’s total plastic use has increased by 2.2% between 2017 and 2019. It is for this reason that I have tabled new clause 11, which would require the Government to set specific targets and reduce the volume of non-essential single-use plastic products sold by a designated date. This amendment is intended to work alongside the measures already set out in this Bill, to complement the Government’s ambitions to end this systemic over-production and over-consumption of polluting plastics.

I have greatly appreciated working with the West Dorset Environmental Alliance, a brilliant local group providing much-needed insights and momentum. I am also grateful for the support from the Conservative Environment Network and Friends of the Earth. This Bill is key to achieving a green future. It will unleash our nation’s potential to make our environment better for us all.

Barry Gardiner (Brent North) (Lab) [V]: I am pleased to support the amendments in the name of the shadow Secretary of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn), and the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas).

The Government said they had a desire to have a “world-leading watchdog”. I wonder whether there was a misprint and it should have said a “world-leading lapdog”. Do they really mean it? I was on the hearing that met Dame Glenys Stacey, and she is a robust regulator, with a proven record of independence, and I trust her. The Secretary of State should set the criteria and the parameters that he expects the Office for Environmental Protection to work to, but he should then leave it to the regulator to regulate. Dame Glenys, I believe, has been appointed as the right person, so let her do the job without further interference. Let her also have the benefit of interim targets, because for someone regulating, targets can be really helpful. I listened to the hon. Member for East Worthing and Shoreham (Tim Loughton), and he is absolutely right. We need interim targets to be able to hold people to account, but also to be able to incentivise businesses and give them clarity about what they have to achieve.

When we are talking about enforcement, it is perhaps salutary if I remind colleagues of those who were there when, as chair of the then all-party group on biodiversity, I worked with Friends of the Earth to organise a photo opportunity for colleagues who came to support ensuring

[Barry Gardiner]

there was no relaxation of the ban on neonicotinoids. It was incredibly well supported: over 100 Members of Parliament came to support that campaign, and I have the photos to prove it. So for those Members who go into the Lobby tonight saying they will support the Government on lifting the ban, perhaps we, with Friends of the Earth, should dig out those photographs and start publishing them one by one to show just how much Members meant it when they had their photograph taken with that bee.

On deforestation, the Government are saying that there should be an imposition on companies to look at the legality of the sourcing of their materials, such as soy and timber. Legality is not enough. Yesterday I met a number of people representing the Brazilian interests as well as the commercial interests, and it is clear that what has happened already in Brazil is that the laws have been weakened because of the pressure. Companies must be asked to look at the sustainability of their supply chain, not just the legality of it.

Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD) [V]: The Office for Environmental Protection concerns me greatly, because I think it is going to offer us very little protection. Its powers include the terrifying capacity to point out that the Government have failed to safeguard environmental protections or to maintain standards, but it cannot force the Government to comply, it cannot fine and it cannot prosecute. It can shame the Government, but if I could be so flippant, Madam Deputy Speaker, this appears to be a Government who know no shame, as demonstrated by the last-minute decision to delay this already criminally overdue Bill by maybe six months or more.

This is outrageous, but the Government will tough it out and will probably bear no consequences for doing so. However, there will be huge consequences for our environment, for biodiversity, for future generations and, indeed, for farmers and food producers. No formal regulation over these months and pretty much toothless enforcement thereafter will mean the steady erosion of animal welfare and environmental protections just, as it happens, as the Government are engaging in negotiating trade deals around the world. Some might consider this to be a rather convenient hiatus that will allow them to throw British farming under a bus once again. Farmers will lose the ability to look at our regulation as something that they can use to strengthen their hand when it comes to those negotiations. The undermining of our land management community—of our farmers—is a massive threat to our environment. Without them, we lose the practical capacity to deliver biodiversity gains.

4.15 pm

That delay will also, of course, delay the setting of targets, which is key to the building blocks of the new environmental land management scheme, so it becomes less and less likely that the scheme will be ready and available to all farmers and land managers by 2028. Surely, therefore, if the Government are going to protect those farmers we depend on so much for biodiversity, they should finally accept that they must extend the basic payment scheme at 2020 levels—full levels—until the environmental land management scheme is available

to all; otherwise, they will put out of business hundreds of those family farms that we rely on here in Cumbria and elsewhere, which are the very structure that has guaranteed Britain's high standards in the past.

Finally, if the Government are going to encourage a new generation of land managers to deliver those biodiversity gains, may I make a plea for them to directly fund Newton Rigg College in Penrith?

Saqib Bhatti (Meriden) (Con) [V]: I will speak to the clauses relating to the Office for Environmental Protection. I had the privilege of being part of the Bill Committee that scrutinised this landmark legislation. I commend the Government and the Minister for taking a world-leading role through this legislation, not least by the introduction of the Office for Environmental Protection.

It is no secret that the defining challenge of our era is to provide an effective mechanism for the preservation of our natural environment. In the wake of covid-19, we have all seen the stories about nature hitting the reset button. Having meaningful, sustainable protection for the environment will require countries across the world to work together, but it will also require countries to show moral leadership on this issue.

That reminds me of a speech that Margaret Thatcher delivered to the United Nations General Assembly in 1989. The then Prime Minister spoke to the international community about the acute dangers of environmental destruction and about nations coming together in a global contribution to our planet's health. We need a concerted effort by each member of the international community, and I believe that this Bill demonstrates to the world that Britain will be a world leader in protecting our environment. We really should be proud of that.

Our environment is not two-dimensional; it is a complex tapestry of biodiversity. Protecting it is not easy, nor is it an overnight job. That is why the Bill is essential. It offers the guarantee that our 25-year plan needs, our future generations demand and our environment requires. I am confident that the establishment of the OEP will deliver the necessary guarantees and safeguards for our natural environment. The OEP will be a watchdog with the ability to ensure that future Governments stay the course with regard to environmental sustainability and make a significant contribution to the environment that we all desire. The persistent monitoring of progress that Governments will be subjected to by the OEP will ensure that they are held to account and do not renege on our national pledge to the environment.

I also welcome the opportunity for local people to challenge the decisions made by their local authorities. Our communities care about the environment. By allowing people this opportunity to challenge local authorities, we recognise the pride that people have in the environment. I am keen for our communities to be given powers to hold public bodies to account through the OEP. If we are to meaningfully protect our environment, our communities will be essential. The environmental activism that I have seen in my constituency, from schoolchildren to volunteer groups and faith communities, has been nothing short of inspirational. In the year that we take up the presidency of COP26, I also see a massive opportunity to engage our faith communities in building a narrative and a case for moral leadership in protecting our environment.

The global community shares in the inheritance of the health of our world and its aesthetic, but it also shares in the immediate danger of climate destruction. I have no doubt that the OEP will be a world-leading organisation, setting the UK at the forefront of environmental protections. If we are to lead, the best way to do so must be by example, and through this legislation and the OEP, I believe we will be exemplary.

Debbie Abrahams (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab) [V]: The Environment Bill is one of the most important pieces of legislation that this place is currently scrutinising. That is not hyperbole; the evidence of the climate crisis and the crisis in the state of nature, where the survival of so many species, including our own, is under threat, is irrefutable—although I know some would like it to be refutable.

I was fortunate to be an observer of the first national citizens' assembly looking at climate change last year. People from all parts of the country, from all backgrounds, with wide-ranging opinions, were randomly selected to reach a consensus about action to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050. During one session I attended, the fabulous David Attenborough came along to give us the benefit of his extensive experience, having seen the devastation being wrought on our planet, including here in the UK. It left a profound impact on me, and I hope that citizens' assemblies will be used at both the national and local level to engage with our communities to build consensus on many other important issues.

It is clear from the many constituents who have contacted me, including many school students from across Oldham and Saddleworth, how concerned they are about the state of the environment and the planet we temporarily inhabit. They want an environment legacy that is fit for not just them, but their children and their children's children. The environment is another issue of intergenerational inequality. I speak in support of the amendments and new clauses in this group to which I have added my name. First, I support the amendments calling for the Bill to include an environmental objective to achieve and maintain biodiversity, support for human health and wellbeing, and the sustainable use of resources. That provides an overarching focus for the Bill, which I hope the Government will support.

Secondly, the Bill needs to include governance measures to ensure that at least World Health Organisation guidelines on air quality and particulates of 2.5 microns or less are monitored and enforced. Anyone who has followed the campaign of Ella Adoo-Kissi-Debrah's family following nine-year-old Ella's death from a fatal asthma attack, contributed to by the poor air quality in London, will recall the evidence to the recent inquest that pointed to her death acting as a warning of the risk of poor air quality to the health of other Londoners. In Ella's memory, we must act.

Thirdly, the Bill must include the opportunity for parliamentary scrutiny where the Government seek exemptions on the use of pesticides such as neonicotinoids and others banned under EU law. We must question the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on his recent decision to authorise the use of neonicotinoids in place of non-chemical alternatives for controlling the yellow beet virus.

Finally, I support the amendment in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) on the state of nature report. Only by

committing to a binding target to halt and begin to reverse the decline of the state of nature at home, showing the domestic leadership that is needed, can the Government have any credibility in trying to secure support for a global deal—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): Order. I thank the hon. Lady for her speech, but I am afraid we must move on now to Sally-Ann Hart.

Sally-Ann Hart (Hastings and Rye) (Con) [V]: This Environment Bill is major legislation and a mark of this Government's commitment to our environment and combating climate change. As the Prime Minister said, it is

“a lodestar by which we will guide our country towards a cleaner, and greener future.”

This Bill is the flagship of a wider package of Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs legislation, including the Agriculture Act 2020 and the Fisheries Act 2020, which seeks to deliver on the Government's pledge to leave the environment in a better state than they inherited it in.

New clause 11, on environmental targets on plastic pollution, has been tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Chris Loder), and I wish to focus my comments on it today. Plastic pollutes land and oceans, and contributes to greenhouse gas emissions at every stage of its life cycle, from its production to its refining and the way it is managed as a waste product. The scourge of plastic waste—the litter we see in our oceans, and on our beaches, streets, pavements and roadsides—takes hundreds of years to decompose, contaminating our soil and water. The toxic chemicals used to manufacture plastic get transferred to animal tissue and eventually enter the human food chain, risking our health.

In my constituency of beautiful Hastings and Rye, we have a number of stunning beaches, at Camber, Winchelsea, Pett and Hastings. Single-use plastic such as straws, cups, bottles and bags blights all parts of our environment. Litter picking groups such as Hastings Beach Clean, Tidy Up St Leonards and Rye Harbour Beach Clean pick up bag-loads of plastic every time they go out. However, there is no doubt that this Government have taken the plastic challenge seriously. In 2018, they published a resources and waste strategy, and they have taken measures such as banning plastic straws and microbeads. They are leading global efforts to tackle ocean pollution, including by launching the Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance alongside Vanuatu. The requirement for large retailers to charge 5p for single-use plastic carriers bags has seen plastic bag sales drop 90% since its introduction.

The Bill includes a range of measures to tackle plastic use and disposal, such as new charges on single-use plastic and a new deposit return scheme, which should incentivise consumers to choose more sustainable products over plastic ones. The amendment seeks to work with the grain of the measures already set out in the Bill to end the systemic over-production and consumption of polluting plastics and non-essential single-use items. However, it would also require the Government to set targets to reduce plastic pollution and the volume of non-essential single-use plastic products sold by a designated date. For those reasons, I support the amendment.

Barbara Keeley (Worsley and Eccles South) (Lab) [V]: I speak in support of amendments 21 and 28, tabled by the hon. Members for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas) and for Gloucester (Richard Graham). I thank the Ramblers and other campaign groups that are supporting the amendments and campaigning to promote public access to nature.

The amendments have a simple purpose: to extend the Bill from just protecting nature to ensuring that we can all access nature. The lockdowns and restrictions of the past year have shown us how important it is for people to have access to high-quality outside space. Although we have all been staying at home to protect the NHS, getting out for regular exercise, whether walking, cycling or running, has been vital to protecting people's mental health.

The use of outside space is to be encouraged after the pandemic, not written off as a temporary phase, but that will mean protecting and expanding green spaces in our cities and supporting and encouraging people to get out into the countryside. As it stands, the Bill allows the Government to set targets for promoting access to nature, which is welcome, but I am concerned that that may end up as a low priority, and we should not allow that to happen.

The amendments would guarantee that future Governments had to take action to protect our access to nature. They would ensure that nature was available to more people, not just those who can afford to access it. We need that to change, because there are already serious inequalities in access to open spaces. Only 57% of adults in the UK live within a five-minute walk of green space, whether a park, field or canal path, but even that disappointing headline figure hides significant further inequalities.

Only two in five people from black and other minority ethnic communities say that they can walk to a green space within five minutes. Adults with a household income below £15,000 are twice as likely to say that they cannot access green space as those with a household income of £70,000. One in four people in my local area of Salford is in that first income band. People in the most deprived areas of England tend to have the poorest health and significantly less green space than those in wealthier areas. We need to do much more to ensure that access to nature is equitable for everyone.

Can the Minister confirm that the Government will set targets for public access to nature, and that they will include widening access to ensure that more people are able to enjoy it? Such targets are only the first step. We will also need concerted action, such as subsidies to farmers to promote access over their land, and the promotion of public transport links from inner-city areas to green, open spaces and the countryside. Without such action and clear targets to prompt it, there remains a danger that access to nature will continue to be denied to many people, so I urge the Government to accept the amendments.

Ben Everitt (Milton Keynes North) (Con): Before the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Florence Eshalomi) gave her contribution over video link, I thought I would be the only Member to speak without tabling a new clause or amendment. The truth is that I actually quite like this Bill—it is a good Bill. It feels like we are having a good day at the office. That does not mean that we should not be debating it, of course, and that is what I am here to do.

Chiefly, I am disappointed by the delay. Climate change is obviously the biggest, most strategic threat that we face as a country and a planet. We have the tactical immediate threat of coronavirus, of course. It is unfortunate, but understandable, that the legislative timetable split. Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Philip Dunne), I remain confident that the Bill will return in the next Session. I seek assurances from the Minister that my colleagues still have that ambition and enthusiasm to make sure that these changes become law.

4.30 pm

I will talk briefly about new clause 1, give a quick shout out to Government amendment 31, and if there is time I will add some more stuff at the end. What I want to say is that the scale of ambition we have in Government is phenomenal. It is amazing. It is almost too much. When I rose to speak on the Agriculture Bill, I said that our farmers are the custodians of the countryside, but of course that applies to all of us. We are the custodians of our environment. This Bill works hand in hand with the Agriculture Act 2020. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Theresa Villiers) described, it also works hand in hand with the White Paper on housing. All of that put together puts an enormous burden on our public sector, local and national. We are asking our civil servants, our professionals, to do lots of new things all at once. We need to be very careful that we do not overload and try to do too much. That said, ambition is not a crime and we should be ambitious, because the world is watching us. As we approach COP26, this legislation shows how ambitious we are and how we can match that ambition with action.

A number of Members noted that the new regulator might seem toothless and that the targets might need a bit more oomph. I am sort of sympathetic to that, but what we have got is a new environmental improvement plan placed on a statutory footing by what we are doing today. We are literally changing the law to make the environment better. This is a good day at the office.

Alex Sobel (Leeds North West) (Lab/Co-op): The world has changed immeasurably in the year since the Bill's First Reading. In the last 12 months covid-19 has devastated lives, torn through communities and paralysed economies across the globe. The pandemic has taken so much: lives, of course, but also hugs, handshakes, kisses, birthdays, Christmas and Eid. It has given, too: mental health issues, domestic violence and poverty. However, during the height of the pandemic the lockdown also gave us much lower emissions and much better air quality. Anecdotal evidence suggests, somewhat ironically, that those who suffer from certain respiratory illnesses fared much better during the first lockdown. That gives us a brief window into a post-pandemic future if we manage to take a hold of it. We need to create long-term structural change, underpinned by robust legislation.

In my city of Leeds, a person is 20 times more likely to die from air pollution than in a car accident—20 times. According to the Royal College of Physicians, across the UK, air pollution is responsible for 40,000 early deaths, at an economic cost of £20 billion a year. For that reason, I believe it is my moral duty to support amendment 25 to ensure that the particulate matter target for air quality is at least as strict as the WHO guidelines. That is a call I made when we introduced the

charging clean air zone in Leeds, a commitment the Government have abandoned. We need to pass the amendment and reintroduce the clean air zone.

The State of Nature report says that UK species diversity is in freefall, with 15% of UK species at risk of becoming extinct. Some of our most-loved animals, including Scottish wild cats, red squirrels and water voles, are at risk. I am the parliamentary species champion for the white-clawed crayfish. New clause 5 would give all those species a much better chance of survival. We also have bee-harming neonicotinoids. The UK Government recently granted emergency authorisation for sugar beet seeds to be treated by neonicotinoids. That is banned under EU law and we cannot allow it to come in through the back door, so we need to pass amendment 39.

Finally, on the OEP, its progress has been followed by the Environmental Audit Committee for three years. It is supposedly independent, but its budget, board and chair are set by the Government. Only recently, the Secretary of State said: “We will be able to guide the OEP.” It is worth noting that the Government have no comparable power in relation to any existing enforcement bodies. We therefore need to pass amendment 23 to bring a semblance of independence back to this important regulatory body, and ensure that we move forward and do not have another pause in this legislation.

Bob Seely (Isle of Wight) (Con) [V]: I am speaking from the Isle of Wight, where, in addition to being a UNESCO biosphere, we hope in the next couple of years to become the UK’s first island park, if the Government intend to bring forward the new protected landscapes Bill, as I clearly I hope they do.

I support this Bill very much—I think it is a great Bill—but I wish to speak in favour of new clauses 14 and 15 to argue the case for minimising the impact of housing on the environment. It is great that the Government want to design better, and frankly we need better design in this country, but a well-designed low-density greenfield housing estate is still a low-density greenfield housing estate, and these housing estates are, by nature, unsustainable. New clause 14 would allow for a handbrake to stop environmentally damaging housing, because it would, by law, prioritise carbon-efficient housing and carbon-efficient locations.

House building, along with everything else that we do, needs to align with the UK’s binding obligations in the Paris climate accords and carbon-efficient obligations, as well as the Government’s justified world-leading commitment to net zero by 2050. To do that, we need carbon-efficient housing solutions, and that implies a focus on cities as opposed to suburban and rural development. If we do not get that carbon-efficient housing in this Bill, as mandated by this new clause, then can we look at it for the housing Bill?

For me, this also means that we need to do more to incentivise brownfield development in not only suburban but rural areas. Very often brownfield sites are too small to be used efficiently under the current financial regime, and it is much cheaper to build inefficiently on greenfield sites. Greenfield sites, as well as being the most carbon-intensive because we are building detached houses, are also dependent on car use outside existing communities, which means dependence not only on carbon-emitting cars but on people having to travel to get to amenities rather than those amenities being built near them. Research

provided by the House of Commons Library shows that homes built in urban areas are significantly less carbon-emitting than those built in suburban and rural areas.

I welcome this Bill, but can we please look at the legal requirement for the most carbon-efficient housing in the most carbon-efficient locations, not only for our climate change commitments but for quality of life in cities, in suburbs and in rural areas?

Ben Lake (Ceredigion) (PC): Like other Members, I am disappointed that the Government have failed to make significant progress with this Bill, especially given the urgent need to act to address not only the causes of climate change but biodiversity loss. In such an important year for climate change mitigation and adaptation, I hope that the Government will make a meaningful effort to get the Bill on to the statute book as soon as possible in the next Session.

It is a pleasure to speak to several amendments, including new clause 9, which draws attention to our international commitments and the importance of action to protect our natural environment both here at home and abroad. In particular, I hope that the new clause will draw further attention to the plight of our forests—the lungs of our world and vital habitats for species great and small—in addition to the need for measures to discourage trade in products of deforestation abroad.

I hope that new clause 9 will also draw attention to an equally pertinent issue: the offshoring of our emissions and associated resource consumption. WWF believes that as much as 46% of the UK’s carbon footprint is not currently accounted for by national reporting or included in the UK’s net zero target. This simply must be addressed if we are serious about our role in tackling climate change.

The Bill also focuses minds on the constraints imposed by the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020 on action to protect our natural world across the four nations of the UK. This is reflected in amendment 40 and new clause 1, both of which Plaid Cymru will be supporting.

Wales is rightfully proud of its status as a world leader in recycling and a nation where sustainable development is a constitutional duty, yet one of the many reasons why the Senedd withheld consent from the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020 and why the Welsh Government are now taking legal action against the UK Government is the issue of plastic pollution, as raised by the Senedd Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee. Wales would be legally prohibited from taking action to restrict the use of single-use plastic under the Act’s non-discrimination clauses. These clauses not only make the Bill’s lack of ambition even more egregious, but draw attention to how the Government are hindering environmental action by working against, rather than with, the devolved nations and their record of action in this field.

We have a duty to do all we can to protect our natural world for present and future generations. We cannot afford to ignore this most profound duty, so I hope the Government will actively listen and reflect on the constructive debate we have had here today.

Richard Fuller (North East Bedfordshire) (Con) [V]: Listening to the contributions from colleagues on both sides of the House on this Bill today has been a real

[Richard Fuller]

pleasure; it is clear that there is widespread support for its ambitions and I share that. It has also been a pleasure to listen to my constituents over the past 12 months—to the schoolchildren, the farmers, the businesses and most of all to Laurinda and The Time is Now group—because it is clear that out in the country the ambitions that the Government have set in this Bill are equally shared and, as many have said, we are eager to see this Bill get on the statute book.

I want to focus on issues of biodiversity and housing and draw the Minister's attention to the new clauses in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Theresa Villiers). In North East Bedfordshire we look to have one of the fastest rates of growth in housing development, and it is crucially important that whatever the level of housing—and of course those numbers need to come down—that housing development takes into account the maintenance, encouragement and resilience of the biodiversity in our local communities. I urge the Minister to listen to representations from the CPRE and also from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, based in my constituency, about the importance of biodiversity being incorporated in legislation when it comes to the expansion of housing developments and new developments across the country.

Finally, on the Minister and her team, it is clear that these ambitions, coming from all directions, at some point have to be corralled into a piece of legislation for the whole, and there are lots of tensions between what people want to achieve, but, as she and her colleagues will know, in addition to setting targets we must make sure that we maintain support and buy-in from the various constituents who are affected by those targets. I wish her all the best in bringing forward this Bill and give it my strong support today.

Jessica Morden (Newport East) (Lab) [V]: I am grateful for the opportunity to take part in this debate. As my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport (Luke Pollard) on the Opposition Front Bench said, the delay in the Bill's progress sends a terrible message in view of the climate emergency. Now that we have left the EU, it is vital that we maintain the highest environmental standards, but this Bill replaces the EU's comprehensive environmental protections with targets that the Secretary of State has near discretion to change at any time. That is why the amendments in this group are so important in seeking to maintain the independence of the OEP, placing duties on public authorities to act in accordance with key environmental principles, and enhancing protections for biodiversity. That is so important and is why we on these Benches support these amendments.

Many constituents have been in touch about amendment 39 in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport, which seeks greater transparency in decisions on banned bee-and-other-species-killing pesticides. I want to say a few words in support, not least because the Welsh Government have led the way through their initiatives to make Wales a pollinator-friendly nation, and Newport City Council has also taken up the baton: we are a bee-friendly city. It is to be hoped that bee-friendly initiatives are having an effect, with a population of small scabious bees found

in St Julian's and the Gwent levels being home to the UK's rarest bumblebee, the shrill carder bee. The Gwent Wildlife Trust and the RSPB are doing fantastic work locally. We know that bees' importance to the ecosystem is towering. Some 90% of the world's flowering plant species are dependent on insect pollination, and many species are dependent on bees because their food sources rely on pollination. Tragically, we know that bees are in decline. Reasons for the decline are various, but include bee-killing insecticides, which were rightly banned across the EU in 2018. Although Ministers previously said that they would keep restrictions on pesticides in place, less than three years on, we now hear that they will allow them to treat sugar beet. This not only puts pollinator populations at risk, but sets a precedent that Ministers can strike out other hard-won protections. We must not allow that to happen.

4.45 pm

Robbie Moore (Keighley) (Con): It is a real privilege to be called to speak in this debate. Improving the environment is a topic that I am incredibly passionate about, and I refer the House to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests.

I start by saying that it has been great to serve on the Bill Committee for this piece of legislation. There is so much that is good in this Bill and I give particular thanks to the Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton Deane (Rebecca Pow), for her energy and enthusiasm in driving this Bill forward.

Protecting the environment and our natural environment is, without doubt, one of the greatest gifts that we can pass on to the next generation, and protecting the environment is something that is exceptionally close to my heart, and, of course, to many of my constituents. I want to focus my comments in this part of today's debate on governance. This Bill is of crucial importance to providing a legal framework for our environmental governance for a post-Brexit global Britain. As it stands right now, our environmental law and policies are mostly driven by the European Union, but I know that, when it comes to the environment, the Government are keen to go further, and go beyond the baseline standards that we adopted while we were within the European Union.

All policy should be long term, but it is particularly important that environmental policy goes above and beyond, which is why I welcome the fact that the Environment Bill will allow the setting of new, long-term, legally binding and joined-up targets, focusing on air quality, biodiversity, water, waste reduction and resource efficiency. The Office for Environmental Protection will go a long way to deterring the breaches of environmental law. For far too long, many people have felt that breaches of environmental law in Britain have gone unchecked—it is almost as if they see those breaches as second or third-tier offences—and that enforcement power could be better spent elsewhere. Of course, that is wrong, which is why I am so pleased that the Office for Environmental Protection will be given the flexibility to go a long way to help change that. Damaging the environment damages us all, and I therefore stress to the Minister that, on this point, it is vital that the OEP is fully independent and properly funded to have teeth and weight to take action, and that it is allowed to take the enforcement action that it deems necessary.

In conclusion, there is always much more that we can do, and I urge the Government to push this piece of legislation forward at pace. We all have a duty to leave the environment in a cleaner, greener state than we found it, and this Bill helps to achieve that.

Rebecca Long Bailey (Salford and Eccles) (Lab) [V]: Despite the infectious enthusiasm of the Minister, I have to say that, sadly, the deficiencies of the Bill bolster my scepticism about the Prime Minister's supposedly Damascene conversion to eco-warrior from someone who, in only 2015, claimed that the science surrounding warming temperatures was "without foundation". But if his Government want to prove me wrong, they certainly have the chance to do so today. First, they could support new clause 9, which would provide that anyone with duties under the Bill must comply with an environmental objective to achieve and maintain biodiversity, support for human health and wellbeing, and sustainable use of resources. The new clause includes specified environmental commitments that have been made by the Government including in the UN Leaders' Pledge for Nature of September 2020 and under the Climate Change Act 2008.

Secondly, the Government should support amendments 25 and 2, whose principles are supported by the British Lung Foundation. These amendments set parameters on the face of the Bill to ensure that the PM_{2.5} target for air quality will be at least as strict as the 2005 World Health Organisation guidelines, with an attainment deadline of 2030 at the latest. As it stands, the Bill does not set a minimum level of ambition for the achievement of this target. I stress to the Minister the importance of these amendments to my constituents. A 2018 report showed that Salford and Manchester were in breach of these WHO guidelines, and air pollution, primarily caused by vehicles, is said to contribute to at least 1,200 deaths a year across Greater Manchester.

Finally, the Government should support amendment 39. There is huge concern about the decision to allow a derogation regarding the use of certain neonicotinoids. The decision goes against all commitments that the Government made to help nature, including an explicit pledge to keep pesticide restrictions after Brexit. Without the scrutiny that amendment 39 would provide, there is a significant risk that the emergency authorisation of such pesticides could sadly become a common occurrence.

There are so many additional amendments in this section that have been eloquently articulated by Members today, but it is clear that we are in a climate and ecological emergency, and that we need this Environment Bill to create the highest of environmental standards. Without the changes outlined, it simply does not do that; it is just greenwash.

Sir Robert Neill (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con) [V]: This is a good and welcome Bill. I support it, but I want it to go further, which is why I have put my name to amendment 2, which was tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish). One area in particular in which we should go further, and which is of concern to my constituents, is in relation to PM_{2.5} particulate pollution, which is perhaps the most dangerous type of pollution to human health. Its impact on things such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, coronary heart disease, stroke and lung cancer are well documented.

I recognise that the Bill as it stands commits to bringing a new target for PM_{2.5} before Parliament by October 2022. It is what Ministers have always said in previous debates and it is good, but we need to go further. The Bill does not, for example, commit to reaching World Health Organisation guidelines and does not give a timescale for adoption, even though Ministers have said that that is their ambition.

As I understand it—it has been said in the House previously—past DEFRA studies have shown that we can achieve the WHO standard of 10 micrograms per cubic metre by 2030. That would be a reasonable timeframe, and, if it can be done, there is no reason why we should not put it into the Bill. It is an important issue, even in a constituency such as mine—a comparatively leafy London suburb, which has better scores on pollution than many parts of London, but is still above the UK average in a number of respects—and it is a matter of real concern for my constituents. Putting that commitment, which we want to achieve anyway, on the face of the Bill would show willing on our part towards our own citizens. It is also worth saying that it would increase our influence on these matters abroad, because, at the end of the day, these matters have to be tackled internationally.

There is a great deal of focus on the integrated review that is under way, and many countries have punched above their weight by taking a lead on this issue. New Zealand is a great example, as are many of the Scandinavian countries. If we were to set out our stall and commit ourselves to tackling PM_{2.5} pollution in this way on the face of the Bill, that would be a really positive message for global Britain, particularly in the run-up to COP26 in November. When the Minister responds to the debate, I hope that she will indicate that the Government want to move forward positively and vigorously on this, and I suggest that that is a way they can do so.

Margaret Greenwood (Wirral West) (Lab) [V]: A number of my constituents have contacted me to stress that the Office for Environmental Protection should be an independent and powerful body capable of ensuring that the Government uphold environmental laws on everything from plastic pollution to air quality. They are concerned about clause 24 of the Bill and have pointed out that, if the Government have the power to tell the Office for Environmental Protection how to do its job, the office cannot be truly effective. I very much share their concerns. The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee has remarked that it is

"essential that every step is taken to ensure the Office for Environmental Protection is as independent from the Government as possible, to give the public confidence that the Government will be properly held to account on its duty to protect the environment."

I therefore support amendment 23, which would delete clause 24.

The quality of the air we breathe is vital to our wellbeing. One of my constituents wrote to me last week to say that air pollution is a daily issue for her and others like her suffering with lung conditions. She told me how, on days when air pollution is high, her symptoms can flare up so badly that she is unable to leave her home. The Government have already committed to adopting a new binding target for PM_{2.5} through the Bill. However, as Friends of the Earth has pointed out, the Bill does not set a minimum level of ambition or a deadline for

[Margaret Greenwood]

its achievements. Amendment 25 is intended to set parameters on the face of the Bill to ensure that the PM_{2.5} target for air quality will be at least as strict as the 2005 World Health Organisation guideline of below 10 micrograms per cubic metre, with an attainment deadline of 2030 at the latest.

I now turn to the matter of bees. I pay tribute to the work of Flourish at Ford Way in Upton for the work it does in keeping hives and producing excellent honey. More than 50,000 people have signed The Wildlife Trusts' petition urging the Prime Minister to overturn the Environment Secretary's recent authorisation of the emergency use of a bee-killing pesticide for farmers to use on sugar beet crops in England. That shows the real strength of public feeling on this issue.

Amendment 39 would require Ministers to allow parliamentary scrutiny of exemptions granted to allow plant protection products banned under retained EU law, such as neonicotinoid pesticides, where they are likely to impact bees and other species covered by an environmental improvement plan. In conclusion, I urge Members to back these key amendments to ensure the independence of the Office for Environmental Protection, improve air quality and protect bees.

Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab) [V]: I am glad that this Bill has finally returned to the Commons after months of delay. It has been a frustratingly long time since I took part in prelegislative scrutiny as a member of the Environmental Audit Committee and the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, and it is nearly a year since I attended the first meeting of the Public Bill Committee. We are now told that we need to wait months more for the second day of Report stage and for the Bill to become law. The Bill should have been in place before the end of transition. Can we even be sure now that it will be in place before COP26? There is absolutely no excuse for the Government's laxity, and one can only attribute it to a lack of ambition and urgency in tackling the nature and climate emergencies.

Leaving the EU without a fully functioning, properly resourced and independent Office for Environmental Protection that can take public authorities to court over the most serious breaches of environmental law leaves a regulatory gap, which so many of us warned against. We were promised that the Office for Environmental Protection would be located in Bristol, with the creation of 120 jobs. That was publicly reported, and I was told it by Ministers on more than one occasion, yet the Minister has today announced without a hint of shame—in fact, with more than a hint of smugness—that the OEP will be based in Worcester. She can rest assured that I will be seeking an explanation from her as to why this hugely disappointing and, given Bristol's record, inexplicable decision was made.

This Bill is not all it could be and needs to be strengthened. Labour's new clause 9 would place firm duties on officials to achieve and maintain biodiversity, human health and sustainable use of resources. New clause 1 would put a duty on public officials to act in accordance with environmental principles. Again, we were repeatedly told during prelegislative scrutiny that a policy statement on environmental principles would be

published imminently, so where is it, or was that just another ploy to stave off awkward questioning at the time?

New clause 5 would set the equivalent of the net zero target for tackling the decline in nature by 2030, to begin to reverse the devastating losses we have seen in recent decades. We need such protections in law because, as we have seen repeatedly, the Government's actions do not always match their words. For example, amendment 39, which would allow parliamentary scrutiny of the use of harmful pesticides such as bee-killing neonicotinoids, was tabled in response to the Government's emergency authorisation of the use of those pesticides. Labour will always back good British farming practices and farmers but, faced with a devastating decline in biodiversity and our bee populations, we cannot uncritically give the green light, without scrutiny, to the use of harmful pesticides.

To conclude, the Bill needs to be better, the OEP needs to be stronger, and we need proper environmental governance in place without further delay. The natural world is in crisis and we must do all we can to address that, not just the bare minimum.

5 pm

Bill Esterson (Sefton Central) (Lab) [V]: Last week, my constituents were given a salutary reminder of the very real threat that we face from the climate and ecological emergency that Parliament declared just 18 months ago: we faced the worst floods—potentially—in living memory, with water levels more than 1 metre higher than ever previously recorded. We were saved because the River Alt burst its banks and demolished an embankment over a 30-mile stretch, bursting into floodplain rather than flooding 500 or so properties in Maghull in my constituency. That is one reason why new clause 9 is so important: it would mean that anyone with duties under the Bill must comply with environmental objectives. We were lucky with the flooding last week but we may not be next time. That is one good example.

The red squirrels in Formby in my constituency, which are looked after by the National Trust, desperately need the intervention of new clause 5, tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn). Local action to support them is no substitute for wider action on habitat and species, so that new clause is an important and necessary step.

Let me turn to air quality and the importance of the amendments on that subject. The Government want to build an access road to the port of Liverpool. The people who live near the port of Liverpool have a life expectancy that is among the lowest in the country, living 10 years fewer than those just 2 miles away. We heard earlier from Members that 40,000 people a year die because of poor air quality, so why do we not have a system in government in which everybody, including the Department for Transport, plays their part? We should not be building new roads to improve transport in isolation, but should take account of air quality and the need to protect people, as well as the effect on the climate. It should be a rail link rather than a road. That is the third element in my constituency that brings to life what the Bill means in practice.

All three of those elements, in common, indicate why the Office for Environmental Protection must have teeth to be able to intervene across Government. It cannot be

that so-called guidance from the Secretary of State can intervene, interfere and dilute the OEP's effectiveness. So much work is needed on these policy areas—I gave three examples just from my constituency, and there are so many more. We must pass the amendments I have mentioned, the legislation must go on to the statute book quickly, and for this country, my constituents and the world, we must have the intervention now.

Liz Twist (Blaydon) (Lab): I am pleased to be able to speak to the Bill on Report. My constituency is a green and pleasant place, by and large, but we have seen our fair share of environmental damage and change, and we still endure landfill sites and the scars of our industrial heritage. Environmental issues of all kinds are hugely important to my constituents, including the schoolchildren I speak to, such as those at Birtley East Primary School, who told me that they had written to the Prime Minister, as they had to me, to persuade us that we must protect the environment for their sake.

I wish to comment on the group of amendments on oversight and environmental protection. The Bill is welcome, but we have to take the opportunity to make sure that it really hits the spot—that it has the strength to protect our environment locally and nationally and also contributes to environmental protection internationally and globally. From talking to many environmental organisations, it is clear to me that there is widespread agreement that we need to build stronger measures into the Bill. We need targets and we need to build in independence for the Office for Environmental Protection. Most of all, we need to see the Bill become law. It is sad that there is a delay, but we must see this Bill become law urgently, and certainly before COP26 in Glasgow.

I would like to speak briefly about new clause 9. This House has already declared a climate emergency, so it is right that the Bill really tackles that emergency in a consistent and ambitious way. New clause 9, as we have heard from previous speakers, provides that anyone with duties under the Bill must comply with an overarching environmental objective.

On amendment 23, we have already mentioned that the Office for Environmental Protection needs to be independent of Government. As others have said, clause 24, which was added by the Government in Committee, allows the Secretary of State to provide guidance. We really need that independence, so I hope the amendment will be supported.

On amendment 39, I am sure that most hon. Members, like me, have been flooded with representations on the granting of the licence to use neonicotinoids. It is right that we have proper scrutiny when such licences are granted. In fact, we should not be granting them at all. There are difficult decisions to be made on environmental issues, and we really need to step up and try to make them.

Finally, on amendment 25 on air quality, it is becoming more and more important that our air quality is a health and environmental issue, so I support this amendment. There is so much more that I would like to say on different parts of the Bill, but I do not have time today. I hope this debate today will help us to make those tough decisions.

Stephen Farry (North Down) (Alliance) [V]: I share with many others the frustration at the delay of this Bill, which started out long before other pieces of legislation, including some incredibly consequential Bills

on Brexit that were rammed through with minimal scrutiny. I want to focus in particular on Government amendment 20 and, briefly, new clause 17, and I offer my support for other progressive amendments.

By way of context, arising from the protocol there is a greater ongoing requirement for Northern Ireland to remain aligned to the European Union. This is a good thing. However, governance needs to be considered separately from policy. It should go without saying that independence and an ability to prosecute effectively are critical to the Office for Environmental Protection, but that is not the case.

This Bill grants the Secretary of State in England and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland the power to issue guidance to the OEP on certain matters that must be included in the OEP's enforcement policy. The Government claim that the new power does not grant the Secretary of State or DAERA any ability to intervene in decision making about civic or individual cases, and that the OEP does not have to act strictly in accordance with the guidance where it has clear reasons not to do so.

While technically correct, it is clear, especially in the context of all the other Government amendments, that the new power will have the effect of allocating Ministers a central role in shaping the basic principles of the watchdog and a severely constraining effect on the OEP's ability to act independently. This power to provide guidance therefore inverts the intended hierarchy, in which the OEP oversees Ministers, in that it gives Ministers the role of overseeing the OEP. I do not believe that this role has been given sufficient scrutiny in Northern Ireland with respect to the role of DAERA.

I also want to stress that the Office for Environmental Protection is not the summit of environmental governance in Northern Ireland. The New Decade, New Approach agreement, which restored the Northern Ireland Executive this time last year, contained a commitment to an independent environmental protection agency. This will be different in its scope and role from the OEP, and the OEP should not be used as an excuse for not proceeding with an EPA.

Finally, I want to speak very briefly in support of new clause 17. The pandemic has laid bare the need for a new outlook on our economy and wider society. We need to look, therefore, at a new, more holistic and inclusive economic model, including more sophisticated economic objectives and indicators such as environmental regeneration, renewable energy and the UK's impact overseas, alongside health, incomes, security, equality, inclusion, affordable housing and the wellbeing of future generations.

Richard Thomson (Gordon) (SNP) [V]: For all that hon. Members have said that this is a good and necessary Bill, devolution means that it will not have a huge impact on my constituents. The aspects of it that will have an impact have received legislative consent from the Scottish Parliament, which was an important step. More widely, legislative consent needs to be respected by the UK Government more often than just when it happens to suit them.

Amendments 43 and 44, in the names of my SNP and Plaid Cymru colleagues, will not be voted on, but the importance of the principles behind them remains.

[Richard Thomson]

They would remove the exemptions for armed forces, defence and national security policy from the requirement to have due regard to the policy statement on environmental principles and environmental law. They would also remove the exemptions for tax, spending and the allocation of resources.

We know of the long-term problems caused by munitions dumped at Beaufort's Dyke between Scotland and Northern Ireland, the impact that military research can have on the environment, the radioactivity on beaches in Fife and the long-term problems left by the decommissioning of nuclear-powered submarines. They have all left us with a literally toxic environmental legacy. Like decisions about taxation, spending and allocating resources, decisions about those matters cannot be divorced from their environmental impact, and the Government cannot be exempted from their wider responsibilities in those regards. This is not about subordinating security or decisions about the economy to the needs of the environment or vice versa; it is about ensuring that the wider policy considerations and responsibilities for the environment are given due regard at all times in the decision-making process.

It is important to recognise that the EU has some of the strongest environmental targets, laws and protections in the world, and our departure has put them under threat. As an EU member, the UK was forced to match those standards. Unlike the Scottish Parliament's EU continuity Bill, this Bill sadly does not include any non-regression clauses in that regard. The promises of non-regression rely on the intent of this and future Governments to stand by that pledge. It would give me and a great many others much greater assurance about the Government's good intentions if they were to allow the insertion of a non-regression principle into the Bill as it progresses through the other place.

Emma Hardy (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle) (Lab) [V]: In the winter of 2019-20, the people of Hull planted 1,300 alder buckthorn trees as part of the butterfly city community initiative. That was done with Hull City Council, local primary schools and community orchard and garden groups across the city. The principal aim was to benefit the brimstone butterfly, as the leaves are food for it, but it was also important to start a conversation about biodiversity.

The planting of the trees was not just about biodiversity; it was also to help to clean our air. Improving the quality of the air we breathe is a priority for Hull. In 2017, the last year for which records are available, Centre for Cities analysis estimated that more than 1,500 deaths in Hull—one in 20—were due to air pollution, making it the most badly affected place in Yorkshire. The major disease-causing component of air pollution is known as fine particulate matter or PM_{2.5}. It can be any solid or liquid particles that are smaller than 2.5 micrometres suspended in the air. The tiny size of the particles makes that form of pollution effectively invisible to the human eye. It is not smog or the haze that we normally associate with pollution, it can even be present on what appears to be a clear and sunny day.

There is no effective defence—no mitigation—if we live in an area of high levels. The particles settle in our airways and are small enough to enter our bloodstream. A study by King's College London of people living

within 50 metres of a major road showed that roadside air pollution can stunt children's lung growth, make asthmatic children more likely to cough and raise people's risk of a heart attack, stroke, heart disease and lung cancer. Studies from around the world have linked PM_{2.5} to low birth rates, diabetes and diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.

Air pollution has a cost not just in terms of health and quality of life, but an estimated financial cost of up to £20 billion a year. Based on 2018 data, it is estimated that more than 22 million people in the UK live in areas with levels of PM_{2.5} above those recommended by the World Health Organisation, yet those deadly levels of air pollution are entirely legal. The Government are well aware of the problems, the costs and the number of deaths. The 2019 air quality strategy clearly states:

"Air quality is the largest environmental health risk in the UK." The Labour party wants this country to be the best to grow up in and the best to grow old in, and we want that for everyone, regardless of where they happen to live. That is why we are calling for the adoption into law of the World Health Organisation air quality standards. I urge the Government to take action today, clean up the air and accept our amendment.

5.15 pm

Mr Alistair Carmichael (Orkney and Shetland) (LD) [V]: This Bill has had an exceptionally long gestation, and it is a matter of great regret to me and to my party that, unfortunately, we have learned today that it is to be delayed even further. This should be an area where there is an easy consensus to be built. Surely, in the year when we are due to host COP26, this should be a matter that brings all parties together to achieve meaningful advance. It is a matter of infinite regret that we are not able to do so.

My first plea to the Minister and the Government is this. If we are to have further delay, can we please use the time a bit better than we have so far? Can we ensure that when we host COP26 later this year, we can point to a significant achievement as an instance of where we are leading the world, rather than being pulled along in this area of vital importance to all future generations?

I worked regularly with the Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the hon. Member for Taunton Deane (Rebecca Pow), on the subject of plastic pollution when she was on the Back Benches. It pains me to say that in that respect, the Bill is a major disappointment. We realise that as a consequence of many of the short-term changes that were necessary to tackle the pandemic, the progress that we had been making on the use of single-use plastic has been put on the back burner. That is regrettable, and possibly necessary, but a concerted effort by the Government is required. The pandemic and the restrictions under which we are living will not last forever, but it feels as though the plastic pollution that we are generating now will do so. It will certainly be with us for decades. That is why we must look to the lessons of how we constructed the Climate Change Act 2008, for example, and get on with the business of setting meaningful targets and having meaningful ways of holding the Government to account for meeting them.

The Minister has new clause 11, from her colleague the hon. Member for West Dorset (Chris Loder). Surely that could be given greater impetus now that more time is to be put into the management of this Bill. When she was on the Back Benches, the Minister worked well on

the subject with people from across the House. Will she carry on doing that work as a Minister on the Front Bench?

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP) [V]: I welcome the opportunity to speak to the Government amendments that were made in Committee to clarify the enforcement powers in England of the Office for Environmental Protection, and particularly the fact that further amendments will be made to ensure that they remain aligned with the OEP functions in Northern Ireland. Perhaps the Minister will confirm that that will be the case. I am aware that there has been co-operation with Northern Ireland Ministers, who have requested that these amendments also be made in relation to Northern Ireland, but I welcome their inclusion and this alignment. If only we could see something similar in all aspects of our governance, such as trade, we would be in a much healthier position, with full shelves—but perhaps that is another debate for another day.

I endorse the comments of the right hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr Carmichael) about plastic pollution, and I request, as he did, that Ministers and Government make a concerted effort to maintain the reduction of plastic pollution. Although we have seen a lot of reduction, we still need more. Enforceability is always a concern of mine. It is right and proper that we introduce greater, more effective legislation, but it is no use unless there is no doubt about the interpretation of the OEP enforcement provisions and the courts' ability to grant remedies. Many of us would like to ensure that there is no doubt that the courts can and will enforce the Bill's provisions.

I am a country sports enthusiast, as I am sure the Minister knows, and part of my being a country sports enthusiast is a dedication and commitment to conservation. That is why the Bill is important; it is an essential component of our moving forward, and that is what I always seek to ensure. It is right and proper that there is a legislative obligation to think about environmental principles and I welcome this addition.

However, some constituents have made it clear that they believe the Bill does not go far enough. I seek further clarification from the Minister. Would she be so kind, during her summing up, to outline the rationale behind excluding defence and procurement from these obligations? Every Government Department should play its part. Whilst it should not be the priority of Defence to think of the economy first—the safety of the nation is first—my constituents believe there could still be an obligation to give consideration to the impact within the process of reaching decisions.

I speak as chair of the all-party parliamentary group for healthy homes and buildings. When it comes to the environment, we believe that more could be done to ensure that Government works with developers to help ensure that new projects are much more sustainable. For example, instead of a developer being responsible for the full price of sewer works, and putting in the least that can be expected to enable them to turn a profit, surely Government or local council assistance to put in long-term environmentally sustainable, more costly infrastructure will benefit us all. I also want to put in a word for the importance of air quality, insulation, heating and play areas—the improvement of all buildings in the future.

I am conscious that the Minister has a lot on her plate—a lot of questions to answer—but I thank her for the time and hope she can take these points on board.

Kim Johnson (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab) [V]: I would like to start by thanking my constituents who have contributed to this debate by sending me emails.

We are in a climate and ecological emergency. Considering the scale and urgency of the crisis we are facing, it is staggering that the Government have seen fit to postpone the Bill yet again. We have a responsibility to take rapid and radical action on sustainability and environmental protection. Delaying this core piece of legislation is a major setback to that work. In the run-up to hosting COP26 later this year, the Bill should be an absolute priority, as should commitment to maintaining and enhancing environmental protection. That it is not speaks volumes about the commitment of this Government to the environment, to our global responsibilities and to future generations.

The Bill, as it stands, has been called a missed opportunity by the Environmental Audit Committee, and has failed to enshrine action on climate change at the heart of Government policy. Environmental campaigners and organisations across the board have been clear that we need ambitious targets, enforced by a fully independent watchdog, with significant powers to actively dissuade the contravention of environmental legislation. However, if the watchdog is to be effective, it must be capable of holding the Government to account, and that means full independence and serious powers to prosecute and impose financial penalties. The Bill currently allows the OEP to be guided by the Secretary of State, threatening to turn it from a watchdog into a lapdog.

I support many of the various amendments that have been tabled today to strengthen the Bill, including amendment 23, which would ensure the independence of the OEP. With the extra time we now have due to the postponement of the Bill, we could go even further. Will the Minister confirm that the Government will take on board the recommendations of countless environmental campaign groups, endless research projects and recognition by the UN itself that the environmental crisis cannot be tackled without powerful legislation and a fundamental rethink of our economic strategy?

The Bill must take the opportunity to put forward a radical vision that puts climate justice and sustainability at the heart of government through a massive programme of investment and regulation, to offer every worker in high-carbon and unsustainable industries the option of retraining, and to be relocated into high-skill, high-wage jobs in their own communities, from insulating houses to green tech to expanding public transport. “Redeployment not redundancies” must be the strategy. The working class must not pay the price for the corporate greed ravaging the Earth. Instead, strategic support and investment must be undertaken to protect both people and planet, clamp down on tax avoidance and use the income to generate sustainable jobs and invest in a carbon-zero economy. Tinkering at the edges is not an option; the Government must take the rapid and radical action needed to get a grip.

Rachel Hopkins (Luton South) (Lab) [V]: I will be voting in favour of amendment 25 to the Environment Bill, to embed World Health Organisation targets on air

[Rachel Hopkins]

quality; amendment 23, to ensure the Office for Environmental Protection is truly independent; and new clause 9, to enforce commitments to protect biodiversity, health and wellbeing, and the sustainable use of resources. However, due to time constraints, I will focus on Labour's amendment 39, and the importance of Parliament scrutinising the granting of any exemptions for the use of banned pesticides.

I share the concerns of my Luton South constituents who have contacted me, and the more than 50,000 people who have signed the Wildlife Trust's petition about protecting bees from the use of neonicotinoids. Their existence is too important to the functioning and survival of ecosystems, so the protection of bees is non-negotiable. It is important to recognise, though, that bees are not just in rural areas: the bees in Luton South produce the delicious High Town Honey just around the corner from me, which has won several prizes at the Bedfordshire Beekeepers Association honey show. The decline of bees will have a disastrous impact on food security. Bees pollinate around 70% of the fruits, vegetables, nuts and seeds we eat, but in the UK 13 bee species are already extinct, and one in 10 of Europe's wild bee species is under threat.

The Secretary of State has authorised farmers to use neonicotinoids on sugar beet crops, even though it is widely recognised that they kill bees. The Government's justification that sugar beet is not a flowering crop, and therefore the risk is acceptable, does not stand up to scrutiny. A similar application for the use of neonicotinoids in 2018 was refused by the UK Expert Committee on Pesticides because of "unacceptable environmental risks." This is not to say that overall I do not recognise the genuine concerns of sugar beet growers across the east of England, but the Government should back farmers to help create a sustainable solution through better support for the sector, accelerating the introduction of blight-resistant crops, and including allowances for crop loss in next year's sugar contracts.

The Government's decision to allow the use of banned pesticides has too big a consequence for there to be no parliamentary scrutiny. The emergency authorisation of pesticides must never become common practice. The Government have a clear choice today: vote to speed up the decline of our bee population, or uphold the ban, allow parliamentary scrutiny of future exemptions, and save our bees.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): I thank hon. Members for their co-operation: we have managed to get everybody from the Back Benches in during this debate. I now call the Minister, Rebecca Pow.

Rebecca Pow: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker; it is an absolute pleasure to have you in the seat today—the hot seat, as I like to call it.

I thank all those right hon. and hon. Friends and Members who have tabled amendments and contributed to today's debate, helping to scrutinise this Bill. They have highlighted the importance that so many people place on the issue of the environment, and how important it is that we tackle biodiversity loss, climate change, and environmental risks to public health. In particular, I thank those Members who are so positive about this

Bill—which, of course, I am as well—including my hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Saqib Bhatti), who has done so much work with his faith groups on the issue of the environment. I also thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Chris Grayling) and my hon. Friends the Members for Milton Keynes North (Ben Everitt) and for Keighley (Robbie Moore) for their enthusiasm. This is a phenomenal ambition, as my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes North said, and it is a good day at the office—in fact, it is very exciting to get out of the office.

I will start with the environmental principles, and respond to the concerns that have been raised by hon. Members. We are legislating to ensure that the environment is front and centre of our future policy making; however, we need to ensure that our approach is balanced. That is why we must reject new clause 1 and amendment 1 tabled by the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas), about which she spoke so eloquently in her opening speech. We must also reject amendments 43 and 44.

Removing the requirement to act proportionately, as set out in amendment 1, would require Ministers to prioritise the principles even where they incur significant disproportionate costs to society, or hinder innovation and sustainable development. This is not our intention. Before I turn to the amendments tabled by the hon. Member for Edinburgh North and Leith (Deidre Brock), I will clarify that contrary to her comments, this is not an England-only Bill. Over half its measures extend beyond England, bringing benefits right across the UK.

5.30 pm

I turn to amendments 43 and 44, which relate to exemptions. The exemptions to the definition of environmental law simply mean that legislation concerning the armed forces, national security, tax spending and allocation of resources would be excluded. I note, however, that the Scottish Government have taken a similar approach in the UK Withdrawal from the European Union (Continuity) (Scotland) Bill, exempting defence and national security. Our exemptions do not alter the accountability of public authorities where duties are imposed on them under existing environmental legislation—for example, the MOD's duties under the habitats regulations. I have discussed the MOD's strong commitment on environmental protections with my counterpart in the MOD.

Similarly, new clause 1 would place a major burden on Government and public authorities without adding any significant environmental benefit. Applying the duty to individual decisions risks public authorities being overwhelmed by an all-encompassing duty and creating additional complexity and cost.

With that in mind, I would like to address the important concerns raised in amendment 4 by my hon. Friend the Member for The Cotswolds (Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown), whom I had the pleasure of meeting very recently and whom I have just written to. I agree with the sentiment behind his amendment and reassure him that our approach to the precautionary principle includes a proportionate and risk-focused application respecting the balance with social, economic and other considerations. This will be provided for in the policy statement, which will be published for consultation very shortly. If the use of the principle relied on information included in an alternative

statutory document—the regulatory code that the amendment refers to—the clarity of its proportional interpretation and application may be confused or even lost.

I will now address the points raised by hon. Members relating to the setting of long-term targets in the Bill. Regarding new clause 5, long-term targets will be developed through a robust evidence-led process, and we will not prejudge where this will take us. I can commit to the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) that our proposed objectives for biodiversity targets include restoring species populations and priority habitats, which will improve the state of nature. By setting targets of at least 15 years, we will ensure that Governments look beyond the short term, but this does not mean we should not make progress until 2030. We are confident that the process we have put in place to develop targets will contribute to meeting new global goals set under the convention on biological diversity.

In addition, with regards to new clause 17, the Government's economic objectives and decision-making processes are already aligned with ambitious commitments to net zero and to improving the natural environment within a generation. HM Treasury's world-leading Green Book requires that all impacts to society as a whole, including environmental impacts, are assessed when developing policy options. This includes monetised and non-monetised climate and environmental impacts. Policies must also consider any legal constraints such as the net zero target.

Continuing to new clause 11, I thank my hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Chris Loder). However, we cannot accept the amendment proposed, as we actually want to see a more ambitious resources and waste target under the Bill, which applies holistically to all materials, not just plastic.

Turning to amendments 21 and 28, we would all agree that the pandemic has underlined the important role of nature in our health and wellbeing. This has been recognised through our green social prescribing project and the £18 million that we have contributed to our green recovery challenge fund. Through their environmental improvement plan, the Government will be able to set out the further steps that they intend to take to improve people's enjoyment of the natural world. One of the 10 goals of the 25-year environment plan also commits to enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment. The 25-year environment plan is the first environmental improvement plan, and it is clearly in there.

Amendments 2 and 25 were raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish) and the hon. Member for Newport East (Jessica Morden). The hon. Members for Swansea West (Geraint Davies) and for Vauxhall (Florence Eshalomi) and my hon. Friend the Member for Bromley and Chislehurst (Sir Robert Neill) also referred to them. I share hon. Members' desire for ambitious action to reduce public exposure to PM_{2.5}, but these amendments would not allow for robust scientific analysis before setting targets. The World Health Organisation is clear that air quality guidelines should inform the setting of air quality standards, but it acknowledged that they are not ready-made targets ready for adoption. I can absolutely assure hon. Members and hon. Friends that we will be considering the World Health Organisation's guideline level for PM_{2.5} when

setting these new air quality targets. I personally met Rosamund Kissi-Debrah, and it was a humbling experience. I want to give assurances that we will give this our full attention. Setting a target for PM_{2.5} is technically highly challenging and we must have a clear pathway to the delivery of the target. We will seek expert input and stakeholder views to develop not just one but two legally binding air quality targets.

Amendment 5 was tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for East Worthing and Shoreham (Tim Loughton). Interim targets will set the trajectory towards long-term legally binding targets and drive environmental ambition. The Bill introduces a robust system for ensuring that we take these targets seriously and report on them. We all know that the trajectory of environmental improvement can be unpredictable, particularly for areas such as biodiversity, but setting interim targets in the environment improvement plan provides a degree of flexibility while still ensuring that there is a clear framework of transparency and accountability.

Amendment 39 was tabled by the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport (Luke Pollard) and was referred to by a great many Opposition colleagues. Pesticides are already subject to strict regulation. They may be used only if they have been authorised following an assessment of risks to people and the environment. I know all this because I grew up on a farm. The decision to grant an emergency authorisation for a neonicotinoid seed treatment for sugar beet—a non-flowering crop, I might highlight—is fully in line with the EU regulations that were retained in UK law at the end of the transition period. Ten member states, including Belgium, Denmark and Spain, granted similar emergency authorisations in 2020.

I assure Members of the strict conditions attached to this decision, to minimise environmental risks, including important protection for bees and other pollinators. I garden for wildlife at home, and I know how important it is to look after our pollinators. Our opposition on neonicotinoids has not changed. We supported the ban in 2018 and we stand by that now—[*Interruption.*] I must just penultimately turn to the Office for Environmental Protection. I wish to respond to amendment 23. It would remove clause 24, which provides an important power for the Secretary of State to issue guidance for the OEP. This is intended to address ambiguities relating to the OEP's enforcement functions, and they are considered very important. It does not provide the Secretary of State with any power to issue directions or intervene on specific decisions. [*Interruption.*] I just want to touch on new clause 14, tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Theresa Villiers). I assure her that there are already strong protections for the environment in the planning system.

I am now going to conclude, Madam Deputy Speaker, because I know that you are hem-hemming at me. I thought you said 5.40, so I am going for it. I just want to say that we are delivering on our commitment to the environment, despite the pandemic, and we want to build back a fairer, greener and more resilient future. We will continue to work in the gap before the second day of the Report stage and we will achieve Royal Assent before COP26.

Caroline Lucas [V]: I thank all Members for their important contributions to the debate, but there is really only one test that matters when it comes to this Bill:

[Caroline Lucas]

does it improve on the protections that we enjoyed as EU members, and is it up to the challenge of the accelerating nature and climate emergencies? Sadly, the answer is no on both counts.

Time and again this afternoon, we have heard that the Bill lacks both ambition and urgency. As many hon. Members have said, with two vital UN meetings on biodiversity and climate this year, it is even more important that we have our own house in order. We cannot hope to influence the performance of other countries if we have not demonstrated leadership in our own domestic policy.

I particularly support those speeches in favour of more ambitious, legally enforceable air quality targets, which are needed now. A number of hon. Members made reference to the tragic death of nine-year-old Ella Kissi-Debrah. Strong, binding legislation would be the only fitting tribute to her and to her mother, who has campaigned so tirelessly for that. I welcome the fact that the Minister has said she will look at it again.

On the state of nature, the case for legally binding interim targets was powerfully made by Members on both sides of the House. I hope that the Minister will take account of that. I noticed that she did not commit to legally binding targets for 2030, or that the interim targets should be binding, yet that is essential if we are to improve on the Government's woeful record; they have actually gone backwards on six of the 20 UN biodiversity targets.

I am not reassured by what the Minister said about the independence of the OEP or the strength of the environmental principles. On the OEP, she says that the guidance is intended simply to address ambiguities. That is not the way the Bill is written. The Bill is written in such a way that Ministers will be able to give instruction to that body, not least because they will also give it its budget and have a major say on who makes up its board. That means that the Government will have a disproportionate impact on the OEP, which should be truly independent.

On the principles, I noticed with interest that the Minister appears to have given up trying to persuade us that "due regard" is at least as strong as "in accordance with". I assume that is because she recognises that that case cannot be made because it is simply not true. In that case, I hope she will undertake to revise that element of the Bill.

The Minister says that applying the principles to public bodies as well as to Ministers is too burdensome. I remind her that it simply replicates what we enjoyed as members of the EU, which was not seen to be too burdensome, and that her Government promised that they would increase the ambition of EU legislation, not water it down in this way. The Environmental Audit Committee, in its prelegislative scrutiny, concluded:

"This aspect of the Bill is not fit for purpose."

The Committee recommended that the principles should be "put on an unqualified legal basis"

and extended to all public bodies, and I echo that conclusion.

I take heart from the strong statements of support for more ambitious action on the environment from Members on both sides of the House, but those on the Government

side need to understand that, as it is currently drafted, the Bill will not even make up for the protections we have lost as a result of leaving the EU, let alone improve on them, and that unless we fix our broken economic system as my new clause 17 sets out, we will not achieve anything like sustainability anywhere near fast enough.

I urge the Minister again to use the time gained by the delay to the Bill to increase its strength and ambition. It could not be more urgent. Over the course of my lifetime alone, populations of some of our most important wildlife have plummeted by over half, and over 15% of species are now threatened with extinction. As the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) said in his powerful speech, if we are not going to be ambitious now, when are we? New clause 1 would re-establish a legally binding architecture for essential environmental protections, and I would therefore like to press it to a vote.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time.

The House divided: Ayes 266, Noes 366.

Division No. 213]

[5.43 pm

AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane	Cooper, Daisy
Abrahams, Debbie	Cooper, Rosie
Ali, Rushanara	Cooper, rh Yvette
Ali, Tahir	Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena	Cowan, Ronnie
Amesbury, Mike	Coyle, Neil
Anderson, Fleur	Crawley, Angela
Antoniazzi, Tonia	Creasy, Stella
Ashworth, Jonathan	Cruddas, Jon
Bardell, Hannah	Cryer, John
Barker, Paula	Cummins, Judith
Beckett, rh Margaret	Cunningham, Alex
Begum, Apsana	Daby, Janet
Benn, rh Hilary	Davey, rh Ed
Betts, Mr Clive	David, Wayne
Black, Mhairi	Davies, Geraint
Blackford, rh Ian	Davies-Jones, Alex
Blackman, Kirsty	Day, Martyn
Blake, Olivia	De Cordova, Marsha
Blomfield, Paul	Debbonaire, Thangam
Bonnar, Steven	Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Brabin, Tracy	Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben	Dodds, Anneliese
Brennan, Kevin	Doogan, Dave
Brock, Deidre	Dorans, Allan
Brown, Alan	Doughty, Stephen
Brown, Ms Lyn	Dowd, Peter
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas	Dromey, Jack
Bryant, Chris	Duffield, Rosie
Buck, Ms Karen	Eagle, Ms Angela
Burgon, Richard	Eagle, Maria
Butler, Dawn	Eastwood, Colum
Byrne, Ian	Edwards, Jonathan
Byrne, rh Liam	Efford, Clive
Cadbury, Ruth	Elliott, Julie
Callaghan, Amy	Elmore, Chris
Cameron, Dr Lisa	Eshalomi, Florence
Campbell, rh Sir Alan	Esterson, Bill
Carden, Dan	Evans, Chris
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair	Farron, Tim
Chamberlain, Wendy	Farry, Stephen
Champion, Sarah	Fellows, Marion
Chapman, Douglas	Ferrier, Margaret
Charalambous, Bambos	Fletcher, Colleen
Cherry, Joanna	Flynn, Stephen
Clark, Feryal	Fovargue, Yvonne

Foxcroft, Vicky
 Foy, Mary Kelly
 Furniss, Gill
 Gardiner, Barry
 Gibson, Patricia
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Glindon, Mary
 Grady, Patrick
 Grant, Peter
 Gray, Neil
 Green, Kate
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Griffith, Nia
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Haigh, Louise
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hanna, Claire
 Hanvey, Neale
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hayes, Helen
 Healey, rh John
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hendry, Drew
 Hill, Mike
 Hillier, Meg
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hopkins, Rachel
 Hosie, Stewart
 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
 Lake, Ben
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Chris
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewis, Clive
 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
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McLaughlin, Anne
 McMahon, Jim
 McMorris, Anna
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Mishra, Navendu
 Monaghan, Carol
 Moran, Layla
 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
 Powell, Lucy
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rayner, Angela
 Reed, Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, Rachel
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Ribeiro-Addy, Belle
 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
 Starmar, rh Keir
 Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo

Stone, Jamie
 Streeting, Wes
 Stringer, Graham
 Sultana, Zarah
 Tami, rh Mark
 Tarry, Sam
 Thewliss, Alison
 Thomas, Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick
 Thompson, Owen
 Thomson, Richard
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Vaz, rh Valerie

Webbe, Claudia
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitford, Dr Philippa
 Whitley, Mick
 Whittome, Nadia
 Williams, Hywel
 Wilson, Munira
 Winter, Beth
 Wishart, Pete
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:

Liz Twist and
 David Linden

NOES

Adams, Nigel
 Afolami, Bim
 Afriyie, Adam
 Ahmad Khan, Imran
 Aiken, Nickie
 Aldous, Peter
 Allan, Lucy
 Amess, Sir David
 Anderson, Lee
 Anderson, Stuart
 Andrew, Stuart
 Ansell, Caroline
 Argar, Edward
 Atherton, Sarah
 Atkins, Victoria
 Bacon, Gareth
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Badenoch, Kemi
 Bailey, Shaun
 Baillie, Siobhan
 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
 Chishti, Rehman
 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
 Davies, Philip
 Davis, rh Mr David
 Davison, Dehenna
 Dinenage, Caroline
 Dines, Miss Sarah
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 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
 Dunne, rh Philip
 Eastwood, Mark
 Edwards, Ruth

Ellis, rh Michael
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
 Elphicke, Mrs Natalie
 Eustice, rh George
 Evans, Dr Luke
 Evennett, rh Sir David
 Everitt, Ben
 Fabricant, Michael
 Farris, Laura
 Fell, Simon
 Fletcher, Katherine
 Fletcher, Mark
 Fletcher, Nick
 Ford, Vicky
 Foster, Kevin
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Frazer, Lucy
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 Fuller, Richard
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Gale, rh Sir Roger
 Garnier, Mark
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gibson, Peter
 Gideon, Jo
 Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
 Girvan, Paul
 Glen, John
 Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 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
 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, rh Boris
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnston, David
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Fay
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Jupp, Simon
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Kearns, Alicia
 Keegan, Gillian
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian
 Kruger, Danny
 Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
 Lamont, John
 Largan, Robert
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leadsom, rh Andrea
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward
 Levy, Ian
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Lockhart, Carla
 Loder, Chris
 Logan, Mark
 Longhi, Marco
 Lopez, Julia
 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, Karl
 McPartland, Stephen
 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
 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
 Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
 Neill, Sir Robert
 Nici, Lia
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norman, rh Jesse
 O'Brien, Neil
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Paisley, Ian
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Philp, Chris
 Pincher, rh Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, Victoria
 Pritchard, Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Raab, rh Dominic
 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
 Sharma, rh Alok
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec
 Simmonds, David
 Skidmore, rh Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Greg

Smith, Henry
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Solloway, Amanda
 Spencer, Dr Ben
 Spencer, rh Mark
 Stafford, Alexander
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, Jane
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunak, rh Rishi
 Sunderland, James
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 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, 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
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, Mr William
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Young, Jacob
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
Maggie Throup and
Leo Docherty

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.

5.53 pm

More than three hours having elapsed since the commencement of proceedings on consideration, the debate was interrupted (Programme Order, this day).

The Deputy Speaker put forthwith the Questions necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded at that time (Standing Order No. 83E).

New Clause 5

STATE OF NATURE TARGET

‘(1) It is the duty of the Secretary of State to set a target to halt and begin to reverse the decline in the state of nature in England as soon as reasonably practicable and no later than 2030.

(2) The target in subsection (1) shall be known as the state of nature target.

(3) The Secretary of State must ensure that the state of nature target is met.

(4) A draft statutory instrument containing regulations that make provision for how progress toward the state of nature target will be measured must be laid before Parliament at least one month before the fifteenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

(5) Before laying before Parliament a draft of a statutory instrument under this section, the Secretary of State must obtain, publish and take into account the advice of relevant experts, including—

- (a) The Environment Agency;
- (b) Natural England;
- (c) The Office for Environment Protection; and
- (d) The Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

(6) In this section—

- (a) the abundance and distribution of species;
- (b) the risk of extinction; and
- (c) the extent and condition of priority habitats.’—
(*Hilary Benn.*)

This new clause would place a duty on the Secretary of State to set and meet a target to begin to reverse the loss of biodiversity in England no later than 2030. This timetable would align with the new Convention on Biological Diversity goals that are due to be agreed in 2021.

Brought up.

Question put, That the clause be added to the Bill.

The House divided: Ayes 217, Noes 360.

Division No. 214]

[5.54 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
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
Crouch, Tracey
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, Dame Angela
Eagle, Maria
Efford, Clive
Elliott, Julie
Elmore, Chris
Eshalomi, Florence
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Farron, Tim
Farry, Stephen
Fovargue, Yvonne
Foxcroft, Vicky
Foy, Mary Kelly
Furniss, Gill
Gale, rh Sir Roger
Gardiner, Barry
Gill, Preet Kaur
Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
Glindon, Mary
Green, Kate
Greenwood, Lilian
Greenwood, Margaret
Griffith, Nia
Gwynne, Andrew
Haigh, Louise
Hamilton, Fabian
Hardy, Emma
Harman, rh Ms Harriet
Harris, Carolyn
Hayes, Helen
Healey, rh John
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
McCartney, Jason
McDonagh, Siobhain
McDonald, Andy
McDonnell, rh John
McFadden, rh Mr Pat
McGinn, Conor
McGovern, Alison
McKinnell, Catherine
McMahon, Jim
McMorris, Anna
Mearns, Ian
Miliband, rh Edward
Mishra, Navendu
Moran, Layla
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, Grahame
Murray, Ian
Murray, James
Nandy, Lisa
Nichols, Charlotte
Nokes, rh Caroline
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
Powell, Lucy
Qureshi, Yasmin
Rayner, Angela
Reed, Steve
Rees, Christina
Reeves, Ellie
Reynolds, 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
Streeting, Wes

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
Warburton, David

Webbe, Claudia
West, Catherine
Western, Matt
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitley, Mick
Whittome, Nadia
Wilson, Munira
Winter, Beth
Yasin, Mohammad
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:
Colleen Fletcher and
Liz Twist

NOES

Adams, Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Ahmad Khan, Imran
Aiken, Nickie
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Amess, Sir David
Anderson, Lee
Anderson, Stuart
Andrew, Stuart
Ansell, Caroline
Arag, 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
Bowle, 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
Chishti, Rehman
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 Sir Geoffrey
Crabb, rh Stephen
Crosbie, Virginia
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
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
Dunne, rh Philip
Eastwood, Mark
Edwards, Ruth
Ellis, rh Michael
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Elphicke, Mrs Natalie
Eustice, rh George
Evans, Dr Luke
Evennett, rh Sir David
Everitt, Ben
Fabricant, Michael
Farris, Laura

Fell, Simon
Fletcher, Katherine
Fletcher, Mark
Fletcher, Nick
Ford, Vicky
Foster, Kevin
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Frazer, Lucy
Freeman, George
Freer, Mike
Fuller, Richard
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Garnier, Mark
Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Gibb, rh Nick
Gibson, Peter
Gideon, Jo
Girvan, Paul
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
Heappey, 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, rh Boris

Johnson, Dr Caroline
Johnson, Gareth
Johnston, David
Jones, Andrew
Jones, rh Mr David
Jones, Fay
Jones, Mr Marcus
Jupp, Simon
Kawczynski, Daniel
Kearns, Alicia
Keegan, Gillian
Knight, rh Sir Greg
Knight, Julian
Kruger, Danny
Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
Lamont, John
Largan, Robert
Latham, Mrs Pauline
Leadsom, rh Andrea
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Levy, Ian
Lewer, Andrew
Lewis, rh Brandon
Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Lockhart, Carla
Loder, Chris
Logan, Mark
Longhi, Marco
Lopez, Julia
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, Karl
McPartland, Stephen
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
Mordaunt, rh Penny
Morris, Anne Marie
Morris, David
Morris, James
Morrisey, Joy
Morton, Wendy
Mullan, Dr Kieran
Mumby-Croft, Holly
Mundell, rh David
Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
Neill, Sir Robert
Nici, Lia

Norman, rh Jesse
 O'Brien, Neil
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Paisley, Ian
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Philp, Chris
 Pincher, rh Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, Victoria
 Pritchard, Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Raab, rh Dominic
 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
 Sharma, rh Alok
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec
 Simmonds, David
 Skidmore, rh Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Greg
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Solloway, Amanda
 Spencer, Dr Ben

Spencer, rh Mark
 Stafford, Alexander
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, Jane
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunak, rh Rishi
 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, Sir Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Wallis, Dr Jamie
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Webb, Suzanne
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whittaker, Craig
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Wild, James
 Williams, Craig
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, Mr William
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Young, Jacob
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
Leo Docherty and
Maggie Throup

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.

Clause 2

ENVIRONMENTAL TARGETS: PARTICULATE MATTER

Amendment proposed: 25, page 2, line 24, leave out subsection (2) and insert—

- “(2) The PM_{2.5} air quality target must—
- (a) be less than or equal to 10 g/m³;
 - (b) follow World Health Organisation guidelines; and
 - (c) have an attainment deadline on or before 1 January 2030.”
- (*Ruth Jones.*)

This amendment is intended to set parameters on the face of the Bill to ensure that the PM_{2.5} target will be at least as strict as the 2005 WHO guidelines, with an attainment deadline of 2030 at the latest.

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The House divided: Ayes 227, Noes 354.

Division No. 215]

[6.4 pm

AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane	Eagle, Dame Angela
Abrahams, Debbie	Eagle, Maria
Ali, Rushanara	Eastwood, Colum
Ali, Tahir	Efford, Clive
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena	Elliott, Julie
Amesbury, Mike	Elmore, Chris
Anderson, Fleur	Eshalomi, Florence
Antoniazzi, Tonia	Esterson, Bill
Ashworth, Jonathan	Evans, Chris
Barker, Paula	Farron, Tim
Beckett, rh Margaret	Farry, Stephen
Begum, Apsana	Fovargue, Yvonne
Benn, rh Hilary	Foxcroft, Vicky
Betts, Mr Clive	Foy, Mary Kelly
Blake, Olivia	Furniss, Gill
Blomfield, Paul	Gardiner, Barry
Brabin, Tracy	Gill, Preet Kaur
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben	Girvan, Paul
Brennan, Kevin	Glindon, Mary
Brine, Steve	Green, Kate
Brown, Ms Lyn	Greenwood, Lilian
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas	Greenwood, Margaret
Bryant, Chris	Griffith, Nia
Buck, Ms Karen	Gwynne, Andrew
Burgon, Richard	Haigh, Louise
Butler, Dawn	Hamilton, Fabian
Byrne, Ian	Hanna, Claire
Byrne, rh Liam	Hardy, Emma
Cadbury, Ruth	Harman, rh Ms Harriet
Campbell, rh Sir Alan	Harris, Carolyn
Campbell, Mr Gregory	Hayes, Helen
Carden, Dan	Healey, rh John
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair	Hendrick, Sir Mark
Chamberlain, Wendy	Hill, Mike
Champion, Sarah	Hillier, Meg
Charalambous, Bambos	Hobhouse, Wera
Clark, Feryal	Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
Cooper, Daisy	Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Cooper, Rosie	Hollern, Kate
Cooper, rh Yvette	Hopkins, Rachel
Corbyn, rh Jeremy	Howarth, rh Sir George
Coyle, Neil	Huq, Dr Rupa
Creasy, Stella	Hussain, Imran
Crouch, Tracey	Jardine, Christine
Cruddas, Jon	Jarvis, Dan
Cryer, John	Johnson, Dame Diana
Cummins, Judith	Johnson, Kim
Cunningham, Alex	Jones, Darren
Daby, Janet	Jones, Gerald
Davey, rh Ed	Jones, rh Mr Kevan
David, Wayne	Jones, Ruth
Davies, Geraint	Jones, Sarah
Davies-Jones, Alex	Kane, Mike
De Cordova, Marsha	Keeley, Barbara
Debonnaire, Thangam	Kendall, Liz
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh	Khan, Afzal
Dodds, Anneliese	Kinnock, Stephen
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.	Kyle, Peter
Doughty, Stephen	Lammy, rh Mr David
Dowd, Peter	Lavery, Ian
Dromey, Jack	Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Duffield, Rosie	Lewis, Clive

Lloyd, Tony
 Lockhart, Carla
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lynch, Holly
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Maskell, Rachael
 Matheson, Christian
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McCartney, Jason
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McMahan, 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
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norris, Alex
 Olney, Sarah
 Onwurah, Chi
 Oppong-Asare, Abena
 Osamor, Kate
 Osborne, Kate
 Owatemi, Taiwo
 Owen, Sarah
 Paisley, Ian
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Mr Toby
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pollard, Luke
 Powell, Lucy
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rayner, Angela
 Reed, Steve

Rees, Christina
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, Rachel
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Robinson, Gavin
 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
 Streeter, Wes
 Stringer, Graham
 Sultana, Sarah
 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
 Warburton, David
 Webbe, Claudia
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitley, Mick
 Whittome, Nadia
 Wilson, Munira
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Winter, Beth
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:

**Liz Twist and
 Colleen Fletcher**

NOES

Adams, Nigel
 Afolami, Bim
 Afriyie, Adam
 Ahmad Khan, Imran
 Aiken, Nickie
 Aldous, Peter
 Allan, Lucy
 Amess, Sir David
 Anderson, Lee
 Anderson, Stuart
 Andrew, Stuart
 Ansell, Caroline
 Argar, Edward
 Atherton, Sarah
 Atkins, Victoria

Bacon, Gareth
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Badenoch, Kemi
 Bailey, Shaun
 Baillie, Siobhan
 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
 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
 Carter, Andy
 Cartledge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Cates, Miriam
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, Alex
 Chishti, Rehman
 Churchill, Jo
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clarke, Mr Simon
 Clarke, Theo
 Clarke-Smith, Brendan
 Clarkson, Chris
 Cleverly, rh James
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse
 Colburn, Elliot
 Collins, Damian
 Costa, Alberto
 Courts, Robert
 Coutinho, Claire
 Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
 Crabb, rh Stephen
 Crosbie, Virginia
 Daly, James
 Davies, David T. C.
 Davies, Gareth
 Davies, Dr James
 Davies, Mims
 Davies, Philip
 Davis, rh Mr David
 Davison, Dehenna
 Dinage, 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
 Dunne, rh Philip
 Eastwood, Mark
 Edwards, Ruth
 Ellis, rh Michael
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias

Elphicke, Mrs Natalie
 Eustice, rh George
 Evans, Dr Luke
 Evennett, rh Sir David
 Everitt, Ben
 Fabricant, Michael
 Farris, Laura
 Fell, Simon
 Fletcher, Katherine
 Fletcher, Mark
 Fletcher, Nick
 Ford, Vicky
 Foster, Kevin
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Frazer, Lucy
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 Fuller, Richard
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Gale, rh Sir Roger
 Garnier, Mark
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gibson, Peter
 Gideon, Jo
 Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
 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
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, Sally-Ann
 Hart, rh Simon
 Hayes, rh Sir John
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Heapey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Henderson, Gordon
 Henry, Darren
 Higginbotham, Antony
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Holden, Mr Richard
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Adam
 Holmes, Paul
 Howell, John
 Howell, Paul
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hudson, Dr Neil
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, Jane
 Hunt, rh Jeremy
 Hunt, Tom
 Jack, rh Mr Alister

Javid, rh Sajid
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jenkinson, Mark
 Jenkyns, Andrea
 Jenrick, rh Robert
 Johnson, rh Boris
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnston, David
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Fay
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Jupp, Simon
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Kearns, Alicia
 Keegan, Gillian
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian
 Kruger, Danny
 Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
 Lamont, John
 Langan, Robert
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leadsom, rh Andrea
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward
 Levy, Ian
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 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, Karl
 McPartland, Stephen
 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
 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 Sheryl
 Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
 Neill, Sir Robert
 Nici, Lia
 Norman, rh Jesse
 O'Brien, Neil
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Philp, Chris
 Pincher, rh Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, Victoria
 Pritchard, Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Raab, rh Dominic
 Randall, Tom
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
 Richards, Nicola
 Richardson, Angela
 Roberts, Rob
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Mary
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Ross, Douglas
 Rowley, Lee
 Russell, Dean
 Rutley, David
 Sambrook, Gary
 Saxby, Selaine
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, rh Alok
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec
 Simmonds, David
 Skidmore, rh Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Greg
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Solloway, Amanda
 Spencer, Dr Ben
 Spencer, rh Mark
 Stafford, Alexander
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, Jane
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunak, rh Rishi
 Sunderland, James
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Syms, Sir Robert

Thomas, Derek
 Throup, Maggie
 Timpson, Edward
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Trevelyan, 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
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Wallis, Dr Jamie

Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Webb, Suzanne
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whittaker, Craig
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Wild, James
 Williams, Craig
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, Mr William
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Young, Jacob
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
 Rebecca Harris and
 David Duguid

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.

Clause 6

ENVIRONMENTAL TARGETS: REVIEW

Amendment made: 6, page 5, line 2, at end insert—

“(9) In this section “England” includes—

- (a) the English inshore region, and
- (b) the English offshore region,

within the meaning of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (see section 322 of that Act).”—(*Rebecca Pow.*)

This amendment provides that in Clause 6 England includes the English inshore region and the English offshore region.

Clause 7

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT PLANS

Amendment proposed: 39, page 5, line 21, at end insert—

“(7A) If an exemption is granted under Article 53 of Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council, concerning the placing of plant protection products on the market, which is likely to affect species covered by an environmental improvement plan—

- (a) a report must be laid before Parliament within one month of the exemption decision on the likely effects of the exemption on populations of—
 - (i) bees,
 - (ii) other pollinators, and
 - (iii) other species,
- (b) the scientific advice given to ministers relating to the exemption must be published as an addendum to the report, and
- (c) a Minister of the Crown must, not later than one month after the report is laid before Parliament under paragraph (8), move a Motion in the House of Commons in relation to the report.

(7B) The requirement in subsection (7A) shall apply retrospectively to exemptions granted within the last 12 months of the coming into force of this Act.”—(*Luke Pollard.*)

This amendment places requirements on Ministers to allow parliamentary scrutiny of exemptions granted to allow plant protection products banned under retained EU law (such as neonicotinoid pesticides), where they are likely to impact bees and other species covered by an environmental improvement plan.

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The House divided: Ayes 221, Noes 366.

Division No. 216]

[6.16 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
 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, Dame Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Eastwood, Colum
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Elmore, Chris
 Eshalomi, Florence
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Farron, Tim
 Farry, Stephen
 Ferrier, Margaret
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Foy, Mary Kelly
 Furniss, Gill
 Gale, rh Sir Roger
 Gardiner, Barry
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
 Glindon, Mary
 Green, Kate
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Griffith, Nia
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Haigh, Louise
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hanna, Claire
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hayes, Helen
 Healey, rh John
 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
 Lake, Ben
 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
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McMahon, Jim
 McMorris, 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
 Powell, Lucy
 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
 Saville Roberts, rh Liz
 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
 Streeter, Wes
 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
 Western, Matt
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitley, Mick
 Whittome, Nadia
 Williams, Hywel
 Wilson, Munira
 Winter, Beth
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:
Colleen Fletcher and
Liz Twist

NOES

Adams, Nigel
 Afolami, Bim
 Afriyie, Adam
 Ahmad Khan, Imran
 Aiken, Nickie
 Aldous, Peter
 Allan, Lucy
 Amess, Sir David
 Anderson, Lee
 Anderson, Stuart
 Andrew, Stuart
 Ansell, Caroline
 Argar, Edward
 Atherton, Sarah
 Atkins, Victoria
 Bacon, Gareth
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Badenoch, Kemi
 Bailey, Shaun
 Baillie, Siobhan
 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	Francois, rh Mr Mark	Jones, Mr Marcus	Parish, Neil
Burns, rh Conor	Frazer, Lucy	Jupp, Simon	Patel, rh Priti
Butler, Rob	Freeman, George	Kawczynski, Daniel	Paterson, rh Mr Owen
Cairns, rh Alun	Freer, Mike	Kearns, Alicia	Pawsey, Mark
Campbell, Mr Gregory	Fuller, Richard	Keegan, Gillian	Penning, rh Sir Mike
Carter, Andy	Fysh, Mr Marcus	Knight, rh Sir Greg	Penrose, John
Cartlidge, James	Garnier, Mark	Knight, Julian	Percy, Andrew
Cash, Sir William	Ghani, Ms Nusrat	Kruger, Danny	Philp, Chris
Cates, Miriam	Gibb, rh Nick	Kwarteng, rh Kwasi	Pincher, rh Christopher
Caulfield, Maria	Gibson, Peter	Lamont, John	Poulter, Dr Dan
Chalk, Alex	Gideon, Jo	Largan, Robert	Pow, Rebecca
Chishti, Rehman	Girvan, Paul	Latham, Mrs Pauline	Prentis, Victoria
Churchill, Jo	Glen, John	Leadsom, rh Andrea	Pritchard, Mark
Clark, rh Greg	Goodwill, rh Mr Robert	Leigh, rh Sir Edward	Pursglove, Tom
Clarke, Mr Simon	Gove, rh Michael	Levy, Ian	Quin, Jeremy
Clarke, Theo	Graham, Richard	Lewer, Andrew	Quince, Will
Clarke-Smith, Brendan	Grant, Mrs Helen	Lewis, rh Brandon	Raab, rh Dominic
Clarkson, Chris	Gray, James	Lewis, rh Dr Julian	Randall, Tom
Cleverly, rh James	Grayling, rh Chris	Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian	Redwood, rh John
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey	Green, Chris	Lockhart, Carla	Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse	Green, rh Damian	Loder, Chris	Richards, Nicola
Colburn, Elliot	Griffith, Andrew	Logan, Mark	Richardson, Angela
Collins, Damian	Griffiths, Kate	Longhi, Marco	Roberts, Rob
Costa, Alberto	Grundy, James	Lopez, Julia	Robertson, Mr Laurence
Courts, Robert	Gullis, Jonathan	Lopresti, Jack	Robinson, Gavin
Coutinho, Claire	Halfon, rh Robert	Lord, Mr Jonathan	Robinson, Mary
Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey	Hall, Luke	Loughton, Tim	Rosindell, Andrew
Crabb, rh Stephen	Hammond, Stephen	Mackinlay, Craig	Ross, Douglas
Crosbie, Virginia	Hancock, rh Matt	Mackrory, Cheryllyn	Rowley, Lee
Crouch, Tracey	Hands, rh Greg	Maclean, Rachel	Russell, Dean
Daly, James	Harper, rh Mr Mark	Mak, Alan	Rutley, David
Davies, David T. C.	Harrison, Trudy	Malthouse, Kit	Sambrook, Gary
Davies, Gareth	Hart, Sally-Ann	Mangnall, Anthony	Saxby, Selaine
Davies, Dr James	Hart, rh Simon	Mann, Scott	Scully, Paul
Davies, Mims	Hayes, rh Sir John	Marson, Julie	Seely, Bob
Davies, Philip	Heald, rh Sir Oliver	May, rh Mrs Theresa	Selous, Andrew
Davis, rh Mr David	Heapey, James	Mayhew, Jerome	Shannon, Jim
Davison, Dehenna	Heaton-Harris, Chris	Maynard, Paul	Shapps, rh Grant
Dinenage, Caroline	Henderson, Gordon	McCartney, Karl	Sharma, rh Alok
Dines, Miss Sarah	Henry, Darren	McPartland, Stephen	Shelbrooke, rh Alec
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan	Higginbotham, Antony	McVey, rh Esther	Simmonds, David
Docherty, Leo	Hinds, rh Damian	Menzies, Mark	Skidmore, rh Chris
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.	Hoare, Simon	Mercer, Johnny	Smith, Chloe
Donelan, Michelle	Holden, Mr Richard	Merriman, Huw	Smith, Greg
Dorries, Ms Nadine	Hollinrake, Kevin	Metcalfe, Stephen	Smith, Henry
Double, Steve	Hollobone, Mr Philip	Millar, Robin	Smith, rh Julian
Dowden, rh Oliver	Holloway, Adam	Miller, rh Mrs Maria	Smith, Royston
Doyle-Price, Jackie	Holmes, Paul	Milling, rh Amanda	Solloway, Amanda
Drax, Richard	Howell, John	Mills, Nigel	Spencer, Dr Ben
Drummond, Mrs Flick	Howell, Paul	Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew	Spencer, rh Mark
Duddridge, James	Huddleston, Nigel	Mohindra, Mr Gagan	Stafford, Alexander
Dunne, rh Philip	Hudson, Dr Neil	Moore, Damien	Stephenson, Andrew
Eastwood, Mark	Hughes, Eddie	Moore, Robbie	Stevenson, Jane
Edwards, Ruth	Hunt, Jane	Mordaunt, rh Penny	Stevenson, John
Ellis, rh Michael	Hunt, rh Jeremy	Morris, Anne Marie	Stewart, Bob
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias	Hunt, Tom	Morris, David	Stewart, Iain
Elphicke, Mrs Natalie	Jack, rh Mr Alister	Morris, James	Streeter, Sir Gary
Eustice, rh George	Javid, rh Sajid	Morrissey, Joy	Stride, rh Mel
Evans, Dr Luke	Jayawardena, Mr Ranil	Morton, Wendy	Stuart, Graham
Evennett, rh Sir David	Jenkin, Sir Bernard	Mullan, Dr Kieran	Sturdy, Julian
Everitt, Ben	Jenkinson, Mark	Mumby-Croft, Holly	Sunak, rh Rishi
Fabricant, Michael	Jenkyns, Andrea	Mundell, rh David	Sunderland, James
Farris, Laura	Jenrick, rh Robert	Murray, Mrs Sheryll	Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Fell, Simon	Johnson, rh Boris	Murrison, rh Dr Andrew	Syms, Sir Robert
Fletcher, Katherine	Johnson, Dr Caroline	Neill, Sir Robert	Thomas, Derek
Fletcher, Mark	Johnson, Gareth	Nici, Lia	Throup, Maggie
Fletcher, Nick	Johnston, David	Nokes, rh Caroline	Timpson, Edward
Ford, Vicky	Jones, Andrew	Norman, rh Jesse	Tolhurst, Kelly
Foster, Kevin	Jones, rh Mr David	O'Brien, Neil	Tomlinson, Justin
Fox, rh Dr Liam	Jones, Fay	Offord, Dr Matthew	Tomlinson, Michael
		Opperman, Guy	Tracey, Craig
		Paisley, Ian	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
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Wallis, Dr Jamie
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Webb, Suzanne
 Whately, Helen

Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whittaker, Craig
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Wild, James
 Williams, Craig
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, Mr William
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Young, Jacob
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
 Rebecca Harris and
 David Duguid

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.

Clause 37

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Amendment made: 31, page 22, line 30, at end insert “; but this does not require the court to apply section 31(2A) of the Senior Courts Act 1981 (High Court to refuse to grant relief where the outcome for the applicant not substantially different) on an environmental review in England and Wales.”

This amendment clarifies that section 31(2A) of the Senior Courts Act 1981 does not apply on an environmental review. Clause 38(3) already disapplies that section to judicial reviews brought by the OEP. —(Rebecca Pow.)

Schedule 3

THE OFFICE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION: NORTHERN IRELAND

Amendments made: 9, page 143, line 38, at end insert—

(aa) explains why the OEP considers that the alleged failure, if it occurred, would be serious, and”

Under paragraph 9 of Schedule 3 the OEP may give a relevant public authority an information notice if it has reasonable grounds to suspect that the authority has failed to comply with relevant environmental law, and it considers that the failure, if it occurred, would be serious. This amendment requires the information notice to explain why the OEP considers that the alleged failure, if it occurred, would be serious.

Amendment 10, page 144, line 28, at end insert—

(aa) explains why the OEP considers that the failure is serious, and”

Under paragraph 10 of Schedule 3 the OEP may give a relevant public authority a decision notice if it is satisfied, on the balance of probabilities, that the authority has failed to comply with relevant environmental law, and it considers that the failure is serious. This amendment requires the decision notice to explain why the OEP considers that the failure is serious.

Amendment 11, page 146, line 4, at end insert “, but only if—

(a) it is satisfied, on the balance of probabilities, that the authority has failed to comply with relevant environmental law, and

(b) it considers that the failure is serious.”

This amendment provides that the OEP may only bring a review application against a relevant public authority if it is satisfied on the balance of probabilities that the authority has failed to comply with relevant environmental law, and it considers the failure is serious. This aligns the conditions for bringing a review application with the conditions for giving a decision notice.

Amendment 12, page 146, line 5, leave out sub-paragraph (2)

The OEP may only bring a review application after it has given a decision notice. This amendment removes the OEP's power to bring a review application in relation to conduct occurring after a decision notice is given, which is similar or related to the conduct described in the decision notice.

Amendment 13, page 146, line 12, leave out “or (2)”

This amendment is consequential on the removal of paragraph 12(2) of Schedule 3 by Amendment 12.

Amendment 14, page 146, line 43 [Schedule 3], at end insert “, and

(b) the urgency condition is met.”

This amendment provides that the OEP may only bring a judicial review under paragraph 13 of Schedule 3, rather than proceeding by way of information notice, decision notice and review application, in urgent cases. Amendments 15 and 16 define what is meant by urgent.

Amendment 15, page 146, line 44, leave out from beginning to “(rather” in line 45 and insert

“The urgency condition is that making an application under sub-paragraph (1)”

This amendment, together with Amendment 16, provides that a case is urgent only if it is necessary to bring a judicial review, rather than proceeding by way of information notice, decision notice and review application, to prevent or mitigate serious damage to the natural environment or to human health.

Amendment 16, page 147, line 1, after “(12)” insert “is necessary”

See Amendment 15.

Amendment 17, page 147, line 11, leave out sub-paragraph (5) and insert—

“(5) Sub-paragraph (6) applies to proceedings (including any appeal) that—

(a) are in respect of an application for judicial review, and

(b) relate to an alleged failure by a relevant public authority to comply with relevant environmental law (however the allegation is framed in those proceedings).

(6) If the OEP considers that the alleged failure, if it occurred, would be serious, it may apply to intervene in the proceedings (whether it considers that the relevant public authority has, or has not, failed to comply with relevant environmental law).”

This amendment provides that the OEP may apply to intervene in a judicial review relating to an alleged failure by a relevant public authority to comply with relevant environmental law only if it considers that the failure, if it occurred, would be serious. If that test is satisfied, it may apply to intervene whether or not it considers that the authority has in fact failed to comply with relevant environmental law.

Amendment 18, page 152, line 6, after “10(1)(b)” insert “, 12(1)(b)”

This amendment is consequential on Amendment 11. It requires the OEP's enforcement policy to set out how the OEP will determine whether a failure to comply with relevant environmental law is serious for the purposes of paragraph 12(1)(b) of Schedule 3, which is inserted by Amendment 11.

Amendment 19, page 152, line 6, after “(13(1)” insert “and (6)”

This amendment is consequential on Amendment 17. It requires the OEP's enforcement policy to set out how the OEP will determine whether a failure to comply with relevant environmental law is serious for the purposes of paragraph 13(6) of Schedule 3, which is inserted by Amendment 17.

Amendment 20, page 152, line 35, at end insert—

23A After section 24 (guidance on the OEP's enforcement policy and functions) insert—

“24A Guidance on the OEP's Northern Ireland enforcement policy and functions

(1) The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland may issue guidance to the OEP on the matters listed in section 22(6) (OEP's enforcement policy), so far as relating to the OEP's Northern Ireland enforcement functions.

(2) The OEP must have regard to the guidance in—

- (a) preparing its enforcement policy, so far as relating to its Northern Ireland enforcement functions, and
- (b) exercising its Northern Ireland enforcement functions.

(3) The Department may revise the guidance at any time.

(4) The Department must lay before the Northern Ireland Assembly, and publish, the guidance (and any revised guidance).

(5) The OEP's "Northern Ireland enforcement functions" are its functions under paragraphs 6 to 15 of Schedule 3."—*(Rebecca Pow.)*

This amendment provides that the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland may issue guidance to the OEP on the matters listed in clause 22(6) (OEP's enforcement policy), so far as relating to the OEP's Northern Ireland enforcement functions. The OEP must have regard to the guidance in preparing its enforcement policy and exercising its Northern Ireland enforcement functions.

New Clause 8

WASTE HIERARCHY

"(1) In interpreting responsibilities under Part 3 of this Act and in all matters relating to waste and resource efficiency the Secretary of State must take account of the requirements of the waste hierarchy, starting with the priority action of prevention.

(2) In this section, "waste hierarchy" has the same meaning as in the Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011 (S.I. 2011/988)."—*(Ruth Jones.)*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Ruth Jones (Newport West) (Lab): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): With this it will be convenient to discuss the following:

New clause 10—*Environmental impact of nappy waste*—

"(1) Schedule [Environmental impact of nappy waste] confers powers on the relevant national authority to make regulations about environmental standards for nappies.

(2) The relevant national authority means—

- (a) in relation to England, the Secretary of State;
- (b) in relation to Wales, the Welsh Ministers or the Secretary of State;
- (c) in relation to Scotland, the Scottish Ministers or the Secretary of State;
- (d) in relation to Northern Ireland, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland or the Secretary of State.

(3) Regulations are subjective to the negative procedure."

The new clause enables the addition of NS1 which is intended to reduce the impact on the environment of disposable nappies, and has been adapted from a Private Member's Bill (Bill 299) on this matter.

New schedule 1—*Environmental impact of nappy waste*—

"Nappy waste impact reduction schemes

1 The relevant national authority must by regulations establish schemes to reduce the impact of nappies on the environment by—

- (a) defining the characteristics required for a nappy to meet environmental standards;
- (b) promoting nappies which meet environmental standards; and
- (c) reporting on the steps taken to encourage local authorities to promote reusable nappies and reduce nappy waste.

Environmental standards

2 (1) The relevant national authority must by regulations establish environmental standards for nappies.

(2) The standards must define the characteristics required for a nappy to be traded, advertised or promoted as—

- (a) "reusable";
- (b) "biodegradable";
- (c) "eco-friendly";
- (d) "environmentally friendly"; and
- (e) other such similar terms as may be defined in the standards.

(3) The regulations may provide for nappies or the packaging in which they are contained to bear a mark signifying that they meet the environmental standards.

(4) The trading, advertising or promotion of a nappy is an unfair commercial practice for the purposes of the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 (S.I. 2008/1277) if—

- (a) that nappy is described using a term used in sub-sub-paragraphs (2)(a) to (d) or a similar term defined in regulations under sub-paragraph (1) but does not meet the relevant standards, or
- (b) that nappy or its packaging bears the mark in sub-paragraph (3) but does not meet the relevant standards.

Promotion of nappies that meet environmental standards

3 (1) The relevant national authority must by regulations establish a scheme to promote nappies that meet the environmental standards in paragraph 2.

(2) The scheme must be a collaboration between public bodies and the nappy industry.

(3) The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision for a levy to be paid by persons who manufacture or trade in nappies for the purpose of meeting the operating expenses of the scheme.

(4) The scheme must provide public information on—

- (a) the effects of disposable nappies on the environment;
- (b) the financial advantages of reusable nappies for families and local authorities; and
- (c) other advantages of nappies that meet the standards in paragraph 2.

Local authority reusable nappy schemes

4 (1) The relevant national authority must prepare a report on steps that will be taken to encourage local authorities to operate schemes to—

- (a) promote the use of reusable nappies, and
- (b) reduce nappy waste.

(2) In preparing that report, the relevant national authority must consult—

- (a) operators of existing reusable nappy schemes,
- (b) local authorities involved in those schemes,
- (c) parents who have participated in such schemes,
- (d) manufacturers of reusable nappies.

(3) The report must be laid—

- (a) in relation to England, before Parliament;
- (b) in relation to Wales, in Senedd Cymru;
- (c) in relation to Scotland, in the Scottish Parliament; and
- (d) in relation to Northern Ireland, in the Northern Ireland Assembly; or in Parliament;

within six months of this section coming into force."

This new schedule brings into the Bill the provisions of the Private Member's Bill on Nappies (Environmental Standards) Bill (Bill 299) in order to define environmental standards for nappies, promote nappies that meet the standards, and report on local authority schemes to promote reusable nappies and reduce nappy waste.

Government amendments 32 to 35.

New clause 6—*Clean Air Duty*—

“(1) The Secretary of State must prepare and publish an annual policy statement setting out how the Government is working to improve air quality, and must lay a copy of the report before Parliament.

(2) The annual policy statement in subsection (1) must include—

- (a) how public authorities are improving air quality, including indoor air quality; and
- (b) how Government departments are working together to improve air quality, including indoor air quality.

(3) A Minister of the Crown must, not later than three months after the report has been laid before Parliament, table a motion in the House of Commons in relation to the report.”

This new clause requires the Secretary of State to publish an annual report on air quality, which includes indoor air quality and the work of public authorities and Government departments working together to improve it.

New clause 13—*Air quality in rural areas: application of pesticides*—

“(1) For the purposes of improving air quality and protecting human health and the environment in rural areas, the Secretary of State must by regulations make provision prohibiting the application of pesticides for the purposes of agriculture or horticulture near—

- (a) buildings used for human habitation; and
- (b) public or private buildings and associated open spaces where members of the public may be present, including but not limited to—
 - (i) schools and childcare nurseries;
 - (ii) hospitals and health care facilities.

(2) Regulations under subsection (1) must specify a minimum distance from any of the locations listed under subsection (1)(a) and (b) to be maintained during the application of any pesticide.

(3) In determining the distance in subsection (2), the Secretary of State must be guided by the optimum distance that would make significant difference in air quality for people using the locations listed in subsection (1).

(4) In this section “public building” includes any building used for the purposes of education.

(5) Regulations under this section are subject to affirmative resolution procedure.”

This new clause would require the Secretary of State to make regulations to prohibit the application and pollution of chemical pesticides near buildings and spaces used by residents and members of the public, with the aim of improving air quality and protecting human health and the environment in rural areas.

Government amendment 7.

New clause 3—*Phosphates Levels*—

“In making decisions on planning decisions, the competent authority can disregard any impact of the potential build and its long-term consequences on the level of phosphates in the water.”

Amendment 42, in clause 78, page 71, line 16, after “licensee”, insert—

“or risk management authority, where risk management authority has the same meaning as in Part 1 Section 6 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.”

The amendment seeks to deliver the National Infrastructure Commission's recommendation that water companies and local authorities should publish plans to manage surface water flood risk (e.g. from roads).

Amendment 3, in clause 82, page 79, line 22, after “damage” insert—

“, including damage from low flows”.

Amendment 30, in clause 82, page 80, line 26, at end insert—

“(4) The Secretary of State must prepare an annual report on water abstraction management.

(5) The annual report must—

- (a) include data for the period covered on the volume of water in England—
 - (i) licensed for abstraction, and
 - (ii) abstracted.
- (b) state whether the natural environment of these water sources has, or particular aspects of it have, improved during that period based on the data, and
- (c) assess the impact of water abstraction in that period on the natural environment of chalk streams.

(6) The first annual report on water abstraction may relate to any 12 month period that includes the day on which this section comes into force.

(7) The annual report must be published and laid before Parliament within 4 months of the last day of the period to which the report relates.”

The purpose of this amendment is to monitor more closely the environmental impact of water abstraction on chalk streams with annual reporting.

Government amendment 8.

New clause 18—*REACH Regulation and animal testing*—

“(1) The Secretary of State must by regulations set targets for—

- (a) the replacement of types of tests on animals conducted to protect human health and the environment within the scope of the REACH Regulation, and
- (b) the reduction pending replacement of the numbers of animals used and the suffering they endure.

(2) A target under this section to reduce the suffering of animals must specify—

- (a) a standard to be achieved, which must be capable of being objectively measured, and
- (b) a date by which it is to be achieved.

(3) Regulations under this section may make provision about how a target that has been set is to be measured.

(4) A target under this section is initially set when the regulations setting it come into force.”

This new clause would require the Secretary of State to set targets for the reduction and replacement of animal testing for the purposes of chemicals regulation.

Amendment 24, in schedule 20, page 244, line 19, at end insert—

“(1A) Regulations made under this paragraph must not regress upon the protections or standards of any Article or Annex of the REACH Regulation.

(1B) Subject to sub-paragraph (1A), the Secretary of State—

- (a) must make regulations under this paragraph to maintain, and
- (b) may make regulations under this paragraph to exceed parity of all protections and standards of chemical regulation with any new or amended regulations of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the regulation of chemicals.”

This amendment would set a minimum of protections under REACH and remove the possibility that a Secretary of State might lower standards than are in place currently, whilst reserving the right for them to set higher standards should they choose.

Ruth Jones: As my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport (Luke Pollard) said in his remarks on the first group of amendments, this Bill has been a long time coming. I am delighted that the Bill is back before the House, but—and there is a

“but”—the Minister and her colleagues have lengthened its passage even further by throwing day two of the Report stage into the long, long grass. Considering that the Bill became known as the missing in action Bill after it disappeared for more than 200 days before the Committee stage, that is not a good sign.

New clause 8 holds a key role in the priorities of Her Majesty’s Opposition with regard to this Bill and the important task of taking whatever steps are necessary in the fight to preserve our planet and protect our environment. The new clause requires the Secretary of State to take account of the waste hierarchy, starting with the priority action of prevention. A few weeks ago, my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Daniel Zeichner) filled in for me as shadow Minister at a Westminster Hall debate called by the hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Elliot Colburn). In his remarks, my hon. Friend was very clear that the collective task of tackling waste, improving recycling rates and taking the steps needed to protect our environment and preserve our planet is one that we need to do together—all of us. In his conclusion, the hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington pressed the point about the need to look further at the waste hierarchy in dealing with waste. I agree with him. I look forward to him supporting new clause 8 in the Lobby tonight, and I hope he will bring some of his hon. Friends with him.

This Bill does not go far enough, and it did not have to be this way. Over the past two decades, the household waste recycling rate in England has increased significantly from just 11.2% to almost 50%. I am pleased that for half of that time a Labour Government ambitiously pushed for a change of behaviour and real action on the green agenda. However, England still falls short of the EU target of recycling a minimum of 50% of household waste by 2020. Our departure from the EU does not mean that we should shift gear or slow down. We need to go further and faster.

As of 2018, Wales is the only nation in the UK to reach the target. In 2017, it recorded a recycling rate of 64%. Wales is recognised as third in Europe and fourth in the world in the recycling league championship. As the Member for Newport West in this House, I pay tribute to the Welsh Labour Government, particularly my right hon. Friend the First Minister and the Environment Minister, Lesley Griffiths.

6.30 pm

The Minister knows that England is responsible for the overwhelming majority of waste in UK households. It is vital that England and therefore this Government show leadership and act. We need to look no further for evidence of the need for swift action than DEFRA’s own resources and strategy monitoring report from August last year. It tells us:

“The large amount of avoidable residual waste and avoidable residual plastic waste generated by household sources each year suggests there remains substantial opportunity for increased recycling.” The message from that assessment is that a substantial quantity of material appears to be going into the residual waste stream when it could at least have been recycled or dealt with higher up the waste hierarchy. So there it is. We just have to take this seriously now and our new clause 8 would do just that.

This issue is not just about waste here at home, but about the fact that English waste—for want of a better description—has an international impact, too. In response

to a written question I asked at the end of last year, the Minister said this about the return of 21 waste containers from Sri Lanka:

“The Environment Agency...as the competent authority for waste shipments for England, is proactively engaging with the authorities in Sri Lanka on these containers and is leading the response on this matter. The 21 containers arrived back in England on Wednesday 28 October”—

in 2020.

“The containers, which were shipped to Sri Lanka in 2017, were found by Sri Lankan authorities to contain illegal materials described as mattresses and carpets which had been exported for recycling.”

Again, just two weeks ago, the UK was accused of failing to honour its promise to curb shipments of plastic waste to developing countries, after it emerged that Britain’s new post-Brexit regulations are less stringent than those imposed by the EU. Our new clause 8 would focus minds. I say to the House that the Bill cannot be used as a race to the bottom. We on the Labour Benches will do all we can to stop that from happening.

On that point, I wonder if the Minister can explain the mysterious missing case of the deposit return scheme. I have a sneaking suspicion that Ministers are looking to scale back their ambition and move away from the all-in scheme. That would be unacceptable, so can the Minister pick that up when winding up the debate, please? I should also say at this point that I am grateful to Ruth Chambers from the Greener Alliance for her unfailing commitment to these issues and the green agenda.

On amendment 24, Labour seeks to highlight an all-too-important issue that does not get the focus it deserves. The amendment would set a minimum level of protections under REACH—the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals—and remove the possibility that a Secretary of State might lower standards that are in place currently, while reserving the right to set higher standards should they choose. How can the Minister disagree with that? Indeed, the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May), recognised the importance of chemical alignment so that we do not become a dumping ground for hazardous chemicals, so why does this Minister and this Secretary of State not recognise it?

I am also very grateful to Chloe Alexander and her colleagues at the Chem Trust, who do wonderful work highlighting the vital nature of chemical regulation. As she put it, the UK REACH regime for regulating chemicals is already weaker and less transparent than the system it is replicating. The powers given to the Secretary of State in the Bill could further reduce the level of protection for the public and the environment from hazardous chemicals. Amendment 24 would prevent damaging deregulation and also help to maintain regulatory parity with EU REACH and chemical-related laws that would prevent the dumping of products on the UK market that failed to meet EU regulations, and avoid the cost and complexity of regulatory divergence on industry. I agree with that and I urge the Minister to get her Back Benchers behind amendment 24.

My hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport spoke earlier to our Front-Bench amendment on air quality, and with new clause 6 in mind I want to pay tribute to the life of Ella Kissi-Debrah

and express my deepest condolences to her mum, Rosamund, and the family. Her death, as Labour's Mayor of London Sadiq Khan said yesterday,

"is a painful reminder that the human cost of damage from air pollution is very real...Toxic air is a public health crisis, and I will keep fighting for Londoners' right to breathe clean air."

The Mayor is right and he has my full support. Labour wants to take the same fight to all parts of England. The hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas) has tabled new clause 13 and new clause 18, both of which bring important elements to the Bill. I look forward to working on them with her in the coming months and years.

Our amendments are pragmatic, objective and balanced. They make an okay Bill better and the Minister should seize the opportunity to work across party lines to do all we can together to preserve our environment and protect our planet.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): Before I call the Minister, I should explain that there are many people who wish to speak this evening, so there will have to be an immediate time limit of three minutes for Back-Bench speeches. I remind hon. Members that, when a speaking limit is in effect for Back Benchers, a countdown clock will be visible on the screens. Yesterday, quite a lot of people spoke for longer than the time limit, so I want to make sure that everyone knows that there is a clock in the bottom right-hand corner of the screen. For the few Members who are participating here in the Chamber, the normal clock will apply.

Rebecca Pow: It is a real pleasure to see you in the Chair, Madam Deputy Speaker, for the second half of what I am sure will be a lively debate on this important Bill. This group of amendments covers waste and resources, air quality, water and the regulation of chemicals—all vital areas to improve on if we are to restore and enhance our environment.

The Environment Bill will deliver consistent recycling collections across England, including separate weekly food collections. We will tackle waste crime by ensuring that the tools we have at our disposal better reflect new methods and online mediums that criminals use. We will also be able to drive a revolution in our resource use, continuing our change towards a more sustainable, circular economy, which is the model set out in our waste and resources strategy. We will have powers to ban the export of plastic waste to non-OECD countries, which is a key manifesto commitment. While I am on the subject of plastic, I would like to pay special tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Chris Loder) and to reassure him that measures in the Bill will help him to tackle the scourge of plastic on his beautiful beaches in West Dorset, which I frequent myself—from Somerset.

The Bill will also enable reform throughout the product lifetime. Producers will be incentivised towards more sustainable design, through new resource efficiency requirements and extended producer responsibility. Single-use plastic charges and resource efficiency information will help consumers make better choices about products, and the introduction of a deposit return scheme for drinks containers, alluded to by the shadow Minister, the hon. Member for Newport West (Ruth Jones)—I am pleased that she brought that up—will drive better

consumer choices and increase recycling. I would like to assure her that work is going on at great speed on that second consultation.

Technical Government amendments 32 to 35 correct references to existing legislation that is no longer in force following the end of the transition period. Measures in the Bill will also deliver key proposals in our clean air strategy, which the World Health Organisation has described as "world leading". Not only will it address health concerns, but it is estimated to cut the costs of air pollution to society by £1.7 billion every year by 2020—well, that is by this year, so we have already been working on that—rising to £5.3 billion every year from 2030. We know that there is more to do and, through this Bill, local authorities will be better equipped to act through a clear framework and simple-to-use powers to address specific concerns in these areas.

The Government have already committed to stopping the sale of new petrol and diesel cars by 2030, and the Bill provides the Government with new powers to enforce environmental standards for vehicles. Government amendment 7 will mean that references to EU standards do not require updating to ensure that they are enforceable with this tough new vehicle recall power. It is a technical amendment that ends any risk that we will be unable to issue a recall affecting Northern Ireland.

Before I talk about the water section of the Bill, I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Philip Dunne) for his dedicated work on water issues and for being a dogged and determined advocate for our precious rivers.

Our climate is becoming less predictable, and we need to manage our water sources better to ensure resilience to future floods and droughts. The water measures in the Bill will help achieve the goals set out in our 25-year environment plan for clean and plentiful water and to reduce the risks of harm from environmental hazards. Water companies will have to produce drainage and sewerage management plans, which will set out how environmental risks, including sewage outflows into rivers, must be managed. Reforms to the abstraction licensing system will mean that less water is taken from our environment when it causes damage or harm.

I know that the health of our rivers, in terms of both flow levels and reducing sewage outflows, is of great concern to many Members; I have met so many of them to discuss this. My hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Sir Charles Walker) has tabled amendment 42, and I look forward to hearing what I am sure will be an impassioned speech from him. However, I am pleased to inform the House that the Bill already delivers the outcomes he is seeking: less water taken where it damages our environment and less sewage spilling into our precious waterways. Water companies will be able to produce joint water resource management plans for the first time, enabling water transfers from areas with plentiful water to water-stressed areas. We will reform the system of internal drainage boards, ensuring that our water management system is fit for the future. Technical Government amendment 8 will update clause 91, as it currently refers to the Criminal Justice Act 2003, which has now been superseded by the Sentencing Act 2020.

Finally, we will ensure that we are able to maintain an effective, efficient system of regulation for our world-leading chemicals industry now that we have left the EU. We have taken control of our domestic laws in this area

through the UK REACH regime. I look forward to hearing the debate, in which I know many Members are eager to participate, and I hope to be able to cover many of the points raised at the end.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): I had said that there would be a limit of three minutes, but so many Members who had informed the Speaker's Office that they wished to take part in the debate have decided not to bother that there is rather more time for those who have taken the trouble to meet their obligations. We will therefore start with a time limit of four minutes for Back-Bench speeches, which does not apply to the SNP spokesperson, Mr David Linden.

David Linden (Glasgow East) (SNP): Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker; it is no surprise that you are so generous.

I have repeatedly spoken in the Chamber about the importance of protecting the environment for future generations. One issue that I have continued to raise—I did so in 2018, 2019, 2020 and I do so now in 2021—is that of disposable nappies and their impact on the environment. For several years, I have been working on this issue with Magnus Smyth of TotsBots, a company in the Queenslie area of my constituency that manufactures reusable and eco-friendly nappies. One of the issues that Magnus has raised is nappy companies that falsely tell their customers that they are eco-friendly. It is important that we level the playing field so that companies such as TotsBots can continue to produce eco-friendly products and encourage consumers to make more environmentally conscious decisions.

New clause 10 outlines the crux of the issues around reusable and environmentally-friendly nappies. In summary, it states that powers should be granted to the relevant national authority to make regulations about environmental standards for nappies. Disposable nappies have a huge impact on the environment. To put that in context, around 3 billion single-use nappies are thrown away each year in the UK, weighing in at an estimated 690,000 tonnes. The use of single-use nappies by an average child over two and a half years would result in a global warming impact of approximately 550 kg of CO₂ equivalents. Indeed, switching to reusable nappies or even using a mixture of both has hugely positive environmental consequences. A family that chooses reusable nappies can save about 99% of the waste that would be generated by using single-use ones. If only 20% of babies using single-use nappies switched to reusables, 1 million tonnes of waste could be prevented each year in the EU.

6.45 pm

Under new schedule 1, "Nappy waste impact reduction schemes", it is hugely important that all is done by the relevant national authority to establish schemes to reduce the impact of nappies on the environment. The new schedule clearly outlines how this can be done by defining the characteristics required for a nappy to meet environmental standards, promoting nappies that meet environmental standards, and reporting on the steps taken to encourage local authorities to promote reusable nappies and reduce nappy waste.

At this juncture, I want to highlight an example of a nappy scheme that has been very successful, and which I have visited. The Hackney real nappy network is an informal network of parents and carers who use and

promote reusable nappies. It runs regular events and demos to help people make more informed choices around purchasing nappies while raising awareness of the free nappy voucher scheme.

The second part of the new schedule refers to establishing environmental standards for nappies, because it is imperative that the standards and characteristics of so-called "environmentally friendly" nappies are defined. That will help prevent disposable nappy companies from talking about eco-friendly nappies that are anything but that; they still end up in landfill, where they can take an astonishing 300 years to break down. The 33 billion nappies each year that go to landfill produce 7 million tonnes of waste, so this is a serious problem for the environment. To prevent disposable nappy companies from peddling clear falsehoods about their products, the scheme would require characteristics such as "reusable", "biodegradable", "eco-friendly" and "environmentally friendly" all to be defined, which is currently not the case now. That will impact on how those companies can advertise and market their products and will help consumers making environmentally conscious decisions.

Magnus Smyth of TotsBots has been clear on the importance of defining these terms. He says:

"The environmental claims made by manufacturers of single-use nappies can be misleading and families deserve to know the truth."

I am sure we would agree with that. Consumers are currently bombarded with information about hundreds of products on the market, all with different benefits and so-called "environmentally friendly" claims, so it is imperative that the UK Government help parents make informed consumer decisions.

Lastly, my new schedule 1 outlines that the relevant national authority will be undertaking actions to prepare a report on the steps taken

"to encourage local authorities to operate schemes to—
promote the use of reusable nappies, and
reduce nappy waste."

When drafting and preparing this report for local authorities, the national authority would have to consult

- "(a) operators of existing reusable nappy schemes,
- (b) local authorities involved in those schemes,
- (c) parents who have participated in such schemes,
- (d) manufacturers of reusable nappies."

The consultation period will help ensure that the eventual scheme to encourage the use of reusable nappies is as effective as possible.

We are currently in a climate emergency, so we must look seriously at all areas of our lives where we are adversely contributing to the global environmental disaster. Parents around the world will use nappies every day; it is therefore incredibly important that such an essential item for families does not continue to damage the environment. With millions of disposable nappies now in landfill, we have the opportunity to make a change. The babies in nappies today will inherit the world that we leave for them, and we owe it to that future generation to do all we can to protect their planet and pass on a better legacy.

The amendments that I have outlined clearly show the advantages of properly defining the environmental standards for reusable nappy products, as well as how important the schemes that promote them are. I hope

that the Government take this opportunity to support my amendments; they are a small step towards helping families make more environmentally conscious decisions, and I commend them to the House.

Neil Parish: In this second debate on the Environment Bill, I will speak to my amendment on air quality and in support of the amendment moved by the Opposition Front Bench.

The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee has done three inquiries on air quality in the last five years, and we are just about to publish our new air quality report. We need cleaner air across the UK, particularly in the hotspots of our cities, to improve public health. The Government are starting to take this issue very seriously, and I am glad that we have a clean air strategy that aims to cut air pollution significantly.

I am also pleased that the Bill places a duty on the Government to set two air quality targets by October 2022, one of which is for particulate matter in ambient air. However, we can and should act sooner, with an ambitious target. PM_{2.5} is one of the most dangerous particulates because of its size, which means that it can be deposited in our lungs. The covid-19 pandemic has also likely resulted in a new cohort of people with ongoing breathing problems who may be more vulnerable to the harmful effects of air pollution. That is why I tabled my amendment on PM_{2.5}. My amendment has cross-party support and seeks to put World Health Organisation guidelines for particulate matter into law, with an attainment deadline of 2030 at the latest. Ministers have said in the past that we should not accept such an amendment because we can be even more ambitious; so why not put the target in law today and then improve it afterwards, if we can do better?

It is important to work practically across the Government to improve air quality, because an ambitious target by itself is not going to fix the issue. In 2018, we did a Select Committee inquiry across four Select Committees to show how this issue can be solved by joined-up policy. DEFRA, the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government, the Department for Transport and the Treasury need to work closely on this issue, and I believe that they are starting to do so.

The Government are now investing huge amounts of money in greener transport including electric cars. I welcome the ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars by 2030. With more ultra low emissions vehicles, we need more charging stations, rapid chargers and other incentives to build confidence and help people to switch over to electric cars in the next decade. Road transport is one of the biggest causes of poor air quality, so this will help to reduce nitrogen dioxide and nitric oxide in the air we breathe.

We also need more walking and cycling in urban areas, because it is not just the fuel that is dangerous, but tyre wear and brakes. That is why I am glad that more help is being given to local authorities so that they can plan and implement clean air zones. I know that Bath and North East Somerset Council is meant to be introducing a clean air zone in March, with Birmingham City Council doing the same in June. But in Bristol, for example, the Mayor has no control of the M32, which goes straight through the middle of the city, because it is run by Highways England. This is exactly why we need a joined-up approach across Government to solve the issue of poor air quality.

The Government should amend the Bill, and accept this cross-party amendment on air quality as it comes back in the next Session. We have done so much work to improve air quality and the environment already. I know that the Minister is passionate about this issue. Let us not go backwards. Let us go the extra mile and put ambitious air quality targets in law today.

Bill Wiggin (North Herefordshire) (Con) [V]: I tabled new clause 3 to draw attention to the environmental challenge and penalties facing Herefordshire. First, let me be absolutely clear: nobody wants to see more pollution or phosphates in the river—nobody. However, due to the levels of phosphate in the Wye, we have an ill thought out and ineffective housebuilding moratorium, imposed on us by a Dutch court through EU law. Implemented in October 2013, this moratorium was enacted to try to address the phosphate pollution in the Rivers Wye and Lugg. This is a serious issue that requires proper and effective action. It was hoped that Herefordshire Council, Natural England and the Environment Agency, and their Welsh equivalents, could come up with a tangible solution by which the threat could be stopped. After recent calls that I have had with these bodies, it is clear that there is still some way to go. I therefore tabled this new clause to have the subject heard in the House.

The threat of phosphates in watercourses is well known. Herefordshire is by no means alone, nor is it the worst polluted area in the country. Indeed, the river winds its way out of Powys into Herefordshire, then back into Monmouthshire where it forms the border with Gloucestershire, yet only Herefordshire has a moratorium. In the Environment Agency's 2017 "State of the environment" report, 86% of English rivers had not reached good ecological status. High phosphate levels in the water can result in toxic algal blooms. These blooms deplete oxygen levels in the water by blocking out the light, resulting in fish and other organisms dying. The phosphates enter the watercourse through two primary means, the first being point source, where the main offender tends to be the sewage outlets—so called because it can generally be traced back to a wastewater pipe that is discharging into the river. The second means is diffuse sources, typically caused by run-off from agricultural land.

The ruling in Herefordshire occurred as a result of an EU legal case. On 7 November 2018, the Court of Justice of the European Union gave its judgment in two joined cases, which were related to the habitats directive and became known as the Dutch nitrogen case, or simply the Dutch case. The case in the Netherlands found that through their fertiliser application techniques, farmers were having a negative effect on EU-protected habitats. Assessments were required to be carried out to determine how to reverse and prevent further environmental damage. As a result of this ruling in a different country, Natural England updated its legal advice, which has since created significant problems for house builders in England, particularly those in Herefordshire.

This ruling has disproportionately affected the River Wye and the River Lugg. The Wye is a special area of conservation; the Lugg is a tributary of the Wye, and is designated as a site of special scientific interest. The Wye is the fourth longest river in England, and is home to plants such as water-crowfoot and wonderful Atlantic

salmon stocks. It is a wonderful river that we need to protect for the future, and the way that that is being done at the moment is ineffective. It is by no means the worst-performing river in the country when it comes to phosphate pollution, and this problem can and must be solved. We have had meetings with the council, the Environment Agency, and Natural England and its Welsh equivalents. We need collaboration, and we need to make sure that the Government will support an improvement to the phosphate levels so that we can get our river back to where it needs to be.

Dr James Davies (Vale of Clwyd) (Con) [V]: It is a pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for North Herefordshire (Bill Wiggin). As I indicated on Second Reading in February last year, I very much support the Bill and the focus that the Government are placing on our environment.

In February, I referred to flooding that had recently occurred in my constituency. Very regrettably, I must report that the heavy rainfall of Storm Christoph has brought further disruption to local residents and businesses. Last Wednesday, high waters flowing down the River Clwyd destroyed the 19th-century Llanerch bridge, connecting Trefnant and Tremeirchion. I have already raised the issue of that bridge's future with my hon. Friend the Minister, the local authority, and the Welsh historic environment service, Cadw. Such devastating events highlight the need for serious consideration of issues relating to water management. Increasing the responsibility of water companies and local authorities to plan how to manage flood risk more effectively is one way to reduce the impact of future floods, and I ask the Government to seriously consider the value of amendment 42, tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Sir Charles Walker).

I am pleased that the Bill further contributes to the Government's commitment to tackle air pollution. Clean air zones and the clean air strategy are important, as are the provisions in this Bill, but I believe that more can, and perhaps should, be done. A number of amendments that have been tabled seek to push the Government to improve air quality, including new clause 6 and amendment 2. The legal duty set out in the Bill to set a target for concentrations of the fine particulate matter known as PM_{2.5} could reduce the 36,000 annual deaths in Britain, primarily through cardiovascular and respiratory disease, that are linked to air pollution. Air quality will improve as a consequence of our national move towards net zero by 2050, but setting a bold target can act as an important driver in the interim.

7 pm

Many believe that the Government's targets should match existing WHO guidelines and that this should be achieved by 2030. As the Bill stands, the Secretary of State will commission independent expert advice on an appropriate target. I would suggest that those advising the WHO are perhaps the most qualified that there are, and I would gently press the Minister to ensure that we set ambitious targets rather than convenient ones. A 2030 deadline would be yet another commitment that we could point to, showing that the UK was leading the world on environmental standards.

I acknowledge that setting targets is an easier task than achieving them, but another goal that the Government can set is on plastic reduction. As new clause 8 seeks to acknowledge, reduction of the use of new materials is

important. However, more pressing still is the agenda promoted by new clause 11—namely, the setting of either long-term or short-term targets for the sale of single-use plastics. The key to meeting any single-use plastics target could be an efficient deposit return scheme. However, at a meeting with me last year, British Glass raised concerns that in Germany, Finland and Croatia, the inclusion of glass in deposit return schemes had led to an overall increase in the use of plastics. Such outcomes in the UK would, of course, be disappointing. Delivery of a DRS could also be supported through the use of technology. In December, I wrote to the Minister inquiring about the use of barcodes and mobile phone apps to deliver a digital DRS, which could help to reduce street litter. I would value further engagement on this important issue.

In the year that we host COP26 and chair the G7, this Bill is essential to show the United Kingdom's true commitment to the environment. I hope that Ministers will consider the well-intentioned amendments that I have spoken about, and I trust that progress on the remaining stages of the Bill will be swift.

John McDonnell (Hayes and Harlington) (Lab) [V]: I want to speak briefly in support of amendments 2 and 25 and new clause 6, all of which seek to tackle the health crisis caused by the current levels of air pollution. For my constituents living in a permanent air pollution blizzard, surrounded by Heathrow airport, the M4, the M25, the Uxbridge Road and the A40, this is literally a matter of life and death, and we have the threat of a third runway making matters worse.

The air pollution levels in my area are among the worst in the country and consistently above levels that are considered safe. The result is, of course, high levels of respiratory disease. At one stage, this reached such epidemic levels that I recall special arrangements having to be introduced in one of our primary schools for pupils to hand in their inhalers as they arrived in class, and courses were introduced for teachers across our borough in how to deal with asthmatic attacks and respiratory problems in pupils. But we know so much more now in my community about the impact of air pollution. It is not just about respiratory problems; it is the cause of heart disease among many of us, as well as cancers and, tragically for our children, even the risk of impeding their physical development.

The modest amendments that we propose today simply enhance our ability to tackle the air pollution epidemic. They set realistic targets. They require Government Departments to work together and they ensure through regular reports to Parliament that we can monitor their implementation. They also inject a sense of urgency into a programme of action to overcome the mounting threat of air pollution. The air my constituents breathe every day is poisoned by air pollution. It is killing us. Knowing as we do the tragic health impacts of air pollution, we have a responsibility to legislate to protect not only my constituents but communities across the country. That is what these amendments can assist us in doing.

Failure to act decisively now will render the Government and Parliament culpable of an appalling dereliction of duty, and future generations will simply fail to comprehend why we did not take the necessary action in this legislation. I urge Ministers to work with us on this and to accept

[John McDonnell]

the amendments and the new clause. Let us tackle this ongoing, life-threatening hazard once and for all. We desperately need this legislation to be effective this time round. It has already been delayed. We cannot wait any longer. Too many people are suffering ill-health and risking their lives. The covid pandemic has made them even more vulnerable. That is why there has to be a sense of urgency about passing this legislation, but ensuring it is complete and comprehensive so that this opportunity is not wasted.

Philip Dunne [V]: It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell). I thank him for his support for my private Member's Bill, which I will touch on briefly. But my thanks primarily go to the Minister, who was generous while talking about my campaigning efforts to improve the water quality of our rivers, which I wish to talk about under part 5 and, in particular, in support of amendment 3 to clause 82 and amendment 42 to clause 78.

It has been clear to me for many years, but particularly this year as I have been campaigning to improve water quality by reducing sewage pollution in our rivers, how significant this issue has tragically become. Many people have been in touch with me through campaigning groups, all urging the Government to get behind my Bill.

I was delighted on Friday, when I was unable to be in the Chamber to debate my private Member's Bill because sittings had been suspended, that as something of a consolation prize the Minister announced the Government's support for the aims of my Bill. I look forward to a second consolation from the unfortunate development today—we hear that the Environment Bill will be deferred until the next parliamentary Session. I invite the Minister to use that time to work with me to bring into the appropriate legislative and regulatory space the many measures in my Bill that have significant support: they have support from 135 Members of this House today, on both sides of the House. I hope that, when she responds to the debate, she will make some encouraging noises to give me hope that that will happen. I am also grateful to her for establishing the storm overflows taskforce, which is the mechanism through which she is seeking to get advice from industry and campaigning groups to try to identify the measures that need to be undertaken.

Through the Environmental Audit Committee, we have launched an inquiry into water quality and we will be providing recommendations to the Government. The delay may mean that we are in a position to provide some recommendations through that Committee prior to the Bill appearing in the other place. I very much hope that the Minister will be able to use this time to introduce relevant amendments to the Bill as it passes through the Lords. We also hope to provide some help in assessing what the suitable water targets are under the Bill, which are so welcome, through the drainage and wastewater management plans laid out in the Bill.

I support the measures that I am sure my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Sir Charles Walker) will talk about shortly. I also support the initiative of my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Chris Grayling), whose new clause 4 is widely supported by my constituents, not least members of the British

Hedgehog Preservation Society, which is based in my constituency. It acknowledged the inclusion in July last year of the hedgehog in the red list of endangered British mammals.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): After the next speaker, I will have to reduce the time limit for Back-Bench speeches to three minutes, but with four minutes, I call Sir Charles Walker.

Sir Charles Walker (Broxbourne) (Con): Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. I rise to speak to my amendment 3 to clause 82, which is signed by me and 16 colleagues, and which has also secured support from other speakers tonight. The Minister said that I was going to give an impassioned speech. I am afraid I am not, because it has been so easy doing business with her. Is it not wonderful in this place when we can sit down with Ministers and do business?

Before I move on, I would like to thank some chalk stream campaigners: Paul Jennings of the River Chess; Charles Rangeley-Wilson; Dr Jonathan Fisher; Jake Rigg of Affinity; Richard Aylard of Thames Water; and of course the Angling Trust and Fish Legal.

To support rich biodiversity, chalk streams need two things: high flows and high-quality water. A lot of debate in this place centres on rewilding, and rewilding often centres on beavers—wonderful little creatures; I knew a lot of them when I was in Oregon—but the fact of the matter is that proper rewilding of our chalk streams requires good-quality water, and plenty of it. Without those two things, we do not have freshwater shrimp and fly life at the bottom of the food chain, we do not have trout and grayling, we do not have water voles and we do not have otters.

Clause 82 provides the Secretary of State with powers to modify abstraction licences without compensation where

“the ground for revoking or varying the licence is that the Secretary of State is satisfied the revocation or variation is necessary—

- (i) having regard to a relevant environmental objective, or
- (ii) to otherwise protect the water environment from damage.”

Our amendment would add the words

“including damage from low flows.”

The Secretary of State and the Minister at the Dispatch Box today said that they could not accept that amendment because it might limit the scope of the clause, and I understand that. However, I received a welcome letter from the Secretary of State and the Minister on 25 January, and that letter made it clear that the accompanying guidance to the Bill once it becomes an Act, in giving life to the legislation, will make it clear that—I quote from the Ministers' letter—“the reference to damage includes damage caused by low flow levels in a river due to unsustainable abstraction.”

That is an important commitment. I have discussed it with the water companies—with Water UK, which is their representative body—and they are very keen for that guidance to be issued. They want to do the right thing. In doing the right thing, they will have to have negotiations with Ofwat, and they will need to be able to point to guidance that has legal force in support of their position.

Steve Brine: As a fellow signatory of amendment 3, I congratulate my hon. Friend on getting that commitment. He knows that I am fortunate to have the River Itchen in my constituency. This is a preventive measure. We have good flows and good-quality water, which is why we have a world-class chalk stream, and we want to keep it that way. The amendment really helps to do that, so on behalf of the River Itchen lovers, I thank the Minister very much.

Sir Charles Walker: I thank my hon. Friend for making that intervention, which is important. Sixteen people signed the amendment along with me, and my hon. Friend, who is a doughty campaigner for the Itchen, was one of those valuable signatories.

In the time left, I will refer briefly to my other amendment, amendment 42 to clause 78, with regard to drainage and sewerage management plans, regulations and procedures. I tipped the Minister off that I would raise this briefly. The amendment seeks to deliver the National Infrastructure Commission's recommendation that water companies and local authorities should publish plans to manage surface water flood risk. In short, it seeks to ensure that everyone operating drains or pushing water into rivers, and all flood risk management authorities, such as the Environment Agency and local authorities, co-operates and shares information on the preparation of drainage and wastewater management plans. The water companies want to make sure that this is a team effort. Lots of nasty stuff goes into our rivers from a lot of different places. The water companies want to get on top of the situation and to work with other agencies to make sure that happens.

I conclude by thanking the Minister for how she has dealt with me and the other signatories to amendment 3. It has been an exemplar of how to do business with Back-Bench Members of Parliament.

7.15 pm

Rosie Duffield (Canterbury) (Lab) [V]: We have lost many of the safety nets provided by membership of the European Union. This skeletal, post-Brexit Environment Bill is somewhat disappointing, unambitious and the opposite of progressive, but it is currently the only mechanism we have in Parliament to protect basic standards and try to build on them. This is not—nor should it be—a partisan political issue; it is an issue for every single human being. It has therefore been reassuring to hear of the many important amendments from Members from all parties.

If I was to represent my constituents' many concerns in this debate, I would have to speak for several hours, not the few minutes we have been allocated. I represent a beautiful part of Kent that has a varied coastal and rural geography and is home to several farmers and wine producers. Our farmers work hard to uphold the highest standards of environmental responsibility, and my constituents are in regular contact about wildlife, protecting our vital pollinators, the unethical concreting over of our precious green spaces and the short-sightedness of building on floodplains.

In May 2019, Parliament declared an environmental emergency. Although this is obviously partly due to events beyond the control of Parliament, it feels at times as though we are plodding towards any meaningful

change, when we should be racing at full speed against the clock to stop the devastating damage that climate change is wreaking on our planet. Adults around the world make and change laws, yet it is children who are dragging us to do so—crying out for us to notice that we have a duty to protect those who will have custody of the world after we are gone. I am talking about children such as Greta, who has led a global network of young people and become a household name.

Another child we remember today is Ella Kissi-Debrah. I am glad that her name will yet again be in *Hansard*, but deeply sad about and ashamed of why that is. Instead of being remembered as the bright and happy nine-year-old girl her mother Rosamund tells us about, Ella should now be 17-year-old young woman thinking about the next stage of her education and looking forward to and embracing adult life. But that opportunity was stolen from her as her little lungs gulped in a toxic cocktail of lethal pollutants. All she was doing was breathing. Her mother has battled to get a verdict from the coroner that proves how poisonous the air that our children breathe actually is. We need to support the amendments that promote improvements in air pollution—we need to get behind those amendments—so I urge all colleagues to vote to improve air quality and protect any more Ellas and the children who will inherit this planet from us.

Mr Virendra Sharma (Ealing, Southall) (Lab) [V]: The Government do not seem to appreciate the dire position we are in, for although our air is far cleaner today than at any point in our lives, some communities have not seen the benefits. My constituency is one of them. We know that deprivation and race make us more susceptible to pollution. We in Ealing, Southall are suffering because of that and, cruelly, the system keeps making things worse. This is a matter of justice and equity.

Last week, at the communities of colour meeting on air pollution, I met Rosamund Adoo-Kissi-Debrah, a woman driven to secure change for her daughter Ella, who was killed by pollution. Her story is a powerful one that is sadly repeated all too often across the country, because there is never really a safe limit for air quality. Sadly, the most polluting activities tend to be left in the worst of places.

Campaigns such as CASH—Clean Air for Southall and Hayes—in my constituency are saying no and holding us all to account. For thousands living near the gasworks, this is an issue of equity. That is why action must be targeted on the areas with the most polluted air today. People are dying and this Government deny the problem.

Environmental justice has to be available to all, or it is available to no one. Please, Ministers, act so that the Environment Agency can. Act so that Public Health England can. You can give justice to thousands who are without it today. Your Government say that pollution contributes to more than 30,000 excess deaths a year. Ella's is just one story in thousands. Act for all of them.

Mark Pawsey (Rugby) (Con) [V]: I speak as chairman of the all-party group on the packaging manufacturing industry, an important part of the UK economy with sales of £11 billion and 85,000 employees, representing 3% of the workforce, and I draw attention to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests.

[Mark Pawsey]

Packaging performs an important function. It is part of the delivery system within complex logistics to enable products to get safely and efficiently from the point of production to the consumer for use or consumption, and it has an important role in preventing damage in transit and extending the life of food products by keeping them fresher for longer. The industry is keen to ensure that the environmental impact of its product is minimised through, first, more recycling of all the materials used in packaging, and that should be carried out within the UK; and, secondly, reductions in the amount of packaging ending its life in the wrong place, which we know as litter, whether that is in the UK or in our oceans. For these reasons, I welcome the provisions in the resources and waste chapter of the Bill, but with so many of them contained in secondary legislation, I wonder whether I can ask for clarity from the Minister on a number of measures.

Will there be continued consultation with the industry on these measures, and will the Minister ensure that the UK industry can continue to remain competitive? There is no merit in simply transferring packaging manufacture overseas. On extensions to producer responsibility, we know that retailers and manufacturers will pay a bigger proportion—in fact, many times more—of the cost of recycling and disposing of packaging, a cost that previously fell on local councils. It is argued that that moves the burden from the taxpayer to the polluter, but it is not the packaging manufacturer that is the polluter—people are—and I hope that improved education and awareness of the local environment will accompany these measures.

We welcome the introduction of a deposit return scheme, but will the Minister confirm that this will be a UK-wide scheme, including Scotland, so that manufacturers do not have to carry two separate sets of stock? Will she advise whether there will be a single deposit, regardless of container size? Can she ensure that we will not simply divert recycling that currently takes place on the kerbside to the DRS? Will she ensure that we include consistent household recycling, including plastic films and flexibles? We know that different local authorities collecting different things has led to very substantial confusion, with only 14% of councils currently collecting flexible materials.

I look forward to the Minister's clarification on many of these items in her winding-up speech at the end of the debate.

Feryal Clark (Enfield North) (Lab) [V]: I support all the amendments put forward by my hon. Friends the Members for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport (Luke Pollard) and for Newport West (Ruth Jones) on air quality. The World Health Organisation has clearly stated that 40 of our towns are breaking the WHO limit for air pollution. We also know that 60% of people in England are living in areas where levels of toxic air pollution exceeded legal limits last year. We know that severe air pollution costs lives, with over 40,000 deaths a year being linked to air pollution.

The impacts of air pollution are not evenly distributed, either, with a disproportionate impact on deprived areas. Research has shown that those living in deprived areas are exposed to higher concentrations of air pollution, often because their homes are situated next to roads with higher concentrations of emissions. The Marmot

report also highlighted that individuals in deprived areas suffer more adverse health impacts than those from less deprived areas, because of higher prevalence of underlying cardio, respiratory and other diseases. In my constituency of Enfield North we see the direct effect of poor air quality. In the borough of Enfield, 6.6% of deaths are attributed to exposure to particulate matter 2.5 pollution. That means that 178 deaths per year in Enfield are linked to long-term exposure to toxic air pollution.

Despite the work of proactive local authorities, pioneering new initiatives like school streets, parklets, low-traffic neighbourhoods or the 60-acre Enfield Chase woodland created by the Labour-run Enfield Council planting almost 200,000 trees, and the work of Mayor of London in introducing the ultra low emission zone, action cannot just take place at a local level; it needs to be backed by national and international legislation. It is too important not to be.

These amendments on air pollution, which I am urging the Government to support today, do not represent a radical step but the bare minimum that we must do as a country. The impact of the amendments would be to establish the WHO legal standard. In the fight against coronavirus, we have shown that working in partnership with international colleagues is vital. Addressing air quality and protecting the environment is no different. We have the opportunity to set the country on a course that will protect lives and advocate stronger environmental protections. This is not just an issue about public health; it is something that impacts our daily lives. We must vote in support of these amendments to ensure that we lead the way, instead of hiding away.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): Ah—Jerome Mayhew. I had just been informed that he did not want to take part in the debate, but I see that he is there.

Jerome Mayhew (Broadland) (Con) [V]: Madam Deputy Speaker, please would you accept my apologies for the confusion that I have managed to cause?

I wish to speak on new clause 6 and amendments 3 and 30 and—if I am permitted by you—to make significant reference to amendment 39, although we have already voted on it.

New clause 6 deals with air quality. I absolutely recognise the challenge of poor air quality, and a number of hon. Members have spoken very movingly about it during the debates this afternoon and this evening, but I am not sure how the creation of an annual policy statement to the House is the best way to address that. We already have a range of existing reporting requirements available to Ministers, as well as two new ones contained in the Bill. They include a new requirement for the Secretary of State to make an annual statement to Parliament on local pollution objectives, in addition to publishing a national air quality strategy every five years.

Amendments 3 and 30 both deal with water quality—with flow rates—and again there is a suggestion that an annual report on water abstraction would be an effective way of improving standards. I question whether that is the right way to approach the subject. When requirements are introduced for such onerous statements, they are effective in increasing costs and increasing delay and the bureaucracy of Government, but I am not sure that they are effective on the ground.

In my constituency of Broadland I am lucky enough to have a number of chalk streams, including the Stiffkey and the Wensum, and I have experience of the Environment Agency and its approach to water extraction licences. To my mind, a much more effective way of policing water abstraction and flow is to use the powers already given to the Environment Agency to deal with abstraction licences—I hope, in co-operation and collaboration with abstractors, which include farmers. I declare my interest as a director of a farming business.

Finally I should like to turn to amendment 39, because its target was very squarely the sugar beet growers and the sugar beet processors of the east of England. EU law has rightly allowed for short-term exemptions to the rules on plant protection products in the event of a virulent outbreak of disease. This year, that is exactly what we have had with virus yellows, so I think the Government are entirely right to allow the exemption with a huge number of protections for bees and other pollinators. To require an obstructive vote in the House would be a backward step.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): Order. I did not want to interrupt the hon. Gentleman but, no, it is not in order for him to have spoken to amendments contained in the previous group. It is not in order. I make the point because I could not reasonably interrupt him in the circumstances in which we are working, but we do expect Members to stick to the rules and not to bend them just because we are working virtually. It is important to keep up standards.

I call Barry Sheerman.

7.30 pm

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op) [V]: Thank you for calling me from Huddersfield, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have been involved in the environmental campaigning sector for all my political parliamentary career, and I have learned the hard lesson that if we do not have good science working purposefully in partnership with the private sector right across the spectrum and building coalitions, we do not get the action that we need.

Today, I am saddened that there will be a further delay in the Environment Bill coming into a living reality. I believe that it is the right of children and all of us in this country to breathe clean air, to have pure water, to be able to swim in the rivers and streams, and to have healthy soil that has not been contaminated and degraded. We could achieve some good purposes in partnership, and I call for that partnership to have great leadership. Sometimes I am not sure whether there is enough purpose, partnership and leadership in this present Government. I remember too many articles in a certain well-known magazine, *The Spectator*, which always seems to feature climate change doubters. The fact of the matter is that many of them have been proven absolutely wrong by good science and the work led by David Attenborough.

We need to do things at home, in our constituencies. As chair of the Westminster Commission for Road Air Quality, I can tell the House today that we are launching a constituency service that gives the quality of air in every constituency, along with the number of electric vehicles, the number of charging points and a whole range of criteria, so that Members know just how the polluted air in their constituencies is affecting their constituents.

We need to roll up our sleeves and get this sorted out. When I came into Parliament, we were known as the dirty person of Europe, and we were burying all our waste in holes in the ground. We have moved on through good science, good partnership and working together. I am an optimist and I think we can sort out climate change, but we will not do it unless we get purposeful and determined leadership in this country.

Laura Farris (Newbury) (Con) [V]: This Bill is so much more than the sum of its parts. It is best described as a prism through which the panoply of wider environmental policies, many of which will be a key part of the covid recovery response, should be viewed. Whether we are talking about phasing out petrol vehicles, encouraging cycling or planting trees, this Bill creates the framework through which targets can be set and the environmental benefits can be measured. For the first time, air quality and water quality are not just afterthoughts but are at the heart of policy making.

I want to pay tribute to some of the environmental groups in my constituency: Action for the River Kennet for the transformational work that it has done on chalk streams, and the West Berkshire Climate Action Network and the West Berkshire Green Exchange for all that they do.

First, I would like to address water quality. I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Philip Dunne) for his private Member's Bill, which places statutory obligations on water companies that are discharging sewage into rivers. Obviously, his private Member's Bill dovetails neatly with amendments 3 and 42, proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Sir Charles Walker). Although the Government have not said exactly what they want on this, I am very grateful to the Minister for her correspondence last night and her general tone, which makes it clear that the Government are in broad agreement.

This is an issue that is very close to my heart. In the last year, we have had terrible flooding in the eastern part of my constituency at Eastbury, but particularly Lambourn, where sewage has floated up to the road surface, run along a road past the children's school and then flowed freely into the River Lambourn, which is one of our most treasured chalk streams. One of my early experiences as a new MP was just how difficult I found it to get any real remedy for my constituents when that happened.

Finally, I would like to talk about air pollution, which we know poses the biggest environmental hazard to public health. I understand the sentiment that sits behind new clause 6, which was proposed by the Opposition, asking the Government to publish an annual policy statement setting out what they and local authorities plan to do, but I think it is superfluous for three reasons. First, setting targets is already embedded in clauses 1 and 2 of the Bill. Secondly, the Secretary of State already creates an obligation on themselves to declare whether the significant improvement test in relation to air quality has been met under clause 8. Finally, there is the establishment of the Office for Environmental Protection, which is not just an oversight body, but has real teeth and powers of enforcement, so the Government are not marking their own homework in this regard.

Anthony Mangnall (Totnes) (Con): I had high hopes of being able to start my speech by speaking the words of Margaret Thatcher in 1989 when she addressed the United Nations on the issue of climate change—she outlined the destruction and damage that was facing the world unless action was taken—but, sadly, there is not enough time to be able to read out the full quotation. However, those words are true now, and there is more that can be done.

I welcome the Government's announcement today, their report and their Bill for what they do in addressing waste, water and air quality. These are all things that, as a triumvirate, must be addressed so that we are able to regain our control over the environment and help it to flourish in years to come. Of course, the Government have already set a number of ambitious targets—from net zero for 2050 to ending the sale of petrol and diesel cars by 2030, eradicating gas boilers, planting more trees and looking at new agricultural regenerative techniques. These are the ambitious things that we must do.

I would like to start by talking a little bit about waste. As my hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Chris Loder) has already mentioned, there is an important element here about ending single-use plastics, but we can do more. I ask whether the Government might consider incentivising businesses to ensure that we have full-cycle plastics that are used from cradle to grave, and then recycled. We can incentivise the industries that pollute this world to make sure that they are adhering more to the rules and regulations of countries across the world.

In my own constituency, air quality has remained an incredibly important issue. The A385 runs through my patch, next to a school, which has some of the highest levels of pollution in south Devon, and planning development alongside it is likely to further add to that problem. It is the same in Brixham, where the new Inglewood development would see roads and traffic increased, leading to further pollution of air quality. These are the things that we must take into account when we are building, improving infrastructure and developing for our entire community.

On water, my right hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Philip Dunne) has done so impressively well on his private Member's Bill, something I have supported since coming to this place. I look forward to seeing what he brings back to the House and how the Government work further with him, but as a keen swimmer all year round—without a wetsuit, I hasten to add—I am very keen that we do all we can to improve the quality of our waterways and of our coastline, and to ensure that we are able to improve the way in which we engage on these issues, especially with groups such as Surfers Against Sewage.

The need to be able to discuss how reports might come to this place was raised under new clause 6, but I would say that we do have the Environment Agency reports that come to Parliament and are reported on, but we also have the OEP, which I think is very welcome as it enables us to take a hold on our environment and improve it.

Tim Farron [V]: On the air quality amendments, the targets in this Bill do not even meet those recommended by the World Health Organisation, as has been said by other Members. That should rightly alarm all of us, especially given that the UK has such a terrible track

record in recent years. When we were a member of the EU, it fined us regularly for failing to meet the targets set at that point. Air quality standards are of the utmost importance, and for the Government to under-aim and be under-ambitious here is deeply troubling. We are being asked to accept not only decreased air quality standards, but delayed standards, as this Bill is pushed back once again, after years of delay. Yet, tragically, we now increasingly see poor air quality cited as a cause of death on the death certificates of many, many people. As many colleagues from both sides of the House have said, this is a matter of life and death. Delayed action at this time, in the hiatus between the strong targets and standards we had up to the end of 2020 and the point at which we get whatever standards we will get when this Bill is finally agreed, allows bad habits to build up and bed in, and it makes Britain's poor air quality harder still to clear up.

On waste, the absence of plastic reduction targets beggars belief, given the rhetoric we have heard from many in the Government. The Conservative manifesto made a specific reference—a promise even—to

“ban the export of plastic waste”

to developing countries. The Government have broken that promise. So not only are they not tackling our plastic problem here at home, but we are adding to the plastic problem of poorer countries overseas.

My amendment 30 related to water quality. We simply want the Government to monitor the impact of the abstraction of water on biodiversity in chalk streams and in other waterways. This Bill does not do that, and it is a simple and obvious request. Only 14% of England's rivers and lakes are in a good state at the moment, so the need for this measure is clear.

So we see an unambitious Bill and a delay, which means even this poor ambition will be hard to bring to fruition, given that we will have to wait many months. This takes commitment to underachievement to new heights, undermining the quality of our environment and animal welfare. These are times when we need to be setting clear and ambitious targets if we are going to lead the world, but I am afraid that we are lagging far behind.

Duncan Baker (North Norfolk) (Con): It has been a pleasure to serve on the Environmental Audit Committee and discuss a number of topics that form part of this landmark Environment Bill through our inquiries. Our Chair, my right hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Philip Dunne), has campaigned tirelessly for better water quality and no doubt through his work we have in this Bill sewerage undertakers now being required to produce a statutory drainage and sewerage management plan to actively address environmental risks such as sewer overflows and their impact on water quality.

Without doubt, this Bill paves the way for the Government to continue putting the environment at the very heart of their decision making, with legally binding targets on biodiversity, air quality and waste efficiency just a few of a plethora of new ambitions. I was heartened by the Minister's opening comments on plastic pollution and new clause 11. As an MP for 50 miles of stunning North Norfolk coast, I am glad that provisions in this Bill will help to reduce plastics on our beaches. This new clause would require the Secretary of State to set targets to reduce plastic pollution and reduce the volume of non-essential single-use plastic products sold.

If plastic pollution continues at current rates, plastic in the oceans will outweigh fish by 2050. There is a strong public appetite for action: 63% of people want to reduce their consumption of plastic, and 77% want the Government to take more action to protect the ocean, so I am glad that this is being covered.

7.45 pm

While on the subject of water, I want to touch on amendment 4. Since my election to this place, we have seen so often how we can strive for absolutes in an imperfect world, and that we cannot always pass legislation to deal with one problem because it will affect another. Amendment 4 tries to define the precautionary principle. In my constituency, the precautionary principle has been used as almost a get-out-of-jail-free card against farmers needing to abstract water when there have been differing levels of evidence on the extent of their activities and the resulting impact on the environment. It is a perfect case in point. Our farmers produce food. They are, in fact, one of the leading industries that will help to protect our environment through the Agriculture Bill, yet no account is taken of the balance of good in what they do when the precautionary principle is used.

We are making enormous strides to protect the environment, to decarbonise, to enhance the natural world and to improve air quality and water quality, and we can see that that is being done through the framework of this landmark Environment Bill.

Barry Gardiner [V]: The UK creates the second highest amount of electronic waste in the world, and we export 40% of that waste to other countries, most of them developing nations. How crazy is that, when that waste contains the rare earth metals and the other valuable metals that we need for our wind turbines, our mobile phone batteries and our car batteries? It is insanity. That is why I support new clause 8, which aims to ensure that the Secretary of State implements the waste hierarchy with specific emphasis on waste prevention, rather than simply waste management.

I turn to amendment 24. Since 2007, the REACH directive has provided a database to assess the risk of more than 21,000 chemical substances in the UK, and it obliges manufacturers to manage the risk of dangerous chemicals. This amendment is very simple. It means that there is a risk that the UK could become a dumping ground for hazardous chemicals unless we maintain the same standards that we had previously.

While talking about risk, let me turn to air quality. We have got used to understanding risk much better with covid and the statistics that we have seen every night on our television screens, but let us imagine if, on our television screens every night, we saw that in many areas of our country, one in 19 deaths can be linked to poor air quality—to air pollution. That is the level of risk. I tend to agree with what the hon. Member for Broadland (Jerome Mayhew) said about new clause 6: what difference will it make for the Secretary of State to report to Parliament once a year, given that the Government were not prepared to meet the legal obligation by 2015 and had to be taken to the Supreme Court twice? But perhaps we should at least try.

This whole Bill is about our 25-year environment plan and leaving our environment in a better state than we inherited it. That means that we have to understand

the whole nexus of connections that exist. That is why the Dasgupta report coming out later this month on the economics of biodiversity and the value of natural capital is so vital, to understand that we must balance the burden of costs that each part of society pays for our public goods.

Alex Davies-Jones (Pontypridd) (Lab) [V]: It is an honour to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Brent North (Barry Gardiner) in this important debate. Hundreds of residents from Pontypridd and across Rhondda Cynon Taff have contacted me over the last few weeks urging me to speak up today, and I know that people's passion for the environment is certainly not limited to the south Wales valleys. I will, however, take this opportunity to mention the fantastic work that Friends of the Earth Pontypridd does to raise awareness of environmental issues; long may its work continue.

On a personal note, I am the very proud co-chair of the all-party group on water, and I sincerely hope, Madam Deputy Speaker, that you will indulge me with the brief opportunity to invite and encourage Members across the House to join the all-party group today. We are always open to new members.

Members may not be aware, but my love for all things water began long before I became a Member of this House, as I was previously an employee of Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water, the not-for-profit water company. Through my work, I have seen at first hand the impact of waste on our environment and also the benefits of investing in our infrastructure to ensure that we have a fit-for-purpose waste water network, both now and into the future. It is because of this that I would like to place on record my support for new clause 10, tabled in the name of my friend, the hon. Member for Glasgow East (David Linden). Items may be marketed as flushable, but I can assure Members that disposable nappies, wet wipes and all manner of items flushed down toilets can cause utter devastation to people's homes and our environment.

This Environment Bill is very welcome as it could make real change that could improve our ecology both now and for future generations. I represent a constituency that was decimated by flooding nearly a year ago. Storms Jorge, Dennis, and Ciara devastated businesses in Pontypridd and they are still trying to recover. This highlights the urgency of the climate emergency that the planet is in. We can build all the flood defences possible, but unless we seek to tackle the root causes of climate change, then they will be the equivalent of King Canute trying simply to hold back the tide.

It seems quite obvious to me that the protections for our environment should be included in legislation. While I welcome the opportunity to speak on the Bill today, I believe that, in its current form, there are some alarming gaps. The Bill does not go far enough to replace the EU's environmental protections, and, in its current form, the Bill allows the Secretary of State far too much discretion in changing certain environmental benchmarks or targets. That is why I am encouraged by new clause 8, tabled in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Newport West (Ruth Jones), who is a very good friend. As previously mentioned by others, this clause would ensure that the Secretary of State has a specific responsibility to take into account the requirements of the waste

[Alex Davies-Jones]

hierarchy. Additionally, this new clause prioritises the importance of waste prevention—a move that we should unanimously support.

I would hate for this Government to apply the same approach to some of the amendments today intended to improve our environmental protections and I hope to see cross-party support for this amendment. I urge Members across the House to support the amendments, because we must act now before it is too late.

Anthony Browne (South Cambridgeshire) (Con) [V]: As chair of the all-party parliamentary environment group and as a member of the Environment Bill Committee, I very strongly welcome this Bill. As we have heard, it may not give everything that everyone wants, but it is a huge step forward in protecting the planet. I really welcome the ambition of the Government and the Minister to work towards that.

I want to focus my comments on water, which is, in many ways, at the heart of this Bill. I have three particular things. The water management schemes will help to move water from wetter parts of the country to drier parts of the country. In South Cambridgeshire and East Anglia, we are one of the driest parts of the country and we need more water. I very much welcome the work of my right hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Philip Dunne) to reduce sewage outflows into rivers. Again, I welcome the fact that the Government have introduced that in the body of this Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Sir Charles Walker) has been a champion for chalk streams and I very much welcome his amendment 3 to clause 82, which would revoke or vary abstraction licences, or give the Secretary of State the power to do so, if rivers run dry. Again, the Government have introduced that in the heart of the Bill, so more water, less sewage—what more could we want?

The reason why I focus my comments on chalk streams is that they run like a network of silver threads throughout South Cambridgeshire—the River Cam most famously, but also many of its tributaries such as the River Shep, which runs down to the RSPB reserve at Fowlmere, the village that I grew up in. I remember playing in the chalk streams as a child. They were so clear that the fish looked like they were floating in the air. The chalk streams are very rare, very beautiful and very threatened. I went back to the RSPB reserve in Fowlmere during the election campaign and it was bone dry. It was not that the chalk streams were running low; they were not there at all. I went there again recently, there was some water back in the streams, but no wildlife. The wildlife cannot survive if the streams run dry. I have been working with local campaign groups, particularly Water Resources East and Cam Valley Forum, to help save the chalk streams. I thank the Minister and her officials for their time, because I know that they have been doing a lot of work with us on that—in particular, setting up a chalk stream working group. I welcome the Government's move to protect chalk streams by giving the Secretary of State the powers to revoke or vary licences if chalk streams run dry. That will bring a ray of hope to the chalk stream campaigners of South Cambridgeshire.

I want to leave the Government with this challenge: when Parliament votes on this Bill, it will vote to give the Government powers to save the chalk streams. If the chalk streams are threatened, I ask them please to make sure that they use those powers.

Robbie Moore: I start by referring the House to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests. I also declare that my family run and operate a plastic recycling business.

There is of course much to talk about in this Bill, but in the short time that I have, I want to talk about rivers and, in particular, improving water quality. The state of some of our rivers today is quite frankly shocking: 40% of all rivers in England and Wales are now polluted with human sewage. That not only threatens aquatic species such as trout and grayling that we might find in the River Wharfe in Ilkley in my constituency, but it is a threat to our own human health. Much praise must be given to my right hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Philip Dunne) for his Sewage (Inland Waters) Bill, which is a fantastic piece of proposed legislation which, as he knows, I wholeheartedly support. I am delighted that the Government have decided to adopt it and encompass so many of its measures within this Bill. My delight also stems from my constituency, because ever since I was elected to this place in December 2019, protecting rivers and improving water quality has been a crucial priority for me.

In Ilkley, for far too long untreated sewage has been released into the River Wharfe by Yorkshire Water at times of high rainfall. We have a dedicated team at the Ilkley clean river campaign group, which has been running a long and very successful campaign to clean up rivers. I have supported them in their endeavours to do so ever since entering this place. By working together as a community, there is so much that can be achieved. My thanks go out to all who are involved in that campaign.

I am very pleased that the Government will be placing on a statutory footing an obligation on sewerage companies to make drainage and water management plans, and that the Government will be setting clear water quality targets. However, may I make a plea to the Minister as a follow-up to the many conversations that we have already had on this point? As she is aware, the Ilkley section of the River Wharfe has now been granted bathing water status—one of the highest levels of water quality anywhere in the UK. However, while I am delighted with DEFRA's decision to grant such a mechanism for providing strict regulation to improve water quality, it is important that we recognise the difference between bathing and clean water status, as many strong undercurrents within a river can cause difficulty for swimming, as has previously happened in the Wharfe. I urge the Government, in future, perhaps to look at a rebranding of such status, as the title of bathing water status can be misleading to the public.

This is a good Bill that I wholeheartedly support. I truly believe that it is the start of a greener, cleaner environment for the future of Great Britain.

Geraint Davies [V]: [Inaudible.]

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): Order. Something is wrong with the sound. [Interruption.] It is not possible to go to the next person until we stop the

video link that is not working. Is somebody listening to me? I apologise to the hon. Gentleman for the system not working properly and for him not knowing that it was not working. We will now go to Kerry McCarthy.

Kerry McCarthy [V]: Labour's new clause 8 would require the Secretary of State to take account of the waste hierarchy. From food waste to plastic pollution, the starting point should be to prevent waste from occurring in the first place. I hope that when this Bill reaches the other place, we will further debate our global carbon footprint and the need to bring proposals to COP26 to measure consumption, not just production. Promoting the circular economy should be at the absolute heart of any green recovery package. At present, we have disincentives to send waste to landfill but very few mechanisms to encourage compliance further up the hierarchy, and virtually no enforcement either, because the Environment Agency simply does not have the resources to do so.

Turning to the amendments on air pollution, we have heard about the tragic death of nine-year-old Ella Kissi-Debrah, and we also know that covid has left many people extra-vulnerable with long-term damage to their lungs. As we mark today the horrific milestone of over 100,000 covid deaths and many more infected, I urge the Minister to think again on this. I support adopting the target on PM_{2.5}; the suggestion that it would prevent higher ambition is ludicrous.

The Government have for too long tried to pass the buck to local councils; what we need is a comprehensive national strategy on air pollution to prevent any further tragedies. We also need urgent action from the Government on their decarbonisation of transport plan. I do not get any sense at the moment that the Government are joining the dots.

Finally, on chemicals and animal testing, with the Prime Minister suggesting in his first post-Brexit deal interview with *The Telegraph* that chemicals was one area where the UK could diverge from EU regulations, it is hardly surprising that people are deeply worried by the Secretary of State being given such sweeping powers to amend the legal framework. It leaves us wide open to the risk of damaging deregulation as a result of trade deals with countries with weaker systems and lower standards such as the United States of America, and the risk of the dumping of products on the UK market that fail to meet EU regulations. Amendment 24 would ensure non-regression from REACH, the EU regime, and allow scope to exceed those standards. A recent European Court of Justice ruling has reaffirmed that under REACH the principle of animal testing as a last resort must be fully respected and it is good that this is included as a protected principle in the Bill, but this is not reflected in current figures for animal testing; there is far too much duplication of testing and far too little data sharing. New clause 18 would require the Secretary of State to set targets to reduce animal testing and the suffering experienced by animals as a result, and I would thoroughly support that.

Let us not just agree to keep our current standards in this Bill, but try to raise our ambitions too.

Bill Esterson: The film "Dark Waters" shows just what goes wrong, with the disastrous consequences for human life, animal life, plant life and pollution, where

there is a lack of regulation in the chemicals industry. Mark Ruffalo brilliantly played the lawyer who took on the might of DuPont and won on behalf of so many who were disadvantaged.

Of course, in this country we benefit from the highest chemical standards in the world—the previous regime made sure of that—and the industry rightly wants to maintain those standards and indeed build upon them. The industry in this country is worth £31.4 billion in exports and employs 102,000 people in well-paid jobs, and chemicals are in everyday products; in the Liverpool city region they are part of our car manufacturing sector and we have many fine chemical industry companies, including Blends Ltd and Contract Chemicals just a few miles outside my constituency. They want to maintain those high standards and they want to build on them; they want to build on them so that new products and services can be developed, and so that innovation in the recycling of plastics can be enhanced. To deliver on that agenda, they need the support of the Government through this Bill.

Unfortunately, we have already seen standards weakened through the changes to UK REACH, and powers in this Bill will give the Government the opportunity to further reduce them, leaving open the prospect of dumping lower-standard products, undermining the excellence of the industry in this country.

Industry here wants no divergence; it wants to solve the problem of the £1 billion cost to access the database that businesses need to be able to continue producing in this country. Unless these problems are resolved, we will see an impact on that £31.4 billion of exports, with companies given no choice but to move their manufacturing capacity to the continent of Europe.

There is much at stake here; there is much at stake in maintaining and enhancing those standards for human health, for animal health, for plant life and for British jobs. The Minister said that she has a good relationship with the industry. She can demonstrate that good relationship by supporting amendment 24.

Caroline Lucas [V]: My new clause 13, on the application of pesticides in rural areas, follows a very similar amendment made to the Agriculture Bill in the other place. Although it was later removed by the Government during the final stages, it enjoyed wide cross-party support, as I hope this new clause will.

As it stands, the Environment Bill lists air quality, water and biodiversity as priority areas for long-term target setting, alongside waste, but it does not recognise the environmental harm caused by the use of pesticides, and the need to protect human health is omitted entirely. My new clause seeks to remedy that by requiring the Secretary of State to make regulations prohibiting the use of chemical pesticides near buildings and open spaces used by rural residents and members of the public, whether hospitals, schools or homes. That is crucial for improving air quality and protecting human health and the environment.

It is important to recognise that this is about not the misuse or illegal use of pesticides, but the approved use of crop pesticides in the locality where rural communities are present, yet there are still no specific restrictions on the contamination and pollution of the air from widespread spraying of pesticides in rural areas. Indeed, the UK's

[*Caroline Lucas*]

regulatory system assesses the safety of only one chemical at a time, yet rural residents are exposed to a cocktail of harmful pesticides spread on nearby farms. Furthermore, although operators generally have protection when using agricultural pesticides, residents have absolutely no protection at all.

We cannot restore and enhance our environment while continuing to ignore the damage caused by pesticides in our intensive food and farming system. In that light, the Government should be standing up for rural residents and communities and protecting them from harm. That is what my new clause 13 seeks to do.

My new clause 18 would require the setting of targets for the reduction and replacement of animal testing under REACH regulations. It has been estimated that, by mid-2019, tests had been performed on about 2.4 million animals. In the last reporting period, the UK used the highest number of animals in experiments of any country in Europe. Although the Government have protected animal testing as a last resort principle from REACH in the Bill, this is an opportunity to go further and demonstrate real leadership by setting targets to replace animal testing.

Tests on animals are notoriously unreliable and are increasingly being questioned by the science. The scientific advancement of non-animal tests and approaches allows us better to predict hazard and manage risk while avoiding or significantly reducing the use of tests on animals—all in a shorter timeframe, with fewer resources used. That is better for human health and animals. I therefore urge the Minister to look again at this important issue and support the new clause.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): We will try to go back to Geraint Davies.

Geraint Davies [V]: Thank you so much, Madam Deputy Speaker.

New clause 6 is a necessary condition of delivering World Health Organisation air quality limits, or indeed any targets that the Government choose to set by 2022, as they plan. DEFRA alone simply cannot deliver the clean air targets that the Government want without the support of all other Departments. The new clause would create a duty for all Departments to work together to do that.

When I met the Environment Secretary, the Environment Minister and Rosamund, Ella's mother, the Environment Secretary said that he had not ruled out WHO air quality limits and needed to understand how he would get to any such targets. I agree with that, but it requires a duty on all Government bodies and Departments to work together. DEFRA would work with Transport when Transport needs to deliver an integrated, electrified public transport system. Clearly, we would need a Treasury fiscal statutory mechanism to facilitate that with the right duties, incentives, scrappage schemes and investment. We would need a housing and planning scheme built into that so that we build around stations, not motorways. We would need Health at the centre of it, because 64,000 people a year are dying prematurely. We need an education system that allows people to walk to school safely, and a local government system so that people can take account of things and possibly reduce the

speed of motorway traffic near urban centres. This all needs to be by joined-up design, rather than hope for the best.

The second part of the amendment is about indoor air quality. I thank the Government for belatedly including indoor air quality in the Bill. I thank the Royal College of Physicians and the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health for their "Inside Story" report, which acknowledged that 90% of the time we are indoors we are subjected to all sorts of dangerous chemicals—formaldehyde and all sorts of other things—in our furniture. Professor Stephen Holgate, one of the architects of the report, mentioned that we will not get limits unless we have an interdisciplinary approach with academics, clinicians, industry and government working together. Indeed, the professor of environmental law at University College London, Eloise Scotford, mentioned that joined-up governance is critical in law to push ahead with progress.

As we approach COP26, we have an opportunity to present a template of an integrated approach to help combat air pollution, which is killing 7 million people across the globe every year. I give my thanks to the Health Secretary and other members of the Government who are working together, but the point of the amendment is to provide a duty, so that we are required to work together to deliver cleaner air and save thousands of lives.

Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD) [V]: We Liberal Democrats have a clear plan to cut most carbon emissions by 2030 and to get to net zero by 2045. In the context of the Bill, waste is a big carbon emitter, particularly plastic waste, and we must address the problem immediately. The Waste and Resources Action Programme's new Plastic Pact, funded by DEFRA, is an important initiative which will create a circular economy for plastics. It is based on building a stronger recycling system, taking more responsibility for our own waste and ensuring that plastic packaging can be effectively recycled and re-used.

Last year, I tabled an amendment to the Bill. It would have perfectly fitted WRAP's initiative, but sadly it is not in the Bill. My amendment aimed to make the reporting of the end destination of household and business waste mandatory for councils. Transparency is a great driver of change, and one of the sad features of the Bill is the absence of transparency and accountability. No targets set within the Bill will be legally binding until 2037. By then, the climate crisis will be massively worse. Acting now is imperative. Climate change delay is hardly better than climate change denial.

We are proud in Bath to be one of the first councils to introduce a clean air zone. Air pollution is a big killer and hits the disadvantaged much harder due to poor housing, high-density living, proximity to main roads and fewer options to avoid higher-risk areas. What my council now needs is a separate clean air Act, which also includes new powers and funding to local authorities to effectively monitor air pollution. For instance, in Bath, residents are asking for real-time data to be made available, so that residents can make informed choices for their city and about what forms of transport they want to use.

I am ambitious for my city and for my country to show clear leadership on clean, healthy urban environments for the future. There is so much we can achieve with the right political will.

Matt Western (Warwick and Leamington) (Lab) [V]: I will be supporting amendment 24, but due to time I will focus my comments on new clauses 8 and 2.

The fact that the Bill has taken so long to progress through Parliament is enough to know that it is not, and never has been, a real priority of this Government. As my hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield (Mr Sheerman) reminds us, think back to the 1970s and 1980s when we were the dirty man of Europe: the dirtiest air, the dirtiest rivers and the dirtiest beaches. Thankfully, we aligned ourselves with European legislation and higher standards. It is with that in mind that I want to address the new clauses this evening.

New clause 8 relates to the waste hierarchy, starting with the absolute priority action of prevention. I am reminded of the importance of international legislation and co-ordination. I will hold the Government to account on whether they meet EU legislation and I will press them to exceed it. Addressing waste was an important part of EU policy, establishing as it did global leadership by creating robust frameworks of different regulations and directives to improve the management of waste in EU and European Free Trade Association countries. EU policy can be separated into product-related regulations such as the waste electrical and electronic equipment directive, the end-of-life vehicles directive and the batteries directive, and legislation including the landfill directive. However, plastics are a particular concern, and it is important that we commit pre-manufacture to how parts will be recycled and address producer responsibility, as well as that of the distributors and retailers. We need to encourage supermarkets to do more; I am reminded of the Grüne Punkt, or green spot, approach in Germany. It started back in the 1990s, and it meant that supermarkets would have to take back packaging. I want to see the UK leading in this area, because it is critical.

8.15 pm

I will also speak to new clause 2, and the issue of air quality. I support the work of the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish), and commend his work on achieving cross-party agreement. Many towns do not have the infrastructure to cope with traffic: towns such as Warwick, one of the finest towns in the country, but where air quality is so poor. I commend Clean Air Warwick, and thank Jon Grey for his work. Likewise, I applaud the leadership of Sue Rasmussen with Clean Air for Leamington. But in recent years, the World Health Organisation has found that the air quality in Leamington regularly breaches safe air pollution levels. That is why the British Lung Foundation wants MPs from across the House to support this new clause: it is so important that we address the issue of PM_{2.5} and the World Health Organisation guidelines.

We have seen what can happen. We saw the desperately tragic case of Ella Adoo-Kissi-Debrah—it could have happened to any child, and it makes me think of so many children and young people who walk those roads to school in my constituency. That is why these amendments and new clauses are vital: for today, but most importantly, for our children.

Ruth Cadbury (Brentford and Isleworth) (Lab) [V]: The Environmental Audit Committee labelled this Bill a “missed opportunity”. I rise to support amendments in the name of the Opposition and others that could

make it fit for our country, in a year in which the eyes of the world are watching us as hosts of the UN COP26 conference on climate change. I only have time to address two issues: the regulation of chemicals now that we have departed from the EU, and air pollution.

I support amendment 24 in the name of the shadow Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Newport West (Ruth Jones), to ensure we do not regress from existing standards and protections. That amendment would prevent a damaging race to the bottom that could undermine standards on chemicals, which is of great concern, given the comments the Prime Minister has made about chemicals and his indication that he may want us to depart downwards from those standards. My constituents Tracey Logan and Richard Szwagrzak were poisoned by formaldehyde fumes when cupboards were being built and installed in their house. We found there was no regulation covering formaldehyde levels in MDF sheets, hence the need to at least protect our existing standards and then ensure that the Government have powers to strengthen them, as amendment 24 does.

The issue of air quality is particularly important in my constituency, lying as it does along the two core routes between Heathrow and central London, and with many living in a highly polluted environment. Toxic air kills 40,000 people a year in the UK and contributes to the health inequalities that plague our society. We need to see action. Community-led efforts such as Chiswick Oasis can cut air pollution, as can city-wide programmes: an Imperial College study found that policies put in place by the Mayor of London have already led to improvements in air quality, with the measures that have been introduced increasing the average life expectancy of a child born in London in 2013. However, we need to do much more and, at a Government level, to tackle toxic air pollution. We need to see Government Ministers leading on this.

If new clause 6—which would require the Secretary of State to lay an annual report before Parliament on air quality and the solutions that the Government are going to be implementing—is moved, I will be supporting it. Crucially, that amendment calls for cross-departmental work to tackle this serious threat to our public health. This Bill has huge gaps in it, and gives Ministers sweeping powers to row back on our much-needed protections. I hope the Government will listen to concerns raised by Members across this House and use any delay to this Bill as a chance to fix it.

Fleur Anderson (Putney) (Lab) [V]: I am very glad to speak today in favour of the Opposition amendments, and on behalf of the deafening voice of civil society and so many organisations and individuals across the country, including the many local members of the Putney Environment Commission in my constituency, who feel that this Bill does not go far enough.

I served on the Bill Committee last November and was disappointed that the Government did not accept any Opposition amendments, which would have improved the Bill. Today, the Minister said that

“the desperate decline of our natural environment and biodiversity has gone on for far too long.”

That is right—so why is this Bill being so delayed, and with more delays to come? How can the EU (Future Relationship) Bill be rushed through in one day, while here we are in a climate emergency—as declared by

[*Fleur Anderson*]

Parliament in May 2019—yet this Bill has taken a year to get to this stage and now it has been announced that the next stage will be in May? Will we even have it passed by autumn?

This leaves us without the regulation of the EU that was in place before and with no new regulator in place. Will the Minister give a final deadline date for passing this Bill, and use the time between stages to improve it? The amendments before us today would give us much-needed higher ambition through targets, and much more strength to take action on the important areas of air quality, water, waste and chemicals.

Let me turn to new clause 8. It is vital to hold producers to account to ensure that waste is prevented throughout the whole supply chain, not just at the end—for example, by reducing plastics, changing materials and rethinking product use, such as nappies.

On air pollution, Putney High Street is one of the most polluted streets in the UK, and has the poor distinction of taking places two and three in a recent table of the top 10 pollution hotspots in London. We should set our sights high and include WHO targets in the Bill, not put them up for negotiation later. The cost will be that 550,000 Londoners will develop diseases attributable to air pollution over the next 30 years if we do not take strong action.

On amendment 24 on chemical regulation and setting up a whole new regulation in the UK when we already have one, this, among many things, will mean unnecessary animal testing. Many constituents have written to me about this issue. If more constituents knew about it, they would not be happy. I hope that this can be changed and rectified before the next stage of reporting in May.

In summary, the Bill has a long way to go before it is fit for purpose. I hope that today Conservative Members finally listen, give this Bill the force and ambition that our environment desperately needs, and vote for the Opposition amendments.

Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD) [V]: Like the previous Members of my party who have spoken, I shall be supporting the Opposition amendments. However, I would like to use my time to focus entirely on air pollution—a subject that is close not just to my heart, but to so many people I meet every day. It is also vital to our future and to our health, both individually and as communities.

In my constituency of Edinburgh West, we have two of the most polluted roads in Scotland, and one in every 29 deaths in our city of Edinburgh has been attributed to air pollution. Surely that is beyond unacceptable. I also have personal family reasons for knowing what a silent and merciless killer air pollution can be. Lives are blighted or even lost, and our NHS is put under yet more strain. Clean air is one of the most precious commodities that we have, and it is becoming even more precious.

For me, there is nothing that we could do that would be too much, but tinkering around the edges, as this Bill will do, is not good enough. We need to be brave and, yes, we need to start spending money. Our children are now making it abundantly clear that they do not believe that previous generations have done enough to ensure

that the planet is safe for them, and they are the ones who tend to be exposed to higher levels of pollution than adults. We need to listen and act now. The Liberal Democrats' zero carbon target is 2045; we believe that 2050 is simply too late. We need to strengthen our interim targets and undertake a 10-year emergency emission reduction programme to cut emissions as much as possible by 2030.

This legislation is a good start, but it does not have the teeth necessary to provide the robust protection for the environment that we need. If it is not to become little more than a series of meaningless platitudes, the Office for Environmental Protection and local authorities must have sufficient funding and empowerment to be effective. We need an Act modelled on the Climate Change Act 2008, with regular interim targets to cut not just air pollution but plastic pollution, and to restore nature. For me, the clean air provisions are simply not good enough. We need new legal limits that meet World Health Organisation limits, a new duty on public bodies to do their part in tackling pollution, and a new right to clean air in domestic law. All that is meaningless, however, if the reports are correct and the Bill is delayed until the next Session. More time will be lost, more people will breathe in dangerously polluted air, more damage will be done to our lives, our environment and the planet, and the chances of turning this ecological disaster around will be lost. I hope that the House will support the Opposition amendment.

Rachel Hopkins [V]: The River Lea flows all the way through my constituency of Luton South, so I shall start by welcoming the earlier clarification stating that clause 82 should cover damage caused to chalk streams as a result of low flow, as championed by the hon. Member for Broxbourne (Sir Charles Walker). I will be supporting the Opposition Front-Bench amendments, including amendment 24 on chemical regulations, but I want to speak specifically about waste management in support of new clause 8, which will require the Secretary of State to take account of the waste hierarchy, starting with the priority action of prevention.

The waste hierarchy refers to the priority order of managing waste: prevention; preparing for reuse; recycling; other forms of recovery; and disposal. To tackle the climate and ecological emergency, there must be a preventive and focused approach to waste management. I am fully aware that the Minister has stated that the Bill enables the Government to place obligations, including targets, on producers to prevent waste, but I am concerned that the Government are refusing to explicitly put that commitment to prioritising preventive action in the Bill. The Bill should use the strongest possible language to demonstrate the UK's commitment to preventing the creation of waste, as well as to the reusing and recycling of it.

Local government has a crucial role in waste management and in tackling unnecessary and unrecyclable material. Community-based action to shape attitudes and behaviour is vital to improving the UK's sustainable management of waste, and bolder language would further empower councils to take stronger action.

Luton Council's waste management strategy for 2018 to 2028 is committed to a "waste less, recycle more" plan that recognises the importance of limiting the amount of waste. As well as ensuring that the recycling

process is efficient, the waste minimisation strategy has a focus on behaviour change through education, engagement and communication, including working with schools, encouraging visitors to reduce the amount of waste and maintaining waste standards. However, unprecedented budget cuts imposed by the Government's austerity agenda over the last decade have restricted the great work that councils do to sustainably tackle waste, so I urge the Government to back Labour's amendment, to use stronger language to tackle waste prevention and to empower our councils by providing more financial support to expand preventive waste strategies in our communities.

Richard Thomson [V]: I want to speak to new clause 10, tabled in the name of Scottish National party and Plaid Cymru colleagues, and also to new schedule 1. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow East (David Linden) spoke eloquently about the impact on the environment of disposable nappies, and about the sometimes misleading claims made about their environmental friendliness by the manufacturers. My partner and I decided to use cloth nappies for our children. I fully understand that, for varying reasons, that is not a decision that everyone feels able to take, or something that people can do 100% of the time, but it was a choice that worked very well for us.

New clause 10 and new schedule 1, taken together, would establish the basis on which the Government could act to address the problem of waste caused by nappies that are not reusable. Establishing clear standards for disposable nappies would help parents to make informed choices. It would provide clarity over terms such as "reusable", "biodegradable", "eco-friendly", "environmentally friendly" and anything else that was put into the mix. That would help parents by making it clear what they were buying and what the impact of that choice would be. Furthermore, the schedule would, through the relevant national authorities cited, oblige the Government to begin to encourage local authorities to promote the use of reusable nappies if they do not do so already—I know that some do—and so reduce waste, by working alongside parents as well as existing schemes such as nappy libraries, which many parents find so valuable.

The waste that comes from disposable nappies is one of the biggest single environmental problems that we face, but it is also, potentially, one of the easiest for us to begin to solve through the provision of good information and good incentives from Government. To do so would be good for babies and good for the world that they grow up in. It is something that we are able to act on, and we should look to do so.

8.30 pm

Rebecca Pow: I thank all hon. Friends and Members who have taken part in the debate—the input on this groundbreaking Bill has been fantastically supportive and enthusiastic.

Let me start with new clause 8. I am pleased to report that the waste hierarchy is already embedded in law through the Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011. Accordingly, the Bill has been developed with it as a guiding light. While I touch on waste, I must assure my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby (Mark Pawsey) that consultations will shortly be launched on issues across waste reforms, including deposit returns, recycling collections and environmental permitting regulations, and we will work with packaging producers on them all.

The Secretary of State must produce a waste prevention programme and a waste management plan for England, setting out policies that apply the waste hierarchy. Waste handlers must also take reasonable measures to apply the waste hierarchy on the transfer of their waste. I hope that that reassures the many Members who touched on the waste hierarchy, waste and plastic, including my hon. Friends the Members for Totnes (Anthony Mangnall) and for North Norfolk (Duncan Baker), who both have spectacular coastlines and concerns about plastics, and the hon. Members for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy), for Bath (Wera Hobhouse) and for Warwick and Leamington (Matt Western). The resource and waste measures in the Bill provide us with a range of options to tackle issues across the waste hierarchy.

Bill Committee members will have heard me talk about whether we could possibly tackle cat food pouches, which brings me neatly to nappies and the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Glasgow East (David Linden). I myself have experience of using reusable nappies—what a labour of love it is. The hon. Gentleman will be pleased to hear that the primary powers on resource efficiency in the Bill will give us the legislative means to act on nappies, as suggested in new clause 10 and new schedule 1. I am happy to make that clearer to the hon. Gentleman through a change to the Bill's explanatory notes. I really hope that the hon. Member for Putney (Fleur Anderson) will also welcome that.

David Linden *rose*—

Mark Tami (Alyn and Deeside) (Lab) *rose*—

Rebecca Pow: I will not take any interventions because of the pressure of time, but I hope the hon. Member for Glasgow East will welcome that. I shall turn to air quality, on which so many Members and colleagues have had an input—unless the hon. Gentleman wanted to say congratulations?

David Linden: I welcome any baby steps, but I would also welcome any opportunity to discuss with the Minister certain aspects of labelling and packaging. I welcome the changes that she is to make to the explanatory notes, but will she agree to meet me and the Nappy Alliance to discuss the matter in the context of the next stage of the Bill?

Rebecca Pow: I listened to what the hon. Gentleman said; of course, we will consider all these things when we come to that point.

Mark Tami *rose*—

Rebecca Pow: I will not give way again.

Let me turn to air quality, which was mentioned by so many colleagues and Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish), the hon. Member for Canterbury (Rosie Duffield), the right hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell) and the hon. Members for Ealing, Southall (Mr Sharma) and for Enfield North (Feryal Clark).

On new clause 6, which was tabled by the hon. Member for Swansea West (Geraint Davies), my Department is working closely with other Departments to improve air quality through the Bill. We are making it simpler for local authorities to tackle a key source of indoor air pollution—domestic burning—and strengthening the

[Rebecca Pow]

role of public authorities in tackling air pollution. The Bill requires the Secretary of State to make an annual statement to Parliament on progress towards local air quality objectives, to review regularly the national air quality strategy and to publish an environment improvement plan.

Let me turn to the use of pesticides and air quality and new clause 13. The use of pesticides is not allowed where that usage may harm people. The existing regulation (EC) No. 1107/2009 requires comprehensive scientific assessment.

Let me turn to water and new clause 3, which was tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for North Herefordshire (Bill Wiggin). Nutrient pollution from phosphates and nitrates is one of the main pressures on the water environment, with the main source being development and agriculture. Planning authorities must consider the environmental effects of increased discharges from proposed developments. By removing any need for the consideration of phosphate pollution in assessments, the new clause would threaten the protection of important wildlife sites.

I turn to amendment 3 in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Sir Charles Walker). I thank him for taking the time to meet me a couple of weeks ago. Flow levels are incredibly important to the health of a river and the ecology it supports, and he is a great champion for rivers. Our new abstraction powers in clause 82 will strengthen existing powers for addressing environmental damage as a result of abstraction, including low flows. The Environment Agency will clamp down further on environmental damage caused by unsustainable abstraction of water through a variety of actions, including placing new conditions on existing permanent licences.

I can also commit to my hon. Friend that I will amend the explanatory notes for the Bill to include a specific reference to flow levels. That will make it crystal clear that low flows will continue to be assessed by the Environment Agency in the exercise of these new abstraction powers. I hope that he will not ask me to write to him again and that that is clear. I commend others who have raised water so eloquently: my hon. Friends the Members for South Cambridgeshire (Anthony Browne), for Keighley (Robbie Moore) and for Broadland (Jerome Mayhew).

Moving on to amendment 30, I assure the House that restoring England's internationally important chalk streams is a priority for this Government and for me personally. A chalk streams working group has been formed, and it is developing an action plan. Actions being considered include improving the transparency and usability of data, which can be done without primary legislation.

I turn to amendment 42. I expect sewerage companies to develop statutory drainage and sewerage plans in collaboration with risk management authorities, and I will use the power of direction in the Bill if they do not.

I turn to new clause 18 tabled by the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas). While I am sympathetic to its aims, it is not necessary. The "last resort" is already a protected provision, and the Secretary of State already has a duty to review testing requirements in respect of reproductive toxicity.

Turning to amendment 24 on the REACH regulations, we have already included safeguards to protect the fundamental principles of REACH, and we cannot agree to proposed new sub-paragraph (1B) of schedule 20.

I am going to wind up now, Madam Deputy Speaker. [Interruption.] Are you saying that I have more time? If I did have time, I would wax a little more lyrical.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): For the sake of clarity, yes, the hon. Lady can have another three or four minutes.

Rebecca Pow: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker; I shall slow down a tiny bit, then.

I did just want to say a little more in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne. I talked about the sewerage management plans, which are now going to be requirements, and said that I would use the powers of direction in the Bill if water companies were not using those properly. Section 13(1) of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 already requires risk management authorities to co-operate with one another when exercising prescribed functions, but I intend to expand those functions to include the preparation of a drainage and sewerage management plan.

I hope that demonstrates that I and this Government, and DEFRA in particular, are putting this whole issue of dealing with our water right up there, centre stage. It is so important to all of us that we sort our water out, and it is thanks to so many colleagues—my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne and others who have spoken—that we are taking this really seriously. I hope that everyone will be supportive of that, including my Labour shadow colleagues.

Let me go back to REACH very quickly. I said that we had included safeguards to protect the fundamental principles of REACH, which is schedule 20. That includes ensuring a high level of protection for human health and the environment, and replacing substances of very high concern, such as cancer-causing chromium compounds, through the REACH authorisation process. As I said, we cannot agree to proposed new sub-paragraph (1B), which would force us to follow what the EU does instead of having ownership of our own laws. We would have to make decisions and regulations with no regard to our own scientific evidence. We have no plans at all to diverge from EU REACH for the sake of it. I hope the shadow Minister was listening to that, because she particularly raised it. Protecting the environment and human health is paramount, and the UK will retain the fundamental approaches and key principles of EU REACH.

I really will wind up now, Madam Deputy Speaker, and thank you for your time. It has been an honour to preside over the passage of this Bill. It has been long, and it still continues, but all the better. It charts a new and much-needed exciting and ambitious course for us all on the environment, and it will leave it in a better state than we found it. I want to thank all colleagues on both sides of the House who have taken part in this, helping to drive us all towards a fairer, greener future. I want to thank my Bill team. I probably do not have time to name them all, but I named them in Committee. I thank my private office, all Members who sat on the

Public Bill Committee, my long-suffering family and my husband Charles, who I hope is watching me from up there.

As Members of the House are aware, the immense pressure put on the parliamentary timetable by the covid pandemic means that the Bill will sadly need to be carried over to the second Session. As I stated at the start, we will be back. I give an assurance that this carry-over will in no way reduce our commitment on the environment. Intensive work relating to measures in the Bill is already under way and will continue. One of the reasons I came to Parliament was to work to put the environment centre stage, helping to steer us to an essential sustainable trajectory for the planet. It is the right thing to do, and we are doing it.

Ruth Jones: I thank the Minister for her wide-ranging thanks and comments, but I have to say that we will be doing it all again in May, because this is only day one, and we have day two to go. Hopefully, the Bill will eventually become law, which will be really good, because that is the whole point of this.

Our amendments would make an average Bill better, but as the hon. Member for Bromley and Chislehurst (Sir Robert Neill) said, we want the Bill to go further. Labour wants to seize the opportunity before us to develop a genuinely once-in-a-generation Bill, in the words of the Minister. Changing explanatory notes about the Bill is all very well, but it does not change the legislation. If it is that important, we should put it in the Bill.

The Minister touched on the deposit scheme, as requested, but we do not want to focus on consultation; we want a proper scheme delivered at the earliest opportunity. On air quality, it is vital that we act and act now. One Government Back Bencher noted that the World Health Organisation knows best, and I urge the Minister to take heed of that piece of advice. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell) for sharing the experiences of his constituents who live in, as he put it, a “pollution blizzard”. I am also grateful to my hon. Friends the Members for Ealing, Southall (Mr Sharma) and for Canterbury (Rosie Duffield) for their moving and important speeches on new clause 6, on air quality. They both mentioned the lost life of Ella Kissi-Debrah—a name we must never forget.

The Minister is right: we all want strong, effective management of our water; we want clean water; and we want to mitigate the impact of hazardous waste in our waters. I am pleased that the Chair of the Environmental Audit Committee, the right hon. Member for Ludlow (Philip Dunne), spoke earlier in the debate. He knows from the shadow Minister for water, my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley East (Stephanie Peacock), that Her Majesty’s Opposition support his private Member’s Bill. Water quality is so important. That is why, when preparing for the debate, I was shocked to find that in Camborne and Redruth—the Secretary of State’s seat—all 10 rivers that pass through the constituency have failed to meet the standards of chemical pollution set by the Environment Agency. Simply put, the Government’s inaction has seen contaminated water not just across the country but in the Secretary of State’s own backyard. I hope that that will focus the Minister’s mind.

I join my good friend my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Alex Davies-Jones) in praising Friends of the Earth Pontypridd for its campaigning work on water, and I praise her work on nappies too. I thank my hon. Friends the Members for Putney (Fleur Anderson) and for Luton South (Rachel Hopkins) for their enthusiastic contributions. The vital nature of science and its purpose was highlighted by my hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield (Mr Sheerman), who spoke about his many decades of fighting to protect our environment and preserve our planet; he is right. The Chairman of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish), made an important contribution in which he spoke to both his amendment and ours, and I thank him for the cross-party approach he has taken to these issues.

On waste, the Minister heard the message loud and clear from colleagues, and a special mention goes to my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) for her years of campaigning. The Minister could quite easily accept new clause 8 and show that a cross-party approach is welcomed by Tory Ministers.

Amendment 24, which we will push to a vote, would ensure that Britain does not become a dumping ground for hazardous waste. It would prevent damaging deregulation and help to maintain regulatory parity with EU REACH and chemical-related laws that would prevent the dumping of products on the UK market that fail to meet the EU regulations and avoid the cost and complexity of regulatory divergence on the industry. Our objective is clear, and I hope that the Minister will support our amendment tonight. The need to do whatever we can to preserve our environment and protect our planet is obvious, so I hope that she will join us in doing just that.

We wish to push amendment 24 to a vote, Mr Deputy Speaker, but, with the leave of the House, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 59

HAZARDOUS WASTE: ENGLAND AND WALES

Amendments made: 32, page 46, line 39, leave out “Before section 62A” and insert “After section 62”.

This amendment changes the way in which the location of new section 62ZA of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 is identified. It is currently inserted before section 62A of the 1990 Act, which is repealed by the Waste and Environmental Permitting etc. (Legislative Functions and Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020.

Amendment 33, page 48, line 45, leave out from beginning to first “the” in line 13 on page 49 and insert—

“(8A) In the application of this Part to England, “hazardous waste” means—

- (a) any waste identified as hazardous waste in—
 - (i) the waste list as it applies in relation to England, or
 - (ii) regulations made by the Secretary of State under regulation 3 of the Waste and Environmental Permitting etc. (Legislative Functions and Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020 (S.I. 2020/1540), and
- (b) any other waste that is treated as hazardous waste for the purposes of—
 - (i) regulations made by the Secretary of State under section 62ZA, or

- (ii) the Hazardous Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2005 (S.I. 2005/894).

(8B) In the application of this Part to Wales, “hazardous waste” means—

- (a) any waste identified as hazardous waste in—
- (i) the waste list as it applies in relation to Wales, or
 - (ii) regulations made by the Welsh Ministers under regulation 3 of the Waste and Environmental Permitting etc. (Legislative Functions and Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020 (S.I. 2020/1540), and
- (b) any other waste that is treated as hazardous waste for the purposes of—
- (i) regulations made by the Welsh Ministers under section 62ZA, or
 - (ii) the Hazardous Waste (Wales) Regulations 2005 (S.I. 2005/1806).

(8C) In subsections (8A) and (8B),

This amendment updates the definitions of hazardous waste being inserted into Part 2 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to take account of the Waste and Environmental Permitting etc. (Legislative Functions and Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020.

Amendment 34, page 49, line 18, leave out from “(2000/532/EC)” to end of line 19.—(*Rebecca Pow.*)

This amendment is consequential on Amendment 33.

Clause 62

REGULATIONS UNDER THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT 1990

Amendment made: 35, page 55, line 33, leave out subsection (4).—(*Rebecca Pow.*)

This amendment omits an amendment to section 62A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, which is no longer needed because section 62A is repealed by the Waste and Environmental Permitting etc. (Legislative Functions and Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020.

Clause 73

ENVIRONMENTAL RECALL OF MOTOR VEHICLES ETC

Amendment made: 7, page 63, line 18, at end insert—

“and the regulations may provide that a reference in the regulations to a standard is to be construed as a reference to that standard as it has effect from time to time.”—(*Rebecca Pow.*)

This amendment provides that regulations under Clause 73 specifying relevant environmental standards may specify standards as they have effect from time to time. This power to make ambulatory references will avoid the need to amend the regulations each time standards are updated.

Clause 91

DISCLOSURE OF REVENUE AND CUSTOMS INFORMATION

Amendment made: 8, page 91, line 31, leave out

“section 154(1) of the Criminal Justice Act 2003”

and insert

“paragraph 24(2) of Schedule 22 to the Sentencing Act 2020”.—(*Rebecca Pow.*)

Section 154(1) of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 has been replaced by paragraph 24(2) of Schedule 22 to the Sentencing Act 2020. This amendment updates the cross-reference in consequence.

Schedule 20

AMENDMENT OF REACH LEGISLATION

Amendment proposed: 24, page 244, line 19, at end insert—

“(1A) Regulations made under this paragraph must not regress upon the protections or standards of any Article or Annex of the REACH Regulation.

(1B) Subject to sub-paragraph (1A), the Secretary of State—

(a) must make regulations under this paragraph to maintain, and

(b) may make regulations under this paragraph to exceed parity of all protections and standards of chemical regulation with any new or amended regulations of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the regulation of chemicals.”—(*Ruth Jones.*)

This amendment would set a minimum of protections under REACH and remove the possibility that a Secretary of State might lower standards than are in place currently, whilst reserving the right for them to set higher standards should they choose.

The House divided: Ayes 227, Noes 357.

Division No. 217]

[8.45 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
Campbell, Mr Gregory
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
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Dromey, Jack
Duffield, Rosie
Eagle, Dame Angela
Eagle, Maria
Eastwood, Colum
Edwards, Jonathan
Efford, Clive
Elliott, Julie
Elmore, Chris
Eshalomi, Florence
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Farron, Tim
Farry, Stephen
Ferrier, Margaret
Fovargue, Yvonne
Foxcroft, Vicky
Foy, Mary Kelly
Furniss, Gill
Gardiner, Barry
Gill, Preet Kaur
Girvan, Paul
Glindon, Mary
Green, Kate
Greenwood, Lilian
Greenwood, Margaret
Griffith, Nia
Gwynne, Andrew

Haigh, Louise
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hanna, Claire
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hayes, Helen
 Healey, rh John
 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
 Lake, Ben
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lavery, Ian
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewis, Clive
 Lloyd, Tony
 Lockhart, Carla
 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
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McMahon, Jim
 McMorris, 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
 Paisley, Ian
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Mr Toby
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pollard, Luke
 Powell, Lucy
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rayner, Angela
 Reed, Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, Rachel
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Robinson, Gavin
 Rodda, Matt
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Saville Roberts, rh Liz
 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
 Streeting, Wes
 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
 Western, Matt
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitley, Mick
 Whittome, Nadia
 Williams, Hywel
 Wilson, Munira
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Winter, Beth
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:
 Colleen Fletcher and
 Liz Twist

NOES

Adams, Nigel
 Afolami, Bim
 Afriyie, Adam
 Ahmad Khan, Imran
 Aiken, Nickie
 Aldous, Peter
 Allan, Lucy
 Amess, Sir David
 Anderson, Lee
 Anderson, Stuart
 Andrew, Stuart
 Ansell, Caroline
 Argar, Edward
 Atherton, Sarah
 Atkins, Victoria
 Bacon, Gareth
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Badenoch, Kemi
 Bailey, Shaun
 Baillie, Siobhan
 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
 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
 Carter, Andy
 Cartledge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Cates, Miriam
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, Alex
 Chishti, Rehman
 Churchill, Jo
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clarke, Mr Simon
 Clarke, Theo
 Clarke-Smith, Brendan
 Clarkson, Chris
 Cleverly, rh James
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse
 Colburn, Elliot
 Collins, Damian
 Costa, Alberto
 Courts, Robert
 Coutinho, Claire
 Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
 Crabb, rh Stephen
 Crosbie, Virginia
 Crouch, Tracey
 Daly, James
 Davies, David T. C.
 Davies, Gareth
 Davies, Dr James
 Davies, Mims
 Davies, Philip
 Davis, rh Mr David
 Davison, Dehenna
 Dinenage, Caroline
 Dines, Miss Sarah
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 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
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Frazer, Lucy
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 Fuller, Richard
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Gale, rh Sir Roger
 Garnier, Mark
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gibson, Peter
 Gideon, Jo
 Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
 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
Heappey, 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
Jenkyins, Andrea
Jenrick, rh Robert
Johnson, rh Boris
Johnson, Dr Caroline
Johnson, Gareth
Johnston, David
Jones, Andrew
Jones, rh Mr David
Jones, Fay
Jones, Mr Marcus
Jupp, Simon
Kawczynski, Daniel
Kearns, Alicia
Keegan, Gillian
Knight, rh Sir Greg
Knight, Julian
Kruger, Danny
Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
Lamont, John
Largan, Robert
Latham, Mrs Pauline
Leadsom, rh Andrea
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Levy, Ian
Lewer, Andrew
Lewis, rh Brandon
Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
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, Karl
McPartland, Stephen
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
Mordaunt, rh Penny
Morris, Anne Marie
Morris, David
Morris, James
Morrisey, Joy
Morton, Wendy
Mullan, Dr Kieran
Mumby-Croft, Holly
Mundell, rh David
Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
Neill, Sir Robert
Nici, Lia
Nokes, rh Caroline
Norman, rh Jesse
O'Brien, Neil
Offord, Dr Matthew
Opperman, Guy
Parish, Neil
Patel, rh Priti
Paterson, rh Mr Owen
Pawsey, Mark
Penning, rh Sir Mike
Penrose, John
Percy, Andrew
Philp, Chris
Pincher, rh Christopher
Poulter, Dr Dan
Pow, Rebecca
Prentis, Victoria
Pritchard, Mark
Pursglove, Tom
Quin, Jeremy
Quince, Will
Raab, rh Dominic
Randall, Tom
Redwood, rh John
Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
Richards, Nicola
Richardson, Angela
Roberts, Rob
Robertson, Mr Laurence
Robinson, Mary
Rosindell, Andrew
Ross, Douglas

Rowley, Lee
Russell, Dean
Rutley, David
Sambrook, Gary
Saxby, Selaine
Scully, Paul
Seely, Bob
Selous, Andrew
Shapps, rh Grant
Sharma, rh Alok
Shelbrooke, rh Alec
Simmonds, David
Skidmore, rh Chris
Smith, Chloe
Smith, Greg
Smith, Henry
Smith, rh Julian
Smith, Royston
Solloway, Amanda
Spencer, Dr Ben
Spencer, rh Mark
Stafford, Alexander
Stephenson, Andrew
Stevenson, Jane
Stevenson, John
Stewart, Bob
Stewart, Iain
Streeter, Sir Gary
Stride, rh Mel
Stuart, Graham
Sturdy, Julian
Sunak, rh Rishi
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, 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
Wragg, Mr William
Wright, rh Jeremy
Young, Jacob
Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
Maggie Throup and
Leo Docherty

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.

Bill to be further considered tomorrow.

Business without Debate

DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),

EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION (AGRICULTURE)

That the Agricultural Products, Food and Drink (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020 (S.I., 2020, No. 1661), dated 31 December 2020, a copy of which was laid before this House on 31 December, be approved.—(*Mike Freer.*)

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),

That the Organic Production (Organic Indications) (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020 (S.I., 2020, No. 1669), dated 31 December 2020, a copy of which was laid before this House on 5 January, be approved.—(*Mike Freer.*)

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),

EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION (ROAD TRAFFIC)

That the Drivers' Hours and Tachographs (Amendment) Regulations 2020 (S.I., 2020, No. 1658), dated 31 December 2020, a copy of which was laid before this House on 31 December, be approved.—(*Mike Freer.*)

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)).

PUBLIC HEALTH

That the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (All Tiers) (England) (Amendment) (No. 4) Regulations 2020 (S.I., 2020, No. 1654), dated 30 December 2020, a copy of which was laid before this House on 30 December, be approved.—(*Mike Freer.*)

Question agreed to.

PETITION

Impact of the M25 junction 25 improvement scheme

8.58 pm

Feryal Clark (Enfield North) (Lab) [V]: I present this petition on behalf of the residents on Enfield North to register their deep concerns about the planned Highways England works on the planned M25 junction 25 scheme.

The petition states

The petition of residents of the constituency of Enfield North,

Declares that the M25 junction 25 improvement scheme proposed by Highways England...poses many problems for the local community.

It further declares that the proposals set out by Highways England are flawed, and completely lack safeguards to protect schoolchildren and other road users from increased toxic air pollution and road accidents. It goes on to say:

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urge the Government to take into account the concerns of the petitioners and take immediate action to assess thoroughly the impact

of the M25 junction 25 improvement scheme on the surrounding neighbourhoods and the environment, and to introduce effective measures to ensure that air pollution is mitigated and the road is safe for residents, school children and other road users.

Following is the full text of the petition:

[The petition of residents of the constituency of Enfield North,

Declares that the M25 junction 25 improvement scheme proposed by Highways England has been approved and planned works are due to begin in March 2021 but the scheme poses many problems for the local community; further declares that the proposals set out by Highways England overlook the impact of increased traffic flows and speeding along the route which is through residential neighbourhoods and school precincts; notes that the scheme will increase the presence of HGVs which is a safety concern for the three schools along the route and thousands of children who use the route to and from school; further notes that there have been 13 motor accidents involving HGVs on this route since 2015 and two fatal accidents involving HGVs since this scheme was introduced in 2001; and further declares that the proposals set out by Highways England present a serious lack of measures to mitigate air pollution and ensure that the road is safe for residents, school children and other road users.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urge the Government to take into account the concerns of the petitioners and take immediate action to assess thoroughly the impact of the M25 junction 25 improvement scheme on the surrounding neighbourhoods and the environment, and to introduce effective measures to ensure that air pollution is mitigated and the road is safe for residents, school children and other road users.

And the petitioners remain, etc.]

[P002645]

Detention of Anoosheh Ashoori in Iran

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(David Duguid.)

8.59 pm

Janet Daby (Lewisham East) (Lab): I am grateful to have the opportunity to present the case of my constituent Anoosheh Ashoori today. Anoosheh is the 66-year-old father of Elika and Aryan, and a devoted husband to Sherry. As we speak, Anoosheh is lying in a prison cell in Evin, Tehran. The Minister will know some, if not all, of the details I am about to say, but I am saying them again because, in spite of the Minister and the Foreign Secretary being in full awareness of the facts of Anoosheh's case, they have not improved their approach in the three and a half years he has been imprisoned.

I am grateful to Anoosheh's wife, Sherry, for telling me about his life before his capture. Anoosheh's dream when he was a teenager was to become an astronaut—not so different from some of our children's dreams perhaps. He had big ambitions and worked hard to make them happen. When he was 18, he moved to the UK from Iran to study, and he finally gained his masters in aeronautical engineering in 1977. When his father passed away in the 1980s, Anoosheh situated himself in Iran to take over the family civil engineering business, for which he won national awards. Anoosheh, Sherry and their young family moved back to the UK in 2004. Anoosheh spent the next decade working tirelessly to make his business successful in the UK. In 2015, they moved into their dream home, in my constituency of Lewisham East, and planned their retirement.

It is obvious from Sherry that Anoosheh is absolutely besotted with his family. He uses his creativity to serve those he loves—from building baking machines to support his daughter to making a hobbit house in the family garden. Sherry has spoken of the pride that she and Anoosheh feel for their children: for Elika, who runs her own patisserie business, and for Aryan, who is an academic researcher with his own music label. It is clear that Anoosheh is a selfless, compassionate and caring family man. His devotion to his family is what led him back to visit his elderly mother in Tehran.

On that horrid day in 2017, just minutes after speaking to his wife on the phone, Anoosheh Ashoori was kidnapped off the street, with a bag over his head, and bundled into a van. He has been detained in Evin prison ever since. He was charged with spying by the Iranian authorities, and given a 10-year prison sentence. There has never been a scrap of evidence presented, and Anoosheh was denied legal support for a trial that should never have happened.

The conditions Anoosheh has had to endure in the past three and a half years are too painful for his family to recount, and I am confident that he spares them the details. Evin prison is known for the psychological and physical torture of its prisoners. There have been reports of mock executions, beatings, brutal interrogations and solitary confinement—not once or twice, but over and over again—of prisoners. Anoosheh has tried to end his life. He has attempted suicide three times, feeling unable to cope and to survive any longer.

But what exactly did Anoosheh do to deserve this horrific ordeal? His only crime is his dual British-Iranian nationality. The Minister will know well of the trauma

Anoosheh and other British prisoners in Iran go through. We have had several urgent questions—particular thanks to my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Kilburn (Tulip Siddiq)—and we have heard many Government statements expressing their regret at the situation. However, our Government are simply not doing enough. Indeed, they are sitting on their hands when it comes to releasing innocent British citizens being held as hostages.

In November, the happy news was reported that Australian national Kylie Moore-Gilbert was released from prison in Tehran. This was a bittersweet experience, as Anoosheh's family wondered when their loved one would return home. We are left to wonder: why can the Australians, and the Americans, make it work for their citizens, but not us?

The Foreign Office's current strategy for dealing with consular disputes is not effective enough. It is imperative that the Government call out the hostage status of Anoosheh and those other dual British nationals being held by Iran for political leverage. To quote the international convention against the taking of hostages, international law dictates that:

"Any person who seizes or detains and threatens to kill, to injure or to continue to detain another person...in order to compel a third party, namely, a State...to do or abstain from doing any act as an explicit or implicit condition for the release of the hostage commits the offence of taking of hostages".

Although this specifies individuals who take hostages, this is the precisely the mentality behind Iran's strategy of hostage diplomacy.

Related to the imprisonment of Anoosheh and other British citizens is the £400 million debt owed to Iran by the United Kingdom. Iranian officials have told Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe that she is being detained because of the IMS debt. Our Foreign Office has repeatedly insisted that there is no link between Iran's demand for payment and the taking of British prisoners. That is utter nonsense. For the rest of us, it is plain to see.

Anoosheh, Nazanin and other British people in Iranian prisons are not mere "consular cases". They are not just numbers, but people with families and futures. They are people being brutally mistreated over an international financial dispute. They are hostages. When will the Foreign Office accept that and acknowledge them as such?

Furthermore, court hearings were due to take place in the autumn to discuss managing the IMS debt, but they were postponed. Will the Minister give an update on the progress that his Department has made in resolving this sticking point? Iran is holding these prisoners in an attempt to hold Britain's feet to the fire. The Government's refusal to admit that and to act on that is only keeping the hostages in bondage for longer. To add insult to injury, last month the Foreign Secretary asserted that British citizens being held hostage abroad are not entitled to protection from the British Government. Surely I do not need to explain how absurd and inhumane that is. Will the Foreign Office issue a retraction of this damaging comment and assure the families of those randomly held that their loved ones will, of course, be given consular assistance?

Ultimately, we need detailed assurances that the UK Government will do all they can to support Anoosheh's release from prison and to step up their efforts to bring him home. Anoosheh needs hope that his brutal treatment will come to an end; and his family need to know that

he will soon be home where he can begin to heal. I implore the Minister to give a commitment today that his Department will not just express “concerns” for Anoosheh’s welfare, but detail a clear plan of action that will explain how they will bring Anoosheh and Nazanin back to London where they belong.

I also urge the Minister to confirm that the UK Government will not abandon my constituent and his family, but will in fact stand by British citizens who are being unlawfully detained abroad and that my constituent is as entitled to protection from the Foreign Office as the Foreign Secretary himself would be.

9.7 pm

The Minister for the Middle East and North Africa (James Cleverly): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Lewisham East (Janet Daby) for securing this debate and I pay tribute to her for her unwavering efforts on behalf of her constituent.

Let me start by offering my deepest sympathies to the family of Mr Ashoori. They have endured this terrible ordeal for many years, as the hon. Lady has said. In August 2017, when Mr Ashoori was visiting family, he was detained by the Iranian authorities and sentenced to 10 years in prison on what the Iranian authorities called national security charges. Despite his appeal, Mr Ashoori’s sentence was upheld in July 2019. His family first made contact with officials from what at the time was the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 19 June 2018, requesting consular assistance for Mr Ashoori. Since then, the UK Government have been in regular contact with the family. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has met the family on four occasions, most recently on 27 October. In these meetings he has reiterated the Government’s continued commitment to reuniting Mr Ashoori with his family here in the UK. We continue to work flat out to secure Mr Ashoori’s full and permanent release, as we do with all detained dual British nationals, regardless of how extensively each case has been covered in this House or in the media.

The House will be all too aware that the Iranian Government do not recognise dual nationality and therefore refuse to identify Mr Ashoori as being British. In practice, that means that they will not permit consular officials from the British embassy to visit Mr Ashoori or other dual British national detainees. That creates severe challenges for the UK Government in providing consular support to the detained dual British nationals. Consular officials are unable to visit Mr Ashoori in prison without the express permission of the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which to date it has never granted.

Despite those challenges, officials in our embassy in Tehran consistently press for access to Mr Ashoori and call on Iran to allow him to receive urgent medical furlough. The Government continue to raise Mr Ashoori’s case at the most senior levels, and we discuss his situation at every opportunity with our Iranian counterparts. Indeed, the Foreign Secretary engages with Foreign Minister Zarif regularly and always raises Mr Ashoori and our other dual British national detainees. Our ambassador in Tehran continually raises the cases of all dual British national detainees, including Mr Ashoori, with the Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs. He last did so on 6 January this year with the deputy Foreign Minister.

Our intention is always to act in a way that we judge most likely to be in the best interests of dual British nationals who are detainees in Iran. We remain committed to doing all we can to ensure that they are released and allow them to return home to be reunited with their families. In the meantime, we have repeatedly pressed, and will continue to press, for consular access and appropriate medical care, including furlough, in advance of their full release.

On our consular support to the family of Mr Ashoori, the Government have relentlessly lobbied for Mr Ashoori’s full and permanent release. Since the family requested assistance from my Department, officials have provided consular support to the Ashoori family and are available to be contacted 24 hours a day. Officials provide regular updates on our lobbying efforts to the family and meet them to discuss their ongoing concerns. The most recent meeting of our officials with the family was on 20 January.

Mr Ashoori’s pressing health and welfare concerns are raised by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and our ambassador in Tehran at every opportunity with their Iranian counterparts, along with the UK’s serious concerns about Iran’s practice of detaining foreign and dual British nationals. The UK Government continue to make robust diplomatic representations on behalf of the dual British nationals detained in Iran who have requested our assistance, including Mr Ashoori, and we have repeatedly expressed our concern about Mr Ashoori’s appalling treatment. Our consular services are the FCDO’s most important public service. Ministers and officials work tirelessly and tenaciously to support individuals and their families. We always act in a way we believe to be in their best interests. But we are not complacent. We will continue to keep under review what actions we might take that are most likely to ensure that Mr Ashoori is allowed to return home to the UK.

The Government have been consistently clear that we want to put the relationship between the UK and Iran on a better footing. We believe that maintaining diplomatic relationships will help achieve our vision of a non-nuclear-armed Iran, an Iran that acts as a responsible regional power, and an Iran that does not pose a threat to the UK and UK interests. We continue to assess that it is also the best way of securing the release of dual British nationals currently in detention. The Government will work with all international partners, including the new US Administration, to deliver those shared goals. The UK will keep a diplomatic door open for discussions across a full range of UK interests. We will also continue to hold Iran to account for its human rights records.

From the Prime Minister down, the Government are clear that we do not accept dual British nationals being used as diplomatic leverage, and that it is essential that they are released. I will not make excuses for those in the Iranian Government responsible for the ongoing detention of British dual nationals. It is unacceptable and it must end. But it is the Iranian Government’s actions that we should be focused on. It is their choice to detain such people, and it is totally in their gift to release them. We should all be relentlessly focused on their behaviour and the decisions that they have made. This Government have consistently made clear to the Iranians our concerns at their persistent violations of human rights. We will keep up the pressure, along with the co-operation of our international friends and allies.

[James Cleverly]

In the past six months, we have summoned the Iranian ambassador to hand over a letter from the UK, French and German Foreign Ministers and co-signed, a joint statement at the Human Rights Council expressing serious concerns over Iran's behaviour. We have also reiterated calls for all states to uphold their human rights obligations. We will continue to call out those violations for as long as Iran commits them.

Let me end by once again expressing my deepest sympathies for Mr Ashoori and his family whilst he remains detained, as well as for all the others that

remain detained at the hands of the Iranian Government. I can assure the House that this Government remain committed to doing whatever we can to secure the release of all of them, and will continue to make representations at every level, at every opportunity, on their behalf.

Question put and agreed to.

9.18 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
Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney North and Stoke Newington) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Debbie Abrahams (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Nigel Adams (Selby and Ainsty) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Bim Afolami (Hitchin and Harpenden) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Imran Ahmad Khan (Wakefield) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Nickie Aiken (Cities of London and Westminster) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Peter Aldous (Waveney) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Rushanara Ali (Bethnal Green and Bow) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Tahir Ali (Birmingham, Hall Green) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Lucy Allan (Telford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Dr Rosena Allin-Khan (Tooting) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Mike Amesbury (Weaver Vale) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Sir David Amess (Southend West) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Fleur Anderson (Putney) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Lee Anderson (Ashfield) (Con)	Chris Loder
Stuart Anderson (Wolverhampton South West) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Caroline Ansell (Eastbourne) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Tonia Antoniazzi (Gower) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Edward Argar (Charnwood) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jonathan Ashworth (Leicester South) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Sarah Atherton (Wrexham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Victoria Atkins (Louth and Horncastle) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Gareth Bacon (Orpington) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mr Richard Bacon (South Norfolk) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Kemi Badenoch (Saffron Walden) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Shaun Bailey (West Bromwich West) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Siobhan Baillie (Stroud) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Duncan Baker (North Norfolk) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mr Steve Baker (Wycombe) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Harriett Baldwin (West Worcestershire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Steve Barclay (North East Cambridgeshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Hannah Bardell (Livingston) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Paula Barker (Liverpool, Wavertree) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Mr John Baron (Basildon and Billericay) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Simon Baynes (Clwyd South) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Margaret Beckett (Derby South) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Apsana Begum (Poplar and Limehouse) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Aaron Bell (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Scott Benton (Blackpool South) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sir Paul Beresford (Mole Valley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jake Berry (Rossendale and Darwen) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Clive Betts (Sheffield South East) (Lab)	Mark Tami

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Saqib Bhatti (Meriden) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mhairi Black (Paisley and Renfrewshire South) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Kirsty Blackman (Aberdeen North) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Olivia Blake (Sheffield, Hallam) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Paul Blomfield (Sheffield Central) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Crispin Blunt (Reigate) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Steven Bonnar (Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Andrew Bowie (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Tracy Brabin (Batley and Spen) (Lab/Co-op)	Mark Tami
Ben Bradley (Mansfield) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Karen Bradley (Staffordshire Moorlands) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Ben Bradshaw (Exeter) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Suella Braverman (Fareham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Jack Brereton (Stoke-on-Trent South) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Andrew Bridgen (North West Leicestershire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Steve Brine (Winchester) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Paul Bristow (Peterborough) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sara Britcliffe (Hyndburn) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Deidre Brock (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
James Brokenshire (Old Bexley and Sidcup) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudon) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Ms Lyn Brown (West Ham) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Anthony Browne (South Cambridgeshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Fiona Bruce (Congleton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Felicity Buchan (Kensington) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Ms Karen Buck (Westminster North) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Robert Buckland (South Swindon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Alex Burghart (Brentwood and Ongar) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Richard Burgon (Leeds East) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Conor Burns (Bournemouth West) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Dawn Butler (Brent Central) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Rob Butler (Aylesbury) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Ian Byrne (Liverpool, West Derby) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Liam Byrne (Birmingham, Hodge Hill) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Ruth Cadbury (Brentford and Isleworth) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Alun Cairns (Vale of Glamorgan) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Amy Callaghan (East Dunbartonshire) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Dr Lisa Cameron (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Sir Alan Campbell (Tynemouth) (Lab)	Mark Tami

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Mr Gregory Campbell (East Londonderry) (DUP)	Ian Paisley
Dan Carden (Liverpool, Walton) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Mr Alistair Carmichael (Orkney and Shetland) (LD)	Wendy Chamberlain
Andy Carter (Warrington South) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
James Cartledge (South Suffolk) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Miriam Cates (Penistone and Stocksbridge) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Maria Caulfield (Lewes) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Alex Chalk (Cheltenham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sarah Champion (Rotherham) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Douglas Chapman (Dunfermline and West Fife) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Bambos Charalambous (Enfield, Southgate) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Rehman Chishti (Gillingham and Rainham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jo Churchill (Bury St Edmunds) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Feryal Clark (Enfield North) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Greg Clark (Tunbridge Wells) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mr Simon Clarke (Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Theo Clarke (Stafford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Brendan Clarke-Smith (Bassetlaw) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Chris Clarkson (Heywood and Middleton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
James Cleverly (Braintree) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (The Cotswolds) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Dr Thérèse Coffey (Suffolk Coastal) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Elliot Colburn (Carshalton and Wallington) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Damian Collins (Folkestone and Hythe) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Daisy Cooper (St Albans) (LD)	Wendy Chamberlain
Rosie Cooper (West Lancashire) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Ind)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Alberto Costa (South Leicestershire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Robert Courts (Witney) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Claire Coutinho (East Surrey) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Ronnie Cowan (Inverclyde) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Sir Geoffrey Cox (Torridge and West Devon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Neil Coyle (Bermondsey and Old Southwark) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Stephen Crabb (Preseli Pembrokeshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Angela Crawley (Lanark and Hamilton East) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Stella Creasy (Walthamstow) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Virginia Crosbie (Ynys Môn) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Tracey Crouch (Chatham and Aylesford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jon Cruddas (Dagenham and Rainham) (Lab)	Mark Tami

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
John Cryer (Leyton and Wanstead) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Judith Cummins (Bradford South) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Alex Cunningham (Stockton North) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Janet Daby (Lewisham East) (Lab)	Mark Tami
James Daly (Bury North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Ed Davey (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD)	Wendy Chamberlain
Wayne David (Caerphilly) (Lab)	Mark Tami
David T. C. Davies (Monmouth) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Gareth Davies (Grantham and Stamford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Geraint Davies (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op)	Mark Tami
Dr James Davies (Vale of Clwyd) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mims Davies (Mid Sussex) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Alex Davies-Jones (Pontypridd) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Philip Davies (Shipley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mr David Davis (Haltemprice and Howden) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Dehenna Davison (Bishop Auckland) (Con)	Ben Everitt
Martyn Day (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Thangam Debbonaire (Bristol West) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Marsha De Cordova (Battersea)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Slough) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Caroline Dinenage (Gosport) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Miss Sarah Dines (Derbyshire Dales) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jonathan Djanogly (Huntingdon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Martin Docherty-Hughes (West Dunbartonshire) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Anneliese Dodds (Oxford East) (Lab/Co-op)	Mark Tami
Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson (Lagan Valley) (DUP)	Ian Paisley
Michelle Donelan (Chippenhams) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Dave Doogan (Angus) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Allan Dorans (Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Ms Nadine Dorries (Mid Bedfordshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Steve Double (St Austell and Newquay) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Peter Dowd (Bootle) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Oliver Dowden (Hertsmere) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Richard Drax (South Dorset) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jack Dromey (Birmingham, Erdington) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Mrs Flick Drummond (Meon Valley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
James Duddridge (Rochford and Southend East) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Rosie Duffield (Canterbury) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Philip Dunne (Ludlow) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Maria Eagle (Garston and Halewood) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Colum Eastwood (Foyle) (SDLP)	Patrick Grady
Mark Eastwood (Dewsbury) (Con)	Stuart Andrew

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Jonathan Edwards (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (Ind)	Stuart Andrew
Ruth Edwards (Rushcliffe) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Clive Efford (Eltham) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Julie Elliott (Sunderland Central) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Michael Ellis (Northampton North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mr Tobias Ellwood (Bournemouth East) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mark Tami (Ogmore) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Mrs Natalie Elphicke (Dover) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Florence Eshalomi (Vauxhall) (Lab/Co-op)	Mark Tami
Bill Esterson (Sefton Central) (Lab)	Mark Tami
George Eustice (Camborne and Redruth) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Chris Evans (Islwyn) (Lab/Co-op)	Mark Tami
Dr Luke Evans (Bosworth) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sir David Evennett (Bexleyheath and Crayford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Ben Everitt (Milton Keynes North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Michael Fabricant (Lichfield) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Laura Farris (Newbury) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD)	Wendy Chamberlain
Stephen Farry (North Down) (Alliance)	Wendy Chamberlain
Simon Fell (Barrow and Furness) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Marion Fellows (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Margaret Ferrier (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (Ind)	Stuart Andrew
Katherine Fletcher (South Ribble) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mark Fletcher (Bolsover) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Nick Fletcher (Don Valley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Stephen Flynn (Aberdeen South) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Vicky Ford (Chelmsford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Kevin Foster (Torbay) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Yvonne Fovargue (Makerfield) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Dr Liam Fox (North Somerset) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Vicky Foxcroft (Lewisham, Deptford) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Mary Kelly Foy (City of Durham) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Mr Mark Francois (Rayleigh and Wickford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Lucy Frazer (South East Cambridgeshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
George Freeman (Mid Norfolk) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mike Freer (Finchley and Golders Green) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Richard Fuller (North East Bedfordshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Marcus Fysh (Yeovil) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sir Roger Gale (North Thanet) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Barry Gardiner (Brent North) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Mark Garnier (Wyre Forest) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Nusrat Ghani (Wealden) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Nick Gibb (Bognor Regis and Littlehampton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Patricia Gibson (North Ayrshire and Arran) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Peter Gibson (Darlington) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jo Gideon (Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Con)	Stuart Andrew

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Preet Kaur Gill (Birmingham, Edgbaston) (Lab/Co-op)	Mark Tami
Dame Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Paul Girvan (South Antrim) (DUP)	Ian Paisley
John Glen (Salisbury) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mary Glindon (North Tyneside) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Mr Robert Goodwill (Scarborough and Whitby) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Michael Gove (Surrey Heath) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mrs Helen Grant (Maidstone and The Weald) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Peter Grant (Glenrothes) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
James Gray (North Wiltshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Neil Gray (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Chris Grayling (Epsom and Ewell) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Damian Green (Ashford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Kate Green (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Lilian Greenwood (Nottingham South) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Margaret Greenwood (Wirral West) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Andrew Griffith (Arundel and South Downs) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Nia Griffith (Llanelli) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Kate Griffiths (Burton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
James Grundy (Leigh) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jonathan Gullis (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Andrew Gwynne (Denton and Reddish) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Louise Haigh (Sheffield, Heeley) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Luke Hall (Thornbury and Yate) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Fabian Hamilton (Leeds North East) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Stephen Hammond (Wimbledon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Matt Hancock (West Suffolk) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Greg Hands (Chelsea and Fulham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Claire Hanna (Belfast South) (SDLP)	Ben Lake
Neale Hanvey (Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Emma Hardy (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Ms Harriet Harman (Camberwell and Peckham) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Carolyn Harris (Swansea East) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Rebecca Harris (Castle Point) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Trudy Harrison (Copeland) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sally-Ann Hart (Hastings and Rye) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Simon Hart (Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Helen Hayes (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Sir John Hayes (South Holland and The Deepings) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sir Oliver Heald (North East Hertfordshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
John Healey (Wentworth and Dearne) (Lab)	Mark Tami
James Heappey (Wells) (Con)	Stuart Andrew

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Chris Heaton-Harris (Daventry) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Gordon Henderson (Sittingbourne and Sheppey) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sir Mark Hendrick (Preston) (Lab/Co-op)	Mark Tami
Drew Hendry (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Darren Henry (Broxtowe) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Anthony Higginbotham (Burnley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mike Hill (Hartlepool) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Damian Hinds (East Hampshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Simon Hoare (North Dorset) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD)	Wendy Chamberlain
Dame Margaret Hodge (Barking) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Mrs Sharon Hodgson (Washington and Sunderland West) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Kate Hollern (Blackburn) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Kevin Hollinrake (Thirsk and Malton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Adam Holloway (Gravesham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Paul Holmes (Eastleigh) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Rachel Hopkins (Luton South) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Stewart Hosie (Dundee East) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Sir George Howarth (Knowsley) (Lab)	Mark Tami
John Howell (Henley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Paul Howell (Sedgefield) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Nigel Huddleston (Mid Worcestershire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Dr Neil Hudson (Penrith and The Border) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Eddie Hughes (Walsall North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jane Hunt (Loughborough) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jeremy Hunt (South West Surrey) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Rupa Huq (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Imran Hussain (Bradford East) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Mr Alister Jack (Dumfries and Galloway) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD)	Wendy Chamberlain
Dan Jarvis (Barnsley Central) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Sajid Javid (Bromsgrove) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mr Ranil Jayawardena (North East Hampshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sir Bernard Jenkin (Harwich and North Essex) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mark Jenkinson (Workington) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Andrea Jenkyns (Morley and Outwood) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Robert Jenrick (Newark) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Boris Johnson (Uxbridge and South Ruislip) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Dr Caroline Johnson (Sleaford and North Hykeham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Dame Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Gareth Johnson (Dartford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Kim Johnson (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab)	Mark Tami
David Johnston (Wantage) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Darren Jones (Bristol North West) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Andrew Jones (Harrogate and Knaresborough) (Con)	Stuart Andrew

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Mr David Jones (Clwyd West) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Fay Jones (Brecon and Radnorshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Gerald Jones (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Mr Marcus Jones (Nuneaton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Ruth Jones (Newport West) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Sarah Jones (Croydon Central) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Simon Jupp (East Devon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mike Kane (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Daniel Kawczynski (Shrewsbury and Atcham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Alicia Kearns (Rutland and Melton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Gillian Keegan (Chichester) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Barbara Keeley (Worsley and Eccles South) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Liz Kendall (Leicester West) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Afzal Khan (Manchester, Gorton) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Stephen Kinnock (Aberavon) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Sir Greg Knight (East Yorkshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Julian Knight (Solihull) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Danny Kruger (Devizes) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Kwasi Kwarteng (Spelthorne) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Peter Kyle (Hove) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Mr David Lammy (Tottenham) (Lab)	Mark Tami
John Lamont (Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Robert Langan (High Peak) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mrs Pauline Latham (Mid Derbyshire) (Con)	Mr William Wragg
Ian Lavery (Wansbeck) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Chris Law (Dundee West) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Andrea Leadsom (South Northamptonshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Ian Levy (Blyth Valley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck (South Shields) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Andrew Lewer (Northampton South) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Brandon Lewis (Great Yarmouth) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Clive Lewis (Norwich South) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger (Bridgwater and West Somerset) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Tony Lloyd (Rochdale) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Carla Lockhart (Upper Bann) (DUP)	Ian Paisley
Mark Logan (Bolton North East) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Rebecca Long Bailey (Salford and Eccles) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Marco Longhi (Dudley North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Julia Lopez (Hornchurch and Upminster) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jack Lopresti (Filton and Bradley Stoke) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mr Jonathan Lord (Woking) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Tim Loughton (East Worthing and Shoreham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Holly Lynch (Halifax) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Kenny MacAskill (East Lothian) (SNP)	Patrick Grady

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Steve McCabe (Birmingham, Selly Oak) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Jason McCartney (Colne Valley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Siobhain McDonagh (Mitcham and Morden) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Andy McDonald (Middlesbrough) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Stewart Malcolm McDonald (Glasgow South) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Stuart C. McDonald (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
John McDonnell (Hayes and Harlington) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Mr Pat McFadden (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Conor McGinn (St Helens North) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Alison McGovern (Wirral South) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Craig Mackinlay (South Thanet) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Catherine McKinnell (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Cherilyn Mackrory (Truro and Falmouth) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Anne McLaughlin (Glasgow North East) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Rachel Maclean (Redditch) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jim McMahon (Oldham West and Royton) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Anna McMorris (Cardiff North) (Lab)	Mark Tami
John Mc Nally (Falkirk) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Angus Brendan MacNeil (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Karl McCartney (Lincoln) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Stephen McPartland (Stevenage) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Esther McVey (Tatton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Justin Madders (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Khalid Mahmood (Birmingham, Perry Barr) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Shabana Mahmood (Birmingham, Ladywood) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Alan Mak (Havant) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Seema Malhotra (Feltham and Heston) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Kit Malthouse (North West Hampshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Scott Mann (North Cornwall) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Julie Marson (Hertford and Stortford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Christian Matheson (City of Chester) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Mrs Theresa May (Maidenhead) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jerome Mayhew (Broadland) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Paul Maynard (Blackpool North and Cleveleys) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Ian Mearns (Gateshead) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Mark Menzies (Fylde) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Johnny Mercer (Plymouth, Moor View) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Huw Merriman (Bexhill and Battle) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Stephen Metcalfe (South Basildon and East Thurrock) (Con)	Stuart Andrew

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Edward Miliband (Doncaster North) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Robin Millar (Aberconwy) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mrs Maria Miller (Basingstoke) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Amanda Milling (Cannock Chase) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Nigel Mills (Amber Valley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Navendu Mishra (Stockport) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Mr Andrew Mitchell (Sutton Coldfield) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Gagan Mohindra (South West Hertfordshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Carol Monaghan (Glasgow North West)	Patrick Grady
Damien Moore (Southport) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Layla Moran (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD)	Wendy Chamberlain
Penny Mordaunt (Portsmouth North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jessica Morden (Newport East) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Stephen Morgan (Portsmouth South) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Anne Marie Morris (Newton Abbot) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
David Morris (Morecambe and Lunesdale) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Grahame Morris (Easington) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Joy Morrissey (Beaconsfield) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Wendy Morton (Aldridge-Brownhills) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Dr Kieran Mullan (Crewe and Nantwich) (Con)	Chris Loder
Holly Mumby-Croft (Scunthorpe) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
David Mundell (Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Ian Murray (Edinburgh South) (Lab)	Mark Tami
James Murray (Ealing North) (Lab/Co-op)	Mark Tami
Mrs Sheryll Murray (South East Cornwall) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Andrew Murrison (South West Wiltshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Lisa Nandy (Wigan) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Sir Robert Neill (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Gavin Newlands (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Charlotte Nichols (Warrington North) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Lia Nici (Great Grimsby) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
John Nicolson (Ochil and South Perthshire) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Caroline Nokes (Romsey and Southampton North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jesse Norman (Hereford and South Herefordshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Alex Norris (Nottingham North) (Lab/Co-op)	Mark Tami
Neil O'Brien (Harborough) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Brendan O'Hara (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Dr Matthew Offord (Hendon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sarah Olney (Richmond Park) (LD)	Wendy Chamberlain
Chi Onwurah (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab)	Mark Tami

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Guy Opperman (Hexham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Abena Oppong-Asare (Erith and Thamesmead) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Kate Osamor (Edmonton) (Lab/Co-op)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Kate Osborne (Jarrow) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Kirsten Oswald (East Renfrewshire) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Taiwo Owatemi (Coventry North West) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Sarah Owen (Luton North) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Neil Parish (Tiverton and Honiton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Priti Patel (Witham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mr Owen Paterson (North Shropshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mark Pawsey (Rugby) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Stephanie Peacock (Barnsley East) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Sir Mike Penning (Hemel Hempstead) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Matthew Pennycook (Greenwich and Woolwich) (Lab)	Mark Tami
John Penrose (Weston-super-Mare) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Andrew Percy (Brigg and Goole) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mr Toby Perkins (Chesterfield) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Jess Phillips (Birmingham, Yardley) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Bridget Phillipson (Houghton and Sunderland South) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Chris Philp (Croydon South) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Christopher Pincher (Tamworth) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Luke Pollard (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Lab/Co-op)	Mark Tami
Dr Dan Poulter (Central Suffolk and North Ipswich) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Rebecca Pow (Taunton Deane) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Lucy Powell (Manchester Central) (Lab/Co-op)	Mark Tami
Victoria Prentis (Banbury) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mark Pritchard (The Wrekin) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Tom Pursglove (Corby) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jeremy Quin (Horsham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Will Quince (Colchester) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Yasmin Qureshi (Bolton South East) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Dominic Raab (Esher and Walton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Tom Randall (Gedling) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Angela Rayner (Ashton-under-Lyne) (Lab)	Mark Tami
John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Steve Reed (Croydon North) (Lab/Co-op)	Mark Tami
Christina Rees (Neath) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Ellie Reeves (Lewisham West and Penge) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Rachel Reeves (Leeds West) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Jonathan Reynolds (Stalybridge and Hyde) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Nicola Richards (West Bromwich East) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Angela Richardson (Guildford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Ms Marie Rimmer (St Helens South and Whiston) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Rob Roberts (Delyn) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mr Laurence Robertson (Tewkesbury) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Gavin Robinson (Belfast East) (DUP)	Ian Paisley
Mary Robinson (Cheadle) (Con)	Stuart Andrew

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Matt Rodda (Reading East) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Andrew Rosindell (Romford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Douglas Ross (Moray) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Lee Rowley (North East Derbyshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Dean Russell (Watford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Lloyd Russell-Moyle (Brighton, Kemptown) (Lab/Co-op)	Mark Tami
David Rutley (Macclesfield) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Liz Saville Roberts (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC)	Ben Lake
Selaine Saxby (North Devon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Paul Scully (Sutton and Cheam) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Bob Seely (Isle of Wight) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Andrew Selous (South West Bedfordshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Naz Shah (Bradford West) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP)	Ian Paisley
Grant Shapps (Welwyn Hatfield) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Alok Sharma (Reading West) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mr Virendra Sharma (Ealing, Southall) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op)	Mark Tami
Alec Shelbrooke (Elmet and Rothwell) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Tommy Sheppard (Edinburgh East) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Tulip Siddiq (Hampstead and Kilburn) (Lab)	Mark Tami
David Simmonds (Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Chris Skidmore (Kingswood) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Andy Slaughter (Hammersmith) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Alyn Smith (Stirling) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Cat Smith (Lancaster and Fleetwood) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Chloe Smith (Norwich North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Greg Smith (Buckingham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Henry Smith (Crawley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jeff Smith (Manchester, Withington) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Julian Smith (Skipton and Ripon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Nick Smith (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Royston Smith (Southampton, Itchen) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Karin Smyth (Bristol South) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Alex Sobel (Leeds North West) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Amanda Solloway (Derby North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Dr Ben Spencer (Runnymede and Weybridge) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Alexander Stafford (Rother Valley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Keir Starmer (Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Chris Stephens (Glasgow South West) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Andrew Stephenson (Pendle) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jo Stevens (Cardiff Central) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Jane Stevenson (Wolverhampton North East) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
John Stevenson (Carlisle) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Iain Stewart (Milton Keynes South) (Con)	Stuart Andrew

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)	Wendy Chamberlain
Sir Gary Streeter (South West Devon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Wes Streeting (Ilford North) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Mel Stride (Central Devon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Graham Stringer (Blackley and Broughton) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Graham Stuart (Beverley and Holderness) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Julian Sturdy (York Outer) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Zarah Sultana (Coventry South) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Rishi Sunak (Richmond (Yorks)) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
James Sunderland (Bracknell) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sir Robert Syms (Poole) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sam Tarry (Ilford South) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Derek Thomas (St Ives) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Gareth Thomas (Harrow West) (Lab/Co-op)	Mark Tami
Nick Thomas-Symonds (Torfaen) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Owen Thompson (Midlothian) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Richard Thomson (Gordon) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Emily Thornberry (Islington South and Finsbury) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Stephen Timms (East Ham) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Edward Timpson (Eddisbury) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Kelly Tolhurst (Rochester and Strood) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Justin Tomlinson (North Swindon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Michael Tomlinson (Mid Dorset and North Poole) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Craig Tracey (North Warwickshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Anne-Marie Trevelyan (Berwick-upon-Tweed) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jon Trickett (Hemsworth) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Laura Trott (Sevenoaks) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Elizabeth Truss (South West Norfolk) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Tom Tugendhat (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Karl Turner (Kingston upon Hull East) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Derek Twigg (Halton) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Mr Shailesh Vara (North West Cambridgeshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Martin Vickers (Cleethorpes) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Theresa Villiers (Chipping Barnet) (Con)	Stuart Andrew

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Mr Robin Walker (Worcester) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mr Ben Wallace (Wyre and Preston North)	Stuart Andrew
Dr Jamie Wallis (Bridgend) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Matt Warman (Boston and Skegness) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
David Warburton (Somerset and Frome) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Giles Watling (Clacton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Suzanne Webb (Stourbridge) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Claudia Webbe (Leicester East) (Ind)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Catherine West (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Matt Western (Warwick and Leamington) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Helen Whately (Faversham and Mid Kent) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mrs Heather Wheeler (South Derbyshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Dr Alan Whitehead (Southampton, Test) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Dr Philippa Whitford (Central Ayrshire) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Mick Whitley (Birkenhead) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Craig Whittaker (Calder Valley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
John Whittingdale (Malden) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Nadia Whittome (Nottingham East) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Bill Wiggin (North Herefordshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
James Wild (North West Norfolk) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Craig Williams (Montgomeryshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Hywel Williams (Arfon) (PC)	Ben Lake
Gavin Williamson (Montgomeryshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Munira Wilson (Twickenham) (LD)	Wendy Chamberlain
Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP)	Ian Paisley
Beth Winter (Cynon Valley) (Lab)	Rachel Hopkins
Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Mike Wood (Dudley South) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jeremy Wright (Kenilworth and Southam) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mohammad Yasin (Bedford) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Jacob Young (Redcar) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Nadhim Zahawi (Stratford-on-Avon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Daniel Zeichner (Cambridge) (Lab)	Mark Tami

Written Statements

Tuesday 26 January 2021

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

Official Development Assistance: Government Priorities

The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs and First Secretary of State (Dominic Raab): As agreed with the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer at the last spending review, I have completed the cross-Government review of how Official Development Assistance (ODA) will be allocated against the Government's priorities for 2021. This statement sets out the process and conclusion of the review, which has ensured that UK ODA is focused on our strategic priorities, spent where it will have the maximum impact, has greater coherence and delivers most value for money.

The UK is facing the worst economic contraction in over 300 years, and a budget deficit of close to £400 billion. At 19% of GDP this is around double that of the last financial crisis. As announced last year, given the impact of this global pandemic on the economy and, as a result, the public finances, we will move to a target of spending 0.5% of GNI as ODA in 2021.

This is a temporary measure and we will return to 0.7% when the fiscal situation allows.

We remain a world leading donor, and based on current GNI forecasts will spend over £10 billion of ODA in 2021.

At the same time, we will ensure the maximum impact from our aid budget by changing the way we allocate ODA to support a more integrated approach. This will allow us to drive greater impact from our ODA spending.

This review has agreed ODA allocations for all Government Departments, sharpening our focus on the core priorities I set out to Parliament in November in the overarching pursuit of poverty reduction: climate and biodiversity; covid-19 and global health security; girls' education; science and research; defending open societies and resolving conflict; humanitarian assistance; and promoting trade.

This settlement gives us the best possible launch pad to champion our international priorities for the coming year, as we commence our G7 presidency and look ahead to hosting COP26. It maintains the Prime Minister's promise to double UK international climate finance to £11.6 billion over the next five years. It sustains our commitment to the world's poorest people, advances our strategic interests overseas, and delivers on the Prime Minister's ambition to bring greater coherence and strategic oversight to the UK aid budget. The Government will drive forward that agenda in 2021 through clear ministerial accountability and oversight for all our development spend. Looking further ahead, I will lead a cross-departmental review on a new development strategy to ensure close alignment of UK aid with the objectives to be set out in the integrated review.

Departmental ODA Allocations, 2021-22

Department	21-22 Allocation (£m)
FCDO	8115
BEIS	706
CSSF	337
DCMS	6
DEFRA	92
DHSC	207
HMRC	4
HMT	3
Home Office	470
ONS	3
Other ^[1]	42

^[1] Includes DfE, DWP, MOD and Barnett given to the devolved administrations as a result of UK Government spend on ODA. These budgets include ODA eligible costs.

[HCWS735]

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Medicinal Cannabis from The Netherlands

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Jo Churchill): I would like to update the House on progress made by the Department of Health and Social Care towards ensuring patients can continue to access Bedrocan cannabis oils from the Netherlands.

The UK has left the EU, and the transition period after Brexit came to an end on 31 December 2020. From 1 January 2021, prescriptions issued in the UK can no longer be lawfully dispensed in an EU member state.

Dutch law does not permit the export of finished Bedrocan oils from the Netherlands. Prior to 31 December, Bedrocan oils were supplied in the Netherlands against UK prescriptions through the proxy of a specialist importer. This was allowed while UK prescriptions were recognised in the Netherlands.

Bedrocan cannabis flowers produced in the Netherlands, and other unlicensed cannabis-based medicines imported from other countries, can continue to be supplied to the UK.

The Government have worked quickly with the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport to resolve the issue. I am delighted to announce that the Dutch Government has agreed to the continued access to the medicine for existing UK patients until 1 July 2021.

This news will bring enormous relief to the families who depend on these medicines and I am hugely grateful to the Dutch Government for working with us closely and quickly on this.

The Department has communicated this to patient groups, clinicians and the supply chain to ensure immediate action is taken to resume supply of these products and that no patient faces a break in their treatment.

The Department are also working in earnest to rapidly explore options for a more permanent solution for supply of these products, and will engage patient representatives and the supply chain.

[HCWS734]

HOME DEPARTMENT**Independent Review of Prevent**

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel): The Counter Terrorism and Border Security Act 2019 committed the Government to making arrangements for an independent review and report on Prevent, the Government strategy for supporting people vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. Prevent is one of the four strands of the Government's counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST, and is therefore a critical part of our approach to reducing the risk we face from terrorism.

Following an open competition to appoint a new independent reviewer of Prevent, I am appointing William Shawcross. Mr Shawcross brings with him the necessary skills, experience and independence to carry out this

review and provide recommendations to further develop our approach to supporting people vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism in the future.

The appointment of Mr Shawcross demonstrates our commitment to ensuring that the Government's strategy for supporting vulnerable people to prevent them from being drawn into terrorism is as effective as possible in the future.

The terms of reference for the review will be published shortly once Mr Shawcross has had an opportunity to review them in full and any amendments he might want to make, taking into account any views which have been shared with the review team on the previous terms of reference. These will outline the timescales for completing the review and ensure this important work fulfils the Government's objective of diverting vulnerable people away from terrorism.

[HCWS736]

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Tuesday 2 February 2021**

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