

**Monday
18 October 2021**

**Volume 701
No. 54**



**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

Monday 18 October 2021

House of Commons

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The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Speaker's Statement

DEATHS OF MEMBERS

Mr Speaker: I invite the Speaker's Chaplain to lead us in a minute's silence.

THE SPEAKER'S CHAPLAIN, the Venerable Patricia Hillas, invited Members to rise and said the following:

We keep a moment of remembrance and respect, honouring Sir David Amess, the hon. Member for Southend West, colleague and friend. May the bright memory of his rich life ever outshine the tragic manner of his death. Let us keep silence.

2.34 pm

The House observed a one-minute silence.

Mr Speaker: I am sorry that the House is returning in such tragic circumstances. Since we last met, we have lost two outstanding friends and colleagues: Sir David Amess and James Brokenshire. I know that hon. and right hon. Members from all parts of the House will

share my deep sadness at their loss and will want to join me in sending our heartfelt condolences to their families. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

The circumstances of Sir David's death were despicable and raise the most fundamental issues about how Members of this House are able to perform our vital democratic responsibilities safely and securely. In light of the ongoing police investigation I will not say more about those events, but I give the House my undertaking that I will do everything within my power to ensure that these issues are treated with the urgency and sense of priority they deserve. I know that whatever political differences there are in the House, all Members want to ensure not just that we and our staff are able to work safely, but that our democracy itself, with the local Member of Parliament at the heart of their constituency, is able to function securely. On that, I know the House is united.

The House will want to pay tribute both to Sir David and to James, and I hope it will be useful if I set out how I expect us to be able to do so. On Wednesday, after Prime Minister's questions, there will be an opportunity for tributes to be paid to James Brokenshire. Today's planned substantive business in the Chamber and Westminster Hall will not be proceeded with. Instead, we will have Home Office questions, followed by an opportunity to pay tribute to Sir David Amess on a motion for the Adjournment, to be opened by the Prime Minister. At 6 pm today, there will be a service of prayer and remembrance to commemorate Sir David at St Margaret's church. I expect the House to adjourn at approximately 5.30 pm and for those Members who wish to attend the service then to proceed from this Chamber to St Margaret's. I know that many Members will want to speak later, and if they bear that in mind, it will help us all to get this on the record. There will also be books of condolence for Members and staff to sign.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

The Secretary of State was asked—

Prevention of Illegal Protests

1. **Mrs Sheryll Murray** (South East Cornwall) (Con): What steps her Department is taking to help prevent illegal protests. [903754]

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel): I will pay my tribute shortly to our dear friend Sir David, but before I respond to the question, I want to echo your words, Mr Speaker, by saying that his killing is a terrible and sad moment in our history. It is an attack on our democracy and an appalling tragedy, and we are all thinking of David and Julia and their family. I also want to echo your words about our dear, dear colleague James Brokenshire, the Member of Parliament for Old Bexley and Sidcup, who bravely battled cancer over the past year. James, Cathy and their children are in all our thoughts.

In response to question No. 1, these protests are extremely dangerous. They have caused great economic harm and caused misery and distress to the law-abiding public. They have also prevented members of the public from going about their daily business.

Mrs Murray: On Friday we saw the worst type of illegal protest, when my good friend was stabbed as he did his job. Mr Speaker, I hope to catch your eye later and give my own tribute to this most excellent fellow, and I thank you for making this possible. Sadly on this occasion it was one of our colleagues, but will the Government review how we can help to keep safe all those who work in public-facing roles?

Priti Patel: I echo the words of my hon. Friend. Of course we have a duty and a responsibility, and there is a great deal of work taking place right now with Mr Speaker and with police forces across the country to do exactly that. There will be further updates over the next few days, particularly for Members of Parliament but also for wider public protection.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): Of course, I also pay tribute to Sir David Amess. I never managed to persuade him to support gay marriage, but he always asked after my husband. I think that was the character of the man.

The difficulty is in judging the boundary between legal and illegal protests, because some people who protest online think vile abuse is perfectly justifiable. We seem to have developed a toxic way of doing politics. How do we simply change it so that we become a bit more like Sir David and, for that matter, a bit more like James?

Priti Patel: The hon. Gentleman captures the mood of the nation on the discourse we have in public life. Clearly we see far too much cruelty in the online space, and we all have a responsibility and a duty to work

together, which is part of the solution here. In this place, in public life and in politics, I would use one word: respect.

Pet Theft Taskforce

2. **Julian Sturdy** (York Outer) (Con): What steps her Department is taking to implement the findings of the pet theft taskforce. [903755]

5. **Simon Baynes** (Clwyd South) (Con): What steps her Department is taking to implement the findings of the pet theft taskforce. [903758]

The Minister for Crime and Policing (Kit Malthouse): I start by associating myself with the remarks of the Home Secretary on James Brokenshire, who I worked with over the last 15 years on all manner of subjects. He was a lovely man and a pleasure to know.

It is poignant to realise that Sir David would have spotted the subject of these two questions and, given his long interest in animal welfare, should in any just world be bobbing behind me now to ask a question.

Stealing a pet from its loving owner is a particularly cruel crime, causing heartbreak for the family and great distress to the pet. The Home Office is working with the police to ensure that pet thefts are recorded in a consistent manner and are readily identifiable within the information management systems of forces across England and Wales. The pet theft taskforce has recently made a series of recommendations, which we are considering, and we will introduce a new criminal offence of pet abduction.

Julian Sturdy: I add my tribute to Sir David. As the Minister said, he dedicated his career to better animal welfare. This topic was very close to Sir David's heart, and I know he had been lobbying the Minister very hard on it.

As we continue to see a rise in pet thefts by criminal gangs who use the proceeds to fund further criminal activity, does the Minister agree that we have to bring forward legislation on this as quickly as possible? We cannot delay any further. Can he give a clear timescale for when we can vote on that important legislation in this House?

Kit Malthouse: My hon. Friend is right that, unfortunately, one of the effects of the pandemic, and particularly of the rise in the value of pets, particularly dogs and cats that are happily in demand by many families who look to them for companionship, has been a criminal phenomenon that we need to address. The taskforce has made a number of recommendations and, although I cannot give him an absolute timetable today, he has our undertaking that we are keen to move as swiftly as possible to give him the opportunity to put this offence on the statute book.

Simon Baynes: Like other hon. Members here, I am honoured to ask this question in memory of Sir David. I met local residents concerned about pet theft recently, in Hanmer, in my constituency. What message would the Minister give to those constituents, who have been worried about this issue locally?

Kit Malthouse: It is typical of my hon. Friend that he would gather his constituents together to give voice to their concern in this area. The message I would give them is that we recognise their distress and concern. As dog and cat owners ourselves, it is inconceivable to us that our pets might be stolen; the damage and trauma that would be caused to my family if that awful event were to happen is keenly in our minds. The policy development work on this offence has begun. As I said earlier, we hope to bring legislation forward as quickly as possible, so that he and the many other Members who are very interested in this subject and recognise the distress that has been caused in communities up and down the land by this crime can exercise their free democratic will and put the offence on the statute book.

Mr Speaker: I call Ian Paisley. He is not here. I call Crispin Blunt.

Psilocybin: Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001

4. **Crispin Blunt** (Reigate) (Con): Whether her Department plans to take steps to reschedule psilocybin to schedule 2 of the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001. [R] [903757]

The Minister for Crime and Policing (Kit Malthouse): We currently have no plans to reschedule psilocybin to schedule 2 of the Misuse of Drugs Regulations. The Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs has recently published stage 1 of its advice on reducing barriers to research on controlled drugs. We will consider the advice, including its implications for psilocybin, carefully before responding.

Crispin Blunt: Does my right hon. Friend understand the emerging potential of the psychedelic class of drugs, with psilocybin to the fore, to treat depression, trauma and addiction? Some of this science was emerging in the 1960s, before our current drugs laws closed it down. In 2019, 90,503 of our fellow citizens were driven to suicide by their depression or trauma, or their rock-bottom in addiction has been death. If there is any scale of potential for these drugs, and it appears that there is, any further delay in getting the science and research going is not defensible—in fact, it is a morally disgraceful abrogation of our duty to the public good.

Kit Malthouse: As a founder of the all-party group on life sciences, I am well aware of the potential of any number of compounds to assist us in the constant battle against mental and physical illness, and of the need for this country to lead in research that might alleviate the problem, not just here, but in the rest of the world. My hon. Friend will know that we reschedule particular compounds where medicines are approved on the advice of the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency and of the ACMD. He will know that, for example, in June last year we placed Epidyolex, a cannabis-based medicine used to treat certain forms of epilepsy, in schedule 5 to the Misuse of Drugs Regulations, following exactly that sort of advice. There are ongoing trials and research studies into psilocybin taking place in the UK; a medicine has yet to be licensed by the MHRA, but if and when one is, we will consider rescheduling.

Ronnie Cowan (Inverclyde) (SNP): To catch up on what was said there, can the Minister tell me on what research the UK Government are basing this current policy on psilocybin? Can that research be made available?

Kit Malthouse: The research is being undertaken in a number of academic institutions, as far as I am aware. I am happy to dig out the detail of where specifically this is being researched—I do not have it to hand. It is worth reinforcing the point that the process for the rescheduling of compounds is that approval is given for a medicine by the MHRA, and advice is then taken from the ACMD as to the rescheduling, as we did with Epidyolex. As soon as those medicines are approved by the MHRA for use, I would be happy to consider rescheduling.

Victims of Domestic Abuse: Support

6. **Mrs Flick Drummond** (Meon Valley) (Con): What steps her Department is taking to support victims of domestic abuse. [903759]

14. **John Howell** (Henley) (Con): What steps her Department is taking to support victims of domestic abuse. [903768]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Rachel Maclean): I would like to associate myself with the comments made by my ministerial colleagues on the sad loss of our dear colleagues.

Supporting victims of domestic abuse is a Government priority. Building on the landmark Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and the tackling violence against women and girls strategy, published this year, we will also publish a dedicated domestic abuse strategy, which will drive action to prevent offending, support victims, relentlessly pursue perpetrators and strengthen the system as a whole.

Mrs Drummond: May I place on the record, on my behalf and that of my Meon Valley constituents, our deep and utter shock at the death of Sir David Amess, and also that of James Brokenshire? I pass on their deepest condolences to the families, constituents and many friends here and outside Westminster.

Over the past year, 26,785 domestic abuse offences were recorded in Hampshire, with a 14% year-on-year increase in the first period of lockdown. Will my hon. Friend continue her support for the police and crime commissioners, such as Donna Jones in Hampshire, who are tackling this dreadful crime as a priority?

Rachel Maclean: I thank Donna Jones for the way that she has prioritised domestic abuse, backed by an uplift in the Hampshire police funding settlement. I assure my hon. Friend that we will work closely with policing colleagues, including police and crime commissioners, and the new police lead for tackling violence against women and girls, Maggie Blyth, to drive forward improvements in the police response to such crimes. Furthermore, we will publish a refreshed national statement of expectations on violence against women and girls to support local commissioners, including PCCs, in the commissioning of effective services.

John Howell: Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, regardless of their gender, age, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, sexuality or background, but how

many men have been subjected to domestic abuse and what is offered to them that is different from what is offered to women?

Rachel Maclean: My hon. Friend is absolutely right that men and boys can be victims of domestic abuse and, indeed, the other crimes that fall under the umbrella of what we call violence against women and girls. For the year ending March 2020, the crime survey of England and Wales estimated that 757,000 men experienced domestic abuse—that is approximately seven men in every 100.¹ We did a lot of work to publish the first ever cross-Government male victims position statement to strengthen our response; we need to refresh that statement. We also fund the Men's Advice Line, which is run by Respect, to provide specialist support to victims.

Small Boat Channel Crossings

7. **Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con): What steps her Department is taking to reduce the number of small boat channel crossings. [903760]

16. **Sir David Evennett** (Bexleyheath and Crayford) (Con): What steps her Department is taking to reduce the number of small boat channel crossings. [903770]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Tom Pursglove): May I, too, associate myself with the tributes that have been paid, and that no doubt will be paid for the rest of the day, to both Sir David and James Brokenshire? They were model parliamentarians and great friends, and we are far poorer in this House for their passing.

Illegal entry to the UK via small boats is unsafe, unfair and unacceptable. We are working tirelessly to make the route unviable through a comprehensive package of measures—there is no one single answer. Our new plan for immigration and the Nationality and Borders Bill will address the challenge of illegal immigration by increasing maximum sentences for people smugglers and making it easier to swiftly remove those who enter the UK illegally.

Sir Desmond Swayne: What urgency does my hon. Friend attach to the implementation of offshore processing along the Australian model?

Tom Pursglove: My right hon. Friend will know that the provisions in the Bill are comprehensive, many and varied. As I said, there is not one single answer to the challenge that we face in relation to illegal channel crossings. We must make the route unviable and, of course, in the Bill we reserve the right to do exactly what my right hon. Friend advocates.

Sir David Evennett: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Nationality and Borders Bill is key to preventing the vile people-smuggling gangs from continuing to facilitate channel crossings and putting so many lives at risk?

Tom Pursglove: As ever, my right hon. Friend gets to the nub of the issue. I make the point again, because it bears repeating, that there is no one single answer to resolve the challenge that we face. In swift order, we require the comprehensive measures set out in the Bill, which are there to tackle dangerous crossings. Of course,

we also need global assistance to help us to achieve our aims. We must put these evil criminal gangs out of business once and for all and preserve human life, which is exactly what the measures we have proposed seek to do.

Afzal Khan (Manchester, Gorton) (Lab): I want to add my sincere condolences to Sir David and his family and friends. Sir David was kind to everyone in Parliament and he will be greatly missed.

Last week, Sir David and I were part of a parliamentary delegation in Qatar. During the visit, we met the unaccompanied child refugees who had been evacuated from Afghanistan and are now being housed in temporary accommodation in Qatar. As many as 13 of those children have family members in the UK and are desperate to be reunited with them. Will the Home Secretary now take steps urgently to facilitate the reunion of those children with their families?

Tom Pursglove: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his question. We are working across Government on these matters. I know that engagement is going on through the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office with the authorities that he describes. We have a proud record and tradition in this country of providing sanctuary to those who find themselves in desperate circumstances. That absolutely continues to be the case. That is a firm commitment of this Government and it is perfectly in line with this country's proud traditions. People across our country would expect us to continue to do that, and that is exactly what we will do.

Mr Speaker: I call the SNP spokesperson.

Stuart C. McDonald (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP): I and my colleagues, from the bottom of our hearts, send our deepest condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of both Sir David Amess and James Brokenshire. It is fair to say that, in short, everyone knew Sir David and everyone liked and respected him, without exception.

I shadowed James Brokenshire as Immigration Minister in my first year in this place, and he made my job 10 times tougher, not only because of his mastery of the brief, but because he, too, was a person whom it was impossible not to respect and to like and we will sorely miss him.

At the last Home Office questions, the Home Secretary suggested that I had not read the Nationality and Borders Bill when I said that it would see Uyghurs, persecuted Christians and Syrians fleeing war prosecuted and sentenced to prison, but I have read it and that is precisely what clause 37 will do. I welcome the Minister to his place, but if he does not want to see Uyghurs, persecuted Christians and Syrians prosecuted and imprisoned, will he take that clause out of the Bill?

Tom Pursglove: I would expect nothing less from the hon. Gentleman given that we are beginning line-by-line consideration of the Bill tomorrow in Committee. I have no doubt that he will have studied every single clause very carefully and will be interrogating me on each of them. We do not want to see anybody persecuted. As I have said previously, as a country and as a Government, we are absolutely determined to make sure that there

1. [Official Report, 1 November 2021, Vol. 702, c. 4MC.]

continue to be safe and legal routes, so that people who qualify can continue to access sanctuary in this country. Also, of course, through our international engagement, we always press home that human rights must be respected and upheld at every turn.

Mr John Baron (Basildon and Billericay) (Con): I warmly welcome the Minister and, indeed, the Government's forthcoming legislation on this issue, but may I urge on him the utmost haste and speed in delivering it to this House for our consideration? The trade, as it were, of human trafficking is a hideous crime. Lives are being lost now. It is making a laughing stock of the two systems on both sides of the channel. We need to put a stop to it. It should not be beyond the wit of the Government to do so.

Tom Pursglove: I am grateful to my hon. Friend who has consistently raised these matters. He is right to say that we want to deliver the provisions of the Nationality and Borders Bill as quickly as possible, because we believe that they are fundamental to preventing these dangerous channel crossings as part of an overall package to deliver on that. I hope that the Bill will command support across the House.

My hon. Friend is also right to raise the issue of collaboration with our international partners; of course, the French are integral to that. We have an arrangement with the French. It is bearing results, but there is clearly still more to do. This issue cannot be resolved entirely without that collaboration.

Drug Safety Testing at Events

8. **Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab): What recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of implementing drug safety testing for (a) festivals and (b) events in the night-time economy. [903762]

The Minister for Crime and Policing (Kit Malthouse): No illicit drug can be assumed to be safe.

Kerry McCarthy: I echo the tributes to Sir David Amess and James Brokenshire, and send my commiserations to their friends and families.

Over a single weekend in Bristol this summer, one young person died and 20 others were hospitalised, leading to police warnings about a lethal batch of pills circulating in the city. It just is not enough for the Government to say, "Don't do drugs"; that clearly does not work. Will the Government work with organisations such as The Loop, which provides testing, or provide their own drugs testing service as the Welsh Government have been doing since 2014? That is the only way that they are going to save lives.

Kit Malthouse: We are obviously all distressed to hear the news from Bristol. Any life lost to drugs is obviously to be mourned. Anyone interested in lawfully undertaking activities that include the possession, supply or production of controlled drugs, including through the course of drug testing services, can already apply to the Home Office for a domestic licence, and they will be subject to the usual visits and considerations about the activities that they undertake. I understand the hon. Lady's implication that we should look at this subject in the round. It is our hope that we will publish later this year

a comprehensive, cross-Government strategy on drugs in the round, including on their impact and what we can do about them.

Violence against Women and Girls

9. **Laura Farris** (Newbury) (Con): What steps her Department is taking to work with the police in helping to reduce violence against women and girls. [903763]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Rachel Maclean): Cases including the sickening murder of Sarah Everard and the appalling murders of Bibaa Henry and Nicole Smallman have caused immense pain and understandably prompted huge concerns. That is why the Home Secretary commissioned an inspection of the police response to violence against women and girls, and why we supported the recommendation to appoint a full-time national policing lead to drive forward progress on this hugely important issue.

Laura Farris: I also extend my deepest sympathies to the families of Sir David Amess and James Brokenshire. Southend has lost two sons and we have lost two very special parliamentary colleagues.

I would like to recognise the work that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has been doing over the past few, very challenging weeks, which have had damaging implications for the relationship between the police and the safety of women. Last week, *The Times* reported that more than half of the disciplinary hearings that had been conducted over the past three years were held in private and almost no force published the findings. We know how important transparency is to public confidence, so will my hon. Friend the Minister tell us what steps she is taking to ensure that members of the public can see what is going on with their local force?

Rachel Maclean: My hon. Friend is absolutely right that public confidence in the policing response is vital to tackling violence against women and girls. I am determined, as is the Home Secretary, to do all we can to combat these sickening crimes. We are committed to ensuring that policing is subject to stringent levels of transparency and accountability. Misconduct hearings are chaired independently of forces by legally qualified chairs. Sometimes those hearings must be held in private, for several legitimate reasons. We will be looking at the matter further to ensure that the system is accountable to the public.

Jess Phillips (Birmingham, Yardley) (Lab): Obviously, all of us on the Opposition Benches wish to be associated with the words of the Home Secretary, and send our love and best regards to Sir David's family. He was kind and good, but for me, above all else, he was funny and he did not take himself too seriously.

As for James, as the Immigration Minister he was incredibly approachable and kind; he was a good and thorough Minister.

I wish also briefly to say from Members on the Labour Benches, who know how it feels to have someone fall, that our love—through you, Mr Speaker—is with all the friends and colleagues of those who have died.

I simply rise to ask the Minister whether her Department has decided whether it is going to implement all the recommendations and the timeframe laid out in last month's report of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, in order to improve our national response to violence against women and girls. In September, the Minister told the House:

"The Home Secretary has committed to considering the report's full recommendations and will update Parliament when she has done so."—[*Official Report*, 22 September 2021; Vol. 701, c. 287.]
An update on that position would be welcomed.

Rachel Maclean: I thank the hon. Lady for her words just now.

Clearly the report that the hon. Lady mentions is a very important one, and the Home Secretary and Home Office are considering it in detail. We have already put in place a number of important actions, including appointing Deputy Chief Constable Maggie Blyth to her new role and chairing a new taskforce to drive cross-Government action. The Home Secretary has also announced an independent inquiry into the issues surrounding Wayne Couzens and the wider culture in policing.

Agri-food Industry: Labour Shortages

10. **Carla Lockhart** (Upper Bann) (DUP): Whether she plans to take steps to amend immigration rules to help tackle labour shortages in the agri-food industry across the UK. [903764]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Tom Pursglove): When we introduced the new skilled worker visa last year, we broadened the skills threshold from the academically focused graduate level under the previous tier 2 visa to school-leaver level, or RQF—regulated qualifications framework—level 3, to ensure that a wider range of skilled work was recognised. That change means that roles such as butcher, farmer and poultry processor qualify for the skilled worker route, allowing recruitment into them on a global level.

Carla Lockhart: I extend my thoughts and prayers to the families, friends, colleagues and staff of Sir David Amess and James Brokenshire. I trust that I will have the opportunity to speak further on that later.

I thank the Home Secretary for meeting me and party colleagues a few short weeks ago on the issue of labour shortages and for the actions taken since then to alleviate the labour supply pressures, but I fear that the short window of opportunity being offered will not be enough to attract the necessary workers. Additionally, our farmers, particularly our pig farmers, are in crisis as we speak in this House today. What additional efforts are being made, alongside the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, to support this industry and meet the pressing demand for labour, with farms backing up with healthy pigs and abattoirs cancelling 25% of their pig slaughter due to staff shortages?

Tom Pursglove: I note that the hon. Lady met the Home Secretary recently to talk about this issue. Events have moved on since; we have flexibility on visas and the issues around cold storage are being addressed. However, it is clear that this is a short-term fix, not a long-term

solution. We must continue to focus—I think people in our country would rightly expect us to do so—on what more we can do to make sure that we improve skills, training, wages and terms and conditions so that the domestic labour market is able to fulfil these roles in the longer term. We have been responsive to industry's asks, and of course our ears continue to be open.

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): It would have been very appropriate today if David Amess had been the first to welcome the new Minister to the Dispatch Box, because the three of us worked together on Grassroots Out, and David held the first rally for us. That is appropriate to this question: is it not right, Minister, that coming out of the European Union gives us the ability to decide on these issues?

Tom Pursglove: I thank my hon. Friend and neighbour for his question. It will not surprise him to hear that only a couple of weeks ago I received a note from Sir David congratulating me on my appointment. It is something that I will absolutely treasure in the years ahead. His encouragement was always second to none. The truth is that people like he and I campaigned in the referendum for a global immigration system, which is exactly what we have delivered. I genuinely believe that that is the right approach to immigration for the years ahead, based on skills—recruiting the skills that we need, but making sure that we do right by the domestic labour market and people in this country by improving skills, opportunity, training and terms and conditions, and making sure that we can recruit more readily to these roles.

Bambos Charalambous (Enfield, Southgate) (Lab): I, too, wish to pay my tributes to Sir David and James Brokenshire and pass on my deepest condolences and sympathies to their families. They were two of the kindest, most decent parliamentarians I have ever met. I will certainly miss my conversations with Sir David by the lifts in 1 Parliament Street, always with a smile.

The National Farmers Union has told MPs that there is a chronic shortage of butchers and agriculture workers that has led to 150,000 pigs being backed up on farms. Will the Government add butchers and agriculture workers to the shortage-occupation list, and will the Government agree to review the list earlier than 2022, as is the current plan?

Tom Pursglove: The hon. Gentleman raises an interesting question. He should know that the Home Office and Ministers in the Home Office are working constructively with DEFRA, which is regularly engaging, no doubt, with the National Farmers Union around these matters. Following last year's SOL review by the Migration Advisory Committee, the Government set out their response, stating that the labour market is changing as a result of covid and that it is important to assess changes in the labour market before making widespread changes to the SOL. This is particularly true at a time when so many British people still face uncertain times with the ending of furlough. We are committed to addressing these challenges and we have taken steps in the short term to do so, but, as I say, such steps are really not the long-term solution to those challenges. Of course, we are responsive as the situation develops.

Karl McCartney (Lincoln) (Con): Although I take this opportunity to welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Tom Pursglove) to his position on the Front Bench, he might not welcome what I have to say after I congratulate him and echo the comments he made in condolence for our dear departed colleagues, David and James.

So far, we have not had any facts and figures. What are the numbers of shortages? How many applications have been made? How many visas have been granted?

Tom Pursglove: I thank my hon. Friend for his question. As I say, we have been responsive to the needs that have arisen in our economy. We have been engaging with the various sectors that have come forward to raise concerns. For example, there is a commitment to supporting visas for 4,700 HGV food drivers, up to 5,500 poultry workers and 300 fuel drivers. I think the key thing now is that those industries that sought that extra support and that flexibility through visas now get on and recruit to those roles.

Online Fraud and Scams

11. **Cat Smith** (Lancaster and Fleetwood) (Lab): What steps her Department is taking to tackle online fraud and scams. [903765]

The Minister for Security and Borders (Damian Hinds): I, too, wish to associate myself with your words, Mr Speaker, and those of the Home Secretary in memory of our two cherished friends, David and James—outstanding parliamentarians both. James, among his many other accomplishments, was also an exceptionally effective and highly respected Security Minister, in which role he set the enduring example. As well as by colleagues in this House, he is very much missed by officials in the Home Office and by the agencies and partners with which he worked.

Online fraud and scams have a devastating impact, and we are taking action to protect the public and make it harder for fraudsters to operate. The online safety Bill will tackle some of the highest harm frauds online.

Cat Smith: I wish to put on record my own condolences to the families of James Brokenshire and Sir David. A lot of people have said that Sir David was a good support to new MPs, but he was also a good support to those of us doing things for the first time. Indeed, he chaired the Bill Committee when I was first on the Opposition Front Bench. He was a great support to me and will be dearly missed from the House.

Many of my Fleetwood constituents are seriously concerned about pension scams, which are on the rise. I pay tribute to the work of Age UK raising awareness of the risk of pension scams. Can the Minister tell me what steps he plans to take in the online harms Bill specifically on pension scams?

Damian Hinds: The hon. Lady is exactly right to identify the wickedness of pension scams picking on people, often at a time of weakness, which is part of a wider field of investment scams. As she will know, the online safety Bill is currently going through pre-legislative scrutiny, which is an opportunity for issues to be fleshed

out. She is absolutely right that the Government focus remains very much on the pension scams that she mentions.

Theresa Villiers (Chipping Barnet) (Con): May I express my deep sadness at the loss of Sir David Amess and James Brokenshire?

May I also ask the Minister what action the Government and the police are taking to protect the elderly in particular from scams? One of the most repellent aspects of such crime is that the criminals particularly prey on the elderly and vulnerable.

Damian Hinds: I thank my right hon. Friend for that question, which follows on from what the hon. Member for Lancaster and Fleetwood (Cat Smith) was saying. It is very important that we raise awareness of how people can protect themselves from these scams and the things to look out for. We need to encourage reporting so that we can build up a wider picture. It is also very important that we focus on victim support when these crimes have occurred and that we prevent re-victimisation. We are increasing our efforts in that area.

Conor McGinn (St Helens North) (Lab): I echo what has been said about Sir David Amess. When it comes to James Brokenshire, quite simply he was everything you would have wanted in an opposite number. He was co-operative, constructive, but occasionally combative, and I will miss him.

I congratulate the new Security Minister, the right hon. Member for East Hampshire (Damian Hinds), and I think we have already established a similar working relationship.

Online harms have been brought sharply into focus during the past 18 months. That includes not only fraud and scams, but extremism, radicalisation and terrorism. The police and the intelligence and security services are very concerned, and we sadly know the tragic consequences. Is the Minister satisfied that he can address that in the online safety Bill, or are specific and perhaps more urgent actions required? I assure him that if they are, we would seek to work with the Government in finding common ground to bring forward any necessary measures.

Damian Hinds: I thank the hon. Gentleman twice over: for what he said at the start and for his expression of support for doing what we must to ensure that we disrupt the terrible messaging, propaganda and ways of association that can have the most horrific outcomes and consequences, and thwart those efforts. There are important steps on illegal content in the online safety Bill that will improve our arsenal and toolkit. However, we must also work in particular on end-to-end encryption and platforms deliberately blinding themselves against being able to take down very harmful material. I look forward to working with him on that.

Siobhan Baillie (Stroud) (Con): May I pay respects on behalf of the people of Stroud to the families of Sir David and James Brokenshire?

On the BBC yesterday, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary was compelling when she spoke about the challenges of tackling anonymous abuse and understanding that the public are looking to us to make

changes. Will my right hon. Friend meet me to discuss my verification campaign with Clean Up the Internet to see how the Department can assist that work?

Damian Hinds: I will certainly meet my hon. Friend, who I recognise has done a lot of work in this area. I want to make it clear that where people are engaged in illegal abuse, they can be identified and prosecuted via existing legislation—the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and the Investigatory Powers Act 2016—but I accept that there are more aspects to this. I am happy to meet her and look forward to hearing her thoughts.

Topical Questions

T1. [903744] **Kate Osborne** (Jarrow) (Lab): If she will make a statement on her departmental responsibilities.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel): The whole country is horrified and shaken by the dreadful killing of our colleague and friend Sir David Amess. There has been a tidal wave of stories about David's kindness and compassion from all quarters. To me, he was a dear and loyal friend. We are all utterly devastated for David's wife Julia and their family and loved ones.

David, as we have already heard across the House, had a huge number of friends in this House, in his constituency, in the county of Essex and well beyond. The causes he supported were diverse, with so many relating to people and, of course, his much-loved animals. Many sittings in this House were enlivened, Mr Speaker, by his calls for city status for Southend. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear!"] It is agonising to know that we will not see his wonderful smile again.

It took no effort on David's part to conduct the business of politics in a civilised, good-humoured way, which came naturally to him. Decency ran through him like the writing in a stick of Southend rock. David represented all that was good about this place, so let us all carry his light forward and reflect his passionate commitment to making things better for the people we serve.

Kate Osborne: May I pay my respects to Sir David Amess and James Brokenshire and send my best wishes to their family, friends and staff?

Today, on Anti-Slavery Day, statistics obtained by After Exploitation show that since 2016 more than 4,500 suspected trafficking victims have been referred for support only after leaving immigration detention. That shows a major failing and demonstrates how the trauma of detention prevents victims from disclosing their exploitation. Will the Home Secretary explain what work is being carried out to tackle the problem and why the Home Office is still planning to open a new immigration centre for women this month in County Durham?

Priti Patel: First, on the really important point that the hon. Member makes about modern-day slavery and trafficking, the Government are absolutely committed to undertaking every step and measure to provide support through the national referral mechanism, as well as support on victims and victimisation through much of our modern-day slavery work. I reassure her that more

work is taking place through the current Nationality and Borders Bill on what measures we can put in place to safeguard victims and their testimony and ensure that they get the support that they need.

T2. [903745] **Mark Fletcher** (Bolsover) (Con): May I place on record my condolences to the families of the two colleagues whom we have lost?

I recently undertook residents surveys in Heath and Shirebrook in my constituency, which showed strong demand for more bobbies on the beat to tackle antisocial behaviour. What progress have we made in getting more police on the streets in Derbyshire?

The Minister for Crime and Policing (Kit Malthouse): I commend my hon. Friend for engaging with his constituents on what, very often, is easily the closest subject to all of our constituents' hearts. He will be pleased to hear that we are now approaching the halfway mark on our 20,000 extra police officers, which obviously represents a gross recruitment of something over 20,000. I hope that he will feel the effect of the now well over 100 police officers recruited by Derbyshire constabulary on the streets of his constituency in the weeks to come.

Nick Thomas-Symonds (Torfaen) (Lab): I first met Sir David Amess when I entered this House in 2015 and he approached me, as a new Member, to ask how I was and how I was settling in. That conversation captured the essence of Sir David, who was a kind, thoughtful and generous man, always cheerful and smiling. He was dedicated to the service of his constituents, he had passionate beliefs and he worked across party lines on causes that mattered to him and those he served. He was respected and held in affection across the House, and we on the Opposition Benches send our condolences to his wife Julia, and to all his loved ones and parliamentary colleagues.

Sadly, another Member of this House, James Brokenshire, was taken from us too young. I worked with James on a number of security issues, and he was a man of firm beliefs, staunch integrity and unfailing good humour. He pursued causes with passion and respect, and represented politics at its best. We on these Benches send our sympathies to his wife Cathy, and to all his loved ones and parliamentary colleagues.

I would also like to send my best wishes to Lynne Owens, thank her for her work as director general of the National Crime Agency and wish her a swift recovery from her recent surgery.

Mr Speaker, I am grateful to your office and to the Home Secretary for the work on MPs' security since the heinous crime that was committed on Friday, but I wonder whether she Secretary could offer some more details on the review. Can she confirm when the review she has announced will be completed, and what she will do to ensure that any recommendations are applied consistently by police forces up and down the country?

Priti Patel: First, I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his comments about Sir David and James, and Lynne Owens as well.

Obviously, these are important points about Members' security that the Speaker and I have been working on over recent days. I think it is absolutely right for all Members of the House to recognise that we want to see

consistency across the board when it comes to the safety and security of Members of Parliament and our ability to conduct our public duties as democratically elected Members of this House.

The review is under way right now, and I can confirm to the right hon. Gentleman and to all hon. and right hon. Members that the policing review itself will be concluding in the next few days. There will be more communications to all colleagues across the House about how to conduct their work publicly in a safe and secure way, while at the same time giving the public the confidence and the assurance that they need when they are coming to meet Members in forums such as surgeries. But the one-to-one contact that Members of Parliament require will be taking place—actually, starting from this afternoon.

Nick Thomas-Symonds: I am grateful for that answer. The awful murder of Sir David follows the dreadful murder of our friend Jo Cox, an attack on my right hon. Friend the Member for East Ham (Stephen Timms), a plot to kill my hon. Friend the Member for West Lancashire (Rosie Cooper) and the murder of Andrew Pennington, who was killed after an attack at the office of the now noble Lord Jones of Cheltenham. Any attack on any elected representative is an attack on our whole democracy, and it is with that imperative that we have to approach this. I appreciate that the current investigation is at a very early stage, and the Home Secretary will quite rightly be very guarded on the specifics, but could she comment more broadly on the issue of lone attackers? Can the Home Secretary set out what steps the Government intend to take to investigate this type of attack and the radicalisation of perpetrators, and will a strategy be put in place to reduce the risk of such attacks in future?

Priti Patel: The right hon. Gentleman is absolutely right that, with the live investigation taking place, I will not be drawn into any commentary whatsoever, and no Member should. The issue of lone attackers is not new, and across society and across our country and other countries around the world, sadly, we have seen too many lone attackers in previous years as well. There is a great deal of work taking place, and we will continue to discuss the work that takes place across intelligence, policing and security, prisons and probation to prevent these attacks, but also the data and intelligence sharing undertaken across our systems, across Government and across all aspects of various institutions and society. Of course, that is linked to some of the current inquiries that are also taking place.

So a great deal of work is under way, but it is also important to recognise—I would like all Members to hear this—that we have some of the best intelligence and security agencies in the world, and I want to pay tribute to them and our police forces today for the work they have been doing, specifically with regard to the current investigation but also the much wider work they do to keep us safe every single day.

T3. [903746] **Dr Ben Spencer** (Runnymede and Weybridge) (Con): I want to associate myself with the remarks made by you, Mr Speaker, the Home Secretary and other hon. Members, and to pay tribute to Sir David Amess

and James Brokenshire, two fantastic and honourable MPs cruelly taken before their time. Their friends and families are in all our thoughts and prayers.

On the review of the security of MPs, does my right hon. Friend agree that one thing that makes our democracy great is the unfettered access our constituents have to us, and that this must be protected and strengthened as part of this review?

Priti Patel: I thank my hon. Friend for his comments and question. He is absolutely right, and I think all Members take pride in our constituency work and the ability for constituents to approach us and us to be approachable for them. A number of security reviews are under way right now and we are rightly looking at practical considerations to protect Members and the public to enable us to carry out our functions as democratically elected Members of this House.

Mr Speaker: I call the SNP spokesperson, Stuart C. McDonald.

Stuart C. McDonald (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP): Having expressed our condolences, can we also express our thanks both to you, Mr Speaker, and the Home Secretary for the work that is already ongoing to review and improve our security? I agree with the Home Secretary that we must make it our mission both to improve safety and to protect the close links between the public and their representatives, but does she agree that this must be true at all levels of democracy? I would mention in particular our local councillors, who are at the coalface and often doing surgeries alone week in, week out.

Priti Patel: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. I pay tribute to all elected representatives across the United Kingdom, because they conduct themselves with great determination day in, day out, and I can assure the hon. Gentleman and the House that work is taking place through the Cabinet Office to look at the right kinds of measures and support.

T4. [903747] **Andrew Selous** (South West Bedfordshire) (Con): I echo every comment made about Sir David Amess and James Brokenshire.

The introduction in 2004 of damping to the police funding formula has cost Bedfordshire about 95 officers on the beat. Will the Government commit to scrap damping as quickly as possible, to be fair to Bedfordshire and the other forces affected?

Kit Malthouse: I have made a commitment in this House before that we will introduce a new funding formula for police forces across the land before the next election. That is the objective we are currently working towards, although I would warn everybody that all cannot have prizes.

T5. [903749] **Taiwo Owatemi** (Coventry North West) (Lab): On behalf of my constituents and myself, I pass on my deepest condolences to the families of Sir David Amess and James Brokenshire.

The Secretary of State will no doubt be aware of the long-running extradition cases of the west midlands three, two of whom are constituents of mine. These

three people are British citizens and have endured raids, arrest and threat of imminent extradition. Given that the Crown's lawyers could present no case whatsoever at the extradition proceedings and the threat of extradition has subsequently been dropped, will the Secretary of State outline exactly what evidence was used to justify these arrests in the first place? I am sure the Secretary of State will agree that my constituents deserve to hear answers.

Priti Patel: I would like to speak to the hon. Lady separately on this case, if I may, because I did not fully hear her question, but I will certainly follow up on this.

T8. [903752] **Nigel Mills** (Amber Valley) (Con): May I first extend my condolences to the families and friends of James and Sir David?

Over the recess the Pandora papers showed that corrupt and criminal money is still making its way into the UK, yet no unexplained wealth orders have been issued for the last two years. Will the Minister ensure that the National Crime Agency has the resources to pursue such orders in any case where they are appropriate?

The Minister for Security and Borders (Damian Hinds): Unexplained wealth orders are a very important tool and, yes, we are absolutely making sure the resources are there to support their use.

Mr Speaker: I call Neale Hanvey—not here.

T9. [903753] **Kate Osamor** (Edmonton) (Lab/Co-op): I extend my condolences to Sir David's and James Brokenshire's family and friends.

Is the Secretary of State aware that victims of the Windrush scandal are disproportionately likely to be suffering extreme hardship? Will she publish guidance on the Department's expedition process for claims under the scheme, so that those in acute need, such as my constituent Anthony Bryan, can apply for expedition?

Priti Patel: The hon. Lady will be well aware of the extensive work that is taking place around the Windrush compensation scheme and the support that we have offered her constituent. If she would like to meet me to discuss this further, she would be very welcome.

Karen Bradley (Staffordshire Moorlands) (Con): I refer the House to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests. Today we mark Anti-Slavery Day. One of the first people in Government to recognise the importance of that issue was our much missed colleague James Brokenshire. Will my right hon. Friend please confirm that her priority will be to continue James's work, making this issue a priority for her and making the UK a world leader in this area?

Priti Patel: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right in the passionate way that she has put her question. We will continue that work and the legacy of the work that has taken place on modern-day slavery.

Tributes to Sir David Amess

3.30 pm

Mr Speaker: In a moment I will ask the Prime Minister to move a motion for the Adjournment of the House, which will give an opportunity for us to pay tribute to Sir David Amess. As I said earlier, the issues raised by the circumstances of Sir David's death will be looked at urgently and with the utmost priority. I remind hon. and right hon. Members that a police investigation is ongoing, so our focus this afternoon should be on Sir David's life and his contribution to our democracy.

In nearly four decades in this House, Sir David was second to none in his determined commitment to his constituents, first as the Member for Basildon between 1983 and 1997, and since then as the Member for Southend West. He was tireless in making sure that the voice of Southend West was heard in this Chamber—it is difficult to believe that we will not hear him make the case for Southend achieving city status before the next recess.

Sir David worked equally hard outside the Chamber for his constituents, always going the extra mile to make sure their case was heard and their needs were met. He used his skills as a parliamentarian to pilot numerous pieces of legislation on to the statute book, reflecting his political priorities, such as fuel poverty and, of course, animal welfare. He was a much admired member of the Panel of Chairs, respected across the House for his fairness and expertise.

I would like to thank the Speakers from around the world who have sent messages of support, including—along with many, many more—Speaker Pelosi and Speaker Smith of Australia, who wanted to let us know that Congress and the Australian Parliament are thinking of us, David's family and all at this time.

On a personal level, David was a lovely man. He was well liked by Members and staff alike, and during his almost four decades here built a reputation for kindness and generosity. Sustained by his faith, David was devoted to his family. As much as we will miss a much loved fellow parliamentarian, the loss felt by David's wife Julia and their children is unimaginable. I know the whole House will want to join me in sending them our deepest condolences. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

I call the Prime Minister.

3.33 pm

The Prime Minister (Boris Johnson): I beg to move, That this House do now adjourn.

The passing of 72 hours has done little to numb the shock and sadness we all felt when we heard of the tragic and senseless death of Sir David Amess. This House has lost a steadfast servant, we have lost a dear friend and colleague, and Julia and her children have lost a loving husband and devoted father. Nothing I or anyone else can say will lessen the pain, the grief, the anger they must feel at this darkest of times. We hold them in our hearts today. We mourn with them and we grieve alongside them.

Sir David was taken from us in a contemptible act of violence, striking at the core of what it is to be a Member of this House, and violating the sanctity both of the church in which he was killed and the constituency surgery that is so essential to our representative democracy.

But we will not allow the manner of Sir David's death in any way to detract from his accomplishments as a politician or as a human being. Sir David was a patriot who believed passionately in this country, in its people, in its future. He was also one of the nicest, kindest and most gentle individuals ever to grace these Benches; a man who used his decades of experience to offer friendship and support to new Members of all parties, whose views often confounded expectation and defied easy stereotype, and who believed not just in pointing out what was wrong with society but in getting on and doing something about it.

It was that determination to make this country a better place that inspired his outstanding record on behalf of the vulnerable and the voiceless. The master of the private Member's Bill and 10-minute rule Bill, he passed legislation on subjects as diverse as animal welfare, fuel poverty and the registration of driving instructors. He was a prodigious campaigner for children with learning disabilities and for women with endometriosis, a condition on which he became an expert after meeting a woman at one of his constituency surgeries.

Behind the famous and irresistible beam lay a seasoned campaigner of verve and grit, whether he was demanding freedom for the people of Iran or courting votes in the Westminster Dog of the Year contest, whether he was battling for Brexit or fighting his way to the front of the parliamentary pancake race. And as every Member of this House will know, and as you have just confirmed, Mr Speaker, he never once witnessed any achievement by any resident of Southend that could not somehow be cited in his bid to secure city status for that distinguished town. Highlights of that bulging folder included: a world record for playing the most triangles at once; a group of stilt-walkers travelling non-stop from the Essex coast to Downing Street; and a visiting foreign dignitary allegedly flouting protocol by saying he liked Southend more than Cleethorpes—a compelling case, Mr Speaker. As it is only a short time since Sir David last put that very case to me in this Chamber, I am happy to announce that Her Majesty has agreed that Southend will be accorded the city status it so clearly deserves. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

That Sir David spent almost 40 years in this House but not one day in ministerial office tells everything about where his priorities lay. He was not a man in awe of this Chamber, nor a man who sought patronage or advancement; he simply wanted to serve the people of Essex, first in Basildon and then in Southend. It was in the act of serving his constituents that he was so cruelly killed. In his recent memoir, Sir David called surgeries a part of

"the great British tradition of the people openly meeting their elected politicians".

Even after the murder of Jo Cox and the savage attacks on the right hon. Member for East Ham (Stephen Timms) and Nigel Jones, he refused to accept that he should be in any way deterred from speaking face to face with his constituents. So when he died, he was doing what he firmly believed was the most important part of any MP's job: offering help to those in need.

In the awful moments before we knew the full horror of the tragedy, a member of Sir David's constituency association, her voice breaking with emotion, told an interviewer that

"we need him...the country needs him"—

and we do. This country needs people like Sir David, this House needs people like Sir David, and our politics needs people like Sir David: dedicated, passionate, firm in his beliefs but never anything less than respectful for those who thought differently. Those are the values he brought to a lifetime of public service. There can be few among us more justified than him in his deep faith in the resurrection and the life to come. And while his death leaves a vacuum that will not and can never be filled, we will cherish his memory, we will celebrate his legacy, and we will never allow those who commit acts of evil to triumph over the democracy and the Parliament that Sir David Amess loved so much.

3.40 pm

Keir Starmer (Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab): In the last few days, there have been many tributes to Sir David, from politicians of all parties, from his constituents and members of the public, from friends and from family, and from faith leaders, especially the Catholic Church, of which he was such a devoted follower. Each tribute paints its own picture—of a committed public servant, of kindness and of a man whose decency touched everybody that he met. Taken together, these tributes are a powerful testimony to the respect, the affection and, yes, the love that David was held in across politics and across different communities. Together, they speak volumes about the man that he was and the loss that we grieve.

Sir David was a dedicated parliamentarian and his loss is felt profoundly across this House. We are united in our grief at this terrible time. We are thinking of David and his family. We are thinking, once again, of our dear friend Jo Cox, who was killed just five short years ago. I know that hon. Members and their staff will have spent the weekend worrying about their own safety. The emotion is the same across the House, but I remember just how acutely Jo's loss was felt on these Benches, so today, on behalf of the entire Labour party, I want to lean across, to reach across and to acknowledge the pain that is felt on the opposite Benches, and I do. Of course our differences matter—after all, that is what democracy is about—but today we are reminded that what we have in common matters far more.

I spoke to Jo Cox's parents on Friday afternoon because I knew that they would be reliving that terrible day. They said to me they were thinking of David's family and how their lives would be changed forever. So today, just as the Prime Minister has said, this House holds in our hearts David's wife, Julia, his children, Katherine, David Jr., Sarah, Florence and Alex, and all of those who loved him. We cannot begin to imagine what they are going through, but our thoughts, our love and our prayers are with them.

I also thank those who did everything they could to save David's life and our emergency services, who run towards danger to protect us. I also want to take a moment for us all to think about David's staff and what they must be going through. This Parliament that David loved so much has lost one of its finest advocates, his colleagues have lost a dear friend, and the people of Southend have lost one of their own.

Sir David was a dedicated constituency MP. When I visited Southend on Saturday, I was struck by the affection and the regard in which he was held by everybody

I met. He rejected ministerial office to focus on Southend; we remember his historic battle to see it given city status, and I am so pleased about the announcement that the Prime Minister has just made. It is a fitting tribute to Sir David's hard work, it really is—fitting because David delivered on the causes that he championed and cared about. He introduced a Bill that forced action on fuel poverty, he paved the way for better standards of fire safety and he delivered protections for animal welfare.

No tribute has emerged in recent days that resonates more vividly than that of David's former parliamentary staffer Edward Holmes. As he was in his first job out of university, Holmes forgot to tell Sir David about an urgent call that the then Prime Minister David Cameron had made. He said that he felt terrified until he finally plucked up the courage to tell David, whose response was typical: "Don't worry about that, Edward." So relaxed was David that Mr Holmes says that he suspects he never actually called the Prime Minister back.

That tells of a politician who had his priorities right: one who put his people before his party, and his patch before his personal advancement. Even as a political opponent, he was a man and a politician we can all learn so much from. I use that phrase "political opponent" very deliberately, because David held his beliefs passionately but gently. I believe not only that we can learn from that, but that we have a duty to learn from it. Civility matters, and it matters in politics.

We must not lose sight of the fact that David's killing was an act of terror in our country. We cannot help but think of Jo Cox, Andrew Pennington and PC Keith Palmer, who lost his life defending all of us in this place in 2017. We thank God that my right hon. Friend the Member for East Ham (Stephen Timms) is with us in the Chamber today, and that the would-be attackers of my hon. Friend the Member for West Lancashire (Rosie Cooper) were stopped in their tracks. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I know that politicians across the country and across this House have their own experiences of threats to their security. Today is a chance to remember David, but in the weeks and days to come we must confront the threats and violence that everyone faces in enacting this country's democracy.

It is too early for us to comment on the exact motivations and circumstances of David's killing, but I want to finish by saying this: a cowardly attack on a public servant doing his job is an attack on our country and on our way of life—a way of life that prizes tolerance, democracy and respect, that accepts our differences but cherishes our commonalities, that refuses to succumb to the poison of extremism. No matter what perverted cause, faith or ideology these attackers support, their intention is always the same: to sow division among us. That is why our response must always be to show that we will never be cowed, that our bonds to one another can never be eroded, that the hatred that took Sir David's life will never win.

Our democracy is precious. It has held firm against many tests, but it is also a fragile, living thing. Let us use the memory of Sir David's life and his passions to nourish it, to recommit ourselves in standing for the things that he stood for, the things that extremists will never comprehend—for decency in our disagreements, for kindness in our hearts, for our great democracy, and for the hope that through it we can make our country and our world a better place.

3.49 pm

Mr Mark Francois (Rayleigh and Wickford) (Con): Sir David Amess was my best and oldest friend in politics, so I confess that I am hurting terribly, and I hope the House will forgive me if, because of that, my contribution this afternoon is even more incoherent than usual. I certainly cannot match those two beautiful and, if I may say so, extremely moving tributes from the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. I thank them.

Everything that I ever learned about how to be a constituency MP, I learned from David Amess. He sponsored me for the candidates list, and he mentored me when I arrived. Without him, I would never have become a Member of Parliament, so some might well argue that he has much to answer for.

I grew up in Basildon when David was the local MP. I grew up on a working-class council estate which even the locals nicknamed Alcatraz. David helped me to campaign in 1991 to win election to Basildon Council—quite a robust place to learn one's trade, and once described as the only local authority in Britain where at council meetings the councillors actively heckled the public gallery. I was there. Trust me: I'm a politician.

In return, I ran David's ground war in his iconic defence of Basildon in 1992. During that campaign, the late Paul Channon came down from Southend to help, and we were out canvassing on a council estate in Pitsea. I will never forget that. We knocked on a door, and a monster of a bloke answered it. He looked at us both, and he looked at the blue rosettes, and he said, "Conservative? Tory? You must be bloody joking, mate—I'm voting for that David Amess!" I said, "I know when I'm beat, sir. Well done."

My partner Olivia and I were due to be on David's table at the Southend West Conservatives' annual dinner on the day he was murdered. But David is now our fallen comrade. He was a devoted and a loving family man, and our deepest sympathies are with his widow, Julia, and his five children, who produced the most amazingly courageous statement, the essence of which was, I think, that love must conquer hate. I am sure we all agree with that. He was an animal-lover, a patriot, a Thatcherite, a Eurosceptic, a monarchist, a staunch Roman Catholic whose faith sustained him throughout his life, a truly great friend to those in need—I can vouch for that—and a fine parliamentarian. He was probably the best potential Father of the House we will now never have.

David had a zest for life, a *joie de vivre*. For him the glass was never half empty; it was three quarters full. He was a doughty champion for Basildon and then for Southend. So thank you, Prime Minister—and I thank Her Majesty and the Privy Council—for making Southend a city after all. It was the right thing to do; and our apologies to Cleethorpes! While you are at it, Prime Minister, perhaps you can help Southend United: they are going through a bit of a sticky patch, and they really need all the help they can get.

You never knew what David was going to do next. That Essex "cheeky chappie" smile, that impish Amess grin, always with a hint of gentle mischief behind it. He once even persuaded His Holiness the Pope to bless a boiled sweet, as my friend and neighbour, my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford and Southend East (James Duddridge), will explain in a moment.

However, David also had a serious side, and it is that on which I want to focus the rest of my speech. In the last few years, he had become increasingly concerned about what he called the toxic environment in which MPs, particularly female MPs, were having to operate. He was appalled by what he called the vile misogynistic abuse that female MPs had to endure online, and he told me recently that he wanted something done about it. Three years ago, my right hon. Friend the Member for Mid Bedfordshire (Ms Dorries) wrote a powerful article about this on ConservativeHome in which she quoted the following social media post:

"I want to see you, trapped in a burning car and watch as the heat from the flames melts the flesh from your face."

I ask you, Mr Speaker, what did she ever do to deserve that? Another fallen comrade, Jo Cox, whose sister now graces this place, said that we have more in common than that which divides us, and I think she was absolutely right.

All of us, wherever we come from, came here to try to help people. We may disagree, sometimes passionately, about how best to help people, but surely we could all agree that we came here to try. For this, we are now systematically vilified day after day, and I simply say to you, ladies and gentlemen, that enough is enough. We all have one thing in common: we are legislators. So I humbly suggest that we get on and do some legislating. I suggest that if we want to ensure that our colleague did not die in vain, we all collectively pick up the baton, regardless of party, and take the forthcoming Online Safety Bill and toughen it up markedly. If I may be so presumptuous, let us put "David's law" on to the statute book, the essence of which would be that, while people in public life must remain open to legitimate criticism, they could no longer be vilified or their families subjected to the most horrendous abuse, especially from people who hide behind a cloak of anonymity, with the connivance of the social media companies for profit. The mood I am in, I confess that I would like to drag Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook and Jack Dorsey of Twitter to the Bar of the House, kicking and screaming if necessary, so that they could look us all in the eye and account for their actions, or rather their inactions, which are making them even richer than they already are.

Let us also do that for all our councillors, who are sick and tired of reading on Facebook after every planning committee meeting the night before, that "it must have been a brown envelope job". Let us do it for all those other people who hold surgeries, including our GPs who have carried on tending to the sick throughout the pandemic but who are now being vilified online, along with their loyal receptionists and staff, just for trying to do their job. If the social media companies do not want to help us to drain the Twitter swamp, let us compel them to do it by law, because they have had more than enough chances to do it voluntarily. Please bring in this Bill, Prime Minister, and if you need any assistance in toughening it up, we are called the Back Benchers of the House of Commons and we are here to help. What better way to ensure that a fine parliamentarian did not die in vain than to enshrine one of his last wishes in legislation forever, for the benefit of all those in public life?

Many Members wish to pay tribute, so I will end with this: another thing about David was his legendary timekeeping, or rather lack of it. His constituency events

always ran late because he was so popular and so many people wanted to speak to him. By the end of a busy constituency Friday, of which he had many, he was sometimes running up to an hour late—he invariably overran, and this afternoon, in his honour, so have I; sorry, Mr Speaker—but what better fault to have than that wonderful trait? Among some of his closest friends, he was known affectionately as the late Sir David Amess.

Well, now he really is the late Sir David Amess. I am absolutely determined—I ask for the House's support in this—that he will not have died in vain. He is now resting in the arms of the God he worshipped devotedly his whole life, so farewell David, my colleague, my great friend—in fact, quite simply the best bloke I ever knew. I thank the House for its indulgence.

4 pm

Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): It is a considerable pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Rayleigh and Wickford (Mr Francois). I do not think I have ever said this after any of his contributions, but I pretty well agree with every single word he said. I hope the House listens very carefully to what he said about the responsibilities we all have.

We are gathered here united in mourning and grief at the loss of a proud champion of Southend—now to be the city of Southend; a great Back Bencher, a beloved husband and father, and a dear friend to so many, particularly on the Government Benches. Sir David Amess was valued in so many ways, but I think the most powerful description of him was, in some ways, the simplest and most human: David was, above all else, a good and deeply decent man—a man who would always greet you with a welcoming smile whenever you met him.

For Members and staff across the House, it will take time to come to terms with the terrible shock of the senseless loss of another colleague. Just as our thoughts and prayers today are with the entire Amess family, we think too of the family of Jo Cox, who are forced to relive the nightmare of their experience all over again. Members of this House are being murdered while simply doing their job. That is the terrible reality we are faced with and, just as we face it together, we need to put an end to it together. In providing that security and safety, we need to protect all those at risk. We all know that it is often our staff who are on the frontline of the threats and abuse. I welcome the review of MPs' security, but I urge the Home Secretary to include our staff as a central part of that security review.

The devastating loss of Sir David has once again laid bare the twin threat of terrorism and the toxic culture of hate and intolerance that has become all too common. Today of all days, it is crucial that we show the same spirit and speak with one voice across this House, as indeed we are.

I stand firmly with and echo the powerful and poignant words of both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, but I also want to commend them for jointly going and standing together in Southend on Saturday. That was exactly the right image and the right message to send. People need to see Saturday's image of unity, and it is an image and ethos of political leadership that we need to project in public far more often, of a healthy democracy that engages with passionate disagreement, as appropriate.

But we all know that, somewhere along the way, we have been badly diverted. For too long we have been dragged down a path where passionate disagreement has been infected by poison. We can all do better not to feed into that corrosive culture. We have all been a victim of it, and every single one of us has a responsibility to put an end to it.

It is the truest tribute to Sir David that he personified exactly what we need to get to. He was a person whose politics could be forceful, but he was always friendly. He was a person who could disagree without ever, not ever, being disagreeable.

I look forward to hearing the fond memories of many of Sir David's colleagues and friends. The beautiful statement released by the Amess family last night put it better than I possibly could. David's lesson and his legacy is to show

“kindness and love to all.”

All of our memories will be of a good man and of a life well lived. May his family and community know today the true depth of respect, affection and love that he enjoyed across this House, and may his gentle soul now rest in peace. God bless you, David.

4.4 pm

James Duddridge (Rochford and Southend East) (Con): David was a man of faith and convictions—faith in his religion and convictions in his politics. He was, above and beyond everything else, a family man and a very funny man. He would often break all the rules, cutting through pomp and ceremony, and connecting with people. When introducing me, he would always make up a story: I was the “Strictly Come Dancing” winner at his annual party for people over the age of 100; before there was a raffle, he would describe me as a lottery millionaire at a charity fundraiser; and there was my favourite ice breaker, which was, “Meet James, he is my neighbour. He has recently got out of prison.”

David would hold the audience with his anecdotes and stories, and I would like to share the story of the boiled sweet. David was a regular visitor to the Vatican, given his faith. In the receiving line, people were getting items blessed, and David, perhaps slightly absent-mindedly, being used to these things, reached into his pocket for a boiled sweet—he had a sore throat. David got his timing wrong and the Pope took the sweet, thinking it was a revered object to be blessed, and blessed the revered object—[*Laughter.*] And David had to put it in his pocket. It was a holy sweet. When David would tell the anecdote, as he would do many a time—I suspect Members have all heard it—he would again reach into his pocket and say, “And this is the sweet that was blessed!” I suspect that many sweets have been passed off as the holy sweet, but there is only one chosen one.

As the neighbouring Member of Parliament for what we must now say is Southend city—thank you, Prime Minister, as it means a lot to everybody, it really does—colleagues would sidle up to me and say, “You're David's neighbour, aren't you?” A bit tentatively, I would say, “Yes”, but I knew what was coming. It was always an outrageous story of his behaviour at a meeting or, in particular, on an overseas trip, which completely broke the ice. He was indeed a great man. David loved animals, but there will no longer be the infamous “dog of the day” tweets. He will never again dress as a knight in full

battle finery, mount a horse and ride across the city of Southend, as he did after receiving a knighthood. That really is unbelievable; it seems as though I am making it up.

Mr Speaker, thank you for coming on Saturday. To have the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and yourself there sent a real message to the town—the city—that the nation cared and the nation was mourning with us. The impact of David's death has been profound on the city. Southend is in shock and I am in shock. I am told that the pathway for the city will be difficult. Having spoken to people around Jo Cox's family, I know that this is going to be a long process. We do not want to be the city where the MP was murdered; we want to be the city with the longest pleasure pier in the world, with a great airport and with a successful football team—even though David was conflicted on the latter, as a confirmed man of the east end and a West Ham supporter.

David loved his mum, who lived to 104. In Southend, we all assumed that David would go on forever. The late Eric Forth told me that David would be the Father of the House. I just thought it was going to be thus one day, but it was not so. In gathering my words, I thought of the phrase “cut short in his prime” and then smirked to myself; it seemed ridiculous, as he was aged 69. But he was sprightly, a secret gym goer, with a full head of floppy hair, and I just felt there was more ahead of him than behind him. Sadly, his future was stolen from us all, and Southend and this House are poorer for it. Over the weekend, I kept watching the news, hoping that the ending of the story or news clip would somehow be different from the previous ending.

At a vigil in Southend there were hundreds of people from all walks of life. Every story was very different, but at the same time every story was the same: David listened, David cared, David delivered—he had a knack of getting things done. Like others have said, I always expected him to turn up late, so I was not surprised when he was not there at the beginning of the vigil, but I really did expect him to be there, because he is always there.

It is unbelievable that David is not coming back. Members can think of the last meeting they had with him—I think of the last Remembrance Day service and the last Christmas with him dressing up as Santa Claus and going out and giving chocolates to the kids in the Neptune ward in Southend, whether they wanted them or not! I would bring the remainder to my kids, who would stick them to one side, despite all the rules about eating chocolate.

This is not the last of David: he lives on in us all. I do not think David would have seen himself as a mentor to people in this House—he would not have called himself that—but that is what he was, by demonstration and osmosis. David inspired great loyalty in his staff, and his office was always packed with people, paperwork and, as anyone who has been there would know, fish and birds, despite the House authorities' ban on the subject. It was part office, part museum of decades of political memorabilia, part pet shop. It was an office like the politician: unique.

David is survived by a lovely family: Julia, his wife, and his children David jr, Katherine, Sarah, Alex and Florence. It is with sadness that the family comes from

all corners to be back together in the city of Southend. We pray for them collectively. Their statement yesterday was poignant. They said:

“we ask people to set aside their differences and show kindness and love to all.”

That should not be beyond us all; it is not a bad instruction to this House. Let us take that message back to our constituencies. Let us make some good of this horror. To Julia: Southend thanks your husband for his service. Rest in peace, my good friend. Rest in peace.

Mr Speaker: Can I just say, to reassure the House, that the animals are being looked after and his office is being looked after?

I urge Members to think of others as we try to get through a very long list of speakers. I call the Mother of the House, Harriet Harman.

4.12 pm

Ms Harriet Harman (Camberwell and Peckham) (Lab): Beyond the horror that we all feel, Sir David's family are first and foremost in my thoughts. I want to add my heartfelt sympathy to his wife and children. Their statement, released in their unimaginable shock and grief, shows such extraordinary dignity.

Sir David was one of the most dedicated but also the most affable of MPs. He looked beyond party differences to work with so many of us on a multitude of issues of common concern. That is why there are tears on all sides of the House this afternoon. To give just one example, most recently he took the lead on a cause that I then took up: the injustice done to young, unmarried mothers whose babies were taken from them in the 1960s and 1970s. We all have examples of when he worked with us. My tribute to him will be to redouble my efforts on that cause and to remember and work in the spirit that he exemplified: commitment to constituency, commitment to Parliament and a belief that he could and did make a difference. Sir David Amess, rest in peace.

Mr Speaker: We now come to the Father of the House, Sir Peter Bottomley.

4.13 pm

Sir Peter Bottomley (Worthing West) (Con): I agree with the right hon. and learned Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman) and the right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford).

In 2010, David Amess made a speech in which he said it was extraordinary to listen to the then acting leader of the Labour party, now the Mother of the House. He said that she made a splendid speech, and that one of the jokes was fantastic and he was going to use it in the future.

David's all-party group on fire safety and rescue worked with the all-party group on leasehold and commonhold reform—we had a number of meetings over the year. Alongside city status for Southend, may I put it to the Prime Minister and the Chancellor that they could make his legacy the finding, fixing and funding of the problems on defective leasehold flats, while chasing those responsible and getting them to pay up? I think he would wish for that.

If we look around this Chamber, we can see the shields of those who have died—some in active service in the last world war. Ronald Cartland was the first. Other Members went forward knowing the risks. So did Police Constable Keith Palmer.

Jo Cox and her family are in our hearts, as we have been told, and we remember Andrew Pennington, the Liberal MP's caseworker who also died in a constituency attack. A few of us were here when Airey Neave's car was blown up. Robert Bradford and I were together in the Westminster Wobblers, the House of Commons' football team. Tony Berry was my Whip, and Ian Gow and I canvassed together in Ulster. Gow's death, I believe, was timed to make us forget the murder of the Sister of Mercy, Catherine Dunne, a few days earlier in July 1990.

In David's first speech in January 1984, he said:

"Charity has been described as that amiable quality that moves us to condone in others the sins and vices to which we ourselves are addicted."

When he made that first speech in the Commons, he was able to say that there with him were five people who had previously represented his own constituency, which must be some kind of a parliamentary record.

David was followed by the right hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne East (Mr Brown), who cheerfully said:

"At the risk of inciting dissent from those behind me, I congratulate the hon. Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) on his maiden speech. I do not agree with what he said, but it was no worse than the speech of the Minister."—[*Official Report*, 17 January 1984; Vol. 71, c. 219-20.]

That was the line that Douglas Jay used when he congratulated me in 1975, so the response must be in the Labour Whips' booklet.

The right hon. Member went on to wish David well in the time that he had in Parliament. That time is well described by Trevor Phillips in *The Times* today. His leading words talked of

"the simplicity of a man who served."

He said:

"He knew his constituents well and showed them what the Tory party could be."

Mr Speaker, can we thank you and the party leaders for what you have said over the past three days? May I also add John Bercow who, in an interview I heard, represented the feeling of those who have served with David in this House?

Many of these attacks are done for calculated publicity and public reaction. We should try to make both act against the wishes of perpetrators. The only guarantee is that, when there is a gap, it will be filled. MPs are in the middle of a pack of people at some risk, including ministers of religion, mental health workers, public transport staff, lone shopkeepers, women police officers, journalists, fair employment builders in Northern Ireland and the judiciary, and especially women and girls going home and at home.

We should defend people in every walk of life, in politics and universities—here I mention mildly the philosopher Professor Kathleen Stock in my county of Sussex. St Margaret's Church, Parliament Square, where I serve as parliamentary warden, is where we will gather later today and for the Roman Catholic service on Wednesday.

We have learned to stand with the Irish and the Northern Irish against violence. We stand with Muslims against Islamophobia, with Jews against anti-Semitism and with all the targets of fascists and white supremacists. We do have to be vigilant, but we also have to continue to be diligent in contact with constituents. Of course, we must review security risks, including the insecure location of the national holocaust memorial presently proposed in Victoria Tower Gardens.

At the opening of the Imperial War Museum's holocaust galleries last week, I collected posters. David might wish us to remember their words, as if directed to us and to our constituents.

"Freedom is in peril. Defend it with all your might."

Another, which brings his face to my mind, says:

"Your courage, your cheerfulness, your resolution will bring us victory."

I end with the then Prime Minister's first speech to the House of Commons:

"Let us go forward together."—[*Official Report*, 13 May 1940; Vol. 360, c. 1502.]

4.19 pm

Ed Davey (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD): The grief, the sadness and the shock that we are all feeling today on the awful loss of Sir David Amess—this collective sorrow—unites us all today. Like the Leader of the Opposition, I want to reach across the aisle and say to every Conservative colleague who knew David much better than many of us on the Opposition Benches, as has been so evident in the brilliant speeches that we have heard: we feel for you.

David's wonderful friendliness and his eclectic mix of campaigns that bridged the political divide were very special. From his campaigns on animal welfare to his championing of the fuel poor, David always spoke with compassion and authority, and often with humour.

Since Friday, I have spoken to a range of people about David, not least Liberal Democrat councillors from Southend. I have to confess to Government colleagues that not all Liberal Democrat councillors are always complimentary about their sitting Conservative MP, but about David Amess their affection was totally authentic. Carole Mulroney, a councillor in Leigh-on-Sea, told me how appreciative she was of David's support for the Leigh Society and the local heritage centre that it runs. Local history was clearly a passion of David's, as shown by his championing of the cause of Endeavour, the only one of Leigh's little ships to have survived the years since Dunkirk. Endeavour has been brought back to Leigh and restored, and now takes part in Dunkirk ceremonies and local events, not least thanks to David.

As well as being proud of Southend's past, David will always be deeply connected to its present and its future, particularly now that we will have the city of Southend. Carole told me how David would proudly boast of walking each road, street, drive, avenue and lane of his constituency, and how supportive he was of every community, not least the local fishing and cockling industry. Every community needs champions like David. The point is that we do not have to agree with each other across our political divides, but we can learn to be kind and warm, even when we disagree; David was.

Today is not the day for discussing the implications for MPs' security and so on, but I want to reflect on what happened to one of my close Liberal Democrat

colleagues nearly 21 years ago. Yesterday I spoke to Nigel Jones, a former MP for Cheltenham, who, as many will recall and a number have mentioned, was brutally assaulted during his constituency advice surgery. Nigel was saved that day by the bravery of his member of staff, Andrew Pennington. Andrew Pennington was killed. Andrew was a local councillor, who, Nigel told me, used to work seven days a week for local residents. He was Nigel's right-hand person. As we reflect on the loss of David and on the threat to MPs, let us remember this too: our staff and many in public services face abuse, threats and violence on an alarmingly frequent basis. It is incumbent on us in this House to defend them all. I am sure that that is what David would have wanted.

4.22 pm

Mrs Theresa May (Maidenhead) (Con): Laughter, service, compassion: these are three of the words that spring to my mind when I think of David Amess.

Laughter, because you could never have a conversation with David without laughter and smiling, whether that was because one of the outrageous stories that he was telling, perhaps about one of his colleagues or somebody else—[*Laughter.*] It was always smiles, always laughter, always fun around David.

Service, because he had an extraordinary record of dedicated service to his constituents. I suggest to anybody who wants to be a first-class constituency MP that they look at the example of David Amess. He was deeply embedded in his constituency and, as we all know, championed it on every possible occasion. I do not think that a question or speech from David went by in this House without his constituency being mentioned. But he did not just promote his constituency here in the House. He was a part of it: he understood it, he knew it, he was in the community, he was of the community, and he was respected and loved by the community. His death is tragic and the manner of his death appalling, but isn't it fitting that his last acts were acts of service to his constituents?

And then there was David's compassion, born out of and strengthened by his faith: compassion for the vulnerable; compassion for those in need. But he did not just talk about it; he acted. He changed laws. He went out there and made a difference to people's lives, because he was also an accomplished parliamentarian and he knew that a Back Bencher who is dedicated and resolute can make a real difference.

To echo some of the comments that have been made today, first of all, I think it is a wonderful legacy for David that Southend is now a city. But we can also add to the legacy of David Amess by ensuring that in all our political debates and our political discourse we bring to those debates and that discourse the same respect, decency and compassion that were the symbols of his life. Because David Amess made a difference. His compassion made a difference to people outside of this House. His kindness made a difference to people inside this House. Our thoughts and prayers are with Julia and the family. Their loss is devastating. His constituency has lost a much respected and loved Member of Parliament, this House has lost a remarkable and valued parliamentarian, and every Member of this House has lost a friend. May he rest in peace.

4.26 pm

Mike Kane (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab): As has been alluded to, Sir David was a man of deep Catholic faith. The Gospel of John, chapter 10, verse 10, reminds us that the Lord came not just to give life but to give it in abundance, and David lived his life in abundance—a joyous service both to his constituents and here in this House. We would see him late at night, often in a tuxedo, going from charitable concern to charitable concern, championing the causes he believed in. He looked good in a tuxedo—no Daniel Craig, but this was no time to die either.

My wife reminded me of the time when we went to the beatification in Rome of John Henry Newman, just before lockdown—a beautiful service presided over by Pope Francis. We were whisked to the Oratorian College on one of the mountains of Rome overlooking Vatican City, where Prince Charles addressed us brilliantly. Then the royal cavalcade rushed out. Unfortunately, the parliamentarians on the trip were left stranded. The former Member for Ealing North, Stephen Pound, a former naval commander, decided to lead the vanguard in a military operation to get us back down to our hotel. Like troglodytes we entered a cave and ended up in a vast Franciscan monastery. Our party become separated; it was now more like an Ealing comedy under Stephen's leadership. My wife reminded me that I abandoned her and her safety—a lifelong Labour activist, my wife—to three Tory MPs getting stuck in a lift, including Basildon Man, as she said, because he was still etched on our 1992 election memory. The other two MPs, by the way, were for North Dorset and Fylde, so I will catch Mark and Simon up about what went on in that lift, because my wife said, "What an utterly, utterly wonderful man."

He participated fully in the liturgy of the Church. He participated fully in the sacraments of the Church. While I have the attention of those on the Front Benches, let me say that Catholics believe that extreme unction helps guide the soul to God after death, so maybe we could come up with an Amess amendment so that no matter where it is, in a care home or at a crime scene, Members, or anybody, can receive that sacrament.

David believed fundamentally in the social teaching of the Church: dignity, solidarity, subsidiarity to the nth degree when it came to Southend, a preferential option for the poor, and care for the environment. That meant that he came with unique views on things such as life, death, Europe and animal protection, sometimes in chime with his party, sometimes in chime with the country, but sometimes not. He channelled the 14th-century mystic Julian of Norwich, who said, "All things shall be well and all manner of things shall be well." That is difficult for us all here today. His cheeky catchphrase was, "Don't worry; it will be fine"—not quite Bruce Forsyth, but he was a friend of Bruce Forsyth and his family.

He did not die a martyr, but he died, as has been said, doing the things he loved and helping constituents. He would have known that the theologian Karl Rahner said that power is a gift from God. That portcullis on the top of our letterheads gives us all that power, whether on the Front Bench, in opposition or on the Back Benches. Let us recommit to Sir David today that we will use that power for the common good.

He died on the feast of St Teresa of Ávila. She said this, famously:

“May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be. May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith. May you use those gifts that you have received, and pass on the love that has been given to you.”

David used those gifts, and he passed on that love.

Sir David, may the choirs of angels come to greet you. May they lead you to paradise. May the Lord enfold you in his mercy. May he grant you eternal life. Eternal rest give to him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. May his soul and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

4.30 pm

Andrew Rosindell (Romford) (Con): It was a true privilege to have known David Amess. He was simply one of the best people I have ever known in my entire life. He was a true friend. He had time for each and every one of us. He looked down on no one. He was everyone's equal. He was kind, he was generous, and he was sincere. He was a man of principle and courage. He was uncompromising in what he believed to be right. He was not one of those who change their views in order to progress. He knew what he believed in, and he stood firm for those things. He was a man of enormous integrity, but he was a true friend to so many of us.

I knew David for around 40 years. We became friends instantly, because we shared the same political views. We came from the same background. I am from Essex—some say east London, but I say Essex—and he knew that our instincts, coming from that neck of the woods, were the same. We hit it off from day one. We were committed to this country. We love our country. He was a passionate believer in Britain and a true patriot. He was a royalist. He was never afraid to fly the flag and to champion great British values. He was a Christian and was proud to be a Christian and uphold the Christian heritage of this country.

He also loved animals, as I do. He loved my dogs almost as much as I love his dogs. On many occasions, I would visit his home in Southend, often taking my elderly mother. He had an elderly mother who lived to 104. When his mum died, he spoke to my mother as if she were his mother. He treated me like family. My heart goes out to Julia and the five children, who are wonderful people. He had a fantastic family. He was so dedicated to his constituencies: Basildon and Southend West. He lived for them, and he did sacrifice everything else to put his constituency first.

I will say this: the one legacy that we must hold true to David is not to let his horrific murder and the horrific way that he left us change our democracy. I remember the day after the appalling Grand Hotel bombing in Brighton in 1984. I remember Margaret Thatcher—he was a dedicated supporter of Margaret Thatcher—saying, “It is business as usual, we must carry on.” I take the same view. Whatever happens and whatever we do to carry on and protect ourselves, we must not let our democracy be undermined by that kind of evil. We must stand up to evil, defend our democracy, cherish the freedom that gives all of us the right to be here and represent our constituents, and defend and cherish the freedoms and liberties that have held our country together for generations. David was a fine example of a parliamentarian, a magnificent constituency MP, a true friend, a gentleman and a truly wonderful human being. We are going to miss him, but I feel truly privileged to have known him. Thank you, David. God bless you.

4.35 pm

Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson (Lagan Valley) (DUP): I rise on behalf of my right hon. and hon. Friends to record the common and unified voice of the people of Northern Ireland, who share in the grief and sorrow at the loss of our esteemed and much-loved colleague and friend. My condolences and sympathy to the Prime Minister and his colleagues on the Conservative Benches. Words cannot adequately describe or suitably express our heartfelt sympathy, but I pray that the words spoken here today and across our nation in recent days sustain and give strength to David's family. No one will feel the loss of David more than his family. To his wife Julia, his beloved children and the wider family circle, I offer my heartfelt condolences and deepest sympathy on behalf of the Democratic Unionist party, and I trust and pray that almighty God, the greatest of all comforters, will draw near to all of them.

David epitomised the true meaning of public service. He was the model parliamentarian. He sought office not for self but to serve others, influenced by his deep Christian faith to champion the needs of the most vulnerable, to give a voice to the voiceless and to stand up for the interests of the people of Southend West. David's greatest joy came not in holding office but in how he could use that office to improve the everyday lives of those he was honoured to represent. The people of his constituency and from the city of Southend have lost their greatest champion, and I, like Members on all sides of the House, have lost a dear friend.

The plaques at the entrance door to the Chamber and around the Chamber in memory of the late Airey Neave, Robert Bradford, Anthony Berry, Ian Gow and Jo Cox are a daily reminder to all of us of the threat that our democracy faces in modern times. In Northern Ireland, all parties in the Chamber have experienced these threats and the loss of dear colleagues at the hands of the enemies of democracy. Today, this House sends a clear message—a resounding message—that democracy in the United Kingdom will never be suppressed. Our voices will never fall silent. We will never allow evil to triumph over good.

David taught us all the true meaning of public service. He showed us the true value of public office and provided us all with a true example of faith in public life. His legacy lives on in all the causes and communities that he championed, the lives that he improved and those whom he inspired.

Mr Speaker, it now falls on us all to take forward the beacon of hope along the path that David led us and to ensure that the flame of his legacy is never extinguished. The House is the poorer for his loss, and this country—all of it—mourns the tragic passing of one of its most faithful servants. Our response collectively is simple. When one of us falls, another will step forward. Together, we will continue to defend the values and ideals that David stood for and that are the foundation stones of this great nation.

4.39 pm

Jackie Doyle-Price (Thurrock) (Con): I think the whole House will be left in no doubt of the genuine affection in which Sir David's constituents held him just by watching the TV footage this weekend. As a friend of his, I am hugely comforted by the genuine affection that

has been shown today, in response, by hon. Members. For me, David was a great friend as well as great parliamentarian.

Last week, Sir David led a delegation of the Qatar all-party group on a visit to Qatar, and he led it with his characteristic good humour, dare I say great fun, and inclusivity. During the visit, we had the benefit of an audience with His Highness the Emir. As the meeting came to a close David, with a great flourish, referred to the need to present a gift, and with his characteristic self-deprecation, he said, “What could I give the man who has everything? Here is an inscribed copy of my book!” That was David.

I suggest that those hon. Members who have not yet read Sir David’s book go out and get a copy, because the proceeds go to some of the charities that he championed. Could I also say that, in actual fact, it is the authentic voice of David, with his pen portraits, some of which are humorous and some of which are quite barbed? It is actually a great insight into Parliament from somebody who, as we have heard today, spent all of his career on the Back Benches, but who loved this place. He genuinely thought it was a privilege to be a Member of Parliament. He loved his work on the Panel of Chairs, he was proud of the legislation he had secured, there were the end-of-term Adjournment debates—they will never ever be the same again, will they?—and he may have become the Father of the House.

I believe there is a serious point here. In the 38 years Sir David served as a Member of Parliament, one of the things he lamented was the decline in the respect for this institution and for the Members within it. The reason he lamented it was that he felt our constituents were the poorer for it, because as that respect declined we just became inconveniences to be managed by public authorities, rather than the genuine voice of challenge. I think that if we do anything to remember him, that is something he would wish us to work collectively to address, as that is what makes this place worthwhile.

In reflecting on Sir David’s memory, we must not remember the way in which his life was taken, but remember how he lived. His beaming face in 1992, when his victory marked a fourth election victory for the Conservatives, is of course iconic. However, I should say to the House that his biggest pride was not actually that result, but the one in 1983, when he won Basildon for the first time—a victory as much against the odds as the one in 1992. I would say that he held Basildon as a marginal seat for all that time because he was an amazing campaigner. He had time for everyone, as we have heard, and his megaphone was never too far away. I have to say that we enjoyed some visits by David and his megaphone in Thurrock over the years, and it was always great fun.

As an east ender, Sir David instinctively represented the politics of south Essex. He would describe himself as a working-class Conservative, and he very much epitomised the kind of person who embraced the politics of Margaret Thatcher. He would recount with great pride the occasion when, after everyone had written off his election prospects in 1992, it was Margaret Thatcher who came on the eve of the poll to support him, and he credited part of his victory to that.

Our thoughts are obviously now with Sir David’s family. Just as a final note, the last time I went to David’s house he was proudly showing me his wedding

video. The reason he was doing so was not just to show me my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire Dales (Miss Dines) and her dancing back in those days in 1983—he was hugely proud that she got here too—but that the exact wedding he had to Julia in 1983 at Westminster cathedral and then a reception here was what he repeated for his daughter only a few weeks ago. I hope the whole family receives some comfort from the fact that we all loved him.

4.44 pm

John Cryer (Leyton and Wanstead) (Lab): I knew David for perhaps 25 years, and for eight years we were constituency neighbours when I was the MP for Hornchurch. Following on from one of the anecdotes given by the right hon. Member for Rayleigh and Wickford (Mr Francois), I remember David telling me a few times that people had said to him on the doorstep, particularly in Basildon, “I’m going to vote for you, David, because you’re a good Labour man.” I once said to him, “Did you ever put them right, David?” and he said “Er...”. That was the closest I got to an answer, so I think we can all deduce that he probably didn’t put them right.

We all know that David was a hyper-assiduous constituency MP. The hon. Member for Thurrock (Jackie Doyle-Price) mentioned the pre-recess Adjournment debates. For a long time, David and I were both contributors to every single—or so it seemed—pre-recess Adjournment debate. We used to call it whingeing gits day, and Members who have taken part in those debates can probably imagine why we did so. There used to be a bit of a competition between us to see who could get the greatest number of constituency topics into the debate. I think David won every time, covering perhaps eight, nine or 10 issues in his staccato way.

On a more general point, I want to say one more thing about David. There are profound and visceral issues that divide parties and individuals in this place, but they are minuscule compared with what divides us from the forces of darkness who brought this about.

Finally, on a deeply personal note—on behalf of my wife, Ellie, my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham West and Penge (Ellie Reeves), who is here, and myself—I will always remember that David always asked about our sons, our children, and how they were getting on. I will carry that with me for the rest of my life.

4.46 pm

Sir Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con): I am going to be, or at least intend to be, brief; after all, pretty much everything about David has been said, but that does not mean I cannot repeat it.

I knew David for 29 years. When I first came into this place in 1992, he was outstandingly and unfailingly kind, conscientious and generous, even to new Members who had arrived here eight years after him. I remember that very clearly. Later on, when I got to know him better, I recalled that a constituent of mine had referred to David, when he represented Basildon, as somebody who would go to the opening of an envelope. I put this to him, saying, “You are accused of going to the opening of an envelope,” and he said, “I damned well hope so, because I wrote it to them so I could go there in the first place.”

When the Conservatives won Basildon Council—for the first time, I think—David was there. It was not enough for him just to be with the councillors when they went in; he formed a conga that took the whole of the newly elected council through the council buildings and into the chamber. His sense of humour was always there, preceded by that megawatt smile that he could turn on. For most of us in this Chamber, it is hard work sometimes being able to smile enough, but for David it was hard work not to smile, and he would smile even in some of the most difficult circumstances.

After I ceased being Leader of the Opposition—I have to say, with respect, to the right hon. and learned Gentleman the current Leader of the Opposition that no matter how much he is enjoying it now, it really is not what it is cracked up to be—[*Laughter.*] I have to tell him that. [*Interruption.*] That is what I thought, too. I had to go and speak at an event for David, and he patted me on the shoulder and said, “Are you going all right?” I said, “Yes, fine,” and he got up and introduced me by saying, “I’m so pleased to have Iain Duncan Smith here; he has just slid down the greasy pole”—and then he carried on. [*Laughter.*] He did tell me directly afterwards that he had retired finally from a long time in government and thought that he would have more influence elsewhere; actually he spent a very short time in government, but that did not bother him in the slightest.

On a more serious note, I want to say that David has shown us the way—the way of co-operation. Most Members in this place know that we get things done by co-operating across the Floor. Little is talked about that, Mr Speaker, as you know, but it is the embodiment of who we are in this place. We cannot get stuff done by ourselves, so we form alliances. Whether it is on modern-day slavery or, in my case, gambling harms, we go on, we form alliances and we eventually move things and get them done. David was the architect of that. There was not an alliance that he could not form; even if there was not an issue on which he could form it, he would form it. [*Laughter.*]

My point is that this is who we are. We are often, as Jo Cox said, more united by the things we believe in than necessarily divided. The fact is that we are in this place because we argue with each other about our ideas. The important feature of this place is that we may disagree with arguments, but we do not disrespect the motives of those who hold them.

This is a lesson to us that we need to be careful here what we legitimise in what we say about our colleagues. They are not evil people. Nobody in this Chamber is an evil individual. They have strong beliefs. I was struck when the media had finished talking about David and then said, “And he was a man with very strongly held beliefs,” as though that was an aside that they wanted to bury. We come here because we have strong beliefs, and we should be proud of that. We argue with each other because we are the point where people can see us debate these things, have power of emotion and be angry about them—this place is a cockpit of that—so that they do not have to do it outside, violently, elsewhere. I believe the point that David was making was that we need publicly to show each other the respect that those ideas are greatly held. We respect each other, but we do not dislike or hate each other. That is not for us, and it is not for that that he lost his life.

I have been told that today, a document came through the door of my constituency office. The front page was all about David, and on it was written, “Like you. You bastard.” In fact, I did think he might have done it, because it was spelled “Barsted”. Even in that threat, I think there is a sense of irony.

In conclusion, let me say that for David’s family, this is a tragedy, which this deranged, hateful and violent individual has brought to them, unwarranted and without cause. David taught us something very important that they can remember. He believed not in the power of position, but in the power of purpose. Mr Speaker,

“They told me, Heraclitus, they told me you were dead,

They brought me bitter news to hear and bitter tears to shed.

I wept as I remember’d how often you and I

Had tired the sun with talking and sent him down the sky.

And now that thou art lying, my dear old Carian guest,

A handful of grey ashes, long, long ago at rest,

Still are thy pleasant voices, thy nightingales, awake”—

that is the important thing, Mr Speaker: he will be with us forever.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Speaker: Can I just urge us to try to be brief to get plenty of others in? I call Yvette Cooper.

4.53 pm

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I will just briefly join the tributes that we have heard.

Sir David Amess asked all of us about our families, and we now send our condolences to his family, not just from all of us but from all our families, who will very much be feeling the need to reach out to them at this difficult time. We pay tribute, too, to Sir David’s staff, who went to work on Friday morning to try to help his constituents, like all our staff do for every one of our constituents, and had to face the unimaginable.

Every one of us has a story of things that we worked with David on. There were so many different issues, but for me it was the work we did together on amendments to help child refugees reunite with their families, which was something he felt strongly about. You could never predict what issue he would feel strongly about next, but then you would look back and think that it made absolute sense that that was what he was championing, because kindness, compassion and helping others were so often at the heart of it.

David’s office is just above mine, so I would often chat to him while walking to vote and coming across here. Walking across today to come and pay tribute to him, I really felt it, knowing that I would not walk with him again and chat about our families. Coming out of the lift to David’s office, you could never get wrong which floor you were on, because, as many will know, there is, hanging on his door, a giant cardboard cut-out of a knight in shining armour with the helmet tilted in a jaunty way just looking at you. A knight in shining armour is what David will have been to so many of his constituents. Around the corner, there is a box of nodding reindeer decorations, ready to be spread across the corridors. That was what David would do at Christmas time: spread friendship and joy. If you stand by that

knight today, Madam Deputy Speaker, you will also hear the ethereal sound of birdsong, for so many reasons, for David.

Jo Cox said to us that we

“have far more in common than that which divides us.”—[*Official Report*, 3 June 2015; Vol. 596, c. 675.]

David showed us how to do that, because while he had disagreements with pretty much every one of us, he also had the unerring instinct of finding what it was he had in common with each and every one of us. When we face awful things happening and extremists try to divide us, we know the most powerful thing in our armoury against them and in defence of democracy is the powerful words said on all sides of the House in unity, in defence of democracy and, now, in respect for David.

4.56 pm

Mr John Whittingdale (Maldon) (Con): I first met David Amess nearly 40 years ago, shortly after his historic election as MP for Basildon, the image of which, the picture of his smiling face, came to symbolise the Conservative victory under Margaret Thatcher’s leadership. He won because he embodied all that was best about Essex man: he was patriotic, he came from a working-class background, he was devoted to his family and he was passionately independent. I got to know him when I was working for Margaret Thatcher in No. 10 Downing Street. He adored her. He was absolutely furious when she was removed from office and, indeed, remained furious long after. In 2013, he held an Adjournment debate on her legacy, following her death. She, in turn, hugely valued him.

David championed many causes, as others have said, but most of all he loved his constituency and the people he was so proud to represent. My constituency is just about 30 minutes away from his, and a number of times I spoke for him at events and he spoke for me. The huge respect and affection in which he was held was always obvious. He loved meeting people and he made sure that he spoke to every single person at whatever gathering he was present. As has been referred to, it became a joke that for his first 14 years he would make sure that, in every question and every speech, he referenced Basildon in ringing tones, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Rayleigh and Wickford (Mr Francois) demonstrated in his contribution.

After David’s election to Southend, his campaign for Southend to become a city was mentioned at every opportunity. It is well known that he was a great animal lover and devoted to his dogs. Even when seeking support for his French bulldog, Vivienne, in this year’s Westminster Dog of the Year competition—as the Prime Minister referenced—the reason he gave as to why we should vote for Vivienne as Westminster dog of the year was that she is an enthusiastic supporter of Southend becoming a city. [*Laughter.*] So when, in 2012, Chelmsford, as the county town of Essex, was granted city status, David took the news reasonably well. [*Laughter.*] I can say, on behalf of my constituents in Chelmsford, how delighted we are that Essex will now have two cities.

I represent a part of the Chelmsford local authority area, but my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Vicky Ford) represents the city itself. She is unable to be here today, as she is on ministerial duties abroad, but she asked me to say on her behalf how much she

appreciated the kindness and gentle wisdom that David typically showed to her and other new Essex MPs when they were first elected. I also join her in paying tribute to the work that David did for all of us to improve our hospitals across mid and south Essex, a legacy that will continue to benefit hundreds of thousands of Essex residents.

David was, quite simply, the best of us. All of us are still in shock but our hearts go out to his family, and I hope that people listen to their words. My right hon. Friend the Member for Rayleigh and Wickford spoke powerfully about the abuse that particularly Members of Parliament—but not just MPs; a lot of other public servants—suffer from online in social media. I have been heartened by the huge number of messages that I have had from my constituents and others, first, to express condolences and, secondly, just to express their appreciation of the work that we do in this place. I like to think—and I strongly believe—that those horrible, aggressive voices that sometimes seem to dominate social media are not representative of the views of the vast majority of people, who share all the qualities and would respond to the appeal of David’s family that we should show each other kindness and love, and that that should be his lasting legacy.

5 pm

Stephen Timms (East Ham) (Lab): We have rightly been reminded of David’s enthusiastic advocacy for the constituencies that he represented, but he was also an enthusiast for the London Borough of Newham, where he was born and grew up; where he attended the excellent St Bonaventure’s Catholic school, which he stayed in touch with for the rest of his life; where he supported West Ham United football club; and where his mother lived until her death five years ago, as we have been reminded, at the age of 104. I heard over the weekend from somebody who was in the sixth form at St Bonaventure’s with David but who, unlike David, supported the Labour party. He told me that the politics teacher, Mr Cunningham, predicted that David was going to be a Conservative MP. He also told me that in a period when he was not able to attend quite a lot of the politics lessons, David very carefully wrote out all of his notes so that his friend could copy those notes afterwards. Kindness was evident at that early stage as well.

David stood for election to the council in Newham in 1974 and 1978 and for Parliament in Newham North West in 1979, before finding more promising opportunities further east, but notwithstanding party differences, his supportive interest in Newham remained. As council leader from 1990, I pressed the Conservative Government to bring the channel tunnel rail link through a station in Stratford. David was our unwavering ally on the Government side. Singlehandedly, he made the campaign cross-party, and that was crucial to its success, leading to London 2012 and the regeneration that is under way at the moment.

Of course, David was not initially seen as a friend by my Newham Council colleagues, who have not seen a Conservative elected for 30 years. We all remembered David dashing our 1992 general election hopes by holding Basildon, but we invited him to our town hall celebration when the Stratford campaign succeeded. I was not quite sure how that was going to go, but David won over everybody with a beautifully judged speech. Newham has lost a great friend.

David was accessible to his constituents. Tragically, he has now given his life. We will rightly reflect on what more we can do to stop that happening again—I wonder if we might ask the police to review our appointment lists ahead of each surgery, for example—but we must not give up on the accessibility of Members of Parliament. If we do, the sponsors of those who attacked David and who attacked me will have succeeded. That must not happen.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): Order. We would all like to have a long time to hear more of these heart-warming stories and recollections of our dear lost friend, but we are due to go to church quite soon, so I implore colleagues: please take just two minutes or so each, because then everyone will get a chance to say what they would like to say.

5.4 pm

Sir Roger Gale (North Thanet) (Con): We have heard magnificent tributes from the Prime Minister, from the Leader of the Opposition, from David's Essex colleagues and from many Opposition Members. I think we are all grateful for that, and the tone of the House is as it can be at its best.

I want to spend just a couple of minutes speaking on behalf of the remnants of the class of '83. Of the 100 of us who came in, sadly only two remain with continuous service, along with another three who have come back after leaving the House briefly. We had all hoped and expected that in the fullness of time, once my hon. Friend the Member for Worthing West (Sir Peter Bottomley) had surrendered his position, by which time David would have been a very old man—[*Laughter*]*—*he would have become the Father of the House. He would have made a magnificent successor to my hon. Friend. Sadly and cruelly, that has been denied us.

The many of us on both sides of the House who had the privilege of working with David on his campaigns—on foxhunting, when campaigning on it was unfashionable; on the reunification of Cyprus; on Iran; on pensions for expat UK citizens; and on a whole range of other issues—know just how doughty a campaigner he was. That is clearly why he was so loved in his constituency.

Mr Speaker said at the weekend that David's death had left a void in this House. He was absolutely right, and there is another void: in David's family home. I hope that David's wife Julia and his children will take comfort from the fact that across this House there is clearly nothing but affection for his memory. That must speak volumes for the man whose life we celebrate today.

5.7 pm

Kim Leadbeater (Batley and Spen) (Lab): I spent a lot of time over the weekend thinking about what to say if I were called today—and indeed whether to say anything at all, because I did not know David personally. It has been a traumatic few days for many people, and none more so than David's family and friends; it is they who remain at the forefront of my mind this afternoon. Sadly, I know from my own all too similar experience that in reality there is nothing that anyone can say to

make things all right for them—but nor is it any use to stay silent, so I welcome this opportunity to pay tribute to someone who was clearly a well-respected and much-loved colleague to many people in this place.

For reasons that I would never wish on any other Member of this House, or indeed anyone, I have a unique perspective on what those closest to David are going through. I send them love, support and solidarity from me, my parents, our family and the people of Batley and Spen.

I have blocked out much of what happened when Jo was murdered, but I remember very clearly the moment when I took the phone call saying that she had been attacked. I remember physically trembling, and the visceral pain that overtook me. It breaks my heart to think that another family have had to experience that phone call and the nightmare that follows. It is a rollercoaster of deep trauma that no one should have to experience. I also know that David's family will still be in utter shock, as I know many Members are, but I hope that at some point they will be able to hear at least some of the beautiful and very funny tributes that have been paid to him today, and that that will provide a morsel of comfort amid their pain.

I cannot talk about David on a personal level—as I say, I did not know him—but from what I have heard, he strikes me as the sort of MP I might well have come across in the coming months and ended up going for a cuppa with, to hear his thoughts on his work on a children's Parliament, on animal welfare or on getting more support for people with learning disabilities. We would have been two Back-Bench MPs from different parties and different parts of the country discussing issues close to our hearts, and I imagine it would have been a lot of fun. Sadly, that day will never come.

I know that wider discussions will now take place about the safety of MPs, the awful abuse and intimidation that we face, the nature of political discourse and how we can deal with the evils of terrorism. It is quite right that they do, but today is about David and his family, along with his staff, his colleagues and the community he served so well; the service he gave; and the support we should show all of them in the coming days, weeks and months. It is up to us to make sure that we do that, because I know more than most that they will need it, and the powerful difference that it will make to them.

5.10 pm

Sir David Evennett (Bexleyheath and Crayford) (Con): David was indeed a great character, with a fantastic sense of humour, and I am honoured to have been able to call him my friend. So much has already been said about him that I do not want to do a repetition. We were both elected to Parliament for the first time in 1983 with small majorities, became firm friends during the 1980s, and shared an office until 1987 in Abbey Gardens. We also shared staff for a while. In those days the House of Commons sat very late, and I was fortunate enough to get to know David really well during that time. Cheerfulness and dedication were his hallmarks throughout his parliamentary career. As for his boundless energy, well, many of us could not keep up. When he took us canvassing and campaigning in Basildon, we certainly could not keep up.

Working in the office with David was quite an experience—we have already heard about the “menagerie” of things that were in his office—but he was also never backward in coming forward. I remember going to a No. 10 reception on the first occasion after we had been elected. Of course, I was in awe of every Prime Minister—including the current one, of course—but Margaret Thatcher was the Prime Minister then. I cannot do her accent, but “Ah,” she said, putting her head on one side, “the two Davids!” I just said, “Prime Minister, lovely to be here”, and all the rest of it, but David Amess said, “I have never been here before—can you do me a tour?” At that moment, I wished I had quietly died, but she said, “Yes, I will come and get you later.” And she did! We had a tour. Then she said, “I am going to take you upstairs to show you the flat.” She said, “Of course, this is where I cook Denis his breakfast.” “Really?” said David. “He has a cooked breakfast?” “Yes,” she said. “Well,” he said, “it is very poky up here, isn’t it?” He did not think much of it at all. He never had aspirations to be Prime Minister, I think.

David was a friend. I was privileged to know him, and privileged to work with him on so many campaigns. He was a great parliamentarian, a great politician, a fantastic advocate on behalf of his constituents, and a great champion of our nation. He was also one of the nicest, kindest and most genuine people I have ever met. He was always smiling, and was an indefatigable campaigner for all the many issues that he held dear. We are all devastated by his murder. I have been privileged to know his wife and family over the years, and we think of them and we grieve with them; but we will remember his legacy, and we will look on the positive side, because one thing that David Amess always was, was very positive. I am proud to have known him.

5.13 pm

Martyn Day (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP): If you had told me before I was elected in 2015, Madam Deputy Speaker, that just a few years later I would be sitting at home grieving over the death of a Thatcherite Tory MP, I would not have believed you, but my partner Nadia and I did just that, for it was David who had died.

David was the first cross-party friend I made in the Commons when I was elected. He was a joy to work with on Committees, and he roped me into all sorts of all-party groups and escapades. He will be sorely missed. He will not, however, be forgotten; when I think back on my memories in this place, my favourites will feature David. I should say that he already features in a number of my Burns supper speeches around the story of a haggis, but it is too long to tell in these short tributes—I hope that I can find the energy and enthusiasm to tell it with the fun that it deserves—so let me just pay my respects to David and send my best wishes to his family. I cannot believe what they will be going through at this time.

5.14 pm

Sir Graham Brady (Altrincham and Sale West) (Con): I will be brief because I know that many others want to pay their respects and tributes. It is right that I, as the chairman of the 1922 Committee, should pay tribute to David, who was a dedicated and effective Back-Bench Member of Parliament, but I also want to say a few

words today because I had the privilege of his friendship for the past 24 years. I am deeply touched by the tributes that have been paid from across the House, including the moving tributes from the Prime Minister and from the Leader of the Opposition. I am also pleased to follow the chairman of the parliamentary Labour party, the hon. Member for Leyton and Wanstead (John Cryer), and my constituency neighbour the hon. Member for Wythenshawe and Sale East (Mike Kane), who was one of the first people to get in touch with me on Friday to offer his condolences. That was much appreciated.

We have all had so many messages of condolence from constituents and others since we heard the terrible news. I think that people across the country could sense the goodness, the kindness and the decency of the man we have lost. It is wonderful that we have heard tributes to David’s great achievements in politics, but it is also wonderful that so many references have been made, right from the start, to the joy that he brought into all our lives and those of so many others. He clearly enjoyed the House of Commons and politics, and he loved meeting people. I hope that that is something that will stay with us.

My recollection of David, over the past few years especially, is of seeing him coming towards me in Portcullis House and seeing his infectious smile. I knew that he was looking forward to starting a conversation. He would say, “What are they doing now, Graham? Why are they doing this?” I will miss that. Like others, I will still be looking out for him.

Finally, on a serious point, this is the most open and accessible Parliament of any major country in the world, and the right tribute to David must be that it remains so, and that while we take sensible precautions, we stay open and continue to connect with our constituents as he did so brilliantly.

5.17 pm

Miss Sarah Dines (Derbyshire Dales) (Con): It is with incredible sadness and, I have to admit, some anger that I rise to pay tribute to my friend David today. I was fortunate enough to have known him as a family friend before he entered this House, and some three decades later as a parliamentary colleague. My mother Elizabeth was his association chairman and, at times, his election agent in Basildon before, during and after the 1983 election. He was of course the MP for Basildon as well as for Southend; he represented Basildon from 1983 to 1987. When I made my maiden speech last year, like for many other Members who were new to the House, he was here. He was seated just behind me and his face beamed with delight when I recalled that, as a teenager, I had been the Young Conservatives representative on the committee that selected him to become the prospective Conservative candidate for Basildon in 1983.

I remember him as a young, enthusiastic candidate in 1983, a good-looking unconfirmed bachelor with a flowing new romantic hairstyle. He fought an energetic election campaign with a very small team of helpers. We all had our jobs: I made cups of tea—I was 16 or 17 at the time—when we came back after a hard day’s canvassing. My father Tony often had to go and find him; he would be talking to somebody or, more often, he would just have run out of petrol. That was David. He was the

recipient of constant motherly advice from my mother, who was his chairman. She would say, “Don’t worry, of course you are going to win”, “You had better get married now, David” and “You need to have some children”, right through to “You’d better get a haircut”. Of course he did win Basildon, he married the love of his life, Julia, and the children followed one after another in rapid succession, but he never did get that haircut.

I know David as a showman. I could tell you numerous stories, but I have had to throw most of the best ones away. What I will say is that, when I found myself on these Benches following the last election, he was delighted. He went out of his way to settle me into the institution he loved so much, and I know he mentored many others, not just me. I speak on behalf of all the 2019 intake when I say how very sad we are to lose him.

5.20 pm

Liz Saville Roberts (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC): It is an honour to speak on behalf of my party and to send commiserations to Sir David’s family, friends and colleagues.

The one thing I would like to emphasise is that people outside possibly do not appreciate how much we work together and how much of an honour it is to work together, and how by that we achieve so much. For all of us here, the reality is that democracy is what we have developed so that we no longer attack each other and use violence to achieve our aims. This terrible, abhorrent death has struck us so badly, as of course it has the constituents and so many other people who knew Sir David so well. When we stand up for democracy, we remember that we are standing up for civility, for good behaviour and for treating people properly because, historically, the alternative has been violence, and violence must never be allowed to succeed again.

5.21 pm

Mrs Natalie Elphicke (Dover) (Con): I rise to pay respect to our dear colleague and my friend, Sir David Amess. I got to know David in 2017, when he reached out to me with his characteristic kindness. He had an extraordinary gift of knowing what to say and when to say it. His many kindnesses provided a firm foundation for our work together on the Dame Vera memorial project.

David was a Christian soul, a fellow Catholic, and his life fully reflected his beliefs. He also enjoyed life. He loved people and had that lightness, vivacity and enthusiasm that drew people to him, and it was infectious. For so many months, we worked together on the Dame Vera memorial on the white cliffs of Dover. He spearheaded this project from the very beginning. From similar working-class backgrounds, we shared a commitment to creating opportunity and social mobility. It makes sense that the Dame Vera project is the centrepiece of Dover’s levelling-up fund bid, one that brings together opportunity, jobs, culture and entertainment, for as the House knows David was a great entertainer as well as a great campaigner.

My enduring memories of David will be of both of us, arm in arm, around the piano singing to Dame Vera’s songs, and of him taking selfies at the white cliffs of Dover. The Dame Vera project was very close to

David’s heart, and his family has made a call for public support for fundraising for the Dame Vera memorial in his memory, so let us get behind that, get the fundraising done and build the memorial, and let us include in it a tribute to the life of Sir David Amess, a lovely man who was a true friend to me, to Dover and to our nation.

5.23 pm

Barbara Keeley (Worsley and Eccles South) (Lab): I join the tributes to the hon. Member for Southend West, who was a kind and generous colleague and a committed and conscientious constituency MP. Just how conscientious he was can be seen in his record of speaking and action in the House.

I recollect Sir David speaking in a pre-Christmas recess Adjournment debate back in 2009, when I was Deputy Leader of the House and it was my job to respond. We heard earlier about his performance in such debates. I remember him raising many, many points that day to be answered or sent for action in Departments, so I looked back and found this amazing list of matters that he raised with me: his view of the then Labour Government; the state of the economy; small shops, having visited every small shop in his constituency during the summer recess; the pay of public servants and the scrutiny of public sector pay; communications with his chief constable and decision-making structures in the police; our forces serving in Afghanistan; the Chilcot inquiry; solvent abuse; compensation for UK users of Vioxx; tax credits and the tax credits helpline; the Southend Association of Voluntary Services and its funding; services for people with rheumatoid arthritis; and seatbelts and the risks to people who do not wear them.

As it was the pre-Christmas Adjournment debate, he concluded that impressive list by talking about the issues of unwanted pets at Christmas and the work of the International Fund for Animal Welfare. I have to say to my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton and Wanstead (John Cryer) that that was 15 issues, not eight, nine or 10, which is the reason David beat him in these debates. That is why he won. [*Laughter.*]

I fast-forwarded to the most recent pre-recess Adjournment debate, on 22 July, to see whether there was a similarly impressive list, and there was: care costs, both for self-payers and council-funded costs; the accessibility of housing for people with disability; the use of tidal power; the safety of jet skis; single-use plastics; sewage discharge from storm overflows; the planting of trees in Southend for the Queen’s platinum jubilee; banning the live export of animals for slaughter; the pension ombudsman; approaches to working with vulnerable children; the public appeal for a permanent memorial in Dover to Dame Vera Lynn, which he helped to launch; good wishes for our Olympic and Paralympic athletes; praise for a constituent who had done a wing walk for charity; the centenary of the Royal British Legion; and, as ever, a plea to make Southend a city. How wonderful that his strongest campaign, for city status for Southend, will happen—it was the city he loved. Thanks to Her Majesty for approving that.

I will finish by saying this: there were so many causes that Sir David championed, and so many of us worked cross-party with him on issues such as support for

people with endometriosis—there was going to be a debate on that today—and children with a learning disability. David’s family have asked us to renew our commitment to the many causes he championed. It is a heartwarming tribute to David’s work that Southend will become a city. We will continue that tribute by renewing and carrying on the work he started.

5.26 pm

Mark Menzies (Fylde) (Con): May I begin by sending my condolences and prayers to David’s wife, Julia, and his five children?

Not only did Sir David represent the people of Southend West, being a dedicated campaigner on a broad range of issues and achieving some real meaningful changes, but he spent a great deal of time representing this House on overseas delegations. That is what I want to focus on this afternoon.

Sir David was an active member of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and a number of all-party groups, including the all-party group on the Holy See. It was on such delegations that I first got to know Sir David well. It was well documented that Sir David was a devout Catholic, but even in the hallowed walls of the Vatican he did not lose his mischievous sense of humour. I think of a time when we were in the Vatican for the canonisation of Cardinal Newman, which has been referred to, and attended a highbrow theological seminar with cardinals. Midway through, David whispered to me, “Isn’t this fabulous? I can see you’re loving it”, to which I replied, “To be honest, not really, David. I am not really understanding it.” It was at the tea break that David and I slipped out, like errant schoolboys. I said to him, “David, are we not going to get into trouble walking through the Vatican gardens?” He said, “Nah”, and nor did we.

As you will be aware, Mr Speaker, not all meetings are engaging or go according to plan. I remember vividly a meeting with a foreign Minister who demanded that the meeting take place in English, with the only problem being that that foreign Minister did not speak English and had instructed his translators not to intervene. Several minutes in, with only the Minister understanding what had been said and parliamentary colleagues becoming increasingly frustrated, I passed a note to Sir David saying that this was getting ridiculous. David simply smiled, in his usual way. About a minute later, Sir David leant forward and said, “Minister, your English is superb. Where did you study?” Tears were rolling down colleagues’ cheeks, and nobody was able to make eye contact, for fear of damaging the reputation of this House, but this was a perfect example of Sir David deploying his full sense of humour and ability to address serious situations with a polite and jovial tone.

Just last week, I and others in this House had the privilege of spending time with Sir David on a parliamentary delegation he was leading. He was at his very best, ensuring that colleagues of all levels of seniority were made to feel included and that they played an active role. Every day, we conducted serious business, but he made sure that we always found time to laugh. It will come as no surprise that, even there, he found time to demand that Southend be made a city.

This House has lost a great representative; his family have lost a father and husband. I have lost a dear friend, but it was a real privilege to be with him on his final adventure.

5.29 pm

Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab): If David had been here to hear the words spoken today, he would have loved the fact that there was so much humour in people’s contributions, as well as the obvious warmth and respect for his decency. It is just so obvious how genuine the tributes are.

I knew David fairly well through working with him on animal welfare issues. All I wish to do is to quote from some of the animal welfare groups that have paid tribute to him on social media. World Animal Protection talked about his support for calls for an end to the global wildlife trade. The Dogs Trust, with which he worked to support the end to the cruel puppy-smuggling trade, said it was “devastated to hear” of his death. Animal Aid posted a picture of David calling for a ban on game-bird battery cages, saying that it was “shocked and saddened” and describing him as a “friend to animals everywhere”.

I feel particularly for the Blue Fox campaigners—the Conservative campaigners against foxhunting. When the campaign was first established, only a very few MPs on the Conservative Benches supported it, but David was so integral to it. We are now at a place where whether there could ever be a successful attempt to overturn the foxhunting ban is a bit of a moot point, because we have managed to win the debate on both sides of the House rather than just on the Opposition Benches. David was so much a part of that.

The animal welfare campaign PETA—People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals—has said it is going to add a leaf with David’s name on it to its Tree of Life memorial, which

“celebrates individuals who made a difference”.

PETA said that he “did that in spades.”

Finally, Nick Palmer wrote a lovely tribute to David. Nick was a Labour MP whose time in the House overlapped with David’s for quite some time, but he is now at Compassion in World Farming. He wrote a lovely article in which he said:

“I was especially struck by Alastair Campbell’s comment that the first thing you noticed when David entered the room was his beaming smile, and that not many of us”—

in politics—

“are remembered especially for our smiles.”

I think that is fair to say. He concluded his article by saying:

“When animal sentience is officially on the statute book, when live exports end, when cages on farms are banished to history, all of us in the animal welfare movement will celebrate—and we shall remember the quiet idealism that made Sir David help bring it all about.”

5.32 pm

Sir Bernard Jenkin (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): In this debate, the life of David Amess keeps invoking one word above all: kindness. The family’s heart-rending statement reflected that word. The Archbishop of York wrote that his life

“showed the true meaning of kindness”.

It would be the greatest of all tributes to David if we, or even just some of us, who are engaged in the daily political battle made kindness our resolution from this day forward. There is much reaching across the Chamber in today's debate, but which of us in this House can honestly say that, when we have looked across the Chamber—or at those in our own parties—we have never fallen prey to feelings of contempt, lack of respect or unkindness towards those who oppose us? Which of us can honestly say that we cannot do better?

Kindness is giving without any expectation of getting. Kindness inspires hope and optimism, which David also embodied. Like many on all sides, we had our disagreements, but nobody could doubt David's sincere wish to make the world a better place with his kindness. I wonder why the seven principles of public life do not include the principle of kindness. Henceforth, let kindness be known as the David Amess principle of public life. He, Julia and the rest of his family could bequeath the nation nothing more generous. We could do no greater service to them and to David's memory than to learn to live that principle more evidently in our daily political lives.

5.34 pm

Dr Rupa Huq (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab): I rise to speak about the brutal killing of our friend, David Amess. I know that we have an adversarial workplace here—we have a face-off—but some of our best friends are often on the other side. I know that when I have been in a hole, it is people on the Conservative Benches who have helped me out and been friendly to me.

This killing was all the more shocking and painful to me because I was certainly the last Labour MP who saw him alive. It was on that delegation to the middle east last week—at the baggage reclaim as it happens. Everyone else had scarpered; everyone else's stuff had gone. I had missed mine because I had been tying up my shoelaces or something. David said, "No, I will wait with you." I said, "Come on, you've got to go to Essex. Be off with you." That was the measure of the man and how kind

he was. The next day, the last stragglers were saying, "We got back. It was a great trip, thank you." His was the last WhatsApp message I saw, thanking everyone for their service. How shocking it is that he was taken in service—a public servant slain in the line of duty at his surgery.

Again, on the trip, his million-dollar smile, which we have heard so much about, won over everyone. To one of the dignitaries that I had to introduce him to, I said, "He has been a parliamentarian since the last century, but he never ages." To another one, David said in his inimitable way, "Oh, you know what? I thought I had a lot of kids, because I have five, but you have 24!" On the coach, in advance of the meeting, he said to us, "Ladies, when we get there, I don't want any ruffling of his hair, any sitting on his lap, any twiddling of his tie, because he already has three wives, and he doesn't need any more."

Everyone has so many Amess-isms. I was with him for a week and miss him dearly. I was shocked. I could not process the news. I had to go and do my own in-person surgery. When I got on the Panel of Chairs, he said, "You? You should be a shadow Minister by now"—no comment! He did not want party preferment and nor do I in that case. When our dear friend Jo Cox—it was so brilliant to hear from my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Kim Leadbeater), who is a dear friend already in a short space of time—was taken from us, we all said that we should live by the diktat of "more in common". I feel that, in life, we should all be a bit more like David. That means being less cross and more cross-party.

Mr Speaker: We will now follow the Serjeant at Arms to process to St Margaret's Church for the service of remembrance. For MPs and staff who wish to watch the service, it will be live on the Annunciator channel 505.

Question put and agreed to.

5.36 pm

House adjourned.

Written Statements

Monday 18 October 2021

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

Gibraltar: Future Relationship with the European Union

The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (Elizabeth Truss): On 31 December 2020, the UK Government, together with the Government of Gibraltar, agreed a political framework with the Kingdom of Spain on how a future agreement between the UK and the European Union (EU) in respect of Gibraltar would function in the interests of all parties.

This represented the first stage of the two-part process whereby the EU would examine a request from Spain, in agreement with the UK, to initiate the procedure for the negotiation of a separate UK-EU agreement in respect of Gibraltar.

On 5 October 2021, the EU concluded its internal processes necessary to begin the UK-EU negotiations. While the EU mandate has not been published we understand it has been amended from the Commission's draft mandate published on 20 July 2021. Importantly it now references the role of the European Border and Coastguard Agency (Frontex) in delivering the fluid movement of people between Gibraltar and the Schengen area. Both the UK Government and Government of Gibraltar have been clear that the operation of frontline Schengen external border checks on the territory of Gibraltar by Spanish officials would not be acceptable.

There remain, however, a number of areas where the opening EU position directly conflicts with the political framework agreed between the UK and Spain. These issues will need to be addressed in the UK-EU negotiations to ensure that the pragmatic and careful balance of the political framework is maintained. The UK is committed to working constructively to address these issues with the objective of concluding a treaty in line with the political framework. Formal negotiations began in Brussels on 11 October and further detailed conversations will follow in the coming weeks.

The UK Government continue to work side-by-side with the Government of Gibraltar. We agreed our joint approach to negotiations at the UK-Gibraltar Joint Ministerial Council held in Gibraltar on 29 March 2021. At the core is a shared aim to secure future prosperity for Gibraltar and the surrounding region. This can be delivered through a treaty which brings confidence, legal certainty and stability to the lives and livelihoods of the people of Gibraltar and neighbouring communities.

While fully committed to seeking a treaty based on the political framework, the UK Government and Government of Gibraltar are working closely to ensure robust plans are in place for all eventualities, including if there is no negotiated outcome. Although confident an agreement can be reached, it is only prudent to prepare for all eventualities. The UK will stand fully behind Gibraltar, its people and its economy in any scenario.

We remain steadfast in our support for Gibraltar and will not agree to anything that compromises UK sovereignty.

[HCWS316]

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

Investment in Green Projects

The Minister of State, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Greg Hands): A year on from the publication of the ten point plan the Government can confirm more than £5.8 billion of investment in green projects has been secured, along with at least 56,000 jobs in the UK's clean industries.

This major green investment boost helps to drive forward the Government's ambitions to make the UK a global leader in green technology and finance. It includes more than £650 million in advancing offshore wind this year alone, supporting almost 3,600 jobs across the Humber and North-East, and over £900 million in accelerating the shift to zero emissions vehicles. As part of this Envision AESC will invest over £400 million in battery manufacturing, for example, as part of a £1 billion project with Nissan and Sunderland Council to create a flagship electric vehicle hub. ENI Spa has invested more than £400 million in offshore wind.

This week's global investment summit in London is expected to attract almost 200 leading industry figures from around the world to invest in the best of UK green business and innovation. Securing private investment for clean technology is a core part of the Government's strategy to meet our world-leading emissions reductions targets over the next decade and achieve net zero by 2050. Our upcoming net zero strategy, to be published this week, builds on the Ten Point Plan, setting out how we will deliver on our net zero commitments, giving businesses the certainty they need to invest.

Further progress since the ten point plan includes:

Securing around £1.5 billion of investment into our offshore wind industry, supported by the Government's £160 million scheme to upgrade ports and infrastructure. Renewables now represent almost 40% of the UK's total electricity generation.

Kicking off the biggest-ever round of our flagship renewable energy scheme for low carbon electricity—contracts for difference—with £200 million for offshore wind projects and £24 million for floating offshore wind.

Publishing the hydrogen strategy to grow the UK hydrogen economy, consulting on design of the £240 million net zero hydrogen fund, and announcing funding of seven real-world hydrogen transport pilots.

Committing £20 million to increase on-street charge points for electric vehicles and providing £50 million to support charge point installations.

Publishing our transport decarbonisation plan and national bus strategy, as well as supporting Coventry to become UK's first all-electric bus city and consulting on world-leading pledge to end the sale of all new, polluting road vehicles by 2040 and net zero aviation emissions by 2050. This is on top of more than 300 new walking and cycling schemes.

Providing £1 billion to upgrade schools, hospitals, and council buildings with energy efficiency measures and committing £222 million to upgrade socially rented homes. Local Authorities through the Green Homes Grant scheme have also started installing upgrades to around 50,000 low-income households.

Announcing £19.5 million of grant funding for UK projects developing novel carbon capture technology and we have kicked off the process to decide the first carbon capture cluster locations in our industrial heartlands.

Launching the floods investment programme that is on track to better protect 336,000 properties.

Awarding 90 projects under the second round of the Green Recovery Challenge Fund, totalling £80 million of investment, and launched several schemes under the Nature for Climate Fund to expand our pipeline of tree planting projects in England.

Launching the £1 billion Net Zero Innovation Portfolio, providing funding for low-carbon technologies and systems across the areas of the ten point plan.

Launching our landmark North sea transition deal and industrial decarbonisation strategy.

[HCWS321]

DEFENCE

Armoured Cavalry Programme: Ajax Update

The Minister for Defence Procurement (Jeremy Quin):

I wish to provide a further update to Parliament on the Ajax equipment project being delivered as part of the armoured cavalry programme.

Health and Safety

The review by the MOD's Director of Health, Safety and Environmental Protection on the health and safety aspects of the noise and vibration concerns raised on Ajax is now in its final stages. The report runs through the chronology of the Ajax programme and key decisions made regarding safety in order to ensure a clear understanding of the current background and is being subjected to a formal Maxwellisation process. I look forward to the report being finalised. I will publish it in full.

Update on Personnel

The health of our service personnel is our top priority. At 30 September 2021, the total number of people exposed to noise and vibration from Ajax was 310, of whom 11 are civilians and 10 are now veterans. All 310 individuals have now been contacted and offered assessments for noise and vibration.

On noise, at 30 September 2021, 270 people have been assessed and 40 people have declined assessment or have so far been unavailable to attend. Of the 270 individuals who have been assessed, 231 have returned to duty having maintained or returned to pre-exposure levels of hearing. Of the 231, as an extra precaution, 166 people are receiving enhanced hearing surveillance. Of the remaining 39 people who have been assessed, 34 remain under specialist outpatient care at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham/Royal Centre for Defence Medicine; most of these are under-going a period of hearing rest prior to reassessment, at which point we expect a significant number to return to full duties. There are a remaining five individuals who have been medically downgraded—potentially requiring a change of duties within the armed forces—or discharged, either for reasons unrelated to hearing or with hearing loss as a major or minor cause. In the case of hearing loss being identified, Ajax may or may not be confirmed as a contributory factor. I am withholding a more precise breakdown of those downgraded or discharged because individuals could be identified resulting in a potential breach in medical confidentiality.

Vibration injuries is a highly specialised area, requiring a graduated assessment process. All 310 individuals exposed have been offered a vibration assessment, with around 125 having so far declined assessment. The

process is ongoing but, at 30 September, 45 individuals have been referred for specialist assessment of symptoms which could be associated hand-transmitted vibration, nine individuals have been referred for specialist assessment of symptoms which could be associated with whole body vibration and nine individuals have been referred for both. None of the individuals exposed to Ajax have had a change in medical grading or been medically discharged due to vibration.

I will continue to update the House on the number of personnel affected by noise and vibration, including if any trends become apparent once the data has been further analysed.

Programmatic Issues

I have made clear that Ajax requires a full-time, dedicated senior responsible owner. I am pleased to report that we have now appointed David Marsh, who took up the role on 1 October with the endorsement of the infrastructure and projects authority. As the new SRO, he is now in the process of reviewing the armoured cavalry programme to determine what actions need to be taken to put the programme back on a sound footing.

On 6 September, following authorisation by the Ajax safety panel, the independent Millbrook trials recommenced. As planned, and following a further meeting of the safety panel, these trials continued at Bovington to provide a wider range of surfaces on which to test the vehicle. These trials involved General Dynamics crew and real-time monitoring of noise and vibration. Trials have been conducted on the turreted AJAX variant and on the ARES variant, both of which were Capability Drop 1 vehicles. The trials were run at the Millbrook Proving Ground and at Bovington. This has generated hundreds of gigabytes of data which is currently being processed. Subject to safety panel authorisation, trials of a second ARES Capability Drop 1 vehicle will commence shortly at the Millbrook Proving Ground. On 7 October the safety panel also authorised military personnel to conduct essential maintenance on the vehicle and marshalled movement.

Since my last statement data has continued to be gathered and analysed to determine the root cause of vibration in the vehicles. In parallel design modifications have been developed to reduce the vibration experienced by the crew. Testing continues to determine the effectiveness of the modifications and whether they would help ensure the vehicle meets the Army's requirement.

Investigations into excess noise also continue. An in-line attenuator has been designed and we are now validating its effectiveness to address the noise transmitted through the communications headsets.

The focus for the MOD and General Dynamics remains on delivering long-term solutions for noise and vibration to ensure Ajax meets the Army's need. Until then, it is not possible to determine a realistic timescale for declaration of initial operating capability or the later introduction of Ajax vehicles into operational service with the Army. We will not accept a vehicle that is not fit for purpose.

Ajax is an important capability for the Army and we are committed to working with General Dynamics for its delivery. We have a robust, firm price contract with General Dynamics under which they are required to provide the vehicles as set out in the contract for the agreed price of £5.5 billion.

[HCWS322]

Closure of Service Police Legacy Investigations

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Ben Wallace):

In February 2017, the then Secretary of State for Defence announced that the Iraq Historic Allegations Team (IHAT) would close and any remaining Iraq legacy investigations would be reintegrated into the service police system. Service Police Legacy Investigations (SPLI), led by a senior Royal Navy Police officer, took over these remaining investigations at the beginning of July 2017.

I can today announce that the SPLI completed its investigative caseload in December 2020 and, following the completion of administrative functions, officially closed its doors on 30 September 2021.

In total, SPLI assessed 1,291 allegations, of which 178 were pursued through 55 separate investigations. The SPLI complied fully with the requirements of the Armed Forces Act 2006—in referring cases to or consulting the Service Prosecuting Authority (SPA)—and with the High Court’s direction to work closely with the SPA to ensure cases were completed as promptly as possible while maintaining the necessary rigour. None of the IHAT or SPLI investigations have resulted in any prosecutions.

One significant challenge throughout the investigations was the issue of the credibility of allegations made against UK service personnel. While we accept that some allegations were credible, this does not detract from the fact we know, from the investigations and from the Al-Sweady public inquiry, that some were not. We know that Phil Shiner, formerly of Public Interest Lawyers, obtained Iraqi clients improperly—through the use of financial incentives—and acted with a lack of integrity. In 2017, the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal found allegations of misconduct when representing claims against British soldiers—including dishonesty—proven to the criminal standard of proof and he was struck off the Roll of Solicitors.

The vast majority of the more than 140,000 members of our armed forces who served in Iraq did so honourably. Many sadly suffered injuries or death, with devastating consequences for them and their families.

However, not all allegations and claims were spurious, otherwise investigations would not have proceeded beyond initial examination and no claims for compensation would have been paid. It is sadly clear, from all the investigations the UK conducted, that some shocking and shameful incidents did happen in Iraq. We recognise that there were four convictions of UK military personnel for offences in Iraq, including offences of assault and inhuman treatment. The Government’s position is clear—we deplore and condemn all such incidents.

It is also clear that in some cases the original Royal Military Police investigations—conducted in arduous, battlefield conditions, with limited resources and under strict force protection measures—did not manage to secure all the required evidence, with the result that opportunities to hold those responsible to account may now have been lost. I apologise unreservedly to all those who suffered treatment at the hands of UK forces which was unacceptable.

The closure of SPLI marks the completion of the remaining investigations stemming from operations in Iraq. However, we are aware that further serious allegations

may arise in the future, and that where credible these would have to be investigated in line with our obligations under international and domestic law.

Looking ahead, any historical criminal allegations will be referred to the Defence Serious Crime Unit. This was recommended in the Lyons/Murphy Review of the Service Justice System, and is further supported by Sir Richard Henriques, a retired judge who I appointed to conduct a review of how allegations on operations are raised and investigated. His review will help ensure we have the best possible framework, skills and processes in place, should this be necessary in the future.

The completion of the SPLI investigations brings us closer to the end of a decade of extensive litigation and large-scale investigations. While the Iraq fatality inspector continues to look at a small number of remaining cases, we can start to draw a line under the legacy of our operations in Iraq and to focus on the future.

[HCWS323]

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Coronavirus Community Support Fund: Evaluation

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Nigel Huddleston):

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the National Lottery Communities Fund (TNLCF) have recently published a series of reports detailing the evaluation of the Coronavirus Community Support Fund. The reports will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses. The reports can also be found online.

The £200 million Coronavirus Community Support Fund (‘the Fund’) was part of the unprecedented £750 million of Government funding to support voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations to continue their vital work during the covid-19 pandemic. The funding was provided by DCMS. TNLCF managed, distributed and oversaw the funding. Additional management support was provided by PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PwC).

The purpose of the fund was to increase community support to people disproportionately affected by the covid-19 crisis, through the work of VCSE organisations; and reduce temporary closures of essential VCSE organisations, and so reduce the burden on public services.

The funding went to 8,200 organisations who in turn supported an estimated 6.5 million people. This included children and young people—supported by 39% of grant holders—people with mental health conditions (40%) and older people (32%).

Without the £200 million fund almost one fifth of recipients would have been forced to close their doors, while over half revealed that they would have delivered significantly fewer services if it had not been for assistance from the fund. Over 6,200 employees of these organisations were brought back or prevented from being furloughed, and over 4,200 new staff members were recruited. This is in addition to grant holders mobilising 136,000 existing volunteers and over 47,000 new volunteers that they had not worked with previously.

The CCSF has also played a major role in the Government’s commitment to tackling loneliness across all grants, with 63% reporting they had promoted ways of building social connections during the pandemic,

79% reporting that beneficiaries felt less lonely, and 70% reporting beneficiaries had more access to social contact.

The findings also underline the positive impacts felt by volunteers who were mobilised during the pandemic. 84% of people who volunteered through the fund felt like they were making a difference, and 66% people felt it gave them a sense of purpose.

[HCWS320]

Wireless Infrastructure Strategy: Call for Evidence

The Minister for Media, Data and Digital Infrastructure (Julia Lopez): I am repeating the following written ministerial statement made on 14 October 2021 in the other place by my noble Friend, the Minister for Arts, the Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay:

The Government want to ensure that the UK has world-class fixed and wireless digital infrastructure as soon as possible, unlocking the huge economic and social benefits these will bring.

On 24 June 2021 the Government therefore announced that we will develop a Wireless Infrastructure Strategy—a long-term policy framework for the development, deployment and adoption of 5G and advanced wireless networks in the UK, ensuring the UK has the wireless coverage to meet our connectivity needs. It will build on the policies outlined in the 2018 Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review (FTIR), and subsequently the 2020 National Infrastructure Strategy, to transform the UK's telecoms infrastructure.

To support this strategy, DCMS is launching a call for evidence to understand in greater detail:

- the future wireless connectivity needs of the UK;
- the extent to which the UK market is likely to be able to meet those needs up to 2030;
- how the legal and policy framework can best continue to support investment, competition, innovation and adoption of wireless infrastructure;
- how the Government can support the development and deployment of future wireless networks, including 6G.

We will use responses to this call for evidence to inform the development of the Wireless Infrastructure Strategy. This call for evidence will run for six weeks, closing on 24 November 2021.

Telecommunications policy is reserved and we will work with the Devolved Administrations to develop the Wireless Infrastructure Strategy.

[HCWS315]

EDUCATION

Qualifications and Assessments: 2021-22

The Secretary of State for Education (Nadhim Zahawi): My noble Friend, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Minister for the School System) at the Department for Education (Baroness Barran), made the following written statement on 11 October 2021:

In April, the Department for Education committed to our intention that exams and assessments would go ahead in 2022. On 12 July, recognising that students taking exams in 2022 have had considerable disruption to their education, Ofqual and the Department published joint consultations outlining detailed proposals for:

- changes to the assessment of GCSEs, AS and A-levels in 2022; and arrangements for vocational and technical and other general qualifications in academic year 2021-22.

The Department and Ofqual confirmed the permitted scope of adaptations for vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs) included in performance tables, Functional Skills Qualifications and T-levels in an announcement on 6 August following analysis of responses to the VTQ consultation. Depending on the purpose

of the qualification, a range of adaptations for VTQs and other general qualifications have been or will be used including, but not limited to:

- a reduction in the number of internal assessments, while ensuring all content is taught
- longer and there are more assessment windows;
- social distancing adaptations—for example, professional discussion in place of certain practical activities;
- greater flexibility in invigilation rules—for example, to allow subject teachers to invigilate their own subject.

On 30 September, the Department and Ofqual published the decision document outlining the decisions taken by the Department and Ofqual following analysis of responses to the consultation on changes to the assessment of GCSEs, AS and A-levels in 2022.

The Department and Ofqual engaged with a wide range of sector representatives during the consultation period. The proposals that were set out in the consultation received a high degree of support and we have therefore confirmed a package of measures that includes four elements:

- a choice of topics in GCSE English literature, history, ancient history, and choice of topic or content in GCSE geography;
- the provision of advance information on exams in those subjects at GCSE, AS and A-level where there is no choice of content;
- changes to the requirements for the delivery of practical activities in science subjects, and assessment in art and design;
- the provision of support materials in the exam in GCSE maths, physics and combined science.

We have confirmed that DfE's policy intention is for advance information to be published by exam boards in early February 2022 to support student revision. The Government retain the flexibility to deploy advance information at an earlier point if there is significant further disruption to education.

The changes for both general and vocational and technical qualifications will be for one year only.

Ofqual also set out its approach to grading for general qualifications, confirming that 2022 will be a transition year to reflect that we are in a pandemic recovery period and students taking exams in 2022 have experienced disruption to their education. Ofqual set out its plans for grading to be based around a profile that reflects a mid-point between 2021 and 2019 grades in 2022. In 2023, Ofqual plans to return to results that are in line with those in pre-pandemic years.

While it is our firm intention that exams will go ahead next year, supported by the permitted adaptations, we understand that contingency arrangements are also needed in the unlikely event that exams cannot go ahead fairly or safely. The Department and Ofqual plan for teacher assessed grades to be used in the event that exams cannot take place, and we have jointly launched a consultation on improvements to the 2021 process for GCSE, AS and A-levels and confirmed the contingency arrangements that will apply to vocational and technical qualifications. The consultation closes on 13 October and we will announce final decisions as soon as possible.

Finally, we have confirmed that in 2022 results days will return to their normal timing, on 18 August for AS/A-level and 25 August for GCSEs. Vocational and technical qualifications used to progress in a similar way to GCSEs and A-levels will be awarded on or before the same days, and other VTQ results will continue to be awarded throughout the year.

[HCWS314]

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Blood Donor Selection Criteria

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Sajid Javid): I would like to inform the House about changes that the Government will be making to the blood donor selection criteria. This announcement forms part of the wider steps the Government have taken to make blood donation more equitable.

In 2019, the Government commissioned the ‘For the Assessment of Individualised Risk’ (FAIR) steering group to consider whether changes could be made to the blood donor selection criteria to ensure it was as effective and inclusive as possible.

On 14 June 2021, in response to the FAIR steering group’s work, the Government implemented changes that enable men who have sex with men in long-term relationships to give blood. These changes put in place a gender-neutral selection policy, where deferrals are now based on higher risk behaviours associated with acquiring infections.

Following further work by the FAIR steering group, I can announce that the Government will be making an additional change to the blood donor selection criteria, which will increase inclusivity without compromising the safety of donated blood.

As part of its work, the FAIR steering group reviewed the effectiveness of the question prospective donors are asked about whether they have recently had sex with a partner who may ever have had sex in an area where HIV is endemic—including most of sub-Saharan Africa. In reviewing the evidence, the steering group considered the other questions that are already on the pre-donation questionnaire that help to identify high-risk donors and the associated deferrals already in place, as well as the effect of routine screening of all donations for HIV and other blood-borne viruses. The FAIR steering group concluded that the question could be removed without impacting the safety of the blood supply. Furthermore, they determined that removing the question would help to improve inclusivity and equity for Black African donors. This is especially important due to the ongoing need for more Black African donors who can have rarer blood types, which will help to improve and save lives in the UK.

The Advisory Committee on the Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs (SaBTO) reviewed the steering group’s findings and agreed that the removal of this question poses no additional safety risks to the blood supply and recommended the change was made to the pre-donation selection criteria.

The Government have now reviewed the evidence presented by the FAIR steering group together with SaBTO’s advice and has accepted this recommendation. This means that the question asking whether donors had recently had sex with a partner who may ever have had sex in an area where HIV is endemic will be removed from the blood donor selection criteria. This is a progressive and welcome step forward, reducing limitations for people to donate blood and creating a fairer system for blood donation.

The Department of Health and Social Care is working with NHS Blood and Transplant to implement this change. We will have monitoring mechanisms in place to ensure the safety of donors and patients, including continued monitoring of both acute and chronic infections in new and regular donors. The changes will be reviewed in 12 months.

[HCWS312]

Coronavirus Test Device Approval Update

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Maggie Throup): The UK is developing one of the most rigorous regulatory regimes in the world for coronavirus tests. The CTDA regulations have set high bars of specificity and sensitivity to ensure only

high quality tests are available on the UK market. The CTDA regulations have set high bars of specificity and sensitivity to ensure only high quality tests are available on the UK market.

The Secretary of State and I have been impressed by the number of applications the regulator has received. This is a testament to the willingness of businesses to rise to the public health challenges set by this pandemic. However, some manufacturers have struggled to provide sufficient evidence in time. As things stand, this would mean they would have to be temporarily removed from the market whilst they complete their validation. This would create an unexpected contraction in supply at the start of winter. This could be particularly problematic for testing returning travellers.

In order to protect public health by ensuring availability of tests, the Secretary of State has decided to exercise the power under regulation 39A of the Medical Devices Regulations 2002. He will publish a protocol today listing certain tests that have both passed a public sector validation, and have a pending application awaiting validation, to remain on the market up to 28 February 2022 or until their validation application is determined. This protocol is a short-term, proportionate and targeted measure to minimise a risk of serious harm to public health by ensuring that a supply of tests most likely to be of high quality, having passed validation as part of DHSC procurement or other public sector process, remain on the market on an interim basis.

Copies of the protocol will also be deposited in the Libraries of both Houses and it will be published on the gov.uk website.

[HCWS324]

HOME DEPARTMENT

Anti-Slavery Day

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Rachel Maclean): Modern slavery is an abhorrent crime. Tens of millions of victims around the world are coerced, deceived, and forced into a life of abuse, servitude, and inhumane treatment.

This happens in the UK as well; to British citizens and to those trafficked from abroad. Today, on the UK’s Anti-Slavery Day, we pause to reflect on the trauma that victims suffer, the cruelty of those that exploit them and the bravery of survivors attempting to rebuild their lives.

This Government are committed to eradicating modern slavery. Over the past year we have continued to work towards this aim with our partners in the Devolved Administrations, in law enforcement and across the criminal justice system, with local government and our health and welfare sectors, with our international partners, with business, civil society, and academia.

Together we have continued to identify and provide support to thousands of victims of modern slavery through our contract with the Salvation Army. The number of law enforcement investigations has continued to increase. Conviction rates for cases prosecuted through the courts have also increased.

The Independent Child Trafficking Guardian Service now covers in total two thirds of all local authorities across England and Wales; a key milestone to better support child victims delivered through our National Referral Mechanism Transformation Programme.

The HO has invested a further £1.4 million this year to support the police modern slavery response, bringing the total investment to £15 million since 2016. This funding has helped to drive the increase in modern slavery investigations and operations.

And during our G7 presidency, G7 members agreed to joint action on forced labour in global supply chains and reaffirmed their commitment to upholding human rights and international labour standards. Modern slavery and human trafficking is a global problem and we continue to provide global leadership to tackle it.

We are committed to driving greater transparency in supply chains to ensure the private and public sectors use their leverage to tackle the risks of modern slavery in the goods and services they procure and provide. In March this year we launched the Government registry of modern slavery statements on www.gov.uk to enhance transparency. Statements covering over 21,000 organisations have now been added to the registry.

This Government continue to lead by example. We have continued to progress work on public procurement that we committed to in the world's first Government modern slavery statement that we published in March 2020. And we will soon publish further detail of the actions Government Departments have taken to prevent modern slavery in their supply chains.

We have continued to fund the Modern Slavery Policy and Evidence Centre to improve the evidence base on modern slavery and to help inform our policy response. And the Government have recently launched the Modern Slavery Prevention Fund to test and develop innovative approaches to preventing modern slavery in the first place, aiming to stop this harm before it starts.

Tomorrow, our landmark Nationality and Borders Bill will progress to Committee stage in the House of Commons, and the modern slavery measures in this Bill will seek to bring clarity for decision makers and victims, and maintain our commitment to ensuring victims of modern slavery are identified and supported as early as possible.

These actions demonstrate the Government's relentless commitment to addressing this crime. We will soon provide further detail in our annual report on modern slavery.

But we are not complacent. The nature of modern slavery continues to evolve. We have committed to publish a new Government strategy for modern slavery next year to ensure we continue to lead the way with our partners in bringing an end to this crime.

[HCWS317]

TRANSPORT

The Train Driving Licences and Certificates (Amendment) Regulations 2022: Draft Legislation

The Minister of State, Department for Transport (Chris Heaton-Harris): As part of the Government's EU transition programme, the Department for Transport, working with other Government Departments, has been negotiating bilateral arrangements with France to support the continuation of cross-border rail services, which provide significant economic and social benefit to the United Kingdom. The purpose of these draft regulations,

which are being published today, is to provide for the continued recognition of EEA issued train driving licences ("European TDLs") in the UK section of channel tunnel cross-border area, so that a bilateral agreement—currently agreed in principle at a technical level—for the mutual recognition of British and European TDLs will be able to be ratified once in place. Without making these regulations, and the proposed agreement they will implement, European TDLs would cease to be valid in the channel tunnel border area from 31 January.

These regulations will provide for the continued recognition of European TDLs only in the UK section of the channel tunnel fixed link up to Ashford International Station and Dollands Moor freight terminal in Kent. This will be reciprocated in France with respect to British train driving licences up to Fréthun freight and passenger terminals in Calais.

The draft regulations make the necessary amendments to domestic train driving licensing legislation to support the implementation of the proposed bilateral agreement. This will be achieved by amending the Train Driving Licences and Certificates Regulations 2010.

The agreement, and by extension these regulations, are fully compatible with our fundamental red lines in these negotiations, which are to support the continuation of cross-border services, which provide economic and social benefit to the UK, while conferring no role for the EU courts or the European Union Agency for Railways in UK territory and avoiding dynamic alignment with EU law.

The bilateral agreement has now been agreed in principle at a technical level and is expected to be ready for signature soon. Subject to approval by Parliament, the intention is that the regulations will be made and come into force after the bilateral agreement has been signed. In the unlikely event that France is not subsequently able to ratify the bilateral agreement, we will look to revoke the changes and recognition of European TDLs put in place by these regulations.

The regulations are being published in draft 28 days before they are due to be laid for affirmative debate. This is required under the paragraph 14 of Schedule 8 to the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 because the Train Driving Licences and Certificates Regulations 2010 were made using powers under the European Communities Act 1972.

The draft regulations and accompanying explanatory memorandum can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/amendments-to-train-driving-licensing-regulations>.

[HCWS310]

Motor Vehicle Driving Licences

The Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps): The need to tackle the HGV driver shortage is a top priority for my Department and the Government are committed to finding solutions to mitigate the effect and take urgent action. With 25 proactive actions taken by my Department to resolve the long-term HGV driver shortage in recent weeks, we are already seeing results, with a 300% increase in the number of HGV provisional licence applications. This is a real achievement, but it is important that we continue to build on this success.

The haulage sector has been experiencing a chronic shortage of HGV drivers worldwide for some time. In Great Britain the issue has been further exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic, which meant that driver testing had to be suspended for much of 2020, delaying entry to the industry of potential drivers. In addition, there are longer-term issues surrounding attracting and retaining drivers to the industry such as: antisocial hours, poor diversity, relatively low pay and poor driver facilities.

The Department for Transport and other Government Departments have been working alongside the haulage industry to ensure that we attract, recruit, train and test drivers who want to enter the profession, including increasing capacity for testing candidate drivers through measures taken by the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency and prioritising licence applications within the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency.

Streamlining the HGV driving licence regime is an important step in getting drivers tested and into jobs quickly, relieving the pressure on the haulage industry from the driver shortage. On 10 September 2021, following public consultation, I announced a number of measures to simplify the HGV licencing regime and bring forward legislation that would remove the current staged process for getting an HGV licence in Great Britain.

It will mean that drivers will not need to hold a Category C—rigid lorry—licence before applying for a Category C + E—articulated lorry—licence, removing a stage in the process for those drivers who wish to acquire a category C + E licence. This measure will be addressed through a draft affirmative statutory instrument which is laid before Parliament today.

This legislation will help to make the process from learner to qualified driver quicker by removing certain steps and allow it to respond more rapidly to the acute need for drivers at the heavier end of the vehicle spectrum. High driving standards will be maintained through existing pre-test training and gaining on-road driving experience.

To make rapid progress on this, we are seeking to make use of the urgent procedure under paragraph 14(6) of Schedule 8 to the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018. As Secretary of State for Transport, I am of the opinion that, by reason of urgency, the requirements for the statutory instrument to be made after being published in draft together with a scrutiny statement should not apply.

Forgoing the 28-day publication period will allow earlier laying of the legislation than would have otherwise been possible and strengthen the steps we have already taken to increase testing capacity and ease supply chain issues as quickly as possible. Arrangements will be in place to ensure that the changes made by the legislation are operationally effective as soon as the legislation is in force.

Tackling the causes and effects of the HGV driver shortage is a top priority for my Department and the driving licence regime and its legislation must support our efforts. This as part of 25 measures we have taken so far, will help us to reduce the impact of this shortage on the people of Britain.

[HCWS311]

Updates to International Travel: Summary

The Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps):
As trailed in my oral statement on 20 September, as of the 4 October, we have:

Replaced the traffic light system with a single red list and simplified travel measures for eligible arrivals from the rest of the world based on passengers' vaccination status.

Removed the requirement for eligible fully vaccinated passengers to take a pre-departure test, providing that they are arriving into England from a non-red list country or territory and have not been to a red list country or territory in the last ten days. The devolved Administrations have also aligned on this policy.

We have also made the follow changes in respect of international travel:

Lateral flow devices for arrival tests

From 4am on 24 October, arrivals into England who are considered fully vaccinated, along with most under 18s, who have not been in a red list country in the last 10 days will be able to take a lateral flow test on or before day 2 of their arrival, instead of a PCR test. This change will cut the costs of tests in time for travellers returning from half-term breaks and these tests can be booked from 22 October.

Passengers will need to take a photo of their lateral flow test result and send it back to their private testing provider for verification. Anyone who tests positive will need to self-isolate and take a free NHS confirmatory PCR test.

Red list review

The Government have conducted the first review of the red list under our new and simplified system of international travel. As of 4am on Monday 11 October, 47 countries including South Africa, Brazil, Mexico and Thailand were removed from the red list.

Given the success of the vaccination programme in the UK and the latest evidence of variants across the world, including the fact that the Delta variant is now dominant in many countries as it is in the UK, we have been able to significantly reduce the red list. However, we remain concerned about the presence of mu and lambda variants in the small number of countries we have kept on the red list. We will keep this list under review.

The following seven countries and territories now make up the red list:

- Colombia
- Dominican Republic
- Ecuador
- Haiti
- Panama
- Peru
- Venezuela

All passengers arriving into England from a red list country, or those who have been in a red list country or territory in the last 10 days, will have to quarantine at a managed quarantine service facility for 10 days upon their arrival in England.

Expansion of the inbound vaccination policy

As of 4am on Monday 11 October, we also expanded our inbound vaccination policy to include eligible fully vaccinated passengers who have not been in a red list country in the ten days before their arrival into England, to the below countries:

Albania
 Bahamas
 Bangladesh
 Bosnia and Herzegovina
 Colombia
 Egypt
 Ghana
 Grenada
 Hong Kong
 India
 Jamaica
 Jordan
 Kenya
 Kosovo
 Maldives
 Moldova
 Morocco
 Nigeria
 North Macedonia
 Oman
 Pakistan
 Serbia
 St Kitts and Nevis
 St Lucia
 St Vincent and The Grenadines
 Turkey
 Ukraine
 Vietnam

In addition, we have expanded the policy to a further set of countries and territories which were removed from the red list at this review:

Brazil
 Chile
 Georgia
 Indonesia
 Montenegro
 Namibia
 The Philippines
 South Africa
 Thailand

Our inbound vaccination policy now covers over 100 countries and territories, and eligible fully vaccinated passengers will be treated the same as those vaccinated in the UK. Eligible fully vaccinated passengers who have not been in a red list country in the ten days before their arrival into England will no longer need to take a pre-departure test before their departure, a post-arrival test on day eight or self-isolate upon their arrival. This now includes UN staff and volunteers vaccinated as part of the United Nations vaccine rollout.

Clinical trial participants

From the end of October, we will also recognise as fully vaccinated people participating in covid-19 vaccine clinical trials from countries and territories including Japan, Canada, Australia and the EU, provided they can supply adequate proof of their participation. This is in recognition of their vital work in helping to tackle the virus and builds on the agreements made at the meetings with G7 counterparts that I chaired in May and September this year.

Acceptance of UK Pre-departure Test Certification via the EU Digital Covid Certificate (DCC)

As of 4 am on Monday 11 October, non-vaccinated passengers arriving into England are allowed to present proof of a negative pre-departure test via the EU Digital Covid Certificate, in either paper or digital formats.

Changes to FCDO travel advice

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) has lifted its advice against all but essential travel for over 80 countries and territories. The change means people will be able to travel to a larger number of destinations with greater ease.

The FCDO will no longer advise against travel to non-red list countries on covid-19 grounds, except in exceptional circumstances such as if the local healthcare system is overwhelmed. Many travel insurance companies use FCDO travel advice as a reference point in their policies, typically excluding cover for places where Government advise against essential travel. However, people will now be able to purchase travel insurance for a wider range of destinations across the globe.

The FCDO will continue to advise against all but essential travel for all red list countries and territories, where the risk to British travellers is “unacceptably high”.

While public health is a devolved matter, the Government work closely with the devolved Administrations on any changes to international travel and aim to ensure a whole-UK approach.

[HCWS319]

WORK AND PENSIONS

Household Support Fund

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Dr Thérèse Coffey): Our £407 billion covid support package has protected jobs and livelihoods through the worst of the pandemic. With the UK economy rebounding, our plan for jobs is working, with the number of payrolled employees now above pre-pandemic levels and vacancies at record levels. Thanks to the formidable force of our jobs and jobs armies, and an expansion of the Government plan for jobs worth over £500 million, we are building back better—helping people to move into better paid work, progress, and increase their financial resilience. Our approach is boosting pay, prospects and prosperity for the long term.

However, we recognise that some people may require extra support over the winter as we enter the final stages of recovery, which is why vulnerable households across the country will now be able to access a new £500 million support fund to help them with essentials. The household support fund will provide £421 million to help vulnerable people in England and allocations to individual local authorities are set out below. The Barnett formula will apply in the usual way, with the devolved Administrations receiving almost £80 million (£41 million for the Scottish Government, £25 million for the Welsh Government and £14 million for the NI Executive), so the fund totals £500 million.

The household support fund is available to councils in England from this month and will run over the winter to 31 March 2022. The funding will primarily be used to support households in need with food, energy

and water costs, with flexibility to support with wider essentials. In cases of genuine emergency, where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need, the household support fund can also be used to support housing costs. At least 50% of the funding will be reserved for households with children and up to 50% is available for vulnerable households without children, including individuals. Local authorities have the flexibility to design their schemes to best suit local needs, within the parameters of the guidance.

This new fund will bolster existing measures that we have introduced for low-income households, such as increasing the national living wage, expanding the £220 million holiday activities and food programme, doubling free childcare for eligible working parents and increasing the value of healthy start vouchers by over a third. The household support fund also sits alongside the support available through the warm home discount, the cold weather payment scheme and the almost £30 billion that Government are projected to spend in 2020-21 on housing benefit and the housing element of universal credit.

The table for the household support fund indicative funding allocations per county councils/unitary authorities for the period 6 October 2021 to 31 March 2022, can be found at: Government launches £500m support for vulnerable households over winter - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

[HCWS313]

Plan for Jobs Extension

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Dr Thérèse Coffey): Our plan for jobs is working. With the UK economy rebounding strongly, the number of payrolled employees is now above pre-pandemic levels and vacancies are at record levels. Our unprecedented £407 billion support package protected jobs and livelihoods through the worst of the pandemic and the formidable force of our jobs and jobs armies means we are building back better—helping people move into decent, well-paid jobs and get the skills they need to succeed.

We are investing a further £500 million to expand the plan for jobs to build on its successes to help people of all ages fulfil their potential, in particular younger and older jobseekers and those on low incomes.

We are extending our kickstart scheme until the end of March 2022, which has so far helped over 85,000 young people take a confident first step in their careers. This will

allow thousands more young people to benefit and enable employers a further opportunity to apply for funding for roles, especially those who were unable to take on young people while covid restrictions were in place. New applications for roles will be accepted until 17 December 2021, though employers will be expected to move quickly to fill their approved roles.

We are extending our youth offer to 2025. This will ensure that young people can continue to benefit from intensive work coach support through the youth employment programme, specialised youth employability coaches and over 135 youth hubs, which are already providing support to thousands of young people across England, Scotland and Wales. We are also expanding eligibility, with 16 and 17-year-olds able to join alongside 18 to 24-year-olds claiming universal credit and searching for work.

For older workers, who often face specific challenges remaining in and returning to work, we will be funding a new support package. This will ensure they receive more intensive, tailored support during their work search journey, as well as information and guidance on later life planning, helping them make informed choices and supporting them to plan their career and stay in, or return to work.

And for low-paid workers, from April 2022, we will bolster our work coach support for people on universal credit to help them boost their earnings through a focus on career progression advice, with jobcentre specialists working with local employers to identify opportunities for people to progress in work.

We are also extending JETS—our job entry targeted support scheme—to September 2022, which has so far supported over 175,000 people across the UK by providing light-touch employment support for six months within the first year of unemployment. And our job finding support (JFS) scheme will continue to prioritise support for those coming off furlough through online, tailored, one-to-one support for those newly unemployed and claiming universal credit, including recruitment advice from a skilled adviser, support with CVs, and mock interviews.

This expansion of our plan for jobs and jobcentre network is an example of our commitment to invest in skills and jobs, helping people to move into well-paid work, progress, earn more and increase financial resilience—boosting pay, prospects and prosperity.

[HCWS318]

Petitions

Monday 18 October 2021

OBSERVATIONS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

Post Office counter services in North East Fife

The petition of residents of the constituency of North East Fife,

Declares that accessible local Post Office counter services are incredibly important; notes that many people rely on these services, particularly older residents; further that the closures of such services would cut off residents from public services; declares that Spar should engage with local and national governments and Post Office Ltd in preserving these services and ultimately reverse the proposal to close the Post Office counter services in Newport-on-Tay, Balmullo, Ladybank and Tom Morris Drive St Andrews.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urge the Government to engage with Spar and advise them to reverse the proposal to close Post Office counter services in North East Fife.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Wendy Chamberlain, *Official Report*, 21 July 2021; Vol. 699, c. 1099.]

[P002678]

Observations from The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Paul Scully):

Government recognise how important post offices are to their communities, which is why Government protects both the branch network by setting minimum access criteria, as well as services by setting minimum services to be provided at post offices across the country. Through the Post Office network of 11,500 branches, these criteria ensure that 90% of the population are within one mile of the nearest post office branch and that 99% of the population are within three miles of the nearest post office branch.

While the Government set the strategic direction for the Post Office, the management of the branch network is an operational responsibility for Post Office Ltd. It would therefore not be appropriate for Government to intervene in this situation. Post Office continues to make significant progress in identifying solutions to mitigate customer impact in the areas affected by CJ Lang & Son's commercial decision to resign from operating 31 post offices. Government will continue to monitor the situation closely to ensure the access criteria continue to be met in the affected areas.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Proposed Heath Common development

The petition of residents of Arundel and South Downs,

Declares that the proposed site of Heath Common by Clarion Housing Group is inappropriate for the development of residential housing; further that this site was not designated in the democratically mandated

Storrington and Sullington and Washington joint-neighbourhood plan; further that original permissions granted for the land were indicative only of tree-felling.

The petitioners therefore request the House of Commons to urge the Government to offer support to residents against the proposed development at Heath Common, Storrington, by Clarion Housing Group and formally acknowledge its inappropriateness for a residential development.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Andrew Griffith, *Official Report*, 15 September 2021; Vol. 700, c. 1090.]

[P002687]

Observations from The Minister of State, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (Christopher Pincher):

Due to the role of the Secretary of State in the planning system, the Government are unable to comment on specific development proposals.

Neighbourhood plans continue to have real statutory weight in planning decisions. Once passed at referendum, neighbourhood plans form part of the development plan alongside the local plan. Decisions on planning applications must be taken in accordance with the development plan for the area unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which is a material consideration, is clear that where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date neighbourhood plan as part of the development plan, permission should not usually be granted. The NPPF also includes important protections for neighbourhood plans where speculative applications are submitted that conflict with the plan.

Proposed loss of Deangate Ridge

The petition of the residents of the United Kingdom

Declares that the proposals outlined in Medway Council's housing infrastructure fund project to build a relief road and community-destructive flyover should be rejected due to their unsuitability and potential for the plans to damage the environment by destroying a key "asset of community value", Deangate Ridge Golf and Sports Complex and Lodge Hill SSSI.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to ensure that plans to build a relief road from A228 Peninsula Way to A289 Hasted Road via a flyover at Higham Road, through the former Deangate Ridge Golf and Sports Complex and Lodge Hill SSSI be rejected and the former Deangate Ridge Golf and Sports complex be developed as an asset that would further the social wellbeing and social interests of the local community, such as a country park.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Kelly Tollhurst, *Official Report*, 21 July 2021; Vol. 699, c. 1101.]

[P002684]

Observations from The Minister of State, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (Christopher Pincher):

The Government are determined to level up opportunities across the country. This means building the homes this country needs, closing the opportunity gap and helping millions of young people into home ownership.

The Government have committed to deliver 1 million new homes by the end of this Parliament and increase building output to 300,000 homes a year by the mid-2020s. To deliver these homes, the right infrastructure must be in place first. The housing infrastructure fund enables local authorities to deliver such infrastructure—including new roads, leisure and healthcare services, digital and power networks, and schools—to encourage more housebuilding without overstretching facilities.

I regret that due to the Secretary of State's quasi-judicial functions in the planning system, we are unable to comment on the details of a specific local plan or planning application. However, I can make the following general comments.

Projects funded through the housing infrastructure fund must go through the standard planning process. Planning applications submitted to a local planning authority, irrespective of whether the development proposal is or is not in receipt of funding secured through the housing infrastructure fund, must be determined in accordance with the local development plan for the area, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. All planning applications will be subject to statutory requirements around publicity and consultation, including with relevant statutory consultees, before a decision is made. Any representations which raise material planning considerations must be taken into account by the local planning authority.

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