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# HOUSE OF COMMONS
## OFFICIAL REPORT

# PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

## (HANSARD)

**Wednesday 8 December 2021**

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# House of Commons

*Wednesday 8 December 2021*

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

**PRAYERS**

[Mr Speaker *in the Chair*]

# Oral Answers to Questions

## NORTHERN IRELAND

*The Secretary of State was asked—*

**Northern Ireland's Place in the UK**

1. **Robin Millar** (Aberconwy) (Con): What steps the Government is taking to strengthen Northern Ireland's place in the UK. [904547]

3. **Rob Butler** (Aylesbury) (Con): What steps the Government is taking to strengthen Northern Ireland's place in the UK. [904549]

4. **Dame Andrea Leadsom** (South Northamptonshire) (Con): What steps his Department is taking to strengthen the Union. [904550]

13. **Antony Higginbotham** (Burnley) (Con): What steps the Government is taking to strengthen Northern Ireland's place in the UK. [904559]

14. **Bob Blackman** (Harrow East) (Con): What steps the Government is taking to strengthen Northern Ireland's place in the UK. [904560]

**The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Brandon Lewis):** In the year of Northern Ireland's centenary, the Government have delivered the largest funding settlement to Northern Ireland since devolution, record investment in public services and vaccines at a rate possible only because of our great NHS. We are boosting local economies through city and growth deals and providing, along with the Northern Ireland Executive, a UK contribution of more than £730 million to the Peace Plus programme to contribute to a more prosperous and stable Northern Ireland. This is a Government working for Northern Ireland, and Northern Ireland is stronger for being part of the UK, just as much as our United Kingdom is stronger for having Northern Ireland as an integral part of it.

**Robin Millar:** Internal trade is one of the key strengths and benefits of being part of our United Kingdom. Irish Government statistics, however, suggest a 60% increase in north-south trade with the United Kingdom. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the diversion of trade is clear evidence of the need to invoke article 16?

**Brandon Lewis:** My hon. Friend makes an important point, highlighting one of the reasons why, when we published our Command Paper in the summer, we said that, as of then, the conditions to trigger article 16 had been met. We are very clear that we do not rule that out. If we have to use article 16, we will, but we are in negotiations with the European Union. The ideal solution for us would be to come to an agreement with the EU, but that has to be one that delivers on the needs of the people of Northern Ireland.

**Rob Butler:** A great strength of being an integral part of the UK is being able to benefit from the excellent trade deals being agreed around the world now that we have left the EU. Clearly, different regions and nations will have different needs from those deals, so what steps is my right hon. Friend taking to ensure that Northern Ireland's voice is heard in trade negotiations as a means of strengthening its place in the Union?

**Brandon Lewis:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right: as a Government of the whole United Kingdom, we are committed to ensuring that Northern Ireland's businesses and consumers have access to and benefit from new trade deals. The Department for International Trade now has an office in Belfast and, just last month, I hosted, with the Secretary of State for International Trade, the Board of Trade in Derry/Londonderry. I look forward to doing more on that. We work with businesses in Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Executive to make sure that we can deliver and involve them in these opportunities.

**Dame Andrea Leadsom:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that every UK citizen and resident should have access to a similar level of healthcare? Will he guarantee that nothing in the negotiations on the Northern Ireland protocol will put at risk access to medicines and covid vaccines for residents and citizens of Northern Ireland?

**Brandon Lewis:** My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is because of our UK-wide NHS that everyone in our country can expect to receive quality health services, regardless of where they live. Currently, because of unnecessary regulatory and trade barriers in the UK internal market, we have seen difficulty in safeguarding medicine supplies. Unlike the EU, which some in this House will remember attempted to trigger article 16 earlier this year, with the intent of putting a hard border for vaccines on the island of Ireland between Northern Ireland and Ireland, this Government would never do anything that jeopardises access to medicines or covid vaccines for the residents of Northern Ireland.

**Antony Higginbotham:** Northern Ireland shares many of the same traits as our great county of Lancashire, Mr Speaker, including world-class expertise in aerospace and cyber-security. Does the Secretary of State agree that we can and should do much more to join up Lancashire and Northern Ireland, so that we can do even more together?

**Brandon Lewis:** I agree with my hon. Friend. This relates to a range of areas, including the strategic transport network, which will bring people and businesses across the UK closer together and which is helping us to build back better. It is also important to look at the business

and general communication links that mean that all parts of the UK and businesses in it can work together to develop the economy for the benefit of people across the United Kingdom, including in his constituency.

**Bob Blackman:** A prosperous Northern Ireland is a force for democracy in Northern Ireland, so what role does my right hon. Friend see the levelling-up fund having in strengthening the economy in Northern Ireland and therefore strengthening its democracy?

**Brandon Lewis:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right: prosperity is an important part of peace and is what has led to the peace that we have seen over the past 23 years. Northern Ireland is benefiting from being part of the fifth largest economy in the world. In addition, it is receiving its largest funding settlement since devolution. We are investing to ensure that we level up in Northern Ireland, with £60 million this year from the levelling-up fund, the community renewal fund and the community ownership fund, as well as £400 million from the new deal for Northern Ireland and more than £600 million in city and growth deal investment to drive growth. We will continue to build back better and level up in Northern Ireland through the upcoming UK shared prosperity fund, as well as the global Britain investment fund.

**Colum Eastwood** (Foyle) (SDLP): The Downing Street declaration states,

"on the behalf of the British Government, that they have no selfish strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland."

That is a direct quote from the declaration—signed, of course, by a Conservative Prime Minister. Does this British Government still agree with that principle, or are they going to abandon the consent principle that means the people of Ireland, north and south, will decide the constitutional future of our island, not the British Government or anybody else?

**Brandon Lewis:** We are absolutely clear, as we have been consistently, about our dedication to and determination to continue to deliver on the Good Friday/Belfast agreement, which includes the principle of consent. This Government understand the difference between consent and impartiality and make no apologies, just as I make no apologies for being a Conservative and a unionist who believes in the Union and that the Union is stronger for Northern Ireland's being in it. That does not detract from the reality that the future of Northern Ireland is a matter for the people of Northern Ireland.

**Kirsten Oswald** (East Renfrewshire) (SNP): Much to the Prime Minister's presumed disappointment, his proposed bridge between Northern Ireland and Scotland has been rejected as "impossible to justify" by his own advisers, as it would cost £300 billion, 22 times more than the Prime Minister's estimates. Does the Secretary of State agree that that flight of fancy is a perfect example of why Westminster should leave devolved matters such as transport to devolved nations? They know what is needed, and it is not impossible projects such as that, based on ideology.

**Brandon Lewis:** I feel sorry for the hon. Lady; she should think bigger and better and be more optimistic about the future of the United Kingdom. It is absolutely right that we look at the things we can do to improve our country. If we do not look at those things, we will never achieve anything exciting that can drive our economy. It is absolutely right that we look at how we ensure that the connectivity of the whole UK is working for the benefit of the UK. Scotland is able to continue as a strong economy as part of the United Kingdom because it benefits from its links with the rest of the United Kingdom.

**Stephen Farry** (North Down) (Alliance): Does the Secretary of State agree that the best way to secure the Union is to ensure that Northern Ireland works, that we build a shared and integrated society and that all traditions in Northern Ireland are equally respected?

**Brandon Lewis:** Yes, absolutely. An important part of that is looking at how we deliver on areas of the Good Friday agreement that have not yet been delivered on, including things such as integrated education. I think it is still shameful that only 7% of the population benefit from integrated education. There is always more to do, and we can do that working together for the benefit of the whole community of Northern Ireland.

**Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson** (Lagan Valley) (DUP): There are many in Northern Ireland, myself included, who believe that the protocol represents the greatest threat to the Union at this time. Recalling the commitment made by the Government in the New Decade, New Approach agreement to protect and strengthen Northern Ireland's place in the UK internal market, what urgent steps do the Government intend to take to deliver on that commitment and to safeguard the political institutions in Northern Ireland?

**Brandon Lewis:** The right hon. Gentleman makes an important point. I want to be clear: the Northern Ireland protocol is not working for the people of Northern Ireland. Societal and economic difficulties have been faced across both unionist and nationalist communities and by the business community, who are very clear about that. There is also a sense that identity is being eroded and east-west links weakened. That is compounded by the very real issue of trade diversion, which has already been mentioned this morning. The European Union and the Irish Government need to recognise that the lack of movement on the Northern Ireland protocol is leading to a loss of confidence in the institutions established under the Belfast/Good Friday agreement.

Restoring the balance between east-west and north-south is vital. That is why we continue to press through negotiations for a new balance to the protocol, but we are clear that all options remain on the table. We will do what we need to do to correct the situation for the UK internal market and Northern Ireland's place within it. This Government will not allow the Belfast/Good Friday agreement, of which we are co-guarantors, to be put at risk.

**Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson:** I thank the Secretary of State for that answer. Another commitment made in New Decade, New Approach was the establishment of the Castlereagh Foundation to promote and to undertake proper research into the benefits of the Union to Northern Ireland. Can the Secretary of State update the House on progress made in establishing the Castlereagh Foundation?

**Brandon Lewis:** In July, I appointed an advisory committee to provide advice on appropriate delivery partners to establish the Castlereagh Foundation, the legal form it should take, the role of the foundation and the cost to establish it. I thank the committee for its work; it is putting forward a proposal that I expect to have on my desk to look at and consider, to be able to make some decisions on the appropriate next steps, in the imminent future.

### Consultations on Addressing Legacy of Northern Ireland's Past: Victims Groups

2. **Mr Gregory Campbell** (East Londonderry) (DUP): What recent representations he has received from victims groups on consultations on addressing the legacy of Northern Ireland's past. [904548]

**The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Brandon Lewis):** Since publishing the Command Paper, the Government have engaged with a range of stakeholders, including victims groups, who we have always said must be central to discussions on legacy. Victims groups have provided evidence at sessions that the Government have convened with Northern Ireland parties and in partnership with the Irish Government, in addition to the Government's own bilateral engagement. The process has been hugely valuable and we are all grateful to those who shared their views on this important and sensitive issue.

**Mr Campbell:** The Secretary of State has said that the victims groups are central to all he is doing in this regard, but now that there appears to be total unanimity in opposition to the Government's amnesty proposals among the people most directly affected in Northern Ireland, how will he reconcile their opinion with his desire to proceed in the face of such opposition?

**Brandon Lewis:** As I have said before, we are working through the feedback that we received over the summer and autumn following the engagement that we had with a range of parties with an interest in this matter: victims groups, political parties and other stakeholder groups in civic society. We need to be honest about what is achievable, and about the reality that the current system is not working for people. It is not providing the information and it is not getting to the truth. Our focus is on ensuring that we are able to deliver a package that can get to the truth for families who have waited for far too long.

**Mr Speaker:** I call the Chair of the Select Committee.

**Simon Hoare** (North Dorset) (Con): My right hon. Friend is right to say that the current position is not working, and I think we should all congratulate him on trying to grapple once again with an issue that has been left lying there for too long. However, if his proposals are to secure any traction, they will have to be compliant with article 2, and we will have to see a fully fleshed out plan for truth and reconciliation. Can he give me assurances on both points?

**Brandon Lewis:** Yes, my hon. Friend is absolutely right. One of the key points that we made in the Command Paper—we will be setting out a lot of the work we are doing on this—was about ensuring that people can see that investigations will continue. There will be an information recovery body that will be able to get to the truth and will have access to information in a way that we have not seen before. We are determined to deliver on that, and we are determined to ensure that what we deliver is article 2 compliant.

**Mr Speaker:** I welcome the shadow Secretary of State to the Dispatch Box.

**Peter Kyle** (Hove) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Command Paper was published back in July, and since that time there have been two pauses, or perhaps more. That implies quite directly that the Secretary of State's thinking is evolving. Can he tell the House, with as much precision as possible: what is the difference between his thinking as it currently stands and his thinking in the paper that was published in July?

**Brandon Lewis:** I, too, welcome the hon. Gentleman to his new position. I look forward not just to sparring with him at the Dispatch Box, but to working with him for the benefit of Northern Ireland in the period ahead. I am sure we will be able to ensure that, on a range of matters, we are delivering for the people of Northern Ireland, along with his team.

We have not had pauses as such. We said when we published the Command Paper that we wanted to engage with parties, and we agreed at the summer British-Irish intergovernmental conference with the Irish Government to do that in partnership. That work continued over the summer and autumn and just last week we had a meeting of the British-Irish intergovernmental conference which is developing that work. This is a very complicated, complex area, as we heard from my hon. Friend the Member for North Dorset (Simon Hoare). We want to bring forward this package of work and legislate for it to ensure that we deliver for people in Northern Ireland—for victims who have waited too long for information. So there have not been pauses; the work continued throughout the summer and autumn.

**Peter Kyle:** I am grateful to the Secretary of State for his kind comments. I am also grateful for the messages and exchanges that we have had in the run-up to today.

In the spirit of constructive relations, let me share with the Secretary of State a bit of advice that comes from my experience. My last job was as the shadow Victims Minister, and when I was drafting the Victims of Crime and Anti-social Behaviour, Etc (Rights, Entitlements and Related Matters) Bill, I learnt that offering support only works when the victims are in the driving seat. According to the proposals that are currently on the table, the victims are not even in the car. Rather than delaying—the Secretary of State did promise it in the autumn and he did promise it before Christmas, and it has not emerged—can he give a clear assurance, on behalf of the victims, that he has gone back to the drawing board and will only return with proposals once victims are front and centre and in the driving seat? That is what they deserve, and that is what Governments should deliver for them.

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I know that the hon. Gentleman is new to this, but we must hear from some other Front Benchers, and I am not going to make it if we do not have shorter questions and answers.

**Brandon Lewis:** I appreciate that this is a complex issue, and I will be very clear about this. We want to ensure that we are delivering for the people and the whole of Northern Ireland, for the victims, and obviously for all those who served in Northern Ireland as well. This is a complex area, and our programme and the work we are seeking to deliver will deliver for victims. Victims are consistently saying that they want to get to the truth of what happened. The current system is not delivering that. Our Command Paper sets out a plan for a way to do that. We need to be honest about the current system's failures and look at a new way forward. The Command Paper sets that out. We will look into the feedback we had over the summer and autumn, and we will do that very soon.

**Johnny Mercer** (Plymouth, Moor View) (Con): On the weekend, I received another call from the media with a briefing from the Northern Ireland Office saying that legislation and a statement would be coming out this week, and so on. This is the seventh deadline to produce this legislation—self-set by the Secretary of State—that he has missed. Does he have any intention at all of honouring his word?

**Brandon Lewis:** I do not recognise what my hon. Friend just outlined. I said that I would set out to Parliament our intended direction of travel and what we wanted to do before the summer recess, and we did that with the Command Paper. We did have an ambition to legislate this autumn, and I was determined to do that, but we have to ensure that we are delivering and focusing on the work that we have seen over the summer and autumn in the ongoing conversations with victims groups and veterans groups, the Irish Government and the parties in Northern Ireland. This is a complex area, and we have to make sure that when we deliver legislation on this, it is legislation that works for the people of Northern Ireland and for those who served in Northern Ireland as well.

**Mr Mark Francois** (Rayleigh and Wickford) (Con): No one believes you any more.

**Mr Speaker:** Order.

## Northern Ireland Protocol Negotiations

5. **Martyn Day** (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP): What progress the Government have made on negotiating revisions to the Northern Ireland protocol. [904551]

7. **Dame Meg Hillier** (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/Co-op): What progress the Government have made on negotiations on the Northern Ireland protocol. [904553]

8. **Julian Smith** (Skipton and Ripon) (Con): What assessment he has made of the progress of the negotiations with the EU on the Northern Ireland protocol. [904554]

**The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Brandon Lewis):** The status quo cannot continue. Nearly six months ago we presented a Command Paper outlining how we thought we could resolve the serious issues within the Northern Ireland protocol. The EU brought forward its own proposals, but these do not have the support of businesses or society and do not remove the need for unnecessary checks on goods that will remain in Northern Ireland and the UK internal market. We want a negotiated solution and we are engaging constructively but the gap between us is still large. We will do what we need to do to deliver for Northern Ireland.

**Martyn Day:** Members of this House have said on the record that the Prime Minister personally told them that the Northern Ireland protocol was being agreed with the specific intention to renege on it in the future, so how can any future trade or negotiating partner trust the UK when it is clearly acting in bad faith?

**Brandon Lewis:** The UK Government have been very clear and transparent about our intentions all the way through, as we were when we launched the United Kingdom Internal Market Bill last year, as we were when we took action back in March, and as we were when we published the Command Paper. The current situation with the Northern Ireland protocol is not working for the United Kingdom internal market and it is not working for anybody or any business in Northern Ireland. That is not sustainable and it needs to be corrected.

**Dame Meg Hillier:** The Secretary of State has said today that the Northern Ireland protocol is not working for the people of Northern Ireland, but it was his Government who negotiated the protocol and voted for the exit from the EU. Is he not embarrassed to stand here as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in a Government who have effectively thrown Northern Ireland under the bus in the name of Brexit?

**Brandon Lewis:** The objectives of the Northern Ireland protocol include ensuring that the everyday lives of people and their communities are not disrupted, that the UK internal market is respected and that all three strands of the Good Friday agreement are respected. The EU's implementation of the protocol is breaching those issues and we will not tolerate that. It is abhorrent to be in a situation in which members of the Jewish community in Northern Ireland cannot practise their religion under the EU's requirements. That should not be tolerated by anybody in this House.

**Julian Smith:** I welcome the Government's dialling down of the rhetoric on the protocol, but may I urge them to speed things up? This issue and these negotiations are affecting our international relationships in steel and other matters, and the very fragile ecology in Northern Ireland. May I also urge the Secretary of State to assist my right hon. Friend the Member for Lagan Valley (Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson) on his need for a negotiated settlement on the Irish sea checks and regulations?

**Brandon Lewis:** My right hon. Friend is right: we need to see this resolved quickly, but that obviously requires the European Union to recognise the very real issues on the ground in Northern Ireland and the fact that we need to see movement from the EU to get to a resolution that can work for businesses in Great Britain supplying Northern Ireland, and for Northern Ireland's citizens.

**Mr Speaker:** I now welcome the new shadow Minister, Tonia Antoniazzi.

**Tonia Antoniazzi** (Gower) (Lab): It is almost 12 months since the Northern Ireland protocol was agreed and concluded yet, despite all the talk and all the bluster from Lord Frost, the UK Government have still not reached an agreement on the transporting of medicines to Northern Ireland. This is a matter of life or death. Will the Secretary of State please give a concrete guarantee to the House now that an agreement on medicines will be reached before Christmas?

**Brandon Lewis:** That is very much at the heart of the discussions that Lord Frost is continuing to have with the EU. The hon. Lady highlights a clear problem. The EU needs to come to the table with proposals to resolve these issues so that people can have confidence in having access to medicines, rather than having that access prohibited by the way in which the EU wants to implement the protocol.

**Mr Mark Francois** (Rayleigh and Wickford) (Con): The Secretary of State keeps threatening to invoke article 16, but he never quite gets round to doing it, does he? There is a pattern of behaviour here: the Secretary of State talks a great game but he never plays one. Where is your Bill, Brandon?

**Brandon Lewis:** My right hon. Friend is right that we have not yet triggered article 16. As we said, the conditions have been met, but article 16 is not the solution in and of itself; it is the start of a process. It is right that we strain every sinew to reach an agreement with the EU, because that is what gives certainty for businesses and citizens in Northern Ireland. It is a reality that if we are not able to secure an agreement with the EU, and if the EU is not able to move in a way that delivers for Northern Ireland, we do not take anything off the table.

**Claire Hanna** (Belfast South) (SDLP): The Secretary of State will be aware of recent Office for National Statistics data indicating that Northern Ireland is faring the best of all UK regions due to the protection and dual market access of the protocol. He will also be aware of the BBC "Spotlight" investigation into very murky goings on at Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, showing that loyalist threats to the protocol were confected for and by political actors. Will he acknowledge that there has been a year-long campaign of reality distortion to mask the fact that the protocol, which has majority and growing support in Northern Ireland, is required by the people of Northern Ireland?

**Brandon Lewis:** We have always been clear that we want to ensure the protocol works for people in Northern Ireland, and at the moment it does not. In my engagement with business representative groups across Northern Ireland last week, they were very clear that the status quo does not work for businesses in Northern Ireland and the EU's offer does not deliver a solution.

**Sir Bernard Jenkin** (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): My right hon. Friend will be aware that the Government's legal representatives are now telling the courts that the Northern Ireland protocol represents a temporary suspension of parts of the Act of Union. When will this temporary suspension come to an end?

**Brandon Lewis:** My hon. Friend will appreciate that it would be inappropriate for me to comment on an open court case, but we are determined to ensure we resolve the issues for the people and businesses of Northern Ireland and for the UK internal market.

### Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission: Core Functions

6. **Liz Twist** (Blaydon) (Lab): If he will make an assessment of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission's ability to carry out its core functions. [904552]

**The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Conor Burns):** We value the important work of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission in championing human rights in Northern Ireland. We are committed to ensuring the commission has the resources and the ability to carry out its functions, and we remain in close contact with the chief executive and their staff.

**Liz Twist:** One of the many risks of activating article 16 is the chance that human rights safeguards secured under article 2 and relied on by organisations such as the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission will fall by the wayside. Will the Minister confirm that any negotiations involving the protocol will not lead to the unravelling of article 2 commitments?

**Conor Burns:** I am happy to confirm to the hon. Lady that the provisions of article 2 are unconnected to any triggering of article 16. We are absolutely committed to seeing no diminution of human rights in Northern Ireland.

### Exports to Northern Ireland: Businesses in Great Britain

9. **Scott Benton** (Blackpool South) (Con): What steps his Department is taking to support businesses in Great Britain which export to Northern Ireland. [904555]

**The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Conor Burns):** International trade is vital to boosting prosperity for this country, and trade within the United Kingdom is essential for our sense of connectivity and belonging, which is a priority for this Government.

**Scott Benton:** I thank the Minister for his answer and for the steps he is taking to support trade between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. *[Interruption.]*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. We should know better. When a Member is asking a question, you should not be walking in front of him. That is just not fair.

**Scott Benton:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Despite these measures, east-west trade remains disrupted because of the EU's application of elements within the protocol. I wholeheartedly support the Minister's efforts to remedy the situation, but if those efforts are unsuccessful, will he confirm that all measures, including invoking article 16, remain on the table?

**Conor Burns:** The Government have been absolutely clear that we want to find a sustainable and durable solution to the problems created by the protocol. Under the strong leadership of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and Lord Frost's unrivalled grasp of the protocol, we are determined to reach that solution.

**Richard Thomson** (Gordon) (SNP): Would not the best way by far to support east-west trade, and to overcome the entirely self-inflicted wounds that this Government have created with the protocol, be simply to realign with the single market and the customs union?

**Conor Burns:** That is so 2016, is it not? SNP Members are still not reconciled to the democratic decision that the British people took to control their own destiny and leave the European Union. We are determined to find a sustainable and durable solution to the protocol, but my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, Lord Frost and the Secretary of State are all clear that if that cannot be achieved, we will take whatever actions are necessary to secure the interests of the whole United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland.

**Ian Paisley** (North Antrim) (DUP): *The Irish Times* carries a piece that states that the Republic of Ireland now has the highest debt in all of Europe and 20% higher costs of living than Northern Ireland, and it now requires a multibillion-pound bailout from Europe to deal with the consequences of Brexit. Is it not the case that, by contrast, Northern Ireland is part of the fifth largest economy in the world, and that not only is it part of a strong and growing economy, but it requires the friction that exists between businesses in Northern Ireland and GB to be removed? Invoking article 16 will allow that friction to be removed.

**Conor Burns:** We do not need any international comparisons to sell the benefits of Northern Ireland being an integral part of our United Kingdom. It is good for jobs, it is good for health and it is good for prosperity. We are definitely better together.

**Mr Speaker:** Before we come to Prime Minister's questions—*[Interruption.]* Mr MacNeil, I do not need any help from you. This is an important message to those people who are watching. Before I come to Prime Minister's questions, I would like to point out that the British Sign Language interpretation of proceedings is available to watch on parliamentlive.tv.

## PRIME MINISTER

*The Prime Minister was asked—*

### Engagements

Q1. [904643] **Nicola Richards** (West Bromwich East) (Con): If he will list his official engagements for Wednesday 8 December.

**The Prime Minister (Boris Johnson):** May I begin by saying that I understand and share the anger up and down the country at seeing No. 10 staff seeming to make light of lockdown measures? I can understand how infuriating it must be to think that the people who have been setting the rules have not been following the rules, because I was also furious to see that clip. I apologise unreservedly for the offence that it has caused up and down the country, and I apologise for the impression that it gives.

I repeat that I have been repeatedly assured since these allegations emerged that there was no party and that no covid rules were broken. That is what I have been repeatedly assured. But I have asked the Cabinet Secretary to establish all the facts and to report back as soon as possible. It goes without saying that if those rules were broken, there will be disciplinary action for all those involved.

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

**Nicola Richards:** Bins left uncollected, council tenants being forced to live in damp and cold homes, £22 million lost on the Providence Place land deal and a £10 million overspend on special educational needs and disability transport contracts that were almost awarded to Labour councillors' friends—today, our council's external auditors released a damning report that surprises none of us. Does the Prime Minister agree with me that 47 years of Labour control in Sandwell has done nothing but level down my constituency of West Bromwich East, and that my constituents in West Bromwich, Friar Park and Great Barr deserve better?

**The Prime Minister:** Yes, I wholeheartedly agree with my hon. Friend, because the instinct of Labour councillors up and down this country is, yet again, to level down rather than to level up. I encourage her constituents to install a Labour council there—*[Interruption]*—a Conservative council there as soon as possible.

**Keir Starmer** (Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab): I heard what the Prime Minister said at the beginning of this session, but frankly it raises more questions than answers. Last week, I asked the Prime Minister: was there

"a Christmas party…in Downing Street for dozens of people on 18 December?"—[*Official Report*, 1 December 2021; Vol. 704, c. 909.]

The Prime Minister and the Government spent the week telling the British public that there was no party and that all guidance was followed completely. Millions of people now think the Prime Minister was taking them for fools and that they were lied to; they are right, aren't they?

**The Prime Minister:** I think the right hon. and learned Gentleman probably missed what I said at the beginning, but I apologise for the impression that has been given that staff in Downing Street take this less than seriously. I am sickened myself and furious about that, but I repeat what I have said to him: I have been repeatedly assured that the rules were not broken—*[Interruption.]*

**Mr Speaker:** Order.

**Jess Phillips** (Birmingham, Yardley) (Lab): I apologise, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Speaker:** Right, well let us just have a little less. It is important.

**The Prime Minister:** I have asked the Cabinet Secretary to investigate exactly what happened, and I repeat that there will be consequences for those involved if the rules were broken.

**Keir Starmer:** An internal investigation into what happened? The situation is as clear as day. I thought last week was bad enough; surely the Prime Minister is not now going to start pretending that the first he knew about this was last night—surely.

We have all watched the video of the Prime Minister's staff, including his personal spokesperson. They knew there was a party, they knew it was against the rules, they knew they could not admit it and they thought it was funny. It is obvious what happened—Ant and Dec are ahead of the Prime Minister on this. The Prime Minister has been caught red-handed; why does he not end the investigation right now by just admitting it?

**The Prime Minister:** Because I have been repeatedly assured that no rules were broken. I understand public anxiety about this and I understand public indignation, but there is a risk of doing a grave injustice to people who were, frankly, obeying the rules. That is why the Cabinet Secretary will be conducting an investigation and that is why there will be the requisite disciplinary action if necessary.

**Keir Starmer:** This pretence that further information has come to light—give me a break! The Prime Minister is still taking the public for fools.

On the day of the Downing Street party, Trisha Greenhalgh's mum phoned her; she was "breathless and feverish"—*[Interruption.]* You might want to listen. Trisha followed the rules and did not visit her mum. Listening? Four days later, on the day the Prime Minister's staff laughed about covering up the party, Trisha's mum was admitted to hospital. Trisha followed the rules and did not visit. Trisha's mum spent Christmas day in hospital; Trisha followed the rules and did not visit. Two days later, Trisha's mum died. What Trisha wants to know is: why did the Prime Minister expect her to accept that the rules allowed a Downing Street party but did not allow her to visit her dying mother?

**The Prime Minister:** The first thing to say is that, in common with everybody in this House, I extend my sympathies to Trisha and her family. I understand the pain of everybody who has suffered throughout this pandemic.

I know the implication that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is trying to draw: that the case that we are now investigating should somehow undermine public confidence in the measures that we are taking. I think that is the point he is trying to make, but I say to him that I think it is a great mistake to try to play politics with this issue, and I think that is what he is doing. I do not think the public do want to see confidence in the measures undermined. We are taking—*[Interruption.]* I think they can see the difference. We are taking the steps necessary to protect the public, above all by rolling out the vaccinations. Rather than focusing on the events of a year ago, that is what we are focusing on and that is what I think the public will understand.

**Keir Starmer:** But it is not just the events of a year ago, is it? We are facing a new variant. We may well be in plan B this afternoon. Even the Prime Minister must understand the damage that he has done to his credibility in enforcing the rules now and in the future. Trisha made an enormous personal sacrifice to do the right thing—to follow the rules and help defeat the virus. That is what she was asked to do. Most people were just like Trisha last Christmas. No one was dreaming of a Zoom Christmas, turkey dinners for one, and gifts exchanged at service stations, but the virus was out of control. Four hundred and eighty-nine people died of covid on the day of the Downing Street party. The British people put the health of others above themselves and followed the rules. Is the Prime Minister not ashamed that his Downing Street could not do the same?

**The Prime Minister:** I have said what I have said about the events on 18 December. They will be properly investigated, Mr Speaker, and I will place a copy of the Cabinet Secretary's report in the Library of the House of Commons. What people should not do is lose focus on what we are trying to do now. Of course we will deal with what may or may not have taken place on 18 December last year, but what we need to focus on today is what we are doing to roll out the vaccinations across the country and what we are doing to protect the public. The right hon. and learned Gentleman is indeed right that we now have, in the omicron variant, a variant that is spreading much faster than any that we have seen before, and, with great respect to him, that is what we need to focus on. That is why I ask everybody to go to get their booster jab as soon as they are called to come forward.

**Keir Starmer:** The Prime Minister apparently wants us to focus on what is happening today. There were no Government spokespersons on the media this morning—I see that the Health Secretary has made it to the Chamber. That is the point: this virus is not defeated. We will face other tests where the British people may be asked by their leaders to make further sacrifices for the greater good. Her Majesty the Queen sat alone when she marked the passing of the man whom she had been married to for 73 years. Leadership, sacrifice—that is what gives leaders the moral authority to lead. Does the Prime Minister think that he has the moral authority to lead and to ask the British people to stick to the rules?

**The Prime Minister:** Not only that, but the Labour party, and the Labour leader in particular, have played politics throughout this pandemic—*[Interruption.]*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I must hear what the Prime Minister is saying, because I need to know what is being said.

**The Prime Minister:** Yes, Mr Speaker. Throughout this pandemic, the Leader of the Opposition in particular has done nothing but play politics to try to muddy the waters, to confuse the public and to cause needless confusion about the guidance. The public have not been so confused and they have not been fooled. They have got on with implementing the guidance, and, in particular, they have got on with showing great commitment to the health of this country by going forward to get vaccinated—*[Interruption.]*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. Mr Streeting, we had this the week before. I will not have this every week. If you want to be on the Front Bench, behave like you are meant to be there.

**The Prime Minister:** At every stage, the Labour leadership and the right hon. and learned Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer), have tried to muddy the waters and play politics, but the people of this country have not been fooled. In particular, they have come forward to get vaccinated faster than any other country in Europe. We have now done 20 million boosters; that is the single best thing that we can do. I encourage everybody to keep going and get their booster jab.

**Keir Starmer:** That is so desperate, and even the Prime Minister's own side can see it. Last week, the Prime Minister told us there was no party. Now he thinks that there is something to investigate. The Justice Secretary thinks that the police do not investigate crimes from a year ago. Well, I ran the Crown Prosecution Service and I can tell him that that is total nonsense. At Westminster magistrates court right now, the CPS is prosecuting more than a dozen breaches of covid restrictions last December—including those, Prime Minister, who hosted parties. The CPS is doing its job, enforcing the law set in Downing Street. Will the Prime Minister support the police and the CPS by handing over everything that the Government know about parties in Downing Street to the Metropolitan police?

**The Prime Minister:** Of course we will do that, and we will get on with the investigation by the Cabinet Secretary. The right hon. and learned Gentleman continually wants to play politics with this issue. We want to get on with our job of protecting this country during the pandemic, delivering the fastest vaccine roll-out in Europe, fighting the drugs gangs when the Labour party wants to decriminalise class A drugs, and backing our Nationality and Borders Bill. The Opposition have an opportunity to focus on that tonight; why not back our borders Bill and have life sentences for people traffickers? That is what the Leader of the Opposition should be doing and that is what I urge him to do, rather than playing politics.

Q2. [904644] **Fiona Bruce** (Congleton) (Con): As we celebrate the advent of Christmas, I thank the Prime Minister for his support for Christians, and those of other faiths and beliefs, who face persecution across the world. We here stand with them. The Government have talked about the gift of resettlement for Afghans who are members of religious minorities—those who are at risk of persecution, targeted for their beliefs. Will this gift of resettlement be available by the end of Christmas?

**The Prime Minister:** I thank my hon. Friend for everything that she does, particularly as special envoy for freedom of religion or belief. As she rightly says, we have an Afghan citizens resettlement scheme coming. We have already taken 15,000, but it is important that we get that scheme right. Further details, including the eligibility criteria, will be announced by the Home Office in due course.

**Ian Blackford** (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): We are standing on the cliff edge of yet another challenging moment in this pandemic. Omicron cases are rising at a rapid rate, and over the coming weeks tough decisions will again have to be made to save lives and protect our NHS. Trust in leadership is a matter of life and death. Downing Street wilfully broke the rules and mocked the sacrifices that we have all made, shattering the public's trust. The Prime Minister is responsible for losing the trust of the people. He can no longer lead on the most pressing issue facing these islands. The Prime Minister has a duty: the only right and moral choice left to him is his resignation. When can we expect it?

**The Prime Minister:** The SNP and the Labour party are going to continue to play politics. I am going to get on with the job.

**Ian Blackford:** No dignity from a Prime Minister who quite simply just does not get it. People across these islands have followed the rules, even when it meant missing friends and family, missing births, missing funerals, missing the chance to be beside a loved one in their dying moments. People have sacrificed, at times to the point of breaking, while the UK Government have laughed in our faces.

It is clear that the Prime Minister has lost the support of the public and now even his own Benches. This is not a grin-and-bear-it moment; this is a moment of moral reckoning. Every Member on the Conservative Benches must now decide: is this the man to lead these islands when lives are at stake? It is clear that this Prime Minister intends desperately to cling on to power, and I have nothing left to say to a man whose answers we simply cannot trust, so Mr Speaker—*[Interruption.]*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I will hear this question whether the Front Bench like it or not. I am expecting better behaviour. The public out there are questioning this Parliament—do not add to that question.

**Ian Blackford:** They are questioning this Parliament and questioning this Prime Minister that we cannot trust.

It is clear that the Prime Minister is desperately clinging on to power, and I have got nothing left to say to a man who we simply cannot trust. It is time for Members in this House to act. If he does not resign, he must be removed.

**The Prime Minister:** I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his vote of confidence, but I can tell him that I am going to get on with the job. I believe that that is the right thing to do. I think it is very, very sad that when the public need to hear clarity from their officials and from politicians, the Opposition parties are trying to muddy the waters about events, or non-events, of a year ago. That is what they are doing today.

## Island Deal for Isle of Wight

Q5. [904647] **Bob Seely** (Isle of Wight) (Con): What recent progress he has made on bringing forward proposals for an Island deal for the Isle of Wight; and if he will make a statement.

**The Prime Minister (Boris Johnson):** I thank my hon. Friend, who is an excellent champion for the Isle of Wight. I know there is ongoing discussion between the Isle of Wight and the Department for Levelling Up about the unique circumstances of the Island, including the discussions about the possibility of a county deal.

**Bob Seely:** I thank the Prime Minister for his response. Will the Government accept the findings of the independent study that they themselves commissioned this summer into a long-term fair funding settlement for the Island, the final calculations of which are due imminently? In doing so, will he help me to right a wrong that has now been ongoing for the Island—for my constituents—for some six decades?

**The Prime Minister:** I thank my hon. Friend very much. He will understand that it is not easy to break down the costs that apply to the service delivery on the Island, but I know the Department is carefully considering the details of the study he mentions, and I am sure the relevant Minister will keep him updated.

**Engagements**

**Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson** (Lagan Valley) (DUP): In view of the harm caused to political stability in Northern Ireland and to our economy by the Northern Ireland protocol, noting the lack of progress in removing the Irish Sea border, and recognising that Unionist consent for the protocol is not forthcoming, what urgent steps do the Prime Minister and his Government intend to take to honour his commitment to restore Northern Ireland's place fully within the UK internal market and to safeguard the political institutions in Northern Ireland?

**The Prime Minister:** I thank the right hon. Gentleman. He and I have discussed this extensively, and he knows that we share a view that the protocol is not working in the way that it needs to in order to guarantee the Belfast/Good Friday agreement. I do not believe things need to be that way. I think it could be worked differently. We want our EU friends and partners to understand that and we will continue to work with them to get them to see things in the way that people on both sides of the Irish sea see them. In the meantime, we do not remove the possibility of invoking article 16 to protect trade between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Q7. [904649] **Bob Blackman** (Harrow East) (Con): This week thousands of my Hindu constituents and millions worldwide start the celebrations of the birth centenary of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj. His life was given over to people of all castes, races and religions. He was of course the inspiration behind the world-renowned Neasden temple and hundreds of other temples. Will my right hon. Friend join me in that celebration and in giving good wishes to all Hindus across the world?

**The Prime Minister:** I thank my hon. Friend for raising this, and I thank the Hindu community for their amazing contribution to this country. I was delighted to visit the Neasden temple last month to hear about all they have done during the pandemic. I wish everybody in that community and all those celebrating all the very best.

Q3. [904645] **Kirsten Oswald** (East Renfrewshire) (SNP): The chaos of this Government is a distraction from the serious decisions they should be taking. We all know that the Chinese Government deny basic human rights to China's minority religious communities. The repression of the predominantly Muslim Uyghur population in Xinjiang has been condemned as an act of genocide. In the face of these abuses, President Biden has decided that US diplomats will boycott the Beijing Olympics. New Zealand and Australia have followed suit. It is international Human Rights Day on Friday, so will the Prime Minister raise his eyes from his chaos and commit the UK to joining the diplomatic boycott, or does his desperation for trade deals trump human rights?

**The Prime Minister:** No, because we make all those points regularly to the Chinese. Indeed, I did to President Xi when I talked to him recently. As I have said before, we do not support sporting boycotts, but there are certainly no plans for Ministers to attend the winter Olympics.

Q9. [904651] **Dr Caroline Johnson** (Sleaford and North Hykeham) (Con): Many of my constituents in Sleaford and North Hykeham are struggling to access an NHS dentist, leading to pain and suffering, in particular for children, military families and veterans. My right hon. Friend has invested a record amount of money in the NHS. Does he agree that some of this money must be used to level up dental care provision? Does he share my surprise that there is no dental school in the east midlands, and will he back my campaign for a dental school in Lincolnshire?

**The Prime Minister:** Health Education England is working extensively in Lincolnshire to improve the recruitment and retention of dentists. I understand that it agrees with her about the uneven distribution of dental schools throughout the country, and I am sure that as it considers its next steps, it will have heard her appeal.

Q4. [904646] **Mary Kelly Foy** (City of Durham) (Lab): Storm Arwen left thousands of people in Bearpark, Ludworth, Sherburn and Waterhouses without heating or electricity, yet it took five days for a ministerial statement to be made and a week to send in the Army. My constituents were not just left without power; they were left without a Government who care. Can the Prime Minister look me in the eye and honestly say that he did everything he could, as soon as he could, to help the people of Durham?

**The Prime Minister:** Yes, I can. I can tell the hon. Lady that I was in contact with representatives of the local authorities, of the Army, of Northern Powergrid and others to see what more we could do to assist them in restoring power. I sympathise very much with the families who lost power for an unconscionably long period, and the House will have heard the explanation of the various electricity companies about why that is so. We must learn the lessons from Storms Arwen and Barra and ensure nothing like that happens again.

Q10. [904652] **David Warburton** (Somerton and Frome) (Con): I know we all agree that our vaccination programme has been a tremendous success. Vaccinations are the frontline of defence against all variants of covid, and the booster jab is a vital component of that, but in rural areas like mine, our booster centres are often few and very far between, and two thirds of housebound people—those perhaps most vulnerable, most susceptible and most in need—have not yet received their booster. Can I ask my right hon. Friend what steps the Government are taking to ensure that more centres are available,

particularly in rural areas? Will he ask the Health Secretary to meet me with some urgency to ensure that my constituents can get their boosters and stay protected this winter?

**The Prime Minister:** Among the heroes of the vaccine roll-out are pharmacists up and down the country, as my hon. Friend rightly says. We have 1,500 community pharmacies vaccinating people near where they live. I know that the NHS is considering the need to support more pop-up clinics where there is a need. I am happy to arrange a meeting with him and the vaccines Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Maggie Throup), to discuss this further.

Q6. [904648] **Catherine West** (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab): Will the Prime Minister tell the House whether there was a party in Downing Street on 13 November?

**The Prime Minister:** No, but I am sure that whatever happened, the guidance was followed and the rules were followed at all times.

Q14. [904656] **Dr Luke Evans** (Bosworth) (Con): We know that booster vaccines are essential in our fight against covid. Speaking to clinical colleagues, one of the biggest hindrances is the 15 minutes that people have to wait post Pfizer. If we could reduce that or take that away, it could release thousands of hours of clinicians' time. Will the Prime Minister ask the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency and the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation to look to see whether it is safe to do so, particularly for those receiving their third Pfizer booster?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend makes a very good point. I can tell him that we are in the process of reviewing the 15-minute waiting requirement for both booster doses. We continue to be guided by the JCVI and the MHRA.

Q8. [904650] **Cat Smith** (Lancaster and Fleetwood) (Lab): My constituents are having to resort to performing DIY dentistry, including on their children. In the catch-up money, nothing has been allocated to NHS dentistry, so can the Prime Minister explain why my constituents cannot access an NHS dentist?

**The Prime Minister:** We are putting record funding into the NHS, including NHS dentistry. If the hon. Lady would like to write to me with the cases that she has mentioned, I would be happy to take them up with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care.

Q15. [904657] **Graham Stuart** (Beverley and Holderness) (Con): On many occasions, the Prime Minister has spoken to primary age children about careers and the opportunities ahead of them. Does he agree that every child should have the chance to meet adults from different professions and backgrounds to be inspired for the future? That could play a major part in delivering the levelling-up agenda.

**The Prime Minister:** I thank my hon. Friend. It is absolutely true that, through our careers strategy, we have so far invested £2 million to support career-related learning in primary schools. As Members of the House will know, we get the most extraordinary questions from primary school children and they are often very ambitious for their futures.

Q11. [904653] **Jack Dromey** (Birmingham, Erdington) (Lab): The father of Jane Roche from Erdington, Vince, died of covid. Five days later, her sister died of covid. She is devastated and appalled by the recent revelations as to what has gone on in Downing Street. She asks this question of the Prime Minister: does trust in British politics matter?

**The Prime Minister:** Yes, it does. That is why it is absolutely vital that we should get to the bottom of whatever may or may not have taken place on 18 December last year, but we need to focus on what is happening this year. I urge the hon. Gentleman's constituent and everybody else to get their booster jab and to look after themselves.

**Mrs Maria Miller** (Basingstoke) (Con): At the moment, indecent exposure or flashing is illegal offline but not online. I welcome the Prime Minister's support for that to change when he spoke to the Liaison Committee in November. Will he support outlawing cyber-flashing and other forms of sexual image abuse online when the forthcoming Online Safety Bill comes to the House?

**The Prime Minister:** My right hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the phenomenon of cyber-flashing. It is one of the issues being addressed by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary in the online harms Bill.

Q12. [904654] **John Mc Nally** (Falkirk) (SNP): Last year, I asked the Prime Minister what progress had been made on delivering his pledge to buy 4,000 zero-emission buses by 2024. The Budget and the spending review confirmed that the UK Government's planned investment will not reach that target. As vice-chair of the all-party parliamentary group for the bus and coach industry, I tell him that bus manufacturers have no orders from the ZEBRA—zero emission bus regional areas—scheme. Production lines in Falkirk, Ballymena and Scarborough are desperate to start orders and deserve better. Why are the Government failing to deliver those orders and that pledge?

**The Prime Minister:** We are absolutely committed to delivering 4,000 zero-emission buses and we are also committed to supporting UK bus manufacturing.

**Sir Iain Duncan Smith** (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con): The Prime Minister has already been asked about the winter Olympics, but having listened to his answer, I have to say that, sadly, it was not strong enough. I support the request that the UK Government now act against the dictatorial brutal Chinese regime that is persecuting everybody from Christians to Tibetans and terrorising the Uyghurs. Will they follow the suit of the Americans, the Australians and even the Lithuanians and please—I beg of him—give a lead to human rights and make a diplomatic boycott of the winter Olympic games?

**The Prime Minister:** It is clear from what I said earlier on that the Government have no hesitation in raising these issues with China, as I did with President Xi the last time I talked to him. There will be effectively a diplomatic boycott of the winter Olympics in Beijing. No Ministers are expected to attend, and no officials,

but what I can tell the House is that I do not think that sporting boycotts are sensible, and that remains the policy of the Government.

Q13. [904655] **Douglas Chapman** (Dunfermline and West Fife) (SNP): The Prime Minister will be aware of the recent National Audit Office report on bounce back loans and the eye-watering levels of fraud and criminality uncovered. In the interests of the taxpayer, will the Prime Minister initiate a great British bounce back fraud squad to recover this public money and prosecute where appropriate, even if the crime was committed more than a year ago?

**The Prime Minister:** Of course, we will take action against anybody who has defrauded any of the covid loans, bounce back loans or otherwise.

**Mr William Wragg** (Hazel Grove) (Con): There are media reports of a Cabinet meeting and press conference this afternoon to initiate covid winter plan B without reference to this House. Covid passes will not increase uptake of the vaccine but will create a segregated society. Is my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister aware that very few will be convinced by this diversionary tactic?

**The Prime Minister:** No decisions will be taken without consulting the Cabinet.

**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan** (Tooting) (Lab): This country is angry, and understandably so. Last Christmas, while we were in lockdown, millions of people were unable to be with their families; thousands of people waved through their care home windows at the loved ones wishing them a merry Christmas from the side of the road; people died without that last touch from their daughters, their sons, their wives; working in intensive care, I wept behind my mask as three children talking to their dying mother on an iPad begged her to wake up; and countless children are now growing up without parents—while parties were held at No. 10. This is disgraceful. This is an insult to everyone who followed the rules. It is an insult to everyone who was not allowed to say their final goodbye. This happened on the Prime Minister's watch, so my question is very simple: how does the Prime Minister sleep at night?

**The Prime Minister:** I want first of all to repeat what I said earlier on about what happened a year ago, or what may not have happened. I share and understand the hon. Member's grief and her feelings. I thank her for her service in the NHS. I know how much this country has been through and I know how difficult it has been. If you ask me how I sleep at night, the answer is that of course I take full responsibility and personal responsibility for everything that this Government have done, but I must say to you, Mr Speaker, and to the House that the way forward for this country now is to focus on the position we are in and, above all, to get our vaccinations as fast as we possibly can. We are in a much better position this year than we were last year, and that is thanks to the vaccination roll-out. I urge every Member of this House to join that campaign and that great British vaccination effort.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. There are lots of points of order, but I will take the parliamentary leader of the SNP first.

# Points of Order

12.39 pm

**Ian Blackford** (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I have informed the Prime Minister that I would be making a point of order, but I was informed by those on the Government Front Bench that he had to go. My goodness, those of us on the opposite side of the House absolutely agree that he has to go—he has to go as Prime Minister. People throughout these islands have been watching this debate today, and people feel revulsion at the stories that have emerged, in particular the video last night. What is worse is that there are now authoritative reports of not just one, not just two, but three different Downing Street parties during lockdown last Christmas, including one in the Prime Minister's flat. What do we on this side of the House have to do to make sure that the Prime Minister takes responsibility for his breach of trust and the breach of covid regulations and that he does the right thing on behalf of all the people of these islands and resigns, and resigns now?

**Mr Speaker:** Order. *[Interruption.]* I think I make that decision. *[Interruption.]* No, I know you are not, and it is not to me, obviously.

This is a very tense moment for the House and I want to try to calm it down. We cannot continue a debate after it has already gone on, but what I would say is that I am not aware of any media attention and it is not for me to rule on something that happens in Downing Street. I also say to the right hon. Member that he has got his point on the record and we can leave it at that.

**Alberto Costa** (South Leicestershire) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. The Committee on Standards has issued its fourth report of this Session, making a number of proposals and recommendations, some of which are open for consultation. As one of the longer-standing MP members of the Committee, I have been approached by some colleagues in the House, cross party, seeking guidance. It has become apparent to me that many colleagues are unaware of the existing practices and processes of the Committee and the code, let alone understand the proposed changes.

The Committee is keen to ensure full consultation and its Chairman and team are doing a good job in encouraging Members to take part. With that in mind, I have checked "Erskine May", spoken to senior colleagues and asked whether it would be appropriate for me to offer a meeting or meetings so that colleagues across the House could take part in the consultation on the proposed recommendations, with a view to sharing my views, listening to colleagues and strongly encouraging them to participate and express their views. The consultation runs until 20 January. I understand that it is entirely in order and permitted, so can you confirm, Mr Speaker, that you would encourage colleagues across the House to take part in this important consultation process?

**Mr Speaker:** I would encourage all Members to take part in the consultation process that has been launched, but that is certainly not a point of order for me. The hon. Gentleman has made a point of clarification for the House.

**Wes Streeting** (Ilford North) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Have you been notified by the Government of their intention to make a statement today from the Department of Health and Social Care, because if media reports are to be believed there will be a Cabinet meeting this afternoon followed by a Downing Street press conference to announce the introduction of new restrictions? Mr Speaker, you have made it clear in the past that statements should be heard here first. I want to say that, despite what the Prime Minister said at Prime Minister's questions to the Leader of the Opposition, this party and we on the Labour Benches have always put public health before party politics, which is why we have voted with the Government time and again—do not abuse that trust in the way that the public trust has been abused. We will always put public health first, but we expect that announcement to be made here.

**Mr Speaker:** First, I am grateful to the hon. Member for giving me notice of his point of order. I can confirm that I have had no request from the Government to make a statement. Of course, I am open to that, as soon as the Government come forward and say that they wish to make a statement. I say to the Government, as I have repeatedly said—and I will continue to repeat it—that it must be made here so that Back Benchers, whether Government or Opposition, can hear it in this Chamber. This Chamber is where statements are made. Otherwise it goes against the ministerial code. I do not want to fall out with the Prime Minister, but this is not a good way of getting Christmas cards sent between us, because I find it very offensive. There is plenty of time for the Government to come forward and say that they wish to make a statement here. What I do not want is statements to be made outside. I want respect for this House. I expect the Government to make sure that they respect their own Back Benchers, because I do even if he does not. So this is a chance for all to make sure that this House hears it first. I hope that, with my voice, they will be able to hear that in Downing Street, because I will make sure that they do hear it. So please let us not take this House for granted, and I stand firmly behind all Members of this House in saying that it must be heard here first.

**Florence Eshalomi** (Vauxhall) (Lab/Co-op): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. On 3 November, I raised the tragic case of my constituent's mother who sadly died by suicide, and the Prime Minister agreed to meet me. Mr Speaker, how best can I get that meeting? Essentially, the Prime Minister is now refusing to meet me.

**Mr Speaker:** I will write to the Prime Minister to remind him that he promised to have a meeting with you. I will pass on those remarks, and I am sure that those on the Government Front Bench will have heard them. When people make statements that they will meet, they should honour that. All Members of this House count. All Members matter.

**Mr Alistair Carmichael** (Orkney and Shetland) (LD): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. It is further to the point of order raised by the shadow Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, the hon. Member for Ilford North (Wes Streeting). Successive Ministers have promised that vaccine passports will not be introduced without the prior approval of this House, yet it is reported today

that they are going to do exactly that. What can you do, Mr Speaker, to protect the position of this House and to ensure that Ministers keep the promises they have made to it?

**Mr Speaker:** I do not want to continue debate on a point we have already had an answer to. What I would say is that I expect—and I know—that your voice will be heard, and it is certainly on the record.

**Mark Pritchard** (The Wrekin) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I seek clarity on a point of procedure. Earlier, the Leader of the Opposition invoked Her Majesty the Queen in the political exchange, and I thought there was guidance—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. No, I am not even going to enter into that. If you look at yesterday's proceedings, you will find that someone from the other side did the same. It was in passing and not part of the debate.

**Sir Christopher Chope** (Christchurch) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Further to the points made about the need for the Government to come to the House if they have anything to announce today, would you exceptionally permit the use of the urgent question procedure if a statement were not offered, so that we could put down an urgent question this afternoon for answer today?

**Mr Speaker:** I would be very willing to look, if it is at all feasible, to see whether we could use a UQ, if there is a way around the rules, because I would be more than willing to accept one if the Government were not willing to come forward with a statement. I totally agree that a statement would be beneficial. As I say, I am sure Downing Street would not let the Members of this House down.

**Catherine West** (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Your advice has been very valuable today; I wonder whether you could extend it to this. I feel that there were some inconsistencies in the reply to my Question 6 in Prime Minister's questions. Could you please advise me of next steps in managing the matter?

**Mr Speaker:** Unfortunately, I am not responsible for the answers—it is as simple as that—and I certainly do not want to be.

**Angus Brendan MacNeil** (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Following on from that, with reports swirling in the last few minutes or half hour, would you accommodate and encourage a statement from the Prime Minister on just how many parties they have had in Government buildings, and when, during the covid restrictions?

**Mr Speaker:** We are not going to extend the debate, and you have been here long enough to know that I am not going to be tempted by that.

If there are no further points of order, we come to the ten-minute rule Bill.

## Community Wealth Fund

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

12.48 pm

**Paul Howell** (Sedgefield) (Con): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to transfer monies from the Dormant Assets Scheme into a new national endowment called the Community Wealth Fund, to be invested for the purposes of improving the local environments and quality of life of deprived communities, including through building social capital and social infrastructure; and for connected purposes.

As the first Conservative MP for Sedgefield since 1931, I, like so many of my colleagues on the Conservative Benches, was elected with a mandate to level up every community across the UK. In our first two years in office, we have worked tirelessly to level up opportunity. The Prime Minister announced the towns fund; the Chancellor set out a landmark £4 billion levelling-up fund for investment in the infrastructure of everyday life; there is the UK shared prosperity fund, to support communities after Brexit; and now we have a Department focused on delivering our levelling-up mission, so that every community across the country can benefit from the policies of this Government.

Most of the proposals announced so far will help improve economic fortunes across the UK, as we build back better from covid and meet the challenges of net zero. I know how important investment in physical infrastructure is—it can be a significant injection of belief in an area—but as I said earlier this week on Second Reading of the Dormant Assets Bill, levelling up needs to be more than that. It is time to tackle the next frontier of levelling up, and to rebuild the essential social infrastructure that our communities rely on, because both places and people are important. Research and evidence strongly suggest that places need investment in their social fabric as well as in their physical infrastructure. People need support and resources to nurture and develop the type of relationships that underpin the health and wellbeing of our communities and of the country as a whole.

We have seen the benefits of strong social connections over the past year, as local residents stepped up during the pandemic to protect their communities from the virus, forming mutual aid groups to ensure that vulnerable residents were looked after. As we move beyond covid and look to the future and to other challenges, we need to build on that community spirit. The Bill seeks to do just that—to help restore local pride in place, through investment in people, so that they develop the confidence and capacity to build the relationships needed to help them take action in their community.

If our levelling-up ambitions are to reach every part of the country, there must be levelling up in those places where the social fabric is most frayed. We need a "least first" approach to levelling up, with investment targeted first at those areas that have the least. It is for that reason that I am bringing forward this Bill in my role as co-chair of the all-party parliamentary group for "left behind" neighbourhoods, which is supported by 76 Members from across both Houses.

The 225 left-behind neighbourhoods that we represent and advocate for face severe economic deprivation and are significantly lacking in the social infrastructure that is so important to our way of life, but which many of us

*[Paul Howell]*

sometimes take for granted. That infrastructure includes: essential community places and local spaces where people can meet; the local activity and engagement with civic life that supports a sense of local ownership, and fosters belonging and civic pride; and physical and digital connectivity, which is vital in connecting residents to amenities, services and opportunities. These neighbourhoods are spread across the UK, and include Trimdon, Thornley and Ferryhill in my constituency. As research done for the APPG has found, such neighbourhoods face significantly worse outcomes than all other areas, including those that are equally economically deprived but that at least benefit from a foundation of social infrastructure.

The work of our APPG over the past 18 months has made it clear that these neighbourhoods require investment in the politics of belonging. We need to make these neighbourhoods better places in which to live and grow up; to invest in local talent and opportunities; and to provide these neighbourhoods with the support and resources that they need to flourish. Communities thrive when they enjoy a vibrant local civic life, whether it is built around a shared local history, heritage and experiences, or important local assets and institutions, such as a pub, library, football club or community centre.

These cultural and heritage assets help to create bonds of trust, and to cement the relationships and strengthen the ties that bind us to each other and to the place we call home. They underpin our unwritten social covenant and generate trust between people in the places where they live —a trust that can be relied on in times of difficulty. These are things that local residents understand. Recent polling from Survation found that two thirds of residents in left-behind neighbourhoods felt that their neighbourhood was missing out on community facilities; over half said that their area had fewer resources, such as parks, leisure and sports facilities, and places to meet. As importantly, almost 60% of residents said that they wanted more of a say in how future funding in their area was spent.

When it comes to levelling up an area, the community is best placed to know what needs to be done. We should not only listen to local people, but trust them to take the lead. We need to level up by devolving down, and give communities the confidence and capacity to take action on the issues that matter most to them, as well as the support and access to the resources that they need to improve local outcomes. That is the purpose of the community wealth fund that I propose in the Bill. As we heard in the Chamber on Monday, the expanded dormant assets scheme provides almost £900 million, which could initially be used for this fund, so there would be no drain on the public purse.

I welcome the aim of the Government's Dormant Assets Bill, which is to broaden the scope of dormant assets. The money will be committed to good causes. My Bill will ensure that that is a reality; it will set up an endowment that supports those places that are most left behind in designing their own future, achieving greater control over their destiny, and building long-term prosperity.

If the community wealth fund is to transform left-behind neighbourhoods in a way that previous schemes have not, the money must be invested in such a way as to build the social capital of residents while delivering visible and tangible benefits to their neighbourhoods. Research by the University of Cambridge looking at the past 40 years of place-based regeneration schemes found that the key determinants for driving lasting change included local decision making, targeting funding at the neighbourhood level, and ensuring long-term funding. Recent research for Onward reflects those findings; it found that while the involvement of communities is essential, many communities require up-front investment in order to participate fully.

The community wealth fund would build on the learning from previous regeneration programmes and support residents in taking the lead on making decisions about how its money is spent in order to achieve lasting change. That would turbo-charge community confidence and capacity, increase the stock of local social capital, and boost civic pride and local quality of life. Over the long term, we expect this investment to pay dividends by increasing residents' ability to develop longer-term strategies for delivering change and tapping into the opportunities on offer across their wider region.

The decision on how and where to commit funds must be driven by the significance of the local social impact, and not some arbitrary calculation of the financial return on investment. We must try to reinforce this opportunity by making the approach as relational and human as possible, and remove whatever bureaucracy we can. I welcome the fact that the Government confirmed on Second Reading that they are not opposed to considering a community wealth fund, and that the idea is actively being considered in the levelling-up White Paper discussions. I also welcome the warm words of my noble Friend Lord Parkinson, who acknowledged that the core features of a community wealth fund—community decision making at a hyper-local level and investment in social infrastructure—have an important role to play in improving access to opportunities for everyone, particularly those in more deprived communities.

I fully support the objectives of the proposed consultation, and indeed hope that the result will be a community wealth fund, but I urge the Government to listen to the many organisations that have backed the call for a community wealth fund, and to colleagues from across the political parties. At the very least, I hope that the Government will ensure that the proposal for a community wealth fund is included in the consultation. I sound a note of caution: we need to initiate investment in social capital as soon as possible. For much of what we will consult on, we already know what we will find, so I encourage only minimal consultation, to allow for action as early as possible.

A community wealth fund would make a significant contribution to delivering the Government's levelling-up objectives in many of our most left-behind communities. It is what is needed if we are to realise our ambitions of a new social covenant: a national endowment vesting greater control directly in the hands of local communities. My Bill, supported by my APPG, will set in motion the mechanisms by which we can build trust and achieve genuine and transformational change in left-behind neighbourhoods. It will do this by giving communities the opportunity to take the steps and identify the measures that they need to thrive. I would of course welcome the opportunity to talk to Ministers, together with members of the APPG, about the design and implementation of a community wealth fund. I commend this Bill to the House.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Ordered,*

That Paul Howell, Jo Gideon, Jim Shannon, Dr Kieran Mullan, Dame Diana Johnson, Alexander Stafford, Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck and Rosie Cooper present the Bill.

Paul Howell accordingly presented the Bill.

*Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 18 March 2022, and to be printed (Bill 215).*

# Nationality and Borders Bill

[2ND ALLOCATED DAY]

*[Relevant documents: Oral evidence taken before the Home Affairs Committee on 17 November 2021, on Channel crossings, migration and asylum-seeking routes through the EU, HC 194; Seventh Report of the Joint Committee on Human Rights, Legislative Scrutiny: Nationality and Borders Bill (Part 1) – Nationality, HC 764 / HL 90; Ninth Report of the Joint Committee on Human Rights, Legislative Scrutiny: Nationality and Borders Bill (Part 3) – Immigration offences and enforcement, HC 885 / HL 112; Letter from the Chair of the Joint Committee on Human Rights to Tom Pursglove MP relating to Part 2 (Asylum) and Part 5 (Modern Slavery) of the Nationality and Borders Bill, HC 588, dated 17 November; Letter from Tom Pursglove MP to the Chair of the Joint Committee on Human Rights relating to Part 2 (Asylum) and Part 5 (Modern Slavery) of the Nationality and Borders Bill, HC 588, dated 25 November.]*

*Further consideration of Bill, as amended in the Public Bill Committee*

## New Clause 3

OFFENCE OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

'(1) A person commits an offence if the person arranges or facilitates the travel of another person ("V") to the United Kingdom with a view to V being sexually exploited in the United Kingdom.

(2) It is irrelevant whether V consents to the travel (whether V is an adult or a child).

(3) A person may in particular arrange or facilitate V's travel to the United Kingdom by recruiting V, transporting or transferring V, harbouring or receiving V, or transferring or exchanging control over V.

(4) A person arranges or facilitates V's travel to the United Kingdom with a view to V being sexually exploited in the United Kingdom only if—

(a) the person intends to sexually exploit V in the United Kingdom during or after the travel, or

(b) the person knows or ought to know that another person is likely to sexually exploit V in the United Kingdom during or after the travel.

(5) "Travel" means—

(a) arriving in, or entering, the United Kingdom,

(b) departing from any country outside the United Kingdom in circumstances where the person arranging or facilitating V's travel intends that the destination will be the United Kingdom.

(6) A person who is a UK national commits an offence under this section regardless of—

(a) where the arranging or facilitating takes place, or

(b) where the travel takes place.

(7) A person who is not a UK national commits an offence under this section if—

(a) any part of the arranging or facilitating takes place in the United Kingdom, or

(b) the travel consists of arrival in or entry into, departure from, or travel within, the United Kingdom.

(8) A person who commits an offence under this section is liable—

(a) on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for life;

(b) on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or a fine or both.'—*(Dame Diana Johnson.)*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

1 pm

**Dame Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

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

New clause 6—*Exemption for child victims of modern slavery, exploitation or trafficking—*

'(1) The Secretary of State may not serve a slavery or trafficking information notice on a person in respect of an incident or incidents which occurred when the person was aged under 18 years.

(2) Section 61 of this Act does not apply in cases where either of the positive reasonable grounds decisions related to an incident or incidents which occurred when the person was aged under 18 years.

(3) Section 62 of this Act does not apply in cases where the positive reasonable grounds decision related to an incident or incidents which occurred when the person was aged under 18 years.

(4) Sections 64(3) and 64(6) of this Act do not apply in cases where the positive conclusive grounds decision related to an incident or incidents which occurred when the person was aged under 18 years.'

*This new clause would exempt victims of modern slavery, exploitation or trafficking from many of the provisions in Part 5 of the Bill if they were under 18 when they became a victim.*

New clause 30—*Victim Navigators—*

'(1) The Secretary of State must, within six months of the date of Royal Assent to this Act, make provisions for each police force in England and Wales to have one or more Independent Victim Navigators to liaise between the relevant police force and potential victims of slavery or human trafficking and to assist in the procurement of specialist advice for both the police force and the potential victim.

(2) Regulations under this section—

(a) shall be made by statutory instrument, and

(b) may not be made unless a draft has been laid before and approved by resolution of each House of Parliament.'

*This new clause seeks to introduce provisions for Independent Victim Navigators to be in operation on a national level, acting as a liaison between the police and potential victim of slavery or human trafficking in accessing the appropriate support.*

New clause 39—*Identified potential victims etc: disqualification from protection—*

'(1) This section applies to the construction and application of Article 13 of the Trafficking Convention.

(2) The competent authority may determine that it is not bound to observe the minimum recovery period under section 60(2) of this Act in respect of a person in relation to whom a positive reasonable grounds decision has been made, if the authority is satisfied that it is prevented from doing so—

(a) as a result of an immediate, genuine, present and serious threat to public order; or

(b) the person is claiming to be a victim of modern slavery improperly.

(3) Any determination made under subsection (2) must only be made—

(a) in exceptional circumstances;

(b) where necessary and proportionate to the threat posed; and

(c) following an assessment of all the circumstances of the case.

(4) A determination made under subsection (2) must not be made where it would breach—

(a) a person's Human Rights Convention rights;

(b) the United Kingdom's obligations under the Trafficking Convention; or

(c) the United Kingdom's obligations under the Refugee Convention.

(5) For the purposes of a determination under subsection 2(b), victim status is being claimed improperly if the person knowingly and dishonestly makes a false statement without good reason, and intends by making the false statement to make a gain for themselves.

(6) A good reason for making a false statement includes, but is not limited to, circumstances where—

(a) the false statement is attributable to the person being or having been a victim of modern slavery; or

(b) where any means of trafficking were used to compel the person into making a false statement.

(7) This section does not apply where the person is under 18.

(8) Nothing in this section shall affect the application of section 60(3) of this Act.'

*This new clause is an alternative to clause 62. It ensures that the power currently provided for in clause 62 is exercised in line with the UK's obligations under Article 13 of the Trafficking Convention. This amendment also protects child victims of modern slavery from disqualification from protection.*

New clause 43—*Civil legal aid under section 9 of LASPO: add-on services in relation to the national referral mechanism—*

'(1) Part 1 of Schedule 1 to the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (civil legal services qualifying for legal aid) is amended as follows.

(2) After paragraph 32A (Victims of slavery, servitude or forced or compulsory labour) insert—

"Pre-National Referral Mechanism advice

32B (1) Civil legal services provided to an individual in relation to referral into the national referral mechanism and connected immigration advice.

General exclusions

(3) Sub-paragraph (1) is subject to the exclusions in Part 2 of this Schedule.

Specific exclusions

(4) The civil legal services described in sub-paragraph (1) do not include—

(a) advocacy, or

(b) attendance at an interview conducted by the competent authority under the national referral mechanism for the purposes of a reasonable grounds decision or a conclusive grounds decision.

(5) In regulation 5(1) of the Civil Legal Aid (Financial Resources and Payment for Services) Regulations 2013 (S.I. 2013/480) (exceptions from requirement to make a determination in respect of an individual's financial resources), after paragraph (l), insert—

"(m) civil legal services described in paragraph 32B of Part 1 of Schedule 1 to the Act (Civil legal services provided to an individual in relation to referral into the national referral mechanism)."'

New clause 47—*Support and leave to remain for confirmed victims of slavery or human trafficking—*

'This section applies if a positive conclusive grounds decision is made in respect of a person.

(1) This subsection applies if the person has received support under section 50A of the Modern Slavery Act 2015—

(a) assistance and support must be provided for at least 12 months beginning on the day on which support provided under section 50A ends,

(b) where assistance and support is provided to a person under this subsection the Secretary of State must consider whether it is necessary for the victim's physical, psychological and social recovery or to prevent

re-trafficking to provide assistance and support after the end of the period in subsection (2)(a) for as long as they think appropriate,

(c) a decision whether to provide assistance and support in accordance with subsection (2)(b) must be made at least four weeks before the end of the assistance and support provided under subsection (2)(a),

(d) a reference in this subsection to assistance and support has the same meaning as in section 50A(7) of the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

(2) This subsection applies if the person is not a British citizen—

(a) the Secretary of State must give the person leave to remain in the United Kingdom if subsection (2) or (4) or (5) applies,

(b) leave to remain provided under this subsection shall be provided from the day on which the positive conclusive grounds decision is communicated to a person for either—

(i) the amount of time support and assistance will be provided under either subsection (2) or one of the measures listed in subsection (4), or

(ii) at least 12 months if the person meets one or more of the criteria in subsection (5).

(3) This subsection applies if the person receives support and assistance under one of the following—

(a) section 18(9) of the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Criminal Justice and Support for Victims) Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 (c. 2 (N.I.)),

(b) section 9(3)(c) of the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Act 2015 (asp 12), or

(c) regulation 3(4)(c) of the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Act 2015 (Support for Victims) Regulations 2018 (S.S.I 2018/90).

(4) This subsection applies if the person meets one or more of the following criteria—

(a) leave is necessary due to the person's circumstances, including but not restricted to—

(i) the needs of that person for safety and protection from harm including protection from re-trafficking,

(ii) the needs of that person for medical and psychological treatment,

(b) the person is participating as a witness in criminal proceedings,

(c) the person is bringing any civil proceedings including pursuing compensation.

(5) Where the person is receiving assistance from a support worker the recommendations of the support worker must be considered in assessing that person's circumstances under subsection (5)(a).

(6) The Secretary of State must provide for persons granted leave to remain in accordance with this section to have recourse to public funds for the duration of the period of leave.

(7) The Secretary of State must allow a grant of leave to remain under subsection (3) to be extended subject to the requirements of subsection (9).

(8) In determining whether to extend a grant of leave to remain under subsection (8), and the period of time for which such extended leave should be provided, the person's individual circumstances must be considered, and whether that person—

(a) is receiving on-going support and assistance under the measures set out in either subsection (2) or subsection (4), or

(b) meets one or more of the criteria in subsection (5).

(9) If the Secretary of State is satisfied that the person is a threat to public order—

(a) the Secretary of State is not required to give the person leave under this section, and

(b) if such leave has already been given to the person, it may be revoked.

(10) In this section, if the person is aged below 18 years of age, the best interests of the child must be taken into consideration in accordance with section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009.

(11) In this section—

"positive conclusive grounds decision" means a decision made by a competent authority that a person is a victim of slavery or human trafficking;

"threat to public order" has the same meaning as subsections (3) to (7) of section 62.

(12) This section is to be treated for the purposes of section 3 of the Immigration Act 1971 as if it were provision made by that Act.'

*This new clause would provide new statutory support for victims in England and Wales after a conclusive grounds decisions. It would provide leave to remain for all victims with a positive conclusive grounds decision for at least 12 months to receive support, assist police with their enquiries or seek compensation.*

Amendment 127, page 57, line 3 leave out clause 57.

Amendment 128, page 57, line 25 leave out clause 58.

Amendment 5, in clause 58, page 57, line 41, at end insert—

'(5) The provision of relevant status information identifying a person as a likely victim of human trafficking for sexual services shall constitute a "good reason" for the purposes of this section.'

*This amendment would mean that the credibility of victims of human trafficking for sexual services would not be called into question by reason of the late provision of information relating to that fact.*

Amendment 6, in clause 58, page 57, line 41, at end insert—

'(5) Subsection (2) does not apply where the person is a victim of trafficking for the purposes of forced prostitution.

(6) For the purposes of subsection (5) the person may be considered a victim of trafficking for the purposes of forced prostitution if there is evidence that the person—

(a) has been transported from one location to another on a daily basis;

(b) bears signs of physical abuse including but not limited to—

(i) branding;

(ii) bruising;

(iii) scarring;

(iv) burns; or

(v) tattoos indicating gang membership;

(c) lacks access to their own earnings, such as by having no bank account in their own name;

(d) has limited to no English language skills, or only such language skills as pertain to sexualised acts;

(e) lives or stays at the same address as person(s) meeting the criteria in paragraphs (a) to (d);

(f) sleeps in the premises in which they work.'

*Under this amendment, late provision of relevant status information would not be taken as damaging the credibility of the person providing the information if that person were a victim of trafficking for the purposes of forced prostitution.*

Amendment 7, in clause 59, page 58, line 5, at end insert—

'(za) at the end of paragraph (a) insert—

"(aa) the sorts of things which indicate that a person may be a victim of human trafficking for sexual services;".'

*This amendment would require the Secretary of State to issue specific guidance on the sorts of things which indicate that a person may be a victim of human trafficking for sexual services.*

Government amendments 64 to 69.

Amendment 3, page 59, line 39, leave out clause 62.

*This amendment would remove clause 62, which excludes potential modern slavery victims from protection in certain circumstances.*

Government amendments 70 to 75.

Amendment 149, page 62, line 18, leave out clause 64.

*This amendment is consequential on NC47.*

Government amendments 78, 76, 77 and 79 to 83.

Amendment 130, page 63, line 26, leave out clause 65.

*This amendment is consequential on NC43.*

Amendment 131, page 66, line 1, leave out clause 66.

*This amendment is contingent on NC43, Clause 66 would no longer be required if NC43 is agreed to.*

Amendment 148, page 66, line 33, leave out clause 67.

Government amendment 84.

Amendment 129, in clause 81, page 79, line 15, at end insert—

'(6) Part 4 (age assessments) and part 5 (modern slavery) only extend to Scotland to the extent that a motion has been approved by the Scottish Parliament, bringing them into force in Scotland.'

*Under this amendment, Parts 4 and 5 of the Bill would not enter into force in Scotland until the Scottish Parliament had given its consent.*

Government amendments 85 to 90.

Amendment 16, in clause 82, page 80, line 3, at end insert—

'(5) Sections [Time limit on immigration detention], [Initial detention: criteria and duration] and [Bail hearings] come into force six months after the day on which this Act is passed.'

*This amendment would bring NC15-NC17 into force six months after the day on which the Bill is passed.*

**Dame Diana Johnson:** I rise to speak to new clause 3, which would put into law a specific offence for trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation. We know that serious organised crime networks are deeply involved in this trade in human misery. I thank Kat Banyard at UK Feminista and Tom Farr at CEASE—the Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation—UK, who have helped to draft new clause 3, and the Humber Modern Slavery Partnership at the Wilberforce Institute in Hull for all its help.

Although the Modern Slavery Act 2015 covers exploitation broadly, the catastrophically high number of women and girls trafficked into the UK for the sex industry means that it merits a specific offence. The latest figures from the national referral mechanism show that 60% of women and girls who were identified as potential victims in the past year were trafficked for purposes including sexual exploitation. In 2020, 94 women and 624 girls were trafficked and sexually exploited. These women need specific and targeted protection.

New clause 3 would ensure that the link between human trafficking and sexual exploitation is acknowledged. It would aid efforts to combat the scourge of human trafficking and broader violence against women and girls by providing a framework that would ensure that the authorities respond to individuals who may have been previously viewed as criminals as though they are, in fact, victims of sexual exploitation.

I also want to speak to amendments 5 to 7, which focus on stopping late disclosure affecting credibility and providing guidance to help the relevant authorities to identify victims. Andrew Smith of the Humber Modern Slavery Partnership, an experienced practitioner, told me:

"We know there are various reasons why we might see late disclosure by victims of sexual exploitation and trafficking. Victims may not identify as victims first and foremost, it can be only when a person is removed from the exploitative environment that they understand they were in fact being abused and exploited."

And yet, the Bill proposes a time limit on disclosure.

The Modern Slavery Policy Unit, co-led by Justice and Care UK and the Centre for Social Justice, stated:

"Presuming late disclosure of modern slavery damages credibility will create barriers to effective identification and engagement with victims."

The Bill, as it stands, will make identifying and assisting victims of human trafficking more difficult.

Amendment 5 would stop late disclosure affecting the credibility of a claim of being trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The Home Office's modern slavery statutory guidance states:

"Victims' early accounts may be affected by the impact of trauma. This can result in delayed disclosure, difficulty recalling facts, or symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. Victims may also be reluctant to self-identify for a number of other reasons that can make understanding their experiences challenging."

This amendment acknowledges Home Office guidance by ensuring that late disclosure does not damage credibility.

Amendment 6 sets out how a person who makes a late disclosure might be better identified by any relevant authority.

**Mrs Theresa May** (Maidenhead) (Con): I am very interested in what the right hon. Lady is saying. If we are to stop modern slavery, we must ensure that we catch the perpetrators, which requires victims to be able to come forward with evidence. She is outlining certain elements of the Bill that she fears will restrict victims' ability to come forward, and I am concerned that the public order disqualification threshold and the time period on slavery and trafficking information notices will also have that effect. Does she share my concerns about those aspects and hope that the Minister will address them specifically today?

**Dame Diana Johnson:** I thank the right hon. Lady for that intervention and pay tribute to her for, as Home Secretary, bringing in the Modern Slavery Act. I sat on the Bill Committee for that Act and I remember well the debates that we had. She should be very proud of her work on this issue, and I absolutely agree with her comments on what the Bill will lead to.

To return to amendment 6, I want to make it clear that putting these guiding factors in the Bill would provide a deeper understanding for the authorities of what they should be aware of and how to identify victims.

Amendment 7 would require the Secretary of State to issue guidance on the specific factors that may indicate that somebody is a victim of human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation. That would provide a framework for the relevant authorities to refer to when trying to discern the type of exploitation that has taken place.

The Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, the hon. Member for Corby (Tom Pursglove), argued against these amendments in the Bill Committee, stating that the Government did not want to create a "two-tiered system" based on the exploitation that a victim had

faced. I think that is simply wrong. Acknowledging the distinct features of trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation, as opposed to, for example, forced labour, would improve the authorities' response and the ability to prosecute and find the perpetrators. Recognising and identifying difference would not create a hierarchy; rather, it would make the system more effective and accurate. The Minister also stated that delineating between trafficking for sexual exploitation and trafficking for other purposes would motivate individuals to put forward falsified referrals. However, all the evidence shows that victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation need more encouragement to come forward, not less.

Finally, I want to speak in support of new clause 47 and the supporting amendment 149, which was tabled by the right hon. Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Sir Iain Duncan Smith). He has worked assiduously on protections for victims of human trafficking and modern slavery for many years. The new clause would provide all victims who receive a conclusive grounds decision with 12 months' leave to remain to either recover, claim compensation or assist the police. The Government need to do more to protect people who have suffered from these horrendous crimes.

**Sir Iain Duncan Smith** (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con): I am grateful to be called so early in the debate. Mr Speaker. I will speak to my new clause 47, which has been signed by Members on both sides of the House. The aims of the new clause, which the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Dame Diana Johnson) kindly referred to, are very simple. It is not a soft option, but a decent and reasonable one that does two things.

First, it deals with the issue of giving people who have gone through the national referral mechanism, who are therefore rightly in the system, longer to be able to settle and to be properly helped and supported. That is a humanitarian position, having already decided that such people have suffered as a result of modern-day slavery. That was the purpose of the Modern Slavery Act, which was brought in by my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May), and this proposal will make that even better as we go forward and learn from it.

The second aspect is very important. The police keep telling us that, if they had more time to help those people to give testimony, we would get many more prosecutions and we would, ironically, shut down more of the ghastly criminal channels that are bringing these people in. This is about being strong in both prosecution and humanitarian terms, and that is the purpose of the new clause. I remind everybody that when the Centre for Social Justice wrote the first big paper about modern-day slavery, my right hon. Friend—we were both in Government at the time—was moved and decent enough to be able to push this point in government and put the legislation through, which meant that we were the first country in the world to acknowledge modern-day slavery and legislate for it. We should be proud of that. It is one of those things on which the British Parliament historically will be spotted for having led the way worldwide. Other Parliaments have followed suit—not all of them, but many have—with their own versions of that legislation.

We should be proud that a Parliament can work to do right by people who have too often been abused. I also remind those here today, and others who may or may not be watching, that the National Crime Agency figures now show that between 6,000 and 8,000 modern slavery offenders are in the UK, but there were just 331 prosecutions in 2020 under the Modern Slavery Act and only 49 convictions. Does that not tell us a story? It tells us that, good as we think we are, we are not winning this battle, and the police know it.

**Tahir Ali** (Birmingham, Hall Green) (Lab): On that point about convictions and the police, does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the police need more resources to tackle and eradicate modern slavery?

**Sir Iain Duncan Smith:** I agree, in principle, that if we are to get more prosecutions it is vital that those who are pursuing these characters should be well-funded. Although that is not part of this particular new clause, it is certainly within the wider scope of the Bill.

**Jeremy Corbyn** (Islington North) (Ind): The right hon. Gentleman is making a very strong point. Is it not one of the problems that victims of any kind of slavery are inevitably isolated, frightened and often unable even to leave the property, factory or home where they are working? They do not necessarily know where to go and, if the local police are not attuned to the problem, they get no help there. They are then completely stuck and in a very dangerous and vulnerable situation. Is there not an issue of both police training and convincing local authorities and all other public services that they have to be attuned to the desperation these people face, rather than the danger of prosecution for what could be—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. All I can say is that I have the greatest respect for the right hon. Gentleman, and if he wants to speak I have plenty of room on the list. Save your speech to read shortly, if you want to.

**Sir Iain Duncan Smith:** I am grateful to you for clarifying, Mr Speaker.

I will just say to the right hon. Gentleman that of course he is right, and it is important for us to understand that this is an issue not of asylum or migration but decency. He will know—even if he does not, I am going to say it to the House—that a significant chunk of those who are now part of the modern-day slavery ghastliness emanate from the UK. It is important that local authorities and others understand that they are looking not just for people who are trafficked in, but for those being trafficked within the UK. That is an important point. I agree with him, and the point of today's debate is to try to raise that issue.

**Mr Peter Bone** (Wellingborough) (Con): The right hon. Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn) makes a pertinent point, but is not Justice and Care—and its navigators who help victims of trafficking with the criminal justice system—one of the success stories? We get more prosecutions because of that charity and the work it does.

**Sir Iain Duncan Smith:** I thank my hon. Friend for signing the new clause, and he is absolutely right. Justice and Care has done a phenomenal amount of work; I am enormously grateful for its guidance and we have worked together on this matter. He is quite right to congratulate the organisation; without it, I suspect this would have been very difficult.

*[Sir Iain Duncan Smith]*

Let me bring in two examples that illustrate the problem. First, a Home Office local authority pilot found that all 62 adult survivors receiving support through the project in 2018-19 supported a criminal investigation, which makes my point that, with the right support, people do the right thing. They lose their fear, they understand that they are protected and they will give evidence. Secondly, Justice and Care found that 89% of victims supported by victim navigator support workers chose subsequently to engage with the police.

I say to my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench that it is important that we understand and separate this question out from all the other arguments that go on about migration and asylum. This is ultimately about helping ourselves and helping the victims. The two go together, and that is the important issue.

It is also worth reminding ourselves of the cost of modern slavery right now, without the resolution that we require and that this new clause would bring. The Home Office estimates the cost at £328,000 per modern slavery victim—a total of £32 billion using 2020 estimates of 100,000 victims from the Centre for Social Justice. I will just repeat that figure: £32 billion is the overall cost. That does not include court, prison and probation costs, or the costs of failed or aborted prosecutions due to insufficient evidence. So the case becomes stronger and stronger that this Bill offers the opportunity to do the right thing here.

1.15 pm

Some objections have been raised by my friends on the Government Bench. They have talked about foreign criminals making fraudulent claims to avoid immigration removal. I want to deal with that issue here. I am clear that in this clause we want help and support, but we also want a minimum of 12 months leave to remain after victims clear the NRM. That is vital.

There are issues. People say, "Oh, hang on, that's a pull factor." They say that more people will immediately claim "on the steps of the aircraft"—I think that is the phrase used—that they are modern slavery victims and therefore they will get into the system. No, is the answer. No one will claim that because they have heard that they will get more than six months if they get through and they might get 12 months.

People might claim, if they are not modern slavery victims, to get into the process at the gateway of the NRM. If we think there is a pull factor, that if anywhere is where it would be. Giving people who are through the NRM longer is a genuinely decent thing to do and a powerful thing to do in prosecutions. If there is a problem and the Government perceive there to be a problem, I suggest with all humility that they need to look at the gateway, which is the NRM, not at what we do to the people who have got through.

Sure, if every now and then somebody who is completely messing around with the system gets through—no system is perfect—the Government can reserve the right to deal with them separately; but please, please let us understand that we should not be in the business of cracking down on those we believe have got through justifiably. We should be in the business of supporting and helping them for their own sake, with the by-product that they will help us in due course to crack down on those gangs. I would have thought that must be a priority for any Government. The new clause allows victims to be excluded if they pose a threat to public order, and it has no significant impact, I believe, on immigration levels.

The problem right now is that clause 64 as it stands is too narrow; it is narrower even than the existing policy, which is a problem. I think the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North also raised that point. Linking leave to remain to needs arising from exploitation leaves victims unsure whether they will qualify. That is a major problem for them and will leave them even less likely to co-operate in due course.

It is almost impossible to separate needs that arise directly from exploitation from those arising from pre-existing vulnerabilities. It is really difficult—all the evidence makes that very clear. The criteria do not consider the risk of re-exploitation, another important point. What is the fear someone has if they have been exploited and they go into the system? It is that they will be out and they will be back into the hands of the very same people—only now those people will believe they were ready to give evidence against them, so the exploitation will be even worse.

On leave conditional on engagement with the police, there would be a problem if the Government were to say, "No, no, we can in guidance make it clear that they could have 12 months, or even more, if they were co-operating with the police." I will just say that if I were a human rights lawyer, I would bring a judicial review against the Government every single day on that one. That is now coercion. They are saying, "You might have rights and we might want to help you, but, first of all, where's the money? Let's see what you're doing before we act decently and give you anything."

I simply say to my colleagues on the Front Bench that that would be a wrong move. If they start down that road, they will end up in court on almost every single case, justifying whether they gave someone three months, 12 months or 14 months. It will end up in court. As all Members will know, including my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead, the last thing Governments want is to do is give themselves an opportunity to be in court under a judicial review. I see my right hon. Friend smiling at that one. Anyone who has served as Home Secretary will know that every day you come into the office someone tells you how many times you are about to be "JRd". So being decent and straight and doing what we have asked in new clause 47 will help the Government as well, because they will not have to end up spending vast sums on defending—sometimes—the indefensible in the courts.

**Mr Alistair Carmichael** (Orkney and Shetland) (LD): The right hon. Gentleman is making a very good point, which illustrates the importance of the availability of judicial review. Looking towards what might be coming down the line in this regard, should I make an assumption about having his support on that occasion?

**Sir Iain Duncan Smith:** You would call me out straightaway, Mr Speaker, if I went so far as to enter into another debate. Tempting though the offer is from my right hon. Friend—I call him that because of the time we spent in government together, and because we agree on so many issues—he will, I am sure, forgive me if I say that I am not yet aware of any Bill that is due to come before us. I will leave it there.

The Government have recognised victims' need for stability and consistency in the support that they receive. That is a good move, and I thank them for it. I welcome the intention to provide a guaranteed 12-month minimum period of tailored support for all confirmed victims; that is particularly important. I ask the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, my hon. Friend the Member for Redditch (Rachel Maclean), to bear in mind, when she rises to sum up the debate, that—as I have already said to you, Mr Speaker—I intend to press the new clause to a Division unless the Government make it clear that they have listened very carefully to this and other debates on the subject. The minimum guarantee will serve as a major stabiliser. If the Government are prepared to accept that, and perhaps table an amendment in another place, I shall be prepared to wait and see what happens.

I also welcome the Government's commitment to considering how best to support victims through the criminal justice process. They need to be serious about that, and I hope to hear a clear statement that modification and improvement are required. There remain concerns about the current restriction of support to

"needs arising from exploitation criteria",

and the Government will need to deal with that as well.

Let me end by saying that we must separate the concept of modern day slavery from the rows about asylum seeking. Many people come over here with good cause; I personally do not blame those who are fleeing for economic reasons when things are desperate. I accept that we must have rules and restrictions, but I ask the Government to consider those who have been trafficked, those who are being persecuted, and those who are being used for the purpose of sexual or any other exploitation.

When I was at the Department for Work and Pensions, we knew that gangs were getting women in particular over here, giving in their names to claim benefit, and then pushing them into brothels and other places. That is what we want to stop. We want to stamp out the exploitation of women, and men, against their will, both at home and as a result of their being trafficked into the UK. If the Minister can give me, and the House, an assurance that she gets this, and that the Government—my Government—are prepared to make the 12 months a de minimis and to look carefully at how the support can be given and how people can be protected through this process after they go through the NRM, I may feel inclined not to press the new clause.

**Mr Speaker:** I call the shadow Minister, Holly Lynch.

**Holly Lynch** (Halifax) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Speaker.

It is a genuine pleasure to follow the powerful contribution from the right hon. Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Sir Iain Duncan Smith). I will come to the merits of his new clause, but let me start by congratulating my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Dame Diana Johnson) not just on the new clause and amendments that she has tabled, but on receiving her damehood at Windsor Castle yesterday. There could be no more fitting tribute in recognition of her services to politics and her community, and I was delighted to see her collect that recognition yesterday.

We have grave concerns about part 5 of the Bill, which would introduce detrimental changes in modern slavery provisions and the national referral mechanism. New clause 3, tabled by my right hon. Friend, has our backing for all the reasons that she outlined. I would struggle to find a more heinous crime than moving another human being across borders, or across the country, in order to force them to have sex and for their abuser to make a profit. Given the utterly depressing rises in this type of criminality and exploitation, my right hon. Friend will have our full support if she is minded to press the new clause to a vote.

Provisions in part 5 will make it harder to identify, safeguard and support victims of modern slavery in securing prosecutions against their abusers. Our new clause 6 will ensure that no child victim of trafficking or modern slavery is denied protection because of those provisions. The new clause follows the many battles that we had in Committee in calling on the Government to hear the pleas of organisations such as The Children's Society and Every Child Protected Against Trafficking, and those of the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, Dame Sara Thornton, and to recognise the vulnerability of child victims of trafficking and modern slavery, something that they have failed to do throughout the Bill's passage so far.

The Government have sought to suggest that a fear of the national referral mechanism being abused warrants the introduction of barriers to accessing it. I remind them that the Home Office's own statistics show that, of the 10,613 potential victims of modern slavery referred to the NRM last year, 47% were children. There was a 10% increase in the number of child referrals last year, and the single biggest type of exploitation was criminal exploitation. The Home Office's own publication states:

"For those exploited as children, an increase in the identification of 'county lines' cases has partially driven the rise in the number of cases categorised within the 'criminal exploitation' category, with 40% of all child referrals for criminal exploitation being flagged as county lines."

It is clear that children who are the victims of vicious county lines gangs will be among those most detrimentally affected by these changes. Just this week, we heard that the Government were getting tough on county lines gangs, but if they pass these proposals today unamended, child victims trapped by those gangs will be met with unnecessary barriers to both freedom and justice.

**Mr Bone:** The hon. Lady is talking about an exceptionally important issue, the trafficking of children. While we in this country probably lead the world in looking after adult victims, we fail our child victims. Do the hon. Lady and her party support a revision of that situation, so we can protect children in the same way that we protect adults?

**Holly Lynch:** As the Minister will recall, we pushed for that time and again in Committee. The Bill makes no distinction between adults and children who are victims of trafficking and slavery. That failure to recognise the age-related vulnerability of a child constitutes a glaring omission, and I welcome the hon. Gentleman's support for seeing what else we can do to press the issue during the Bill's subsequent stages.

If the Government require any further persuading, the legislation in its current form contravenes their own existing statutory guidance, which states:

*[Holly Lynch]*

> "Whatever form it takes, modern slavery and child trafficking is child abuse and relevant child protection procedures must be followed if modern slavery or trafficking is suspected."

The changes introduced in the Bill mean that a child can only access protection from abuse if they disclose details of their trauma, against a Home Office-mandated timeline, or else have their credibility as a victim discredited, and can only access NRM support if they are not deemed to be a threat to public order as outlined in clause 62. The Government's own guidance rightly says that a child who has been trafficked must be protected—no ifs, no buts, which means no clause 57, no clause 58 and no clause 62. I urge the Government to rethink all the modern slavery provisions, but as a minimum, in order merely to deliver on their own commitment to the general public this week, to adopt our new clause to prevent changes that would leave children more vulnerable to criminals and traffickers.

I want to make clear our support for independent victim navigators, who have already been mentioned by other Members. New clause 30 seeks to build upon the successful pilot programme launched by Justice and Care in 2018, which has now been extended, with eight victim navigators currently in post in five different police forces. I recently had the opportunity to visit the modern slavery team at West Yorkshire police with Justice and Care to gain a better understanding of the incredibly impressive work undertaken by those navigators in providing vital support to victims to rebuild their lives, which is what then facilitates prosecutions. An interim report has shown that, up to June 2021, the programme has provided strategic advice to 392 modern slavery investigations and given intensive support to 202 victims. Significantly, 89% of the victims supported by those navigators have chosen to engage with police investigations, compared with just 33% nationally, and 120 suspected exploiters have been arrested in cases supported by victim navigators. I know this is something we can all celebrate.

1.30 pm

The most recent data from the Crown Prosecution Service shows that completed prosecutions for offences flagged as modern slavery have decreased from 349 in 2019 to 267 in 2020, which is a fall of 23%. This was despite the fact that the number of cases referred by the police to the CPS increased from 275 to 331, so it is clear that this programme represents some of the best practice in supporting victims and securing prosecutions—something that the current stats tell us needs to improve. We are aware that the Government are looking at this programme, and I very much hope that the Minister will provide confirmation of their support for this approach. Areas of consensus on this Bill have been sparse, but we can all agree that securing prosecutions against the perpetrators of trafficking and modern slavery has to be a priority, and this new clause would help us to make that a reality.

In the time I have left I want to speak in support of new clause 39, tabled in the name of the hon. Member for North East Bedfordshire (Richard Fuller), which reflects the concerns raised by the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, particularly regarding clause 62. I know that it has support across this House and in the other place. Similarly, we very much welcome the right hon. Member for Chingford and Woodford Green's new clause 47. I know that this is an issue he cares deeply about, and that he has done valued work with Justice and Care and others on the Modern Slavery (Victim Support) Bill with Lord McColl in the other place. The right hon. Gentleman raised concerns about this section of the Bill on Second Reading, and we echo the need for support for victims in relation to their care and their immigration status to be extended and enhanced, not only because that is the right thing to do in light of the exploitation they have had to endure but in order to bring abusers before the courts. The proposals are in line with the Work and Pensions Committee's 2017 recommendations, and have once again won support from across Parliament.

We are very supportive of amendments 127 and 128, tabled by the Scottish National party to remove clauses 57 and 58, having voted against those clauses standing part of the Bill in Committee. The clauses introduce trafficking information notices that would force victims to provide details about the abuse and trauma that they had been subjected to, before a Home Office deadline. Otherwise, their credibility as a victim would be damaged due to late disclosure. As we have already argued, that delayed disclosure would be almost inevitable for those who had been subjected to the worst possible trauma.

Clause 57 seeks to mandate, rather than encourage, early disclosure by survivors of human trafficking and modern slavery, with the Minister confirming in Committee that information notices could be used prior to a reasonable grounds decision being made. Such a decision needs to be made within hours of a referral being made. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull North has pointed out, the Home Office's statutory guidance states:

> "Victims' early accounts may be affected by the impact of trauma. This can result in delayed disclosure, difficulty recalling facts, or symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. It is vital for decision makers to have an understanding of the mitigating reasons why a potential victim of modern slavery is incoherent, inconsistent or delays giving details of material facts. Throughout this process it is important to remember that victims of modern slavery have been through trauma".

That is the Government's own statutory guidance, so if that guidance is to mean anything, these clauses should have no place in the Bill.

Government amendment 80 makes provisions for a survivor of trafficking to be removed to a country that is not a signatory to the Council of Europe convention on action against trafficking in human beings, if the UK has made an agreement with that country. This is one of around 80 amendments tabled after the line-by-line scrutiny of the Bill in Committee and days before Report that have potentially massive implications. This is quite frankly an outrage. I have written to the Procedure Committee to express my concern at the disregard for parliamentary scrutiny we have seen with this Bill. I simply ask the Minister to outline what, if any, agreements have been made, and with which countries. What are the details of those agreements? We should have had this detail on Second Reading and in Committee, and we wish to put strongly on record our opposition to this amendment, as I suspect the Minister cannot begin to answer my questions.

The fact that by far the greatest number of referrals to the NRM last year were of British nationals raises the question of why these provisions are in a Bill about immigration at all. The way part 5 has been drafted means that some of the most vulnerable people, who have been subject to the worst possible trauma, will face the greatest barriers to support, protection and justice, and I hope that hon. Members have heard our concerns and will support our amendments.

**Richard Fuller** (North East Bedfordshire) (Con): I rise to speak to new clause 39, standing in my name and the names of the Chairs of the Procedure Committee, the International Development Committee and the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee. For a variety of reasons, none of those colleagues can be with us today, and I feel that I am a poor substitute for them in making these points—

**Sir Iain Duncan Smith:** Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Richard Fuller:** With great modesty, I shall.

**Sir Iain Duncan Smith:** Can I just reassure my hon. Friend that, by the very fact that he is speaking to this new clause, he is more than a substitute and that he is on the side of right?

**Richard Fuller:** I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. One other aspect of this is that it has given me the opportunity to have a fresh look at an area of legislation that I have not been as deeply involved in as he has. I might therefore raise some concerns that the Minister might not get from other quarters, with a keen focus on the legislation dealing with modern-day slavery.

I wish also speak in support of amendment 3, tabled in the name of the right hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr Carmichael). I will be pleased to hear him later expressing his support for my new clause, as I also hope the SNP will. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Halifax (Holly Lynch) for her indication of support. The reason I say that is that my new clause has not been selected for separate Division, and it is therefore important that this House sends a clear and unequivocal cross-party message to the other House, where this issue can perhaps be looked at anew.

**Mr Carmichael:** I am sure that the House will be on tenterhooks to know, so I can put it out of its misery and tell the hon. Member that I will be more than happy to support his new clause.

**Richard Fuller:** I am very pleased to be off those tenterhooks, although I am never very sure what tenterhooks are. They do not sound very comfortable.

New clause 39 provides the Government with an opportunity to achieve their objectives but on a more considerably secure legal footing than their current proposals would permit. The new clause has been informed by the concerns raised by the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, Dame Sara Thornton. Clause 62 currently seeks to disqualify potential victims of trafficking from the protections afforded under the national referral mechanism. Those protections are important not just as a manifestation of the mercy of our country towards those whose lives have been made wretched by the exploitations of others but to enable more effective prosecution of the perpetrators of such trafficking. Consideration of exclusion from these protections therefore requires careful assessment of the consequences for both those factors. Moreover, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Sir Iain Duncan Smith) mentioned, it should be considered in the context of our country's leading position in international law on human trafficking. That is a position that we should not give up at all lightly.

My first concern with clause 62 as proposed is to ask: where is the evidence? Where is the evidence that access to the national referral mechanism is being abused, and where is the evidence from the Government on the impact of their proposal? My second concern with clause 62 is that it does not appear to address vexatious or unwarranted claims regarding access to the national referral mechanism. That point was also made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford and Woodford Green when he was speaking to his new clause. This is the wrong piece of legislation to do what the Government hope is the right thing, but which many of us fear will make the situation worse rather than better. In the absence of evidence for why this is a logical measure to adopt, I am perplexed as to why clause 62 has been drafted in this way.

My concern is also that subsections (3)(b) and (3)(f) provide a very low bar for disqualification based on criminal sentencing. For those, like me, who are not familiar with modern slavery, it may sound odd that there is public interest in supporting people who have committed crimes either here or, more likely, overseas that carry a 12-month sentence—that is the bar—but that public interest is the same public interest as we have in trying to reach the main perpetrators in county lines drug gangs or serious fraud cases.

The public interest is in enabling sufficient evidence to be collated to bring successful prosecutions against the co-ordinators of those crimes, which is where I fear this clause falls short in subsections (3)(b) and (3)(f). I see good reasons in the other subsections and paragraphs for why clause 62 makes sense, but subsections (3)(b) and (3)(f) are clearly very different. I am interested in understanding the Minister's logic.

Although this is an immigration Bill, clause 62 will largely apply to people already here, including British citizens, who currently make up the majority of victims. Because it refers to the national referral mechanism, most British victims will fall foul of this clause. The data suggests that the vast majority of British victims would fail under the Bill's disqualifying remit, as the majority of cases involving British victims involve criminal exploitation. Even those who fall under labour or sexual exploitation often participate in criminal activities as part of their exploitation and so may end up being "unworthy" of support. I fear that is not what we are trying to do, and it should not be in an immigration Bill.

Another concern that has been raised with me is that there are currently significant difficulties in bringing prosecutions for modern slavery. As previous speakers have mentioned, with approximately 10,000 potential victims of modern slavery identified in the UK last year and only 238 convictions, it is clear that the process is at risk of being overloaded.

How does it help for there to be new additional legal requirements to investigate the criminal history of each and every potential victim who is seeking access to the

*[Richard Fuller]*

national referral mechanism? How on earth will that help? Have we not been here before, more than a decade ago? I do not like to refer back to the bad old days of immigration under Labour, but what a complete mess Labour made of it. The lives of many of my former constituents in Bedford, and the constituents of many hon. and right hon. Members here, were ruined by the Home Office's processes, and those processes are still not where they need to be. With this new provision on access to the national referral mechanism, the Home Office is at it again, making it more complicated, making it more difficult and, ultimately, making a rod for its own back.

New clause 39 would remove children from the scope of clause 62, which is important. We do not want children to fall foul of other rules and regulations, certainly when it comes to their criminal record or otherwise. Will the Minister address that directly?

The new clause preserves the Government's power to remove individuals from the UK who pose

"an immediate, genuine, present and serious threat to public order".

We understand the Government want to make these changes, and there may be good reason for doing so, but let us set the bar higher and let us make it more pertinent so that we do not block the whole system and unduly use immigration law to address modern slavery. That seems a sensible change to make.

New clause 39 would change the wording of the Bill so that a person who claims to have been trafficked improperly will not be treated as having acted in bad faith, which is more in line with the trafficking convention. When a Government seek to conflate effective modern slavery legislation a little too much with immigration law, it is important that we refer to the founding principles of that first set of legislation. Let us not be wishy-washy by saying we can make it up as we go along. Let us not import one schedule from one Act and say it will work fine in this Bill, which seems sloppy. It seems much better to place it more firmly and resolutely in international conventions and other aspects of international law.

1.45 pm

New clause 39 will ensure that the most vulnerable victims of modern slavery, including children, are able to come forward without fear of punishment to be identified, to access safeguarding and support, and to have the opportunity to engage and support criminal justice processes—that is the point raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May) earlier in the debate.

Coming at this anew, I fear the Government have tried too closely to conflate effective legislation on human trafficking with legislation on immigration. New clause 39 seeks to help them by securing their objectives more solidly in the law on modern slavery, rather than on the more perilous aspects of immigration law that they are currently pursuing. It seeks to avoid some of the unfair excesses, particularly regarding children, that will cause upset to many. Ultimately, it seeks to be more effective in the prosecution of the Government's immigration aims by avoiding the Home Office building up huge backlogs and chasing its tail on pieces of information that have no due regard in our law.

**Stuart C. McDonald** (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP): It is a pleasure to take part in this debate and to follow the hon. Member for North East Bedfordshire (Richard Fuller).

Yesterday we badly damaged the UK's reputation for upholding the refugee convention and the rights of refugees, and today's clauses risk undermining the protection offered to victims of trafficking and modern slavery. That is particularly frustrating because a lot of good work has been undertaken in Stormont, Westminster and Holyrood to put in place legislative frameworks for tackling trafficking and modern slavery.

Just as yesterday's clauses failed to address the real failings in the asylum system, the clauses we are debating today do not address the real and significant problems we all face in our efforts to tackle trafficking. They will not lay a glove on traffickers and, in some cases, they will give traffickers extra power and ammunition over their victims and will discourage victims from reaching out for support and assisting prosecutions.

The problems we all face include: the fact we almost certainly identify only a small fraction of trafficking victims and prosecute only a small number of traffickers; the massive delays in the national referral mechanism that see victims sitting in limbo for months and years as they wait for a decision; and the failure to give so many people the stability of the decent period of leave to remain that they need to recover. None of that is addressed in part 5. Instead, it reinforces the impression that efforts to protect victims of trafficking play second fiddle to immigration enforcement, just as decent treatment of asylum seekers and refugees played second fiddle yesterday.

On that note, although I absolutely agree that what we are debating today is distinct and separate from what we debated yesterday—in fact, they should be in separate Bills—it is important that we recognise there is an overlap. Importantly, some of the provisions this House approved yesterday will apply to certain victims of trafficking, including the new criminal offences in relation to arrival in the UK and the discriminatory two-tier asylum system that many trafficking victims will now enter. If I correctly recall our debates in Committee, the offence we put into law yesterday of entering or arriving without permission could result in trafficking victims being excluded from protection.

In particular, I spoke yesterday about this place's awful habit of passing legislation that tells decision makers how to assess the evidence that they will obviously have in front of them but which we do not have in front of us and that we will never know anything about. Instructing decision makers to make adverse credibility findings in relation to trafficking victims because the evidence or information was provided late is especially pernicious and dangerous. As Members on both sides of the House have pointed out, both today and on Second Reading, it takes time for many victims of modern slavery to identify themselves as a victim, let alone to present the evidence required to establish that fact. As we have heard, there are numerous reasons for that: fear of reprisals, shame, instructions or coaching from traffickers, the impact of trauma and mental health issues, as the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Dame Diana Johnson) set out earlier. All the clauses that we debated yesterday requiring negative credibility findings to be made will impact on

trafficking survivors who enter the asylum system, and clauses 57 and 58, which we are debating today, will impact on all who seek support as trafficking survivors.

As we argued in Committee, such a trafficking notice might serve a useful purpose if it was just that—a notice that information should be provided. Speaking from personal experience, it could focus the mind of solicitors who might be reasonably well practised in making claims on behalf of clients in relation to the refugee convention, or for immigration status, but who might have had significantly less experience of identifying and taking forward trafficking cases. I am sure lots of colleagues in the legal profession would identify with that.

In Committee, we argued to keep the notices but ditch the threat of sanctions. That approach was rejected by the Government, so we have tabled amendments 127 and 128, which would ditch the scheme altogether. In short, we cannot support a statutory scheme that threatens to punish trafficking victims for late provision of information. Most fundamentally, there can be no doubt that with such a scheme, there is a risk that survivors of trafficking who miss a mandatory deadline will simply withdraw from the whole process. The Bill requires that their credibility be treated as damaged, and all the talk of good reasons as an excuse will make a limited difference. In fact, the whole process risks becoming a vicious circle. I could provide evidence that was late because of the trauma of trafficking, but I would not be able to establish that I had been trafficked because my credibility would be damaged by providing that information late. That is a mess of a provision.

Going further, the scope of the provision is also bizarre, covering as it does not just statements made by the trafficking victim but statements made on their behalf. That could include evidence from their doctor, a counsellor or a social worker. Such reports should be considered on their own merits, not automatically discredited by utterly misguided provisions such as those we are discussing. A victim of trafficking could be in a position of needing to submit more evidence to strengthen their case, but by providing that evidence after a deadline set by the Home Office, they risk having their credibility damaged. They can be disbelieved either for providing not enough evidence, or for providing evidence late. What a Hobson's choice that is for incredibly vulnerable people. The shadow Minister posed practical questions about the timing. We say, "Let's take out the punishment through amendment 128," or, at the very least, support the shadow Minister's bid to disapply these dangerous provisions to children.

Our third amendment is 148, which probes the Government on the vague and broad provisions in clause 67 to disapply retained EU law deriving from the trafficking directive. In their modern slavery strategy of 2014, the then Conservative Government said that opting into that directive

"demonstrated our commitment to working with other countries in Europe to drive up standards across the continent in tackling trafficking"

and showed

"the UK's commitment to tackling human trafficking and providing support to victims."

The Government said that the directive

"paves the way for further engagement with EU-wide organisations and governments to share our prosecution and investigation expertise."

Clause 67 disapplies that directive, in so far as it would be incompatible with the Bill and any subordinate legislation made under it. Given that the directive is so crucial to prevention, victim identification, protection and support, this proposal is concerning. We should be fully implementing the directive, not moving away from it.

Nothing is said about that provision in the equality impact assessment or the human rights memorandum, so we have no information about which parts of the directive the Home Office considers to be incompatible with this Bill, or which parts would cease to apply. How are anti-trafficking organisations and those who provide support and advice to survivors supposed to know what the law is? Can the Minister spell some of that out today? What other provisions of the directive might the Government want to ditch through subordinate legislation?

Before I address our last amendment, let me express support for amendment 3, which was tabled by the right hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr Carmichael), to remove the disqualification provisions of clause 62. As all Opposition Members argued in Committee, those provisions are far too wide. For the same reasons, we support the alternative new clause 39, in the name of the hon. Member for North East Bedfordshire, to secure compliance with the trafficking convention and protect children from disqualification. Rather than fixing the clause, the Government seem intent on making it worse through amendment 71, meaning that survivors who are identified as needing leave to remain to seek compensation, or to co-operate with investigations and prosecutions, will not get it.

We give our support to new clause 47, tabled by the right hon. Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Sir Iain Duncan Smith), and in particular to the provisions requiring a grant of leave for 12 months, or longer if required because of personal circumstances.

**Tommy Sheppard** (Edinburgh East) (SNP): My hon. Friend is making an excellent humanitarian case against aspects of the Bill. Does he agree that when the Government reject that argument, it will fuel the case for Scotland to become a politically independent country so that it can build a different immigration system on the basis of fairness and international solidarity, rather than prejudice and paranoia?

**Stuart C. McDonald:** I fully endorse what my hon. Friend says. We will continue to make the case against this Bill, although we all know that that case will be rejected. People who are watching will see our alternative proposals, and they are a strong argument for independence indeed.

In addition to saying yes to new clause 47, we support new clause 3 from the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North. I mentioned at the start of my speech that Stormont, Westminster and Holyrood had all passed important legislation in this area, and that brings me to the key point that we have just touched on. Large parts of this issue are a devolved matter, and that is only partially recognised in the Bill. The same is true of the age assessment provisions in part 4. There are very good arguments for saying that legislative consent motions should be required from the Scottish Parliament for various provisions in parts 4 and 5, and that is why we have tabled amendment 129.

*[Stuart C. McDonald]*

The whole disreputable scheme of trafficking notices, plus most law in relation to the recovery period, is surely within devolved competence, but clause 49 also sees the Secretary of State interfering in how local authorities go about discharging their duties in relation to devolved children's legislation. I would be happy to share with the Minister a legal opinion by Christine O'Neill QC that has been published by the Scottish Refugee Council and JustRight Scotland, and that makes similar points. I am sure that devolved Administrations in Northern Ireland and Wales will also want to look closely at these points.

Our view is that this is a disaster of a Bill and, as the shadow Minister said, the whole legislative process leading up to it has been a disaster as well. The consequences for many vulnerable people will also be disastrous. That is as true of the provisions in relation to trafficking survivors as it is for asylum seekers and refugees. Although we have tried to ameliorate the worst aspects of the Bill, the whole rotten lot of it needs to be canned.

**Mr Bone:** It is a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East (Stuart C. McDonald). He supports new clause 74, which is the main thrust of what I want to talk about today.

Across the House, we have seen support for measures to fight modern-day slavery and human trafficking, but I think we should start at the beginning. Only a few years ago, this House did not even recognise human trafficking. I can remember when I came into the House and Tony Blair was Prime Minister, the great Anthony Steen tried every week from the Opposition Benches to persuade the Government that human trafficking existed. The Council of Europe brought forward proposals about human trafficking, and, to the great credit of former Prime Ministers David Cameron and my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May), we produced Europe's leading anti-slavery legislation.

We should start by congratulating the Government on doing that, but we are here today to see how we can improve on that legislation. I will briefly mention my dissatisfaction with the way child victims of human trafficking are dealt with. As I have said on many occasions, we should follow the methods that we use for adults; we should not just put children into the care of local government, where they are routinely re-trafficked. That is not particularly to do with the clauses that we are debating today, but it is something that we need to look at.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Sir Iain Duncan Smith) made the very fair point that we are not talking about asylum, and we are not talking about economic migrants. With economic migrants—people coming here who should not be—the victim is this country. Human trafficking victims are people who have been tricked or coerced into coming to this country, mainly with the thought that they will get a job or a career.

Let me give an example. Somebody from Hungary came into this country thinking they were going to get a job in Belfast. Instead, they were locked up in a terraced house in Belfast. The locks were on the outside of the bedroom and that girl was repeatedly raped. She was rescued by the police and looked after. That is human trafficking, and it is completely different from people coming across the channel in small boats.

2 pm

I very much welcome the meetings I have had with the Minister on this issue and the tremendous work that my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford and Woodford Green does. I also welcome the work of Justice and Care and, in particular, of Tatiana Gren-Jardan, who used to work for me when I was part of the all-party parliamentary group on human trafficking, and who has made this issue her passion and done so much to help the situation.

**Sir Iain Duncan Smith:** While we are talking about Tatiana—she has been phenomenal in bringing cases forward and I pay tribute to her—it is worth reminding the House that she cannot be with us at the moment because she is about to give birth. We congratulate her on that.

**Mr Bone:** I can give the House an update: birth has not yet occurred and she is watching today's proceedings. I wish her very well with the new baby.

Let me go back to the national referral mechanism. One thing that people misunderstand about new clause 47 is that they think it refers to when people go into the NRM, but it does not. It would apply for people who have "conclusive grounds"—people the Government agree are real victims of human trafficking. The difference between me and the Government is about what happens next. We have always looked after victims of human trafficking—it has been a really sensible process, with overall control given to the Salvation Army and then distributed through all the different charities and voluntary and religious groups that help to look after victims. But I want there not to be any victims in the first place. I want these evil gangs stopped. By the way, this is organised crime: they are ruthless and horrible and they do not care about people. They are quite happy to murder people. If we can shut them down, we will not have the victims, which is why the prosecution of these gangs is so important.

When we have discussed the failure to secure prosecutions in the past, it was argued, "Well, we prosecute on lesser offences so that we get convictions," but these people are put away for only a small amount of time. We want to nail the people at the top and put them away for a very long time, to make it a dangerous thing to be involved in. If it is dangerous and they are likely to get caught and put away for a long time, they will not carry out this evil trade and will try something else.

The difference between me and the Government in respect of leave to remain, which is the crux of new clause 47, is that I think it should be given as a right to people who are confirmed as victims of trafficking if their immigration status is irregular. I say that for two reasons: first, they are much more likely to help to prosecute the evil gangs if they know that their immigration status is secure for a year; and secondly, if we do it not that way but on a piecemeal basis, there is a possibility, to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford and Woodford Green referred, that the lawyers will go to the court and say, "The only reason why this person

is saying that is because it is the only way she could have got leave to remain," whereas if it is a right, they cannot use that argument at all.

I will listen with great interest to what the Minister says in response to the debate. If my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford and Woodford Green pushes new clause 47 to a Division, I will indeed support it. I know that the Minister and the Government share my desire to get these evil gangs; we just have a little difference on this point. Why doesn't the Minister accept the new clause and perhaps add a sunset clause in the other place? Put two years on it, and if in two years nobody extra is prosecuted, we were clearly wrong. But if a lot more people are prosecuted, as I believe they would be, the Government could renew the sunset clause.

Everybody is trying to do the right thing here; we are just discussing the best way forward. I go back to the start and say well done to Anthony Steen and to all the Governments who have moved forward and made our country the best place to prosecute modern-day slavery. But we can do better, and we can and must do better with children. New clause 47 would help us to prosecute more evil gangs, so I very much support it and hope that the Government will accept at least its principle.

**Margaret Greenwood** (Wirral West) (Lab): Numerous constituents have written to me with their concerns about the Bill. They fear that it will harm refugees and victims of trafficking and slavery and that it undermines our international commitment to human rights and the right to asylum. I share their concerns.

The Children's Society has said that it is

"concerned that the provisions of the bill will have a significant impact on all child victims of trafficking".

Notably, the charity has expressed support for Labour's new clause 6, which would exempt victims of modern slavery, exploitation or trafficking from many of the provisions in part 5 of the Bill if they were under 18 when they became a victim. Statistics show that 3,140 potential victims of modern slavery were referred to the Home Office in the second quarter of 2021—the second highest number of referrals since the national referral mechanism began in 2009—and 43% of them claimed exploitation as children.

Serious concerns have also been raised about, and many Members have referred to, the proposals in the Bill to allow the Secretary of State to serve trafficking information notices on potential victims of modern slavery and expect a response within a fixed timescale. Dame Sara Thornton, the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, has said that

"will make it harder to identify those who have been exploited… Traumatised victims cannot disclose their suffering to order—it takes time to build trust and confidence."

That is absolutely right.

The Government's own statutory guidance on modern slavery states:

"Victims' early accounts may be affected by the impact of trauma. This can result in delayed disclosure, difficulty recalling facts, or symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder."

Why do the provisions in the Bill run contrary to the evidence in the Government's own guidance? This point relates to amendments 5, 6 and 7, which were tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Dame Diana Johnson) and have cross-party support. I also support my right hon. Friend's incredibly important new clause 3, which would create an offence for arranging or facilitating the travel of another person with a view to that person being sexually exploited in the UK.

We debate the Bill less than two weeks after the tragic loss of 27 lives in the English channel, yet the Government are intent on pushing ahead with their cruel pushbacks plan, despite Border Force officials saying privately that it is dangerous and unworkable, and despite the Joint Committee on Human Rights having said that pushbacks would

"create a situation where state actors were actively placing individuals in situations that would increase the risk"

On behalf of my constituent, who has more than 10 years' experience in maritime rescue, I ask the Minister how the Government expect Her Majesty's Coastguard to operate in a situation that it deems to be search and rescue but that the Home Office considers to be a pushback situation? He wants to know who will have the veto authority in such situations?

As Families Together has pointed out:

"No one chooses to cross the channel…unless they have no other option."

Amnesty International has said that the Bill

"will cost not save lives. It will enable and empower ruthless criminal gangs not break them. It closes safe routes and opens none. It will harm women and girls along with the men seeking asylum, to whom Ministers appear to take such exception".

I urge members from all parties to vote against the Bill on Third Reading.

**Mr Carmichael:** I am grateful for the opportunity to make a few remarks about the amendments and new clause tabled in my name and the names of my right hon. and hon. Friends and others. I put on the record my support for the amendments tabled by the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Dame Diana Johnson), by the hon. Member for North East Bedfordshire (Richard Fuller), by the official Opposition, by the Scottish National party, and by the right hon. Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Sir Iain Duncan Smith). I think you can take it from that selection, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the view of many of us here is that part 5 of the Bill requires some fairly urgent and radical surgery. In general terms, that is something to be regretted.

The hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr Bone) was absolutely right to remind us of the history in relation to human trafficking in this House. He mentioned Anthony Steen, who ploughed a lonely furrow in the early days but was dogged in pursuit of that. I fear that it may not always be what he is remembered for, but ultimately he did a great deal of good in relation to this matter.

I also pay tribute to the right hon. Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May), who, as Home Secretary, drove this with an unquestionable commitment—I saw that for myself in government. The fact that we now find the salami slicer starting to work and that, piece by piece, the provisions and protections that we have brought into operation to protect the victims of modern slavery are being taken away is, I think, a matter of regret.

I do not often tell tales from outside the Chamber, but I went up in the lift in Portcullis House with the right hon. Member for Maidenhead yesterday—I hope that she will not mind me referencing this—and apropos the House's consideration of the Bill yesterday, she

*[Mr Carmichael]*

asked what sort of a debate it had been. I replied, "Suffice it to say that I don't think anybody would refer to it as being the House at its best." It is to be welcomed that the temperature of debate today is perhaps a bit more measured. It also illustrates that, on a matter such as this, if one looks around the Chamber and sees the range of interests that have brought forward amendments, it is very easy still to build a consensus around this. The fact that the Government show no inclination or enthusiasm for building or maintaining that consensus is a matter of deep regret.

The hon. Member for Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East (Stuart C. McDonald) referred to the credibility provisions. He is absolutely right. The idea that legislation should interfere with the assessment of something around credibility is fundamentally obnoxious. If any right hon. and hon. Members have ever spent any time in the Appeal Court, they will have seen advocates being pulled up occasionally for trying to reopen questions of credibility. The Appeal Court always says, "We are not interested. That was heard by the judge at first instance, and he or she alone can be the judge of these matters." Trying to set out parameters around credibility in the way that is sought here is dangerous to say the very least.

I will touch on the matters that stand in my name. Amendment 3 seeks to leave out clause 62. The hon. Member for North East Bedfordshire made an excellent dissection of the effect of clause 62. He said that it was the wrong measure in the wrong place, and he is absolutely right. What we have brought here is more of a scalpel to the Bill, to remove the clause completely. It does sit with other measures in clause 5 in restricting the protections that are available to victims of modern slavery. In our view, this breaks our obligations to support the victims of human trafficking and undermines the fight against slavery and human trafficking. It will make victims less likely to come forward and to co-operate with law enforcement. Ultimately, it will strengthen the hand of the slavers.

Clause 62 works to exclude potential victims of slavery or human trafficking from protections on the grounds that they are a threat to public order or have claimed to be a victim in bad faith. I can put the concerns about this clause no better than Dame Sara Thornton, the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, who, in a letter to the Home Secretary, warned:

> "I have grave concerns about this clause because it casts a wide net with the potential to prevent a considerable number of potential victims of modern slavery from being able to access the recovery and reflection period granted through the NRM. Without such support prosecution witnesses will be unable to provide witness evidence and this will severely limit our ability to convict perpetrators and dismantle organised crime groups."

Those are the concerns of the Government's own Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner. We have to wonder why we have people in such positions if their advice is to be disregarded in this way.

In promoting new clause 43 and amendments 130 and 131, I fully declare that I am something of a cipher for the Immigration Law Practitioners' Association—a declaration I make with absolutely no shame or embarrassment. ILPA has a long and distinguished record in this area and it comprises people whose views should be listened to.

2.15 pm

Clause 65 brings legal advice and referral to the national referral mechanism for potential victims of modern slavery and human trafficking within scope of legal aid funding, but only if it is attached to an existing immigration or asylum matter. New clause 43 would expand that test to legal advice by removing that requirement. It would also remove the requirement to assess the financial means of a person who requires advice on a referral to the NRM. The means test acts as a significant barrier to justice for people who are not eligible, as even the receipt of subsistence payments can be enough to exclude a person from accessing a lawyer.

The view of ILPA is that bringing this work within the scope of legal aid is particularly important for cases where there is no asylum claim but there is an immigration claim—for example, where the person may be eligible for a grant of discretionary leave to remain or leave as an overseas domestic worker if they were recognised as a victim of trafficking. These victims may be too scared to come forward to the authorities, or may not know what immigration options are available. The lack of access to independent advice is a powerful deterrent to people coming forward when they are escaping exploitation. The current position is that they would be unable to access legal advice easily as immigration advice on this issue is not in scope for legal aid. This means that an application for exceptional case funding would need to be made and granted before the person could see a lawyer.

I think I made the point yesterday that so much of our immigration system has now become so complex that, for anyone who is not legally qualified to try to plot their own way through it without assistance, let alone somebody who may be working through issues such as using English as a second language or a foreign language, is virtually impossible.

I observe in passing that provisions in this part of the Bill that refer to unreasonable moves being taken in tribunal by applicants is something on which the Government should proceed with great caution. We have all seen through our own constituency case loads the way that the immigration services operate, and I suspect strongly that if the same test were ever applied to the Home Office as the Home Office seeks to apply in this case to applicants, it would find itself in some significant difficulty.

**Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP): I rise to support the amendments in the name of my colleagues. I also speak in my capacity as chair of the all-party parliamentary group on immigration detention. We have many concerns about the Bill. As my hon. Friend the Member for Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East (Stuart C. McDonald) mentioned, there is a degree of overlap between what I wish to say today and some of the measures that we addressed yesterday.

The UK Government propose a quasi-detention system for new arrivals. The all-party parliamentary group on immigration detention has taken a great deal of evidence on the harm that such facilities cause. We looked at Napier and Penally barracks, and others such as Tinsley House and Yarl's wood, which were used for quasi-detention. We found, very much so, that these facilities undermined the health of vulnerable people, dehumanised them and also made vulnerable those who did not consider themselves that vulnerable to begin with.

Those facilities featured: physical and social isolation; prison-like conditions with people feeling under surveillance 24/7; and shared facilities, meaning a lack of dignity and privacy, and, of course, during the period of covid, the risk of covid, which the Government failed to take into account, basically facilitating an outbreak among those unlucky enough to be living there. Due to their very nature, the facilities also ended up being targeted by the far right, further making those who happened to be living there very, very vulnerable.

The evidence that we received in our inquiry found a lack of safeguarding, healthcare and access to legal advice. The Home Office equality impact assessment on the facilities set out that people seeking asylum were not analogous to British citizens and other permanent residents in need of welfare assistance. As we heard yesterday, facilities such as these and offshoring facilities were tried, and failed, in Australia.

The implication of what we are discussing today was discovered by the Jesuit Refugee Service, which in the course of its work encountered residents at Napier barracks whose asylum screening interviews had revealed clear indications of trafficking, yet individuals had been transferred to those sites when they should never have been there in the first place. This happened initially, which could perhaps be accepted as a mistake or oversight, but also as late as June 2021, when such issues should not still have been going on, and people should have been identified as victims of trafficking. Solicitors engaged in the site found similar circumstances, where people who had been trafficked ended up in this inappropriate accommodation.

The provisions are concerning in a number of ways, because such facilities are difficult for people to be in. I had a conversation with somebody earlier in the week who suggested that the UK Government and the Home Office have not thought this through. I disagree with that in some respects, because to me this is a very deliberate policy of removing people from legal support—their opportunity to make the best case of putting themselves before the immigration system—and from communities, where they could build links, settle in, make friends and engage with people who had perhaps come from their own countries. It is a deliberate policy of removing people from the healthcare and support they need to get well and recover from trauma. All those things make it easier for the Government to send these people away—and that is not done in the name of my constituents or my party. We do not agree with the proposals and this ideological pandering to the lowest common denominator, because the people we are speaking about are very vulnerable.

I fully support amendment 6 on late disclosure, because the provisions place people, such as those who ended up in this quasi-detention system, in a trap. I see people in my surgeries week in, week out who are already disbelieved by the Home Office. It puts people at risk to say that if they do not disclose everything at the point where they are being told that they must disclose, the case will be stacked against them.

**Chris Stephens** (Glasgow South West) (SNP): Is this provision not of huge concern to constituents in Glasgow South West and Glasgow Central—women, in particular, who have been subjected to sexual violence and would not necessarily disclose that at the first interview?

**Alison Thewliss:** Indeed; they may take a long time, and may not have the language, to disclose that very traumatic experience. Those who were held in this quasi-detention system were not necessarily even provided with notice of their substantive interview. It was sprung on them, in many cases with very little notice. Let us imagine someone being woken up in the morning by somebody saying, "Today's the big day—your substantive interview. Spill your guts", and their not having the capacity to explain what happened to them, having not processed the trauma that they have been through, yet if they do not do so there and then, their case may fall apart completely. That is a brutal system, but not only do the Government have that system just now, they want to roll it out yet further.

**David Linden** (Glasgow East) (SNP): I am grateful to my constituency neighbour for giving way. She is absolutely right, as is my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow South West (Chris Stephens), to place on record the fact that many women, for example, who have experienced sexual violence, will not feel comfortable declaring that in the first interview. Does she agree—we see this in our cases in Glasgow—that one of the common concerns that we get from constituents is that quite often when they go to these interviews, the person interviewing them does not have any qualifications or knowledge on these matters, and that therefore these constituents of ours, who she is right to say are incredibly vulnerable, pick up very quickly that even if they try to explain the situation to somebody, that person will not actually understand?

**Alison Thewliss:** Yes. I am sure that like me my hon. Friend has read through the transcripts of people's substantive interviews, including some of the ludicrous questions that people have been asked by Home Office officials. There is just a lack of understanding of the trauma that people have been through. There is no way by which people are understood; rather, the Home Office is trying to catch people out at every turn. It is a game that people are not equipped to participate in.

The Government are failing victims of trafficking, both male and female. As difficult as it is for many women to explain how they have been trafficked, men who have been trafficked for sexual purposes will also find that very difficult to explain, particularly those who have been housed in mass accommodation such as Napier barracks; they will find it difficult to live among other men and to deal with that trauma there as well.

There was no privacy in Napier, Penally and the other facilities. Those men were asked to give their substantive interview and to speak to their lawyers without any privacy whatever, in common spaces such as kitchens. To explain their cases in earshot of other people, without having the privacy and the dignity that they should have, retraumatises people all over again. The Government should be ashamed of treating people this way. It is inhumane.

I want briefly to mention the work of the Trafficking Awareness Raising Alliance, based in my constituency in Glasgow, which does amazing work to support women who have been trafficked. In my experience, the Home Office is not doing its bit. A woman came to speak to me at a surgery in 2017. She had limited English and had clearly been through traumatic experiences. She had first been encountered by the police in 2014, three years

*[Alison Thewliss]*

prior to coming to me, but did not receive her substantive interview until 2017, and my office was still working on her case two years after that. How is somebody supposed to get on with their lives, heal, move on and make a new life for themselves away from trauma, when they are reminded of that trauma every day when they wake up in the morning—if they manage to wake up in the morning, because many also suffer lack of sleep and other symptoms of trauma?

The Home Office is not doing its bit. Although people should not be rushed into making disclosures, once they have done so and the case is under way, the Home Office should ensure that it is not delayed by petty bureaucracy. A lot of the bureaucracy in the case that I mentioned was as simple as getting the woman's name and date of birth right, but we were going back and forth for months. The Home Office comes to lecture all of us on the asylum system being broken in this country, and I agree that it is certainly broken, but what the Government are proposing is certainly not the way to fix it.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** I call Jeremy Corbyn, although just before the right hon. Gentleman rises, let me say that I know that he is usually very brief, but it seemed like we had a lot of time for this business and we are now running out of time, so would people just be a bit sharper? It is not a general conversation, but a debate. Let us just get on with it.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** Sharpness is the order of the day; I will be very brief and very sharp.

This Bill is appalling in so many ways. I will come to that in just a moment. In this set of amendments, we are dealing with people who are suffering the most grotesque exploitation of almost anyone in the world—people who have been trafficked into sexual slavery, and into working illegally in factories and agriculture, and who have no recourse to any support anywhere. They are living in dangerous conditions. They are often isolated and have no one to turn to. While I appreciate that all the amendments are trying to provide better support and better protection for them, these people are the victims of slavery in every form imaginable.

Although I support the amendment tabled by the right hon. Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Sir Iain Duncan Smith), I do not quite understand why he limits the right to remain to 12 months, because if, at the end of that 12-month period, the person concerned is then faced with deportation, I would ask: deportation to where and under what circumstances? Would they not then be in danger in the country they have originally come from, or from the very gangs that have been called out, because of their seeking safety in this country?

2.30 pm

**Sir Iain Duncan Smith:** For clarification, we argued for the period as a de minimis, to give greater scope and time for the person's case to be resolved fairly and reasonably. That was all. We could go further and further, but it is a compromise. I fully accept the right hon. Gentleman's point, but I simply say to my colleagues that it is a minimum that they can take further and extend further, and they should be encouraged to do so if they wish.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** I thank the right hon. Gentleman for that explanation. Clearly his amendment is better than no amendment, but I would want us to go a lot further, because if we do not give support to people who are complete victims, they will suffer in the most abominable circumstances. I therefore hope that the Bill can be strengthened.

This Bill is an appalling piece of legislation. It does not bring safety or humanity to people around the world. It will result in more people being put in danger. It will create a more draconian attitude towards refugees. There are 70 million refugees around the world. They are victims of war, human rights abuse and poverty. Some of them are victims of wars that we ourselves have been involved in. We need to reset the dial and work globally towards reducing the need for people to seek refuge or asylum by dealing with the issues at source. That is a more positive method than the incredibly draconian measures included in the Bill.

There are many victims around the world in refugee camps and many other places. Having met many people in refugee camps and those who are victims of trafficking and modern slavery, I know they have a thirst to live a life and make a contribution to our world and our society. This Bill does not give them those chances. It further criminalises people who, out of desperation, put themselves in the most terrible danger. Sadly, 27 died in the channel, while thousands have died in the Mediterranean, and many more around the world. We need a global call for humanity, not repression.

**David Linden:** It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn). I remarked to my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow North East (Anne McLaughlin) at the beginning of the debate that it was significant that both a former Leader of the Opposition and a former Prime Minister were still in the Chamber. We owe them a huge amount of respect for sticking around and informing the debate, even if our politics often differ from theirs and we do not agree with absolutely everything they say.

The Bill is hostile towards refugees, flies in the face of the refugee convention, and goes against the advice of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, non-governmental organisations and human rights lawyers. Put simply, the Bill takes some of the most vulnerable people in the world and exacerbates their risk of poverty, exploitation, and family separation. In speaking to this group of amendments and new clauses, I wish to offer my support for amendment 128, which would remove clause 58, and a number of other amendments and new clauses, but in the interests of brevity I will focus on part 5 of the Bill, which deals with modem slavery.

Slavery is not yet a thing of the past. For so many people, slavery does not exist simply in the history books but is the horrific reality they face every day. From human trafficking victims to those undertaking involuntary labour and those in forced marriage, modern slavery impacts countless lives, and it is a sad but inescapable reality that it happens in many of our constituencies. Its scale is unknown, but the International Labour Organisation has estimated that more than 40 million people worldwide are victims of modern slavery.

I pay tribute to Restore Glasgow in my constituency and the great work that it does to raise awareness of human trafficking, particularly teaching people to spot the signs of trafficking. Many of us wrongly assume that human trafficking and slavery occurs behind closed doors, but in some cases—indeed, far too many—it is hiding in plain sight on our high streets and in our shop fronts. I want to particularly raise this form of exploitation and highlight the forced labour of people who work in industries that are less regulated, such as car washes and nail bars. Many of us will walk past these shops every day and think nothing of the low prices or the long hours worked. I am asking not just hon. Members in this House but everyone watching this debate to really consider their purchasing power. We need to stop and think about that £5 car wash and that £10 set of nails. Bluntly, if four or five guys in flip-flops are washing your car for a few quid, then the alarm bells should be ringing loud and clear.

There should be greater regulation in these industries to help prevent cases of human trafficking and slavery occurring in the first place, and that is where I would challenge governments both local and national, and all across these islands, to go further. In 2020, the chief executive of the British Beauty Council, Millie Kendall, said of the nail salon industry that

"we are very under regulated and that's a real problem for us."

Ms Kendall asked the British Government to move to license the industry. As far as I can see, there is very little provision in legislation to deal with that aspect of modern slavery. The situation for so many victims and survivors is desperate, which only makes the Government's failure on this worse. Figures released in 2020 highlight that any efforts to crack down on slavery have been weak and slow, with only 42 convictions on slavery and human trafficking in 2018, down from 59 in 2017 and 69 in 2016.

I have outlined aspects of modern slavery that I feel need to be further addressed, and I hope that the Minister will address some of those points in the wind-ups. However, I also ask the Minister and the Home Office to reflect on the fact that at least four Members representing the seven seats in the city of Glasgow have taken part in this debate. We so often hear from Conservative Members about their views on immigration and asylum. However, I would be willing to wager a safe amount of money that the amount of cases that I, my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow North East and my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow Central (Alison Thewliss) have ongoing at the moment is probably more than every single Conservative Member has dealt with in the course of this year. That is because, as MPs who rightly welcome people to our city and take up asylum casework, we far too often see the significant failings of an asylum and immigration system that is utterly broken, making it so difficult for those we represent.

This Bill and much of what it represents is not what Scotland wants or voted for. Scotland is a welcoming country to refugees and asylum seekers. They are part of the rich tartan tapestry that makes up our communities. Indeed, they are our friends and our families with whom we break bread at community meals in places such as my native Cranhill. Earlier this year, my home city united and sent a clear message to the Home Office with the Kenmure Street protest, proving that once again all people, including refugees and asylum seekers, make Glasgow. Glasgow rejects this Bill and looks forward to a day when Westminster's right-wing immigration policies and dangerous anti-refugee rhetoric have no territorial application on our citizens, and instead we can form borders and nationality policy that is based on dignity, not on dog-whistle politics.

**Anne McLaughlin** (Glasgow North East) (SNP): It is an absolute pleasure to follow my hon. Friend, and neighbour, the Member for Glasgow East (David Linden).

I have said repeatedly how disgusted I am with this Bill in its entirety, so I will not go over that again, and I am sure, Madam Deputy Speaker, that you would not let me. It is hard not to do it, but it is all on the record. In any case, whatever I say today is unlikely to change anybody's vote, and that is what is so depressing about this. Today I will focus on what you want me to focus on, Madam Deputy Speaker, which is modern slavery and human trafficking. I will highlight two aspects of the many that I find greatly disturbing.

First, there is late disclosure. I am deeply concerned by the measures in the Bill that aim to damage the credibility of victims of modern slavery or human trafficking. Using late disclosure as a reason to damage their credibility only serves to create barriers to effective and vital identification and engagement with those victims. The Government, of course, in their usual, cynical way, believe that claimants are abusing the system and attempting to frustrate removal. They point to the rise in the number of trafficking claims, but that is down to a range of factors, including greater awareness of modern slavery among detention workers and others and an improved ability to recognise vulnerability, as a leading Hibiscus report highlighted. All the awareness-raising campaigns, supported by all the Governments on these islands, including this Government, were always going to increase those numbers—that is what we were looking for, surely. To use that increase as a reason to now cynically attack people is just despicable.

**Mr Bone:** The hon. Lady seems to be welcoming what Governments have done against slavery, and she says that raising awareness and encouraging people to report has created more victims. Does she support what this Government and previous Governments have done to make this country the leader in the fight against modern-day slavery?

**Anne McLaughlin:** I support any attempts to help people who are victims of modern slavery, of course I do. Some good measures have been taken—of course they have—but it depresses me that this Government continually assume that anyone displaying signs of vulnerability, who for a number of reasons might not be able to come forward and present their story to the authorities immediately, is somehow acting in bad faith or gaming the system. There is a distinct lack of compassion and understanding in equal measure regarding the severe trauma suffered by some victims and its impact on their testimony.

There are reasons why people are late in coming forward. I want to read something from the guidance for this Parliament's Modern Slavery Act 2015. It states:

"Victims' early accounts may be affected by the impact of trauma. This can result in delayed disclosure"—

the thing that we are now saying damages their credibility—

"difficulty recalling facts, or symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder…Victims may also be reluctant to self identify for a number of other reasons that can make understanding their experiences challenging".

*[Anne McLaughlin]*

Who wrote that? This Government did, so they know, yet they seek to punish victims by accusing anyone who fails to recount their traumatic experiences in time.

To state that someone has experienced exploitation is in many ways similar to domestic violence in terms of how complicated it is. Exploitation is often committed by someone the victim knows or is close to, and it can happen very gradually over a long time. Some victims of exploitation are unaware there is even a crime being committed against them until it is too late, which this Bill will only prove to exacerbate.

Some victims might not want to admit they have been exploited, particularly in cases of sexual abuse, where cultural sensitivities could mean a victim feels ashamed—shame that they should not feel, but do feel anyway. As my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow Central (Alison Thewliss) pointed out, men who are exploited may feel ashamed or degraded by their lack of agency. Let us not forget that a lot of victims are terrified that if they reveal information, they or their family, here or wherever they have come from, might be punished by the traffickers. That is how they get them. The Met police said recently that it takes two years on average to get a west African victim of juju-induced slavery to reveal what happened to them.

Then there are those who simply block it out. They do not consciously block it out; their unconscious mind cannot cope with it any longer. I had a friend many years ago who I used to visit every six months or so. One time I went to stay with her for the weekend. She worked as a cleaner in a local primary school. She had a normal life. She built a life for herself. She had a family and everything and this job. She was cleaning, and suddenly she had a flashback—for anyone who does not know, a flashback is not a memory; it is reliving the moment—to when she was eight years old and her stepfather was raping her. It was the most terrifying thing, clearly, but she was then in her 40s, and she only remembered it all those years later. She had the courage to speak to her siblings, one of whom had remembered it and had not told anybody. Sometimes it is simply that it is gone from someone's memory, but it can come back, and we should not be punishing people in those cases.

These measures will not prevent false claims. Instead, they will create an even deeper mistrust and suspicion of the authorities, and the only people who will gain from that are, as others have said, those who are seeking to exploit and extort these vulnerable victims. Traffickers use the fear of the authorities as a means of control, and this Bill will just give them, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East (Stuart C. McDonald) said, a broader set of tools. I cannot work out whether those supporting these measures do not realise that, or just do not care. It is increasingly looking like the latter, particularly over the past couple of days and throughout Committee.

2.45 pm

If I have time, I would not mind saying a little about public order disqualifications. Do I have time for that?

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** It is at the hon. Lady's discretion, but I think everyone wants the Minister to answer the questions that have been asked this afternoon. If the hon. Lady goes on for very much longer, there will not be an opportunity for that. I am not stopping her, but I hope she will not take too much longer.

**Anne McLaughlin:** I will take your advice on that, Madam Deputy Speaker, although I am little unsure whether we will get answers, because we have not any other time we have been asking for them.

Any disqualification from protection must be reserved for the most serious of offenders—those who pose a serious risk to the public or to national security. A public order disqualification for victims with prior convictions of 12 months or more is too wide, as others have said. There is a real danger that genuine victims who could give vital evidence against slavery networks, and who pose absolutely no risk to the public, will be excluded from that support.

The actual figures for referrals of offenders in immigration detention to the NRM are low, as was said earlier, and the Government have published no data to back up the sensationalist claims made in support of these measures. It is another theme running through every part of this Bill. There is nothing to back up their scaremongering claims. The hon. Member for North East Bedfordshire (Richard Fuller) was also asking for evidence. I very much doubt the Minister is going to give us any, but let us wait and see.

I will move on, finally, to say that I fail to see why all of this is part of an immigration Bill. We are not talking about immigrants; we are talking about victims of criminal offences. In 2016, I sat on the Immigration Bill Committee, and a Government Member, who is not present and whose name I will not reveal, told me, "If people do not want to be trafficked, they should simply say no." That demonstrated a crass misunderstanding of what trafficking is. These are people who are not trying to migrate to this country; they are simply caught up in exploitation and they end up here.

I will end by saying that I would love to hear what the Minister has to say. I have zero faith that we will hear anything. I have never ever been so ashamed as I am today, because I know that Members will vote for this Bill that will damage, exploit and kill vulnerable people, who they claim to care about. It is absolutely a disgrace.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Rachel Maclean):** We have had an excellent debate. Despite some of the comments I have just heard from the previous speaker, the hon. Member for Glasgow North East (Anne McLaughlin), there is more agreement across the House on the seriousness of these crimes and our determination to tackle them than there is disagreement.

The aims of the modern slavery elements of the Bill are twofold: to provide clarity on victims' rights and entitlements, supporting effective recovery from this awful crime, and to increase prosecutions of perpetrators of the despicable crime of modern slavery. That is why we make clear for the first time in legislation that where a public authority, such as the police, is pursuing an investigation or criminal proceeding, confirmed victims who are co-operating and need to remain in the UK to do so will be granted temporary leave to remain. Our core principle is that the entitlements provided to victims are based on their needs, delivering a firm but fair

approach. The Nationality and Borders Bill will go further than ever before in putting modern slavery victims' rights into law. At the same time, we will put in place safeguards to ensure that these important protections are provided to those who most need them.

I will begin by addressing the Government amendments. I will attempt to come on to the Opposition amendments, but I do not have very much time. Government amendments 64, 71 and 73 to 75, which will make changes to clauses 60 to 63, are technical amendments that seek to provide greater clarity on the protections provided to possible victims through the recovery period and on when those rights can be withheld, and to ensure that we have flexibility in decision making. Specifically, they enable the conclusive grounds decision to be made in the recovery period, while still providing for a minimum recovery period of 30 days, which is effectively 45 days in guidance. The second part makes clear our position that, in specific circumstances, as set out in clauses 61 and 62, we can withhold the recovery period and the protection from removal that it provides. Those changes allow us to respond to modern slavery as an evolving crime.

On Government amendments 72 and 76 to 83, which all relate to modern slavery specific temporary leave to remain for confirmed victims of modern slavery, the aim is to clarify our international obligations with regard to the provision of temporary leave to remain for confirmed victims. Government amendments 78 and 81 to 83 are minor technical drafting amendments that provide consistency with similar provisions on the statute book. Similarly, Government amendment 79 updates the wording of the clause to reflect amendment 56, which we considered yesterday.

Government amendments 76 and 77 remove the wording "social well-being" from subsection (2)(a) of clause 64 on the temporary leave to remain. That phrase was an over-broad concept that lacked clarity and left the eligibility criteria for a grant of leave under the clause unclear for victims and decision makers, which undermined the aim of the clause.

I reassure hon. Members that we remain in line with our international obligations. We will continue to support, via a grant of temporary leave to remain, those who have a need to be in the UK to recover from physical and psychological harm caused by their exploitation. In the same vein, Government amendment 72 amends the wording in clause 63 from "social well-being" to "social harm". I reassure hon. Members that the clause will be underpinned by the immigration rules, which will provide more guidance on the issue for decision makers.

Government amendment 80 extends the current policy in the Bill that temporary leave will be provided where needs cannot be met in another country of which the individual is a national or citizen, another Council of Europe convention on action against trafficking in human beings signatory country, or any country with which we have an appropriate bilateral agreement. Decision makers will assess potential returns on a case-by-case basis following an individualised assessment in line with guidance and available country information.

**Stuart C. McDonald:** Will the Minister give way?

**Rachel Maclean:** If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I have a huge amount to put on the record. I may take interventions later in my speech, but I have a number of things that I need to address.

I commend the Government amendments to the House and turn to the non-Government amendments. I will attempt to address the points of the hon. Member for Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East (Stuart C. McDonald). As I have said, the Government are committed to tackling the heinous crime of modern slavery. I will first turn to some of the points made by the hon. Member for Halifax (Holly Lynch) and the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Dame Diana Johnson).

I thank the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North and the organisations that she works with for meeting me. I commend her for her extensive work on this important point. I say again that we are committed to tackling all forms of modern slavery. We recognise the specific and horrific circumstances that victims of sexual exploitation have gone through. We believe that we have the right tools and a compassionate approach to those traumatised victims. Our people are fully trained to take a trauma-informed approach to advocate for them with compassion to help them to rebuild their lives and to reintegrate in their communities.

The hon. Member for Halifax referenced the issue of child victims of modern slavery. I repeat to her and other hon. Members who raised the issue that safeguards are built into the measures and that decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis with appropriate levels of care. It is the clear duty of the Government to safeguard and protect child victims of that appalling exploitation.

The people who are dealing with those victims are professionals who will use their discretion and, again, a trauma-informed approach. They fully understand and appreciate the experience of those children—those vulnerable victims—and will ensure that they get the right support and approach to rebuild their lives. I have much more to say about all the work that we are doing with regard to that, victim navigators and independent child trafficking guardians, and some of the other work that we are doing across police forces, but I am afraid that time will not allow me to expand on those issues.

New clause 47, which was tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Sir Iain Duncan Smith) and signed by several other hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr Bone), relates to support and leave to remain for confirmed victims. It is clear that we share common aims of bringing the perpetrators of that horrendous crime to justice and of supporting victims to rebuild their lives.

I put on record my appreciation of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford and Woodford Green, my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough and many other hon. Members who have advocated for many years to ensure that we support the victims of that awful crime. A number of organisations, such as the Centre for Social Justice, have been instrumental in that; I want to continue to work with them. We are absolutely committed to ensuring that those victims of modern slavery have the support that they need to assist their recovery and the support that they need when they are engaging with the police and through the criminal justice process.

It is a priority to increase prosecutions of perpetrators of modern slavery. My hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough is absolutely right that we do not want to see any victims in the system, which is why we are

*[Rachel Maclean]*

making it clear for the first time that, where a public authority such as the police is pursuing an investigation, those victims who are co-operating and need to remain will be granted temporary leave to remain. Our legislation also makes it clear that leave will be granted where it is necessary to assist an individual in their recovery from any physical or psychological harm arising from the relevant exploitation or where it is necessary to seek compensation from their perpetrators. It is right that leave is granted to those who need it—that is firm but fair.

That is but one element of our work to strengthen the criminal justice response to modern slavery. Since 2016, we have invested £15 million to support the police's response to modern slavery, led by the modern slavery and organised immigration crime programme. Through that programme, the Home Office has provided funding for specialist training for police victim liaison officers, who build trust with victims to facilitate engagement with the process using a victim-centred approach.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford and Woodford Green spoke about the critical role that victim navigators play to help those traumatised individuals to engage with the system to ensure that we bring those despicable criminals to justice. To reflect the need for that specialist expertise, the Home Office funding provides a bespoke modern slavery intelligence hub with regional analysts, operational co-ordinators and improved training to support police forces and increase prosecutions. We are constantly ramping up that work so that we can best get to the source of those awful crimes.

I assure my right hon. Friend that all those who receive a positive conclusive grounds decision and are in need of tailored support will receive appropriate individualised support for a minimum of 12 months. We will set out further details in relevant guidance.

I add a note of appreciation for the hon. Member for Glasgow East (David Linden), who raised the issue of us all being aware of where modern slavery may be happening under our noses. I fully agree with those words and bring them to the attention of everybody in the House.

**Sir Iain Duncan Smith:** I am grateful that my hon. Friend has given the commitment to 12 months, but there are other elements in the new clause. It is not my intention to press it to a vote but, if such amendments are not tabled in the other place, others will table an amendment and we will bring it back to this House for a vote.

**Rachel Maclean:** I thank my right hon. Friend for his words. We will of course watch the progress of the Bill through the other place with interest, and I am happy to work with him and any others as we do so.

Amendments 127 and 128, to which a number of Members have referred, seek to remove clauses 57 and 58 on the one-stop process as it relates to information relevant to modern slavery. These clauses are crucial to the Bill to enable us to appropriately identify victims at the earliest opportunity and make sure that they get support to rebuild their lives.

Finally, on new clause 39 and amendment 3, I appreciate the concerns about clause 62, but it is right that we should be able to withhold protection from serious criminals and those who pose a national security threat to the UK. I would like to reassure hon. Members such as my hon. Friend the Member for North East Bedfordshire (Richard Fuller) that our approach is not to have a blanket disqualification based on public order, but to take a case-by-case approach to decisions and consider the individual's circumstances.

I would like to restate that our approach is to stamp out this evil and inhuman trade. The Bill is firm and fair, and it is in line with the overall objectives of our new plan for immigration. For those reasons, I hope that hon. Members will be content not to press their amendments.

*Question put,* That the clause be read a Second time.

*The House proceeded to a Division.*

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** Order. Would the Serjeant at Arms please investigate the delay in the Aye Lobby? This is not acceptable: this Division should have been concluded by now. There is a lot of business to be done this afternoon, and taking too long to vote is taking time out of the next item of business.

*The House continued to divide.*

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. There is an unacceptable delay in the Aye Lobby. It is simply wrong if people are taking too long to vote, deliberately obstructing the Tellers when coming through and remaining in the Lobby when there is no need for them to be remaining in the Lobby in order to stop other business taking place in this House this afternoon. That is unacceptable. There is deliberate action occurring in the Aye Lobby, and it is unacceptable.

*The House having divided:* Ayes 236, Noes 288.

**Division No. 140] [2.59 pm**

**AYES**

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
Abrahams, Debbie
Ali, Rushanara
Ali, Tahir
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Amesbury, Mike
Anderson, Fleur
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Ashworth, rh Jonathan
Bardell, Hannah
Barker, Paula
Begum, Apsana
Benn, rh Hilary
Betts, Mr Clive
Blackford, rh Ian
Blackman, Kirsty
Blake, Olivia
Blomfield, Paul
Bonnar, Steven
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brennan, Kevin
Brock, Deidre
Brown, Alan
Brown, Ms Lyn
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burgon, Richard
Butler, Dawn
Byrne, Ian
Cadbury, Ruth
Cameron, Dr Lisa
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Chamberlain, Wendy
Champion, Sarah
Chapman, Douglas
Charalambous, Bambos
Cherry, Joanna
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Cowan, Ronnie
Coyle, Neil
Crawley, Angela
Creasy, Stella *(Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore)*
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Cummins, Judith
Cunningham, Alex
Daby, Janet
Davey, rh Ed
Davies, Geraint
Davies-Jones, Alex

Day, Martyn
De Cordova, Marsha
Debbonaire, Thangam
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Dodds, Anneliese
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
Doogan, Dave
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Dromey, Jack
Duffield, Rosie
Eagle, Dame Angela
Eagle, Maria
Eastwood, Colum
Edwards, Jonathan
Efford, Clive
Elliott, Julie
Elmore, Chris
Eshalomi, Florence
Esterson, Bill
Farron, Tim
Farry, Stephen
Ferrier, Margaret
Flynn, Stephen
Fovargue, Yvonne
Foxcroft, Vicky
Foy, Mary Kelly
Furniss, Gill
Gibson, Patricia
Gill, Preet Kaur
Glindon, Mary
Grant, Peter
Green, Kate
Green, Sarah
Greenwood, Lilian
Greenwood, Margaret
Griffith, Nia
Gwynne, Andrew
Haigh, Louise
Hamilton, Fabian
Hanna, Claire
Hanvey, Neale
Harman, rh Ms Harriet
Hayes, Helen
Healey, rh John
Hendrick, Sir Mark
Hendry, Drew
Hillier, Dame Meg
Hobhouse, Wera
Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hollern, Kate
Hopkins, Rachel
Hosie, rh Stewart
Howarth, rh Sir George
Huq, Dr Rupa
Hussain, Imran
Jardine, Christine
Jarvis, Dan
Johnson, rh Dame Diana
Jones, Darren
Jones, Gerald
Jones, rh Mr Kevan
Jones, Ruth
Jones, Sarah
Kane, Mike
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz
Khan, Afzal
Kinnock, Stephen
Lake, Ben
Lavery, Ian
Law, Chris
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Lewis, Clive
Linden, David
Lloyd, Tony
Lockhart, Carla
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lucas, Caroline
Lynch, Holly
MacAskill, Kenny
MacNeil, Angus Brendan
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Malhotra, Seema
Maskell, Rachael
Mc Nally, John
McCabe, Steve
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonald, Andy
McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
McDonald, Stuart C.
McDonnell, rh John
McFadden, rh Mr Pat
McGovern, Alison
McLaughlin, Anne
McMahon, Jim
Mearns, Ian
Miliband, rh Edward
Mishra, Navendu
Monaghan, Carol
Moran, Layla
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, Grahame
Murray, Ian
Murray, James
Newlands, Gavin
Nicolson, John
Norris, Alex
O'Hara, Brendan
Olney, Sarah
Onwurah, Chi
Oppong-Asare, Abena
Osamor, Kate
Osborne, Kate
Oswald, Kirsten
Owatemi, Taiwo
Owen, Sarah
Paisley, Ian
Peacock, Stephanie
Pennycook, Matthew
Perkins, Mr Toby
Phillips, Jess
Pollard, Luke
Powell, Lucy
Qaisar, Ms Anum
Qureshi, Yasmin
Rees, Christina
Reeves, Ellie
Reeves, Rachel
Reynolds, Jonathan
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
Rodda, Matt
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Shah, Naz
Shannon, Jim
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheerman, Mr Barry
Sheppard, Tommy
Siddiq, Tulip
Slaughter, Andy
Smith, Alyn
Smith, Cat
Smith, Jeff
Smith, Nick
Smyth, Karin
Sobel, Alex
Starmer, rh Keir
Stephens, Chris
Stevens, Jo
Stone, Jamie
Streeting, Wes
Stringer, Graham
Sultana, Zarah
Tami, rh Mark
Tarry, Sam
Thewliss, Alison
Thomas, Gareth
Thomas-Symonds, rh Nick
Thompson, Owen
Thornberry, rh Emily
Timms, rh Stephen
Turner, Karl
Twigg, Derek
Vaz, rh Valerie
Webbe, Claudia
West, Catherine
Western, Matt
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitford, Dr Philippa
Whitley, Mick
Williams, Hywel
Wilson, Munira
Wilson, rh Sammy
Winter, Beth
Wishart, Pete
Yasin, Mohammad
Zeichner, Daniel

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Colleen Fletcher and Liz Twist**

**NOES**

Adams, rh Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Aiken, Nickie
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Anderson, Lee
Anderson, Stuart
Andrew, rh Stuart
Argar, Edward
Atherton, Sarah
Atkins, Victoria
Bacon, Gareth
Bacon, Mr Richard
Bailey, Shaun
Baillie, Siobhan
Baker, Duncan
Baker, Mr Steve
Baldwin, Harriett
Baron, Mr John
Baynes, Simon
Bell, Aaron
Benton, Scott
Beresford, Sir Paul
Berry, rh Jake
Bhatti, Saqib
Blackman, Bob
Blunt, Crispin
Bone, Mr Peter
Bottomley, Sir Peter
Bowie, Andrew
Bradley, Ben
Brady, Sir Graham
Braverman, rh Suella
Brereton, Jack
Brine, Steve
Bristow, Paul
Britcliffe, Sara
Browne, Anthony
Bruce, Fiona
Buchan, Felicity
Buckland, rh Robert
Burghart, Alex
Burns, rh Conor
Butler, Rob
Cairns, rh Alun
Carter, Andy
Cartlidge, James
Cash, Sir William
Cates, Miriam
Caulfield, Maria
Chalk, Alex
Chishti, Rehman
Chope, Sir Christopher
Churchill, Jo
Clark, rh Greg
Clarke, Theo
Clarke-Smith, Brendan
Clarkson, Chris
Cleverly, rh James
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Colburn, Elliot
Collins, Damian
Costa, Alberto
Courts, Robert
Coutinho, Claire
Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
Crabb, rh Stephen
Crosbie, Virginia
Crouch, Tracey
Daly, James
Davies, David T. C.
Davies, Gareth
Davies, Dr James
Davies, Mims
Davis, rh Mr David
Davison, Dehenna
Dinenage, Caroline
Dines, Miss Sarah
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Docherty, Leo
Donelan, rh Michelle
Double, Steve
Dowden, rh Oliver
Doyle-Price, Jackie
Drummond, Mrs Flick
Duddridge, James
Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain
Dunne, rh Philip
Eastwood, Mark
Edwards, Ruth
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Elphicke, Mrs Natalie
Eustice, rh George
Evans, Dr Luke
Evennett, rh Sir David
Fabricant, Michael
Farris, Laura

Fell, Simon
Fletcher, Katherine
Fletcher, Mark
Fletcher, Nick
Ford, Vicky
Foster, Kevin
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Frazer, rh Lucy
Freeman, George
Freer, Mike
French, Mr Louie
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Gibb, rh Nick
Gibson, Peter
Gideon, Jo
Glen, John
Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
Grant, Mrs Helen
Grayling, rh Chris
Green, Chris
Green, rh Damian
Griffith, Andrew
Griffiths, Kate
Grundy, James
Gullis, Jonathan
Halfon, rh Robert
Hammond, Stephen
Hands, rh Greg
Harper, rh Mr Mark
Harris, Rebecca
Harrison, Trudy
Hart, Sally-Ann
Hart, rh Simon
Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Heappey, James
Heaton-Harris, Chris
Henderson, Gordon
Henry, Darren
Hinds, rh Damian
Holden, Mr Richard
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Holmes, Paul
Howell, John
Howell, Paul
Hudson, Dr Neil
Hughes, Eddie
Hunt, Jane
Hunt, rh Jeremy
Hunt, Tom
Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenkinson, Mark
Jenkyns, Andrea
Jenrick, rh Robert
Johnson, Dr Caroline
Johnson, Gareth
Johnston, David
Jones, Andrew
Jones, rh Mr David
Jones, Mr Marcus
Jupp, Simon
Kawczynski, Daniel
Kearns, Alicia
Keegan, Gillian
Knight, Julian
Kruger, Danny
Lamont, John
Largan, Robert
Latham, Mrs Pauline
Leadsom, rh Dame Andrea
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Levy, Ian
Lewer, Andrew
Lewis, rh Brandon
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Loder, Chris
Logan, Mark
Lopez, Julia
Lord, Mr Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Mackinlay, Craig
Maclean, Rachel
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, rh Kit
Mangnall, Anthony
Mann, Scott
Marson, Julie
Mayhew, Jerome
Maynard, Paul
McCartney, Jason
McCartney, Karl
McPartland, Stephen
Menzies, Mark
Metcalfe, Stephen
Millar, Robin
Miller, rh Mrs Maria
Mills, Nigel
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Mohindra, Mr Gagan
Moore, Damien
Moore, Robbie
Morris, Anne Marie
Morris, David
Morris, James
Morrissey, Joy
Mortimer, Jill
Morton, Wendy
Mullan, Dr Kieran
Mumby-Croft, Holly
Mundell, rh David
Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
Neill, Sir Robert
Nici, Lia
Nokes, rh Caroline
Norman, rh Jesse
O'Brien, Neil
Parish, Neil
Patel, rh Priti
Pawsey, Mark
Penning, rh Sir Mike
Penrose, John
Philp, Chris
Pincher, rh Christopher
Prentis, Victoria
Pritchard, rh Mark
Pursglove, Tom
Quin, Jeremy
Quince, Will
Raab, rh Dominic
Randall, Tom
Redwood, rh John
Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
Richards, Nicola
Richardson, Angela
Roberts, Rob
Robertson, Mr Laurence
Robinson, Mary
Rosindell, Andrew
Rowley, Lee
Russell, Dean
Sambrook, Gary
Saxby, Selaine
Scully, Paul
Selous, Andrew
Simmonds, David
Smith, Greg
Smith, Henry
Smith, rh Julian
Smith, Royston
Solloway, Amanda
Spencer, Dr Ben
Stafford, Alexander
Stephenson, Andrew
Stevenson, Jane
Stevenson, John
Stewart, rh Bob
Stride, rh Mel
Stuart, Graham
Sturdy, Julian
Sunderland, James
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Thomas, Derek
Throup, Maggie
Tolhurst, Kelly
Tracey, Craig
Vara, Shailesh
Vickers, Martin
Vickers, Matt
Villiers, rh Theresa
Wakeford, Christian
Walker, Sir Charles
Walker, Mr Robin
Wallis, Dr Jamie
Warburton, David
Warman, Matt
Watling, Giles
Webb, Suzanne
Wheeler, Mrs Heather
Whittingdale, rh Mr John
Wiggin, Bill
Wild, James
Williams, Craig
Williamson, rh Gavin
Wood, Mike
Wright, rh Jeremy
Young, Jacob

**Tellers for the Noes:**
**Craig Whittaker and Michael Tomlinson**

*Question accordingly negatived.*

3.18 pm

*More than two hours having elapsed since the commencement of proceedings on consideration, the proceedings were interrupted (Programme Order, 7 December).*

*The Deputy Speaker put forthwith the Questions necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded at that time (Standing Order No. 83E).*

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** This Division will be conducted in a timely fashion. I will not have it obstructed deliberately.

## New Clause 6

EXEMPTION FOR CHILD VICTIMS OF MODERN SLAVERY, EXPLOITATION OR TRAFFICKING

(1) The Secretary of State may not serve a slavery or trafficking information

notice on a person in respect of an incident or incidents which occurred when the person was aged under 18 years.

(2) Section 61 of this Act does not apply in cases where either of the positive reasonable grounds decisions related to an incident or incidents which occurred when the person was aged under 18 years.

(3) Section 62 of this Act does not apply in cases where the positive reasonable grounds decision related to an incident or incidents which occurred when the person was aged under 18 years.

(4) Sections 64(3) and 64(6) of this Act do not apply in cases where the positive conclusive grounds decision related to an incident or incidents which occurred when the person was aged under 18 years.—*[Holly Lynch.]*

*Brought up,*

*Question put,* That the clause be added to the Bill.

*The House proceeded to a Division.*

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I ask the Serjeant at Arms to investigate, once again, the delay in the Lobbies. This is an anti-democratic practice. It may not be obvious to the House, or to those who observe our proceedings, that the effect of delaying these Divisions is to deprive

the Home Secretary and the shadow Home Secretary of the ability to speak on Third Reading of the Bill. That is unacceptable. It is right that this House should hear from the Home Secretary, the shadow Home Secretary, and others on Third Reading. The delaying tactics, if one can use that term, that appear to be being used are unacceptable and contrary to good democratic practice.

**Mr David Davis** (Haltemprice and Howden) (Con): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Is it about the Division?

**Mr Davis:** It is.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Then I can accept the right hon. Gentleman's point of order.

**Mr Davis:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. In view of the anti-democratic nature of the obstruction, is it possible to name the people who are causing it?

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** The right hon. Gentleman asks a perfectly reasonable question. I am considering the answer. At present, I have no proof of the identity of those who are obstructing these Divisions. I will endeavour to obtain that information, and then I will consider what to do with it.

*The House divided:* Ayes 234, Noes 293.

**Division No. 141] [3.19 pm**

**AYES**

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
Abrahams, Debbie
Ali, Rushanara
Ali, Tahir
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Amesbury, Mike
Anderson, Fleur
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Ashworth, rh Jonathan
Bardell, Hannah
Barker, Paula
Begum, Apsana
Benn, rh Hilary
Betts, Mr Clive
Blackford, rh Ian
Blackman, Kirsty
Blake, Olivia
Bonnar, Steven
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brennan, Kevin
Brock, Deidre
Brown, Alan
Brown, Ms Lyn
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burgon, Richard
Butler, Dawn
Byrne, Ian
Cadbury, Ruth
Cameron, Dr Lisa
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Chamberlain, Wendy
Champion, Sarah
Chapman, Douglas
Charalambous, Bambos
Cherry, Joanna
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Cowan, Ronnie
Coyle, Neil
Crawley, Angela
Creasy, Stella *(Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore)*
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Cummins, Judith
Cunningham, Alex
Daby, Janet
Davey, rh Ed
Davies, Geraint
Davies-Jones, Alex
Day, Martyn
De Cordova, Marsha
Debbonaire, Thangam
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Dodds, Anneliese
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
Doogan, Dave
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Dromey, Jack
Duffield, Rosie
Eagle, Dame Angela
Eagle, Maria
Eastwood, Colum
Edwards, Jonathan
Efford, Clive
Elliott, Julie
Elmore, Chris
Eshalomi, Florence
Esterson, Bill
Farron, Tim
Farry, Stephen
Ferrier, Margaret
Flynn, Stephen
Fovargue, Yvonne
Foxcroft, Vicky
Foy, Mary Kelly
Furniss, Gill
Gibson, Patricia
Gill, Preet Kaur
Glindon, Mary
Grant, Peter
Green, Kate
Green, Sarah
Greenwood, Lilian
Greenwood, Margaret
Griffith, Nia
Gwynne, Andrew
Haigh, Louise
Hamilton, Fabian
Hanna, Claire
Hanvey, Neale
Harman, rh Ms Harriet
Hayes, Helen
Healey, rh John
Hendrick, Sir Mark
Hendry, Drew
Hillier, Dame Meg
Hobhouse, Wera
Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hollern, Kate
Hopkins, Rachel
Hosie, rh Stewart
Howarth, rh Sir George
Huq, Dr Rupa
Hussain, Imran
Jardine, Christine
Jarvis, Dan
Johnson, rh Dame Diana
Jones, Darren
Jones, Gerald
Jones, rh Mr Kevan
Jones, Ruth
Jones, Sarah
Kane, Mike
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz
Khan, Afzal
Kinnock, Stephen
Lake, Ben
Lavery, Ian
Law, Chris
Leadbeater, Kim
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Lewis, Clive
Linden, David
Lloyd, Tony
Lockhart, Carla
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lucas, Caroline
Lynch, Holly
MacAskill, Kenny
MacNeil, Angus Brendan
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Malhotra, Seema
Maskell, Rachael
Mc Nally, John
McCabe, Steve
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonald, Andy
McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
McDonald, Stuart C.
McDonnell, rh John
McFadden, rh Mr Pat
McGovern, Alison
McLaughlin, Anne
McMahon, Jim
Mearns, Ian
Miliband, rh Edward
Mishra, Navendu
Monaghan, Carol
Moran, Layla
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, Grahame
Murray, Ian
Murray, James
Newlands, Gavin
Nicolson, John
Norris, Alex
O'Hara, Brendan
Olney, Sarah
Onwurah, Chi
Oppong-Asare, Abena
Osamor, Kate
Osborne, Kate
Oswald, Kirsten
Owatemi, Taiwo
Owen, Sarah
Paisley, Ian
Peacock, Stephanie
Pennycook, Matthew
Perkins, Mr Toby
Phillips, Jess
Pollard, Luke
Powell, Lucy
Qaisar, Ms Anum
Qureshi, Yasmin
Rees, Christina
Reeves, Ellie
Reeves, Rachel
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
Rodda, Matt
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Shah, Naz
Shannon, Jim
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheerman, Mr Barry
Sheppard, Tommy
Siddiq, Tulip
Slaughter, Andy
Smith, Alyn
Smith, Cat
Smith, Jeff
Smith, Nick
Smyth, Karin
Sobel, Alex
Starmer, rh Keir
Stephens, Chris
Stevens, Jo
Stone, Jamie
Streeting, Wes
Stringer, Graham
Sultana, Zarah
Tami, rh Mark
Tarry, Sam
Thewliss, Alison
Thomas, Gareth
Thomas-Symonds, rh Nick
Thompson, Owen

Thomson, Richard
Thornberry, rh Emily
Timms, rh Stephen
Turner, Karl
Twigg, Derek
Vaz, rh Valerie
Webbe, Claudia
West, Catherine
Western, Matt
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitford, Dr Philippa
Whitley, Mick
Williams, Hywel
Wilson, Munira
Wilson, rh Sammy
Winter, Beth
Wishart, Pete
Yasin, Mohammad
Zeichner, Daniel

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Colleen Fletcher and Liz Twist**

**NOES**

Adams, rh Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Aiken, Nickie
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Anderson, Lee
Anderson, Stuart
Andrew, rh Stuart
Argar, Edward
Atherton, Sarah
Atkins, Victoria
Bacon, Gareth
Bacon, Mr Richard
Bailey, Shaun
Baillie, Siobhan
Baker, Duncan
Baker, Mr Steve
Baldwin, Harriett
Baron, Mr John
Baynes, Simon
Bell, Aaron
Benton, Scott
Beresford, Sir Paul
Berry, rh Jake
Bhatti, Saqib
Blackman, Bob
Blunt, Crispin
Bone, Mr Peter
Bottomley, Sir Peter
Bowie, Andrew
Bradley, Ben
Brady, Sir Graham
Braverman, rh Suella
Brereton, Jack
Brine, Steve
Bristow, Paul
Britcliffe, Sara
Browne, Anthony
Bruce, Fiona
Buchan, Felicity
Buckland, rh Robert
Burghart, Alex
Burns, rh Conor
Butler, Rob
Cairns, rh Alun
Carter, Andy
Cartlidge, James
Cash, Sir William
Cates, Miriam
Caulfield, Maria
Chalk, Alex
Chishti, Rehman
Chope, Sir Christopher
Churchill, Jo
Clark, rh Greg
Clarke, Theo
Clarke-Smith, Brendan
Clarkson, Chris
Cleverly, rh James
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Colburn, Elliot
Collins, Damian
Costa, Alberto
Courts, Robert
Coutinho, Claire
Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
Crabb, rh Stephen
Crosbie, Virginia
Crouch, Tracey
Daly, James
Davies, David T. C.
Davies, Gareth
Davies, Dr James
Davies, Mims
Davies, Philip
Davis, rh Mr David
Davison, Dehenna
Dinenage, Caroline
Dines, Miss Sarah
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Docherty, Leo
Donelan, rh Michelle
Double, Steve
Dowden, rh Oliver
Doyle-Price, Jackie
Drax, Richard
Drummond, Mrs Flick
Duddridge, James
Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain
Dunne, rh Philip
Eastwood, Mark
Edwards, Ruth
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Elphicke, Mrs Natalie
Eustice, rh George
Evans, Dr Luke
Evennett, rh Sir David
Fabricant, Michael
Farris, Laura
Fell, Simon
Fletcher, Katherine
Fletcher, Mark
Fletcher, Nick
Ford, Vicky
Foster, Kevin
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Frazer, rh Lucy
Freeman, George
Freer, Mike
French, Mr Louie
Fuller, Richard
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Gibb, rh Nick
Gibson, Peter
Gideon, Jo
Glen, John
Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
Grant, Mrs Helen
Grayling, rh Chris
Green, Chris
Green, rh Damian
Griffith, Andrew
Griffiths, Kate
Grundy, James
Gullis, Jonathan
Halfon, rh Robert
Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, rh Matt
Hands, rh Greg
Harper, rh Mr Mark
Harris, Rebecca
Harrison, Trudy
Hart, Sally-Ann
Hart, rh Simon
Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Heappey, James
Heaton-Harris, Chris
Henderson, Gordon
Henry, Darren
Hinds, rh Damian
Holden, Mr Richard
Hollinrake, Kevin
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Holmes, Paul
Howell, John
Howell, Paul
Hudson, Dr Neil
Hughes, Eddie
Hunt, Jane
Hunt, rh Jeremy
Hunt, Tom
Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenkinson, Mark
Jenkyns, Andrea
Jenrick, rh Robert
Johnson, Dr Caroline
Johnson, Gareth
Johnston, David
Jones, Andrew
Jones, rh Mr David
Jones, Mr Marcus
Jupp, Simon
Kawczynski, Daniel
Kearns, Alicia
Keegan, Gillian
Knight, Julian
Kruger, Danny
Lamont, John
Largan, Robert
Latham, Mrs Pauline
Leadsom, rh Dame Andrea
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Levy, Ian
Lewer, Andrew
Lewis, rh Brandon
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Loder, Chris
Logan, Mark
Lopez, Julia
Lord, Mr Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Mackinlay, Craig
Maclean, Rachel
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, rh Kit
Mangnall, Anthony
Mann, Scott
Marson, Julie
Mayhew, Jerome
Maynard, Paul
McCartney, Karl
McPartland, Stephen
McVey, rh Esther
Menzies, Mark
Metcalfe, Stephen
Millar, Robin
Miller, rh Mrs Maria
Milling, rh Amanda
Mills, Nigel
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Mohindra, Mr Gagan
Moore, Damien
Moore, Robbie
Morris, Anne Marie
Morris, David
Morris, James
Morrissey, Joy
Mortimer, Jill
Morton, Wendy
Mullan, Dr Kieran
Mumby-Croft, Holly
Mundell, rh David
Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
Neill, Sir Robert
Nici, Lia
Nokes, rh Caroline
Norman, rh Jesse
O'Brien, Neil
Parish, Neil
Patel, rh Priti
Pawsey, Mark
Penning, rh Sir Mike
Penrose, John
Pincher, rh Christopher
Prentis, Victoria
Pritchard, rh Mark
Pursglove, Tom
Quin, Jeremy
Quince, Will
Raab, rh Dominic
Randall, Tom
Redwood, rh John
Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
Richards, Nicola
Richardson, Angela
Roberts, Rob
Robertson, Mr Laurence
Robinson, Mary
Rowley, Lee
Russell, Dean
Sambrook, Gary
Saxby, Selaine
Scully, Paul
Selous, Andrew
Simmonds, David
Smith, Greg
Smith, Henry
Smith, rh Julian
Smith, Royston
Solloway, Amanda
Spencer, Dr Ben
Stafford, Alexander
Stephenson, Andrew
Stevenson, Jane
Stevenson, John
Stewart, rh Bob

Stride, rh Mel
Stuart, Graham
Sturdy, Julian
Sunderland, James
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Thomas, Derek
Throup, Maggie
Tolhurst, Kelly
Tracey, Craig
Vara, Shailesh
Vickers, Martin
Vickers, Matt
Villiers, rh Theresa
Wakeford, Christian
Walker, Sir Charles
Walker, Mr Robin
Wallis, Dr Jamie
Warburton, David
Warman, Matt
Watling, Giles
Webb, Suzanne
Wheeler, Mrs Heather
Whittingdale, rh Mr John
Wiggin, Bill
Wild, James
Williams, Craig
Williamson, rh Gavin
Wood, Mike
Wright, rh Jeremy
Young, Jacob

**Tellers for the Noes:**
**Craig Whittaker and Michael Tomlinson**

*Question accordingly negatived.*

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** New clause 47 has been selected for a separate decision. I call Sir Iain Duncan Smith to move the new clause formally.

**Sir Iain Duncan Smith:** Not moved.

### Clause 58

LATE COMPLIANCE WITH SLAVERY OR TRAFFICKING INFORMATION NOTICE: DAMAGE TO CREDIBILITY

*Amendment proposed*: 128, page 57, line 25, leave out clause 58.—*(Stuart C. McDonald.)*

*Question put,* That the amendment be made.

*The House proceeded to a Division.*

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** Will the Serjeant at Arms please go and clear the Lobby?

**David Linden:** On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Does the hon. Gentleman's point of order relate to the Division?

**David Linden:** It does, Madam Deputy Speaker. Given that it is taking quite a lot of time to get through the votes, I wonder whether it might be possible to investigate the idea of introducing this thing called electronic voting, which would speed things up a little bit.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** If the hon. Gentleman had been behaving properly, I might have taken his point of order seriously. I have to say to him and to the House that a very serious piece of legislation is going through the House today. There has been genuine debate and disagreement about it, but it is legislation that will affect a lot of people in this country and it deserves to be properly considered. The antics that have been reported to me—the way in which certain Members have behaved, very obviously delaying and lengthening the time that the Divisions are taking—are, as I said a few moments ago, contrary to good democratic practice. I deplore the actions of those people who have delayed the Divisions, and who indeed are doing so now. Will they please cast their votes, come back into the Chamber and allow the Third Reading to take place?

*The House having divided:* Ayes 231, Noes 300.

**Division No. 142] [3.35 pm**

**AYES**

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
Abrahams, Debbie
Ali, Rushanara
Ali, Tahir
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Amesbury, Mike
Anderson, Fleur
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Ashworth, rh Jonathan
Bardell, Hannah
Barker, Paula
Begum, Apsana
Benn, rh Hilary
Betts, Mr Clive
Blackford, rh Ian
Blackman, Kirsty
Blake, Olivia
Blomfield, Paul
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brennan, Kevin
Brock, Deidre
Brown, Alan
Brown, Ms Lyn
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burgon, Richard
Butler, Dawn
Byrne, Ian
Byrne, rh Liam
Cadbury, Ruth
Cameron, Dr Lisa
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Chamberlain, Wendy
Champion, Sarah
Chapman, Douglas
Charalambous, Bambos
Cherry, Joanna
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Cowan, Ronnie
Coyle, Neil
Crawley, Angela
Creasy, Stella *(Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore)*
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Cummins, Judith
Cunningham, Alex
Daby, Janet
Davey, rh Ed
Davies, Geraint
Davies-Jones, Alex
Day, Martyn
De Cordova, Marsha
Debbonaire, Thangam
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Dodds, Anneliese
Doogan, Dave
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Dromey, Jack
Duffield, Rosie
Eagle, Dame Angela
Eagle, Maria
Eastwood, Colum
Edwards, Jonathan
Efford, Clive
Elliott, Julie
Elmore, Chris
Eshalomi, Florence
Esterson, Bill
Farron, Tim
Farry, Stephen
Ferrier, Margaret
Fletcher, Colleen
Flynn, Stephen
Fovargue, Yvonne
Foxcroft, Vicky
Foy, Mary Kelly
Furniss, Gill
Gibson, Patricia
Gill, Preet Kaur
Glindon, Mary
Green, Kate
Green, Sarah
Greenwood, Lilian
Greenwood, Margaret
Griffith, Nia
Gwynne, Andrew
Haigh, Louise
Hamilton, Fabian
Hanna, Claire
Hanvey, Neale
Hayes, Helen
Healey, rh John
Hendrick, Sir Mark
Hendry, Drew
Hillier, Dame Meg
Hobhouse, Wera
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hollern, Kate
Hopkins, Rachel
Hosie, rh Stewart
Howarth, rh Sir George
Huq, Dr Rupa
Hussain, Imran
Jardine, Christine
Jarvis, Dan
Johnson, rh Dame Diana
Jones, Darren
Jones, Gerald
Jones, rh Mr Kevan
Jones, Ruth
Jones, Sarah
Kane, Mike
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz
Khan, Afzal
Kinnock, Stephen
Kyle, Peter
Lake, Ben
Lavery, Ian
Law, Chris
Leadbeater, Kim
Lewis, Clive
Linden, David
Lloyd, Tony
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lucas, Caroline
Lynch, Holly
MacAskill, Kenny
MacNeil, Angus Brendan
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Malhotra, Seema
Maskell, Rachael

Mc Nally, John
McCabe, Steve
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonald, Andy
McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
McDonald, Stuart C.
McDonnell, rh John
McFadden, rh Mr Pat
McGovern, Alison
McLaughlin, Anne
McMahon, Jim
Mearns, Ian
Miliband, rh Edward
Mishra, Navendu
Monaghan, Carol
Moran, Layla
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, Grahame
Murray, Ian
Murray, James
Newlands, Gavin
Nicolson, John
Norris, Alex
O'Hara, Brendan
Olney, Sarah
Onwurah, Chi
Oppong-Asare, Abena
Osamor, Kate
Osborne, Kate
Oswald, Kirsten
Owatemi, Taiwo
Owen, Sarah
Peacock, Stephanie
Pennycook, Matthew
Perkins, Mr Toby
Phillips, Jess
Pollard, Luke
Powell, Lucy
Qaisar, Ms Anum
Qureshi, Yasmin
Rees, Christina
Reeves, Ellie
Reeves, Rachel
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
Rodda, Matt
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Shah, Naz
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheerman, Mr Barry
Sheppard, Tommy
Siddiq, Tulip
Slaughter, Andy
Smith, Alyn
Smith, Cat
Smith, Jeff
Smyth, Karin
Sobel, Alex
Starmer, rh Keir
Stephens, Chris
Stevens, Jo
Stone, Jamie
Streeting, Wes
Stringer, Graham
Sultana, Zarah
Tami, rh Mark
Tarry, Sam
Thewliss, Alison
Thomas, Gareth
Thomas-Symonds, rh Nick
Thompson, Owen
Thornberry, rh Emily
Timms, rh Stephen
Turner, Karl
Twigg, Derek
Twist, Liz
Vaz, rh Valerie
Webbe, Claudia
West, Catherine
Western, Matt
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitford, Dr Philippa
Whitley, Mick
Williams, Hywel
Wilson, Munira
Winter, Beth
Wishart, Pete
Yasin, Mohammad
Zeichner, Daniel

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Richard Thomson and Steven Bonnar**

**NOES**

Adams, rh Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Aiken, Nickie
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Anderson, Lee
Anderson, Stuart
Andrew, rh Stuart
Argar, Edward
Atherton, Sarah
Atkins, Victoria
Bacon, Gareth
Bacon, Mr Richard
Bailey, Shaun
Baillie, Siobhan
Baker, Duncan
Baker, Mr Steve
Baldwin, Harriett
Baron, Mr John
Baynes, Simon
Bell, Aaron
Benton, Scott
Beresford, Sir Paul
Berry, rh Jake
Bhatti, Saqib
Blackman, Bob
Blunt, Crispin
Bone, Mr Peter
Bottomley, Sir Peter
Bowie, Andrew
Bradley, Ben
Brady, Sir Graham
Braverman, rh Suella
Brereton, Jack
Brine, Steve
Bristow, Paul
Britcliffe, Sara
Browne, Anthony
Bruce, Fiona
Buchan, Felicity
Buckland, rh Robert
Burghart, Alex
Burns, rh Conor
Butler, Rob
Cairns, rh Alun
Carter, Andy
Cartlidge, James
Cash, Sir William
Cates, Miriam
Caulfield, Maria
Chalk, Alex
Chishti, Rehman
Chope, Sir Christopher
Churchill, Jo
Clark, rh Greg
Clarke, Theo
Clarke-Smith, Brendan
Clarkson, Chris
Cleverly, rh James
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Colburn, Elliot
Collins, Damian
Costa, Alberto
Courts, Robert
Coutinho, Claire
Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
Crabb, rh Stephen
Crosbie, Virginia
Crouch, Tracey
Daly, James
Davies, David T. C.
Davies, Gareth
Davies, Dr James
Davies, Mims
Davies, Philip
Davis, rh Mr David
Davison, Dehenna
Dinenage, Caroline
Dines, Miss Sarah
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Docherty, Leo
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
Donelan, rh Michelle
Double, Steve
Dowden, rh Oliver
Doyle-Price, Jackie
Drax, Richard
Drummond, Mrs Flick
Duddridge, James
Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain
Dunne, rh Philip
Eastwood, Mark
Edwards, Ruth
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Elphicke, Mrs Natalie
Eustice, rh George
Evans, Dr Luke
Evennett, rh Sir David
Fabricant, Michael
Farris, Laura
Fell, Simon
Fletcher, Katherine
Fletcher, Mark
Fletcher, Nick
Ford, Vicky
Foster, Kevin
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Frazer, rh Lucy
Freeman, George
Freer, Mike
French, Mr Louie
Fuller, Richard
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Gibb, rh Nick
Gibson, Peter
Gideon, Jo
Glen, John
Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
Grant, Mrs Helen
Gray, James
Grayling, rh Chris
Green, Chris
Green, rh Damian
Griffith, Andrew
Griffiths, Kate
Grundy, James
Gullis, Jonathan
Halfon, rh Robert
Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, rh Matt
Hands, rh Greg
Harper, rh Mr Mark
Harris, Rebecca
Harrison, Trudy
Hart, Sally-Ann
Hart, rh Simon
Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Heappey, James
Heaton-Harris, Chris
Henderson, Gordon
Henry, Darren
Hinds, rh Damian
Holden, Mr Richard
Hollinrake, Kevin
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Holmes, Paul
Howell, John
Howell, Paul
Hudson, Dr Neil
Hughes, Eddie
Hunt, Jane
Hunt, rh Jeremy
Hunt, Tom
Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenkinson, Mark
Jenkyns, Andrea
Jenrick, rh Robert
Johnson, Dr Caroline
Johnson, Gareth
Johnston, David
Jones, Andrew
Jones, rh Mr David
Jones, Mr Marcus
Jupp, Simon
Kawczynski, Daniel
Kearns, Alicia
Keegan, Gillian
Knight, Julian
Kruger, Danny
Lamont, John
Largan, Robert
Latham, Mrs Pauline
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Levy, Ian
Lewer, Andrew
Lewis, rh Brandon
Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Lockhart, Carla
Loder, Chris
Logan, Mark
Lopez, Julia
Lord, Mr Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Mackinlay, Craig

Maclean, Rachel
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, rh Kit
Mangnall, Anthony
Mann, Scott
Marson, Julie
Mayhew, Jerome
Maynard, Paul
McCartney, Jason
McCartney, Karl
McPartland, Stephen
McVey, rh Esther
Menzies, Mark
Metcalfe, Stephen
Millar, Robin
Miller, rh Mrs Maria
Milling, rh Amanda
Mills, Nigel
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Mohindra, Mr Gagan
Moore, Damien
Moore, Robbie
Morris, Anne Marie
Morris, David
Morris, James
Morrissey, Joy
Mortimer, Jill
Morton, Wendy
Mullan, Dr Kieran
Mumby-Croft, Holly
Mundell, rh David
Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
Neill, Sir Robert
Nici, Lia
Nokes, rh Caroline
Norman, rh Jesse
O'Brien, Neil
Paisley, Ian
Parish, Neil
Patel, rh Priti
Pawsey, Mark
Penning, rh Sir Mike
Penrose, John
Pincher, rh Christopher
Prentis, Victoria
Pritchard, rh Mark
Pursglove, Tom
Quin, Jeremy
Quince, Will
Raab, rh Dominic
Randall, Tom
Redwood, rh John
Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
Richards, Nicola
Richardson, Angela
Roberts, Rob
Robertson, Mr Laurence
Robinson, Mary
Rosindell, Andrew
Rowley, Lee
Russell, Dean
Sambrook, Gary
Saxby, Selaine
Scully, Paul
Selous, Andrew
Shannon, Jim
Simmonds, David
Smith, Greg
Smith, Henry
Smith, rh Julian
Smith, Royston
Solloway, Amanda
Spencer, Dr Ben
Stafford, Alexander
Stephenson, Andrew
Stevenson, Jane
Stevenson, John
Stewart, rh Bob
Stride, rh Mel
Stuart, Graham
Sturdy, Julian
Sunderland, James
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Thomas, Derek
Throup, Maggie
Tolhurst, Kelly
Tracey, Craig
Vara, Shailesh
Vickers, Martin
Vickers, Matt
Villiers, rh Theresa
Wakeford, Christian
Walker, Sir Charles
Walker, Mr Robin
Wallis, Dr Jamie
Warburton, David
Warman, Matt
Watling, Giles
Webb, Suzanne
Wheeler, Mrs Heather
Whittingdale, rh Mr John
Wiggin, Bill
Wild, James
Williams, Craig
Williamson, rh Gavin
Wilson, rh Sammy
Wood, Mike
Wright, rh Jeremy
Young, Jacob

**Tellers for the Noes:**
**Craig Whittaker and Michael Tomlinson**

*Question accordingly negatived.*

**Stephen Flynn** (Aberdeen South) (SNP): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** I am not taking your point of order. Sit down—*[Interruption.]* Sit down! I am not taking any points of order—

**Stephen Flynn** *rose—*

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Sit down! I am not taking a point of order. It would have to be about the Division that we have just had—*[Interruption.]* Sit down!

**Clause 60**

IDENTIFIED POTENTIAL VICTIMS OF SLAVERY OR HUMAN TRAFFICKING: RECOVERY PERIOD

*Amendments made:* 64, page 59, line 1, leave out subsection (2).

*This amendment removes the requirement that there must be at least 30 days between the making of a positive reasonable grounds decision in relation to an identified potential victim of slavery or human trafficking and the making of a conclusive grounds decision.*

Amendment 65, page 59, line 4, at beginning insert "Subject to section 62(2),".

*This is a drafting amendment to make it clear that the prohibition on removal of an identified potential victim does not apply where they are disqualified from protection under clause 62 as a threat to public order or for having acted in bad faith.*

Amendment 66, page 59, line 10, leave out paragraph (b) and insert—

"(b) ending with whichever of the following is the later—

(i) the day on which the conclusive grounds decision is made in relation to the identified potential victim;

(ii) the end of the period of 30 days beginning with the day mentioned in paragraph (a)."—*(Rachel Maclean.)*

*This amendment is consequential on Amendment 64. It ensures that an identified potential victim is entitled to a recovery period (giving protection from removal) of at least 30 days even where a conclusive grounds decision is made within 30 days of the positive reasonable grounds decision.*

**Clause 61**

NO ENTITLEMENT TO ADDITIONAL RECOVERY PERIOD ETC

*Amendments made:* 67, page 59, line 17, after "person" insert

", in a case where the reasonable grounds for believing that the person is a victim of slavery or human trafficking arise from things done wholly before the first RG decision was made".

*This amendment corrects a drafting error in the definition of "further RG decision".*

Amendment 68, page 59, line 18, leave out paragraph (c).

*This amendment is consequential on Amendment 67.*

Amendment 69, page 59, line 21, leave out subsections (2) to (4) and insert—

"(2) If the competent authority considers it appropriate in the circumstances of a particular case, the authority may determine that the person may not be removed from, or required to leave, the United Kingdom during the period—

(a) beginning with the day on which the further RG decision is made, and

(b) ending with whichever of the following is the later—

(i) the day on which the conclusive grounds decision is made in relation to the further RG decision;

(ii) the end of the period of 30 days beginning with the day mentioned in paragraph (a).

This is subject to section 62(2)."—*(Rachel Maclean.)*

*This amendment removes the disapplication of a requirement to make a conclusive grounds decision following a "further RG decision" and instead provides that, although an identified potential victim is not automatically entitled to protection from removal following a further RG decision, the competent authority may decide that it is appropriate to give them that protection.*

## Clause 62

IDENTIFIED POTENTIAL VICTIMS ETC: DISQUALIFICATION FROM PROTECTION

*Amendments made:* 70, page 60, line 1, leave out paragraph (a).

*This amendment is consequential on Amendments 64 and 69.*

Amendment 71, page 60, line 4, at end insert ", and

(c) any requirement under section 64 to grant the person limited leave to remain in the United Kingdom."—*(Rachel Maclean.)*

*This amendment provides that if an identified potential victim is disqualified from protection (on the grounds of public order or acting in bad faith) but goes on to receive a positive conclusive grounds decision, any requirement to grant them leave to remain in the United Kingdom that would otherwise arise under clause 64 ceases to apply.*

## Clause 63

IDENTIFIED POTENTIAL VICTIMS ETC IN ENGLAND AND WALES: ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT

*Amendments made:* 72, page 61, line 28, leave out from "any" to "arising" in line 29 and insert

"physical, psychological or social harm".

*This amendment changes the reference to "social well-being" to "social harm" to follow more closely the language of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.*

Amendment 73, page 61, line 35, leave out paragraph (b).

*This amendment is consequential on Amendment 69.*

Amendment 74, page 61, line 43, leave out paragraph (b) and insert—

"(b) ending with whichever of the following is the later—

(i) the day on which the conclusive grounds decision is made in relation to the further RG decision;

(ii) the end of the period of 30 days beginning with the day mentioned in paragraph (a)."

*This amendment is consequential on Amendment 64.*

Amendment 75, page 61, line 45, leave out subsection (5).—*(Rachel Maclean.)*

*This amendment is consequential on Amendment 73.*

## Clause 64

LEAVE TO REMAIN FOR VICTIMS OF SLAVERY OR HUMAN TRAFFICKING

*Amendments made:* 78, page 62, line 23, leave out "give" and insert "grant".

*This amendment and Amendments 81 to 83 make minor drafting changes for consistency with related provisions on the statute book.*

Amendment 76, page 62, line 26, after "any" insert "physical or psychological".

*This amendment removes assisting a victim of slavery or human trafficking in their recovery from harm to their social well-being from the list of purposes for which the Secretary of State is required to give a victim limited leave to remain the United Kingdom.*

Amendment 77, page 62, line 27, leave out from "exploitation" to end of line 28.

*This amendment is consequential on Amendment 76.*

Amendment 79, page 62, line 33, at end insert—

"(2A) Subsection (2) is subject to section 62(2)."

*This amendment is consequential on Amendment 71.*

Amendment 80, page 63, line 3, leave out "as" and insert

"which may be, but does not need to be, an agreement".

*This amendment makes it clear that a trafficking victim may be removed to a country which is not a signatory to the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, if the UK has made an agreement with that country.*

Amendment 81, page 63, line 9, leave out "give" and insert "grant".

*See the explanatory statement for Amendment 78.*

Amendment 82, page 63, line 11, leave out "given" and insert "granted".

*See the explanatory statement for Amendment 78.*

Amendment 83, page 63, line 12, leave out "given" and insert "granted".—*(Rachel Maclean.)*

*See the explanatory statement for Amendment 78.*

## Clause 81

EXTENT

*Amendment made:* 84, page 79, line 4, leave out subsections (4) and (5) and insert—

"(4) Her Majesty may by Order in Council provide for any of the provisions of this Act to extend, with or without modifications, to any of the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man.

(5) A power under any provision listed in subsection (6) may be exercised so as to extend (with or without modification) to any of the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man any amendment or repeal made by or under this Act of any part of an Act to which the provision listed in subsection (6) relates.

(6) Those provisions are—

(a) section 36 of the Immigration Act 1971,

(b) section 15(1) of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993,

(c) section 13(5) of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996,

(d) section 9(3) of the Special Immigration Appeals Commission Act 1997,

(e) section 170(7) of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999,

(f) section 163(4) of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002,

(g) section 338 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003,

(h) section 49(3) of the Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants etc) Act 2004,

(i) section 63(3) of the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006,

(j) section 60(4) of the UK Borders Act 2007,

(k) section 57(5) of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009,

(l) section 76(6) of the Immigration Act 2014,

(m) section 60(6) of the Modern Slavery Act 2015,

(n) section 95(5) of the Immigration Act 2016, and

(o) section 8(2) of the Immigration and Social Security (EU Withdrawal) Act 2020".—*(Rachel Maclean.)*

*This amendment will enable the provisions of the Bill to be extended, by Order in Council, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.*

## Clause 82

COMMENCEMENT

*Amendments made:* 85, page 79, line 21, leave out "This Part and".

*This amendment, and Amendment 86, make minor drafting changes needed as a result of Amendment 87.*

Amendment 86, page 79, line 25, leave out paragraph (b) and insert—

"(b) this Part."

*See statement for Amendment 85.*

Amendment 87, page 79, line 26, at end insert—

"(3A) The following provisions come into force on the day on which this Act is passed for the purposes of making (and, where required, consulting on) regulations—

(a) section 13 (requirement to make asylum claim at "designated place");

(b) section 26 (accelerated detained appeals);

(c) section 41 and Schedule 4 (penalty for failure to secure goods vehicle etc);

(d) section 42 (working in United Kingdom waters: arrival and entry);

(e) section 49 (persons subject to immigration control: referral or age assessment by local authority);

(f) section 51 (regulations about use of scientific methods in age assessments);

(g) section 52 (regulations about age assessments);

(h) section 68 (interpretation of Part 5);

(i) section 77 (pre-consolidation amendments of immigration legislation)."

*This amendment brings powers in the Bill to make regulations into force on Royal Assent, so that the regulations can be prepared in advance of the substantive provisions being commenced. The regulations themselves will not be commenced for at least two months after Royal Assent.*

Amendment 88, page 79, line 38, leave out paragraph (g).

*This amendment is consequential on Amendment 87.*

Amendment 89, page 79, line 42, leave out paragraphs (j) and (k).

*This amendment is consequential on Amendment 87.*

Amendment 90, page 80, line 3, leave out paragraph (n).—*(Rachel Maclean.)*

*This amendment is consequential on Amendment 87.*

*Third Reading*

3.51 pm

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

Madam Deputy Speaker, may I echo your remarks—

**Stephen Flynn:** On a point of order—

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. No points of order!

**Priti Patel:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. May I echo your remarks—*[Interruption.]*

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** Order. If the hon. Gentleman rises again, I will require him to leave the Chamber.

**Priti Patel:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is appalling that we have seen these delaying tactics today.

This Bill introduces the most significant overhaul of our asylum system in over two decades, and it is a shame that Members of this House have brought in these delaying tactics today to prevent this debate. Our Bill will bring in a new, comprehensive, fair but firm long-term plan that seeks to address the challenge of illegal migration head on. Illegal immigration is facilitated by serious organised criminals exploiting people and profiting from human misery.

**Lee Anderson** (Ashfield) (Con): I am sure my right hon. Friend will agree that this is the most important piece of legislation to be passed since I was elected in 2019. Does she also agree that the disgraceful tactic of hiding in the toilets used by the rabble opposite to delay democracy is an attack on democracy? You should be ashamed, the lot of you!

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. We will now hear the Home Secretary and the shadow Home Secretary.

**Priti Patel:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I will not give way further, so that the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) can have some time. The Back Benchers have debated this Bill already.

**Pete Wishart** (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): Will the Minister give way?

**Priti Patel:** No I will not, because I want to give the right hon. Lady a chance to speak in the debate and quite frankly, other Members on the Opposition Benches have already delayed the debate.

Illegal immigration is facilitated by serious organised criminals exploiting people and profiting from human misery. Illegal migration is counter to our national interests, because those criminal gangs and networks are also responsible for other illicit activity including those involving drugs, firearms and serious violence. If left unchecked, it is a risk to our country and our national interests. Illegal migration is counter to our moral interests, because it means that people are put into the hands of ruthless criminals, which we want to stop because it endangers lives. By facilitating illegal entry via unsafe means such as boats, lorries and sealed shipping containers—

**Pete Wishart:** Will the Minister give way?

**Priti Patel:** I will not give way, because I want to leave some time for the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford. The hon. Gentleman would have had time to contribute from the Back Benches during the debate on Report.

Families and young children have lost their lives at sea and in lorries and containers because they put their trust in the people traffickers. The challenge is not unique to the United Kingdom, but we as a Government are seeking to address these issues in a responsible way, because they have been neglected for far too long. Let us not forget that the British public are angered by what they see. The British people are fair and generous when it comes to helping those in need—*[Interruption.]*

If I may, hon. Members have had hours to debate this Bill. They are screaming and using delaying tactics because they lack the solutions to these problems, and we are going to put fundamental reforms into statute.

The reality is that the system is broken. It has been open to gaming and criminal exploitation, and we are compelled to act with the simple principle of fairness. We are the only Government who will bring forward a balanced Bill. We are bringing forward a legislative framework that is firm and fair, prioritising those in genuine need. We will have powers to stop illegal entry

*[Priti Patel]*

and to break the business model of the evil people smugglers, who will face life in prison, which is something all Opposition Members have opposed completely.

We will bring in tough new sentences—maximum life sentences—for people smugglers and facilitators. There will be new rules to stop unscrupulous people posing as children, and there will be stronger enforcement powers for Border Force. Importantly, those who travel through a safe country should claim asylum in that safe country, rather than asylum shopping in the way we see right now.

**David Linden:** Will the right hon. Lady give way?

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** Order. Sit down. The Home Secretary does not have time to take interventions, neither will the shadow Home Secretary, because time has been wasted by the Members on the SNP Benches. Stay in your seat.

**Priti Patel:** They do not like hearing the fact that this Government will seek to rapidly remove those with no legal right to be in the UK. We are establishing a fast-track appeal process and streamlining the appeal system, making it quicker to remove failed asylum seekers and dangerous foreign criminals, the very people they would like to keep in this country. We will tackle the practice of meritless last-minute claims and appeals that clog up the courts, which is a fundamental unfairness that, by the way, even the legal profession says has been frustrating it for too long because the justice system has been gamed. We will protect the rights of modern-day slavery victims, too.

On that basis, we will bring in a fundamental change. The Opposition have had a chance to back the Bill, and they have chosen not to back the Bill. They want open borders, and they would encourage more people smuggling and more dangerous crossings that would compromise our national interest and our public safety. Our opponents have no answers to this Bill, and we are the ones who want to control illegal migration. We want to take back control of our borders. Many Opposition Members have written letters opposing the deportation of murderers and rapists. *[Interruption.]* They can say they have not, but they have.

This Bill will bring in fundamental reform, and I commend it to the House.

3.58 pm

**Yvette Cooper** (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): Unfortunately, what we have just had is a lot of rhetoric and slogans, not solutions, on such a serious issue. Two years ago, the Home Secretary promised she had a plan to halve within three months the number of boats crossing the channel. Instead, the number has gone up tenfold since then, as criminal gangs have switched to using flimsy boats instead. She said she was confident that her plan would lead to a considerable reduction in illegal activity. Instead, those smugglers and traffickers are making more and more profit as lives are being lost.

Far from cracking down on the criminal gangs and the smugglers, this Bill makes things worse. The Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner and former top police chief, Sara Thornton, has warned the Government repeatedly that the policies in this Bill will severely limit our ability to convict perpetrators and dismantle organised crime groups. I can tell the Home Secretary that the Labour party will not support letting vile people traffickers and criminal gangs off the hook in the way that she is prepared to do.

In November, 27 people died in the cold English channel. We need solutions and co-operation to try to tackle the smuggler gangs who are making a profit from people losing their lives. We need the safe and legal routes that the Home Secretary has promised and not delivered. The Afghan soldier who worked with our armed forces and arrived by boat with his family just a few weeks ago to claim asylum should never have ended up in a dinghy on the channel. The security co-operation just is not happening. The Home Secretary has failed to go to the heart of the criminal gangs' business model, which is all around social media, and she has failed to back the measures that we proposed yesterday.

*Question put,* That the Bill be now read the Third time.

*The House divided:* Ayes 298, Noes 231.

**Division No. 143]** **[4 pm**

**AYES**

Adams, rh Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Aiken, Nickie
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Anderson, Lee
Anderson, Stuart
Andrew, rh Stuart
Argar, Edward
Atherton, Sarah
Atkins, Victoria
Bacon, Gareth
Bacon, Mr Richard
Bailey, Shaun
Baillie, Siobhan
Baker, Duncan
Baker, Mr Steve
Baldwin, Harriett
Baron, Mr John
Baynes, Simon
Bell, Aaron
Benton, Scott
Beresford, Sir Paul
Berry, rh Jake
Bhatti, Saqib
Blackman, Bob
Blunt, Crispin
Bone, Mr Peter
Bottomley, Sir Peter
Bowie, Andrew
Bradley, Ben
Brady, Sir Graham
Braverman, rh Suella
Brereton, Jack
Brine, Steve
Bristow, Paul
Britcliffe, Sara
Browne, Anthony
Bruce, Fiona
Buchan, Felicity
Buckland, rh Robert
Burghart, Alex
Burns, rh Conor
Butler, Rob
Cairns, rh Alun
Carter, Andy
Cartlidge, James
Cash, Sir William
Cates, Miriam
Caulfield, Maria
Chalk, Alex
Chishti, Rehman
Chope, Sir Christopher
Churchill, Jo
Clark, rh Greg
Clarke, Theo
Clarke-Smith, Brendan
Clarkson, Chris
Cleverly, rh James
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Colburn, Elliot
Collins, Damian
Costa, Alberto
Courts, Robert
Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
Crabb, rh Stephen
Crosbie, Virginia
Crouch, Tracey
Daly, James
Davies, David T. C.
Davies, Gareth
Davies, Dr James
Davies, Mims
Davies, Philip
Davis, rh Mr David
Davison, Dehenna
Dinenage, Caroline
Dines, Miss Sarah
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Docherty, Leo
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
Donelan, rh Michelle
Double, Steve
Dowden, rh Oliver
Doyle-Price, Jackie
Drax, Richard
Drummond, Mrs Flick

Duddridge, James
Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain
Dunne, rh Philip
Eastwood, Mark
Edwards, Ruth
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Elphicke, Mrs Natalie
Eustice, rh George
Evans, Dr Luke
Evennett, rh Sir David
Fabricant, Michael
Farris, Laura
Fell, Simon
Fletcher, Katherine
Fletcher, Mark
Fletcher, Nick
Ford, Vicky
Foster, Kevin
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Frazer, rh Lucy
Freer, Mike
French, Mr Louie
Fuller, Richard
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Garnier, Mark
Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Gibb, rh Nick
Gibson, Peter
Gideon, Jo
Glen, John
Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
Grant, Mrs Helen
Gray, James
Grayling, rh Chris
Green, Chris
Green, rh Damian
Griffith, Andrew
Griffiths, Kate
Grundy, James
Gullis, Jonathan
Halfon, rh Robert
Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, rh Matt
Hands, rh Greg
Harper, rh Mr Mark
Harris, Rebecca
Harrison, Trudy
Hart, Sally-Ann
Hart, rh Simon
Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Heappey, James
Heaton-Harris, Chris
Henderson, Gordon
Henry, Darren
Hinds, rh Damian
Holden, Mr Richard
Hollinrake, Kevin
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Holmes, Paul
Howell, John
Howell, Paul
Hudson, Dr Neil
Hughes, Eddie
Hunt, Jane
Hunt, rh Jeremy
Hunt, Tom
Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenkinson, Mark
Jenkyns, Andrea
Johnson, Dr Caroline
Johnson, Gareth
Jones, Andrew
Jones, rh Mr David
Jones, Mr Marcus
Jupp, Simon
Kawczynski, Daniel
Keegan, Gillian
Knight, Julian
Kruger, Danny
Lamont, John
Largan, Robert
Latham, Mrs Pauline
Leadsom, rh Dame Andrea
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Levy, Ian
Lewer, Andrew
Lewis, rh Brandon
Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Lockhart, Carla
Loder, Chris
Logan, Mark
Lopez, Julia
Lord, Mr Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Mackinlay, Craig
Maclean, Rachel
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, rh Kit
Mangnall, Anthony
Mann, Scott
Marson, Julie
Mayhew, Jerome
Maynard, Paul
McCartney, Jason
McCartney, Karl
McPartland, Stephen
McVey, rh Esther
Menzies, Mark
Metcalfe, Stephen
Millar, Robin
Miller, rh Mrs Maria
Milling, rh Amanda
Mills, Nigel
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Mohindra, Mr Gagan
Moore, Damien
Moore, Robbie
Morris, Anne Marie
Morris, David
Morris, James
Morrissey, Joy
Mortimer, Jill
Morton, Wendy
Mullan, Dr Kieran
Mumby-Croft, Holly
Mundell, rh David
Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
Neill, Sir Robert
Nici, Lia
Norman, rh Jesse
O'Brien, Neil
Paisley, Ian
Parish, Neil
Patel, rh Priti
Pawsey, Mark
Penning, rh Sir Mike
Philp, Chris
Pincher, rh Christopher
Prentis, Victoria
Pritchard, rh Mark
Pursglove, Tom
Quin, Jeremy
Quince, Will
Raab, rh Dominic
Randall, Tom
Redwood, rh John
Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
Richards, Nicola
Richardson, Angela
Roberts, Rob
Robertson, Mr Laurence
Robinson, Mary
Rosindell, Andrew
Rowley, Lee
Russell, Dean
Sambrook, Gary
Saxby, Selaine
Scully, Paul
Selous, Andrew
Shannon, Jim
Shelbrooke, rh Alec
Simmonds, David
Smith, Greg
Smith, Henry
Smith, rh Julian
Smith, Royston
Solloway, Amanda
Spencer, Dr Ben
Stafford, Alexander
Stephenson, Andrew
Stevenson, Jane
Stevenson, John
Stewart, rh Bob
Stride, rh Mel
Stuart, Graham
Sturdy, Julian
Sunderland, James
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Syms, Sir Robert
Thomas, Derek
Throup, Maggie
Tolhurst, Kelly
Tracey, Craig
Vara, Shailesh
Vickers, Martin
Vickers, Matt
Villiers, rh Theresa
Wakeford, Christian
Walker, Sir Charles
Walker, Mr Robin
Wallis, Dr Jamie
Warburton, David
Warman, Matt
Watling, Giles
Webb, Suzanne
Wheeler, Mrs Heather
Whittingdale, rh Mr John
Wiggin, Bill
Wild, James
Williams, Craig
Williamson, rh Gavin
Wilson, rh Sammy
Wood, Mike
Wright, rh Jeremy
Young, Jacob

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Craig Whittaker and Michael Tomlinson**

**NOES**

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
Abrahams, Debbie
Ali, Rushanara
Ali, Tahir
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Amesbury, Mike
Anderson, Fleur
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Ashworth, rh Jonathan
Bardell, Hannah
Barker, Paula
Begum, Apsana
Benn, rh Hilary
Betts, Mr Clive
Blackford, rh Ian
Blackman, Kirsty
Blake, Olivia
Blomfield, Paul
Bonnar, Steven
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brennan, Kevin
Brock, Deidre
Brown, Alan
Brown, Ms Lyn
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burgon, Richard
Butler, Dawn
Byrne, Ian
Byrne, rh Liam
Cadbury, Ruth
Cameron, Dr Lisa
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Chamberlain, Wendy
Champion, Sarah
Chapman, Douglas
Charalambous, Bambos
Cherry, Joanna
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Cowan, Ronnie
Coyle, Neil
Crawley, Angela
Creasy, Stella *(Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore)*
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Cunningham, Alex
Daby, Janet
Davey, rh Ed
Davies, Geraint
Davies-Jones, Alex
Day, Martyn
De Cordova, Marsha
Debbonaire, Thangam
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Dodds, Anneliese
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Dromey, Jack
Duffield, Rosie
Eagle, Dame Angela
Eagle, Maria
Eastwood, Colum
Edwards, Jonathan

Efford, Clive
Elliott, Julie
Elmore, Chris
Eshalomi, Florence
Esterson, Bill
Farron, Tim
Farry, Stephen
Ferrier, Margaret
Flynn, Stephen
Fovargue, Yvonne
Foxcroft, Vicky
Foy, Mary Kelly
Furniss, Gill
Gibson, Patricia
Gill, Preet Kaur
Glindon, Mary
Grant, Peter
Green, Kate
Green, Sarah
Greenwood, Lilian
Greenwood, Margaret
Griffith, Nia
Gwynne, Andrew
Haigh, Louise
Hamilton, Fabian
Hanna, Claire
Hanvey, Neale
Harman, rh Ms Harriet
Hayes, Helen
Healey, rh John
Hendry, Drew
Hillier, Dame Meg
Hobhouse, Wera
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hollern, Kate
Hopkins, Rachel
Hosie, rh Stewart
Howarth, rh Sir George
Huq, Dr Rupa
Hussain, Imran
Jardine, Christine
Jarvis, Dan
Johnson, rh Dame Diana
Jones, Darren
Jones, Gerald
Jones, rh Mr Kevan
Jones, Ruth
Jones, Sarah
Kane, Mike
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz
Khan, Afzal
Kinnock, Stephen
Kyle, Peter
Lake, Ben
Lavery, Ian
Law, Chris
Leadbeater, Kim
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Lewis, Clive
Linden, David
Lloyd, Tony
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lucas, Caroline
Lynch, Holly
MacAskill, Kenny
MacNeil, Angus Brendan
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Malhotra, Seema
Maskell, Rachael
Mc Nally, John
McCabe, Steve
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonald, Andy
McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
McDonald, Stuart C.
McDonnell, rh John
McFadden, rh Mr Pat
McGovern, Alison
McLaughlin, Anne
McMahon, Jim
Mearns, Ian
Miliband, rh Edward
Mishra, Navendu
Monaghan, Carol
Moran, Layla
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, Grahame
Murray, Ian
Murray, James
Newlands, Gavin
Nicolson, John
Norris, Alex
O'Hara, Brendan
Olney, Sarah
Onwurah, Chi
Oppong-Asare, Abena
Osamor, Kate
Osborne, Kate
Oswald, Kirsten
Owatemi, Taiwo
Owen, Sarah
Peacock, Stephanie
Pennycook, Matthew
Perkins, Mr Toby
Phillips, Jess
Pollard, Luke
Powell, Lucy
Qaisar, Ms Anum
Qureshi, Yasmin
Rees, Christina
Reeves, Ellie
Reeves, Rachel
Reynolds, Jonathan
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
Rodda, Matt
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Shah, Naz
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheerman, Mr Barry
Sheppard, Tommy
Siddiq, Tulip
Slaughter, Andy
Smith, Alyn
Smith, Cat
Smith, Jeff
Smith, Nick
Smyth, Karin
Sobel, Alex
Starmer, rh Keir
Stephens, Chris
Stevens, Jo
Stone, Jamie
Streeting, Wes
Stringer, Graham
Sultana, Zarah
Tami, rh Mark
Tarry, Sam
Thewliss, Alison
Thomas, Gareth
Thomas-Symonds, rh Nick
Thompson, Owen
Thomson, Richard
Thornberry, rh Emily
Timms, rh Stephen
Turner, Karl
Twigg, Derek
Vaz, rh Valerie
Webbe, Claudia
West, Catherine
Western, Matt
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitford, Dr Philippa
Whitley, Mick
Williams, Hywel
Wilson, Munira
Winter, Beth
Wishart, Pete
Yasin, Mohammad
Zeichner, Daniel

**Tellers for the Noes:**
**Colleen Fletcher and Liz Twist**

*Question accordingly agreed to.*

*Bill read the Third time and passed.*

# Opposition Day

[7th Allotted Day, Second Part]

## Rail Investment and Integrated Rail Plan

4.11 pm

**Louise Haigh** (Sheffield, Heeley) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House recognises the importance of rail investment to the UK economy and, in particular, the delivery of new lines linking Yorkshire, the North West, North East and Midlands; regrets the Government's decision not to deliver new high speed investment, Northern Powerhouse Rail in full, and electrification covering communities across the North and Midlands; calls on the Government to deliver the new northern rail investment promised by the Prime Minister in full; and further calls on the Secretary of State for Transport to update the House in person before January 2022 on his Department's benefit cost ratio analysis for the revised HS2 line.

The motion stands in my name and the names of the Leader of the Opposition and my hon. and right hon. Friends.

It is a great privilege to speak for the first time as the shadow Transport Secretary of State. This sector is absolutely central to regenerating our communities, decarbonising the economy, and connecting people across our country. It is the one area of Government where, every day, every person in this country relies on the Government to get this right. I look forward to working with Members across the House to ensure that every corner of this country gets the transport system that it deserves.

Days after the Prime Minister came to power he said with absolute clarity to communities across the north:

"I want to be the Prime Minister who does with Northern Powerhouse Rail what we did for Crossrail in London. And today I am going to deliver on my commitment…with a pledge to fund the Leeds to Manchester route."

No fewer than 60 times, the Conservative Government committed to deliver Northern Powerhouse Rail in full. Conservative Members stood on a manifesto to deliver it—and the eastern leg of HS2—in three consecutive elections. Just two months ago, at the Conservative party conference, the Prime Minister said it all again. I imagine that Conservative Members are feeling pretty ashamed of their Government today, and I imagine that they have been sent out with lines to take to buoy them up and spin the IRP for their party. Before they do, I would like them to reflect on the importance of honesty with the public and of promises made, and the implications that breaking those promises have for trust in this place and in our democratic institutions, particularly promises made to communities that have been underinvested in for too long. I would like them to reflect on exactly why the plan before us goes nowhere near delivering what was committed time and again to the north and the midlands.

**Jacob Young** (Redcar) (Con): Of course the hon. Lady will be aware that the Leader of the Opposition called multiple times for HS2 to be scrapped. In the spirit of honesty and of honouring promises, will she tell us whether he has done a U-turn on that?

**Louise Haigh:** I could have written these lines for them myself!

The Leader of the Opposition, like many Members across this House, had concerns with particular issues around particular stations and particular routes. As a Member for Sheffield, I can say that we have had that debate many times over the past few years. The Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Chancellor have been absolutely clear that, if we were in government now, we would be committed to getting on with delivering HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail in full.

Let us be totally clear about what those commitments meant. The benefits of HS2 being extended from Birmingham to Leeds, and of a new, high-speed line between Leeds and Manchester, would be to get those fast, long-distance trains off the existing infrastructure and to free up capacity for local services and freight.

**Stephanie Peacock** (Barnsley East) (Lab): My hon. Friend is making a powerful speech. The people of Barnsley have to rely on overcrowded, overpriced and often delayed trains. Does she agree that the Government's shameful decision to U-turn on investment in the north will only make local services worse?

**Louise Haigh:** I could not agree more with my hon. Friend's powerful point. This is not the local transport revolution that was promised to the people of the north and midlands. In fact, what is now before us is not only less than what was promised, but could deliver a poorer service for many of our towns, cities and communities than the already unacceptable service that they currently have.

**Alexander Stafford** (Rother Valley) (Con): Will the hon. Lady make it explicitly clear: if Labour was in power, would it build the 2b arm of HS2 that would go through Rother Valley?

**Louise Haigh:** Yes, I just said that.

**Dawn Butler** (Brent Central) (Lab): They are not listening on the Government Benches, are they? All the Government are good for is breaking promises to the north, but not only have they broken promises to the north, they have now told London that it has to manage a decline and that investing in London would mean a loss of 43,000 jobs in the north. All this Government do is break promises and not invest in our infrastructure.

**Louise Haigh:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. London colleagues will be battling with the Government in the next three days over promises that were made to Londoners about TfL funding, on which they are again engaging in that brinkmanship.

**Hilary Benn** (Leeds Central) (Lab): Does my hon. Friend share the frustration of so many people in Leeds and Yorkshire that, after 11 years of planning and working hard, the Government cancel the eastern leg and the integrated rail plan says:

"We will look at the most effective way to run HS2 trains to Leeds"?

We do not have to look very far; there was a plan, which the Government have reneged on.

**Louise Haigh:** Absolutely. I am afraid, as my right hon. Friend has pointed out, that the IRP is full of nonsense like that.

*[Louise Haigh]*

The economic case for delivering the original plans as promised could hardly be stronger. Both schemes would have created more than 150,000 new jobs, connecting 13 million people in major towns and cities in our industrial heartlands. Without that eastern leg of HS2, the business case barely makes sense. In the middle of a climate emergency, when we know that we need to double rail capacity in order for the Government to meet their own net zero target, the decision makes even less sense. This was a once-in-a-generation chance to transform opportunity across the whole country, rebalance the economy and level up, but last month the Government tore their promises up.

**Vicky Foxcroft** (Lewisham, Deptford) (Lab): My hon. Friend is making a powerful speech, and she is absolutely right—the Government talk about levelling up, but they are looking to level down in London. If the Government refuse to give TfL the funding that it needs, one in five bus routes, on which disabled Londoners rely, will be cut, and there will be no new step-free access schemes. This is not levelling up, but seeking to level down London. Do we not want to ensure that transport is accessible for all, especially disabled people?

**Louise Haigh:** I could not agree more.

The Transport Secretary said in this House that

"the eastern leg is called the 2b, and, as the Prime Minister has said from this Dispatch Box, it is not a question of 'to be or not to be'"—[*Official Report*, 22 October 2020; Vol. 682, c. 1221.]

Well, he was absolutely right; it was simply a question of not to be. Madam Deputy Speaker, as you know, Hamlet went on to say,

"Be all my sins remember'd".

None of us needs reminding of the Prime Minister's sins: he promised HS2 to Leeds; he promised Northern Powerhouse Rail in full; he promised that the north would not be forgotten, but delivered less than half the investment that it demanded; the planned Leamside line and a station upgrade at Middlesbrough—scrapped; the planned electrification of Selby to Hull gone too; the new station at Bradford, one of the fastest growing cities in the country—abandoned; and the people of Chesterfield, Sheffield and Leeds no longer connected by HS2.

**Imran Hussain** (Bradford East) (Lab): By scrapping Northern Powerhouse Rail and in particular the station in Bradford city centre, the Government have condemned another generation of Bradfordians to a low-growth, low-wage economy. Does my hon. Friend agree that we cannot trust a word that comes out of this Prime Minister's mouth?

**Louise Haigh:** I agree wholeheartedly with my hon. Friend. The people of Bradford are rightly furious about this decision.

**Lilian Greenwood** (Nottingham South) (Lab): My hon. Friend is making a very powerful argument. Does she agree that it is not surprising that the Government are reneging on their promises on the HS2 eastern leg because they did precisely the same thing with regard to electrification of the midland mainline, which was promised by 2015, promised by 2017 and promised by 2019, and we will now be incredibly lucky if it is even delivered by 2034?

**Louise Haigh:** This is exactly the problem. The problem that Ministers have is whether we can even trust what is being promised in this plan.

In this country we measure infrastructure investment not in months but in years and in decades. When the Victorians laid the foundations for our modern railway, it was a vote of confidence in our future. The integrated rail plan was the Government's chance to build a railway fit for the century to come that would help us to tackle the climate crisis, but when the north came to cash its cheque, it bounced. At the heart of these broken promises are the missed opportunities for investment, for growth and for business. The OECD could not have been clearer when it said that investment in regional transport drives growth. Northern Powerhouse Rail could have increased productivity by 6%—a £22 billion boost to the northern economy. That opportunity has been squandered.

**Andrew Gwynne** (Denton and Reddish) (Lab): My hon. Friend talks about missed opportunities. I can tell her of one big disappointment to residents in Greater Manchester, and that is the shaving of £4 billion off the cost for increasing capacity through Manchester city centre. We were promised a high-speed underground station. That is now not happening. We will end up with a sanitised version of trains on stilts that will completely halt the regeneration of my hon. Friend the shadow Minister's constituency.

**Louise Haigh:** This was about capacity, and it was about promises made that have been broken. Frankly, this plan is simply not future-proof.

I cannot imagine that the Treasury is happy. The business case for HS2 without the eastern leg no longer represents value for money. I imagine that many of those in the home counties will be wondering why their lives have been turned upside down for a project that would not even have been started under Treasury rules if it was not going all the way to Leeds. People across this country were told this would level up the north and provide a significant return on investment, but now it is doing neither.

The difficult truth for Ministers is this: if they can openly, clearly and publicly deceive people in our proud regions, why on earth should we believe anything else contained in this plan? As we saw crystal clear last night in the leaked video from No. 10, their bare-faced, brazen and shameless dishonesty is catching up with them. If No. 10 can laugh and lie about a party it held when lives were literally on the line, does that not prove that the one thing we know for certain about this Government is that you cannot believe a single word they say? Given this record, can the Conservative Members lined up today to do the bidding of their Government really be confident that even the paltry plan they stand up to defend will ever be delivered?

The nonsense contained in the integrated rail plan that these plans will somehow be better for communities such as Peterborough, Wakefield or Newark is just that—nonsense. Failing to build new lines will put more fast, longer-distance trains on existing infrastructure and will crowd out local services. The Secretary of State

needs to be honest with his colleagues in Broxtowe, Dewsbury and Bolsover about the level of disruption that they can expect to experience over the next decade, with the cancelled trains and longer journeys while their lines are being upgraded, and whether, at the end—if, of course, this work is ever done—they will have more services, more capacity or less than they currently enjoy.

**Dr Jamie Wallis** (Bridgend) (Con): Will the hon. Lady be equally vociferous with her colleagues in the Senedd? The devolved rail lines in Wales were recently rated the worst in the United Kingdom, and the Welsh Government continue to insist on not building the M4 relief road, so there will be longer journeys. Will she talk to her colleagues in the Senedd about those points?

**Ruth Cadbury** (Brentford and Isleworth) (Lab) *rose—*

**Louise Haigh:** I give way to my hon. Friend.

**Ruth Cadbury:** I thank my hon. Friend for the very powerful speech she is making and congratulate her on her new role. Does she agree that as well as squandering the opportunity to provide jobs and regenerate so many communities in the north, this plan squanders the opportunity to take freight and cars off the road, which would reduce congestion and pollution and increase journey speeds for those who need to be on the road?

**Louise Haigh:** That is exactly the point, and it was the point of the original plans for HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail. The hon. Members for Shipley (Philip Davies) and for Keighley (Robbie Moore) understand that. They understand what it means to scale back NPR. They have described the decision as hugely and bitterly disappointing.

**Robbie Moore** (Keighley) (Con): The hon. Lady mentions electrification, but does she recognise that in 13 years of Labour Government, they only electrified 63 miles, which is the equivalent of 4.8 miles a year?

**Louise Haigh:** This Government have been in power for 11 years. What have they done for the people of his constituency? He has described it as "utterly disappointing".

**Matt Rodda** (Reading East) (Lab): I wholeheartedly support my hon. Friend in the points she makes about how this Government have let down the north, London and other parts of the country. The electrification programme is a prime example. Electrification stops before it even gets to most of south Wales. It stops in Newbury in my region. Does she agree that there should be far greater investment in this important part of modernising our railway?

**Louise Haigh:** I could not agree more with my hon. Friend.

Fundamentally the problem is that the integrated rail plan misunderstood the intention and benefits of High Speed 2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail. It was about freeing up fast, long-distance trains from the existing network and enabling more capacity for local services and rail freight. As a result, we have a set of proposals that will not deliver anything like what was promised for the north and the midlands.

This scaling back is a massive double whammy for our regions. The worst part is that the communities that will feel the brunt of years of broken promises, empty words and inaction are, at the same time, being squeezed the hardest by the Conservatives' tax hikes and rising bills, while those with the broadest shoulders remain largely untouched. Those same working people will likely face a record increase in rail fares next year. They will be paying more than 50% more to get to work than a decade ago, relying on an unreliable and overcrowded system.

Tonight, Conservative MPs face a very simple choice. Will they stand by the pledge they made to their constituents at election time—a pledge that their Government repeated 60 times? Will they vote for the investment they were elected to office to deliver? With trust in politics so low, will they now do the right thing? This great rail betrayal will hit millions of people—their constituents—and leave the north and the midlands in the slow lane for decades to come. Tonight, Tory MPs can join with Labour and right this wrong. They have a chance to stand up for their communities. If they vote against this Opposition motion tonight, their electorate will know where they stand, will know they cannot be trusted and rightly will not forgive them.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** Before I call the Secretary of State, I note that clearly very many colleagues want to contribute to this debate. There will be a time limit from the beginning, and it is likely to be four minutes, but I will confirm that after the Secretary of State has spoken.

4.28 pm

**The Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps):** Before I begin, I first welcome the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Louise Haigh) to her place and congratulate her. She will be the third shadow Transport Secretary I have faced across this Dispatch Box, and I wish her all the luck of the previous two.

We were elected as a reforming Government. We have undertaken the biggest ever review of the industry and published the Williams-Shapps plan, creating a new public body in Great British Railways, with an overwhelming aim to deliver trains on time for passengers. We began by reversing the Beeching cuts, restoring lines to communities that were cut off from the railway in the 1960s and 1970s. We have set out our integrated rail plan, a £96 billion programme to reshape our railways in the north and the midlands. It is the largest single rail investment ever made by any UK Government.

**Mr Toby Perkins** (Chesterfield) (Lab): The Secretary of State described this as a reforming Government, but what they are reforming is their manifesto after they have been elected on it. People in Chesterfield and across north Derbyshire were promised HS2, which would increase capacity. Instead, what we have got are slower services and years and years of delays while the reforms happen.

**Grant Shapps:** Our manifesto talks about the Oakervee review. The hon. Gentleman's constituency of Chesterfield will be served by a new line to the east midlands completing the electrification of the midland main line, which I will come on to shortly.

*[Grant Shapps]*

Our reforming vision marks a new era of investment and growth. The integrated rail plan starts to provide benefits to passengers and communities quickly, rather than leaving it for two decades as previously planned. We will boost eight of the 10 busiest rail corridors across the north and the midlands. We will speed up journeys, increase capacity and run more frequent services, and we will do all that much earlier than previously planned.

**Ruth Cadbury:** Does the Secretary of State not recognise that upgrading existing lines is far more disruptive for the existing passengers of those lines than building new lines? Will he retract the statement that he made on the radio on the day he released the plan when he seemed more worried about car drivers on the M1 being upset by potential works on the new high speed link than about passengers on the existing rail network who will suffer years and years of disruption?

**Grant Shapps:** As I will come to shortly, it is not just about upgrading lines or building one or two high speed lines; it is about three new high speed lines and £96 billion of investment overall. Rather than focusing purely on inter-city connections, we will also strengthen regional rail lines in a way that economically benefits the midlands and the north the most and tie them into the main network. It is one integrated solution that delivers a better, faster, more efficient and more affordable railway than the outdated blueprint from 2019.

**Jacob Young:** On economic benefits, one of the best economic benefits that the IRP can provide to Redcar is using British steel in the construction of all new rail lines, so I ask the Secretary of State to commit to doing that.

**Grant Shapps:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. So far, some 97% of contracts for HS2 have gone to British-registered firms, and he is right to encourage them to come to his area.

**Andy McDonald** (Middlesbrough) (Lab): Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Grant Shapps:** I will make some progress.

You could be forgiven for thinking, Madam Deputy Speaker, that we had abandoned all those plans if you listened to the Opposition, and I would not for one moment want them to mislead the House—albeit inadvertently, I am sure—on what we are doing. As I mentioned, we are not just building one high speed line from Crewe to Manchester; we are building a second high speed line from Warrington to Manchester to west Yorkshire, slashing journey times across the north, and a third high speed line from Birmingham to the east midlands with HS2 trains continuing to central Nottingham, central Derby, Chesterfield and Sheffield on an upgraded and electrified midland main line. Just one of those might be regarded as a major achievement for any Government, particularly given the economic shock of the last two years, but we are doing all three.

**Lilian Greenwood:** Will the Secretary of State confirm that under his plans, the high speed line joins the midland main line at East Midlands Parkway and does not go any further north, thus depriving Nottingham and all the cities of the east midlands of the improved connectivity and faster journey times to Sheffield, Leeds, Newcastle and Scotland? Is that not precisely why my constituents are so angry about his broken promises?

**Grant Shapps:** It is absolutely extraordinary: the hon. Lady's constituents in Nottingham were not going to be served by the HS2 line that was going to be built, so they were not going to get the additional journey times or the improvements, and now they will. I suggest that it is important not to mislead her constituents—*[Interruption.]* inadvertently, I should say, perhaps through not having read the details of the IRP—with regard to the many advantages that they will now get. As I was about to say, the journey time from Birmingham to Nottingham will be cut from an hour and a quarter to just 26 minutes through the new plan, so it is far better for her constituents. We will reduce rail journey time between London and Derby from almost an hour and a half to just under an hour, and in Leeds we are going to invest £100 million to look at how we can best take the HS2 trains through to the city, as well as to start work on a west Yorkshire mass transit system, which is something successive Governments have failed to do.

I must say I am slightly surprised by the disappointment of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley. I would urge all those who listened to her speech today to study the actual details of the plan, because it is producing benefits not only for the midlands and the north years ahead of what was planned, but for her own Sheffield constituency. She will want to hear the benefits for her Sheffield constituency. I know from her previous work that she was diligent and worked very hard campaigning to get that electrification done, so let us give her constituents some of the facts about what this new plan brings. The midland main line will be electrified to Sheffield, which is something she has been calling for—she has been calling for it—and the upgrade of the Hope Valley line between Manchester and Sheffield will be completed. HS2 trains will reach Sheffield and—get this—the journey from Sheffield to London will be half an hour quicker.

I have a suggestion for how the hon. Lady can use the extra half an hour she will have gained. I think she could spend half an hour speaking to her party leader and convincing him of the case for HS2. She might have her work cut out, though. This, after all, is the man who called for HS2 to be cancelled, and he even voted against his own party's instructions—defying a three-line Whip—to try to stop the thing she says she is now campaigning for. I have no doubt about her own convictions on the need for HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail, and she has been consistent in calling for the electrification of the midland main line, but I do wonder if she knows her own leader's views on that project. Recently, he called the electrification of the midland main line "complete nonsense". As usual, we are looking at a Labour party riddled with divisions and too busy arguing with itself—and that is just the Leader of the Opposition. Meanwhile, we are getting on with delivering, as promised, better, faster and more reliable trains, and they are going to get there sooner as well.

**Jonathan Edwards** (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (Ind): As the Secretary of State knows, for some bizarre reason HS2 was deemed to be an England and Wales project, resulting in no Barnett consequentials for Wales.

All the projects he has announced in his speech today are clearly England-only projects, so can he confirm that they will result in full Barnett consequentials for Wales?

**Grant Shapps:** The plan actually provides significant benefits to north Wales. Studies have been done about the tens of millions of pounds of additional benefit that HS2 will bring to north Wales in particular, and of course there is the Union connectivity review, recently launched by Sir Peter Hendy, which brings yet more benefit as well.

**Geraint Davies** (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op): Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Grant Shapps:** I will make a bit of progress.

For anyone who claims we are failing to deliver Northern Powerhouse Rail, I want to set the record straight. Northern Powerhouse Rail is going ahead. It is going to bring faster services, there will be big capacity increases, and it is going to do this in the most logical and efficient way. *[Interruption.]* There are those—and I hear the hon. Member for Manchester Central (Lucy Powell)—who say all we are doing is electrifying the trans-Pennine route. That is wrong. We are actually investing £23 billion to build Northern Powerhouse Rail and unlock east-west travel across the north of England. *[Interruption.]* Yes, we are. Trains from Leeds will reach Manchester in just 33 minutes, cutting journey times almost in half. Seating capacity between Leeds and Liverpool will more than treble as a result of the integrated rail plan, and the journey between Leeds and Bradford will take just 12 minutes.

**Helen Hayes** (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab): Can the Secretary of State confirm that, while he is letting down passengers across the north and the midlands, he is also letting down passengers in London? Can he confirm what conversations he has had with his colleagues in the north of England about the 43,000 jobs that will be put at risk if he does not agree further emergency funding for Transport for London? Can he say why he is neglecting our transport system in London three days from the current emergency funding running out?

**Grant Shapps:** At the risk of straying outside the bounds of the debate, I have already paid £4.1 billion to TfL to ensure the services can carry on running. I hope that, as a London MP, the hon. Lady will have a word with the Mayor of London and ask him where the plan he should have sent to us on 18 November is, because that is what is preventing a further settlement to a system we have of course always said we will support.

**Mike Amesbury** (Weaver Vale) (Lab) *rose—*

**Grant Shapps:** I will make a little further progress.

"Ah," some say, "But this was never the plan for Northern Powerhouse Rail." That is basically their argument—"This is a good plan, but it's not the plan that was in place"—but, again, that is wrong. In fact, we are using part of the existing route, which was always one of the options for Northern Powerhouse Rail so it is not something we have just created. But this is not, of course, just about that £23 billion for the east-west rail: Northern Powerhouse Rail will cut 20 minutes off journey times between Leeds and London, with a £3.5 billion package of work to upgrade the east coast main line, benefiting many other destinations including Darlington and Newcastle, and north to Scotland as well.

I have heard many comments about this plan in the last few weeks, it has to be said. The Leader of the Opposition cried "betrayal", the shadow Chancellor said it was "shameful", and the former shadow Transport Secretary the hon. Member for Oldham West and Royton (Jim McMahon) described £96 billion as "crumbs off the table". We really do have to worry about a party that thinks that £96 billion equates to "crumbs".

In reality, of course, the integrated rail plan is the biggest ever single Government investment in a rail network, five times more than the amount spent on Crossrail and 10 times more than was spent of the Olympics. I cannot help but detect the hand of politics in the Opposition's reaction, but while they criticise and politicise, their constituents will start to see the benefits. They will ride on faster trains, sit in more comfortable carriages and not have to fight for a seat. Perhaps that is why the Labour Mayor of Manchester said the plans bring "significant benefits", or the Labour Mayor of Doncaster welcomed the

"significant further investment in the East Coast Main Line"

or—

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Grant Shapps:** I will give way in a moment, but I think Labour Members will want to hear this. Perhaps it is why the Labour leader of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council said that the IRP was a "victory for common sense".

Of course it is common sense. We have not just stuck to the original plans which would have spent an extra £18 billion. And what for—what would it have given the Labour party to include that extra £18 billion? It would have given 15 years of delays and just four minutes off the journey between Manchester and Leeds.

**Paula Barker** (Liverpool, Wavertree) (Lab): The Secretary of State talked about leaders and the quotes. I want to touch on the quote of the Metro Mayor of the Liverpool City Region, Steve Rotheram. He said that the penny-pinchers at the Treasury have won the day to roll out a "cheap and nasty option". Isn't that the case?

**Grant Shapps:** It is an extraordinary idea that £96 billion is "cheap and nasty", but maybe this is a question of language. Those in Liverpool should know that the current journey time from London to Liverpool is 132 minutes and that will be slashed to just 92 minutes—"cheap and nasty", but 92 minutes.

The common-sense approach we have taken delivers a plan that under the original plan would have been years and years in the making—until well after many of us had stopped serving in this House. This plan benefits smaller towns and cities, which would have been ignored under the plans Labour still backs. The smaller towns and cities would have seen no improvements at all; in fact, in many cases they would have seen deteriorating services, and let us face it, these problems have been known about for years.

**Alexander Stafford:** My right hon. Friend is completely right: the smaller towns and villages will benefit from this plan, not least Bramley, Wales and Aston in Rother

*[Alexander Stafford]*

Valley because HS2 was going to bulldoze through them, destroying 400 homes. However, there is still safeguarding around the route, so can the Secretary of State update us on when that will be lifted so that people in Rother Valley can get on with their lives?

**Grant Shapps:** We will of course continue to keep the matter under review, but as my hon. Friend knows £100 million is going to west Yorkshire and Leeds to see the best way of getting HS2 trains to Leeds so I ask him to be a little more patient on that front.

However, he is absolutely right to mention the smaller towns and cities that the Labour party seems to have largely forgotten about. The existing plan would have seen deteriorating services. We intend to revise the plan, because as far back as 2014 it was recognised that the existing plan would

"deliver maximum disruption and minimal benefit."

Those are not my words about the plan that Labour is proposing, but those of the now Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham.

**Dr Kieran Mullan** (Crewe and Nantwich) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that Labour's pledge on this can be added to its very long list of totally uncosted spending commitments that it expects the British taxpayer to pick up? It has no way of paying for it.

**Grant Shapps:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Of course, Crewe is going to get a fantastic service, with a wonderful delivery, as is Manchester. I was just talking about the Manchester Mayor.

**Andy McDonald:** I am grateful to the Secretary of State for giving way, but he knows and I know that his predecessors committed to the full delivery of HS2. That was the way that the full economic benefits would be delivered. He talks about smaller towns. They are the ones that would directly benefit from a fully funded HS2, which would not only get people off the roads and away from aviation on to rail, but release capacity across the entire network. He knows that to be true. This is a shortfall. It pulls the rug from under his own plans and those of his predecessors. Is that not the case?

**Grant Shapps:** The hon. Member knows a lot about this subject from our time sparring across the Dispatch Boxes and, representing Middlesbrough as he does, he knows that he is going to get a direct train from London to Middlesbrough. That is a major achievement, and I am proud that this Government were able to give his constituents that service.

I was talking about the Mayor of Greater Manchester and what he said—I could not agree more—about sticking to that original plan through thick and thin. It did not deliver what was required. Instead, our new plans mean that the great northern infrastructure projects are going to be linked up locally, regionally and nationally.

**Lucy Powell** (Manchester Central) (Lab/Co-op): That is not what he said.

**Grant Shapps:** I am challenged that that is not what he said, but I have the quote. He said that the original plan would

"deliver maximum disruption and minimal benefit."

In fact, he was campaigning against HS2 going north of Birmingham until Northern Powerhouse Rail was built.

Many towns and villages that would not have benefited originally will now benefit from this approach. Labour Members need to explain to people in places such as Kettering, Leicester, Loughborough, Doncaster, Grantham, Newark, Retford, Dewsbury, Huddersfield and Wakefield why they want to take away from them the services that our integrated rail plan will deliver.

Mayor Burnham had more to say on the subject. Just last year he claimed that the 2040s were far too long to wait for high-speed rail in the north. Perhaps that is why he was prepared to sacrifice HS2 north of Birmingham to focus exclusively on Northern Powerhouse Rail.

**Mr Perkins:** Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Grant Shapps:** I want to get to the end and let others come in.

This Government are not going for either/or, as the Mayor of Manchester tried to persuade us to; we are going to deliver both—high-speed trains up to Leeds while building a brand-new high-speed line east-west between Liverpool, Manchester and West Yorkshire, with a total of 110 miles of new high-speed line and 180 miles of newly electrified line, all of it in the midlands and the north.

**Andrew Gwynne:** Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Grant Shapps:** I am going to finish so that other Members have the opportunity to come in.

In the last 11 years, we have electrified 1,221 miles of track. In 13 years, how many miles did the Labour party electrify? I will tell Members the answer: 63 miles. It is extraordinary. The Opposition want us to believe their plan for rail when they managed 63 miles. Previous plans would have cost the taxpayer twice as much. They would have ignored the very towns and communities that need to be levelled up.

Madam Deputy Speaker, £96 billion is an immense investment. Every single pound will go to boosting our network, not in 10 or 15 years' time—no, we want to get this work under way immediately. The integrated rail plan represents the biggest upgrade to rail services in the north and the midlands since the arrival of rail 200 years ago—not just improving journeys but spreading opportunity and, yes, levelling up our country.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** Order. After the next speaker, there will be a four-minute time limit.

4.50 pm

**Gavin Newlands** (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP): I, too, welcome the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Louise Haigh) to her post and wish her well. No doubt we will chat soon about the role.

Those of us with long experience of the UK Government's trail of broken promises and inaction knew that this day was likely to come. The minute the

High Speed 2 Bills in this place were split by phases, it was clear that the Government were preparing the ground for cancellation once the political cover of promised HS2 to the north was no longer required. The idea of a rail strategy coming from the Department for Transport is a bad joke. In recent months, my office, and indeed my house, has accumulated a colourful collection of glossy DFT booklets and reports—a substitute for genuine action and construction. What with the Williams-Shapps plan, the integrated rail plan, the net zero strategy, the Union connectivity review and the transport decarbonisation plan, to name but a few, the Department is at least keeping graphic designers in work, and will no doubt keep fact checkers busy for months and years to come.

If hon. Members want to see real ambition and forward thinking, they should look across the North sea to Denmark—do not worry; I will come to Scotland. Denmark has managed to construct an 8 km bridge and a 4 km tunnel linking it with Sweden—a real bridge and a real tunnel, by the way, not a back-of-a-fag-packet scheme with roundabouts under the Isle of Man, dreamed up by the Prime Minister while he organised secret Santas. *[Interruption.]* I will come to it; don't you worry, Secretary of State. Denmark's fixed link with Sweden includes a high-speed rail link between the countries. For the foreseeable future, there will be more high-speed rail over and under an inlet of the Baltic sea than over a single inch of the north of England.

Now the Danes are building a fixed link to Germany —the project is financed and run by the Danish Government—while also building high-speed rail links joining the rest of the country. In fact, on current plans, Denmark, which takes up a third of the area that England does, will have more high-speed track in use than England by the end of next year, and it will continue to pull miles and miles ahead.

The Danish authorities are showing more vision and commitment to the nation's transport infrastructure than their counterparts in the DFT. In Denmark, connecting neighbours is not a wheeze dreamt up by the Prime Minister, with no basis in reality; it is part of a sustained, long-term strategy to truly level up. I cannot imagine the Danish transport authorities planning a bridge or tunnel over a munitions and radioactive waste dump. They live in the real world, where they are building real infrastructure and real connections. This is a small, independent, northern European country taking bold and radical steps to improve connectivity with its neighbours, to push towards decarbonisation, and to boost its economy and that of its neighbours.

Contrast that with the Union connectivity review, where, despite the Scottish Government wanting meaningful engagement on a raft of issues, the UK Government simply ploughed ahead and ignored them.

**Mike Amesbury:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Gavin Newlands:** I will give way once, but I see that a number of Members want to speak in the debate, and this is a devolved issue.

**Mike Amesbury:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way during his powerful contribution. In May, a station in my patch, Northwich, collapsed. It still has not been rebuilt. People who are disabled or have mobility problems cannot travel in one of the directions, yet the Government have so far refused to build back better, fairer and in an inclusive way. Does he concur that that is the reality on the ground in many parts of the UK, including the north of England?

**Gavin Newlands:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. I have not been to his part of the country yet, but I am sure that I will make plans to shortly. I have no doubt about what he says, and I am entirely unsurprised by it. I am sure—or at least I hope—that the Secretary of State was listening to what he said.

**Chris Loder** (West Dorset) (Con): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Gavin Newlands:** I apologise to my Transport Committee colleague, but I promised to try to keep my contribution under 10 minutes because of the number of Members who want to contribute. *[Interruption.]* It is a devolved matter.

It is the usual pattern for Downing Street. Don't like something? Ignore or marginalise it. Transport for the North speaking up for a real rail network, and against the Government's plans? Neuter it out of any real existence. Afraid that the Welsh Government might use Barnett consequentials from HS2 spending in a way that shows up the paucity of ambition on the other side of the border? Just do not give them any. Worried that the Scottish Government will come to some different conclusions about what is needed for real connectivity across these isles? Just ignore them when they look for real engagement. And, dare I say it, do not like the rules about Christmas parties during a pandemic? Organise that secret Santa anyway.

To be crystal clear, the Minister, in his summing up, must confirm that Scotland and Wales will receive full Barnett consequentials from the English rail plan and confirm the level of consequentials and the timing, because the transfer of the funds simply cannot be punted down the track. Everyone on these isles would benefit from improved connectivity internally and externally, but instead of working collaboratively with the devolved Administrations, Mayors and combined authorities in England, once again Whitehall knows best, and Whitehall, as ever, knows London best.

**Chris Loder:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Gavin Newlands:** I will give way once to the hon. Gentleman because he is persistent.

**Chris Loder:** I very much appreciate the hon. Gentleman giving way and it is always a pleasure to serve with him on the Transport Committee. In the interests of collaboration, which he just mentioned, would he care to share with the House why, during the Union connectivity review, the Scottish Government refused engagement on this issue from the United Kingdom Government to achieve that very point?

**Gavin Newlands:** As I have outlined, that is not true. We asked for engagement on a number of issues and those advances were rebuffed by the UK Government. *[Interruption.]* It is a simple fact.

In the last financial year, the east midlands saw spending on transport of £477 per person. London received £1,476 per head. Even allowing for the fairly

*[Gavin Newlands]*

extraordinary circumstances of the pandemic, if we go back another year, we see a similar picture: £377 per person versus £856 in London. On every metric going back decades, we find a similar picture, with every single region of England not just outstripped by London, but overpowered by multiples of 200%, 300% and even 400%.

This system is holding back every part of these isles while making sure that London gets the lion's share year after year, decade after decade. For all the Government's talk of levelling up, there is no sign, and nor has there been since time immemorial, of making the kind of investment in the rest of England that is deemed necessary in Greater London. Even assuming that every single inch of track and electrification laid out in the integrated rail plan actually happens—about which, given the precedents of cancellation that have been referred to in this debate, we are right to be sceptical—it will do little or nothing to close the gap between the north of England and London.

There is a fundamental flaw in not just how the UK is governed, but how policy is decided, that allows this kind of warped disparity to go not only unchecked, but positively encouraged by successive Administrations and Transport Secretaries. Again, places such as the north of England, the south-west and the midlands bear the brunt of that dysfunctional system.

Lest anyone thinks that it is just SNP Members calling out the Government for their failures, let me correct that record. The chair of Transport for the North called the integrated rail plan "woefully inadequate". The former technical director of HS2 said:

"You can't have prosperity without being well connected."

The chair of the North East Joint Transport Committee said that the plan is

"a hammer-blow for the North East and…the very opposite of levelling up".

And the chief executive of the Rail Industry Association asked:

"How certain can the railway industry be that the"—

plan—

"will actually be delivered, given what's happened to the previous plan?"

Once again, the north of England is being let down by a Government whose action, if not their rhetoric, stops at the M25.

We in Scotland are well used to being let down over connectivity. Nearly three decades ago, we were promised direct rail links to Europe through the channel tunnel. Just as with HS2 to the north-east of England, those promises were buried as soon as it became politically expedient. Even the proposed sleeper trains were punted off to Canada, and what a mistake that looks now. Europe is seeing a rapid renaissance in cross-border sleeper trains. Today, anyone looking to avoid flying to Europe will be boarding in central London, not Manchester, Birmingham, Edinburgh or Glasgow.

Around the same time—*[Interruption.]* That is a bizarre contribution; I will take an intervention, but I would advise against it if that is what it would be. Around the same time, the old Strathclyde Regional Council brought forward plans for a new and modern light rail network for Glasgow. They were kiboshed as the UK Government were more interested in their dogmatic rush to privatise British Rail. Residents of Leeds should look into the history of the UK's commitment to urban light rail in Scotland, given the promises now being made to them as a fig leaf to cover the HS2 cancellation. It was the UK Government who spent months and who knows how many fag packets drawing up madcap schemes for bridges over munitions dumps instead of working to improve our infrastructure in the real world. Knowing that, it was rich to hear the Scottish Secretary laud his Government's Union connectivity review the other week. It is only since the dead hand of Westminster was removed from transport policy in Scotland that real progress on rail modernisation and a decarbonised future has been made.

It is the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Governments—in fairness, from three political parties on these Opposition Benches—who have upgraded, reopened, and decarbonised the four rail lines running between Scotland's two biggest cities over the past two decades, and launched many other electrification projects, including Paisley Canal, which boosted demand by up to 35% at some stations. The length of track electrified in Scotland has gone up by nearly 50% since devolution under both SNP Governments and Labour-Lib Dem Administrations. In contrast, in England and Wales the increase is more like 14%.

It is the Scottish Government who have overseen the reopening of the Airdrie-Bathgate line, the current work on the Levenmouth rail link and, of course, the Borders Railway, with demand far outstripping predicted passenger numbers. We have got on with reversing Beeching without the need for exaggerated rhetoric, overpromising and underdelivering. It is also the Scottish Government who are taking our rail services back into public ownership, where they belong, from next year.

Scotland's economic prosperity depends on not just our own domestic connectivity, but that of our neighbours. We want and need a prosperous and well connected north of England. Collectively, Scotland and the three northernmost regions of England have a population of 21 million. That is bigger than all but five EU member states, but nearly 16 million of those people are being let down by a UK Government and a Department for Transport who are stuck in a 19th-century mindset, where Whitehall is the centre of power and woe betide those who challenge its authority, as Transport for the North is now finding out.

To conclude, the north of England deserves better. The birthplace of the first steam railway, the first inter-city railway and the first purpose-built main line electric railway; the cradle of an industrial revolution where the railways and commerce went hand in hand—it is being let down, as it has been for decades, by a Westminster Government who lack vision, lack ideals, and above all lack commitment.

The new industrial revolution will be much different from that of the 19th century. It is about decarbonising our economy and society to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Scotland's rail network will play its part by decarbonising all passenger services by 2035.

**Sir George Howarth** (Knowsley) (Lab): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I think the Scottish National party spokesman is likely to be taking up more time than the Opposition and Government Front Benchers. Is that in order?

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** I am of the strong opinion that the SNP spokesperson is coming to a conclusion imminently.

**Gavin Newlands:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have a Front-Bench role here, but I have only four lines left, so if the right hon. Member for Knowsley (Sir George Howarth) had let me finish, I would have taken up less time.

The UK's plans, in contrast, leave much of the north of England stuck with those 19th-century services and infrastructure. It is time for the UK to learn from elsewhere, from Scotland, from Denmark—from anywhere, frankly, because anywhere else would have a rail policy that lasts longer than a Downing Street Christmas party. Other countries are joining up and truly are levelling up, but the UK Government continue to ensure that for huge swathes of England, the only way is south.

**Mr Mark Harper** (Forest of Dean) (Con): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I understand that the Prime Minister's official spokesman has now confirmed that a Downing Street press conference hosted by the Prime Minister will take place at 6 pm. As of course I am sure the Government will want to ensure that this House hears from a Government Minister no later than the time of that press conference, may I ask whether Mr Speaker has received a request from the Government for a statement to take place in this House no later than 6 pm, to enable the Government to set out any proposals that are coming forward and to allow Members of this House to ask important questions on behalf of those we represent here?

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I thank the right hon. Gentleman for that point of order. As I understand it, we have not had notification of a statement as yet, but I will ensure that that is confirmed and, if there is anything further that I need to add, I will do so. I call Andrew Jones to speak, with a four-minute time limit.

5.4 pm

**Andrew Jones** (Harrogate and Knaresborough) (Con): I agree with the first line of the motion before us today, recognising

"the importance of rail investment",

but the motion goes on to say that the Government will not be delivering high-speed rail, electrification and the rest. That is simply wrong and we should not support it.

My first impression when I read the integrated rail plan was of its sheer scale, because £96 billion is a major investment. It is the largest rail investment ever made by any Government, and that must be recognised as a positive. Rail investment is a driver of economic growth, social mobility and environmental progress, and the scale of these actions is not limited to high-speed rail. We will see investment in ticketing and upgrading of the systems to bring the benefits of convenience and modal integration to more parts of the country, and also investment in smaller schemes, such as line reinstatement. I know that the first of the schemes to reverse the Beeching cuts opened last month. One of the key benefits of the IRP is certainty for the industry and its supply chain, which are in need of it.

I am a long-term supporter of HS2, and I was disappointed to learn that the eastern leg would not be delivered in full, because I think it is a good scheme. However, the picture is far more complex than the claims of cancellation. It is complex because parts of the original plan will happen—for example, the east and west midlands will be connected—but then an enhanced midland main line will bring HS2 services north to Sheffield and Leeds.

I understand from the IRP that we will see a range of benefits for the north, in the form of new lines, increased capacity, and improved journey times. In fact, the outcomes seem similar to those of previous plans, but they will be delivered in a different way. There will be investment in both the existing trans-Pennine line and the construction of a new fast line between Warrington, Manchester and Yorkshire. I think that my constituents will see enhanced services, but while I note that the IRP includes work on the connection between Leeds and Bradford, I am still concerned about overall Bradford connectivity, and I think there is more work to be done in that regard. I also note that the east coast main line will receive investment to deliver much improved journey times between Leeds and York, and a reduction of 20 minutes in the journey between Leeds and London. As a regular user of the service, I welcome that benefit.

I look around and I see rail improving. I see, for example, the doubling of the frequency of services between Harrogate, Knaresborough and York, which will take place this month. There is work to be done on the resilience of the east coast main line, and I hope to see the electrification made more robust. However, the motion regrets the scale of electrification. It is remarkable that Labour should remind the House just how poor its record is. Labour delivered 63 miles in 13 years; we have delivered 1,221 in 11 years. I remain disappointed that HS2 will not be coming north fully, as was planned, but the next question for me is how quickly we can deliver on these plans. HS2 would not have reached Leeds until the 2040s, but we should now be asking ourselves how we can deliver these schemes better and more quickly, and gain the benefits earlier.

We are in a ludicrous position today, with the Leader of the Opposition tabling a motion criticising the Government when he has repeatedly called for the cancellation of HS2 in the first place. If he were not just a feeble opportunist, he would have tabled a motion in support of the Government, whose record, compared with that of the previous Government, is like the result of the Lionesses' match against Latvia last week. I can inform those who do not follow football that it was 20-nil to the Lionesses. The motion before us fails to recognise the progress that is being made. When any Government invest £96 billion in rail, we should welcome that, which I why I will not support the motion.

5.8 pm

**Sir George Howarth** (Knowsley) (Lab): I want to address the way in which these new proposals affect the Liverpool city region, and specifically the way in which it will be affected by the upgrade, as distinct from the northern powerhouse option. Earlier in the debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Wavertree (Paula Barker) quoted the metro Mayor, Steve Rotheram, who said that the upgrade was the "cheap and nasty" option. I do not think that there is any hyperbole in that; it is an accurate description of what is going on.

*[Sir George Howarth]*

I want to concentrate on the disruptive effect that this new proposal will have over the six years of its lifetime. For example, it will lead to 500,000 more road journeys annually, partly as a result of freight being shifted from the rail network on to the motorway network and partly as a result of private car journeys. That will mean a loss of something like 88 freight trains a week, which will lead to an additional 2,000 truck journeys a week and of course more car journeys. That is bound to have an adverse impact on the environment and on our net zero target. It will badly affect the Government's levelling-up agenda. We estimate that the Liverpool city region economy will be worse off to the tune of £280 million—a vast sum of money—as a result of the disruption to trade.

In terms of rail travel, there will be only marginal or negative gains to journey times. For example, the journey time to Manchester will be reduced from 37 minutes to 35 minutes. Well, that is not going to make anyone in Liverpool want to go and work in Manchester, or vice versa. Those figures compare with the 23-minute journey time that the Northern Powerhouse Rail option offered. Turning to capacity, which is after all the main reason for HS2, the so-called upgrade proposal will add little or no additional capacity. For example, there will be 83% capacity compared with the industry standard of 85%. That sounds quite marginal, but it means that when there are adverse weather conditions, the system will go into chaos, because there will not be the capacity to deal with it. To summarise, the upgrade option will be disruptive, with little or no gain to be had.

Let me conclude by making what I hope will be a constructive suggestion to the Secretary of State. Steve Rotheram has made it plain that as a city region we are open to compromise, so will the Secretary of State agree today to meet the metro Mayors of the region, to see whether we can arrive at a compromise that will improve this outcome, in contrast to the rather bleak picture that I have just had to paint?

5.12 pm

**Paul Maynard** (Blackpool North and Cleveleys) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow, on this side of the House, my hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate and Knaresborough (Andrew Jones). We both have the distinction of having had two stints as Ministers in charge of HS2 and major rail projects, and we both bear the scars on our backs. One of my first duties as a Minister was to cancel the electrification of the midland main line, so I am delighted to see that the integrated rail plan reverses that. Who knows, my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Robbie Moore) might get a surprise in five or six years' time. Who is to say?

**Lilian Greenwood:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Paul Maynard:** Only if I get another minute!

**Lilian Greenwood:** Does the hon. Gentleman not think that this decision to reverse the previous decision to cancel the electrification of the midland main line shows that the Government do not have a proper strategy for delivering net zero or for delivering rail investment? Is this not the most inefficient way to electrify the railway? Should they not have a proper rolling programme rather than this stop-go approach?

**Paul Maynard:** I have to disagree with the distinguished former Chairman of the Select Committee. I am about to set out why I think there is perhaps an understandable flaw in the system of rail investment.

There is a political problem with rail investment when justifiable ambition on both sides of the House runs into the hard, cold reality of the public finances and the practical reality of enhancing rail networks in a sustainable and timely fashion. Since around 2008, we have seen plans for HS2 come along in differing fashions and HS3 being rebranded as Northern Powerhouse Rail to serve a shifting cast list of northern cities, although no one could quite agree on the full list. Then Midlands Connect came along because it did not want to miss out on the party that the northern powerhouse was having, and all the while in the background there was a threnody of upgrades for the east coast main line, the west coast main line and the trans-Pennine routes.

The Oakervee review progressed in the latter part of 2019. I was the HS2 Minister at the time, and it became increasingly clear to me that there was no proper understanding either here or more widely in the country of how any of it should best be sequenced, built and delivered in a timely fashion. It was deemed sensible and appropriate to ask the National Infrastructure Commission to look in detail at all the plans that were in circulation, which led to the rail needs assessment for the midlands and the north.

None of those criticising the Government today has engaged with the analysis from the National Infrastructure Commission on the feasibility, rather than the desirability, of delivering all these schemes. Indeed, it instructs the Government not to overpromise and underdeliver but to underpromise and overdeliver—it is easy to mix up the two.

As a Minister, nothing made my heart plummet more than when groups of people came to me from across the country with lengthy lists of projects they wanted. It is much better to set out the conditional outcomes we wish to achieve, in terms of both capacity and journey times, preferably set within the country's economic objectives, and to let the transport planners come up with suggestions and answers. Instead, we get named projects that acquire almost mythical status, brands in their own right. This obscures whether those conditional outcomes can be achieved sooner by other, more affordable means, which is what we see with the integrated rail plan.

There is an underlying importance of continually asking the right questions, rather than identifying marquee projects that can be trumpeted politically but may supersede less eye-catching but more deliverable short-term projects that would have greater economic impact.

The integrated rail plan does not contain everything I might wish and, like my hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate and Knaresborough, I would rather see phase 2b, the eastern leg, go ahead. I would rather see Bradford served much better than it will be, but that does not make the integrated rail plan an incoherent and unrealistic package. As schemes and projects mature, and as we know more about the conditions in which they will be built, a few may turn out to be easier and cheaper than predicted; others will be more complex than expected. The nature of building railways is that we cannot predict how easy it will be. Plans will change and details will alter, but at least we now have a baseline for what can

be delivered within a specific budget and a specific timeline and, to some degree, against a range of desired outcomes.

The construction of new railways takes decades, not months. It is the work of many Governments, not just one. Transport planning is not inherently politically exciting, but I hope we can now move away from the feverish branding of specific projects and understand how we can create capacity, rolling stock, station enhancements and a much wider range of interventions to identify and remedy the inadequacies that we all know exist across our rail network.

The IRP, as my hon. Friend pointed out, is a £96 billion investment in our rail network, and it should be welcomed on both sides of the House. It will bring benefits far sooner to many of our communities across the north, so it should be welcomed and not turned into a political football.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** I know it is tempting to take interventions, but I would be grateful if colleagues could still stick to the four minutes, otherwise time will be taken from others.

5.18 pm

**Andy McDonald** (Middlesbrough) (Lab): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Blackpool North and Cleveleys (Paul Maynard).

Much has been said about the disintegrated rail plan, the watering down of the northern powerhouse and the scrapping of the eastern leg of HS2, and all that criticism is well founded. The bottom line is that this Government have broken their promises. I see the northern rail network as a beating heart, and the arteries are badly clogged. So much so, we need stents where the blockages are most severe and some major bypasses to take the pressure off the entire system.

The conventional system needs upgrading as well as the high-speed intercity connections. The Tories, the Prime Minister and a succession of Transport Secretaries, including the latest one, have argued that we need both. That is what HS2 and NPR, as promised, would have delivered, but it has all been tossed aside by the Tories' integrated rail plan, which is nothing short of a betrayal.

For all the talk of levelling up, the Government are failing constituents like mine in Middlesbrough. When I came into Parliament at the end of 2012, I immediately began to campaign for better transport services in our region. One element of that was a direct rail service from Middlesbrough to London, as we were the largest conurbation in the UK without a direct rail link to our capital city. Despite its late arrival, we will finally be getting that service next week, but it is only one train out and one train back each day. It is a start, but the fight continues. I will do everything I can to make sure we get the promised seven trains out and six trains back a day, and that they materialise as soon as possible.

Another key issue on which I have pressed the Department for Transport from the moment I arrived in the House is the expansion of electrified rail from Northallerton on the east coast main line to Middlesbrough. Electrification is a hugely important infrastructure development for our wider ambitions. Back in 2013, a national electrification taskforce reported to the then Secretary of State, who is now the right hon. Lord McLoughlin, highlighting 12 northern routes that should be electrified by 2024. Northallerton to Middlesbrough was among the 12 routes earmarked for completion in the period 2019 to 2024, but since then the Government have gone completely silent on the schemes. We need a modern mass transit system connecting our communities, with full connectivity of our rail services across and beyond our region. That would be truly transformative for our community.

**Tahir Ali** (Birmingham, Hall Green) (Lab): On the point about connecting communities, does my hon. Friend agree that HS2 was not just about building track, building stations or reducing journey times; it was more about regeneration and connecting regions and cities, and about the economic benefits that could flow between them?

**Andy McDonald:** My hon. Friend makes a very good point. The entire purpose of HS2, which was supported by successive Governments—the Prime Minister stood at the Dispatch Box and supported it himself—was to release capacity on our conventional rail line. If we really want to make that advance, take vehicles off our roads and get people off aviation and into rail, HS2 is the way to deliver it. Give us the option to go all the way up to Scotland, because that is critical. Sadly, that opportunity has been lost with the plan that has been announced.

Observing your strictures, Madam Deputy Speaker, I will draw my remarks to a close. We want those improvements in our systems, and there is no reason in the world why we should not strive for exactly that. Frankly, however, I have no faith that the Government will deliver on any of their past promises, and I fear that their further promises are destined to be broken.

5.22 pm

**Mark Eastwood** (Dewsbury) (Con): I thank the Secretary of State for mentioning Dewsbury several times in his opening remarks. Under the old proposals for Northern Powerhouse Rail, Dewsbury would not have got a single mention, because it was not included.

People often forget that the north is not just made up of cities such as Manchester or Edinburgh; towns such as Dewsbury, Mirfield and Huddersfield also deserve accessible and realistically delivered transport services. Under the old plans, my constituency would have seen little, if any, improvement, but it will now undergo major developments, including full electrification and improved station facilities, alongside faster connections to nearby cities. The original Northern Powerhouse Rail proposals would not have delivered benefits to the north for another two decades, and Dewsbury and Huddersfield would have been missed out in their entirety. That is why I fully support the integrated rail plan.

On that point, I was extremely surprised that the Labour leader of Kirklees Council signed a joint letter to the Prime Minister suggesting that he wants anywhere but his own borough to benefit from the integrated rail plan. I therefore urge the leader of Kirklees Council to stop blindly following his counterparts in Bradford and Leeds, and the Mayor of West Yorkshire, and to stand up for Kirklees by acknowledging the fact that Dewsbury and Huddersfield benefit greatly from the introduction of this plan.

*[Mark Eastwood]*

The plan also changes the game for British businesses and those involved in the rail industry, such as Associated Utility Supplies Ltd, a company based in Clayton West that supplies specialist equipment to Network Rail. Coming from a business background myself, I know the importance of the tendering process. I will continue to work with not just AUS, but other companies in my constituency to ensure that they have the best chance of taking the opportunities granted through this major rail investment.

One final piece of the jigsaw in my constituency is still missing: the much-needed upgrades to the Penistone line. Despite my hon. Friend the Member for Penistone and Stocksbridge (Miriam Cates) and I putting in a joint levelling-up bid, there is still uncertainty as to whether we will be successful as we move into the second round of bidding. The integrated rail plan more than adequately covers those travelling from east to west by significantly improving links with Manchester, Leeds and York, via Dewsbury and Huddersfield. However, it is equally important that we link up the north and south through my constituency and beyond by connecting Huddersfield to Sheffield, thereby making it accessible to people who live in those villages in my constituency that have stations on the line. This would enable the people of Stocksmoor, Denby Dale and Shepley to commute between those hubs and, just as easily, to Manchester and Leeds.

The making of much-needed station improvements on the Penistone line and the movement from an hourly to a half-hourly service would be transformational for my constituency. With that in mind, will the rail Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Chris Heaton-Harris), consider the benefits of such an upgrade and investigate how it could be incorporated into the IRP? With a total investment of £96 billion, I am sure he could squeeze in the odd £47 million.

Investment in rail in the north was a central element of the manifesto that I ran on. Levelling up cannot wait until the 2040s, so I fully support the plan, which will deliver more punctual, frequent and reliable journeys for the people of Dewsbury, Mirfield, Kirkburton and Denby Dale.

5.26 pm

**Dan Jarvis** (Barnsley Central) (Lab): I declare an interest as a metro Mayor. Also, it would be churlish of me not to acknowledge the fact that both Ministers on the Front Bench—the hon. Members for Daventry (Chris Heaton-Harris) and for Pendle (Andrew Stephenson)—have been unfailingly helpful and cheerful in supporting the work we are trying to do in South Yorkshire, so the critique of the Government's plans that I am about to make is aimed not at them personally but at decisions that have been made in Downing Street.

When the Prime Minister first set out his levelling-up agenda back in July 2019, he made an unequivocal pledge to fund Northern Powerhouse Rail. Since then, he and his Government have repeated that pledge not once, not twice but 60 times—not in part and not with compromises, but in full. The Prime Minister was right to make those promises, because the delivery of Northern Powerhouse Rail and, indeed, HS2 in full is the least that the north could expect. It is not some extravagant fantasy—another airport in the Thames or bridge over the Irish sea—and it is not special treatment; it is the bare minimum to redress a legacy of decades of neglect.

Set against that neglect, Transport for the North's plan of investment, spread over 30 years, is entirely reasonable, but instead we have ended up with a cut-price, compromise scheme that leaves Sheffield disconnected from any high-speed link to Manchester or Hull; that does nothing to fix the unacceptably slow and infrequent connection to our sister powerhouse city of Leeds, just 35 miles away; that leaves the great city of Bradford isolated on a branch line; and that does too little to mend the north-south divide and risks widening the east-west divide.

Worse yet, the IRP sets the stage for decades to come. This was the moment to invest in our railway infrastructure for generations to come; it was not the moment to cut corners. Instead, the plan bakes in mediocrity for a generation and delays the structural improvements needed for the fundamental change that levelling up is supposed to be all about. Sadly, all this is par for the course. The Government have a consistent track record of dressing up half measures and telling voters that they amount to transformation. If it means anything, levelling up must mean that, for a change, the north gets what it needs—that we do not get second best.

Let us be clear: this is a betrayal not just of the north but of the whole country.

Northern Powerhouse Rail could have helped to create 850,000 extra jobs and unlock £3.4 billion of gross value added every year. It could have reduced the £14 billion a year regional inequality that it is estimated to cost in lost tax revenue and higher health and benefit spending, but, as it stands, the IRP only confirms the utter poverty of vision of this Government and the insincerity of their pledges. Perhaps some people are so used to this that they have forgotten to be outraged, but I say to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I have not, and enough is enough.

5.29 pm

**Dr Jamie Wallis** (Bridgend) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Barnsley Central (Dan Jarvis).

It is essential that our country, which invented rail travel, continues to pioneer rail connectivity. Projects such as the integrated rail plan and the publication of the Union connectivity review proved that this Government, despite what the Opposition claim, remain committed to levelling up as one nation and building back better from the pandemic. In total, the integrated rail plan brings forth the single biggest investment in the history of our rail network—£96 billion—delivering three new high-speed rail lines that will slash journey times across the United Kingdom.

Unlike the Leader of the Opposition, I have consistently championed HS2's benefits for Wales. Too often, the benefits of HS2 are thought to impact only England, but this investment brings benefits for the entirety of the United Kingdom, including for passengers travelling from my constituency in south Wales. This plan will spread the benefits of HS2 further, enabling more frequent, faster journeys while simultaneously enhancing passenger capacity across the country.

Additionally, the investment of the IRP provides opportunities and job security for people across the whole of the UK and supports vital sectors, such as steel, that are integral to my constituency of Bridgend—many of my constituents work in the Port Talbot steelworks in the neighbouring constituency of Aberavon.

Previous plans would not have delivered benefits to Wales for another two decades. Levelling up cannot wait until the 2040s; it must happen now. These plans deliver transformational changes in speed, capacity and reliability, while increasing prosperity and access to larger job markets for all throughout the United Kingdom. It is clear to me that this plan is a record-breaking, fantastic investment in our rail. It is not just for that reason that I will not be supporting the Opposition motion this evening, but for three further reasons as well: less than 65 miles of track was electrified prior to 2010; Sadiq Khan's Transport for London is in tatters; and the Welsh Government-controlled rail lines are a devolved disaster.

5.32 pm

**Nia Griffith** (Llanelli) (Lab): It is not just the north that has been badly let down by this Government, but the people in Wales. All of us recognise the need for rail investment not just for the immediate economic and commercial benefits, but in order to decarbonise our transport, which currently accounts for some 27% of all emissions. Electrification of the railways and investment in the renewable generation of electricity are an obvious way in which emissions can be reduced. Then of course there is the need to increase capacity. I have frequently raised with railway professionals the question of why more freight cannot be transported by rail, and I am told that, in many instances, there is simply not the capacity.

The truth is that the people in Wales have been badly short-changed by this Government in respect of investment in rail infrastructure, because, although Wales has some 11% of the UK's rail track, we have barely had a 2% share of investment in rail infrastructure. Matters are currently compounded by the fact that HS2 has been designated as an England and Wales project—

**Dr Wallis** *rose—*

**Nia Griffith:** No, I will not give way. The hon. Member has had his say.

Matters are currently compounded by the fact that HS2 has been designated as an England and Wales project in spite of the fact that, according to the Government's own analysis, rather than benefiting from the project, Wales will actually miss out. The designation means that Wales does not receive any Barnett consequentials, so I again ask the Government whether they will now follow the recommendations of the Welsh Affairs Committee and redesignate HS2 as an England-only project, and then accord Wales the appropriate funding in the form of Barnett consequentials.

Sadly, time and again, we have heard the Tory Government talk of lavish investment, but it is all talk that is not backed up in reality. Instead, we have had announcements that are reduced in scope, re-announced as if they were new, delayed, postponed or completely forgotten. All we know is that they are broken promises that are not delivered.

One such case is the electrification of the Great Western main line. In 2009, the former Labour Government announced a £1.1 billion project to electrify the line to Swansea. However, in 2010, the incoming Tory Government immediately axed the Cardiff to Swansea leg. After some considerable campaigning by local MPs, a promise was made in 2012 that the electrification would in fact continue to Swansea. However, in 2017, the Government again broke their promise and axed the Cardiff to Swansea leg. When this issue was raised recently, the Secretary of State for Wales responded glibly that there was no point in doing it because the nature of the track meant that speeds would not be significantly improved—what a pathetic answer. For the sake simply of combating climate change, electrification makes sense. Indeed, it is essential if we are to decarbonise our transport.

**Geraint Davies:** Does my hon. Friend agree that as the Welsh Affairs Committee has recommended, Wales should get its fair share of Barnett consequentials for HS2, which would be £4.6 billion, to electrify, modernise and move towards net zero in the rail system?

**Nia Griffith:** Absolutely, and I thank my hon. Friend for the work that he has done on this matter.

After all the razzmatazz of COP26, I hope that the Government are going to get serious about tackling climate change. One obvious way to do this would be to electrify the railway, not just to Swansea, but all the way through to the strategic port of Milford Haven.

We desperately need upgrades to the north Wales main line, which goes through to Holyhead, which handles huge volumes of traffic with Ireland. We also need much better connectivity between north Wales and the north-west of England, as there is a huge volume of cross-border traffic. Indeed, Transport for Wales and Growth Track 360 have been developing plans for a north Wales metro, as well as improvements to the north Wales main line, speed and capacity upgrades between Wrexham, Bidston and Liverpool, and proper links to HS2.

**Mark Tami** (Alyn and Deeside) (Lab): Does my hon. Friend agree that it was sad to see that the very good idea of funding further work on the Wrexham to Bidston line, which was put forward under the levelling-up proposal, in fact got no money whatever, and that again Wales has been levelled down by this Government?

**Nia Griffith:** My right hon. Friend makes a good point. In fact, Sir Peter Hendy, in his report, recognised the value of that project, the Burns report on improvements for the area around Newport, and the need for improvements from Cardiff up to the midlands—all very worthwhile projects. There is no lack of ideas in which the Government could invest, if they were so minded to.

I really cannot finish without stressing the real need for this Government to respect devolution and the Welsh Government. No matter how big a Union flag Ministers put on their internet background, if they ride roughshod over the Welsh Government rather than fostering co-operation, they will provoke resentment. A strong Union needs effective collaboration, not—as we have seen with the community renewal fund—the UK Government ignoring the long experience and strategic planning of the Welsh Government.

*[Nia Griffith]*

I remind the House of the huge commitment of the Welsh Government to public transport infrastructure, taking over the Wales and Borders franchise, creating Transport for Wales, and now investing £738 million in transforming the valleys lines. To match the Welsh Government's ambition and commitment to rail, in which they are investing, we now need the Government to step up to their responsibilities for rail to Wales and main lines within Wales, make up for their lack of investment to date and for their broken promises, consult meaningfully with the Welsh Government on priorities and plans, and deliver for Wales.

5.38 pm

**James Grundy** (Leigh) (Con): First, I thank the Secretary of State for his support in securing the funding for the reopening of Golborne station in my constituency of Leigh, and of course his excellent ministerial team for all the other work that they have been doing. The £15 million from the Government's transforming cities fund will ensure that the long-held ambition of my constituents in Golborne to reopen our railway station is realised, with the timetable for the completion of the new station currently set to be 2026-27, although I hope that we can bring that target forward and would welcome an opportunity to meet the Secretary of State to discuss that issue.

Secondly, I welcome the investment that the Government are making in signalling improvements to create capacity on the Castlefield corridor, which would allow a station serving Leigh to be built at Kenyon Junction—the first railway junction built in the entire world—just south of the Atherleigh Way—another long-held ambition of my constituents, and a much-needed improvement.

Next I should like to talk about the Golborne spur of HS2. I declare my interest: the spur affects my family home, the Grundy family farm, as it does the homes of thousands of my constituents in Lowton and Golborne. The integrated rail plan and Union connectivity review both recommended that the Government look at alternatives to the Golborne spur. I strongly welcome that recommendation, on behalf of my constituents. I know my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington South (Andy Carter) will strongly agree with me on that point.

Finally, I pay tribute to the thousands of local residents and the many local groups who have contributed to the campaign against the Golborne spur of HS2—two individuals, in particular. The first is Linda Graham. Some Members who have been around long enough may remember that she was Andy Burnham's office manager, and a very formidable one at that. The second, more sadly, is the late Ted Thwaite, chair of local residents' group the Lowton East Neighbourhood Development Forum, who sadly passed away just a couple of weeks before the announcement about the review of the Golborne spur. He was a great man. Many people would spend their 70s with their feet up sat on the couch; Ted spent his 70s campaigning for his village and his community. As his great friend Bob said when he was giving the eulogy at his funeral, if Ted has anything to do with it, that review will go the right way. I ask Members to listen to the residents of Lowton and Golborne and take note of all the thousands of letters and petitions they have sent in over the years: please scrap the Golborne spur of HS2.

5.41 pm

**Sir Mark Hendrick** (Preston) (Lab/Co-op): The north of England is the birthplace of the modern railway, with the first passenger services launching in the UK between Darlington and Stockton in 1825. The Liverpool and Manchester Railway, which opened in 1830, was the first modern railroad. Preston was an early adopter of railways, with the first station opening in 1838. Since the Victorian age, the north has lagged far behind the south in new railways and infrastructure. The existing infrastructure has reached capacity, but now demand continues to grow. A fast railway line would take northern England into the 21st century and help to level up the region, which continues to be the promise of this Government.

The case to have a high-speed railway running through the centre of Britain was first formally made by the Labour Government in 2010. It is not just about speed; capacity constraints are mainly at the heart of the strategic case for HS2 and north-south rail links in England. Rail capacity is dependent on two things: train capacity and route capacity. HS2 will improve transport times, create jobs and help the country's economy while serving as a driver of growth in regional economies and creating opportunities for regeneration. Ultimately, the economic benefits will be worth the proposed costs.

The Government said that they wanted to deliver more frequent, more reliable and faster journeys between our major economic centres. Beyond the immediate transport concerns, the gap in productivity and economic growth between London and the south-east and the north was recognised in the strategic case for HS2, linking in with the Prime Minister's ambitions to "level up the country". In fact, the Government's own national infrastructure strategy cites backing HS2 to deliver essential north-south connectivity as an example of how it is using infrastructure to unite and level up the UK.

**Sara Britcliffe** (Hyndburn) (Con) *rose—*

**Sir Mark Hendrick:** I am sorry, but I want to save time for other speakers.

As recently as February 2021, the Prime Minister told MPs in the Chamber that the project was going ahead:

> "I can certainly confirm that we are going to develop the eastern leg as well as the whole of the HS2."—[*Official Report*, 10 February 2021; Vol. 689, c. 325.]

The Transport Secretary, who is not in his place, outlined his commitment to the project nearly seven months ago. Similarly, Northern Powerhouse Rail was supposed to deliver a new high-speed rail connection between Manchester and Leeds, Leeds and Birmingham and London and Birmingham in phase 1, due to open in 2029, thus linking England's four largest urban areas with faster train services. Now the project's proposed £34 billion budget is being slashed by half, so the trimmed-down initiative does not resemble the bold rethink of Britain's rail system once promised. That has triggered widespread condemnation in the north, in both Labour and Conservative seats. The Lancashire local enterprise partnership believes that the productivity gains as a result of HS2 services to the area could help provide an extra £600 million for the region. HS2 will reinforce Preston's position as a strategic rail hub. The Lancashire LEP has referred to Preston as the engine to

establish an "arc of prosperity" running from Lancaster and through to Blackpool, Blackburn and Burnley, taking in Lancashire's aerospace, energy, tourism and higher education sectors. In Preston itself, HS2 could mean 75,000 extra visitors a year.

The rhetoric has not matched the reality. The Government should deliver on their promises from three general elections. I urge the Government to rethink their plans.

5.45 pm

**Darren Henry** (Broxtowe) (Con): A few weeks ago, the Government announced £96 billion worth of infrastructure for rail throughout the midlands and the north—an unprecedented commitment to levelling up transport and delivering on the Government's agenda. The east midlands, where I have my constituency of Broxtowe, has received the lowest spend on transport per head in the country year after year. With the Government having laid down a package of more than £12 billion of rail infrastructure for the east midlands, they have made it absolutely clear that that ends today.

The rail improvements will not only provide faster journeys, increased capacity and more frequent trains, but will make us greener. We are not only levelling up; we are cleaning up. Electrification under the IRP will mean that more than 75% of Britain's main trunk roads will be decarbonised. It will also take significant volumes of passengers and freight away from petrol and diesel cars and trucks and on to electric trains. By upgrading our local services, we will reduce the use of cars and reduce carbon emissions, building back better and helping us to reach net zero by 2050.

In my constituency of Broxtowe, we are receiving a brand-new station at Toton, with links to Nottingham and other areas throughout the region. A shuttle could also operate from Toton to the HS2 stop at East Midlands Parkway, meaning faster and more efficient travel times throughout my constituency. In the area, we will see the new Maid Marian line, as well as the Robin Hood line, improving connectivity in the east midlands, thus unlocking investment and creating jobs throughout Toton and surrounding communities. It is now absolutely essential that we move forward at speed. It is a fantastic package in front of us that has excited many in the region, and we must now see those plans come to fruition. It is time to get shovels in the ground and get the job done.

5.47 pm

**Naz Shah** (Bradford West) (Lab): I wish I could show the House an image of Bradford's transport system. A train comes into Forster Square and must reverse back out, and the same happens less than just half a mile away on the other side of town, where a train coming into Bradford Interchange also must reverse back out. The reality is that Bradford transport is literally a one-way, dead-end cul-de-sac.

The people of Bradford were continually reassured that they would get NPR in Bradford. I wrote to the Chancellor a week before this announcement with cross-party Members and the Bradford business community, highlighting the importance of the Government sticking to their promise. I highlighted the great work that my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford South (Judith Cummins) has done in raising the need for a proper transport network.

**Kim Leadbeater** (Batley and Spen) (Lab): My hon. Friend is absolutely right to highlight the scandalous way that the proud Yorkshire city of Bradford—a place close to my heart, having worked there for more than a decade—has been let down yet again. Would she also agree that for the towns and villages in my constituency of Batley and Spen, we need more detail on the stopping patterns at intermediate stations? Faster trains between cities on existing lines do nothing to free up the capacity that we desperately need.

**Naz Shah:** I thank my hon. Friend for her intervention, and I agree with the valid points she makes.

Campaigners say that it was quicker to travel to places from Bradford on a steam train than it is on today's network. The Edwardians could get on a train from Bradford to Wakefield and it would take 30 minutes. Today, it is 48 minutes. Bradford is Britain's seventh biggest city, with the youngest population, and it is the worst connected major city in the UK. We were promised a through line and were betrayed by this Government. Only a few weeks ago, at the annual Bradford chamber of commerce dinner, the new president Victoria Wainwright said, "This isn't the end of the line for business in Bradford; it's never the end of the line for Bradford", because despite the failure, neglect, and contempt that this Government have shown towards Bradford and its people, Bradford is still reaching new heights.

Bradford is the only city outside London that has two FTSE 100 companies—Bradford & Bingley and Provident Financial. We are proud to have in Bradford the headquarters of Morrisons, one of the country's largest supermarkets. Najam Kidwai, who is from Bradford, today listed a company on NASDAQ that is five times over-subscribed with more than $1 billion in share orders. We have curries that Lahore and New Delhi struggle to compete with and milkshakes that have been tried and tested by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge. We have the Bradford literature festival, which is the most diverse festival in Europe, and we are bidding to be the city of culture, because, among other things, Bradford has one of the largest collections of David Hockney's work, is a UNESCO city of film and has a world heritage site.

I end by asking hon. Members to imagine the potential that Bradford could unlock if the Government supported it and it got its fair share—I would be happy to work on a non-partisan basis with the Government on that. With the transport investment alone, we would have unlocked a £30 billion economic boost to the region within a decade; brought more than 6.5 million people to the city; created 27,000 jobs; generated a 10% uplift in land value; and unlocked 1.3 million additional accessible jobs within 90 minutes of Bradford.

When I was growing up, I knew my mother had been down to town because she used to walk through Rackhams and try on all the nice perfumes—a bit like people do in Selfridges these days. That is what Bradford used to have, and it deserves to be back at its best, not just for Bradford, but for the whole of the north.

The litmus test of levelling up is levelling up for Bradford. I am grateful to my friends, the hon. Members for Keighley (Robbie Moore) and for Shipley (Philip Davies), who have supported NPR, but the Government have failed. It is time for the Government to remove the iron gate in front of Bradford. They need to support us, invest and allow Bradford to unlock its full potential.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans):** Order. If everybody can resume their seats, I am getting information that there is likely to be a statement at approximately 6 o'clock. The debate would be paused for that period and would then be resumed after that, as I understand it. If anything changes, I will let you know, or Mr Speaker will give a statement informing the House what the procedure will be when he takes the Chair to chair the statement.

5.52 pm

**Sara Britcliffe** (Hyndburn) (Con): In Hyndburn and Haslingden, we have not had representation for years and Labour did nothing for our area. I have campaigned tirelessly to improve our transport links. For example, in the recent Budget, the Manchester to Rawtenstall service was given approval through the next stages of the Restoring Your Railway fund; there have been advancements on the vital Skipton to Colne railway line, on which my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Robbie Moore) has worked with me; and Accrington station has received money for disabled access. I also worked with hon. Members to save the vital X41 route.

I push the Government to keep the promise that they will focus on the smaller projects that link towns to cities. A 25-mile journey from Accrington to Manchester can take an hour by rail. When we look at projects about journeys from Manchester to London, we have to understand that that takes 10 minutes more than a 25-mile journey. I ask the Government to keep that promise to connect constituencies such as mine to the big cities, so that an area that could be a brilliant commuter town can really prosper.

5.53 pm

**Jeremy Corbyn** (Islington North) (Ind): Railways are the most essential form of transport, and they are the greenest and cleanest form of transport available, so their development is absolutely essential. We have to reflect, however, that since privatisation in the 1990s, fares have gone up astronomically, there has been massive profit-taking from the railway systems, and fare-paying passengers are paying the price. We should take the opportunity to take the entirety of the rail system into public ownership, as we put forward in our 2019 manifesto. The longer we go on with a partly privatised rail system, the longer many of the people we represent—many of them—simply cannot afford to travel by train. They are, however, expected to support a very high level of investment in the railway system. We do need to address the problems of the fare gap.

This expensively produced document—the integrated rail plan—is actually a massive apology for the failure of the Government to carry out the promises they made in 2019 about the investment they would make in the midland main line, the Pennine lines and all across the north of England. I have absolute solidarity with all of my colleagues across the north who are demanding proper, rational investment—

**Jacob Young:** Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

**Jeremy Corbyn:** No, I will not give way.

Those colleagues are demanding proper, rational investment to ensure that their towns and cities are properly served by the railway system across this country. I absolutely support them in doing that.

There has to be an integrated transport system in this country. Therefore, the underfunding of Transport for the North and the failure of the Government to recognise the need to support Transport for London at the present time are actually part and parcel of the same short-sighted mentality they have to try to get through the current problems they face.

We need to increase rail capacity, and we need to increase rail capacity all across the country. I support the reopening of closed railway lines. The whole process that Beeching carried out under a Tory Government of closing branch lines all over the country did a great deal of damage to the railway network as a whole, but I have to say that some of the reopening is good but short-sighted. For example, why was the line reopened as far as Okehampton, but there is no plan so far to reopen it all the way to Plymouth? And so it goes on all across the country. I would urge the Government—

**Jacob Young** *rose—*

**Jeremy Corbyn:** Just so that the hon. Member is aware of it, I am not giving way.

I would urge the Government to make sure that in their plans for reopening disused lines—*[Interruption.]*

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans):** Order. I cannot hear what Mr Corbyn is saying, and he is not giving way.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** I would urge the Government in planning any reopenings, which generally I would support, to do a serious cost-benefit analysis and look at the potential of the line. In most cases, there has been a gross underestimation of the benefits that reopening brings. For example, the Edinburgh to Galashiels line, which is doing very well, should be opened right the way through to Carlisle.

The last point I would make is that to make the railways affordable we have to take the profit motive out of the running of the train operating companies, and we have to bring them into public ownership to make railways affordable for all. Otherwise, what are we going to say—that those less well-off can take the bus or those less well-off can take long-distance coaches, while the railways will be there for those who can afford it and for the middle classes? No, railways have to be there for everybody, and that means proper investment and public ownership.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr Deputy Speaker:** Order. We are now going down to a three-minute limit.

5.57 pm

**Dr Kieran Mullan** (Crewe and Nantwich) (Con): The railways are at the heart of Crewe's history. The town came after the railways did, in fact. Until the station and railway works were built, it was just a village. While we do not have the same dependency on the railway sector as we used to, it is a key part of our local industry. So major investment in the railways, wherever it is in the country, can only be good news for Crewe.

Companies in Crewe and Nantwich contribute to the building and maintenance of trains and railway lines in all sorts of different ways. The fact that Crewe is itself at the heart of these plans means that we will be benefiting directly from what is the single biggest investment in the railways ever in the north and the midlands. The integrated rail plan is set to level up our transport networks in Crewe and across the north-west. Crewe is set to become a vital super-hub, connecting high-speed services and the existing railway network.

The arrival of HS2 services into Crewe and the confirmation of the Crewe to Manchester leg of HS2 will benefit my constituents in a number of ways. The most talked about element is the drastic cuts in journey times—for example, from Crewe to Manchester airport down to 15 minutes, Crewe to Manchester Piccadilly to 24 minutes and Crewe to Birmingham halved to 25 minutes. These sorts of journey times will allow my residents to make very different choices. Young people will not have to leave our area to get a job in a big city or to study, which means we will keep their vibrancy, their spending power and their contribution to our local communities.

Of course, these journey times, Crewe's railway heritage and its centrality to the future of our railway networks make it the only place we could sensibly place the headquarters of Great British Railways, and I know the Minister will find it very difficult to disagree with that.

Importantly, by moving inter-city traffic off the west coast main line, this investment will free up capacity on existing lines and routes so that Crewe can benefit from more frequent and reliable services locally, which I think is what my residents care the most about. We do need to work hard to make the most of that opportunity—for example, by making sure that services from Nantwich to Crewe are improved in frequency and reliability.

As always, the Opposition are just not credible on these issues. I have completely lost track of all the extra things they want to spend money on across government, whether welfare, foreign aid, education, the NHS, social care, business rates, support for lockdown measures and now the railways. We can guarantee that whenever the Government decide to spend money, it will not be enough; the Opposition would spend more and that would make everything all right. But what does their track record show? The last Labour Government did not require Northern Rail to invest and improve the network—contracts signed by the Labour Government were done on the basis of zero growth and zero investment. Under Labour, the ranking of our roads and railways plummeted from seventh in the world to 33rd, meaning UK infrastructure was ranked below those of Namibia, Slovenia and Cyprus. That is their track record on infrastructure in this country.

How would the Opposition pay for what they are proposing? They tell us, "Just tax the rich and tax wealth," with no details, no idea of how they are going to do it and how much money they would get from that. While they cry "betrayal" we know that their track record is one of betrayal while ours will be one of delivery on railways and infrastructure for the people of the north and midlands.

6 pm

**Ian Lavery** (Wansbeck) (Lab): This has been an interesting discussion. Not once has any Government Front Bencher mentioned Northumberland. It is a wonderful county and I wonder whether Ministers or indeed the Secretary of State have ever visited it. The Government's integrated rail plan proposals are an absolute disaster for the north-east. Once again the Government have overpromised and under-delivered. Once again the north-east has been betrayed; once again the saying "the great north rail betrayal" rings true throughout the communities of the north-east.

The scrapping of the eastern leg of HS2 is extremely disappointing, if not surprising in the least, and the Government announced on more than 60 occasions that they would not scrap it. But in the north-east the plans were never really going to benefit the communities in the first place. The eastern leg of HS2 basically only went as far as Leeds and NPR only went as far north as Newcastle, with those in Downing Street missing out the wonderful county of Northumberland. I wish people would visit our wonderful county.

The plans to reintroduce passenger rail on the Ashington, Blyth and Tyne line are essential. I and my predecessors have been campaigning for that for generations, and I want to place on record my thanks to the South East Northumberland Rail User Group for its outstanding campaigning efforts. I want the Minister to please give a firm commitment in the winding-up speech that that line will go ahead. I say that simply because of the broken promises of this Government with regard to many things—we cannot trust a word they say.

On the east coast main line, the proposals to change the services schedule in order to shave seconds off the time from Edinburgh to London were an outrage, and that was only changed because of public annoyance. I ask the Government to please look at that again. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn) said only a few seconds ago in his contribution, public ownership is the answer to the issues facing the disastrous transport system on our rail networks.

*Debate interrupted.*

**Mr Speaker:** I am now going to call the Leader of the House to move a motion without notice regarding the time allocated for the motion in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

## Business of the House (Today)

6.4 pm

**The Leader of the House of Commons (Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg):** I beg to move,

That the Order of 7 December 2021 (Business of the House (8 December)) be varied as follows:

After "three hours" insert—

"; such business may be interrupted by any statement made by a Minister of the Crown, and in calculating the three hours no account shall be taken of the time taken by any such statement."

The motion amends the business motion agreed yesterday to allow the Opposition day debate to continue for three hours, with time in lieu for the time taken for the Government statement.

**Mr Speaker:** In this unusual situation, and to facilitate this important statement, I accept the need to have the motion without notice.

*Question put and agreed to.*

## Covid-19 Update

6.5 pm

**The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Sajid Javid):** With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to update the House on the covid-19 pandemic. We are working night and day to understand more about the omicron variant. There is still a lot to learn, but some important data has emerged recently and I would like to update the House on the latest developments.

There are three reasons why the omicron variant is a threat. First, it is far more transmissible than the delta variant. The delta variant was much more transmissible than the alpha variant, and we are confident that omicron is significantly more transmissible than delta. We can see this most starkly when looking at how many days it takes for the number of infections to double for each variant. For delta, this was around seven days, but for omicron, based on the latest data from here and around the world, our latest analysis is that it is between two and a half and three days.

This has made the virus an even more formidable foe. Using S-gene drop-out as a reliable proxy for omicron, the rate of drop-out in England is similar to that observed in South Africa. Although there are only 568 confirmed omicron cases in the UK, we know that the actual number of infections will be significantly higher. The UK Health Security Agency estimates that the number of infections is approximately 20 times higher than the number of confirmed cases, so the current number of infections is probably closer to 10,000. UKHSA also estimates that at the current observed doubling rate of between two and a half and three days, by the end of this month, infections could exceed 1 million.

Secondly, we do not yet have comprehensive data on the severity of this virus, but rising rates of hospitalisation in South Africa show that it certainly has the potential to cause harm. In South Africa, the average age is 13 years lower than in the UK, there is a high level of antibodies from natural infection, and it is currently the middle of summer.

Even if severity is lower or the same as delta, high transmissibility means that the omicron variant can still have a severe impact, with the threat of more hospitalisations and unsustainable pressure on the NHS. That would mean an impact not just on covid treatment, but on the non-covid care that we all rely on, such as emergency care if somebody is sadly involved in a serious accident. When we set out plan B, we said that we would act if the NHS was likely to come under unsustainable pressure and was at risk of not being able to provide the care and treatment that people need. The omicron variant has given us cause for concern.

Thirdly, we have been looking closely at what the omicron variant means for our vaccination programme. New laboratory data that has emerged in the last 24 hours suggests that there is lower immunity against omicron from vaccination when compared with the delta variant, so that two doses of a vaccine is less effective at reducing transmission in the community.

However, early research published today by Pfizer suggests that a third dose of the Pfizer vaccine neutralises the Omicron variant to an extent that is similar to the impact of two doses against the original strain of the virus. It is more important than ever that we get the boosters

that are available to all those who are eligible, and that we keep strengthening the defences that we have built. Today, we have opened booster bookings to 7 million more people in England, so people aged 40 and over and those in high-risk groups will be able to get their booster jab from three months after their second dose.

Another defence is new treatments, which have a huge part to play in protecting the most vulnerable from covid 19, especially those who are immunosuppressed, for whom vaccines may be less effective. Today we have announced plans for thousands of people across the UK to be among the first in the world to access life-saving antivirals through a new national study. People who are at highest risk from the virus—for example, those who are immunosuppressed or cancer patients—will also be able to access treatments outside this study from next Thursday if they have a positive PCR test.

We have built some powerful defences. We have put more boosters in arms than any other country in Europe. We have built a huge national infrastructure for testing, and we are leading the world in the deployment of new treatments. Thanks to these defences and our decision to open up in the summer, rather than the winter, we are much better protected than we were this time last year—and we need this protection now more than ever, because although Omicron is becoming more and more prevalent, over the next few days and weeks we will see the Delta and Omicron variants circulating together. Facing these twin threats without these pharmaceutical defences would have been hard enough, but even with them in place we still face a perilous winter, so unfortunately we need to take steps against the threat of this new variant.

When we were moving down our road to recovery, we looked at four tests to see whether we should proceed to the next stage. The tests are: that the vaccine deployment programme is continuing successfully; that the evidence shows that vaccines are sufficiently effective in reducing hospitalisations and deaths in those vaccinated; that infection rates do not risk a surge in hospitalisations that would put unsustainable pressure on the NHS; and that our assessment of the risks is not fundamentally changed by new variants of concern. Unfortunately, the situation is markedly different from the summer, when we were able to open up, so we must take proportionate steps to meet this emerging threat.

These are not measures that any of us wants to take, but these measures give us the best chance of saving lives and protecting our freedom over the next few weeks, and it is precisely because we do not want a lockdown that we are putting these proportionate steps in place now. As we have seen before, if we act early, firmly and decisively, and come down hard on this new Omicron variant, we can avert tougher action later. I know that the news of further measures will be disappointing, of course, for many people, and that every measure comes with a cost. I can assure the House that, in making these decisions, we have taken a wide-ranging view that looks at the impact on not just the NHS, in terms of both covid and non-covid care, but the nation's education, the economy, life chances and mental health.

I would like to update the House on the measures that we will take to enact plan B. First, we will reintroduce the guidance on working from home. It will be updated to say that only people who cannot work from home should continue to go into their workplace. We know that this has an important part to play in slowing transmission, both at workplaces and on public transport. Secondly, we will introduce mandatory certification, based on vaccines or tests, for nightclubs and large events. This will reduce the number of unvaccinated, infectious people in venues, which could limit overall transmission.

Thirdly, on face coverings, we will be extending the legal requirement from shops and public transport to all indoor public settings, including attractions and recreation, although hospitality will be exempt, and we will be exempting specific activities where it is not possible or practical to wear a face covering—for example, singing and exercise. We will be laying these regulations tomorrow, to come into force the following day.

Fourthly, as omicron spreads in the community, we will also introduce daily tests for contacts instead of isolation so that we keep people safe while minimising the disruption to daily life.

Fifthly, on communications, we will be urging caution in all our communications on covid-19 and will keep urging people to get their booster doses and to follow the little steps that they can to help get the virus under control. All these measures will be reviewed on 5 January, when we will also update the House, and they will all sunset on 26 January.

Finally, we will also be taking further measures to protect and support adult social care, and we will be updating the House on a package of measures later this week.

It is better to stay a step ahead of the virus, rather than reacting to what it brings—to take control of our response now, rather than waiting for what comes next. Waiting a few weeks would make it easier to explain the need for these measures, but by then it might well be too late, so we need to act now and take these balanced and proportionate steps.

We take these steps with a heavy heart, but we do so confident that we are doing everything in our power to keep our nation safe this winter. We have come so far over the course of this year, thanks to the defences that we have built against this deadly virus. Now, as we face this new threat, we must draw on the same spirit that has got us here, strengthening our defences, and think about what we can do to help get this virus under control. I commend this statement to the House.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** I will run this statement for an hour after both Front Benchers have spoken. I will try to get as many Members in as possible, but we will all have to help one another, because the business has to carry on afterwards. In fairness to the Secretary of State, he has taken a bit longer because it was a very important statement, so I suggest that the shadow Minister, the hon. Member for Ilford North (Wes Streeting), takes six minutes rather than the normal five—if he wishes to take it—and I will allow some extra time for the Scottish National party spokesman, the hon. Member for Linlithgow and East Falkirk (Martyn Day).

6.17 pm

**Wes Streeting** (Ilford North) (Lab): I begin by thanking the Secretary of State for the telephone call that he made to me this afternoon, which I greatly appreciated. On the Opposition side of the House, we have always

*[Wes Streeting]*

put public health before party politics at every point throughout this pandemic, so I want to be clear with the House and the country that Labour will support these measures in the national interest. Let me reassure the Secretary of State that he does not need to compromise with the interests behind him; he has the votes he needs to do what is right by the public, and that is all the reassurance that the country needs.

Let me also agree with the Secretary of State: we do not do this lightly. Restrictions impact on people's lives, livelihoods and liberties, and we do not take those for granted. We want everyone to be able to enjoy Christmas safely this year, given the trauma of last winter, but the omicron variant is a clear threat and we need swift action to limit its spread.

Let me take the actions outlined in turn. In our opinion, the Government should never have scrapped the guidance on mask wearing, so we support the strengthened guidance. Will the Secretary of State explain whether that extends to hospitality settings? Obviously, he was not able to give me advance sight of his statement, and I totally appreciate why, but if it does not, he ought to elaborate on why that choice was made.

We have always said that people should have the flexibility to work from home, so we also welcome the updated guidance on that. On the introduction of vaccine passports, I am glad that the Government have listened and responded to our proposal that people will also be provided with the option of presenting a negative test. That is exactly the right thing to do. Will the Secretary of State provide reassurance that vaccine passports will not be required to access essential services?

Clearly, in the light of what the Secretary of State has outlined, demand for testing will increase, so will he provide us with the reassurance that we need that the capacity for testing will be there and that tests will be provided for free to ensure that there is proper take-up among the public?

Of course, our greatest tool against the pandemic remains vaccination, so I ask the Secretary of State how he plans to speed up the booster roll-out, which is not hitting the target of half a million vaccines a day and is not currently on track to get everyone boosted by the end of January.

Public health relies on people's willingness to comply with the rules, which in turn relies on confidence in the people making the rules. The damage the Prime Minister has done to public compliance and public trust in the rules that have governed our lives during the pandemic is incalculable. He has undermined public trust and distracted from key public health messaging at a critical time.

If we needed any proof of that, it was the absence of the Secretary of State from the morning media round today, which he was due to undertake to tell people why taking up the booster was so important. He was not able to do that, not through any fault of his own, but through the actions of the Prime Minister and those closest around him.

The past 24 hours have not been the only example or the only incident that has damaged public trust. The first turning point was the notorious trip to Barnard Castle. We saw the actions of the former Health Secretary in his office, the former Education Secretary holding his own private party while schools were struggling to get through the end of term and headteachers were on their knees coping with what confronted them, and the Prime Minister himself attempting to get out of having to isolate. Now, of course, we have the footage of the Prime Minister's own staff laughing on camera and joking about breaking the rules at the No. 10 Christmas party.

It is hard to overstate how much damage that has done and how angry people feel—the businesses that were forced to close; the family weddings that were postponed; the chances to say goodbye at funerals missed; the educators, the key workers, people in the NHS and social care who ran into danger as other people were laughing in their office parties. That is what makes the laughter so stomach-turning; it feels as if they are laughing at us. The question we all need to ask this evening, especially in light of the statement made earlier this afternoon by Allegra Stratton, who has done the right thing, shown she has understood the anger and taken responsibility for what she did, is why it is so difficult for this Prime Minister to own up, take responsibility and admit he was wrong.

I will say two more brief things. The Health Secretary was heckled by his own side this evening, but he is not the risk to public health and this is not a laughing matter. Right hon. and hon. Members on the Government Benches need to think and to search their own consciences about whether, at this moment of serious crisis, we have the serious leadership our country needs. If not, they know what to do.

I conclude by saying what the Health Secretary was unable to tell the public this morning: "Get your booster jab as soon as you are able and, if you haven't already, get your first and second jabs. It is safe, it is effective and it is the best tool we have to protect against the virus." That is what we are all here to do, and that is why we support this Health Secretary in the national interest.

**Sajid Javid:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his constructive approach in the national interest. He asks a number of questions. The face mask requirement includes a number of public indoor settings, but excludes hospitality settings. On the NHS covid pass, I can confirm that certification will not include access to any emergency setting. Tests will remain freely available, whether that is PCR tests for anyone who has any covid-19 symptoms, or very easy access to lateral flow tests, with even more of those available than before to help with some of the measures set out today and to allow people to exercise even more caution in the light of omicron. If perhaps people are visiting loved ones who might be particularly vulnerable, I certainly suggest they take up the opportunity to take a free lateral flow test.

On boosters, it is worth recalling that we already have the most successful booster programme in Europe, with more than 20 million booster shots given throughout the UK to some 35% of the population over the age of 12 and a commitment to offer booster shots to every adult by the end of January. That programme continues. As for what we are doing about it, as well as increasing access to vaccines through new vaccine centres and hubs, mobile vaccine units and in other ways, we will continue to extend eligibility, as we did today. Today's move, reducing the gap between the second vaccine and

the booster vaccine from six months to three months, has opened up eligibility to millions more people over the age of 40.

As for the hon. Gentleman's questions about what may or may not have happened at Downing Street, I think that the Prime Minister addressed that issue quite clearly today from the Dispatch Box; and as for his final message about boosters, I wholeheartedly agree.

**Mr Speaker:** I call the Chair of the Select Committee, Jeremy Hunt.

**Jeremy Hunt** (South West Surrey) (Con): Disappointing though the statement will be for many people, the Secretary of State has my full and unqualified support. This is not a choice between more and fewer restrictions; it is a choice between taking action early to protect a future lockdown and making such a lockdown inevitable. We all hope that the omicron variant is milder than delta, but if it is not, a failure to act now could cost many lives.

I want to ask the Secretary of State about the social care sector. I know that he will say more about it later this week, but he will have seen the estimate from NHS Providers that 10,000 beds—over 10% of all NHS hospital beds, and more beds than are currently occupied by covid patients—are occupied by people who are fit to be discharged but cannot obtain a care package. Will he provide funds to ensure that all those patients can be discharged, so that the NHS can be ready for any potential spike in new cases?

**Sajid Javid:** I thank my right hon. Friend for his support for the statement. He is right to emphasise that by taking swift, early and proportionate action now, we can potentially avoid further restrictive measures in the future. As I have said, there will be a statement on social care later this week, but I can also give him the assurance that he seeks: the statement will include further measures to help with the discharge of hospital patients who are clinically ready to be discharged.

**Mr Speaker:** I call the spokesman for the Scottish National party, Martyn Day.

**Martyn Day** (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP): I thank the Secretary of State for his statement, and indeed for advance sight of it, albeit fairly briefly.

Given the time when the press call went out this afternoon, I think that this could have been handled in a way that would have given everyone more opportunities to scrutinise what was happening. That said, I find myself much in agreement with the Secretary of State's remarks, perhaps more so than many on his own Benches.

One aspect that should concern all of us is the lower immunity from vaccination. That is especially worrying, and I think we need to emphasise that it is still important for people to be vaccinated and, in particular, to get that booster vaccination. I had mine on Sunday, and I encourage everyone else to do the same.

England's plan B does, remarkably, resemble the current arrangements in Scotland—working from home, face coverings and vaccine certificates, all of which measures we have repeatedly advised this Government to adopt. Better late than never; however, I cannot but comment that when my colleagues in Scotland were faced with these choices, they were given a vote on them in the Scottish Parliament. Likewise, it must now be time for a COBRA meeting to happen finally. How can the Secretary of State think it acceptable not to have held such a meeting with the devolved Governments when this point of restrictions has been reached?

**Sajid Javid:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his constructive tone. He made the important observation that while the emerging data suggests that current vaccines may well be less effective in providing protective immunity, that does not mean that they are ineffective. It is especially important for those who have not had any jabs to have their first vaccination, and for people to have their booster jabs, and the older and more vulnerable people are, the more important that is.

The hon. Gentleman spoke of the need for us to work together. He may well know that I have regular meetings, sometimes more than once a week, with my counterparts across the UK, as does the Prime Minister, who is also the Minister for the Union. That is a well established and, I think, very good way to work together on this pandemic.

**Greg Clark** (Tunbridge Wells) (Con): A week ago, the Secretary of State assured me from the Dispatch Box that he would not trigger further restrictions based on a rise in infections which was predicted and, in fact, was always inevitable. He said that

"what matters more than anything is hospitalisations."—[*Official Report*, 29 November 2021; Vol. 704, c. 683.]

That data is not available yet, so why has the Secretary of State reversed his position and jumped the gun in this way?

**Sajid Javid:** That is a very fair question, and it requires a full explanation. There is new data since I was last at this Dispatch Box on the rate and growth in transmissibility, and there is new data, to which I referred in my statement, on the impact of the variant on vaccines. My right hon. Friend will know that if the vaccines were even a little bit less effective, especially against severe disease and therefore against hospitalisation, and if there was also a hugely growing infection rate, a smaller percentage of what would be a much larger number would still result in significant hospitalisations.

**Hilary Benn** (Leeds Central) (Lab): Could the Secretary of State tell the House what his understanding is of the development of a new vaccine specifically to target omicron and when it might be available? Secondly, can he tell us what the latest evidence is on the protection against this new variant that two doses plus the booster will give to people?

**Sajid Javid:** From the moment they learned about omicron, the vaccine manufacturers, particularly those that make the so-called mRNA-type vaccines, started work on new omicron-targeting vaccines. It is hard to put a timing on this, not least because the companies themselves are unable to, but it is reasonable to think that they can move very quickly. Some of the conversations I have had suggest that they may well be able to have vaccines ready for trial within weeks. There would obviously have to be a trial to ensure that they were safe and effective, but there may be cases where they could be used in emergency situations. On the question about the two doses and a booster, we do not have reliable data on that at this point. However, the information I referred

*[Sajid Javid]*

to in my statement on the impact of vaccinations showed that South Africans, in this case, who had had two doses of the vaccine and who had also had an infection had a higher level of protection than those who had not had an infection. This suggests that that hybrid outcome, where someone has had an infection and two doses, is not too dissimilar from having a booster shot and that it had a positive outcome.

**Sir Graham Brady** (Altrincham and Sale West) (Con): It's déjà vu all over again, isn't it? I remind the Secretary of State that in March 2020 we were asked to impose restrictions for three weeks while the health service capacity was increased. Can he tell the House how much that capacity has now been increased? Secondly, in moving from a world that last week depended on isolation to one that this week depends on testing, is he saying that the statutory instrument that was approved in this House on Tuesday last week will be rescinded, today or tomorrow?

**Sajid Javid:** On NHS capacity, since March 2020 there has been a significant increase in ICU capacity. My hon. Friend will know that most beds in hospitals are still for people who need emergency care. There are still approximately 6,000 beds in England taken up by covid patients with the delta variant, and around 4,000 beds that are not available for use because of infection control procedures that are still in place. On the timing of the regulations, I have said that there will be a review on 5 January and that they will all sunset on 26 January. There will be a debate in this House next week on all the regulations, followed by votes.

**Naz Shah** (Bradford West) (Lab): I was part of a vaccine trial for Novavax in Bradford, and the Bradford Hospitals Trust did amazing work on that, but it has still not been approved. My first question is: where are we at with Novavax? Surely we need more vaccines now. Also, will the Secretary of State give us a reassurance that he will still be providing free lateral flow tests and PCR tests continuously?

**Sajid Javid:** I assure the hon. Lady that there are plenty of vaccines available. We have no issue with vaccine supply, including the booster shots. The lateral flow tests from the UKHSA will be freely available, and there are plenty of them.

**Esther McVey** (Tatton) (Con): The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control reported on the omicron variant:

> "All cases for which there is available information on severity were either asymptomatic or mild. No deaths have been reported among these cases so far."

However we know that, by imposing plan B and bringing in restrictions, there will be an effect on mental health, physical health, jobs, the economy, livelihoods and children's development. Will the Secretary of State release the data and analysis, upon which this decision was made, on the impact of the omicron variant on the public by, first, implementing plan B and, secondly, by not implementing plan B?

**Sajid Javid:** My right hon. Friend makes a very important point about the non-covid health impacts of these measures and of the measures we had in the past. She makes a very fair point about the potential impact on mental health, and we have to accept there will be an impact, but there will also be an impact on the economy and individuals' education. I accept that point, but I hope she accepts that, to the extent measures are necessary to save lives and to prevent unsustainable pressure on the NHS, it is better to take measures now that might mean bigger, more impactful measures are avoided in future.

On the vaccination data, I referred in my statement to the data that Pfizer published, I believe, today and to a study on transmissibility that was published by the South Africans yesterday. If my right hon. Friend is speaking about other data, I would be happy to know which specific data she is referring to and I will see what more we can publish.

**Wendy Chamberlain** (North East Fife) (LD): When I was on the estate a couple of weeks ago, I was unable to get tested—I had missed the boat—so I had to get lateral flow tests from the local chemist. There was an additional step in which I had to enter a code to get the code to go to the chemist to get my testing kit. That is not the case in Scotland. If we are moving to daily tests for contacts, will we make it easier for people to access lateral flow tests?

**Sajid Javid:** I will look into whether it can be made even easier for people to access lateral flow tests, but I hope the hon. Lady was reassured when I said that we have plenty of these tests and we will make them as easily available as possible.

**Dr Liam Fox** (North Somerset) (Con): On the evidence we have seen so far, I think it is difficult to justify these extra measures, but I welcome the sensible shift from isolation to daily tests. In the bigger picture, we cannot allow the permanent threat of overloading the NHS to be a reason for maintaining semi-permanent restrictions on our people. What amount of extra capacity has NHS England looked at? Will the Secretary of State publish that data so we can have a cheaper option than recurrent damage to our economy and to people's quality of life?

**Sajid Javid:** I am pleased my right hon. Friend welcomes the move from isolation to daily testing. As I said earlier, there is more capacity in the NHS than there was at the start of the pandemic, especially in intensive care, but some of that extra capacity has understandably been taken by the 6,000 or so patients currently in hospital with covid and by the infection prevention and control I mentioned earlier. He is right to say we should be looking for ways to further increase capacity, but I hope he will accept that, whatever that further increase may or may not be—there are plenty of measures in place to try to do that—there will always be a limit.

**Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): The Secretary of State will have the support of most reasonable people in this House for measures that will save lives and protect our country from a pandemic that takes many lives. I say in a very supportive way that one of the most effective things we have had are the local outbreak groups in which Members of Parliament and local government

leaders work together to ensure we get real action at the grassroots. We found it to be very effective in Kirklees and Huddersfield, working and conspiring together, week by week, on the most effective way to get our community to get jabbed. Will he assure me that he will give his full backing to these groups?

**Sajid Javid:** I do, of course, back any working together, whether it is of local government, the NHS or directors of public health, to help to combat this pandemic. They are doing a stellar job across the country, especially on vaccination.

**Dr Caroline Johnson** (Sleaford and North Hykeham) (Con): One of the most significant harms over the last 18 months or so of restrictions has been the effect on our children and schoolchildren. I welcome the fact that instead of causing another pingdemic and having teachers and students out of school isolating, the Government have said that children will not need to isolate but will be able to use testing instead. Can my right hon. Friend confirm that that will be lateral flow testing and not PCR testing, for which they need an appointment? Can he tell us that we have enough tests if the scale of increase in cases is as he has said, and can he confirm to this House that he will resist any restrictions on schoolchildren?

**Sajid Javid:** My hon. Friend makes an important point. There is nothing more important in our society than our children. As a nation we have, like many other nations, learned a lot during the pandemic about some of the better ways to handle the concerns around the pandemic but better protect our schoolchildren. I am happy to confirm what she has said. If there is a positive case in a child, of course that individual child would isolate like anyone else, but any contacts of that child would not have to isolate. Instead, they can take lateral flow tests, not PCR tests.

**Liz Saville Roberts** (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC): Health is devolved in Wales. We already have in place reasonable measures that reflect what needs to be done to protect our communities. If we need to do more to safeguard people's health in Wales, can the Secretary of State guarantee that his Government will enable sufficient funding to ensure that Welsh businesses get sufficient support to do what is necessary?

**Sajid Javid:** We work very closely across the UK, and the positive output from that work has been evident throughout the pandemic, especially on vaccinations and antivirals. We will continue to work together and provide whatever support is needed.

**Sir Bernard Jenkin** (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): My right hon. Friend obviously understands that these measures will try the patience of the British people. Will he look at the other measures that can suppress the virus, particularly the booster rate? Does he agree that the rate of booster vaccinations is constrained not by supply or demand, but by the capacity of the health service to deliver the vaccines? Will he also, therefore, support integrated care systems that call on military assistance or local authority assistance and want to reopen the mass vaccine sites to accelerate the vaccine programme?

**Sajid Javid:** I very much agree with my hon. Friend. He is right to point to the huge importance, more than ever, of the pharmaceutical defences—let us call them that—against this pandemic. Top of the list are the vaccines, and especially the booster programme. Although it is already the most successful in Europe, there are a lot more people whom we want to boost. I hope he will agree with me that in doing so, it is not just about the quantity, although that is hugely important; it is about getting through to the most vulnerable people first and making sure that we prioritise them. I should also point out that, as I said in my statement, the antivirals are hugely important pharmaceutical defences. Building on all these things—whether it is the vaccinations with the new hubs, the 10,000 new vaccinators we are hiring, the use of the military or the use of pharmacies more than ever before—will really help us to turbocharge access to those pharmaceuticals.

**Barbara Keeley** (Worsley and Eccles South) (Lab): I want to raise the vital issue of public trust in restrictions during the pandemic. People across this country have followed the rules, even when that meant being separated from loved ones at the end of life, and families not being able to be together at funerals. Does the Secretary of State agree that the people of this country have the right to expect the Government to follow the rules as well? The measures he has just announced rely for compliance on people having trust and confidence in the Government, and that has been shattered by the news of the Downing Street party. How is he going to restore it?

**Sajid Javid:** Of course everyone should follow the rules—no one is above the rules. The hon. Lady refers to the exchange that took place earlier in Prime Minister's questions; the Prime Minister set out the Government's position in that exchange.

**Mr David Davis** (Haltemprice and Howden) (Con): Where is the evidence that vaccine passports actually work? France introduced them in the summer and now has more cases than it had in the March peak. Austria, Greece and the German states that have used them are in the same position, with more cases. Vaccinated people can still catch and transmit the disease, and there is a sizeable chance that passports will introduce a false sense of security, giving exactly the reverse result to the one the Secretary of State intends, so why is he using them?

**Sajid Javid:** When we set out plan B for the autumn and winter in respect of the challenges we would face, whether from covid or flu, we set out in that plan how and why we thought vaccine passports could help in certain circumstances. Also, it is not straightforward to compare different countries. Different countries have taken a whole host of different measures at different points in time—for example, there can be huge differences in vaccination rates or in respect of other measures that may or may not be in place—so I caution my right hon. Friend in comparing, for example, France with the UK.

**Tahir Ali** (Birmingham, Hall Green) (Lab): What advice does the Secretary of State have for our constituents who have not been able to visit their loved ones in times of illness, death or for a family event like a wedding in Kashmir, Pakistan, India or Bangladesh? Many of them will have planned a visit during the school holidays; do they go ahead with that? If not, what advice does the

*[Tahir Ali]*

Secretary of State have for them? If further restrictions come in once they are over there, that could prevent them from coming back into this country for a length of time. They should not be put through that, especially if the advice is clear from the outset.

**Sajid Javid:** When it comes to travel measures such as the recent announcements in respect of the red list, I think the hon. Gentleman will understand why the Government took that action to buy time and to try to slow any incursion of this new variant. I am afraid it is just not possible to give a guarantee for any particular country that there will not potentially be any future measures. As he has raised the important issue of travel measures, one thing I would say is that very soon, in the days and weeks that lie ahead, if, as I think is likely, we see many more infections and this variant becomes the dominant variant, there will be less need to have any kind of travel restrictions at all.

**Philip Davies** (Shipley) (Con): Earlier this week, the Secretary of State came to the Chamber and said, in answer to my right hon. Friend the Member for New Forest West (Sir Desmond Swayne), that there had been not one single hospitalisation from this new variant. Today, he comes here with his latest in a long line of arbitrary, unnecessary, socialist measures, supported by the socialists on the Opposition Benches. I am sorry that the Secretary of State seems to have gone native so fast and has come forward with this announcement without even doing a cost-benefit analysis. Will he give me any reason at all why I should not tell my constituents to treat these new rules in exactly the same way that No. 10 Downing Street treated last year's rules?

**Sajid Javid:** I understand the importance of my hon. Friend's point. First, we all know that in South Africa, where we believe this variant originated, we are seeing significant hospitalisations of people with the new variant, and they have been doubling on a weekly basis. Also, we know from the history of viruses, and particularly with this pandemic, that there is a lag—sometimes a significant lag—between infection and hospitalisation. It takes time for the virus to incubate and, sadly, in some people that might lead to serious disease, which might mean hospitalisation. It is worth noting that the UK had its very first case of covid-19 back in January 2019 but it was not until, I think, two months later that we experienced the first death.

**Hannah Bardell** (Livingston) (SNP): As an inactivated whole virus candidate, the Valneva vaccine being developed in my Livingston constituency could well have advantages over other vaccines when it comes to the emerging omicron virus. Will the Secretary of State reconsider his disastrous decision to deny the people of these islands a vaccine that may well tackle the further pandemic? The EU can see its value, as it has bought 60 million doses.

**Sajid Javid:** The hon. Lady may know that, in making decisions on vaccines, the UK Government take advice from both the vaccine taskforce and the experts on the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, and I know that they keep all potential vaccine options under review.

**Dr Andrew Murrison** (South West Wiltshire) (Con): Our NHS is not being overwhelmed by covid, nor is it likely to be, but if the Health and Social Care Secretary really believes that it will come under pressure, what is he doing to ensure that novel antivirals, such as sotrovimab and molnupiravir, are freely available now to treat people, as we know that they will reduce hospitalisation and death by up to 80%?

**Sajid Javid:** We have secured, I believe, some 180,000 doses of new antivirals. There are two main antivirals that are specifically designed to work against covid-19. As I mentioned earlier in my statement, we are starting a national study that will help us to roll these out and make them targeted and effective. For those who are immunosuppressed and have a positive PCR test, we will be able to use them very shortly.

**Dame Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): Many parts of the country have a lot of jobs that are impossible to do from home. I am thinking of factories and manufacturing jobs, many of which are in Hull. Hull also has below average vaccination rates, so will the Secretary of State say what more we can do to support areas such as that, and would not one start be to improve statutory sick pay?

**Sajid Javid:** It is important that sick pay begins from day one, but in terms of supporting areas—whether it be Hull or others—the right hon. Lady is right to point to the importance of the vaccination programme. The measures that we are taking, especially to help with the booster programme, including bringing on board more pharmacies, more hospital hubs and help from the military, will all help to increase access.

**Mr Mark Harper** (Forest of Dean) (Con): Having looked very carefully at the evidence and listened to what the Secretary of State said, I have to say that the initial evidence on omicron does not support the introduction of these measures, because the protection against serious disease remains strong. If the Secretary of State's fears are confirmed, there is no exit strategy from the measures that he has set out; we will end up having to introduce them permanently. What I am really concerned about is that it is unquestionably the case that, over the past couple of weeks, the Government's credibility—whether it is on Paterson or on the Christmas parties—has taken a hit. Why should people at home, listening to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State, do things that people working in No.10 Downing Street are not prepared to do?

**Sajid Javid:** When it comes to the exit strategy—this is a very important question from my right hon. Friend—a number of factors are at play. The one that I would point to that is possibly the most important is the pharmaceutical defences that I referred to earlier, particularly the booster programme. Whatever emerging evidence there is on vaccine efficacy against omicron, it is perfectly reasonable to assume that, at this stage, a booster dose gives significantly more protection, and the more booster doses that we have in arms will certainly help with the exit strategy. As for the comment that my right hon. Friend made about activities that may or may not have taken place in Downing Street, I refer him to the comments that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made earlier today.

**Geraint Davies** (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op): In the United Kingdom, there are 45,000 infections a day. In Japan, there are just 200 infections a day, because people in Japan understand that they do not have the right to put other people at avoidable risk. Will the Secretary of State consider extending what he is saying to introduce vaccine passports and testing at pubs, because I for one do not want to go into a pub where I can be infected by someone who is not vaccinated? Secondly, will he look to introduce masks into schoolrooms for older children? Let us get to grips with this.

**Sajid Javid:** When it comes to case numbers, we should be cautious about making straightforward comparisons between countries, not least because different countries have different ways to measure infection and different capacity. Regarding the measures to which the hon. Gentleman has just referred, what we have set out today is proportionate and balanced.

**Miriam Cates** (Penistone and Stocksbridge) (Con): This morning, the think-tank Bright Blue published polling showing that 11% of those working from home during the pandemic experienced domestic abuse, compared to just 1% of those not working from home, and that 27% of disabled home workers reported domestic abuse in the same period. What assessment has my right hon. Friend made of the physical, emotional and psychological cost of this work from home mandate to some of the most vulnerable women in our communities?

**Sajid Javid:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right to point to the non-covid impact of these measures, which I mentioned earlier. She is right to point to emotional distress and mental health issues, but I hope she agrees that, for the reasons I set out earlier, if we do not take these measures, the impact on the very people about whom she rightly cares deeply could be especially challenging.

**Mr Ben Bradshaw** (Exeter) (Lab): Following the Secretary of State's answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Tahir Ali), given that omicron is now spreading rapidly here, what is the point in maintaining his damaging travel restrictions a day longer?

**Sajid Javid:** As I mentioned earlier, we will keep that under review.

**Steve Brine** (Winchester) (Con): It is clear to me that "learn to live with covid" is now as dead as the zero-covid proponents want it to be. I am pleased about the change from isolation to daily tests, as that will avoid a dangerous pingdemic, but may I ask my right hon. Friend about the "papers please" mandatory certification world that we are now moving into, with respect to young people? Does he consider young people to be in possession of a vaccine passport if they are double vaccinated, which of course many are not yet able to be; and how will they be able to prove their status given that they cannot do so through a digital vaccine passport and are having huge problems accessing any other form of vaccine passport through their primary care centres?

**Sajid Javid:** I am pleased that my hon. Friend welcomes the move from isolation to daily testing. On his questions about the NHS covid pass, the requirement and definition of vaccination will be two jabs—a first and second dose—but I hope that he welcomes the fact that it is that or a negative lateral flow test.

**Sir Mark Hendrick** (Preston) (Lab/Co-op): Does the Secretary of State feel that the important messages and measures that he has announced today will be undermined by the fact that we have a Prime Minister who does not lead by example, and who has a cavalier attitude towards mask wearing, particularly in places such as hospitals—as well as the issue of the alleged parties that have taken place at No. 10? Is it not one rule for him and another for everybody else?

**Sajid Javid:** The Prime Minister has addressed both those issues.

**Richard Drax** (South Dorset) (Con): My right hon. Friend keeps referring to South Africa, but it does not have the same level of vaccination as we do here. This country is just getting back on its feet, and today hope and freedom—our freedoms—are being taken away again, on the basis of what a variant might, not does, do. These variants will continue to hit us for years to come, and this country cannot go on reacting to them in the way in which we are doing, when there is no evidence to support what my right hon. Friend has said today.

**Sajid Javid:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right that South Africa has a much lower level of vaccination—I believe it is around 25%—but there are other differences between South Africa and the UK, including that the vast majority of South Africans have antibodies against covid through infection. Not only do they have antibodies through infection, but a huge number of South Africans have antibodies through infection from the beta variant. It is important to know that the beta variant is much closer to the omicron variant, and it is quite possible that it might be giving an even higher degree of protection than people have in countries such as the UK, with vaccination against the Wuhan strain.

**Debbie Abrahams** (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab): I welcome a precautionary response given the emerging data. By introducing these measures to slow down the doubling of the rate from two to three days to five to six days, we will enable more people to get vaccinated, which is very important. Will the Secretary of State authorise the immediate roll-out of the directors of public health float stock PCR pilot to help tackle omicron clusters before they become significant outbreaks?

**Sajid Javid:** I am pleased that the hon. Lady welcomes these measures, which will certainly help to slow down the growth of omicron. I will look at the measure that she referred to.

**Nickie Aiken** (Cities of London and Westminster) (Con): First, I thank my right hon. Friend for coming to the House to make this statement this evening and showing this place the respect that it deserves and expects. The hospitality sector has had a huge hit over the past 18 months because of the covid pandemic. In the past two weeks, following the omicron travel restrictions, we have seen a 25% cancellation rate in bars, restaurants and hotels in central London. Can he give assurances that whatever measures the Government introduce in the short term really will be short term, and that we will be able to get back to normal as soon as possible to support the hospitality sector?

**Sajid Javid:** Yes, I am happy to give that assurance. My hon. Friend may want to know that the mandatory certification will apply to entertainment venues that have more than 10,000 seated people, 4,000-plus outdoor or 500 indoor, so a lot of the types of venues she refers to will be excluded, and also the requirement on mandatory face coverings will exclude hospitality settings.

**Andy Slaughter** (Hammersmith) (Lab): Many constituents have contacted me today outraged by the antics at No. 10 Downing Street. One, a young man of 14, was unable to attend the funeral of his much-loved grandfather during last Christmas's lockdown. He wants me to ask the Government this: is the Prime Minister heartless and cruel enough not to tell the country the truth and apologise to us all? How will the Secretary of State, at this crucial time, regain the trust of my constituent and that of millions of others that the Prime Minister has lost by his disgraceful conduct?

**Sajid Javid:** I am very sorry to hear about the hon. Gentleman's constituent. Of course there will be many people across the country who found themselves in such an awful situation. In terms of what he refers to about what may or may not have happened in Downing Street, I believe that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister addressed that from the Dispatch Box earlier today.

**Sir Christopher Chope** (Christchurch) (Con): It is often said that the first casualty of war is the truth. Does my right hon. Friend accept that in the so-called war against covid-19, truth is indeed the casualty? In his statement he used expressions such as "could", "can", "potential", "suggests" and "might". Does that not show that there is no justification for these restrictions upon liberty?

**Sajid Javid:** My hon. Friend will know that when it comes to, in this case, a new variant, or viruses more generally that are new in some way, there are uncertainties —there always will be. I do not think a new infection is going to come along and we will have all the answers to all the questions we would logically have on day one. But I hope he agrees in terms of what we do know. For example, I said in my statement that we are confident about the transmissibility—the growth rate—of this, and I hope he will respect that.

**David Linden** (Glasgow East) (SNP): It is quite clear from the tone of the Health Secretary's comments tonight that things are going to get worse before they get better, and that we are in something of a holding position. Can he confirm that the Chancellor was involved in initiating plan B and that the Government, and indeed the Treasury, will again do whatever it takes in terms of generosity in financial support to those most vulnerable in our communities?

**Sajid Javid:** I can confirm that the Chancellor, and indeed every member of the Cabinet, is fully behind these decisions.

**Anthony Mangnall** (Totnes) (Con): A few weeks ago, Nicola Sturgeon produced a 70-page report that outlined whether or not coronavirus vaccine certificates actually worked. That report presented absolutely evidence, so where is the Secretary of State getting his evidence? The Office for National Statistics published a report saying that the fact that 95% of English and Welsh adults have antibodies should also be a consideration, far above what is going on in South Africa. If there is a severity document published in the next few weeks that shows that transmission is lower than expected, will we see an end to these measures? If I can sing in a club, drink in a pub and not have to go to work with colleagues, why are the Government pursuing a completely illogical process?

**Sajid Javid:** During the next few days, when we have the debate in Parliament and a vote next week, we will set out more of the data. In terms of one of my hon. Friend's key questions about what happens should the data change or we get more evidence that suggests that omicron is less severe or its impact on the vaccines is not what it seems at this point, we will not hesitate to act and remove these restrictions.

**Imran Hussain** (Bradford East) (Lab): I thank the Health Secretary for his timely update to the House today. I am still somewhat unclear as to what additional support is available for individuals and businesses as a result of his announcement. In particular, can he ensure that enough support is made available for those businesses where people will now have to work from home?

**Sajid Javid:** I hope that the hon. Gentleman would agree that with the measures set out today, which are essentially the plan B measures that were the contingency plan the Government set out to this House two or three months ago, although there will be some impact on some businesses, that should be minimal. The extent to which any further support needs to be provided will be kept under review.

**Jane Stevenson** (Wolverhampton North East) (Con): While I realise that the Secretary of State has a difficult call to make, the symptoms of this do seem mild, and I remain to be convinced that the measures are necessary. My constituents in Wolverhampton North East have put up with an enormous amount over the pandemic. Can he reassure them, in the light of these measures, that at least they can make solid plans for the Christmas and new year period to see their family and their friends, whether at home or in our hospitality industry? Can he reassure them about their right to include family members who are resident in care homes?

**Sajid Javid:** May I say to my hon. Friend, as I said to one of my right hon. Friends earlier, that even if the symptoms turn out to be less impactful than delta, if we see the growth we are seeing and we get to the kind of numbers that I mentioned earlier, it would be a smaller percentage in terms of severity, but of a much larger number? I ask my hon. Friend to take that into account and the impact that might have on her constituents. I also hope she accepts that by taking these proportionate and balanced measures now, we are in a much better place to avoid any further measures in the future.

**Rachel Hopkins** (Luton South) (Lab): The Secretary of State spoke about communications being a key part of his statement. We know that good communications are not just about what someone says, but what they do. Does he accept that the Government have lost the moral authority to ask our constituents and the people of this country to follow all the rules, given that the Government having parties last Christmas in No. 10 blatantly showed disregard for the rules?

**Sajid Javid:** As I said in response to a question earlier, whatever the rules—whether for this pandemic or anything else—they apply equally to everyone. With regard to Downing Street, as the Prime Minister has said today, there will be an investigation, and we should all await the outcome of that.

**Dr Julian Lewis** (New Forest East) (Con): If bed capacity is the problem, were we right to close the Nightingale wards, and are they available for reopening? If so, does he expect to have to reopen them?

**Sajid Javid:** My right hon. Friend will not be surprised to hear that we will be taking measures to increase substantially capacity in the NHS. He will know that it is not just about beds, whether Nightingale or elsewhere, but about having the right amount and type of workforce to help with those beds.

**Tim Farron** (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): We have a range of measures put in front of us, some of which will perhaps help a little bit, but will not actively control the virus very much, coupled with a colossal attack on civil liberties, which is a strange juxtaposition. Can I ask the Secretary of State to pay special attention to something that the Government have overlooked too much over the past two years, which is to invest in catching up with cancer? What the Government have done through this period is do a great job on vaccine roll-out, but I would love to see them show the same ringfenced dedication and commitment to catching up with cancer, given that we know that at least 50,000 additional people will lose their lives as a consequence of the covid situation.

**Sajid Javid:** The hon. Gentleman is right to talk about the importance of cancer and he will know that it remains a priority for the NHS. That is one reason why recently, when the Government set out the extra catch-up funding for the NHS over the next three years to pay for a lot more elective operations and diagnosis, cancer was a priority in that.

**Mrs Pauline Latham** (Mid Derbyshire) (Con): As in South Africa, many people in this country have had covid, particularly young people and school age children. Can my right hon. Friend tell us what the estimation of that is in this country? He must be aware that while he was delivering his statement, in No. 10, Chris Whitty was saying that hospitalisations and deaths have gone down, so why are we having a kneejerk reaction today when we were not going to do it until Monday at the earliest? We should have waited.

**Sajid Javid:** I am happy to answer that. Thankfully, hospitalisations have fallen in recent weeks; they are at roughly 6,000 in English hospitals at the moment. Although they have fallen, however, the numbers are still relatively high. It is good and encouraging that they are falling, but all those hospitalisations at this time are to do with the delta variant. With omicron, as I mentioned in response to a previous question, there will be a lag between infections and hospitalisation. With delta, that has often been about 10 or 12 days, or even longer. We are not quite sure what it will be with omicron, but we know that there will be a lag. The history of the pandemic has always backed that up.

**Mick Whitley** (Birkenhead) (Lab): This week, the TUC published research showing that more than 600,000 workers in hospitality, retail and entertainment do not qualify for statutory sick pay. That workforce is especially at risk over the busy Christmas period and the lack of support available to those workers means that they risk going without income at Christmas if they are infected with covid-19. Does the Secretary of State agree that it is a scandal that so many people go without such basic protection in the workplace? Will the Government commit to ensuring that every worker in the UK is entitled to sick pay that at least matches the national minimum wage?

**Sajid Javid:** That is another important issue. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will welcome the fact that sick pay begins from day one and that there is a hardship fund to help with the most difficult situations.

**Alicia Kearns** (Rutland and Melton) (Con): My right hon. Friend will not wish to move too slowly, but I am struggling to understand how we have come to this decision a week before the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory reports on the omicron variant. One in five critically ill patients in ICU is an unvaccinated pregnant woman—not one fully vaccinated pregnant woman has ended up in ICU. What is he doing to ensure that we do not see a catastrophe over winter with the loss of young life and of mothers?

**Sajid Javid:** My hon. Friend is right to point to the importance of vaccinating everyone, and especially to the risk to pregnant women. A huge amount of work has gone on in the last few months to reach out to even more pregnant women. A new campaign launched in the last few days and we have already seen a positive response to it. As she says, sadly, almost all the women who are pregnant and in hospital because of covid are unvaccinated.

To refer to the start of my hon. Friend's question, I think she was suggesting that we wait a week. I hope that she can reflect that, based on the doubling time that we have now observed, that would make a substantial difference to infections, and can take into account the lag between infections and hospitalisation.

**Mr Toby Perkins** (Chesterfield) (Lab): Throughout the covid crisis, the Government have continually had to take draconian steps because they took those steps too late. I welcome the fact that the Health Secretary is attempting to get ahead of it this time, because it means that the steps being taken are not as bad as they were last Christmas, which is really important. Mask wearing is important and it is regrettable that it had been stopped on public transport previously. Does it not undermine his message on mask wearing that, when he is making his statement, 21 Conservative Members are not wearing masks in this crowded place?

**Sajid Javid:** I think the approach that we have taken to mask wearing, which I have set out, is the right one.

**Craig Mackinlay** (South Thanet) (Con): We seem to be on a slippery slope towards lockdown based on precisely no real data, which is a worry. It seems to be the precautionary principle gone completely mad. However, I will give my right hon. Friend credit in that I am very pleased that daily testing is going to replace the self-isolation

*[Craig Mackinlay]*

proposed just a week ago. I am sorry to say to my right hon. Friend that he is looking a little silly on these things as we shilly-shally between different rules. Could he answer me this: is he proposing a reformulation of the vaccine and then keeping these or similar restrictions in place for the period until that new vaccine is in arms, then in a year's time when we get a new variant, we do it all over again ad nauseam—like a stuck record, only more annoying?

**Sajid Javid:** First, I hope that my hon. Friend will agree with me that one of the reasons for these measures is precisely to avoid a lockdown. We all want to see a lockdown avoided for all the obvious reasons, and taking the right proportionate measures now will certainly help to do that. On the vaccine, I am not proposing reformulation. I think the most important thing right here and now, and more important than even before, is the booster programme—not a reformulation, but getting a third shot to boost everyone's immunity. On the future, where I see vaccines going is multi-variant vaccines, a number of which are already being developed. Just as we see that with flu, I am sure we will see that with covid.

**Alex Sobel** (Leeds North West) (Lab/Co-op): Mr Speaker, I am sure you, the Health Secretary and everybody in the House would like to thank the South African scientists for their early work and discovery of the omicron variant. If we are to avoid more variants in the future, it is really important that we have a high level of vaccination not just in the UK, but everywhere in the world. Is it not our duty, as a country that produces vaccines, to ensure that countries such as South Africa and others have high levels of vaccine, and that we end the Government policy of vaccine nationalism?

**Sajid Javid:** First, I join the hon. Gentleman in thanking the South Africans for their huge efforts with respect to this variant, recognising how they have worked with the world, including us, on it. I think the way they have reacted to this is nothing but exemplary. However, I would have to disagree with the hon. Gentleman on referring to the Government's approach as vaccine nationalism. We have already given more than 20 million doses to COVAX and bilateral doses, and there are another 9 million or so ready to go.

**Henry Smith** (Crawley) (Con): Last month, the aviation and travel sectors were showing real signs of recovery from the covid-19 pandemic restrictions. Their reimposition has seriously dented confidence in people being able to travel, and that is having a direct impact on jobs in an industry that is already on its knees. What discussions have been had in Government about reintroducing support packages for critical sectors of the UK economy, without which we will not have the economic recovery to be able to pay for the public services we need?

**Sajid Javid:** I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that the best support we could provide for the transport sector right now is to remove these recent restrictions. I am confident that, as we learn more about this variant and if, as is expected, over time it becomes the dominant variant, we can start removing those restrictions very quickly.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the Secretary of State for his statement, and I believe his response reflects the seriousness of the current covid disease levels. Has there been any opportunity to speak directly to the Health Minister in the Northern Ireland Assembly to ensure that the regulations put in place here in Westminster may be considered for Northern Ireland, so that all regions of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland can together combat and defeat the latest omicron variant?

**Sajid Javid:** We do work very closely together across the Union, and I have regular contact with my counterpart in Northern Ireland. I have not been able to discuss these particular measures with him today, but I know that we will do so shortly.

**Dr Luke Evans** (Bosworth) (Con): I am grateful to the Secretary of State for coming to this House first, and for providing a copy of his statement. In it, he said that

"we will introduce mandatory certification, based on vaccines or tests, for nightclubs and large events."

Could he explain if this will look like the Euros, when people had to present whether or not they had had a test? Failing that, if we are to have mandatory certification, which is the concern for Conservative Members, will there be an explicit vote on the regulations?

**Sajid Javid:** The NHS covid pass already has an in-built capability to allow for either a vaccination or the result of a negative lateral flow test, and next week there will be a debate on these regulations and a vote.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** The final question is from Liz Twist.

**Liz Twist** (Blaydon) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Speaker. The Secretary of State rightly emphasised the importance of vaccines, but the Government have fallen short of their target to offer all 12 to 15-year-olds the vaccine by October, so what will he do to ensure that programme is speeded up and rolled out?

**Sajid Javid:** We recently took measures to increase take-up among that age group by allowing those children, with their parents or guardians, to use the national booking system and the walk-in facilities, and that has certainly helped boost take-up.

**Dame Diana Johnson:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker. In the light of the Health Secretary's announcement about the guidance that people should work from home wherever possible, are you able to say anything to the House about what will happen to Parliament before we rise on 16 December?

**Mr Mark Harper:** Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. I think we established when debating these measures before that it was essential for the proper conduct of business and for Ministers to be held to account that we attended Parliament in person to make sure that the right decisions were made for the British people, and I very much hope that will continue.

**Mr Speaker:** I have only just heard the statement and have not had time to reflect on it, but there is a Commission meeting on Monday. I am also having a discussion later tonight with officials of the House, but obviously a matter for the Chamber is also for others rather than just myself. However, I do take the point.

## Rail Investment and Integrated Rail Plan

*Debate resumed.*

7.22 pm

**Robert Largan** (High Peak) (Con): First, I associate myself with the excellent speeches of my hon. Friends the Members for Harrogate and Knaresborough (Andrew Jones) and for Blackpool North and Cleveleys (Paul Maynard), two experienced former rail Ministers who set out why they welcome the integrated rail plan while perhaps hoping that it had gone further in some areas. I completely agree with every word of both of their speeches.

One area of the IRP that I really welcome is the continued commitment to the £137 million upgrade to the Hope Valley line running between Manchester and Sheffield. That is important for several reasons. First, the line is one of the worst performing in the country in terms of reliability and punctuality, so this extra capacity to improve reliability and frequency and help freight get out of the quarries and into market is a really positive step, along with, finally, the retirement of the Pacers and their replacement by the new class 195 trains, and the much-needed reforms to rail franchising. That £137 million investment in our railways, combined with the £228 million new Mottram bypass and Glossop spur road, which is due to start construction in 2023, represents the biggest investment in transport infrastructure in the High Peak in my lifetime at least.

On top of that, it is important to ensure that local passengers on the stopping stations on the Hope Valley line, such as Hope, Edale, Bamford, New Mills and Chinley, also benefit from this, and that we link up the bus services from those stations to destinations. That is why the Hope Valley explorer bus pilot is such a positive step forward. I also welcome the commitment to look at electrification of the line.

I also want to talk about HS2, which benefits the High Peak directly. I am very pleased that the western leg and extension is going ahead. That will free up capacity on the Stockport corridor of the west coast main line through to Manchester Piccadilly, a big bonus for those travelling there from places including Buxton, Whaley Bridge, Chapel-en-le-Frith and New Mills.

However, we do need to go further. That is why I continue to campaign for a railway station for Gamesley, one of the most deprived places in the country. It has one of the lowest car ownership rates but atrocious transport links, including a bus service that ends at 5 o'clock in the evening. That desperately needs sorting out. We also need to replace the loss of the 236 bus, which means that at the moment people in Glossop have no connection and no direct bus route through to Tameside Hospital and Ashton College. I really hope that gets fixed too.

Overall, there are lots of really positive things in the integrated rail plan for us to welcome. I would like to see it go further in other places, but the key now is that we get on and deliver it, and that we get spades in the ground as soon as possible. I look forward to the start of the construction of the upgrade to the Hope Valley line within the next few months.

7.25 pm

**Tim Farron** (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for High Peak (Robert Largan), who made a thoughtful contribution concerning his constituency.

*[Tim Farron]*

The integrated rail plan for the north is a real disappointment to many people, not least people from Cumbria, the furthest north-west county in England. When we leaf through the 162 pages of that document, we find not a single mention of the county of Cumbria. That is a reminder that when we talk about the north and levelling up the north, it feels to many of us that the rural north—rural communities generally, but specifically those in the far north-west of England—is not thought of and is very much overlooked.

The cancellation of part of HS2 is deeply troubling, but of course the more troubling cancellation is that of Northern Powerhouse Rail. If one understands the north of England, one understands that what we really need is not to get to London a bit quicker, but to have greater capacity and to get from east to west more quickly. That has been overlooked by the Government. It is a betrayal of the north, yes, but more than that it is a betrayal of their lack of understanding of the north, which is more telling.

I want to focus on a couple of things in my community. First, we appreciate that the HS2 line is not going to go further into Lancashire and into Cumbria, but nevertheless the trains will. I am deeply concerned that there are no plans for any of those HS2 trains to stop in the biggest visitor destination in the country apart from London, namely my constituency—the Lake district. That should be put right.

We have a railway line from the main line at Oxenholme that takes us to Windermere—the Lakes line. It is a very short line, and it would be one of the cheapest electrifications in the country if only it were done. Sadly, the Government have cancelled that. I am, however, encouraged by recent conversations with the rail Minister about the possibility of a passing loop at Burneside, which would give us the opportunity to effectively dual the line again—that was our Beeching cut back in the '60s and '70s. Doing that would double the capacity on the Lakes line and massively increase the number of people who could come to the Lake district and not come by car. That would be a huge positive.

It is worth bearing in mind that there are many small things that are huge to us. At Staveley, the first station in the Lake district, there are 42 steps to get up to the station. Friends of mine who have disability issues, are elderly or need to use prams simply cannot use their local station, so I call on the Government to consider very carefully funding access to Staveley station.

We have a world-class visitor destination in the Lake district, with what feels at the moment like a third-class rail connection. That is why I ask, finally, that the Government reconsider the electrification of the line from Oxenholme to Windermere, and of the Furness line from Lancaster to Barrow through my constituency. That would be a positive, carbon-neutral thing to do, and it would be a massive boost to tourism and to local communities. It would be a good, effective use of public money after this disappointment.

7.28 pm

**Ruth Edwards** (Rushcliffe) (Con): I feel privileged to speak in this debate, not simply because this fantastic £96 billion investment in rail is transformational for huge swathes of our country, and not just because we have sped up existing plans by around 15 years to bring real benefits to places such as my constituency of Rushcliffe. No—I feel particularly privileged because this debate gives us the chance to examine the habits and the utterances of that rare species, the Starma chameleon.

For years, the Leader of the Opposition has manned the barricades in opposition to HS2. He said that he opposes HS2

"on cost and on merit: it will not achieve its stated objectives."—[*Official Report*, 15 September 2015; Vol. 599, c. 1006.]

He called its impact devastating and said it would cause "wholly unacceptable damage". However, all of a sudden, the Government have not gone far enough. Suddenly he believes that the plans are

"a second-class option for the North"

and the midlands. If the Leader of the Opposition had had his way, the people of Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Birmingham and Sheffield would not have had high-speed rail at all, but perhaps it only matters when it is in his own backyard—hardly prime ministerial.

The integrated rail plan delivered on a commitment to level up regional connectivity by electrifying the midland main line, and electrification work is set to begin in the next phase, before Christmas. These improvements will be welcomed by my constituents, who, because of the plan, will find it a lot easier to commute and undertake other travel by train. Indeed, in my inbox, praise for this plan far outweighs criticism. As the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Robbie Moore) have said—in fact, as has been said repeatedly—the last Labour Government electrified 63 miles of track in 13 years. An ordinary British garden snail moving at a top speed of 0.048 kph would have made more progress.

Colleagues may be surprised to hear that the Leader of the Opposition and I have something in common: we both represent constituencies containing planned HS2 stations, the only difference being that I did not petition against this massive upgrade to, and investment in, rail in my constituency. The integrated rail plan will deliver HS2 faster. It will slash train journey times between London and Nottingham by two thirds, and the journey time from Nottingham to Birmingham to only 26 minutes, which is half an hour faster than envisaged under previous plans. It will deliver HS2 right into the heart of the East Midlands freeport, where we are making a green jobs hub that will create over 60,000 jobs in the region.

7.31 pm

**Cat Smith** (Lancaster and Fleetwood) (Lab): It is a pleasure to speak in this debate on the disintegrated rail plan. I associate myself with the comments made by the hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Tim Farron); I agree wholeheartedly with his points about rail connectivity outside the Liverpool-Manchester-Leeds corridor, and across Lancashire and Cumbria. It so often feels as though that part of the north is forgotten about. Just because we do not have big cities, it does not mean that we do not have jobs and industry, and a need for connectivity. Indeed, we have some very good projects that lend themselves to reasonably cheap electrification, which would help lower the carbon footprint of our public transport system.

I will keep my remarks tightly focused on lines affected in my constituency. I must be clear: if HS2 ever gets as far north as us in Lancashire and Cumbria, which seems like something of a long shot, we cannot have trains not stopping in Lancaster. It is the county town of Lancashire. We have world-class universities and industries that need rail connectivity to the capital, and we need that investment. We cannot keep talking about rail connectivity as meaning getting to London faster. We must also talk about investing in the north and in our communities.

I want to talk about Fleetwood, a town without a railway station, though it has been promised one. In November 2019, the Prime Minister came to Poulton-le-Fylde—and later got it muddled up with Bolton, but we will move on from that. He promised us that its rail line would be reconnected. We are still waiting. We have had £100,000 for a plan, but so far, there is no indication that the line will materialise. I encourage the Minister of State, Department for Transport, the hon. Member for Pendle (Andrew Stephenson), who is on the Front Bench —a Lancashire guy—to look favourably on Fleetwood, and to work with us and the local community to make that rail line happen.

I finish with some words from my constituents, because all too often the real impact is on constituents' lives. Mark Waites asks, "Where's the railway?" That is probably the No. 1 question that I am asked as a local MP—where is our railway in Fleetwood? The track bed is there, but there are no trains running up and down it. Jack Harrison offered me a festive quote to share in the debate:

> "Now all we want for Christmas, is our trains back;
> And no more empty election yackity yack."

That sums up the feeling across Fleetwood, and right across the Fylde coast, about the promises that the Government have made, but not delivered on. We have been promised that railway back.

> "Now that the Prime Minister knows where Fleetwood is, will he finally say when the railway connection will be reinstated to Poulton and the rest of the country?"

That is a quote from my constituent Tony Johnson. I urge the Minister to look favourably at Lancashire and Cumbria, and to offer us the rail connection that we have been promised.

7.34 pm

**Ben Bradley** (Mansfield) (Con): It is easy for us as Members of Parliament to stand here and say that we want more—that we want it faster, bigger and that we want more money—because that is what we do. No doubt we will draw a line under the integrated rail plan and will come back next week and say that we want more for the next train line and the next plan. We would probably do ourselves a disservice if we did not do that—it is important—but it does not mean that this is not an excellent plan and an excellent investment in our region.

The integrated rail plan commits £12.8 billion of investment to the east midlands. That is probably more than we have had since the M1 was built, I would imagine, if that even cost that amount of money.

**Lee Anderson** (Ashfield) (Con): This investment of £12.8 billion is a massive package. Is it true to say that, as the leader of Nottinghamshire County Council, he is now responsible for one of the biggest packages in the midlands?

**Ben Bradley:** I thank my hon. Friend for the intervention. Nottinghamshire's package is indeed huge and we are very proud of it. It is absolutely right to say that Nottinghamshire is one of the most benefited places, if that is correct English—it is probably not—from the entire plan. The bulk of that £12.8 billion will connect Nottingham to Birmingham, reducing that journey time to less than half an hour. That will bring the whole of the west midlands into commutable distance for much of Nottingham and south Nottinghamshire, changing the lives of all sorts of people across our county, because it will draw in a whole new swathe of businesses and opportunities for people across the region.

Government have listened to us throughout this discussion. We have heard from Opposition Members about things being cancelled and scrapped, but when we have engaged constructively with the Government and Ministers on this, they have recognised our local priorities and delivered for us. We all understand the need and the wish to connect cities, and connecting Nottingham and Derby to Birmingham is really important. However, when we spoke with Ministers and officials, they understood the economic priorities for the region and the county, the importance of Toton as a hub for job creation and what was said about local residents being able to access jobs. They listened and included that in the plan. I am very grateful for the understanding and really positive engagement that we have had with Government. That is the part that provides the levelling up for my constituents.

**Mr Perkins:** I am rather confused by what the hon. Gentleman is saying. On 30 September, he and the leader of Leeds City Council wrote to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to say that levelling up would

> "fall at the first hurdle"

without HS2. Less than three months later, the hon. Gentleman is back here saying that he welcomes these plans, which many of us in the midlands and the north see as an utter betrayal.

**Ben Bradley:** The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right that I have always petitioned Government for the greatest possible investment in our region. I have always said that HS2 was important, and I continue to believe that that is the case. That is why I am delighted that we are getting a new HS2 connection from Birmingham to Nottingham and that it delivers on the Toton priority that we have been pushing as a county and as a region. And it is why I will continue to push Government over the next 18 months to make sure that we get that certainty between the east midlands and Sheffield, so that we get those journey times and the connectivity. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Lee Anderson) has said many times, many of my residents would rather see a local connection that they can use to access jobs and economic growth, than a fast train that flies past their town. Government have listened to our priorities and I am very grateful for that.

The Toton part is what is important for my Mansfield constituents, because it will allow them to get on a new train line—the Maid Marian line or the Robin Hood line that will go through my constituency—that will link Warsop in my constituency to the rail network for the first time in about 50 years, and it will allow them to get a direct train to thousands of new jobs. There will be a new hub for economic growth at Toton and there is

*[Ben Bradley]*

already significant interest in investment in that. It will benefit the county and help us to join together the economies of the east midlands, in Derby and Nottingham, and that will be hugely beneficial for the levelling-up agenda.

For me, levelling up means, in short, providing better quality jobs to residents who do not have access to them and making sure that those communities have the skills and transport links to be able to access them and improve their life chances. That is key, and it is a long-term goal. The IRP commits and supports that goal absolutely, because it provides the economic epicentre for us as a county and connects the most disadvantaged communities to it, so I welcome that.

If I have one ask from Government, it is that the IRP also commits to introducing and accelerating a development vehicle for the east midlands—our east midlands development corporation. That is absolutely key to the delivery of those outcomes at Toton and to the rail connections that surround it. We need specifics on that, a process, funding and a way of bringing that in to accelerate growth, so that we can get improved delivery times, which the Minister mentioned.

I absolutely welcome the review, the integrated rail plan and this debate. Notts MPs are here in force to support the plan because it is hugely beneficial to our county and our constituencies, so I commend the Government for bringing it forward.

7.39 pm

**Matt Rodda** (Reading East) (Lab): It is a pleasure to speak in this important debate. I start by offering my wholehearted support to the shadow Transport Secretary, who has made an excellent contribution this afternoon, as have many other hon. Members across the House.

I feel deeply sorry for many communities across the midlands and the north of England, because they have clearly been badly let down by the Government. I know the rail Minister is a decent, hardworking Minister, and I am sure even he is disappointed with this rather thin offering—the way Nottinghamshire has been let down, the way the north-west of England has been let down, the way Bradford and Sheffield have been let down. They have all been badly let down by the Government, I am afraid, and indeed colleagues in London are about to be severely let down with the looming crisis in Transport for London, where the Government are clearly unable to do the decent thing and provide the right level of support to vital transport infrastructure in the capital.

All those things bode very badly for our country at a time when we need more investment and more economic growth. High-speed rail is clearly a driver of significant economic growth and regeneration for major cities and smaller towns, such as my Reading constituency, and offers huge advantages to communities across the country.

I draw the Minister's attention to a number of points in my own area. In particular, I call for greater Government focus on electrification of the Great Western line to the west of Reading; at present the electric line stops at Newbury, which is clearly not far enough to the west. Indeed, the far south-west is not served by adequate rail infrastructure at this time. The electric line also stops in Cardiff, Wales, and Welsh colleagues have mentioned the serious flaws with that lack of investment in their country.

In addition, the north-south line that connects the south coast of England with the midlands and ultimately Manchester should be a priority for electrification. It is currently a narrow rail corridor with only one line going north and one going south. There are real issues there, but electrification offers greater efficiency, lighter rolling stock, much faster speeds on the railway and a more efficient railway all round. It requires more up-front investment, but it pays back great dividends in future. Many colleagues from Coventry and other midlands cities have mentioned that to me.

I realise time is limited, but I also draw the Minister's attention to a number of other issues, particularly Reading Green Park station in the neighbouring seat of Reading West, which also serves my constituents who commute to work in the science park at Green Park on the west of Reading. We also need investment in other stations across Berkshire. I draw his attention to the need for the Western Rail Link, another crucial piece of rail infrastructure in the Thames valley that offers wider benefits to people from across the country. I appreciate that he is interested in the project, and I urge him to speak to local councils, myself and other MPs such as the shadow rail Minister on that point.

I realise time is pressing, but I would like to make a couple of other very brief points. Will the Minister also—

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans):** Order. I am sorry, but not with one second gone. I call Lee Anderson.

7.42 pm

**Lee Anderson** (Ashfield) (Con): Now then—another Opposition day debate and another chance for the Labour party to demonstrate to my constituents in Ashfield and Eastwood how out of touch it is. Most residents in Ashfield, including a lady called Sue Hey, were delighted and breathed a sigh of relief when the integrated rail plan was published a few weeks ago with the news in it that the eastern leg of HS2 had been scrapped.

The eastern leg of HS2 would have come through the edge of my constituency and it would have been a case of, "You can see it, but you can't use it." What they can already see in my constituency is the Robin Hood line and the proposed Maid Marian line, which I have lobbied for since being elected to this place. The new Maid Marian line will see rail passenger services returned to the rural parts of Ashfield for the first time in nearly 50 years, with new train stations at Kings Mill Hospital and at Selston. That is what we call real levelling up in the north and midlands.

I was fortunate enough to be quoted by the Prime Minister in the IRP when I pointed out that many of my constituents are more interested in good local transport links than in the eastern leg of HS2. What we now have is a first-class regional package of £12 billion, and the good news is that we have a new batch of Conservative MPs who will ensure that that investment is delivered in Nottinghamshire and the east midlands.

**Ben Bradley:** I think my hon. Friend has underestimated the size of his package, because the amount for the east midlands comes to a total of £12.8 billion. Indeed, his package is much larger than even he thought it was.

**Lee Anderson:** I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention, but I will not get into an argument over regional packages during this debate. That is another conversation.

Let us remember that until a few years ago, the red wall seats like Ashfield had several things in common. They had above-average deprivation, failing town centres, lower life expectancy, poor transport links and lower aspirations; but the main thing that places like Ashfield, Mansfield and Bolsover had in common was Labour MPs and Labour-run councils. What a shocking track record that is. *[Interruption.]* Rather than chuntering, Opposition Members should be ashamed of the legacy that they have left us new Conservative Members in places like Ashfield. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Wansbeck (Ian Lavery) might want to concentrate on giving back the £165,000 that he stole from the miners on his own patch. He is an absolute disgrace.

What does this world-class plan mean for the people of Nottinghamshire? It means a high-speed line from the west midlands to the east midlands, providing direct high-speed rail services to Nottingham, Derby, Chesterfield, and Sheffield. Journey times from London to Nottingham will be cut by a third to just 57 minutes. Journey times from Sheffield to London will be cut by a quarter, to just 1 hour 27 minutes. Journey times from Nottingham to Birmingham will be cut by two thirds, to just 26 minutes. Even Labour in the north is backing the plan. According to the leader of Rotherham council,

"It is a victory for common sense".

It is a pity that that lot have no common sense.

This is all good news. The Mayor of Doncaster welcomes the plan, and even the next Labour leader, the Mayor of Manchester, welcomes it. It would appear that the members of the parliamentary Labour party are out of touch with their friends in the midlands and the north, who back the IRP. It is a good job that Conservative MPs are sitting here today speaking out for the Labour voters of yesterday.

7.46 pm

**Mr Toby Perkins** (Chesterfield) (Lab): Conservative Governments have made me angry before. Indeed, it was the Thatcher Government who first awoke my passion for politics, because I wanted to stand against everything that they stood for, but at least the Thatcher Government were competent. What we have now is a Government who are so incompetent, so inept, so irresponsible and so dishonest that they constantly let down the people who voted for them, and that is what we see in this plan for integrated rail.

We need only look at the manifesto promises that we have had from the Tory Government—all the way back to 2010, when I was first elected and the hon. Member for Ashfield was working for a Labour MP—to see what the Tories have been all about. Throughout that time, we have seen manifestos promising that HS2 would be delivered. We saw those promises in 2010 and we saw them in 2015, and the Tories were also promising to electrify the midland main line in 2017. In 2019 they promised that they would listen to the Oakervee review, a detailed review of HS2, the costs of which were escalating because of the constant delays and ineptitude of this Government in implementing it.

For 11 years HS2 has been Tory party policy, but throughout that period they have managed the policy so ineptly that the costs have continually escalated, and public confidence has not been there. Now they are asking how we can support policies that they spent four general elections and 11 years telling us were the right policies. They stand there and say that this is a major investment, but every major investment in rail that they have announced in the 11 years for which I have been here has never been delivered. They have stood there and announced midland main line electrification, and they have never delivered it. They have stood there and announced HS2, and they have never delivered it. So why on earth should anyone believe that the plan that is on that desk, which will take many years and future Parliaments to be delivered, will ever happen?

The people of Chesterfield have been lied to, and people across the midlands and the north have been lied to, in order to get this shabby Government elected. It is no wonder that people throughout my constituency are finally starting to see what this Government really stand for. It makes me sick, Mr Deputy Speaker.

7.49 pm

**Jacob Young** (Redcar) (Con): The Tees Valley has a proud history as the home of our nation's railway. Starting with George Stephenson's revolutionary launch of the Stockton to Darlington railway in 1825, our region has been a pioneer in the development of Britain's rail sector, from steel forged in the furnaces of Redcar for the construction of the London underground to the production of new trains at Hitachi in Newton Aycliffe.

Recent announcements show our commitment to levelling up rail in Teesside. From next year, TransPennine Express services will be extended from Redcar Central to Saltburn, something I have been campaigning on for well over two years. As of next week, LNER will launch a direct service from Middlesbrough to London Kings Cross—a fantastic step, but we need more than just one a day. And the £100 million redevelopment of Darlington train station creates new platforms, a new station building and the potential for more frequent services on the local network.

The Tees Valley is also playing a huge role in the development of the wider national network, and a key way we can strengthen this role is by committing to using British-made steel from Teesside. HS2 is one of this Government's biggest infrastructure projects but it has yet to commit to signing the UK steel charter. It is a false economy to continue to bail out our steel industry and not secure its pipeline through procurement rules in the UK. Using UK-sourced steel in the construction of HS2 will help us to secure the future of this vital national industry and support over 1,000 jobs in Redcar alone.

This IRP delivers for the north, but there is more work to do. The Minister will know that I am pushing for the east coast main line to extend its services not just to Middlesbrough but to Redcar to complement our new freeport. Along with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, I am supporting the return of passenger services to east Cleveland on the Boulby potash line, if we are able to achieve it. But as we rightly increase services on the Redcar line, such as the TransPennine service to Saltburn, we run the risk of cutting Redcar in half, virtually blockading

*[Jacob Young]*

our level crossings in the town centre. There is no doubt that resolving this roadblock to growth in Redcar will require significant funding, and there is no obvious solution right now, but I seek assurances from the Minister that Redcar town will not be cut off as we grow our network, and that we will seek to minimise the length of time the crossings are down. This is a Government committed to levelling up and transforming Teesside for the better. Thanks to this Government and our Conservative team across our region, we have never been better connected by rail, road and air. Long may it continue.

7.52 pm

**Mohammad Yasin** (Bedford) (Lab): Last month's announcement that the Prime Minister would be dropping Northern Powerhouse Rail is one of the biggest broken promises to date from a Government. I stand in solidarity with my colleagues in the north and its people who are rightly outraged by this betrayal, but I watch with particular interest because my constituents in Bedford and Kempston are going through the planning stages of the East West Rail project. More must be done to ensure the public are properly consulted on rail plans, with more honesty from the outset on the pros and cons. Let us be open about the benefits, the costs and the negative impacts so that people can make informed choices, and let us have clear, fair and transparent compensation plans for the people who are impacted.

I have people in my community whose homes are under threat of compulsory purchase, but rail building plans are years away. We await the decision on whether East West Rail and the Department for Transport will accept plans for a four-track option to avoid the demolition of homes. In the meantime, people are trapped in their homes and there is no point in making home improvements or even selling if they need to. The East West Rail plans effectively have a charge on their homes, but despite that, support and advice from EWR is poor. There is no clarity about reasonable compensation, should the worst happen, and they are completely at the mercy of whatever the Government decide. It is not fair or right to treat people like this.

**Tahir Ali:** Does my hon. Friend agree that HS2 was supposed to be about connecting the entire country and achieving a fairer and more balanced country as a result? This disintegrated rail plan delivers the opposite by leaving much of the north with inferior rail infrastructure, and this IRP promises continued infrastructure inequality.

**Mohammad Yasin:** My hon. Friend makes a powerful point. I have lost half a minute, so I will carry on.

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans):** A minute has been added.

**Mohammad Yasin:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

I listened carefully to the electrification plans in the integrated rail plan, and it is the third time we have been promised the electrification of the midland main line. As the electrification in other areas has been scaled back, who knows whether the plan will be followed up? It is impossible to trust a word this Government say. They have so far refused to answer when I try to pin them down on the electrification of East West Rail. No new infrastructure plan should include the use of diesel trains if we are serious about reaching our net-zero targets. East West Rail must be electrified from day one to avoid the need for diesel locomotives and the future costs of retrofitting. Although it is important to investigate new ways to decarbonise transport, we know that existing technology such as rail electrification works now.

These rail plans that change as they go along make a mockery of the so-called integrated rail plan. It is not integrated if it rolls back previous plans. The scrapping of a major northern rail route should be the final straw for this Government, with their dead, buried and bogus levelling-up agenda.

7.56 pm

**Andy Carter** (Warrington South) (Con): Listening to the comments of the doomsters on the Opposition Benches who seek to rubbish £96 billion-worth of investment in UK rail, I wondered whether they were reading a different document from me, but I have concluded that they have not read any documents at all.

This integrated rail plan is an absolutely brilliant plan for Warrington South. This plan puts our town and the great people of Warrington at the heart of the north's rail network, with good connections north and south via the electrified west coast main line and a new passenger line east to west from Liverpool into Yorkshire.

I remember knocking on doors during the 2019 election, when many people said to me that the links between Liverpool and Manchester are critical for towns like Warrington in the north-west of England, and the Government have listened and responded. I thank the Rail Minister, who has worked so hard to ensure that people in my constituency get the benefits they need.

People in Warrington will see faster, more reliable connections to key cities and towns. It is reassuring to see such a strong commitment from this Government, who have listened to the views of local people, for better, faster rail services through Warrington to be delivered more quickly.

Often the biggest criticism we hear from constituents, of all Governments, is that we fail to invest in infrastructure. We need to do this to help our economy and to help local people live better, more effective lives.

**Mark Eastwood:** My hon. Friend mentions the importance of economic growth. Does he agree this is important for local businesses, small and medium-sized enterprises and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Jacob Young) said, large businesses such as British Steel?

**Andy Carter:** I absolutely agree. It is so much more than just infrastructure. This plan has the potential to be a social and economic catalyst for the north of England, bringing businesses, universities and employment markets closer together, changing people's lives because they will no longer have to take a two-hour journey to Leeds. Under these plans, journey times from Warrington will be slashed to just 50 minutes. Those journey times will also be delivered 10 years faster than previously planned.

The new transport network will act as a catalyst to redevelop areas around our stations. I am looking forward to the investment I know will come to Warrington as a result of the plans for the north of England.

While the rail Minister is on the Front Bench, I would like to raise with him the more immediate proposed changes to train timetables, which will have significant implications for services through Warrington Central station. Northern and TransPennine have been consulting on the proposed December 2022 timetables, particularly on the CLC line. The plans will see a reduction in services connecting Warrington Central to Manchester from four an hour to three an hour at peak due to the removal of one of the stopping services. Having accepted that more capacity is needed between Warrington and Manchester, Northern is actually taking away services. Will the Minister meet me to discuss how we can make sure that those timetable alterations do not impact on people in Warrington?

Finally, I want to draw briefly on the Government's recent publication on the Union connectivity review. I am pleased that the review recognised that we need to invest more in the west coast main line north of Crewe to properly use HS2, taking advantage of the capacity and journey time benefits. More importantly—I have called for this for some time—I welcome the move to explore more alternatives to the Golborne spur, which is the link that will connect HS2 to the west coast main line. The outcome of the report was clear. There are better ways to link the west coast main line to HS2 than the Golborne spur—a connection that will cut through Warrington, cost £2 billion and deliver very few benefits.

8 pm

**Alex Sobel** (Leeds North West) (Lab/Co-op): My colleagues and I were extremely disappointed with the decision to scrap Northern Powerhouse Rail between Leeds and Manchester. Although the IRP, or, as I like to call it, the bus replacement service, has some things to like —we will be constructive about them where they meet our aims for Yorkshire—the impact of the loss of high-speed rail will have ripple effects through every community in our region.

A lot of people do not fully realise that high-speed rail infrastructure, on dedicated lines, is not solely about getting to London or the midlands more quickly. It is about releasing capacity so that local lines can run effective local services and we can ensure the future of our network, the growth of our region and the environment around us. Northern Powerhouse Rail promised three things: faster services on a dedicated line, new trains and new stations. It promised an all-electric dedicated line between Bradford and Manchester. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford West (Naz Shah) has already made the point about the short-sightedness of not connecting the people of the UK's youngest city with the opportunities that that would have brought. Instead, the Government have written in the IRP:

"We will also upgrade and electrify"—

I just want to say that many people here do not understand what "upgrade" means. It does not mean getting something new. If I put a new stereo in my car, it is not a new car; it is just a car with a new stereo in it—

"the line between Leeds and Bradford giving a non-stop journey time which could be as low as 12 minutes."

That sounds good at first glance, but without the dedicated line, there are knock-on effects that are not printed on the tin.

There are currently two lines that run from Leeds to Bradford. One takes 20 minutes, stopping twice, and the other takes 24 minutes, stopping four times. Both those lines are at maximum frequency. There is no way, on the current line, to meet the 12-minute target to Bradford without sacrificing local services and local stops. I have constituents living between those stops who do not feel that the cancellation of NPR affects them, but when residents who commute to Leeds or Bradford by rail find that their service will be cut to meet the Leeds-Bradford target, what will they do? The answer is probably to increase car use. We have been promised new trains, but new trains are not a replacement for new services. More than that, they will work only on electrified lines, which do not extend beyond Bradford westbound through Huddersfield or northbound to Preston.

**Naz Shah:** Does my hon. Friend agree that the commute from Bradford to Leeds, or from Bradford to Manchester, puts more cars on the road and does not help us to meet our COP26 obligations?

**Alex Sobel:** Absolutely. Only NPR will get people on those routes on to the train.

Most concerning is the broken promise of new stations in Leeds and in Bradford. Faster and more regular services require more platform space, and Leeds is already at capacity. Without extra capacity, will my constituents who use the Harrogate line have their services cut? I would like the rail Minister to answer that question. On the electrification of the Harrogate line, the recent Network Rail transport decarbonisation network strategy includes a recommendation for electrification between Leeds and Harrogate. Will that come forward?

On Northern Powerhouse Rail, we have been sold a pup, but I also want to address the problem of getting to a train station in the first place. Otley in my constituency was cut from the train line by Beeching. Our Mayor, Tracy Brabin, has an ambitious and achievable plan for a mass transit system to reach Otley, linking it to Leeds and Bradford, where we thought it would join NPR. The Government committed to that scheme in their manifesto in 2019. The Prime Minister said in this Chamber:

"We will remedy the scandal that Leeds is the largest city in western Europe without light rail or a metro."—[*Official Report*, 19 December 2019; Vol. 669, c. 47.

However, trams are built not on the hopes and dreams of a whimsical Prime Minister, but on cold, hard cash.

The Prime Minister has failed to show us the money. All the Government have committed to is £200 million, of which they have said £100 million should be used to work out how to get HS2 trains from Sheffield to Leeds—something that the DFT, not the West Yorkshire metro Mayor, should be doing—and that falls well short of the £3 billion required for us to build the tram scheme. The people of West Yorkshire have been short-changed for far too long. What the Prime Minister has offered is not levelling up, but pushing us down a hill. He is indeed northern infrastructure's grand old duke of York, marching us up to the top of the hill and right back down again.

8.4 pm

**Robbie Moore** (Keighley) (Con): I always welcome the opportunity to discuss improvements to our rail system on behalf of my constituents in Keighley and Ilkley.

First, I welcome the work of this Conservative Government and previous Conservative Governments to make positive changes to rail connections and rail improvements in the north and, indeed, throughout the whole country. The Opposition gloss over the fact that in 13 years a Labour Government did absolutely nothing to improve opportunities for my constituents in Keighley to travel by rail. It is worth noting that in the Blair and Brown years, the Labour Government electrified only 63 miles. In 13 years, that is 4.8 miles a year.

Earlier, the shadow Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Louise Haigh), asked what the Conservatives have done for my constituents. Let me tell her: constituents travelling from Ilkley or Ben Rhydding, or from Steeton or Keighley, either to Bradford or to Leeds, do so on an electrified line that was put in under the Major Conservative Government in 1994. Since 2010, the Conservatives have electrified 1,500 miles of line, and here we are again, under the Johnson Conservative Government, seeing another huge boost in the shape of the £96 billion package to improve rail infrastructure across the north and throughout the rest of the country, benefiting most of my colleagues.

But that is where it stops for me. As I have said previously in the House, I feel very strongly about and am deeply disappointed by the recent rail announcements in respect of improvements for the Bradford district. In my view, the announcements completely short-change the Bradford district. The rail Minister has made several announcements about reducing the travel time between Leeds and Bradford, but the crucial thing for unlocking economic potential for Keighley and the wider Bradford district is better linkage from Bradford across to Manchester, thereby opening up better east-west links.

**Naz Shah:** Does the hon. Member agree that although the Secretary of State came to the House and tried to sell us the idea that the Government will reduce the time of a journey from Leeds to Bradford from 20-something minutes to 12 minutes—or whatever it is—that journey could be done in seven minutes? The journey from Bradford to Manchester, which is currently quicker in a car so increases car usage, could be done in less than 20 minutes. The Government are wrapping up something that is actually a very hollow promise, are they not?

**Robbie Moore:** I was pleased to sign a joint letter to the rail Minister with the hon. Lady, the hon. Member for Bradford South (Judith Cummins) and my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley (Philip Davies) to urge the Government to look into getting better transport connectivity between Leeds and Manchester, with a stop in Bradford, because that is the only mechanism to drive real economic prosperity and economic opportunities for my constituents in Keighley.

My constituency is only 43 miles away from Manchester. I want to make the strong case for a resident who lives in Keighley to have the opportunity to get quickly to Manchester so that they can commute there to work on a daily basis, if needs be. Likewise, that would open up economic opportunity between Manchester and Keighley. In my view, that can be done only by having a proper stop in the Bradford district to improve connectivity.

In the short time I have remaining, I wish to make the case, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Sara Britcliffe) has, for opening up the Skipton to Colne line. Better connectivity to east Lancashire would dramatically increase the economic opportunities for many of my constituents in Keighley and would make sure we can really drive economic prosperity in Keighley.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans):** Order. Before I call Grahame Morris, I must say that I understand that during your contribution, Mr Anderson, you referred to another Member stealing, which is clearly unacceptable language. Will you please withdraw that?

**Lee Anderson:** Yes, the debate with the hon. Member for Wansbeck (Ian Lavery) did get a little bit heated. I apologise if I called him a thief but, just for the record, I am not a scab.

**Mr Deputy Speaker:** I did not hear the word scab being used; had I done so, I would have called that Member up as well. In the memory of Jo Cox, we really do have to have a far better atmosphere in this Chamber. I hope we can now start to move on with that.

8.9 pm

**Grahame Morris** (Easington) (Lab): I rise in support of the motion in the name of Her Majesty's Opposition.

My constituency has minimal rail infrastructure. The reopening of Horden train station was a cause for celebration. It promised new opportunities for employment, education and leisure through making the major towns and cities in the north-east more accessible to people living in my constituency in east Durham.

We do not enjoy the embarrassment of riches in public transport that we see in London and, apparently, in some other constituencies, where missing a tube or a bus is not a major issue, with another service arriving just minutes later.

Seaham and Horden in my constituency are served by one train an hour, normally consisting of two carriages. For my constituents who are seeking to attend a hospital appointment, a university or college class, getting to work, or simply meeting friends, the reliability of the train has a considerable impact on employment prospects or educational success. To increase capacity and frequency, we are not talking about multi-billion pound schemes. If there were any truth in the levelling-up rhetoric, I would not be on my feet here tonight, pressing the Government for additional transport options, more resources and more frequent services.

I want to highlight a particular case for the Minister, who is a good man, about what the consequences are when we have severe overcrowding, I will, if I may, read out a letter that I have received, relaying the experience of a constituent. It is from the mother of Harry, an 11-year-old boy. This is what she said:

"Harry, 11, was standing squashed with his Dad. He started to go pale and felt sick. He then suddenly collapsed, went limp, eyes rolled back and he passed out. We pulled the emergency stop button. After about a minute, he came round, but was weak, limp and only just responding. There was no space for him to lie down"—

the train was so crammed—

"no space for me to even get to him. No space for the conductor to get to him to see if he needed medical help. The windows were closed. It was hot, airless, and people were packed to absolute capacity. What does it take for the train companies to understand that packing trains full to above safe capacity is a fatality waiting to happen. The conductors were encouraging people to get on an already dangerously full train."

I invite the Minister to understand our experience in east Durham with these overcrowded crushes, which are a clear risk to health and safety.

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans):** We will move on to the wind-ups now, but Rachael Maskell would have been next. Tan, you can have a bit more time, but would you allow her to intervene on you? I know that this is an unusual request, but I hope that you will think kindly of her when she decides to intervene.

8.13 pm

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi** (Slough) (Lab): Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker, and, of course, how could I not agree to your demand? If I want to speak in future debates, I cannot but obey your request as a command.

It is an absolute honour, on behalf of Her Majesty's Opposition, to respond to this debate on rail investment and Government betrayals. Indeed, from the moment I became a shadow Minister for railways, I have been waiting patiently—impatiently, in fact—like an overly keen train spotter, for the integrated rail plan, but what a complete let-down. For well over a year, I have received so many assurances that it would be published soon, very soon, that I had taken to calling it the mythical rail plan, but perhaps the Minister was simply too busy picking his secret Santa gift for the Downing Street party to finish it in time last year. Perhaps I can recommend that his secret Santa splashes out on a dictionary for him this year, because there are a few words around this rail plan that Ministers may wish to look at. "Soon" is certainly one of them, but "promise", "commitment" and "betrayal" are a few other words that come to mind, having now seen the Government's disintegrated rail plan, as so eloquently highlighted by so many hon. Members.

I thank the many right hon. and hon. Members who have contributed today, and who share the passion that is so clearly felt by their constituents and many others across our country regarding the Government's abysmal plans for our rail network. They have spoken so eloquently and powerfully—none more so than my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Louise Haigh), who gave a detailed exposé of the Government's betrayal. Hon. Members' comments about disappointment in the lack of Government ambition are echoed by many of those affected.

**Jacob Young:** Will the hon. Member give way?

**Rachel Hopkins** (Luton South) (Lab): Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Mr Dhesi:** The hon. Member for Redcar (Jacob Young) has made many interventions and has spoken. As directed by you, Mr Deputy Speaker, I am looking to take interventions, within the limited time, from those individuals who have not yet spoken, including my hon. Friend the Member for Luton South (Rachel Hopkins).

**Rachel Hopkins:** My hon. Friend is talking passionately about our constituents' enthusiasm for investment in rail. Does he agree that rail investment needs to be integrated through rail and infrastructure, so that stations that are decrepit, such as Luton station, get the investment they need so that they can be rebuilt to be fit for the 21st century?

**Mr Dhesi:** My hon. Friend makes an excellent point and is a passionate exponent of what is required for her constituency. Indeed, other hon. Members have highlighted the dilapidated state of many stations and other infrastructure.

Given that the Secretary of State is keen on quotes from northern leaders and industry experts, I thought I would share some so that he and the Minister can become familiar with theirs views and are left in no doubt. The National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers noted that the Government's decisions are

"driving decline in our railways".

The Transport Salaried Staffs' Association and Unite unions were of a similar view, given the huge loss of well-paid, unionised jobs, and the loss of skills and apprenticeships thereafter.

The metro Mayor of Liverpool, Steve Rotheram, whom the Secretary of State quoted, said that the Government are just offering "scraps off the table". ASLEF aptly described the plans as "levelling down". Transport for the North called them "woefully inadequate". The Mayor of Manchester, Andy Burnham, who has been quoted by Government Members on many occasions, observed that instead of NPR, the north just got PR. The Northern Powerhouse Partnership, headed up by the Government's old friend, the former Chancellor, George Osborne, said that these plans disappointed "virtually everybody".

When six major newspapers in the north of England all united to run the same powerful front page, calling on the Government simply to deliver what they promised on rail—nothing more, nothing less; just what they promised—it should have been a wake-up call to Ministers that they cannot substitute proper investment with the usual Government spin, so why did the Department so blatantly ignore those who actually live, work and travel in the north and midlands when pulling these proposals together? Were the years spent compiling this and other reports not enough to meet stakeholders and listen to their suggestions, or did Ministers simply ignore them?

The scale of the Government's under-delivery on promises would be surprising if we had not been paying close attention to their past record. Just last year, the Minister noted:

"The Government recognise the importance of improving rail connectivity to Bradford—for the local community, for passengers and for the regeneration opportunities that it could bring."—[*Official Report,* 30 June 2021; Vol. 698, c. 72WH.]

Yet, when it comes to actioning this plan, Bradford has been left high and dry—as has been eloquently highlighted by Members from Bradford and Yorkshire, and indeed by the West Yorkshire Mayor, the wonderful Tracy Brabin —with no new high-speed connection between Bradford and Leeds and no new station, despite it being a city that houses more than half a million people. It has the UK's worst rail connections for a city of such stature.

*[Mr Dhesi]*

And then there is the eastern leg of HS2 to Leeds. I have simply lost count of the number of times the Government have assured the House, myself—for over a year, from that Dispatch Box—and the public that this will go ahead "in full". I am therefore sure that the people of Chesterfield, Sheffield and Leeds were surprised, to put it mildly, to find out that they would no longer be connected by HS2. Northern Powerhouse Rail may as well have been cancelled under Government plans, with a half-baked version delivering only for a select few going ahead, despite being promised over 60 times by the Government. Why would the British people believe a single word that this Government say?

In February 2020 the Prime Minister told the House, with regard to HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail, that

"both are needed and both will be built as quickly and as cost-effectively as possible."—[*Official Report*, 11 February 2020; Vol. 671, c. 713.]

So why has he gone back on his word once again? By which date—perhaps the Minister could answer this—had the Government decided to betray the investment promises that they made? Was it before the IRP was published recently, or was it while they were still making commitments to this House that plans would be delivered in full? Did they ever intend to keep their word? We cannot continue to fail rail passengers due to Government incompetence. Under-delivering on our rail network will have consequences for decades to come. Transport has lasting consequences for the way that people live their lives—the types of jobs that they are able to do, the holidays that they take, and the areas that they choose to live in. Breaking promises on such fundamental parts of our society is truly unforgivable.

This Government have become famous for their U-turns, so I ask the Minister: will the Government U-turn one more time to benefit our northern towns and cities? Will he take the opportunity today to reverse his decision to scale back plans for the north and instead keep the commitments that the Government have regularly promised? Labour Members know that breaking promises on such fundamental issues, especially to communities crying out for proper investment, is unforgivable. Will he do the right thing today, because people will not settle for crumbs? They deserve the full deal.

8.21 pm

**The Minister of State, Department for Transport (Andrew Stephenson):** I thank everybody who has spoken for their important contributions to this debate. As a northern MP myself, I know this is an issue of huge importance to all our local communities.

Despite the protestations of Labour Members, I know that our constituents will not mind which technical scheme we have gone for; what they will care about is the outcomes when those schemes are delivered: the faster and more reliable services that they will get; the ease and convenience with which they will be able to move not just up and down this country but across it; and crucially, the speed with which these investments will be delivered—not decades in the future but getting started on that work right now, this very month. I understand that there are enormously strong feelings about rail investment across the country, and it is important that we ensure that all areas get a fair deal that enables them to grow their local economies and support employment opportunities. That has been demonstrated in both the response to the integrated rail plan and throughout this debate. Let me therefore address a number of the points that were made.

The SNP spokesman, the hon. Member for Paisley and Renfrewshire North (Gavin Newlands), lamented that the integrated rail plan lacked ambition and talked about what was going on in Denmark. I remind him that under our plans HS2 will remain the largest infrastructure project in Europe, with over 20,000 people already employed, increasing to 34,000 people at peak construction. Our plans will reduce the current journey time from Glasgow to London by 49 minutes, and from Edinburgh to London by 42 minutes. These plans are good for Scotland and good for the Union.

**Jacob Young:** This is the largest infrastructure project in Europe, so would it not be great if it was using British steel?

**Andrew Stephenson:** My hon. Friend tempts me. As he knows, HS2 has already awarded work to 2,200 businesses across the United Kingdom, 97% of which are British-registered firms. There are many people already supplying British steel but I am keen for us to do even more and support even more businesses in Redcar.

My hon. Friends the Members for Harrogate and Knaresborough (Andrew Jones) and for Blackpool North and Cleveleys (Paul Maynard), both distinguished former rail Ministers, welcomed the plans and set out how they build on the £29 billion already invested in transport across the north since 2010. My hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate and Knaresborough reminded us of the £360 million to introduce contactless tap in, tap out ticketing to hundreds more stations outside London and the south-east, which will bring huge benefits to travellers across the north.

The right hon. Member for Knowsley (Sir George Howarth) talked about the impact on Liverpool city region and asked if I would meet the Mayor, Steve Rotheram. I am happy to commit to continuing to work with the Mayor and local stakeholders, but I remind the right hon. Gentleman that under these plans, the journey time from Manchester to Liverpool will fall from 50 minutes to 35 minutes and we will see the number of trains doubled.

**Rachael Maskell** (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): The Minister will know that York is a formidable rail city, bursting with expert planners and engineers. They were astounded by the rail plan, not least because it is about economic development in Yorkshire and the north-east, as well as the rest of the north. Will he therefore go back and rethink that plan so that the north-east and Yorkshire can see the benefits that elsewhere in the country gets? Ultimately, the expertise needs to be put back on the rail lines, which our city can offer.

**Andrew Stephenson:** I thank the hon. Lady for her point. We have met in her constituency to discuss various proposals, and she knows that the east coast main line upgrade will benefit York. The core Northern Powerhouse network being built from York all the way to Liverpool will benefit her constituents, so I believe that this plan has significant benefits for her constituents.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mark Eastwood) highlighted the significant benefits to Dewsbury, Mirfield and Huddersfield, which are well beyond anything proposed under the previous plans, including electrification and major station improvements. I look forward to visiting his constituency soon.

**Jason McCartney** (Colne Valley) (Con): The Minister has just mentioned my neighbour, my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury. Continuing on from Dewsbury and Huddersfield, there is huge investment going into stations in Slaithwaite and Marsden and into better connectivity and improving accessibility for those with disabilities.

**Andrew Stephenson:** I thank my hon. Friend for that point. As he recognises, these plans deliver far more for towns on the existing railway line than was ever previously proposed, and therefore he will see significant investment in all the stations on his line.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Dr Wallis) reminded us of some of the benefits of HS2 to Wales, with passengers from south Wales able to access HS2 services via Birmingham Curzon Street and passengers from north Wales becoming within two hours 15 minutes of London. As he knows, the current control period, control period 6, has seen a record £2 billion revenue settlement for Network Rail in Wales.

The hon. Member for Llanelli (Nia Griffith) called for more electrification. I agree with her. That is why I am proud that since 2010 we have electrified 1,221 miles of track, compared with just 63 miles under the 13 years of the last Labour Government. My hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (James Grundy) welcomed the investment in Golborne station and the Castlefield corridor improvements, while also again putting on record the concerns of his constituents about the Golborne spur. Thanks to my hon. Friend's campaigning, and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington South (Andy Carter), those concerns have been heard loud and clear, and they know we are currently reflecting on alternatives.

The hon. Member for Preston (Sir Mark Hendrick) complained about the plans, even though for his constituency the current plans are pretty much the same as the previous plans. We will get on with our plans to deliver HS2 all the way into Manchester, reducing journey times from Preston to London from 128 minutes down to 78 minutes once HS2 is operational.

My hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Darren Henry) has been a tireless champion of his constituents, and I am pleased to have visited Toton with him.

**Sir Alan Campbell** (Tynemouth) (Lab) claimed to move the closure (Standing Order No. 36).

*Question put forthwith,* That the Question be now put.

*Question agreed to.*

*Main Question accordingly put.*

*The House divided:* Ayes 139, Noes 0.

**Division No. 144] [8.28 pm**

**AYES**

Abrahams, Debbie
Ali, Rushanara
Ali, Tahir
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Amesbury, Mike
Anderson, Fleur
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Ashworth, rh Jonathan
Bardell, Hannah
Begum, Apsana
Betts, Mr Clive
Blake, Olivia
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brennan, Kevin
Brock, Deidre
Brown, Alan
Brown, Ms Lyn
Buck, Ms Karen
Burgon, Richard
Byrne, Ian
Byrne, rh Liam
Cadbury, Ruth
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Chamberlain, Wendy
Charalambous, Bambos
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Coyle, Neil
Creasy, Stella *(Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore)*
Cunningham, Alex
Daby, Janet
Davey, rh Ed
Davies, Geraint
Davies-Jones, Alex
Day, Martyn
De Cordova, Marsha
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Doogan, Dave
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Duffield, Rosie
Elmore, Chris
Eshalomi, Florence
Esterson, Bill
Foxcroft, Vicky
Foy, Mary Kelly
Gibson, Patricia
Glindon, Mary
Grant, Peter
Green, Kate
Greenwood, Lilian
Griffith, Nia
Gwynne, Andrew
Haigh, Louise
Hamilton, Fabian
Hayes, Helen
Hendrick, Sir Mark
Hobhouse, Wera
Hopkins, Rachel
Howarth, rh Sir George
Huq, Dr Rupa
Hussain, Imran
Jardine, Christine
Jarvis, Dan
Johnson, rh Dame Diana
Jones, Gerald
Jones, rh Mr Kevan
Jones, Ruth
Jones, Sarah
Kane, Mike
Khan, Afzal
Lavery, Ian
Leadbeater, Kim
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Lewis, Clive
Linden, David
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lucas, Caroline
Lynch, Holly
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Malhotra, Seema
Maskell, Rachael
McCabe, Steve
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonald, Andy
McDonnell, rh John
McFadden, rh Mr Pat
McMahon, Jim
Mearns, Ian
Mishra, Navendu
Monaghan, Carol
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, Grahame
Murray, James
Newlands, Gavin
Norris, Alex
O'Hara, Brendan
Onwurah, Chi
Osamor, Kate
Osborne, Kate
Oswald, Kirsten
Owen, Sarah
Peacock, Stephanie
Perkins, Mr Toby
Pollard, Luke
Qureshi, Yasmin
Reynolds, Jonathan
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
Rodda, Matt
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Shah, Naz
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Slaughter, Andy
Smith, Cat
Smith, Jeff
Sobel, Alex
Stephens, Chris
Stevens, Jo
Stone, Jamie
Sultana, Zarah
Tami, rh Mark
Tarry, Sam
Thewliss, Alison
Thompson, Owen
Thomson, Richard
Thornberry, rh Emily
Timms, rh Stephen
Twigg, Derek
Webbe, Claudia
West, Catherine
Western, Matt
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitley, Mick
Wilson, Munira
Winter, Beth
Yasin, Mohammad
Zeichner, Daniel

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Liz Twist and Colleen Fletcher**

**NOES**

**Tellers for the Noes:** **Gill Furniss and Taiwo Owatemi**

*Question accordingly agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House recognises the importance of rail investment to the UK economy and, in particular, the delivery of new lines linking Yorkshire, the North West, North East and Midlands; regrets the Government's decision not to deliver new high speed investment, Northern Powerhouse Rail in full, and electrification covering communities across the North and Midlands; calls on the Government to deliver the new northern rail investment promised by the Prime Minister in full; and further calls on the Secretary of State for Transport to update the House in person before January 2022 on his Department's benefit cost ratio analysis for the revised HS2 line.

8.40 pm

**Debbie Abrahams** (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. I have been contacted by a constituent who has incurable secondary breast cancer. She has planned a Christmas holiday to Spain with her family, including her 12-year-old and 15-year-old children. The UK Government recommend a single dose of vaccine for over-15s which her daughter has had, but the Spanish Government are now saying that over-12s are to have two doses of a two-dose vaccine or one dose of a one-dose vaccine. My constituent is very concerned that her daughter could be prevented from entering Spain and joining them on their holiday. She is desperately seeking clarification on this matter, as it is not on the Government website or indeed that of the airline, and they are due to travel next Thursday. Given this, I seek your guidance, Mr Deputy Speaker, on how to get a full response from the Foreign Office on what she can expect and how she can ensure her family can make travel plans before Christmas.

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans):** I thank the hon. Member for giving me notice of the point of order on behalf of her constituents. It is important that Ministers give timely answers to Members, particularly when they raise issues of an urgent nature. Those on the Treasury Bench will have heard the point raised and I hope they will relay it back, but there will be other opportunities, including business questions tomorrow.

## Business without Debate

### DELEGATED LEGISLATION

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),*

EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION (FINANCIAL SERVICES)

That the draft Solvency 2 (Group Supervision) (Amendment) Regulations 2021, which were laid before this House on 15 November, be approved.—*(Steve Double.)*

*Question agreed to.*

### PETITIONS

#### South Warwickshire Mega-Council

8.41 pm

**Matt Western** (Warwick and Leamington) (Lab): I want to bring to the attention of the House the issue of the merging of local councils without due regard to the wishes of local residents. This issue is directly linked to proposals in my constituency along with many others to merge Warwick District Council with Stratford-on-Avon District Council. This petition complements that to Warwick District Council which has 1,050 signatures demanding that it establishes a citizens assembly to examine governance options before holding a referendum.

The petition states:

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urge the Government to make it a requirement for a range of options to be put to local residents in the form of a referendum in the event that local councillors propose any changes to local governing structures.

*Following is the full text of the petition:*

*[The petition of residents of the United Kingdom,*

*Declares that the proposal to merge Warwick and Stratford district councils will dilute local power; further that, if the proposal is approved, the number of councillors serving residents in south Warwickshire would be reduced from 80 to 60; further that residents need to feel more connected and less detached from political decision-making, and that could only be achieved if councils are more in touch with residents; further that Warwick District Council was prepared to stage a referendum to decide whether to adopt a climate change levy in Spring 2020 and so is open to referendums in theory; and further that before any decision is made, a citizens assembly should be set up to outline arguments for and against the merger and that this should be followed by a referendum on the final verdict.*

*The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urge the Government to make it a requirement for a range of options to be put to local residents in the form of a referendum in the event that local councillors propose any changes to local governing structures.*

*And the petitioners remain, etc.]*

[P002702]

#### Death by dangerous driving

8.43 pm

**Liam Byrne** (Birmingham, Hodge Hill) (Lab): On 29 August, Ghulam Nabi was walking to his job as a bus driver so as to donate his Sunday earnings—he worked on Sundays—to charity. Suddenly over a bridge sped a driver, Mr Raihan Ahmed, driving so fast that all the wheels of his vehicle were off the road. He hit Mr Nabi and killed him. Mr Ahmed was driving a stolen vehicle, without a licence and without insurance, yet was sentenced to just a couple of years. This is not justice. Some 1,300 people have signed a petition in similar terms tabled by my colleague, Councillor Majid Mahmood of Birmingham City Council.

The petition states:

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urge the Government to request that the Attorney General refer the unduly lenient sentence to the Court of Appeal.

*Following is the full text of the petition:*

*[The petition of residents of the United Kingdom,*

*Declares that Raihan Ahmed caused death by dangerous driving, drove without a licence or insurance and failed to stop at the scene of the crime; notes that the actions of Raihan Ahmed led to the loss of Ghulam Nabi's life; further that under his current sentence Ahmed could be out on the street in under two years whilst the family and community grieve for the rest of their lives; declares that a longer sentence will act as a greater deterrent to others.*

*The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urge the Government to request that the Attorney General refer the unduly lenient sentence to the Court of Appeal.]*

And the petitioners remain, etc.

[P002703]

## Dignity in Dying

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*(Steve Double.)*

8.44 pm

**Mr Andrew Mitchell** (Sutton Coldfield) (Con): I express my thanks to Mr Speaker for granting this Adjournment debate.

Assisted dying is an immensely sensitive and emotive issue of conscience over which each of us individually, as Members of this place, must wrestle, and which this House will have to address collectively before much longer. In my role as co-chair of the all-party parliamentary group for choice at the end of life—I have the pleasure of co-chairing it with the hon. Member for Bristol South (Karin Smyth) in this House—I have had discussions with many colleagues, including the Prime Minister, and I know how seriously this issue is taken. I know that many colleagues are yet to come to a firm conclusion on it. I respect that position. I respect it not least because I have completely changed my mind on this issue since I arrived in the House of Commons. After listening to many constituents in my office in Sutton Coldfield, often with tears of solidarity in my eyes, as with inordinate sadness they have told me of the painful and undignified death of someone they loved, I have concluded that I want the law changed to benefit my constituents, to benefit those who I love, and possibly, indeed, to benefit myself.

Our constituents are, according to every single opinion poll over the past three decades, in strong support of this change in the law. I remind the House that the Bill introduced by the noble Lady Meacher in the other place, which has recently commanded their lordships' support and builds on the consensus so painstakingly and skilfully assembled over many years by Lord Falconer, sets out that those who are within six months of the end of their life and who, in the opinion of two doctors and a High Court judge, have reached the decision independently and in sound mind that they wish to end their life to avoid the often undignified and extraordinary suffering that would otherwise assail them, should be able to do so.

**Fiona Bruce** (Congleton) (Con): Is it not extremely difficult to assess when a life will end? Is that not one of the challenges that we have with regard to this proposal of a timed end to a life?

**Mr Mitchell:** My hon. Friend is right, but I used to be a junior social security Minister, and I know that social security law means that the Government—society—already have a way of determining a period six months before the end of someone's life. We can of course reflect on this, and on whether there is a better way of doing it, but that facility in fact already exists.

**Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown** (The Cotswolds) (Con): How would my right hon. Friend's Bill prevent relatives or others from putting pressure on the person to ask for this procedure to be put in place?

**Mr Mitchell:** My hon. Friend makes a very good point, and I will come directly to that.

My aim in this debate is not to persuade all colleagues of the rightness of this cause but to make two clear points: first, that this is a debate about the real-life consequences of our blanket ban on assisted dying; and secondly, that there are real examples from overseas of how it can be done better.

In the past several days, we have seen the rules on international travel tighten once again; in the space of a week, the Swiss Government closed their borders to travellers from the UK unless they undertook a quarantine of 10 days, before changing the rules back a few days later. The dismay that that has caused people seeking an assisted death in Switzerland is overwhelming, with their having to spend their final days confined to a hotel room, scrambling to update plans when time and energy are in such short supply, and unable to have all—or perhaps any—of their loved ones there to accompany them. The already cruel situation where British citizens can have the death they want only if they travel to another country becomes yet more unacceptable when even that most exceptional option can be withdrawn with such short notice. That is not to blame Switzerland; it is the fault of our own failure as a country to provide that option at home, preferring to outsource our compassion to another country.

Last year, I raised the question of travel during the pandemic with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. He confirmed that the ban on travelling overseas did not apply to those travelling for an assisted death in another country. That announcement was a welcome relief to many, although it once again highlights our heavy reliance on other jurisdictions to provide our own citizens with the deaths that they want.

**Christine Jardine** (Edinburgh West) (LD) *rose—*

**Mr Mitchell:** I will get a little further with my case, and then I will certainly give way.

Furthermore, this leniency does nothing for those who cannot afford a trip to Switzerland; who cannot access the necessary medical records; who cannot travel due to illness or disability; or who cannot access the services of Dignitas for a host of other reasons. It forces all those who accompany the dying person to break the law and run the risk of prosecution on their return to this country.

I am saddened to tell the House that David Peace has today died at Dignitas; it is a coincidence that he happened to die today. Many colleagues may have seen a touching interview with David over the summer, in which he spoke about his desire to control his death, rather than let motor neurone disease choose his death for him. Earlier this week, before he left this country—his home—for Switzerland, David said:

> "I have terminal motor neurone disease, a fatal illness for which there is no treatment or cure. It has robbed me of my ability to speak, swallow, balance and walk. It is rampaging through my body, paralysing my muscles. Nothing will stop it. Palliative care cannot give me the death I want, I simply want the right to die on my own terms...My only option has been to plan an assisted death at Dignitas in Switzerland, which I have done in meticulous detail over the past few months. Though stressful and hugely expensive, this has given me comfort and peace of mind. Covid-19 measures have been a real concern throughout this year, knowing that travel restrictions or lockdowns could jeopardise my plans".

He continued:

> "The emotional and logistical nightmare I have endured over the past few days would have been avoided entirely under the Assisted Dying Bill, which would have enabled me to go peacefully and with dignity in my own home at a time of my choosing."

*[Mr Mitchell]*

David's call is echoed by another proud Englishmen, Ray Illingworth, the legendary English and Yorkshire cricketer, who was diagnosed with oesophageal cancer a year ago. He said this of having to go abroad to obtain an assisted death:

"If that was the only option I would, but we shouldn't have to do that. I'd like to be put to sleep in peace in my own home in Yorkshire."

Ray has represented his country, and is now asking his country to help him have the choice of dying on his own terms.

Those who cannot travel to Switzerland have only a few agonising choices here at home. For many, our world-leading palliative and end-of-life care will ensure a peaceful and dignified death, but even with the very best care, 17 people a day will die in excruciating pain, to say nothing of those who die with uncontrollable symptoms, or without dignity in their final days. For those who wish to hasten their death, the option remains open of withdrawing from life-sustaining treatment, or voluntarily stopping eating and drinking with the intention of hastening death; but there is no option to take direct steps to end one's own life with medical support.

Perhaps most tragic are the cases in which dying people, trapped in pain and despair, decide to end their life by suicide. The best estimates are that hundreds of suicides every year are of people living with a terminal illness. I know from speaking to people who have direct experience of losing their loved one to suicide that these dreadful decisions are taken not lightly, but as a last, desperate choice, due to the lack of a safeguarded assisted dying option.

We must be honest about recognising the victims of our laws—the dozens of our citizens who feel they must travel overseas to achieve the death that is right for them; the hundreds of terminally ill people who die by their own hand; and the thousands of people who die beyond the reach of the very best end-of-life care we can offer. Every year, we condemn too many people to becoming casualties of a law that lacks compassion and public support, and belongs to a bygone age.

**Danny Kruger** (Devizes) (Con): My right hon. Friend is making a powerful speech, as expected. He refers to a very small number of people to whom he wants to give this new right. I recognise the extraordinary pain and distress of those individuals and their families, but is he aware that in Oregon—the legislation being proposed in the other place is based on the law there—over half the people who apply for assisted death do so not because of terrible pain and suffering, but because they do not want to be a burden on their family? That is the consideration that motivates them. Does he not agree that that is likely to be replicated here, given the sad prevalence of abuse and neglect of elderly relatives in our country?

Surely the answer to the distress of people facing death is to improve palliative care, which, as he says, though it can be excellent in this country, is tragically patchy, which is not good enough. Surely we should invest significantly in palliative care to ensure that everyone in this country has the opportunity to die with all the care that they need, and does not have a terrible, distressing death, before we ever consider this terrible step of allowing assisted suicide.

**Mr Mitchell:** My hon. Friend and I will no doubt continue this argument for many months. He and I are as one on the importance of improving palliative care, but alas, there are those who will never benefit from those improvements because of the nature of their illness. I will come to Oregon in a moment, but to address the very point that he made, we emphasise the importance of a High Court judge being involved.

What can we learn from overseas, as others like us struggle with this issue? We know that this can all be done better. Indeed, with each year that passes, yet another jurisdiction takes a step forward to provide choice at the end of life for its citizens. Eleven states in the USA and five Australian states have legalised assisted dying, with New South Wales likely to follow suit very shortly. New Zealand permits assisted dying, following a nationwide referendum that found an overwhelming majority of New Zealanders supported a change in the law. In Europe too, in the past couple of years, laws have been passed by the Spanish and Portuguese Parliaments, and court judgments have overturned the bans on assisted dying in Germany and Austria.

In places such as Oregon, which my hon. Friend mentioned, assisted dying has been legal for a quarter of a century, and the eligibility criteria and processes remain essentially the same as the day they were introduced. Of the jurisdictions that have introduced assisted dying solely for people who are terminally ill and mentally competent, not a single one has subsequently extended its laws beyond that point.

The other important point is the direction of travel in this area: we are told by those who oppose law change that other countries provide clear warnings of the horrors that would befall the elderly, the vulnerable and others in society if we were to legalise assisted dying. Not only is there no evidence to that effect, but no single jurisdiction has legalised assisted dying and then subsequently repealed that law. Do we as a House consider ourselves to be more blessed with wisdom and foresight than the parliamentarians of all of these other jurisdictions or think that they have simply turned a blind eye to those concerns? The truth, of course, is that these fears, as seriously as we take them, simply have not come to fruition.

Very close to our shores, change is on its way. Two weeks ago, the States Assembly of Jersey voted by a large margin of 36 votes to 10 in support of a proposition on assisted dying, with draft legislation to be introduced by 2023. A widely signed petition led to the establishment of a citizens' jury of islanders, which found that more than 75% of participants wanted to legalise assisted dying.

Ireland's Parliament has given its support in principle to assisted dying in October 2020 and a new special committee has been established to begin working on legislation that will command the support of their MPs. That work will commence early next year and demonstrates the renewed commitment of the Irish Parliament to progressive causes.

Perhaps most important is the proposed legislation in the Scottish Parliament, introduced by the long-serving and well respected Liam McArthur MSP. Indications are that the resulting legislation is likely to secure the support of MSPs, as long as it is tightly drafted and contains robust safeguards. Scotland would become the first constituent nation of the United Kingdom to legislate on assisted dying and, inevitably, that may shine a light on our successive failures to progress law changes here in Westminster.

**Christine Jardine:** The right hon. Gentleman is making a very powerful speech on a highly emotive issue. He mentioned Liam McArthur's Bill in the Scottish Parliament, which was the subject of consultation, and there is movement in Scotland. The right hon. Gentleman spoke of the reticence of some Members or their reluctance still to make their minds up. Does he share my hope that they will take confidence from what is happening in the Scottish Parliament and the support among the public to have the courage of their convictions, if and when legislation comes before this place?

**Mr Mitchell:** I thank the hon. Lady very much for her intervention. It must be the case, and I am sure my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Danny Kruger) will agree, that all Members of Parliament will be following what happens in Scotland with the greatest possible care. It is an issue that, wherever we stand on the debate, greatly exercises Members of the House of Commons.

I wish to draw colleagues' attention to the process envisaged by the Scottish Parliament for a debate on this issue. A proposal has been lodged in the Parliament and the initial consultation will close in two weeks' time. In the new year there will be an analysis of the responses to the consultation, which will feed into the drafting of the Bill. Once drafted, the Bill will be examined in detail by Select Committees, calling for evidence from stakeholders across society. Only once that pre-legislative scrutiny has been completed will the legislation be debated on the floor of their Parliament.

Here in this House we lack anything like such a comprehensive system. Our system for considering private Members' legislation is entirely inadequate when debating such an important issue. The Government have rightly determined that it should be neutral on the principle of assisted dying, but I invite my hon. Friend the Minister to recognise that neutrality on the legislative process, rather than on the principle, has the effect of siding with the status quo. A refusal to facilitate the debate is a de facto opposition to law change.

Finally, I will ask the Minister some questions about specifics of how the laws in neighbouring jurisdictions would work together. As she will no doubt be aware, the General Medical Council, the Nursing and Midwifery Council and other healthcare regulators operate on a UK-wide basis. Can she confirm that if either Jersey or Scotland were to legalise assisted dying, any health and care professional who participated in and followed the requirements of that law would not face prosecution?

The Minister may also be aware that the issue of conscientious objection has previously been treated as a reserved matter by the Scottish Parliament. It should be common ground that, whatever our view on assisted dying, health and care professionals should not have to actively participate in the practice if they believe it contravenes their conscience and beliefs. I understand that the Government's position is that conscientious objection is in fact already within the competence of the Scottish Parliament: can she confirm to the House that that is the case, and to what extent any legislation on conscientious objection in the Scottish Parliament would contravene the devolution settlement or require the approval of the UK Government?

Finally, I ask the Minister to update the House on the work commissioned by the former Secretary of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for West Suffolk (Matt Hancock), to be undertaken by the Office of National Statistics on the number of terminally ill people who end their own lives by suicide. All of us in this House wish to tackle and reduce the number of suicides, attempted suicides and incidents of self-harm, but in order to do that, it is imperative to understand why many people take that most desperate decision.

**Rachel Hopkins** (Luton South) (Lab): I thank the right hon. Gentleman for giving way. As a fellow member of the all-party parliamentary group on choice at the end of life, is this not fundamentally about enabling everyone to have a good death—be it through palliative care, if that is their wish, or the choice of an assisted death? It is a matter of choice at the end of life. Does he agree?

**Mr Mitchell:** I very much agree with what the hon. Lady says. She has thought about this very carefully. We all want to see choice extended wherever possible in our daily lives, and she is right in what she says.

Many colleagues and former colleagues, including Lord Field of Birkenhead, have changed their mind on assisted dying, whether informed by their constituents or by their personal experience. This House is in a very different place from when this issue was last voted on, more than six years ago. I am afraid that we as a House will continue to find ourselves running to catch up with the public view on this unless a serious process for consideration of this issue is put in place.

9.3 pm

**The Minister for Care and Mental Health (Gillian Keegan):** I begin by thanking my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell) for securing a debate on this issue and for not only outlining his views on assisted dying, but taking many interventions on both sides of the debate.

It remains the Government's view that any change to the law in this sensitive area is a matter for Parliament to decide and an issue of conscience for individual parliamentarians, rather than one for Government policy. I have the utmost sympathy for all those who have suffered the pain of watching a loved one battle a life-threatening or degenerative condition; many of us will have witnessed that, and it will inform our decisions.

As my right hon. Friend mentions, in order to develop more precise estimates of suicide risk for people with specific debilitating and terminal illnesses, the Office for National Statistics is consulting with clinical experts and is due to publish its report next year. We will consider its findings carefully.

We know that this issue is also being considered across the wider UK family, with—as my right hon. Friend mentioned—an ongoing consultation with the Scottish Parliament and legislation being drafted by Jersey's Council of Ministers. We will await further details of any proposals that may be presented, at which point we will be able to say more about how medical professionals can work within the different countries. The Government are, however, committed to ensuring that patients of all ages are treated with dignity at the end of life, and have the opportunity to benefit from high-quality personalised care that takes account of their wishes.

*[Gillian Keegan]*

The NHS constitution states our commitment to putting respect, dignity, compassion and care at the core of the way in which patients are treated. Dignity means different things to different people, but as the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman pointed out in a 2014 report, there are some key actions to ensure that people have dignity at the end of life They include allowing patient choice through appropriate care planning and promoting good and timely communication, with patients and their families and between the people and organisations supporting them.

We have seen many changes in the health system over the last decade, including an ambition to move more care out of acute, in-patient settings and make it available to people at—or closer to—home. The place where care is provided is particularly important for people at the end of life, and palliative and end-of-life care services have adapted to allow patient choice wherever possible.

We know that the covid-19 pandemic brought new challenges, with a sudden and significant increase in both the number of deaths overall and the proportion of people who passed away at home, but despite those challenging circumstances, our dedicated and exceptional palliative and end-of-life care workforce demonstrated their pragmatism and resilience and continued to provide world-class care for patients around the clock, working hard to adapt to meet the needs of patients and their families and ensure that dignity was maintained. We are immensely grateful to them. They have truly gone above and beyond throughout the covid response, and they deserve our unwavering support and recognition.

However, despite the efforts of our health and care colleagues across the system, before and during the pandemic, we know there is still more that we can do. Improving quality of care requires a confident workforce with the knowledge, skills and capability to deliver high-quality palliative and end-of-life care. Health Education England continues to provide comprehensive training for all health and care staff involved in palliative and end-of-life care through the availability of resources from the End-of-life care programme.

Furthermore, NHS England and NHS Improvement have committed themselves to supporting the transformation of palliative and end-of-life care services, as was pointed out by my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Danny Kruger). They have developed a three-year strategic delivery plan, aligned with the long-term plan, which prioritises the importance of improving access, quality and sustainability. They are committed to providing dignified, personalised care for people at the end of their lives, including opportunities for shared decision-making conversations about their treatment and support. Those conversations between healthcare professionals and patients ensure that patients' preferences and needs are taken into account when their care is being planned.

NHS England and NHS Improvement will be publishing advance care planning principles in early 2022. They will focus on the importance of providing opportunities for a person and his or her family or carers to engage in meaningful discussions, led by the person concerned, which consider that person's priorities and preferences when he or she is nearing the end of life. The Health and Care Bill presents a fantastic opportunity to strengthen the existing partnerships across the health and care system and continue the excellent work that non-statutory integrated care systems have started.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are already supporting commissioners through their strategic clinical networks. These networks are using integrated whole-system collaborative approaches to continue to drive improvements in outcomes for patients at the end of life, including through encouraging innovation and sharing best practice. One example is the work of the north-west palliative and end-of-life care strategic clinical network, which is focused on delivering activities to promote equity and reduce health inequalities in palliative and end-of-life care across the region.

If passed, the legislation will increase integration between health and social care further by removing barriers to data sharing and enabling joint decision making and collaborative practice. As a Government, we value collaboration at all levels, and just this morning I met colleagues from Marie Curie to discuss services for people at the end of their life. I am keen to continue to work with our passionate and dedicated stakeholders to further consider the opportunities for embedding best practice at local and national level, and to ensure that there is no postcode lottery or patchy services. Building on the great work that is already happening and looking to the future, we know that demand for palliative and end-of-life care services has increased and will continue to do so as our population ages. The Government will continue in their commitment to enable high-quality personalised palliative and end-of-life care, and we are committed to ensuring dignity and choice for all, even at the most difficult of times.

*Question put and agreed to.*

9.10 pm

*House adjourned.*

# Westminster Hall

*Wednesday 8 December 2021*

[Peter Dowd *in the Chair*]

## Ukrainian NATO Membership

9.30 am

**Peter Dowd (in the Chair):** Before we begin, I remind Members that they are expected to wear face coverings when they are not speaking in the debate. This is in line with current Government and House of Commons Commission guidance. I remind Members that they are asked by the House to have a covid lateral flow test twice a week if coming on to the parliamentary estate. That can be done either at the testing centre in the House or at home. Please give each other and members of staff space when seated, and when entering and leaving the room.

**Daniel Kawczynski** (Shrewsbury and Atcham) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered British support for Ukraine's membership of NATO.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Dowd. I am very pleased to be called in this debate. Yesterday on the Floor of the House, my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Bob Seely) asked an urgent question on the situation in Ukraine, and today I am very pleased to initiate this debate, given the extraordinary situation and military build-up that we are starting to see on the border between Ukraine and Russia.

Yesterday on the Floor of the House, we referred to the Budapest memorandum, which was signed in 1994 by the United Kingdom and other major powers. Hon. Members will remember that the Budapest memorandum allowed Ukraine to give up her nuclear arsenal, which at the time was the third largest in the world, in return for certain security guarantees in relation to her territorial integrity and sovereignty. As signatories of the Budapest memorandum, we in the United Kingdom have a unique responsibility to our Ukrainian partners. During the course of my speech, I intend to highlight some of the growing and serious violations of Ukrainian security that we are starting to see, and explain why I and many others believe that it is essential to lobby our own Government on the issue and to take a lead in supporting our Ukrainian partners.

In a previous Parliament, when I was on the Foreign Affairs Committee, I had the opportunity to go to Donetsk and Luhansk. The Committee was writing a report on British relations with Russia, and we were taken to Donetsk and Luhansk to see for ourselves the situation on the ground. I have never come across anything like it, certainly in my 16-year career as a Member of Parliament. It was total, utter destruction on an industrial scale. All the buildings had been destroyed; all traces of human habitation had disappeared. What really struck me was not just the sheer material destruction of Donetsk and Luhansk, but the complete annihilation of wildlife and the natural habitat—something that I had never seen before. We saw for ourselves what the Russians are capable of, and what they can do to another European country on our continent. It is something that will stay with me forever. I will never forget those scenes in Donetsk and Luhansk.

I am the sole Conservative Member of Parliament to have been born in Poland, and the sole Conservative Member of Parliament to have been born in a communist country. I used to go back to communist Poland two or three times a year to see my beloved grandfather, when he was still alive. I understand what the Russians are capable of. I saw it in the country of my birth, Poland, where they had instigated and forced on the country an economically illiterate and politically Orwellian system, which—thank goodness—finally collapsed in 1989. We know what the Russians did to our partners behind the iron curtain between the end of the second world war and 1989, trapping all those European partners behind the iron curtain. The Russians are now trying to trap our Ukrainian partners behind a new iron curtain that they want to impose in what they perceive to be their sphere of influence.

Despite those concerns, when the Select Committee was undertaking the report, I was the sole Conservative MP on the Committee pushing for dialogue with the Russians. We had many debates about what we saw on the ground and what should be our recommendations to the Foreign Office. I think there was universal hostility, frustration, anger and suspicion towards the Russians from my colleagues, but I was the one MP who was trying to look at it in a more balanced way.

Certainly when we visited Donetsk, the independent monitors on the ground said that some of the ceasefire violations were half the responsibility of the Ukrainians and half the responsibility of the Russians. I remember trying to push back and talking about the need for dialogue with the Russians. I still believe that we need to have dialogue with the Russians, but things have changed significantly since we visited Donetsk and Luhansk.

The first concern I want to highlight is something that we have seen in recent weeks. We have seen and heard of the death of a Syrian child on the Poland-Belarus border. We have seen the extraordinary way in which the tyrant, Lukashenko, has been abusing vulnerable refugees, whom he has incentivised to come to Belarus in his attempt to instigate a new hybrid warfare against one of our major partners.

We have seen the extraordinary suffering that has taken place on that border, with vulnerable refugees being used in a cynical way as pawns for President Lukashenko to manipulate in order to put one of our NATO partners under pressure. As genuine refugees, he should be protecting them, but instead his soldiers pushed them on to the barbed wire fences of the border. Unfortunately, barbed wire has inevitably had to be put up on the Poland-Belarus border because of the vulnerability of that border and of Polish sovereignty, bearing in mind what is going on.

Why do I reference Belarus and President Lukashenko? We know that these actions could be stopped immediately by President Putin, who, to all intents and purposes, controls Lukashenko and what happens in Belarus. I would argue that the suffering and cruelty we are seeing on that border is, in part, the responsibility of President Putin and the Russian regime. Only inhumane, cruel people would behave in this way, and President Putin could, should and must stop it immediately.

*[Daniel Kawczynski]*

Temperatures are dropping significantly as we move towards the winter, and the Polish winters are always very, very cold. We have seen the suffering on the border, and goodness only knows what will happen as the temperatures drop and as those people continue to stay at the border, in the most vulnerable circumstances.

That is one aspect of the hybrid warfare that is being used against our NATO partners, but there are others, including the Nord Stream 2 pipeline. I have secured numerous debates on the Nord Stream 2 pipeline here in the House of Commons and I have probably asked more questions about it than any other Member of Parliament. Why? Because so many of our NATO partners in central and eastern Europe, for many years, have been talking about how this German-Russian project—a 1,200 km gas pipeline under the sea from Germany to Russia, completely bypassing all our NATO allies in central and eastern Europe, and Ukraine—is a direct, deliberate threat to their security.

We are very pleased that the Poles and the Croatians, within the Three Seas initiative, are building liquified gas terminals on their coastlines. We are pleased and proud that they are stepping up and investing in huge new facilities such as Świnoujście on the Baltic coast, in order to import liquified gas from America and Norway, our fellow NATO partners. Nevertheless, many of those countries, particularly the Baltic states, Ukraine and others, still depend on gas and energy from Russia. This pipeline, which bypasses them and goes under the sea directly to Germany, is another way for Russia to try to manipulate, coerce, blackmail and intimidate countries in central and eastern Europe.

We have seen what is happening with the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, and I very much hope that the incoming German coalition Government, who have the Green party among them, will seriously reconsider the project, which is not only a violation of the spirit and letter of our NATO obligations—Germany, being a NATO partner, should take that into consideration—but, I would argue, a major concern from an environmental perspective. With a 1,200 km pipeline going under the Baltic sea directly to Russia, the security situation in the event of a confrontation with the Russians, as well as the ramifications for the environment, could be catastrophic if it were to come under attack or there were some other issue related to it.

There are concerns about Nord Stream 2 and cyber-attacks, but my last point is about assassinations, which have changed my mind about the Russians more than anything else, particularly those assassinations on British soil. Whether it is the Litvinenko or the Skripal case, most of us here in the Chamber—cross-party, throughout the House of Commons, as well as our electorate beyond—have been shocked by Russia's complete disregard for normal diplomatic protocols and normal international behaviour. The Russians are prepared to send trained killers on to British soil to eliminate their political opponents.

The annexation of Crimea is a serious matter. The other day, I was interacting on the issue with a leading research fellow at the Henry Jackson Society who is an expert on Russia and Ukraine. He highlighted to me some real concerns about what is happening in Crimea in terms of ethnic cleansing, manipulating the Tatars and preventing minority Ukrainians from learning and teaching Ukrainian. There is an attempt to Russify the Crimean peninsula. I am pleased that we have sanctions against Russia because of its illegal occupation of Crimea, but concerned that countries such as Germany and others, for their own commercial gain, seem to be bypassing those sanctions and instigating some extraordinary, high-level commercial contracts with the Russians. Nord Stream 2 is a clear example of that.

The illegal occupation of Crimea is one thing, but the Russians have done something even more worrying, and with even greater potential ramifications. They have built a bridge across the Kerch strait, linking Russia directly to Crimea. They have invested hundreds of millions of dollars to construct that huge bridge to give them direct land access to the Crimean peninsula, so that mother Russia is connected to Crimea.

It is not just the bridge; the Russians are using the bridge, and the jurisdiction around it and the maritime control underneath it, to restrict access to the Sea of Azov. Mariupol and many other important Ukrainian ports are now completely prevented from being utilised because vessels cannot get out of the Sea of Azov into the Black sea, and further beyond to navigate the global seas and oceans.

The Russians are controlling everything that comes through the Kerch strait, not just military vessels. My understanding is that they have now banned Ukrainian military vessels from even going through that strait to the Sea of Azov, Mariupol and other parts of Ukraine, which is extremely concerning. I would like the Minister to refer to the restriction on vessels accessing the Sea of Azov when she responds to the questions we are putting to her.

I am very pleased that the United Kingdom has recently sent our own naval vessels to the Black sea in freedom of navigation exercises: that is something I welcome very much. Let us not forget that the Black sea is not a Russian lake—the Russians would like to think that it is, but it is not. It is an international waterway, and I very much hope that we continue our freedom of navigation exercises throughout the Black sea.

Most people think, "Where is the Sea of Azov, and what are the consequences of blocking it?". It is the way Ukrainians access almost half their country, and a lot of the industrial products of eastern Ukraine are exported through Mariupol and the Sea of Azov to the Black sea. Our equivalent would be somebody coming along and blocking off the English channel. What would be the consequences for our country if the English channel were blocked off? What would be the consequences for our security if our naval vessels were not allowed to patrol the channel? It would be completely unacceptable, and would potentially lead to war.

We are also starting to see a build-up on Ukraine's eastern frontier. We are led to believe that 90,000 soldiers are now on its borders, and are there deliberately as a provocation to Ukraine. According to experts I have spoken to, some intelligence reports from the United States believe that there could be up to 175,000 Russian troops on the border with Ukraine by January, which is obviously of great concern to the Ukrainian Government in respect of their national sovereignty and security.

I must take a moment to pay tribute to the Ukrainian ambassador, whom I met the other day. He and his team are doing a superb job here, putting forward the

Ukrainian perspective in a calm and measured way. Despite all the provocations they are under and all the stress and tension they are going through, they are still trying to communicate their message to us and our Government in a very diplomatic and professional way.

Apparently, Putin has some red lines of his own. Apparently, he will not tolerate or accept the following four countries ever joining NATO: Finland, Sweden, Ukraine and Georgia. Those are his red lines, and I must take a moment to condemn Madame Marine Le Pen, the candidate standing to be the next President of the Republic of France. On a recent visit to Warsaw, she is quoted in *Rzeczpospolita*—a major newspaper in Poland—as having said that Ukraine is a buffer zone and is in the Russian sphere of influence. I find it highly rude and inappropriate to call a European country a buffer. Let us pause for a moment and think how we would feel if somebody called us a buffer; not an independent sovereign nation, not a democratic society, not a country with its own language, history, culture and aspirations, but merely a buffer. It is not a buffer and it is not in the Russian sphere of influence.

I joked with the Ukrainian ambassador the other day because he said that Ukraine is also sometimes described as a bridge between east and west. I suppose it is slightly better to be called a bridge than a buffer. The ambassador joked with me, "No, we are neither a buffer nor a bridge. Who would want to live on a bridge?" This is an independent sovereign nation, and we must start to treat it as such.

I wonder what would have happened to Madame Le Pen's ancestors if we in Britain during the second world war had said, "Sorry, you are now in the German sphere of influence. We are not going to support you. We are going to leave you to German occupation." Frankly, her language has to be called out and challenged.

Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Regan taught us how we can only negotiate with the Russians from a position of strength. That is the one thing that I remember about Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Regan. I had the opportunity, when I was first elected in 2005, to meet Margaret Thatcher and thank her for the unique role that she played during the cold war, in giving material and moral support to the Solidarity movement in Poland, which was essential in helping the democratic movements in those countries to persevere in their fight against Soviet and communist oppression.

Margaret Thatcher taught us that the only way to negotiate with the Russians is from a position of strength. I will be 50 next month so I am old enough to remember December 1984 when she invited Gorbachev to Chequers. Konstantin Chernenko was the general secretary of the Communist party in December 1984, but Margaret Thatcher identified Gorbachev as a man she could do business with, and started that extraordinary process of negotiation with the Russians from a position of strength. That position had a united, solid NATO that was outspending the Soviet Union on research and defence capability, showing the Soviets that ultimately their aspiration of world domination would not succeed, and would fall apart because of our strength, unity and determination to outspend them by at least four to one on military capability and technology.

That is the lesson that we now need to learn. We need to negotiate with the Russians from a position of strength. That, I am afraid, is the only thing the Russians understand. They only understand if negotiations are entered from a position of strength and unity. Nothing would please President Putin more than a disunited NATO that is crumbling, divided and not spending a great deal of money on new investments and technology.

We need to increase our spending on defence. Many Conservative MPs, myself included, are extremely concerned at the cuts to our armed forces, whether they are to the number of ships being built or the number of soldiers we have. We understand and recognise the pressures on the budget but, nevertheless, the first duty and responsibility of any Government is the defence of the realm. That is not just the defence of this island; it is the defence of our continent.

When a country is a permanent member of the UN Security Council and the largest military power on our continent, that comes with huge responsibilities. We need to think about the defence of not just our NATO partners, but the other countries in Europe—those final few people and countries on the fringes of Europe that still do not have the comfort blanket of NATO membership and security. We also need to keep NATO strong against the dangerous moves by the European Union to create a single EU army.

I have been a Member of Parliament for nearly 17 years, and I have not had a single complaint about NATO from any of my 81,000 constituents. I have had a lot of complaints about the European Union, but not a single complaint about NATO—it does what it says on the tin. It is an organisation of 30 countries and, as hon. Members know, North Macedonia is the latest country to have had the privilege of joining what is probably the most successful military alliance in the world, and it was given that privilege last year.

We need to keep NATO strong and united against the moves to create a single European army, because I would argue that if it came to fruition, that would, at best, duplicate the services of NATO and, at worst, usurp the supremacy of NATO, destabilise it and push out those six countries that, at the moment, are inextricably linked to the common defence of our continent but are not, and will never be, members of the European Union. Let us just think about those countries for a second: America, Canada, Iceland, Norway, Turkey and the United Kingdom—six extraordinarily important partners that are committed to the defence of our continent. Turkey is protecting our southern flank, America and Britain are two permanent members of the UN Security Council, and Norway, Iceland and Canada are critical in keeping the Atlantic open in the event of hostilities between Russia and America. That is also something to take into consideration.

President Putin wants to undermine Ukraine and turn it into a vassal state like Belarus. He wants another puppet like Lukashenko to run Ukraine for him, and I have spent the last few days watching interviews with former President Yanukovych, who, after the Maidan revolution in Kiev, was whisked to safety to Russia in a Russian helicopter. Putin is keeping Yanukovych there, ready for when he can destroy the Ukrainian Government and reimpose another puppet who will basically give a veneer of independence to Ukraine. As we all know, however, the strings of the puppet will all be controlled from Moscow. We cannot allow that to happen.

I am coming to the end of my speech, but I want to mention the NATO summit in Bucharest, Romania in 2008 that stated the organisation's commitment to NATO

*[Daniel Kawczynski]*

membership for Ukraine. That is a very important point, because the United Kingdom, as a member of NATO, is a signatory to the Bucharest statement of 2008. Let me read an extract from the Bucharest summit declaration:

"NATO welcomes Ukraine's and Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership in NATO. We agreed today that these countries will become members of NATO. Both nations have made valuable contributions to Alliance operations. We welcome the democratic reforms in Ukraine and Georgia and look forward to free and fair parliamentary elections in Georgia in May. MAP"—

the membership action plan, which is the prelude and precursor to NATO membership, as well as the framework and grid—

"is the next step for Ukraine and Georgia on their direct way to membership. Today we make clear that we support these countries' applications for MAP. Therefore we will now begin a period of intensive engagement with both at a high political level to address the questions still outstanding pertaining to their MAP applications. We have asked Foreign Ministers to make a first assessment of progress at their December 2008 meeting. Foreign Ministers have the authority to decide on the MAP applications of Ukraine and Georgia."

That is a statement from 2008 whereby Britain and other NATO partners made it abundantly clear that the prelude and precursor to NATO membership—which is ostensibly carried out through the MAP, the membership action plan—would be instigated. That was over a decade ago, so I would like to ask the Minister for her assessment of what has happened since the Bucharest summit. What is her understanding of the MAP strategy for Ukraine, and what are the British Government doing to take a lead in supporting Ukraine's MAP application process and ongoing movement towards a conclusion and fruition?

There are other things in that process, such as the enhanced partnership for peace which NATO affords, formed partly by countries such as Jordan, Australia, Ukraine, Georgia, Sweden and Finland. However, the real precursor to membership is the MAP, and that is what I will ask the Minister about today. That is why I have instigated the debate; I want to know about the MAP, and I am going to ask a lot of written parliamentary questions about the issue over the coming months and years.

Finally, I come to British leadership on our continent. Do Members remember what they used to say to us in 1999 when Poland, the country of my birth, joined NATO? Do they remember what they said to us when Poland and the Czech Republic joined NATO, when those central European counties were given part-defence partnership with us? They said that it was a step too far, that it would cause world war three and that it would trigger some sort of conflagration that would destroy Europe. That is what they told us: "Don't give the Poles NATO membership, it is too dangerous. Let's just leave them there, in the Russian sphere of influence."

That is absolutely disgusting and disgraceful. That is not the British way. However, we showed that leadership to ensure that our friends in Poland, the Czech Republic, and other central and eastern European countries were given that right to join NATO. The same thing happened in 2004, when Romania and Bulgaria were allowed to join NATO. There were the same siren calls, "It is a step too far, it is going to cause another world war and conflagration with the Russians". That did not happen.

The time has come to give our Ukrainian partners that same insurance policy. They are our fellow Europeans; let us remember that. They are our fellow European brothers and sisters, not some obscure country far away of which we know very little, and not some banana republic that we have no connections with. They are our fellow brothers and sisters, our fellow European brothers and sisters. With that comes a massive obligation to support them.

I have recently written a report on the Three Seas initiative, which I have sent to the Minister. That is a new grouping of 12 countries in central and eastern Europe led by Poland and Croatia, and we interviewed all 12 ambassadors in writing the report. It is a very exciting project that is taking place in central and eastern Europe, and I very much hope that we can engage further with that initiative, as well as helping Ukraine. It is an opportunity for Britain to take a lead in central and eastern Europe. As Germany and France are undermining Ukraine for their own selfish, national commercial interests—specifically with the Nord Stream 2 pipeline—now is the time for Britain to show leadership.

Finally, the Ukrainians will remember our actions. They are in probably one of the most vulnerable, dangerous set of circumstances that any European country could face. We are lucky here in the United Kingdom to be perched on the extreme western fringes of our continent, as far away as possible from Russia. When a country has a border with Russia—I have been to the Polish-Russian border on many occasions—and the brown bear is next door, his claw scratching on the windowsill, everything changes. The Ukrainians are watching us now and will remember how we behave. I want to lead a campaign, which I hope other MPs will join, in a cross-party caucus to convince our Government that the time has come to show leadership and ensure our Ukrainian friends are finally given NATO membership.

10.6 am

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): Thank you for permitting me to speak in today's debate, Mr Dowd. I thank the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Daniel Kawczynski) for leading the debate. He has not said a word that I do not totally agree with, so I add my support to his final statement—indeed, all his words—that we do our best across parties in this House to help Ukraine and its citizens. Like him and others who will speak shortly, I fully understand the necessity to support Ukraine physically, emotionally and militarily in such a way that it can feel secure and more confident, and can be assured that we will, as part of NATO and the western countries, add our support should it be necessary.

I am pleased to speak in this debate, and I look forward to hearing the Minister. I thank our United Kingdom Government, who have been very supportive of Ukraine. We urge others to follow our example and support the Ukrainians in their fight against Russian intervention and the potential—indeed, the reality—of invasion. Russia has for many decades posed a threat to democracy. We are probably more aware of that today than we have been in the past. There is no doubt that we must take further action to support the smaller countries that cannot protect themselves.

Along with others, I have an interest in history, and I have read some of the history of Ukraine. I am ever mindful—I was mindful of it before I came to this debate—of the famine and forced hunger that Russia

put Ukrainians through in the past. Some 6 million, probably more, died as a result. Russia is no friend of Ukraine. Indeed, Russia is no friend of anybody in the western countries. Its ambitions are great and will be detrimental.

Since 2014, the disruption and intrusion into Ukrainian territory has been ongoing. Only last year President Zelensky approved Ukraine's new national security strategy, which provides for the development of a distinctive partnership with NATO, leading towards membership. I was struck by the comment made by the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham about Poland on its introduction to NATO and the comments from some countries about what would happen. Well, it did not happen for Poland and it will not happen for Ukraine, provided NATO stands strong. I commend him for those comments.

The sooner Ukraine is introduced to NATO, the better. I am keen and anxious to see that happen sooner rather than later. It is one small step forward in improving relations between Ukraine and the rest of the NATO states. As recently as 2019, President Vladimir Putin admitted that there was still a significant amount of military intelligence in Ukraine, so President Putin's ambitions are clear. As of 2019, 7% of Ukraine's territory is occupied by Russia—taken illegally and violently. The 7% of Ukraine that Russia now controls has no buildings, no growth, no wildlife and no habitat—desolation and total destruction. What Russia has done to that part of Ukraine it will do, but more so, elsewhere. There have been many reports of Russia's undercover and special forces behind the lines, carrying out attacks, espionage and, indeed, the murder of Ukrainian citizens. That is something about which I am greatly concerned.

I am very grateful to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for supporting Ukraine's continued efforts to boost its naval capability, to which the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham referred. In 2015, the UK launched Operation Orbital, a non-lethal training and capacity building operation to aid the Ukrainian armed forces. I very much welcome that, but I perhaps wish that there was something stronger; we and NATO have to look at that possibility, and the United States has to look at it alongside us. Operation Orbital came shortly after the 2014 Russia-Ukraine war, in which it was estimated that 13,000 people lost their lives and 1.5 million people were internally displaced. Those internally displaced people are now residing permanently in Government-controlled areas of Ukraine.

I chair the all-party parliamentary group for international freedom of religion or belief. At the time of the war I highlighted, in some questions and statements, information received from eastern Ukraine about churches having been destroyed, and Baptist and other clergy having gone missing—what happened to them has never been disclosed. People in eastern Ukraine lost their freedom and the right to practise their religion, and it is time that Russia is held accountable for those crimes against humanity—crimes carried out against people who just happened to be Christians and to have a religious point of view. Their human rights were abused. Russia is a threat to religion and belief, and its human rights abuses are enormous.

In September 2020, further efforts were made by the Secretary of State for Defence, the right hon. Member for Wyre and Preston North (Mr Wallace). He announced that the UK would lead a multinational maritime training initiative for the Ukrainian navy, enabling it to advance its own naval strategy to fight off Russian threats. Some £2.2 million of non-lethal equipment has been gifted to Ukraine. Despite the continued efforts of the UK and others, I believe that more needs to be done. We need more direct military intervention. Preventing war requires the military to be in place, so that others think twice before they do anything. The quicker we can bring about Ukraine's partnership with NATO, the better.

In addition, we must do more to encourage our allies—to be specific, the USA—to help Ukraine. President Biden has recently been under pressure to say whether he will support Ukraine's bid to join NATO, given the immense pressure that he is under from Putin. I know that Biden and Putin have had talks in the last few days. The NATO Secretary-General, Jens Stoltenberg, has previously stated that Ukraine needs to do more to fulfil promised reforms before it can be accepted for NATO discussions. I ask NATO and Ukraine to expedite those reforms. The quicker they can be brought forward, the quicker Ukraine can become part of NATO and the quicker we can provide support where it is needed.

Have the Minister and the Government had any update on the discussions that President Biden has had with President Putin? What was the outcome of those talks? President Biden is not accountable to us, but I am hopeful because he has had a very strong stance and his comments have reiterated the commitment of NATO and the USA to Ukraine. Is the Minister aware of what took place? I think that we in this House would be very pleased to have an update.

It is important that these promises are met, but I must emphasise further the importance of demonstrating the force of a network of liberty against malign activity. I welcome the recent efforts of the Foreign Secretary at her meetings with world leaders in addressing the concerns about Russian intervention. We must not forget our commitment to protecting democracy, ensuring essential defence mechanisms and doing everything necessary to ensure that the relationship between Ukraine, NATO, the US and ourselves prospers.

I am proud of the continued efforts by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to aid Ukraine in its fight to join NATO. Until that is accepted, we must do more to ensure that Ukraine is strong enough to fight off Russian interference, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland must be seen to be one of the leading actors encouraging others to do so. I commend the Minister and the Government for what they have done. I look forward to the shadow Ministers' speeches shortly. I believe that we must have a united front in favour of Ukraine, stand by it and ensure Russia knows that if it takes on Ukraine, it takes on us.

10.16 am

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald** (Glasgow South) (SNP): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Dowd. I congratulate and thank the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Daniel Kawczynski) for bringing the debate forward. He and I do not often find ourselves in agreement—in fact, I do not know whether we ever have outside of this issue—but we agree 100% on this issue. I start by declaring an interest, of sorts. I am very proud to be a recipient and holder of the Ukrainian Order of Merit, bestowed on me by the President of Ukraine, and I proudly hold that award as a strong and robust friend of Ukraine.

*[Stewart Malcolm McDonald]*

It is important to acknowledge, in the context of the debate, not just the current military backdrop that the hon. Gentleman mentioned, but two important anniversaries. One was Holodomor Memorial Day last month, which was mentioned by the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon). Also, this month marks the anniversary of the start of the Revolution of Dignity in 2014, when Ukrainians, in that bitter cold weather—I do not know whether you have been to that part of the world at this time of year, Mr Dowd, but it is bitterly cold—camped out on Maidan Square, taking on the friend of a tyrant with almost unparalleled resistance to demand a democratic future for their country. And they paid, many of them, with their lives in doing so.

It is important that we understand that important anniversary and that backdrop to the debate. However, I lament the debate in one sense, because of the acres of empty green seats around me. The House needs to wake up, because we are facing a potential conflict that will not confine itself to the borders of Ukraine, but will impact every single country in Europe and beyond, and that includes this country.

I want to address the conflict in eastern Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea. Like the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham, I too have been to eastern Ukraine; I was there almost four years ago with colleagues. We took the time to go to Donetsk and Kramatorsk—and we went out to Kharkiv, which is a bit more liberated, shall we say—and spoke to people there. I encourage anyone who goes to Ukraine that just as London is not the United Kingdom, Kiev is not Ukraine. Get out of the capital, head east and talk to people, and go west and talk to people about the conflict as well.

Although the hon. Member for Strangford mentions the number of deaths that the conflict has so far tallied up, we should take a moment to reflect on the fact that nearly 15,000 people have been killed in a war that barely gets a mention outside of escalating tensions reported in our national media, and we are not alone in that. It has displaced more than 1 million civilians within their own country—a country that we can fly to in about four hours from Heathrow airport.

I also want to address the annexation of Crimea, where there continue to be human rights abuses, in particular of religious rights, as rightly mentioned by the hon. Member for Strangford, such as the rights of the Crimean Tatars. It is worth emphasising that we do not recognise the illegal annexation of Crimea in any way, shape or form—I think we all agree on that.

There has been a lot of talk about military encirclement of Russia. Well, let us deal with that issue. The hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham rightly used the phrase "the new iron curtain". There are currently more Russian troops stationed in countries bordering Russia than there are US troops stationed in countries bordering Russia. The Kremlin and its current office holder can have as many concerns as they like about Ukraine's future defence posture and the alliances that it may or may not choose to join, including NATO or the European Union, but Russia does not get a veto on membership or aspirations for membership. The only countries that get a say in that are Ukraine—it is a stated aspiration of the current and previous Governments of Ukraine, and I would bet that, in any free and fair election, it will be the stated aspiration of the next Government of Ukraine—and the other member states of NATO, of which, last time I checked, Russia is not one. So the red lines and the desire for the veto should be seen for what they are—posturing on behalf of the Kremlin that should be given the cold shoulder.

It is worth reflecting on that encirclement right now and, in particular, as the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham rightly mentions, the situation in Belarus and how that becomes a new opening—a new platform—in a conflict that started in 2014; because Russia right now has stationed more troops around Ukraine than there are troops in the entire British Army, and we have intelligence from the United States that that number will get bigger early in the new year. We should also reflect on the steps that the United States has taken. After some capitals, in Europe in particular, were mildly sceptical of its intelligence, the US took the extraordinary step of sharing even more intelligence than it normally would, which has united NATO in recent statements and united NATO in its assessment of what may well happen next.

It is vital, therefore, that we give all the support we can to Ukraine. The hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham rightly mentions Nord Stream 2. I am minded to check his claim that he has asked more questions on that than any other Member of Parliament—I think he and I might be in competition there—but I will say this about the Government. I have always found it difficult to criticise the Government for their support for Ukraine; my only criticism is that I want them to go further and faster. They do a good job. I have met the defence attaché in Ukraine; I have met the embassy staff who work with civil society groups and others. They do an excellent job; but I always want to see the Government go further.

On Nord Stream 2, finally the Government are starting to see sense, although it might be a bit late for that. I remember standing where I am now, when Alan Duncan was the Minister—perhaps even in the post now held by the Minister with us today—listening to him say that the issue was peripheral to British interests and that we did not have to worry about it that much, with Member of Parliament after Member of Parliament telling him otherwise. The money that is generated from Nord Stream 2 into Kremlin coffers ain't gonna stay in Kremlin coffers. It will fund the new hybrid war not just in Ukraine, but across all of Europe as well. Despite there being so few speakers in the debate, we probably do not have time to go into what that might look like.

**Daniel Kawczynski:** I completely concur with the hon. Gentleman's statement about NATO. Former President Trump, who I suspect the hon. Gentleman is not a great fan of, nevertheless did challenge Jens Stoltenberg in a clear and sensible way when he asked him, "Why is it that you, the Secretary-General of NATO, allow one of its members to bypass and impede the security of our other NATO partners?". If you are a member of NATO, that is a huge attribute, but it is also a huge responsibility. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that Germany should think more reasonably and responsibly about the interests of fellow NATO partners, rather than just securing her own energy interests?

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** I do agree, and I hope that the new Chancellor, who has taken up post during this debate, will take a more robust position, not least

because of Annalena Baerbock's appointment as the new Foreign Minister of the German Federal Government, which the hon. Member mentioned. However, the less that is said about the Trump Administration and Ukraine, the better.

I end with some questions for the Minister, if I might. When will we see some detail on what the enhanced sanctions mentioned by the White House in the past few days might be, and how the UK would fit into a co-ordinated effort? What assessment have the Government made of Russia's intentions post the call between President Putin and President Biden? If there is a further military escalation, what response can we expect—and can Ukraine expect—from the Government? I am thinking in terms of the full spectrum of options open to them. Will the Government now, for goodness' sake, implement something—anything—from the Intelligence and Security Committee's report on Russia?

On the impact that a further escalation of the conflict will have, will the Government publish an assessment of what that will mean for Europe, learning from Afghanistan? Some assessments say that if there is to be a full-scale invasion, we could be looking at up to 9 million Ukrainian refugees. We will need to take some of those people in. Will the Government give us assurances that if that were to be the case, we will not have a repeat of what has played out in terms of taking refugees as far as Afghanistan is concerned? Will they also outline what it might mean for grain supplies in Europe? There has been much talk about Ukraine being a bridge or a buffer, but it is actually well known as the breadbasket of Europe, and it is important that we understand what the consequences of a full-scale invasion would look like. Perhaps the debate would have more speakers if the House better understood that the conflict will come to this country as well.

On NATO membership, I support Ukraine's aspiration to join NATO because that is its people's aspiration and we should help them make that happen. This is not to diminish the work already going on through Operation Orbital and elsewhere, but can the UK look to lead a coalition of NATO member states to deepen the work that we are doing to get to the important membership action plan? Can we start to second officials from whatever Departments we need to second them from, to really beef up the efforts to get Ukraine to the point where its aspirations can be met?

As the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham correctly said at the end of his speech, Ukrainians will remember. They will remember what we did and what we did not do. It is not good enough for us to pat ourselves on the back and think that we are in a good place, because events change and change fast, and so do people's perceptions. I look forward to the Minister's response.

10.29 am

**Stephen Doughty** (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairpersonship, Mr Dowd. I thank the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Daniel Kawczynski) for securing this timely debate, not least following the developments in recent days and yesterday's urgent question in the House.

I will begin by referencing the close ties between Ukraine and my country of Wales as well as my city of Cardiff, which was twinned with Luhansk for many years following the assistance given in the 1980s by that fine city's citizens to Welsh striking miners. There are many fond and close connections between our two countries. I have had the pleasure of spending time in Ukraine in the past; I taught English in Lviv for some time in my early 20s and have many fine Ukrainian friends and connections and a deep affection for the country. Our friendships and histories are close. In Wales, our Counsel General, Mick Antoniw, is of Ukrainian heritage and a strong defender of the rights of Ukraine.

We heard a range of important contributions this morning and yesterday from Members from both sides of the House. The degree of unity, resolution, concern and attention to this issue, both in this place and across our allies, should not be underestimated by President Putin, the Russian regime and others seeking to destabilise Europe and undermine the liberties and aspirations of people wherever they may be, whether in Ukraine or across the continent. I therefore reiterate the comments of the new shadow Foreign Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham (Mr Lammy):

> "It is important at moments such as these that we send the united message from all sides of this House that the UK is resolute in our support for the sovereignty, the independence and the territorial integrity of Ukraine."—[*Official Report*, 7 December 2021; Vol. 705, c. 188-9.]

It is rare for me to quote Ministers, but we absolutely agreed yesterday with the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Vicky Ford), that it is right that

> "the UK is unwavering in our support of Ukraine's sovereignty, and its territorial integrity, including of its territorial waters, within its internationally recognised borders. Russia should uphold the OSCE principles…that it freely signed up to, which it is violating through its ongoing aggression against Ukraine."—[*Official Report*, 7 December 2021; Vol. 705, c. 188.]

Ukrainians want a democratic future and to choose their own path. They must be allowed to choose their own political destiny. We welcome the dialogue between President Biden and President Putin yesterday, and it was rightly made clear in statements before and after that it should be understood that any attempt to further undermine Ukraine's integrity or engage in dangerous military adventurism will be met with a strong, robust and resolute response. Nobody—not least us—wishes for or seeks further armed conflict. The Opposition welcome the unity and clarity with which our European and Atlantic allies have spoken. We hope that that message has been heard, that dialogue will continue and that the Russian regime will step away from the precipice it is currently sitting on.

Regrettably, this has been part of a wider pattern of dangerous behaviour by Russia and its agents, with tensions raised not only in Ukraine but through its support for the regime in Belarus and its actions, and recently in Bosnia as well. That follows the completely unacceptable and illegal annexation of Crimea and Russian actions in Donbass and other locations, including Georgia, in previous years. We must not forget that more than 14,000 people have lost their lives in the seven years of conflict in Ukraine's east since Russian-backed forces seized large areas, nor must we forget those who tragically lost their lives in the despicable shooting down of MH17 over the conflict area. Nobody wishes to see further lives lost. Russia's further ratcheting up of rhetoric and military assets in the region is both dangerous and irresponsible. Perhaps Russia thought

*[Stephen Doughty]*

we would look away, not least given the pressures of the pandemic and many other international matters. It should be assured that, when it comes to the stability and security of Europe and of Ukraine itself, we will not look away. We will stand by our commitments.

Michael Kofman from the US Centre for Naval Analyses illustrated today for the BBC exactly why concerns have escalated. We heard of the huge numbers of troops and assets. He said:

> "While the current Russian military posture supports a range of contingencies…what's remarkable about it is the size of the combat elements assembled and the follow-on force designed to hold seized territory. Consequently, it looks like a credible invasion force, in excess of anything put together in 2014-2015, (the last time major Russian units were directly involved in the fighting) designed for a large scale military intervention."

That is absolutely clear and tallies with other open-source intelligence that the United States and others have shared. We have also heard in recent days about medical and fuel supply chains to the borders of Ukraine being established, which only further unnecessarily escalates the situation. It is completely dangerous and completely unacceptable.

I turn to some questions for the Minister and other issues. In particular—I will return to this—I hope she will be able to provide further clarity and commitment on the types of financial and economic actions that are being considered, not least with regard to the Nord Stream 2 development, if the Russian regime foolishly chooses to follow another path. I agree wholeheartedly with a number of Members' comments on that today and yesterday. Have the Minister and her colleagues been engaging with the incoming German Government, particularly the new Foreign Minister? Have they asked them to discuss the situation regarding the cancellation of Nord Stream 2 to ensure that Russia is not able to increase Europe's energy dependency or weaken our unity with a chokehold on critical energy supplies during the winter? It is clear to anybody who has been watching the situation, as many of those in this room and the speakers in yesterday's debate have been, that this has been a medium and long-term strategy by the Russian regime to destabilise Ukraine and others in the region, whether that is because they will lose potential transit fees or energy supplies. What other steps are we taking to reduce our dependency on energy supplies from Russia?

Opposition Members wholeheartedly welcome the support the Government have given to Ukraine, and the strong partnership and friendship we have. As has been said, this is not some far-flung shore, but a nearby friend, neighbour and partner, whose prosperity, stability and liberty is of mutual interest to us all. Ukraine has been an important ally since its independence in 1991 and has been working with us closely in military partnerships and through NATO missions for many years. We stand in support of international law, self-determination and the specific commitments that were made under the Budapest memorandum. We have specific responsibilities as a result of those, which have unfortunately been forgotten in some parts of this House. We must remind people about them and about the agreements that were made at that time.

We welcome the support that our UK armed forces and NATO partners have provided and continue to provide in Ukraine. We have trained over 21,000 Ukrainian military personnel in medical skills, logistics, counter-improvised explosive device actions, leadership, planning and infantry tactics, as part of Operation Orbital and in relation to the UK-led maritime training initiative. As has been referenced, it is absolutely right that we work with Ukraine to ensure the freedom of maritime navigation in the Black sea and the Sea of Azov, in line with international law and commitments.

As has also been said, our trade links are critical. We heard about Ukraine being the breadbasket of Europe. In 2019, almost 15% of British cereal imports originated in Ukraine. We must be clear about the impacts for us, our food security and our trading relationships going forward. Beyond that, we have provided official development assistance towards developing economic prosperity, peacebuilding and human rights initiatives. It is right that that continues.

We continue to work with organisations promoting diplomatic dialogue, freedom, human rights and peace, such as the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Can the Minister outline the latest conversations we have had at the OSCE, at the United Nations and at other bodies regarding existing agreements? She will be aware that the OSCE's special monitoring mission continues its work, although it is often hampered in eastern Ukraine.

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for reminding me of a point I wanted to make about the special monitoring mission. I take the point that the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Daniel Kawczynski) made about breaches of agreements, but does the shadow Minister agree that it remains more than a bit absurd that the Russian Government are a party to that special monitoring mission and are therefore marking their own homework, as the fomenter of the conflict in eastern Ukraine?

**Stephen Doughty:** Indeed. There are many frustrations around that mission and its ability to do its work, and about the wider context. In terms of those who are breaking the ceasefire agreements, the SMM reported 286 ceasefire violations, including 131 explosions, in just the last reporting period. In the Luhansk region, the mission recorded 261 ceasefire violations. What assessment has the Minister made of the current situation there? What steps are we taking to help de-escalate tensions and ensure adherence to the ceasefire agreement?

At times of high tension, it is critical that calm heads and accurate information prevail. In that regard, it is deeply alarming to see much of the false information emanating from the Russian media, the Russian regime and sympathisers in the region regarding the intentions of Ukraine, the UK, NATO and its allies. We cannot afford for military or political miscalculations to be made on the basis of misinformation or deliberate disinformation, and nor can we accept hybrid attacks on the critical infrastructure of Ukraine or other allies and partners. What assessment has the Minister made of the levels of false information circulating? What steps are we taking to counter and correct that, both directly with the Russian regime and to reassure our allies and partners, including Ukraine, when false information is circulated? What steps are we providing to support Ukraine and other partners to defend themselves against cyber-attacks and other forms of hybrid warfare?

At this time, our NATO allies in the region, in the Baltic states and in eastern Europe will—understandably—be deeply concerned about the direct impact of this escalation and indeed about the continued provocations of Russia towards them. Of course, we have UK forces and support present across the region, not least in Estonia, where Welsh regiments have served very bravely recently, which is very welcome. Can the Minister give some more detail about the discussions the Foreign Secretary had with our Baltic friends and others in eastern Europe on her recent visits, and assure them of our absolute commitment to our NATO partnership with them?

We have heard talk about the situation in Belarus. The Russian regime has additionally encouraged Belarus to antagonise its neighbours, including Ukraine, Poland and the Baltics, through the shameful use of human beings to create a border crisis, with the dictator Alexander Lukashenko continuing to attempt to push them across into Poland and other neighbouring countries, including Ukraine itself. We have heard about the tragic loss of life and the tragic humanitarian situation there, and those actions have rightly been condemned by many members of the Security Council. Can the Minister say what she is doing to work with our partners to de-escalate tensions and provide humanitarian support? Will she send a clear message to the Belarus Government that refugees cannot be used as pawns in a political game pushed by their sponsors in Moscow? What assessment has she made of the impact on the wider tensions that we are debating today? We must move in lockstep with our European partners to consider all appropriate responses to the unacceptable behaviour of the Lukashenko regime, including applying further sanctions. We have a debate coming up later today on the Magnitsky sanctions, and I am sure many of these issues will be raised then.

Finally, I come to an area where I do have some criticism of the Government; indeed, my right hon. Friend the shadow Foreign Secretary raised this issue yesterday. As well as working with allies and supporting actions to support Ukraine, we must ensure we do all we can at home to challenge the Russian regime's behaviour, tackling the untransparent and in some cases illicit sources of support that undermine our sovereignty and that of our allies, and that provide routes to influence even at the heart of our own democracy. We know that that is merely one step removed from even more offensive actions on our own territory—the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham referenced these earlier—whether that be murder or the use of chemical or radiological weapons, which cannot be tolerated, or a wide range of other unacceptable actions. We know that the UK continues to be a soft touch for corrupt elites and the dirty money that helps sustain the Putin regime. That was set out clearly in the Russia report and continues to be substantiated by further evidence, yet more than 18 months after that report was published none of its recommendations has been fully implemented. The Minister who responded yesterday failed to commit, so I ask again: will this Minister commit to taking the steps necessary to implement the recommendations in the Russia report?

As I mentioned, later today we will be debating Magnitsky sanctions and the Government's failure to further expand the number of individuals subject to sanctions. To be fair, we welcomed and supported the set-up of that system, and we want to see it used further to tackle individuals responsible for deeply unacceptable actions globally, threatening our interests and those of our allies, to ensure that they are brought to book. The Minister will not want to be drawn on individual cases, but can she say whether the Government are considering further Magnitsky sanctions in relation to actions by individuals in the Russian regime with regard to Ukraine or the other issues we have discussed today?

Despite those criticisms, I conclude by reiterating our clear support for the broad approach being taken by the Government. It is only right that the Russian regime understands that when it comes to Ukraine we will take a unified, robust and appropriate response to unacceptable aggression and adventurism. We are united in this House, and we are united among our partners and allies. We urge Russia to de-escalate the situation and respect the liberties and territorial integrity of Ukraine, which it has previously shown scant regard for.

10.44 am

**The Minister for Asia (Amanda Milling):** It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Dowd, and to be a part of this interesting and insightful debate, and I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Daniel Kawczynski) on securing it. Normally the Minister for Europe and the Americas would respond, but I am delighted to take part while she is travelling on ministerial duties. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for securing this debate and for the real wisdom and insight he brings to it. I am also grateful to other Members who have contributed today. As has been mentioned, the debate follows an urgent question on the Floor of the House yesterday.

Our debate takes place in the shadow of a build-up of Russian troops on Ukraine's border and against the backdrop of the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting in Riga last week, which has been mentioned. At that meeting, the Foreign Secretary, alongside our allies, made crystal clear to her Ukrainian counterpart our commitment to Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty. We have repeated that support many times in the House, as the shadow Minister, the hon. Member for Cardiff South and Penarth (Stephen Doughty), mentioned.

I should state that the current relationship with Russia is not the one we want. As we made clear in the integrated review, Russia's actions pose an acute and direct threat to the national security of the UK and its allies, and we have shown in recent years that we take that threat seriously. As well as responding to and calling out Russian aggression wherever it occurs, we have been clear that serious criminals, corrupt elites and individuals who seek to threaten the security of the UK and our allies are not welcome in the United Kingdom. That is why we are also tackling illicit finance entering our country through groundbreaking legislation and our ambitious economic crime plan.

The UK remains firmly committed to Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. We want Ukraine to be secure, stable and prosperous, and we want Ukrainians to be able to define their own future. Any military incursion would be a terrible miscalculation, and the Russian Government should expect significant strategic consequences, including severe economic sanctions.

The UK does not stand alone. We are at the heart of the international community's support for Ukraine, deepening its partnership with NATO. Together, we stand ready to continue and build our support for

*[Amanda Milling]*

Ukraine across all areas, including energy, reform and defence. Last summer, we backed Ukraine to become an enhanced opportunity partner to increase political consultations, co-operation and joint training and exercises with NATO. We stand firm in our support for Ukraine's membership aspirations, in line with the 2008 Bucharest summit declaration, which saw NATO allies agree that Ukraine will become a member of the alliance. Allies have reiterated this commitment at every summit since—most recently in June 2021—and that is as it should be.

The route towards membership requires Ukraine's continued commitment to strengthen its institutions and to deliver the defence and security reforms agreed with NATO in its annual national programme. Ukraine needs to persevere with defence and security reforms as the route to membership. As mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham, it is a decision between all 30 allies to grant MAP. That does not prevent NATO and Ukraine from developing their interoperability. As I say, Ukraine achieved enhanced opportunity partner status last year. That is the closest level of partnership with NATO and offers valuable opportunity for engagement with the alliance as Ukraine moves forward with its reforms. I encourage Ukraine to make full use of its enhanced opportunity partner status, which allows for regular information sharing and co-operation.

In the meantime, it is vital that NATO allies continue to stand in solidarity with Ukraine in the face of Russian aggression and provocations and that we work to bolster Kiev's defences and broader security in the region. That includes Ukraine's energy security, which is one of the reasons why the UK remains opposed to Nord Stream 2. We are concerned about its implications for the interests of Ukraine and for European energy security, and we stand firm in defending our common interests. I want to make it clear that this support is fundamentally defensive in nature, because Ukraine poses no threat to Russia, and nor does NATO. It is a defensive alliance, which strives for peace, security and stability in the whole Euro-Atlantic area.

The UK remains a key and active member of the NATO alliance. UK military support for Ukraine covers many areas and has been expanded and extended. That includes training delivered through Operation Orbital, which has trained more than 20,000 Ukrainian troops. The training is defensive, is designed to save lives, focusing on the skills for which the Ukrainians have sought our assistance, and is delivered at the point of need.

We will continue to demonstrate our commitment to maintain regional security and freedom of navigation. We take part in periodic deployments, including under a NATO banner, such as Exercise Sea Breeze in the Black sea, and Exercise Joint Endeavour, where we tested and evaluated new techniques, alongside Ukraine. Those deployments have helped to maintain regional security, check Russian aggression and demonstrate NATO's political support for Ukraine and other allies and partners in the region. In addition, in conjunction with our Canadian allies, we are the NATO contact point embassy for 2021-22. That provides further opportunities to strengthen NATO's relationship with Ukraine, explain the responsibilities and benefits of the alliance and tackle false narratives.

As I mentioned at the beginning, the Foreign Secretary took part in the NATO Foreign Ministers' meeting at Riga last week, where she discussed the current situation with the Ukrainian Foreign Minister. She reassured him of our unwavering support for Ukraine, including through NATO's comprehensive assistance package. That package includes assistance on capacity building for cyber and logistics expertise, as well as developing Ukraine's training programmes. The two are meeting again today at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, during the inaugural UK-Ukraine strategic dialogue.

Tensions on the Ukraine-Russia border, and on the border with the illegally annexed Crimea—

**Jim Shannon:** I thank the Minister for her response. With reference to my contribution and those of others, does the Minister know what happened between Biden and Putin? Can she update us on that?

**Amanda Milling:** The hon. Member has pre-empted me. I will come to that before I wind up, and give my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham a few minutes to conclude.

With our allies, we are closely monitoring the situation. It is critical that all sides avoid miscalculation. We are unequivocal in our message to Vladimir Putin to see reason and return to diplomatic channels. We have called on the Russian Government to abide by their international commitments, to provide transparency and see reason. NATO remains open to dialogue with Russia.

We will continue to work with our allies and partners to uphold the rules-based international system in relation to Ukraine and the institutions that underpin it. The Prime Minister has spoken to President Zelensky on a number of occasions to reiterate the UK's support. He raised the issue of Russia's aggression towards Ukraine directly with President Putin when they spoke ahead of COP26.

Turning to the call between Presidents Biden and Putin this week, President Biden voiced deep concerns about Russia's escalation of forces surrounding Ukraine and made it clear that we would respond with strong economic and other measures in the event of military escalation. President Biden reiterated his support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. They also discussed the US-Russia dialogue on strategic stability, a separate dialogue on ransomware, as well as joint work on regional issues, such as Iran. After the call, President Biden called the French, German, Italian and British leaders to debrief them on the call and consult on the way forward.

To conclude, the UK will continue to stand by Ukraine's side as an honest friend and close partner. Our support for Ukraine, alongside our allies, is crystal clear. Together, we can and must co-ordinate greater economic support, including energy support, to Ukraine. Similarly, we must be clear to Russia that an incursion into Ukraine would incur a high cost and result in massive strategic consequences. Russia should understand that the support we provide to Ukraine is to help Ukraine defend itself. Nothing in our support could be construed as a threat to Russia. NATO poses no threat to Russia. That is why Putin needs to see reason, return to the negotiating table and understand this: our support for Ukraine is unwavering. The United Kingdom will continue to build Ukraine's resilience and stand up for its right to determine its own future.

10.55 am

**Daniel Kawczynski:** I am very grateful to the Minister for her very positive remarks and I am very pleased with the unity among all political parties. It is a very pleasant experience to be able to, for the first time ever, agree wholeheartedly with an SNP Member, the hon. Member for Glasgow South (Stewart Malcolm McDonald)—I shall remember this moment.

I want to finish by saying that the Ukrainians are watching all of us. They look to Britain for leadership on our continent and it is extremely important. Ukraine will be one of the most important countries on our continent in the decades ahead. It is a huge country with massive resources and one of its greatest assets is its people. Anybody who has been to Ukraine—the hon. Member for Glasgow South has, and I have had the honour and privilege of visiting that beautiful country on many occasions—will have seen the spirit of innovation and courage of the Ukrainian people. It will be an extremely important country in the future. Our future relationship will inevitably be predicated on how we conduct ourselves today and what support we give them today at its most difficult time.

I remember the previous iron curtain, the gash that cut across our continent which lasted for 50 years. We saw the celebrations in 1989 when the curtain was finally taken down. There is no greater symbolism of the curtain coming down than the destruction of the Berlin wall by young people with pickaxes, finally chipping it away. After the sacrifice and courage of previous generations to tear down that curtain, we must not allow another iron curtain to be reimposed just a little bit further east. Let us not forget that the Ukrainians are our European partners, our European brothers and sisters. I am very proud that the Government seem to be taking a lead. I will be holding them to account on how we take that leadership role in giving them maximum support.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered British support for Ukraine's membership of NATO.

## Enterprise Zones: Waveney

10.58 am

**Peter Dowd (in the Chair):** Before we begin, I remind Members that they are expected to wear a face covering when not speaking in the debate, in line with current Government guidance and that of the House of Commons Commission. I also remind Members that they are asked by the House to have a covid lateral flow test twice a week if coming on to the parliamentary estate, which can be taken at the testing centre in the House or at home. Please also give each other and members of staff space when seated, and when entering and leaving the Chamber.

I will call the hon. Member for Waveney (Peter Aldous) to move the motion and then the Minister to respond. There will not be an opportunity for the Member in charge to wind up, as is the convention for 30-minute debates.

10.59 am

**Peter Aldous** (Waveney) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the future of enterprise zones in Waveney.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Dowd, and I welcome my hon. Friend the Minister. The purpose of this debate is to highlight the success of the enterprise zones in the Waveney area, and to make the case for amending the arrangements through which they operate in order to unleash further economic growth and job creation. If that is done, we would be very well placed in the Waveney area and better able to level up, build back better, and deliver clean and green growth.

Enterprise zones in their present form were established by the coalition Government. The original proposals were set out in the 2011 Budget and its accompanying plan for growth. Twenty-four enterprise zones were created during the 2010 to 2015 Parliament, including the Great Yarmouth and Waveney enterprise zone, which has been run by the New Anglia local enterprise partnership in conjunction with East Suffolk Council—formerly Waveney District Council—and Great Yarmouth Borough Council.

In setting up the enterprise zones, the Government asked the LEPs to nominate enterprise zone sites, taking into account economic potential, with an emphasis on stimulating additional growth, new businesses and new jobs. Vacant sites with little or no business occupancy were favoured. In the Waveney area, there are now six enterprise zone sites across four locations: Mobbs Way in Oulton, South Lowestoft industrial estate, Riverside, adjoining the port, and Ellough, near Beccles. Those enterprise zones have provided various incentives to promote the development of new business units. They include business rates discounts, a simplified planning process through local development orders, and access to super-fast broadband.

In the Waveney area, other than on two small extension sites, the business rates relief has now expired, although all business rates growth for 25 years from April 2013 is retained by the LEP and reinvested in the area. That is an important and welcome source of funds that is invested in infrastructure improvements. The Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft New Anglia enterprise zone partnership was awarded enterprise zone status in 2011, and the site

*[Peter Aldous]*

came into operation on 1 April 2012. To date, across the Waveney and Great Yarmouth areas, the enterprise zones have attracted a total of £44 million in private and public sector investment, created 916 jobs, and facilitated the development of 17.9 hectares, or 44 acres, of new employment space. In short, they have been very successful.

The enterprise zones in Lowestoft got off to a very good start with the construction of 27 units in Mobbs Way in Oulton by MS Oakes Ltd, the majority of which are occupied. The availability of the incentives I have outlined was the catalyst for Mark Oakes building the units and thereby meeting a latent demand for business accommodation in the area. It is a great example of the public and private sectors working together to deliver significant benefits for the local business community, and is being continued on the adjoining Wolsey business park, where 12 units are now fully occupied. Businesses there are from a diverse range of sectors, including energy, construction, warehousing, media, IT, and the manufacture of clay pigeon traps.

While this debate focuses on the future of enterprise zones in the Waveney area, it is also appropriate to point out that they have been a great success in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth (Brandon Lewis). Beacon Park has been exclusively developed for offshore port and energy logistics uses, while South Denes has seen significant investment and is the home of Seajacks, which is involved in offshore wind projects around the world.

With the expiry of the business rates relief and the extension of superfast broadband across the enterprise zone sites, there is now a need to reinvigorate the enterprise zone project in Waveney. With this in mind, in 2018, the New Anglia enterprise partnership—made up of East Suffolk Council, Suffolk County Council, Norfolk County Council, Great Yarmouth Borough Council and the New Anglia local enterprise partnership—commissioned a study to provide a new development and investment strategy for the enterprise zones. The report included a review of current development, identified barriers to that development, and proposed interventions across all sites. It highlighted the fact that little new development has been undertaken recently. The position is similar to that in many locations around the UK and can be explained by relatively low property values set against rising construction costs, which makes new development difficult to justify. Moreover, covid has exacerbated that trend.

The report also identified low demand for new business units on the South Lowestoft industrial estate enterprise zone, where there is a large amount of undeveloped land and where rental values have traditionally been low. Development there is further constrained because, since 2013, the site owner has been reluctant to bring forward land for development. That means that approximately 15.97 hectares allocated as an enterprise zone site are highly unlikely to come forward for development over the life of the project. At the same time, demand for units, particularly in the clean energy sector, has shifted to vacant sites around the port of Lowestoft. It should be pointed out that since the enterprise zones were allocated, large parts of the port have been cleared, and are thus vacant and thus well suited to allocation as an enterprise zone.

Associated British Ports, which runs the port, is pursuing a proactive approach to development, although it is constrained by the high cost of improving port infrastructure. Taking those considerations into account, East Suffolk Council now wishes to reallocate the existing footprint of the enterprise zone by reducing the enterprise zone on the South Lowestoft industrial estate by 7.8 hectares, leaving 8.8 hectares for future development. The 7.8 hectares would be reallocated to the vacant areas around the port, and would be available for clean energy and fishing-related developments.

This is a proposal for the reallocation of sites, not for a larger enterprise zone. Thus, the Minister will be pleased to learn, it would be cost-neutral. It would meet the current demand for units, and it would enable the enterprise zone partnership to invest enterprise zone funds in the relocated sites, making development more financially viable and the sites more attractive to occupiers. It is anticipated that the reallocation would create more than 300 jobs and more than 40 new businesses, and would generate between £1 million and £3 million of retained rates to be invested in the enterprise zone scheme during the project.

The business rates relief has been a great catalyst for promoting activity on the enterprise zone sites, incentivising developers to build units and encouraging occupiers to buy or rent them. Now that the relief has expired, other than on the two small extension sites, that means of stimulating economic activity is no longer there. It needs to be put back in place, and if that is done, it will help to promote development around the port and on the other enterprise zone sites, particularly at Mobbs Way and at Ellough. I therefore ask the Minister to give full consideration to extending the rates relief incentive for a further five years.

Since the enterprise zones came into operation in Waveney in 2012, there has been a sea change in the focus of regeneration activity towards the centre of Lowestoft, where the port lies adjacent to the main shopping area, which, like so many other high streets, has faced enormous challenges in the past two to three years. The proposal to reallocate the enterprise zone sites is in accordance with, and complements well, the Lowestoft town investment plan, which earlier this year helped to secure a town deal of £24.9 million. Exciting new opportunities are emerging, and it is important that we do all that we can to realise their full potential. LEEF, REAF and Eastern Energy Hub, on the power park, are three such initiatives taking place in the area.

LEEF—the Lowestoft Eastern Energy Facility—has been brought forward by Associated British Ports and, in the first instance, is a five-year plan involving an initial £25 million in port infrastructure to support the offshore energy industry. Three new deep-water berths will be provided, spanning more than 360 metres and with additional crew transfer vessel berthing capacity, along with 8 acres of supporting land.

REAF—the Renaissance of the East Anglian Fisheries—is a community-led project that has come forward with a long-term strategy to regenerate the East Anglian fishing industry, with Lowestoft as its hub. It is made up of representatives of the local fishing industry, East Suffolk Council, Suffolk County Council, Norfolk County Council, the New Anglia LEP and Seafish. I currently chair its steering group.

The strategy has been reviewed following the signing of the trade and co-operation agreement with the EU this time last year, and funding has recently been received from the Blue Marine Foundation to start work on implementing the 11-point plan. I will not go through them all in detail, but I will highlight three: first, to promote sustainable fishing practices and the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions—it is very much about clean and green growth—secondly, to invest in port infrastructure; and thirdly, similarly to enhance processing and marketing facilities. The reallocation of the enterprise zone will support those proposals, which will create jobs not just on fishing boats, but right along the supply chain, from the net to the plate.

The Eastern Energy Hub proposals involve the refurbishment of Gulliver, the existing wind turbine, and pairing it with electrolysers to produce hydrogen. That could then be used by municipal buses and refuse fleets in east Suffolk, with a nearby depot from which hydrogen-fuelled buses could run. In due course, one could move on to promote a hydrogen heating scheme in Lowestoft. As you can see, Mr Dowd, an awful lot is happening in the local area, and we need to use all the tools we can to stimulate and invigorate it.

In conclusion, I have two requests for the Minister. First, the 7.8 hectares of the South Lowestoft industrial estate enterprise zone should be reallocated to the port area adjacent to the town centre. That will meet the current demand from businesses and will generate funds that can be reinvested in infrastructure, creating a virtuous circle of economic regeneration, which, as I have said, will cost the Government nothing. Secondly, the rates relief incentive should be reintroduced for a further five years to incentivise developers to build units and encourage occupiers to buy or lease them to take up the numerous opportunities that I have briefly outlined.

Enterprise zones in Waveney are not an experiment. There is no need for a pilot, as they have a proven track record of success. The two changes that I am seeking to the way that they operate will create jobs in a coastal community that has deep pockets of deprivation. They would unleash a wave of development across a range of sustainable low-carbon sectors and deliver that trinity of levelling up, building back better and creating clean and green growth.

11.14 am

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (Neil O'Brien):** It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Dowd, and I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Peter Aldous) for securing this important debate. He has always been—I knew this even before I was an MP —an incredible community champion. He always has multiple projects that he is promoting, and he is normally very successful in making them happen, so I was interested and excited by all the different things that he set out he is trying to achieve.

Let me start with enterprise zones. Since their relaunch in 2012, enterprise zones have established themselves as a real driving force for local economies by unlocking development through infrastructure, attracting businesses and creating jobs. Enterprise zones are about delivering long-term, sustainable growth by harnessing cutting-edge technology and enterprise, and their purpose is to encourage local economic growth and support businesses. To that end, they have been a huge success, as my hon. Friend said.

I have listened to my hon. Friend's proposal with interest, and I thank him for his thoughts on the subject. As he has pointed out, the enterprise zones in Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft are a testament to the success of those interventions, having created around 1,900 jobs, attracted over 70 businesses and brought forward somewhere in the region of £51 million-worth of private sector investment—an incredible record. They are helping to sow the seeds for our transition to a green economy, too. As my hon. Friend mentioned, Lowestoft is the base of operation for Galloper and Greater Gabbard wind farms, which together will produce over 850 MW of electricity. That is enough to power 800,000 homes across the UK—a really incredible amount. Lowestoft is also home to OrbisEnergy, a worldwide centre of excellence that drives innovation and investment in renewable power technologies.

We have said from the outset that the Government-backed business rate discount will last up to five years and the enhanced capital allowances, where they exist, will be provided for eight years. Business rates retention will last for 25 years, giving councils a long-term source of revenue that can be borrowed against to fund infrastructure, or pooled to spend on other barriers to investment. Local authorities can continue to offer business rate discounts, should they choose to do so, and many continue to use the brand of enterprise zones to attract investment.

I am afraid that we have no plans to extend any enterprise zones, and my hon. Friend's proposition to change the boundaries of enterprise zones would signal a precedent that we are wary of setting. Such a change would take up significant resource, and we are now focused on delivering the freeports programme, which is influenced heavily by what we have learned from enterprise zones. However, there may be other ways to achieve many of the things that my hon. Friend seeks.

As our consultation on freeports in 2020 showed, key aspects of the model include business rates retention, business rates relief, commercial spots for councils and local development orders, plus the provision of seed capital. All those things were taken from what we have learned from enterprise zones and built into the freeports model. The freeports will be national hubs for trade, innovation and commerce, regenerating communities across the UK, attracting new businesses and spreading jobs, investment and opportunities to towns and cities up and down the country.

In March, we announced that Felixstowe and Harwich were successful in their bid for a freeport, and officials are now working with them to develop the proposal. The freeport will provide jobs to the area surrounding Felixstowe and Harwich and further afield, where specialist skills will be required. It will also draw the attention of international investors to the opportunities in the wider East Anglia area, including the enterprise zones in Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft.

I turn to the particular question of levelling up Waveney. As my hon. Friend will know, levelling up is the absolute heart of the Government's agenda, and the enterprise zone programme and freeports are just some of the tools at our disposal to help level up our communities. Some £290 million has already been invested in local growth projects in and around Waveney through the New Anglia LEP, which I have had the pleasure of discussing offline with my hon. Friend. That will boost jobs, build houses, leverage private investment and increase

*[Neil O'Brien]*

skills, and the funding has been used for a variety of local interventions, including £10 million from the local growth fund for improved flood defences in Lowestoft harbour. The money was put towards the tidal gate for the inner harbour, which will not only safeguard over 400 households from flooding, but support 22,400 jobs. Some £73 million has been provided to build the Gull Wing bridge—an iconic and much-needed third crossing, which I remember my hon. Friend campaigning hard for. The bridge will reduce congestion, regenerate the area and attract new investment for the local economy.

I turn now to the towns fund process. The Government recognise that towns such as Lowestoft must be at the absolute forefront of our levelling-up agenda, which is why we launched town deals for areas across the country, to unlock their full economic potential. As one of the 101 areas selected to agree a town deal, Lowestoft received £24.9 million in March to support ambitious local projects, transform disused buildings and public spaces, deliver new green transport and create opportunities for people to develop new skills. That includes £14 million to develop a new cultural quarter in the town, providing a new leisure and cultural venue and enhancements to the Marina theatre. Over £2.8 million will go towards the development of Station Square, a meeting place and gateway point for the seafront and town centre, and £2.6 million will be used to improve the port area, which supports the growth in the clean energy centre about which my hon. Friend spoke, and to enhance the public realm. I thank my hon. Friend for his work on that town investment plan, which will see that initial public sector seed funding, catalytic funding, unlock a minimum of £354 million of private sector investment in the area—an incredible sum. He and his colleagues involved in the town deal process can be really proud of what they are achieving.

My hon. Friend talked about REAF, a brilliant local initiative. I welcome the way in which local industry and local government in East Anglia have come together to consider how to create a more sustainable fishing industry, and I thank my hon. Friend for his work as the chair of the steering group. The REAF report contains some interesting ideas that the Government will certainly consider as part of our ongoing work on inshore fisheries management. The Government welcome the work to review the REAF recommendations in the light of the EU-UK trade and co-operation agreement and to develop a new delivery framework. I know that officials from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Marine Management Organisation have been discussing the framework with the REAF project team and are very encouraged by its focus on more effective fish marketing in the region and on using local opportunities and networks.

I know that my hon. Friend is passionate about the role that East Anglia could play in the emerging green economy, about which he talked in his speech. I share his enthusiasm for developing our emerging industrial strengths in areas such as offshore wind, the use of nuclear and hydrogen fuels, and carbon capture technology. The transition to net zero presents a real opportunity to support communities that may be impacted by climate change and flooding, and also to drive levelling up across the country. The Government are working closely with local partners to ensure that we maximise the economic growth opportunities that emerge from the transition to a low-carbon economy, as well as support communities around the country to adapt to the impact of climate change. I know that there are several examples in my hon. Friend's constituency of communities taking advantage of those opportunities: for example, the ambition to create a self-sustaining hub at power park in Lowestoft, or Associated British Ports' £25 million investment in the Lowestoft Eastern Energy Facility to create more quayside space, create deeper water, and provide officers and additional facilities for crew transfer vehicles. All that drives local economic growth.

We are proud to lead the world by ending our own contribution to climate change—not just because it is the right thing to do but because we are determined to seize this unprecedented opportunity to boost local economies. We want to build back better from the pandemic by building back greener and levelling up our country with high-skilled, high-wage, sustainable new jobs in every part of the UK. As part of that, "The ten point plan for a green industrial revolution" will mobilise £12 billion of Government investment, and potentially three times that from the private sector, to create and support up to 250,000 British jobs in clean energy, clean transport, nature recovery and innovative new technologies. Taken together, those programmes are helping to maximise the economic potential of my hon. Friend's constituency.

We can and will do more. As my hon. Friend knows, the Government will shortly publish a White Paper that builds on existing action being taken across Government, and sets out a new policy regime that will drive change for years to come. Some of the challenges that my hon. Friend talked about, such as those pockets of stubborn deprivation in his constituency, will not be solved overnight, but we are determined to solve them. We want to restore pride in places across the country and we want people in those places once again to have the confidence that the Government are delivering their economic and social priorities, boosting long-term living standards and improving public services.

I thank my hon. Friend once again for securing this important debate. The Government are unwavering in our commitment to work with Members from across the House to spur long-term recovery from the pandemic.

**Peter Aldous:** I am most grateful to the Minister for highlighting the part that must be played in the transition to a low-carbon economy by Lowestoft, Suffolk and East Anglia and how that can create enormous opportunities for our area. It is not just a question of levelling up—we can be a global exemplar. I heard what he said on the simple, cost-neutral change of reallocating enterprise zone sites. He indicated that he did not want to go down that route because of concerns about the precedent that it would create. May I ask that, in correspondence between me, East Suffolk Council and him, we can continue to explore that a little further?

**Neil O'Brien:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend and am happy to correspond and continue to meet and discuss with him and local councillors all the opportunities in the area, which he has done a brilliant job of highlighting. There are many opportunities, including the UK shared prosperity fund, which is coming shortly, and the potential for devolution to drive a multitude of improvements in the area. He is right to make that point and I am happy to continue the conversation after the debate.

My hon. Friend is right to pick me up about not just tackling problems of deprivation but going from good to great. When I have been out in East Anglia, I have been struck by the sense that it is on the edge of something really exciting in many different ways. My hon. Friend's ideas are central to the Government's levelling-up agenda, building a recovery that sees all parts of the UK recover strongly from the pandemic and building a new and better economy and public services.

*Question put and agreed to.*

11.26 am

*Sitting suspended.*

# Sickle Cell Treatment

[Mrs Maria Miller *in the Chair*]

2.30 pm

**Mrs Maria Miller (in the Chair):** Before we begin, I remind Members that they are expected to wear face coverings when they are not speaking in the debate, in line with current guidance. I remind Members that they are asked by the House to have lateral flow tests twice a week. Please make sure that you give members of staff and other people lots of space when you are leaving or coming into the room. I expect that there will be a Division at around 3 o'clock, and I am advised that there could be up to four votes. If the Division bell rings, I will remind hon. Members what to do, but people who are speaking at around that time should bear that in mind, so that it does not freak you out—sorry, that is probably not parliamentary language—or catch you unawares.

**Mr Pat McFadden** (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the treatment of sickle cell.

Thank you for chairing our proceedings, Mrs Miller. I am very pleased to open this debate. I chair the sickle cell and thalassaemia all-party parliamentary group, which works for a better understanding of sickle cell and better treatment for those living with the condition. I am enormously grateful to all hon. Members who have supported the APPG's work, including our late colleague Sir David Amess, who was one of our officers. I am also grateful to the Sickle Cell Society, which provides the secretariat function for the APPG. I also thank Parliament's digital engagement unit, and the hundreds of individuals from around the country who have emailed me in advance of today's debate.

The focus of our debate is the APPG's recent report, "No one's listening", which has a number of findings and recommendations in relation to the care of people with sickle cell. The trigger for our report was the tragic and avoidable death of Evan Nathan Smith in North Middlesex University Hospital in 2019. The coroner's report into Evan's death, published in April of this year, found that he would not have died if medical staff had recognised his symptoms and treated him sooner. The report pointed to a

"lack of understanding of sickle cell disease in the medical and nursing staff looking after Mr Smith"

and

"a failure to appreciate the significance of those symptoms by those looking after Mr Smith at the time."

Evan Smith was just 21 years old; he had his whole life in front of him. His death is not the only one in which a lack of understanding of sickle cell and mistakes in treatment have been contributory causes.

**Catherine West** (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab): I thank my right hon. Friend, my hon. Friend the Member for Edmonton (Kate Osamor) and all the other Members who have done a lot on this topic in the House. Despite this being a long-running disease, we have not paid enough attention to it at an institutional level, be that in primary or secondary care. That needs urgent redress.

**Mr McFadden:** I quite agree with my hon. Friend, and our report goes into many recommendations that could improve care. Indeed, it is a call to action; it is a call to arms. Following Evan's death, the deaths of others and the many near misses involving sickle cell patients, we wanted the report to set out the changes that are needed to stop this story from repeating itself over and over again.

Sickle cell affects about 15,000 people in the UK, with many more carrying a trait. Patients with the condition experience periodic crises—bouts of intense, severe pain that sometimes require hospitalisation. The crises are treated with strong pain relief, and sometimes blood transfusions, and over time they can result in organ damage, an increased risk of stroke, other associated conditions and even early death. It is therefore common among sickle cell patients to have to go to hospital regularly, to present at A&E and to be admitted on to wards. This is an important point. For sickle cell patients, contact with the healthcare system or admission to hospital is not a one-off; it is a lifelong part of living with the condition.

To prepare our report, we took evidence in three oral evidence sessions in June this year. We heard from patients, clinicians and policy makers. We heard from Evan Smith's parents, Betty and Charles, who spoke with so much dignity about the loss of their son and their determination to make sure that other families do not have to go through what they have been through. We received over 100 written submissions and, taken together, this is the most comprehensive report on sickle cell care that the APPG has ever produced.

**Marsha De Cordova** (Battersea) (Lab): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his leadership on and commitment to this issue. The report that his APPG has produced has shone a light on some of the challenges faced by people living with sickle cell—whether it is around some of the negative attitudes, the lack of awareness and understanding, or, most importantly, patient care. Does he agree that tackling this issue and the multiple health inequalities that exist will require significant investment and resource from the Government, and an acknowledgement of the structural racism that exists within the health setting?

**Mr McFadden:** My hon. Friend makes some very strong points, and I will discuss some of them, including the question of race.

Since the report's publication, I have continued to receive emails from sickle cell patients all around the country that confirm the report's findings, and I want to put on the record my gratitude to each and every person who has taken the trouble to write to me, whether it was just after the report was published or in advance of today's debate.

Let me set out the main findings of the report for the House. Let us begin with a positive: we found a good level of trust among sickle cell patients in the specialist haematology departments of hospitals that look after them on a long-term basis. We found clinicians passionately committed to better treatment and honest enough to tell us when that good treatment was not there. We found that where there is a good level of understanding and knowledge, sickle cell patients are generally well treated and well looked after, but we also found a huge gulf between the good level of confidence and trust in the specialist parts of the system, and treatment in the more generalised parts of the system—specifically A&E and general wards.

Our key findings include the unacceptable variability of treatment, depending on where someone lives or who happens to be on duty at the time; patients having to battle for the pain relief to which they are entitled; and protocols on pain relief—for example, that it be administered within 30 minutes of arrival—being regularly and repeatedly ignored or not being implemented. Witnesses told us of waiting for hours in excruciating pain. Some clinicians spoke of adherence to the pain relief guidelines within their hospital being as low as just 20% or 30%. There is a lack of compliance with care plans that have been agreed for individual patients, including with the hospital where a patient has turned up, and people have been told, "That doesn't apply here."

We found a dangerous lack of communication between the general and specialist parts of the system. In Evan Smith's case, he had been in the hospital for over two days before the haematology unit even knew he had been admitted. That finding was described as "shocking" by one haematologist who gave evidence to the group. Such delays can contribute to mistakes, with the most terrible consequences. As well as deaths, we heard about a number of near misses where care had gone badly wrong and the patient had still survived.

There is a lack of awareness of the condition and a lack of understanding about how to respond to a sickle cell crisis among some NHS staff. Everyone in the healthcare system knows the key symptoms of a heart attack or a stroke, and how to respond to them. With sickle cell, however, the patient experience is often one of being caught in a perpetual loop of trying to teach staff about what is happening to them and what treatment they need, often at the time that they are experiencing excruciating pain.

**Catherine West:** I thank my right hon. Friend for giving way a second time; he is being very generous. Does he agree that that lack of awareness goes all the way through to the research community, whereby sickle cell is one of the most under-researched diseases, despite the fact that research into it has many different and interesting applications through its links to malaria and all sorts of other diseases, and that there is simply not enough research funding going into understanding this disease?

**Mr McFadden:** I very much agree with my hon. Friend. Indeed, the next finding that I was going to cite is a lack of research and innovation in treatment. There has only been one new drug approved in the UK for sickle cell treatment in decades and it was approved just before our report was published.

For each of the findings, we made recommendations: about training; about compliance with clinical guidelines; about reviews of sickle cell treatment in secondary care; about communications change; very importantly, about a stronger voice for patients in all of this; and in many other areas, too.

Underlying all those individual findings and recommendations are some key overarching themes. First of all, the experiences that I have described have contributed to a damaging loss of trust among sickle

cell patients in the system that is there to help them. Some patients told us that they avoided going to hospital at all costs, no matter how serious their crisis, because they found the whole experience so exhausting and debilitating, or, as one woman put it,

"to avoid the mental strain of another battle...when she does not have the energy to advocate for herself".

It cannot be right that people who need help have so little trust that they do not seek that help from the very system of care that is supposed to be there for them.

Secondly, there is the unavoidable question of race. Sickle cell is a condition that predominantly, but not exclusively, affects black people. Many patients told us of being treated with suspicion when they sought treatment, being regarded as troublesome by staff, being thought of as drug-seekers, and encountering negative and sometimes even hostile attitudes.

The principle of racial equality in healthcare is fundamental. No one is seeking to put one group of people above another, but we want to see equality in healthcare treatment and right now with sickle cell we do not have that. That situation is completely unacceptable and, following this report, it must be addressed.

Thirdly, the findings that we cite in our report are not new; these things have been happening for a long, long time. They have been raised time and again, and the fact that this situation is continuing has led to a great deal of anger and frustration among those living with sickle cell and their families.

Yet, even though all of those things are true, this might—just might—be a moment of opportunity. Why do I say that? Soon after the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care was appointed, he spoke about the "disease of disparity" and about how the covid pandemic had exposed a number of long-standing health inequalities, including racial ones. I welcome the Secretary of State's commitment to address these inequalities and his warm welcome for our report on the day it was published. Perhaps this is a moment when we are more aware of health inequalities than we would have been before the pandemic; maybe this period can be a turning point for change.

There is no need for this to be a partisan issue. No one is pretending that the findings in our report only began in recent years or under one Government. These things have been there for a long time. However, perhaps the experience of the pandemic will give us a new-found resolve; maybe it will mean that this time people listen.

From the Secretary of State and the Department to the NHS in every part of the United Kingdom, we want this report to mark a moment of change in the treatment of sickle cell. We want to ensure that the issues raised in the report are addressed once and for all, and that training is improved so that staff throughout the system understand, and have a knowledge of, the condition. We want to ensure that care plans and pain relief protocols are adhered to by both the generalist and the specialist parts of the system. We want to step up research and innovation in treatment and restore trust among sickle cell patients. Most of all, we want to ensure that there is equal health treatment for everyone, regardless of the colour of their skin. That is not too much to ask for, but we do not have it at present.

Today I appeal to the Minister, the Secretary of State, my own Front-Bench team and the other parties represented here to become our allies in this and to work with us. Please do not let this be a missed opportunity. Let us collectively resolve that we will not have me, or another chair of the APPG, standing here in a few years' time making exactly the same points as I am making today. Let us make sure that this time people do listen, that we act on these long-standing failures in the care of people with sickle cell and that we improve healthcare for people with this condition once and for all.

**Mrs Maria Miller (in the Chair):** I remind hon. Members that if they want to speak in the debate, they should indicate it by rising in the normal way. I intend to call the Front-Bench spokespeople and the Minister just over 30 minutes before the end of the debate, whenever that falls—I will clarify that if there is a vote. I will not put in a time limit; if everybody is respectful of each other's time, everybody should be able to speak.

2.46 pm

**Greg Clark** (Tunbridge Wells) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mrs Miller. I congratulate the right hon. Member for Wolverhampton South East (Mr McFadden) on securing this debate, on his very powerful speech and on his leadership of the APPG. I agreed with every word that he said. He is right that this issue should unite Members in all parties. I have the honour to have recently replaced our very good friend, Sir David Amess, as the Conservative officer of the APPG; I do so with pride. It is a great responsibility and I look to continue the formidable work that Sir David did for this very important cause, as he did for so many other causes in this House.

The right hon. Member for Wolverhampton South East has given a comprehensive account of a very powerful and impactful report. I want to highlight a number of its observations and recommendations, drawn from the evidence given by people who are living with sickle cell or, in many cases, have suffered the consequences of family members falling victim to the condition. My first point reflects on inequality, as referred to by the right hon. Gentleman. I have the honour of chairing the Science and Technology Committee, and some Members will have read the joint inquiry report that my Committee and the Health and Social Care Committee conducted; one of the chapters of that was about the differential impact of covid on different groups in society. We made some recommendations as to how we could improve our practice in future. As the right hon. Gentleman said, that also applies to sickle cell.

In particular, the report emphasises the need for a—if I may put it this way—geographical strategy for the management and response to sickle cell. As the right hon. Gentleman said, sickle cell disproportionately affects black people; we know that the distribution of people of ethnic minorities is not consistent across the country. That will mean that there are some places that have an ethnically diverse population who are used to coping with and helping people with sickle cell; other places will not. That cannot be left to chance; all places have people who will have sickle cell. It is very important that we put in place connections between those hospitals and trusts that have deep experience and those that do not. That would mean that experience could be accessed

*[Greg Clark]*

immediately when the circumstances arose. That is a very important commitment that we should make. The establishment of 42 integrated care systems across the NHS provides the ideal mechanism for that.

The second point from the report that I wanted to emphasise—which the right hon. Member for Wolverhampton South East also touched on—is the differential practice within hospitals. Some disciplines, such as haematology departments, have very high levels of understanding and expertise in caring for sickle cell patients, but other departments and disciplines within the same hospitals do not. I am particularly concerned by the patchy experience of A&E departments and emergency medicine. That is very important, and I hope that the Minister, in her response, will point to ways in which the diffusion of knowledge across hospitals—rather than its remaining in silos—can be seized on as a practical outcome of this report, as it is clearly attainable.

Thirdly, I want to emphasise the importance of giving timely pain relief to people presenting in A&E with sickle cell. We know that there is an acute need for that to be administered promptly. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence standard is that that should be within 30 minutes, but the report was striking in noting that only 30% of adults—for example—said that they were given pain relief early enough. It is greatly concerning that people are suffering great distress during that time, and that has longer-term consequences for their health. In this time of covid, and as we enter into the winter when, as we know from our experiences as constituency MPs, A&E departments come under particular pressure and waiting times are understandably longer, there is an especial need for emergency medical practitioners to be able to not only spot but respond to the very immediate needs of people presenting in A&E departments with sickle cell.

For the fourth aspect that I would like to emphasise, I will again draw from our work in our covid inquiry. A consequence of covid and the response to it in hospitals has been that, as we know, there are great restrictions on relatives and carers accompanying people into hospitals. We looked at the experience of people with learning disabilities who did not have people to advocate for them. Obviously we are talking about sickle cell, not about people with learning disabilities; nevertheless, the assistance of their relatives, loved ones and carers is particularly important. They are able to communicate the particular needs of the patient at a time when the sufferer may not be able to express themselves because of intense pain. I hope that might be recognised during the remaining period of this covid pandemic—that there are patients who need people to help communicate their needs if they are in a state that means they cannot do that directly themselves. Of course, one means of doing that is to pay attention to their care plans, so that they are followed. That would be a way in which we can ensure that the right treatment is given.

Those are just four of the themes that come out of a very comprehensive and powerful report, but they are four aspects that have a particular relevance to the immediate weeks and months ahead, as we face some difficulties across the NHS. It is important, as we seek to ensure that covid does not exacerbate inequalities, that this potential further source of inequality is attended to, and that action is taken by the NHS so that conditions during the weeks ahead can be better than they would otherwise be.

2.54 pm

**Kate Osamor** (Edmonton) (Lab/Co-op): Thank you for calling me to speak, Mrs Miller. It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, although "chairship" is a better word. I thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton South East (Mr McFadden) for securing this important debate and for setting out a strong argument.

First, our thoughts must be with Evan Smith, who tragically died at North Middlesex hospital in my constituency. Owing to a determination to prevent further tragically avoidable deaths, the sickle cell and thalassaemia all-party parliamentary group must be given huge credit for putting together the hugely important "No One's Listening" report on the failures in sickle cell care, and for producing an extensive and thought-through list of recommendations.

It has clearly been found that although the details of Evan's case are particularly distressing, this is not just an individual failing of one hospital but the reflection of widespread shortcomings in care and a lack of institutional knowledge, which have led those with sickle cell to be fearful of receiving secondary care and of attending hospitals. Indeed, North Middlesex hospital is situated in an area with a large black population and, compared with the average hospital, it should have been adept at caring for sickle cell patients. Evidence of the dismissal of the pain of sickle cell patients sadly tallied with what has been highlighted by other studies of the disparities regarding the treatment of black people by healthcare staff, such as by Five X More, which has done work on black maternal health.

I wholeheartedly endorse the recommendations made in the all-party group's report, and I want to highlight a number of those recommendations. First, the North London Partners integrated care system, within which my constituency and North Middlesex hospital fall, should develop a concrete plan to improve sickle cell care and share lessons learned from across the country. North Middlesex hospital should also engage with Betty and Charles, the parents of Evan Smith, regarding an appropriate memorial for their son.

I urge the Government to tackle the report's recommendations with the seriousness that they deserve. Knowledge of sickle cell among healthcare professionals must be improved by mandating that universities should provide training in sickle cell as part of the curriculum, and healthcare in England should develop a mandatory e-learning module for staff treating sickle cell patients in high-prevalence areas.

The standard of care must be improved by developing individualised care plans for sickle cell patients, with copies passed to the patients and all their carers. NHS trusts should develop action plans to ensure compliance with the clinical guidelines to deliver pain relief to sickle cell patients within half an hour.

Finally, the NHS Race and Health Observatory should undertake a study of sickle cell care, examining how racism affects the experiences of patients, and the prioritisation that sickle cell patients are given compared with those experiencing other conditions. While sickle cell patient advisory groups are flourishing, they should

be given the resources they need to have an oversight of sickle cell services across all hospitals. There is a lot of work to be done, but the way forward has been set.

I want to add that North Middlesex hospital has a unit for people who have sickle cell, so what happened to Evan should not have happened. The A&E experience for all patients who have sickle cell needs to be looked at with urgency. Thank you for listening.

2.59 pm

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): Thank you, Mrs Miller, for giving me the opportunity to speak on this issue. I am my party's health spokesperson and it is always a pleasure to speak on any health issue.

I was talking to a colleague about Stephen Pound, the former Member for Ealing North, who told me about this disease. He and I had a good, friendly relationship. I went to an all-party group event on sickle cell, and through Stephen's introduction I perhaps gained some small knowledge of the disease. I want to speak today on behalf of those people who have sickle cell. We do not have it in Northern Ireland; thank the Lord we do not have it in Northern Ireland—*[Interruption.]*

**Mrs Maria Miller (in the Chair):** Order.

**Jim Shannon:** I was just getting started.

**Mrs Maria Miller (in the Chair):** There is a Division in the House. I am going to suspend the sitting for 15 minutes, and for 10 minutes for each subsequent vote, but may I encourage Members to return to this Chamber as soon as possible so that we can resume the debate and ensure that as many Members as possible can participate? Thank you.

2.59 pm

*Sitting suspended for Divisions in the House.*

3.46 pm

*On resuming—*

**Mrs Maria Miller (in the Chair):** Order. If the next break is 15 minutes long, and we have just one break, we should complete this debate at around 5 o'clock. Can Members bear that in mind?

**Jim Shannon:** I will not repeat what I have already said; I will not take more than four or five minutes, and then I will give other Members a chance to speak. I was referring to Stephen Pound, the former Member for Ealing North, who introduced me to sickle cell and understanding that process. This happened around the time that the daughter of one of my staff members had taken ill—she lives over here. I am not smarter than anyone else when it comes to health issues, but I just happened to say to my staff member, "I hope she hasn't got that sickle cell." From what I understand, she could not have had it. However, she did have primary biliary cholangitis; this is a lifetime health issue—a forever illness. It was just because at that time, I had been made aware of sickle cell, and I wondered if there was any connection.

Sickle cell can affect anyone, although it is more common in people from African and Caribbean backgrounds. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence estimates that there are currently 12,500 to 15,000 people with sickle cell disease in England, while data from NHS Digital shows that there were almost 25,000 hospital admissions in England in 2020-21 where the primary diagnosis was sickle cell disorders. It is very clear that there is a significant issue when it comes to sickle cell. I commend the right hon. Member for Wolverhampton South East (Mr McFadden) for introducing the debate and raising awareness of the condition—I should have done so at the beginning; apologies for not doing so—and I support all the other speakers who are here today.

A stem cell or bone marrow transplant is currently the only cure for sickle cell disease. Neither are commonly undertaken in sickle cell patients. The US National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute notes that a

"well- matched donor is needed for a patient to have the best chance for a successful transplant".

In the introduction to sickle cell given to me by Stephen Pound, that was one of the things that we looked at in relation to transplant issues. However, most patients who have sickle cell disease are either too old for transplants, since the risks associated with transplants become greater as a person gets older—and the older someone gets, the less they may want to receive one—or they do not have a relative who is a good enough genetic match to be a donor.

There are many issues that need to be resolved. After reading the APPG on sickle cell and thalassaemia report into the quality of care received by sickle cell patients, "No One's Listening", my heart went out to those people who quite simply feel abandoned—many people do. How do we improve that? The Minister and I are good friends, and I know that, when asked for help with this issue, she will come back with a response that the right hon. Member for Wolverhampton South East, and others, will be happy with.

The key findings of the report are a true indictment of the current state of play for sickle cell sufferers. Evidence of substandard care for sickle cell patients, either in a general ward or attending an accident and emergency department, including a widespread lack of adherence to national care standards, is unacceptable, as is the fact that there is clearly a low awareness of sickle cell among health care professionals. There are examples of inadequate training and insufficient investment in sickle cell care. In the Minister's response, can she give some indication of how that can be improved, so that awareness can be raised and sickness levels addressed?

Many sickle cell sufferers feel that they are not getting answers. That is not a criticism of Government, but if we indicate that there is a problem, as we are doing through this debate, and there is a way of curing that problem, let us do that. There is a clear breakdown that must addressed, not simply clinically, with treatments being made widely available, but further with the training of medical staff and teams to understand this disease and its other medical contraindications.

Those are the issues that we are looking to the Minister to address. I support the right hon. Member for Wolverhampton South East and his attempt to highlight this plight, as he and other speakers have done so well—that will continue in the following contributions. They have not simply highlighted the problem, but pushed the Government and the Minister for action to begin the steps to rectify our current approach.

3.51 pm

**Florence Eshalomi** (Vauxhall) (Lab/Co-op): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairship, Mrs Miller. I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton South East (Mr McFadden) for securing this important debate and for his tireless work as the chair of the APPG on sickle cell and thalassaemia. I would also like to reflect on the work of the late hon. Member for Southend West, who was a former officer of the APPG, on sickle cell and to say how much poorer we are today without his contribution, which I know would have been well received by all of us.

This debate is quite personal for me. Reading through the report about Evan's lack of care and the failings brought back many memories. My late mother suffered from sickle cell anaemia, which is a disease that does not discriminate. My late mum was one of 12 children—same mum and same dad—but she was the only child who had full-blown sickle cell. Some of my aunts and uncles had the trait. I found out that I had the trait when I got pregnant with my daughter, who is now six years old. I went on to have a healthy daughter and a healthy son. My daughter has the trait, but my son does not. That shows how sickle cell can affect anybody.

Reading through some of the failings in Evan's care—or lack of care—made me, as my late mother's principal carer, remember some of the issues we encountered in the 1990s. As a young child, I had to learn about diamorphine, co-codamol, penicillin, folic acid and the large variety of painkillers that sickle cell patients have to take. I knew how important it was for my mum to have access to oxygen when she had shortness of breath, and to hear that Evan had to call 999 from his hospital bed to get oxygen, in 2019, and to see sickle cell patients failed so badly, breaks my heart.

My mum had two oxygen units at home; that is how severe her sickle cell was. I know that for many sickle cell patients this time of year is so difficult and that they have to make sure that they are wrapped up warm because, once they start getting cold, that pain gets into their bones. I spent many nights rubbing my mum's legs and back, trying to help her relieve the pain. I know how important it is to make sure that when the ambulance arrives, the symptoms are properly outlined so that when she arrives at A&E she is prescribed with the right drugs, not paracetamol.

I know how to describe the searing pain that sickle cell patients face when they are going through a crisis, with doctors and some nurses looking at them with a blank expression because they do not understand. My mum used to describe that pain to me as someone chiselling at her knee, her bones and her joints. That is why patients need that strong pain medication, not because they are addicted to painkillers. Calling sickle cell patients addicts is totally wrong.

I know how important it is to ensure there is access to good quality housing and that patients who suffer from sickle cell have time off for appointments. I know how timely it was—a matter of life and death—that my mum got the blood transfusions she needed. This 21-year-old boy was failed. With the right level of care and support, sickle patients can lead a fulfilling life. My mum went on to have three healthy children—I am one of three girls—and thankfully, she saw her granddaughter before she died in 2015, when she was 60. Evan will never have that chance. He will not have a chance to start a family, his parents will not have a chance to see their grandchildren, and he will not have a chance to fulfil his life ambitions. Why? Because he was failed by the doctors and nurses who should have helped him. That area has a high prevalence of sickle cell patients, so why did they not know what to do? Those doctors and nurses should be caring for sickle cell patients, regardless of their race.

The APPG's report highlights the many failings that took place. I will not go into it, as many Members have highlighted it, but it is important that we listen to its clear recommendations. The fact is that our communities, not just in London but right across the UK, are becoming more diverse, and we have to make sure that the people going into the health system now understand this disease. We are going to see more diverse communities, and this is not just about black, Asian and minority ethnic people in London, but about BAME people right across the country. Our population will continue to be diverse, which is something we should celebrate, but those people will be scared, not wanting to move to and live in areas where this disease is not understood. That understanding existed at King's College Hospital where my mum was cared for, and at Guy's and St Thomas' in my constituency now, but there were times when my mum would be scared to visit family members in other parts of the country because she did not know whether, if she came into a crisis, she would be understood if she had to go into hospital.

Sickle cell patients should not be scared to travel and leave their areas, but basic things that should be available to everybody are being denied them. I thought the days of patients not being believed about their pain threshold—being told that they should come back, or that they should go and buy paracetamol over the counter—were over, but all those things seem to be happening now, so this issue is really important. I hope that the Minister will respond to the critical recommendations in this report with a clear action plan. No one should be failed in the way that Evan has been failed. No one should have to die because they suffer from sickle cell.

3.57 pm

**Janet Daby** (Lewisham East) (Lab): There have been some really powerful contributions to this debate, especially from my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Florence Eshalomi). I appreciate everything that she has shared, including the turmoil and difficulty that was endured when she had to care for her mother. I want to acknowledge that, and show her my appreciation and thank her for her contribution.

I also congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton South East (Mr McFadden) on securing this important debate. He knows only too well the need to speak about the experience of children, young people and adults who have sickle cell disease and where they experience health inequalities. People with sickle cell disease desperately need us to raise their profile in this place, and I am so pleased that we are able to do so this afternoon. My right hon. Friend and I have worked hard on this issue together through the sickle cell and thalassaemia APPG.

It is truly shameful that the history of treatment of sickle cell in this country is a story of ignorance and neglect. That disease causes unimaginable suffering,

most often to people of African and Caribbean descent, a group of people who already experience medical discrimination. I have frequently spoken out in this place about health inequalities, with specific reference to the impact of sickle cell in diverse communities, and the correspondingly poor investment into care and research. I have heard first-hand stories of the suffering of patients, both their physical pain and the psychological trauma of not being able to afford their medication or their condition not being understood as a student, in the workplace or, indeed, in hospitals. I have heard from people who feel worried about disclosing their illness—about their voices not being heard and their pain not being believed. A young man has told me that he is afraid to attend an A&E department in case he is not believed and treated correctly when he is in a crisis, and that is not the first time that I have heard this. Going into hospital should be about alleviating fears and worries. A hospital should be a place of safety, but that is not the general experience among some people who suffer from sickle cell.

When a doctor or nurse does know how to treat someone with sickle cell, that patient feels confident, but too often, that is not the case. Our nation has already heard about the case of Evan Nathan Smith—*[Interruption.]*

**Mrs Maria Miller (in the Chair):** Order. The sitting is suspended for 15 minutes.

4 pm

*Sitting suspended for a Division in the House.*

4.9 pm

*On resuming—*

**Mrs Maria Miller (in the Chair):** Everyone is back now, so I will recommence the debate. Just so that everybody can plan their day, I can confirm that we will end the debate at 4.56 pm. I will call the Front Benchers at 4.24 pm.

**Janet Daby:** Thank you, Mrs Miller. Our nation should know of the case of Evan Nathan Smith, but there were also the deaths of two army recruits during military training. If they had been treated appropriately—all of them—their deaths could have been avoided. One of the young men was aged 21; the other was 31. They were undiagnosed with sickle cell. A coroner warned that their deaths could be repeated without urgent Government intervention. The recent inquiry by the APPG found that the majority of sickle cell patients surveyed had received inadequate healthcare support, adding to their physical discomfort and distress. Our NHS is underfunded, and it needs the resources to train staff to have specialist understanding of sickle cell.

The Government have decided not to fund the research that is so desperately needed and they need to say why that is. Will the Minister give young and old sickle cell sufferers hope for their future by ensuring that training on sickle cell is included in the teaching of medical, nursing and midwifery degrees at all universities and colleges? A further area that needs to be addressed urgently is how to respond to a sickle cell crisis. That information is needed, and these professionals need to know what to do.

A sickle cell crisis is when sufferers experience a severe attack. Their blood cells stick together, and it causes unimaginable pain across their whole body. Sadly, too often medical professionals do not recognise the signs of a crisis. Stigma and stereotyping have a part to play in this, and racial discrimination must come to an end. If necessary pain relief is not given, the condition can worsen and go on to affect internal organs, which causes other medical conditions. At its worse, it leads to death. That can be prevented if the Government have the will to make the necessary changes.

NICE guidelines state that the first dose of pain relief should be administered no longer than 30 minutes after a sickle cell crisis starts. Can the Minister tell me why that target is so often missed? Why does the Care Quality Commission not recommend it as an official guideline? What do the Government intend to do to address this?

The APPG report made several recommendations, including guidance for specific NHS trusts to improve their performance. It requested commitments to raise awareness of sickle cell in the medical community, from paramedics to A&E doctors and senior consultants. Professionals from across the public sector also need to be educated in what sickle cell involves, from nursery nurses to teachers and employers. Children, young people and adults with sickle cell need to be understood.

We should investigate whether we can test every baby for this disease. We know that around 300 babies are born with sickle cell each year. If they have not done so already, I ask that the Minister and her team urgently read the APPG report supported by research from the Sickle Cell Society and take heed of the guidance to change practices. Sickle cell patients like Shubby Osoba are describing sickle cell care as a lottery. On some days, in some hospitals, sufferers get the help they need. On other days, in other hospitals, they do not. That is just not good enough.

Over two years ago I asked the then Health Secretary, the right hon. Member for West Suffolk (Matt Hancock) if he would remove the current charge for prescriptions for sickle cell medicines. Some patients are on five different medications a day. For a lifelong illness, that is a heavy financial cost. The right hon. Member for West Suffolk promised to look into this, but all this time later nothing has changed. Will the Minister take forward this measure and relieve patients of yet another burden on their lives?

I also bring it to the Minister's attention that it is more cost-effective for the public purse to prevent hospitalisation by adding this lifelong disease to the list for free medication than to treat people with this disease in hospital. I am sure Members would agree that prevention is better than cure. In this case, preventing a crisis by free medicine is much cheaper than being in hospital. I impress upon the Minister the need to have a conversation with the Chancellor concerning this issue. So much more needs to be done. On behalf of those with sickle cell and their families, I ask the Minister to respond appropriately to the serious concerns that have been raised by myself and other Members across this Chamber.

**Mrs Maria Miller (in the Chair):** I remind hon. Members that we need to go to the Front-Bench speeches at 4.24 pm.

4.14 pm

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy** (Streatham) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairship, Mrs Miller. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton South East (Mr McFadden) on securing this debate and on his sterling work as the chair of the sickle cell and thalassaemia all-party parliamentary group. I also commend my neighbour, my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Florence Eshalomi). She always speaks with such affection about her mother, and I hope that she knows that her mum would be so incredibly proud of her if she were alive today.

The APPG's landmark report, which was triggered by the tragic and avoidable death of Evan Nathan Smith in North Middlesex hospital, reveals the terrible truth of sickle cell treatment: the substandard care, the stigmatisation and the lack of prioritisation of this condition. As an officer of the group, I was pleased not only that the report came out, but to be able to give evidence as somebody who cared for someone with sickle cell—as someone who lost a loved one, my friend Adjuah, to negligent care. I sat with her through many hospital admissions, and I witnessed mistakes and mistreatment. She said to me on more than one occasion, "One day this hospital is going to kill me," and one day it actually did. I hope that the Minister has read the report, has taken into account its many recommendations and will outline what steps the Government will take to improve the treatment of sickle cell and the overall experience of sickle cell patients in our national health service.

I also hope that the Minister will touch on what steps the Government will take specifically to improve the treatment of black sickle cell patients. Unfortunately, for those of African and Caribbean heritage, the experience of sickle cell is made far worse by the prevalence of institutional racism. In several past debates and in various inquiries, reports and personal accounts, we have heard how racist attitudes have a negative impact on a patient's healthcare and experience: lack of research, which is certainly a major issue with sickle cell; biased perceptions of pain tolerance, drug habits and medical knowledge; and experiences of overt racism. All of that makes the experience of living with any condition difficult, but it makes living with sickle cell even harder.

When we talk about institutional racism in the NHS, we are sometimes met with Conservative Members saying, "Why are you calling our NHS staff racist?". We are not calling NHS staff racist; we value our NHS staff. We are recognising that the institution of the NHS, which is governed by the Government, has issues when it comes to race, and that the policies and practices create biases that cause us problems. We want to know what the Government are doing about that.

Sickle cell is often referred to as an invisible illness, because of how the pain is experienced—often it is invisible to others. However, there is also a distinct lack of education and public awareness of the condition and the symptoms. I point specifically to the issue of education. I studied biomedical sciences and specialised in cellular pathology as an undergraduate. Because of the amount I knew about sickle cell before I went to university, I was struck by just how much it was used as an example but just how little those teaching me knew about its practical aspects. If we do not improve the education of those who treat people, we are never going to improve the outcomes. That definitely needs to be looked at.

The recent removal of discriminatory blood donation restrictions on black donors was a massive step in the right direction, which I really welcome. The largest beneficiaries of the change will be those patients who are often treated through blood transfusions and need rare blood subgroups, such as Ro, that are more common in black people. I have that blood group, so I give blood. Blood donations have gone down rapidly during the pandemic, but they are needed no less at the moment. I encourage all people from the black community, and from all communities, to give blood. I would love to see a blood donation stand in Parliament one day; there are so many of us here, and we should all be able to roll up our sleeves and give a pint or two.

**Jim Shannon:** I think that the Government have been keen to have blood donations, and the hon. Lady has very kindly volunteered and has been donating. She could perhaps be a poster lady for the campaign. Maybe the Minister will take that on board.

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his contribution, and look forward to seeing him roll up his sleeve as well.

Maintaining those discriminatory blood donation rules for so long was really poor. They were based on outdated HIV science and denied thousands of black sickle cell patients the treatment that they needed, but not only that; the legacy of those rules resulted in a reluctance among the black community to come forward to donate blood. The restrictions have resulted in a shortage of black blood donors and have had a severe effect on the willingness of the black community to donate overall. We have to undo that damage.

I call on the Minister to promise all of us here, and those who are keenly watching the debate, that the Government will act to improve the quality of care and treatment of sickle cell patients. Words are good, but action is better. My hon. Friends have touched on prescriptions and the barriers to receiving proper care. We want action on that. Those watching the debate at home do so in eager anticipation of something that will give them hope of better treatment. I sincerely hope that the Minister will not let them down.

4.20 pm

**Martyn Day** (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP): I am grateful to the right hon. Member for Wolverhampton South East (Mr McFadden) for securing this important debate, for the manner in which he opened it and for the work of the APPG that he chairs. He said we should all be concerned by the lack of understanding of sickle cell disease. I think we all agree with that fact. This has been a consensual debate and a valuable reminder that this issue is about the pain and loss that impacts on many families. That pain was well demonstrated by the personal testimony of the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Florence Eshalomi), who spoke so movingly of her mother's experience. I am in full agreement that the increasing diversity of our communities amplifies the need for greater awareness of the disease.

The hon. Member for Lewisham East (Janet Daby) used the term "ignorance and neglect", which summed things up pretty well, given that deaths from sickle cell disease are pretty much avoidable. She also highlighted the cost of sickle cell medicines—a point I will return to.

The hon. Member for Streatham (Bell Ribeiro-Addy) also gave a personal account of her experience of the disease and spoke strongly about the institutional racism that has been experienced. This matter should concern all of us from all parts of the country. I commend her for her action on blood donation—something, I must confess, that I have always been too frightened to do myself. We all need to consider the importance of giving blood.

Like the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon), I was impressed by the APPG's report, "No One's Listening", published in November 2021 with its stakeholder group, the Sickle Cell Society. The report found that sickle cell patients too often receive substandard care; that community care for sickle cell patients is generally inadequate or non-existent, which leads to unnecessary admissions to hospital; and that awareness of sickle cell disease is low, as we have heard repeatedly.

The right hon. Member for Tunbridge Wells (Greg Clark) highlighted the differential impact of geographic factors, even within the same hospitals. That is an important point that I had not properly considered, although I had thought about the race element affecting different parts of the country differently. The hon. Member for Edmonton (Kate Osamor) highlighted the fear of sufferers even of attending hospitals, particularly in areas with a high population susceptible to sickle cell disease. Again, that is a point I had not thought of, so I am grateful for that commentary.

Sickle cell disease overwhelmingly affects people from particular heritage backgrounds, and the report highlighted the role of racism in diagnosing and treating sickle cell patients. People from African, Asian, Caribbean, eastern Mediterranean and middle eastern backgrounds are more likely to have sickle cell disease or to carry the gene, and it is therefore impossible to debate this subject without considering race and the failings to adequately provide equality of treatment within the existing system. It is particularly concerning that many sufferers believe that racist attitudes affect healthcare providers' perceptions of the disease. A number of Members highlighted the systematic racism that appears to exist.

Sickle cell disease is a genetic blood disease. There are treatments to manage it, but it is a lifelong condition. These disorders are inherited, with the only cure being transplants. Approximately 5% of the world's population carries trait genes for inherited blood disorders, and around 15,000 sufferers in the UK have sickle cell disease, which affects how the body produces red blood cells. Normal red blood cells around the red blood cells affected by sickle cell disease harden and become sickle-shaped, like a crescent moon. This causes the red blood cells to die too quickly and block blood vessels, leading to symptoms that are often painful, as we heard in a number of testimonies.

The Scottish Government are committed to improving the availability of treatment services in order for patients with sickle cell disease to receive the care they need. The Scottish Government's NHS recovery plan for 2021-26 sets out the plan for healthcare over the next five years, including investment of more than £400 million to create a network of 10 national treatment centres across Scotland, increasing capacity for diagnostic care. The plan also sets out the Scottish Government's £155 million investment to provide general practices and their patients with support from a range of healthcare professionals in the community. The plan includes the recruitment of further pharmacists to help with patients' repeat prescriptions and medicine reviews and of community nurses to assist with the diagnostic tests and chronic disease management.

It is vital that we design and develop services that meet the needs of everyone, with a focus on those experiencing health inequalities, and we have heard much of those inequalities today. The UK Government should follow the lead of the Scottish Government in the provision of free prescriptions to those who suffer from sickle cell disease and beyond. Sickle cell disease usually requires lifelong treatment, and a medicine called hydroxycarbamide—I probably spell it worse than I pronounce it—may be prescribed by a patient's doctor to manage episodes of pain. Patients are usually told to take it as a capsule once a day.

In Scotland, we abolished prescription charges in 2011, but in England the current charge is £9.35 per item. There is a live petition—e-petition 588355—to encourage the UK Government to add sickle cell to the prescription charge exemption list. They responded on 6 August that they have

"no plans to make changes to the list of medical conditions exempting patients from prescription charges".

That petition has a few days left for people to sign it. I encourage the Minister to reconsider the position on prescription charges and to support the recommendations detailed in the excellent all-party parliamentary group report.

4.26 pm

**Liz Kendall** (Leicester West) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mrs Miller. Like everyone, I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton South East (Mr McFadden) on securing this debate on an extremely important issue. I pay tribute to the members, officers and staff of the APPG on sickle cell and thalassaemia. The report "No One's Listening" is one of the most powerful, serious and substantial reports I have read in a long time in this place and while working in the health and care field. The detail, analysis and recommendations it provides are really important and cannot be ignored.

As we heard from right hon. and hon. Members, the report was carried out in response to the absolutely tragic case of Evan Nathan Smith, who died in the most utterly appalling circumstances with his whole life ahead of him. It is crystal clear from the coroner's inquest that he would not have died had it not been for the failures in his care: the failure to get the pain relief he desperately needed, the failure to give him a timely blood transfusion and the utter lack of understanding about sickle cell Opposition the part of the staff looking after him, in an area where they should have known because of the local population.

Most importantly, the report highlights far more fundamental issues, which my right hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton South East picked out in his comments. First, this is not an isolated incident, as my hon. Friends the Members for Vauxhall (Florence Eshalomi) and for Streatham (Bell Ribeiro-Addy) so powerfully and personally described. There is a pattern of years of substandard care in this crucial area. Patients understandably lose trust in the system. Secondly, there is the issue of race—the racial inequalities in the standard

*[Liz Kendall]*

of care being provided and the stereotyping and discriminatory attitudes towards black people that have contributed to that. Of course, those two things are inextricably linked—

**Mrs Maria Miller (in the Chair):** Order. Could I encourage the hon. Lady to project her voice this way?

**Liz Kendall:** I apologise. I was speaking to people rather than into a void.

Unless we understand those two fundamental issues, we will never get the change we need. I want to use my time not to repeat what others have said but to talk about how we get real and lasting change, thinking about some of my own experience of working in health and care for 20 to 25 years. There is a lot in the report that is excellent. Much of it is coming from the top down, and there are important recommendations that should be followed, but the real change that we need to see is to give patients and their families far more say, control and involvement in the system, because that is how we will get lasting change.

Five key areas need to be addressed. The first is tackling the appalling variations in care that the report highlights. The really important issue, which my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall picked up, is that as our country becomes more diverse—something we should celebrate—this issue will not just affect London. That point was made in evidence to the APPG by Global Blood Therapeutics, which clearly said that the geography of sickle cell is starting to change, with patients increasingly moving outside London. In understanding that, we have to ensure that variations in care are ended in all parts of the country.

One of the most important recommendations in the report is that all NHS trusts should share findings of their internal reviews into incidents involving serious sickle cell care failings with the National Haemoglobinopathy Panel so that learnings can be communicated across the country. It is within the remit of the Minister and the Department to ensure that that happens, so I hope she will set out what she intends to do and what discussions she has had with NHS England about making it happen.

The second key recommendation around variations is that the CQC should make compliance with NICE clinical guidelines on the delivery of pain relief within 30 minutes for sickle cell patients an essential criterion that it uses when assessing NHS trusts. As far as I can see, the CQC has not responded to the report. I wonder what discussions the Minister has had with the CQC about that, because it is crucial.

The third issue around variation, which the right hon. Member for Tunbridge Wells (Greg Clark) touched on, is that we now have integrated care systems across the country. Every time there is an NHS reorganisation, and there have been many over the last two decades—I have been involved in some myself—we lose institutional memory about these issues and findings. What discussions has the Minister had with colleagues in the NHS about how we ensure that, when people have made changes or are trying to make a difference, that is reflected in the new ICSs as they get up and running across the country?

The second key issue is around communication and the lack of joined-up care. There are so many parts of the NHS where those conversations do not happen, and it is patients who are left telling people what they need. Will the Minister set out what she will do to try to ensure that NHS trusts improve communication within their own hospitals and follow the particular recommendation that all haematology teams are informed whenever a sickle cell patient comes into A&E or on to a general ward? I will pursue that with University Hospitals of Leicester in my constituency as a result of the report to ensure that it happens.

Thirdly, improved awareness of the condition and training are critical. That has the power to make one of the biggest differences. Staff are not purposely not understanding it; they need to be trained in it. The report sets out recommendations about universities having proper training, and says that the Nursing and Midwifery Council and the General Medical Council should urgently review their approach to training on sickle cell conditions. Again, I do not think that the NMC or the GMC have responded, although I may be mistaken, but unless people are properly trained how will they make a difference in the future?

The fourth issue is that of race, racism and discrimination within the NHS. I know from my own diverse constituency and the work that I have done with Leicester Against Racism that there is much that can be done to improve understanding of the different issues facing black, Asian and minority ethnic communities in the NHS, to improve access to and outcomes of care, to understand the implicit and explicit discriminatory attitudes that may be present in the NHS and, crucially, to have better representation of BAME communities in senior NHS leadership positions.

During today's debate people have talked about their own experiences, understanding the issues and showing that Parliament can act on the issues that matter to our communities because of our diverse representation. That is what we need in the NHS. I hope the Minister will be able to say what NHS England is doing about those issues.

Last but by no means least, the NHS always changes its structures and organisations, and people move around, so it is often difficult to embed change in the system. In my experience, the only way to do that is to give patients and their families far more voice, and I include training in that.

Imagine if my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall—if she was not extremely busy representing her constituents—was involved in the training of health professionals and told her story so that people could hear what had happened to her. It would be a powerful driver of change if the people who use services could be part of the training and the way the system is regulated. That is how we will get real change in the system and I hope the Minister will set that out.

In conclusion, the report provides an opportunity to make substantial and lasting change. I hope the Minister will set out the Government's response when she stands to speak.

4.37 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Maria Caulfield):** It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mrs Miller. I thank the right hon. Member for Wolverhampton South East

(Mr McFadden) for securing this important debate, for all his hard work chairing the sickle cell and thalassaemia all-party parliamentary group and for the report it has put together. It is a crucial report that highlights some of the gaps in the treatment, management and experience of those with sickle cell disease. I also thank the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Florence Eshalomi) for sharing her experience. Hearing first-hand experience of what it is like to have a family member going through a sickle cell crisis and the experience of healthcare is extremely helpful.

Anyone who has read the "No One's Listening" report cannot fail to be moved by some of the findings. It is such an important issue when we consider that the majority of patients who suffer with sickle cell are black. The tragic death of Evan highlights some of the disparities that are part of this issue. Managing the disease is much more than a physical problem. I thank the APPG and the Sickle Cell Society for the work they have done to shine a light on the challenges facing sickle cell patients. Any failure in care is one failure too many.

I want to reassure all colleagues here that the Government are not just listening; action is taking place right now. I think colleagues will be pleased by some of the changes already made since the report was done, which we want to build on. I am happy to work with the APPG and Members across the House to address the gaps highlighted in the report.

As the shadow Minister, hon. Member for Leicester West (Liz Kendall), said, working with the sickle cell community is vital if we are to address these issues. NHS England is doing that, working with the community to develop a new service. The specifications have outlined a new model of care for the development of 10 haemoglobinopathy co-ordinating centres for sickle cell disease care in England, each leading a network of care and overseeing specialist teams and local centres.

What this means—what many have described in the debate today—is that those specialist centres, which is where patients experience really good care, feel very confident and get great advice, are now able to reach out to local centres and share their experience, so if a patient does not have access to a specialist centre, they can still access that specialist care through their local facilities. That is only just starting, but it is making a huge difference to the experience of patients and in supporting staff, many of whom might never have encountered a sickle cell patient. Some might have, but that might have been a long time ago. Having the support of specialist input is crucial.

In addition, the National Haemoglobinopathy Panel has been set up to run a national multidisciplinary meeting and to provide clinical leadership and co-ordination for those haemoglobinopathies co-ordinating centres, so that patients' cases can be reviewed by a national group of specialists, and recommendations and support can be fed in.

NHS England also provided funding last year and this year to develop and update a national register—a database of UK patients with red cell disorders. Previously, although testing has been available for babies to identify whether they have sickle cell, that has never been fed into the NHS. With the new register, GPs and hospitals can all identify who in their local communities has sickle cell, and they can start to plan resources and services accordingly. Hopefully, no one will slip through the gaps, and when a patient turns up at A&E they will be identified as a sickle cell patient without having to explain all the issues that they face.

**Janet Daby:** I thank the Minister for what she is saying about the list that will be created for babies. Will there be a similar list of professionals in certain areas who have experience of working with sickle cell patients? The Minister is saying that the list will be set up retrospectively, but it would be good to know what resources are already available.

**Maria Caulfield:** The hon. Member makes an excellent point. The HCCs—the 10 specialist networks that have been set up around the country—will do just that. People will be registered, so that anyone who lives where there is a sickle cell community but no specialist provision is available can feed in and advice can be passed back and forth. This is the start of the process of making that happen in practice. There has not yet been an evaluation because the service is very new, but it is expected that when it publishes the results of its activity a significant improvement in standards will be seen. The results will be used to target areas of concern. We will see where improvements have been made and where improvements still need to be made. Once the service starts to report back, I think colleagues will be pleased with the progress.

The education and awareness of medical professionals was raised by everyone in the debate, and was highlighted in the "No One's Listening" report. Health Education England has recently made improvements to the medical curriculum in relation to sickle cell and thalassaemia, and now the curriculum has, as core competencies, modules on those. Health Education England has held discussions with royal colleges to ensure that the curriculum is delivered to all four nations.

There are now two e-learning modules with sickle cell content—NHS screening programmes and the maternity support worker programme—and other e-learning programmes on wider areas, such as anaesthesia, radiology and pain management, are also including sessions on sickle cell. We are making some progress on that, but for me, as someone who has worked in healthcare, that education needs to be ongoing. It is great for people to get some education when they are students, but if they do not come across a sickle cell patient for five or six years, that learning might be at the back of their mind. We also need to focus on ongoing education.

NHS Blood and Transplant is working really hard to improve the service experienced by patients. Given that, until recently, blood transfusions were one of only two treatments for these conditions, much work has been done on that. NHS Blood and Transplant submitted, I believe, evidence to the report and described a number of areas in which it is involved that could be improved. Some of that is being worked on right now, including improving matching of more donors of African descent, improving co-ordination of care and improving consistent access to red cell exchange services. Some work is being done specifically on that area.

As has been mentioned by many colleagues, we know that sickle cell disease is particularly common in people with African or Caribbean family backgrounds. Health inequalities are made much worse if someone has sickle cell or has experienced covid, and we know that in maternity, women from black and Asian ethnic groups

*[Maria Caulfield]*

have disproportionately negative outcomes. I am meeting the Equalities Minister fairly soon to look at the specific areas of health where black communities in particular are disproportionately affected and have poorer outcomes. I am happy to update colleagues—we are very keen to look at those areas—and to work jointly with the Equalities Minister to improve outcomes in those areas.

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, launched this October, plans to tackle health disparities across the UK. The NHS Race and Health Observatory has also developed a new evidence-focused remit to tackle ethnic health inequalities, and sickle cell is one area that it is looking at. Coinciding with the launch of the APPG report in November, the observatory appointed a sickle cell expert, Dr Carl Reynolds, to drive forward work in this area. He is reviewing the evidence that contrasts sickle cell care with other rare genetic diseases, to examine the robustness of sickle cell patient care pathways within the NHS. That work will additionally support the work of other organisations and build on many of the report's findings.

I will just touch on research and treatment. As, I think, the right hon. Member for Wolverhampton South East said, a new drug has been developed, and recommended by NICE, for sickle cell disease—the first in more than 20 years. It is expected to reduce the number of times that a patient will end up in A&E and go through a crisis. Research is vital to develop new drugs and improve treatments, and I want to reassure colleagues that funding is available.

The National Institute for Health Research has £1 billion per year set aside for research, and researchers on any condition can apply for funding from that pot. It is often the case that researchers for rare diseases such as sickle cell do not come forward with proposals because there tend to be far more researchers and clinicians for better-known conditions, and far more charities driving researchers forward to apply for research funding. Not only funding, but help and guidance is available. If there is research that clinicians or academics want to do in this area, we are very keen to see them come forward and apply for that funding. If they are not successful, they will receive feedback as to why that was. Funding is available; it is not ringfenced for any particular condition, so researchers on all conditions may apply.

In conclusion, I again thank all members of the APPG for their hard work on behalf of the sickle cell community, but also for their important report, which highlights many of the discrepancies and gaps that sickle cell patients have been facing. Deaths such as Evan's, simply because of a lack of care and expertise when he was admitted to hospital, are unacceptable, and we want to change that. I think that today's debate really highlights how much work there is to do.

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** Before the Minister sits down, there is one point that I do not believe she has touched on—prescriptions. I should be grateful if she would let us know whether the Government have any plans to make prescriptions free for people who require medication for sickle cell.

**Maria Caulfield:** The hon. Member makes a good point. Most patients are probably young, of working age, and have to pay for their prescriptions, but around 89% of all community prescriptions are not paid for—they are free at the moment—and for those with long-term conditions, such as sickle cell, there are the prepayment certificates covering prescriptions for around £2 per week, no matter how many items they have to order. If, say, someone needed three items, that gives a saving of around £228 per year. I know that that does not give free prescriptions, but it is an existing system that patients are often not told about, and it can offer huge savings. I am happy to discuss that with the hon. Member after this debate.

I want to reassure colleagues that a huge amount is being done by the Department to improve the treatment of sickle cell patients. Clear and positive work is under way. It is quite new and innovative, and we hope it will make a difference in a very short space of time. There are still gaps in the provision of services.

**Kate Osamor:** I thank the Minister for the update that she has just given us, but she has not said anything about the bottleneck in A&E. Patients arrive and they are not listened to and not believed. What work will the Government do on that area of hospital treatment?

**Maria Caulfield:** The hon. Member makes an excellent point. There are NICE guidelines on sickle cell, so I will ask departmental colleagues to look at how often they are not followed. The issue was raised about analgesia not being given within half an hour of someone presenting. That is in NICE guidance, and the guideline should be followed in A&E or other areas where patients are admitted. I am happy to look at the prevalence of that not happening and why not. Again, I think that a lot of it is not deliberate. Much of it is to do with the education of staff, who might be in busy A&E departments with lots of people in pain, and they might not realise the impact on a sickle cell patient who does not get analgesia in a timely manner.

**Greg Clark:** On the point about A&E, I welcome, as I am sure colleagues do, the commitment to look at the figures. Given that we have APPG reports, could the Minister perhaps circulate them, through the NHS, to A&E departments to remind them of the current NICE guidance?

**Maria Caulfield:** My right hon. Friend makes an excellent point. I am happy to work with departmental officials to look at how, if the NICE guidelines are there, we can make sure they are distributed so that all clinical areas are aware of them, particularly, as the point was made, to areas where there is a high prevalence of sickle cell and people are more likely to be admitted to A&E. I am happy to take that forward.

I want to reassure colleagues that progress is being made. I want to place on the record my thanks to all those in specialist units who work really hard behind the scenes to improve the care for sickle cell patients and to get information out to the NHS across the board. Where there are gaps, I am happy to work with the APPG to make sure we address those.

4.52 pm

**Mr McFadden:** I thank everybody who has spoken and contributed to this afternoon's debate. It might be unfair to pick people out, but I want to pick out my

hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Bell Ribeiro-Addy), who was a witness when we took evidence for the inquiry, and my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Florence Eshalomi), who spoke so movingly and powerfully about her mum. To echo the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham, I know that her mum would be really proud of her for what she has said in this debate.

I am grateful to the Minister for her response and the spirit in which she has listened to the debate. It is good to hear about the specialist units, the expert who has been appointed, and the other things that she highlighted. It is good to hear about all of that. However, the test will be in the lived experience of sickle cell patients themselves. One problem highlighted in the debate was that often the protocols are there—the 30-minute guidance is there and the care plans agreed with individual patients are there—but in the day-to-day experience they are not being adhered to, so a part of the battle is to make sure that things already there are applied properly. Anything that the Minister and the Department can do to reinforce that is welcome.

I make a final appeal to the Minister to make the report a moment for change, not just a debate that is here today, gone tomorrow. I appeal to her to go back to the Department, gather the officials, call in the different key parts of the NHS and tell them: "This time we are going to listen. This time we are going to make a difference, and we are going to change things for good for people living in this country with sickle cell."

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered the treatment of sickle cell.

## Levelling Up: Local Councils

4.55 pm

**Mrs Maria Miller (in the Chair):** Before we begin, I remind Members that they are expected to wear face coverings when they are not speaking in the debate, in line with the guidance, and I also remind them to have lateral flow tests twice a week. When you are coming into or leaving the room, will you also make sure to give other people lots of space?

I will call John McDonnell to move the motion and the Minister to respond. There will not be an opportunity for the Member in charge of the debate to wind up, as is the convention for a 30-minute debate. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman is well aware of that.

4.56 pm

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

That this House has considered the role of local councils in levelling up.

The debate is about the role of local councils in the levelling-up strategy that the Government are pursuing. I applied for it because I had hoped that the Government's White Paper would have been published either last week or this week. Unfortunately, it has been delayed until the new year. Nevertheless, at least the debate gives us an opportunity to feed some last thoughts into the pre-White Paper discussions in Government on the way forward, although the reality is that the most valuable dialogue will most probably come as the Government plan the detail of the roll-out and delivery of the policies set out in the White Paper.

The Government have rightly put great emphasis on levelling up the country, so much so that we now have a new Department—the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. However, they have not yet defined what achieving levelling up would look like, what targets they have set themselves to achieve through that policy programme, or what the timescale for the programme will be. Hopefully, the White Paper will set out these things clearly when it is published in the new year.

There is widespread agreement that there is a need for levelling up. Way back in 2016, at a conference that I convened in Liverpool, I launched a similar policy with the CBI, using its regional government investment analysis at that time. That demonstrated the stark inequalities that exist. The figures are stark. London receives about twice as much capital investment per person as the south-west of England and the north-west of England receives only two thirds of the level that London receives.

Back then, I also used Department of Health statistics to demonstrate the consequences of inequality, and particularly the consequences of low incomes and poverty, with a difference in life expectancy of 20 years between Kensington in Liverpool and Kensington in London. The Minister may know that we have two Scousers in Westminster Hall today to evidence that.

The harsh reality, which we have all accepted, is that this imbalance of investment has meant that too much priority has been given to investment in parts of London and the south-east, as well as too many of the best jobs in the country. I speak as a London MP, because there

*[John McDonnell]*

are also grotesque levels of inequality within London and the south-east. Over-investment and the heat that it generates in an economy has a negative impact on the area, with exorbitant housing costs that leave many workers priced out of ever owning their own home and paying a disproportionate amount of their wages in rent.

The other element, which I have drawn attention to in past debates, is the way that, just to keep a roof over their heads, families are working every hour God sends, which unfortunately undermines family life as well. The grotesque imbalances in our economy are not an accident, or even the invisible hand of the market. They are a deliberate, ongoing Government policy—one that has gone on for the last four decades, at least, regardless of the party in Government.

I looked at the detailed analysis of what the cost of levelling up would be. To bring every UK nation and region up to London's level of funding would require an additional £30 billion in annual capital investment per year. Even to level up every nation and region to the current UK average, the capital spend required would be an additional £6 billion in funding.

To be successful, levelling up has to be about more than capital spend. It has to be about more than just physical infrastructure, important though that is. We need a comprehensive and holistic approach to building both the physical and the social capital of an area, but that cannot be done when local government funding from central Government is about £16 billion lower than it was in 2010. There has been a cumulative reduction of more than £100 billion in central Government funding for local councils over the last decade.

**Ian Byrne** (Liverpool, West Derby) (Lab): It is an honour to serve under your chairmanship, Mrs Miller. On the funding aspect, Liverpool has lost £450 million since 2010, with further cuts of £32 million expected in April. Levelling up rings hollow in Liverpool. The sustained attacks that we have seen, starting with the Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition in 2010, have ripped the heart out of the fabric of Liverpool, so levelling up is hollow rhetoric there. I look forward to the next Government spending review for local councils.

**John McDonnell:** The message I am trying to get across is that although the emphasis in Government announcements has been on capital spending, levelling up will not become a reality in cities like Liverpool and elsewhere unless we address the issue of council funding overall. When we debate the White Paper, I hope that we can have a serious and sensible debate about how, over time, we can address what has happened over the last 11 years. We can have a political knockabout about whether or not it was justified, but I think we just have to move on and look at how we can address the situation, perhaps being more creative than we have been in the past.

The situation is serious in Liverpool, but it is not just Liverpool. In recent years, we have seen three councils issue section 114 notices, while another dozen or so have had to call in exceptional financial support from the Government to avoid the same fate. I do not know whether the Minister saw the recent evidence session of the Public Accounts Committee, but we know that there are possibly dozens more councils in contact with the Department over their financial situation.

The issue of central Government funding has to be addressed. The figures are pretty stark. Since the 2015-16 financial year, local authorities have lost 41% of their central Government funding—equivalent to the loss of £8.7 billion a year. Although I accept that some of that has been offset by the retention of business rates and raising council tax above inflation in recent years, it has still left councils with significant real-terms losses in their overall spending power. It has had real consequences for all parts of the country.

According to the briefing provided by Unison, the local government union, councils in England have closed more than 859 children's centres since 2010, although that figure has been contested—some people think it is actually more. It listed 940 youth centres and 738 libraries that have been closed, while funding for more than 1,200 bus routes has been withdrawn. That has an impact on communities across the country that has to be addressed if we are going to genuinely level up.

I will give an example. It is difficult to see how local economies can be levelled up if childcare and support for parents is not available. How can we level up our town centres and high streets if people do not have a means of transport to get there, or even just basic public conveniences when they do? My argument is that, when we debate the levelling-up White Paper—I look forward to it—we need to debate both the revenue and capital funding that is needed. Let us look at one region, the north-west of England; this example will be relevant to my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Ian Byrne) and it is where I did the most intensive work on Labour's policies, talking with local communities to find out what was needed. Local authorities in the north-west of England are receiving £1.2 billion less per year in 2021-22 in central Government funding than they did in 2015-16; that is a 36% cut. The calculation is that the north-west would need an extra £3.47 billion per year in capital funding just to reach London's level. The north-west received nearly £500 less—well, £492 less—per person per year when compared with London.

We know of some councils that are so depleted by cuts that they did not have the in-house capacity to even submit bids for the levelling-up fund. These are funds that were allocated in the recent Budget, which we welcomed. We cannot have a begging-bowl approach, with councils fighting over scraps; we need a rising tide of funding that raises all local authority ships.

I want to talk about power. Levelling up must mean not just an injection of cash, but a redistribution of power as well. Councils need more than just greater resources in order to level up—they need to be given powers to do so. That is the message from all local authorities controlled by all political parties. I will watch with interest the Secretary of State's recently floated idea for further Mayors—or governors, as he said—covering more of the country. It will be interesting to see how that can be rolled out. I am not opposed to it. I am not happy with the mayoral principle, but it has been established and it seems anomalous that there are Mayors for cities but not for other areas.

Let us talk about now. We have devolved Governments in the nations, and a dozen or so city-region Mayors in England. I hope the Government will listen to the

demands from, for example, the Mayor of London for more powers. He is asking for more powers to set rent controls—powers which major cities around the world, from Berlin to New York, possess. Shelter, the housing charity, has recently published a report that explains the consequences of levelling up infrastructure investment without taking housing need into account. I will use my area as an example; the Minister is welcome to come down and visit and we could have a discussion on site if necessary. In my area, a consequence of the welcome multi-billion pound investment in Crossrail is that land and house prices have shot up. Without new council housing or rent controls, local people are being forced out of the local housing market. Alongside the building of more council housing, a Mayor with powers of rent control would really help level up in London and areas like mine.

I hope the Government are going to listen and back the Mayors who are seeking to re-regulate the buses in Greater Manchester, Liverpool city region and West Yorkshire. It is a great policy. It is about improving infrastructure that will increase private investment, it is about a modal shift that will improve carbon emissions and improve air quality, and it is about increasing active travel, which has health benefits as well. I point the Minister towards the recent reports from Green Alliance, a coming together of various national environmental groups. They have pointed out how much more could be done on the Government's climate change agenda if the powers and resources were made available to local government.

When I raised the issue before, Government Ministers have argued that council spending has been boosted by the retention of business rates and the ability to raise more through council tax in recent years. First of all, based on the National Audit Office's figures, it is likely that councils' overall spending power is now some £5 billion lower in real terms than it was in 2010. The Minister will also know that raising council tax has very unequal impacts: a 5% increase in Surrey raises about £38 million, while a 5% increase in Blackburn with Darwen raises £2.8 million. It is a similar story with business rate retention: councils with prosperous commercial centres can raise significant sums, whereas councils without such areas cannot.

As such, alongside discussing the levelling-up agenda in investment terms, it is now time to have a serious discussion in Government about a more radical reform of local government finance to provide a stable, locally determined income stream from councils. There have been discussions in all our political parties about options for doing so, but we need to bring those options forward more rapidly. For example, I am interested—as are a number of Conservative MPs—in some version of land value taxation that might transfer both resources and, more effectively, power to the local level.

I also want to raise the issue of debt, in the Liverpool context as well as that of other local authorities. We have a responsibility here: to be frank, central Government have encouraged local authorities to borrow, often heavily, to go into property deals in order to secure much-needed additional revenue income. The result is that the local government debt burden is now becoming crippling for some, which is why the Government should explore new mechanisms for debt relief for local authorities. I was here during the banking crash, and can remember when that whole exercise was undertaken and the bad debt bank was established to sort out the debts of the banks involved. It may well be that the most responsible thing at the moment is for the Government to take over some of that debt, and even write some of it off through a debt jubilee for some local authorities.

Finally, I am concerned that as the levelling-up policy programme is developed, it must be seen to be fair. We all have a responsibility on a cross-party basis to not allow even the perception of pork barrel politics to take hold in this country, which is why there must be the fullest openness, transparency, objectivity, and engagement in decision making about the distribution of resources. One proposal is to consider a Barnett formula-type approach, one that would be objectively based on population, to determine the distribution of capital investment alongside the local government finance formula. Another is the establishment of government structures that bring local government representatives into government more effectively. Some ideas have been floated on all sides, such as a new Cabinet sub-committee that invites Mayors and other representatives to participate, or—as suggested by the Local Government Association—a national taskforce on levelling up that, again, rebalances some of the relationship between local and central Government.

In conclusion, I hope that a central plank of the Government's levelling-up White Paper and the subsequent policy direction will be the empowering of local government to show that councils can play their role in levelling up our nations and regions. The Minister and the Government will not find local councils lacking, either in enthusiasm or in commitment.

5.14 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (Neil O'Brien):** It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mrs Miller. I congratulate the right hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell) on securing this very important debate. I am not sure whether he or I will be more alarmed to find that we are, as he suggested, in quite strong agreement on much of this agenda.

**John McDonnell:** I am so convincing, do not worry.

**Neil O'Brien:** The right hon. Gentleman is always convincing when he talks about the lost opportunities caused by parts of the economy overheating, which means that people cannot afford a house, whereas other parts of the economy are crying out for investment. I felt that his was an echo of the Prime Minister's speech, so we all find ourselves in at least a pretty high level of agreement on the challenge.

**John McDonnell:** Does the Minister recognise that the Prime Minister is my next-door constituency neighbour?

**Neil O'Brien:** I thank the right hon. Gentleman for that intervention. We are being run by a west London mafia.

As a lifelong advocate for ending the kinds of regional disparities that run through the country, I want to reiterate the importance that I, and the Government, attach to restoring a sense of local pride right across the country. I will start by stating a very obvious point,

*[Neil O'Brien]*

which is that local councils are an absolutely central part of our levelling-up agenda. They have to be. They have long been huge parts of the democratic fabric of this country and I firmly believe that our huge ambitions for levelling up will not be realised unless local leaders and communities are properly empowered to deliver for their local areas.

Levelling up must now go beyond the first stage of devolution. It must be a mission that gives local leaders and communities the tools they really need, as the right hon. Gentleman said, to take control of their own destiny, boost people's living standards and spread opportunity. It will not be an exercise in levelling down London or the south-east in order to lift up other areas; it will be one with a clear-eyed focus on using local leadership to spread opportunities to parts of the country that have long felt that Governments in successive decades have not been interested in their city or their region.

The levelling-up agenda will recognise that disparities are not just between everyone who lives north of Watford Gap and everyone else. Cookie-cutter policies are not going to bridge the divides that exist between Leeds and Bradford, between Blackpool and Manchester, and between different boroughs in London. We recognise that there are some of the same issues in Darlington and in Hayes and Harlington. We also recognise that levelling up—I agree with the right hon. Gentleman—is a major challenge that will take some time, but work is well under way.

Nobody understands the needs of a local area as well as the people elected to serve as the leadership of that local area in local councils. We are taking forward several programmes that will press ahead with meaningful devolution, including the new county deals that the right hon. Gentleman talked about, to spread devolution across the whole of England beyond the larger cities, and new funding streams to give people the financial firepower to make the changes they want to see in their communities. For example, we have agreements with 101 towns across England that have seen £2.4 billion allocated to local projects through the towns fund and the efforts we are making to resurrect our high streets as we continue to respond to the economic headwinds of the pandemic, with £100 million of combined investment from our welcome back fund and the reopening high streets safely fund.

Those investments are just the start. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor and the Treasury have shown that they are foursquare behind the levelling-up agenda with the recent spending review. As part of that review, we committed £1.7 billion in the first round of our flagship £4.8 billion levelling-up fund, backing 105 different initiatives across the country, from the South Derby growth zone to an upgrade to the ferries to the Isles of Scilly. Both received nearly £50 million from the fund. Other successful bids that we have been funding through the levelling-up fund include the Bolton College of Medical Sciences, the reopening of the world's oldest suspension bridge in County Durham, and the redevelopment of Leicester train station quite near to me. Those are examples of how the fund is flexible in backing the ambitions of different local places, whatever they may be. The funding builds on the foundations laid in the March Budget this year, with plans to bring regeneration, new prosperity and restored pride to 10 different places through the new freeports, which are levelling up in action. In fact, only three weeks ago Teesside became the first of those amazing freeports to open its doors for business and future investment from top-end employers.

In the time remaining, I would like to turn to local government finance. The right hon. Gentleman talked about the need to move on from the debates we had for a long time at the start of the 2010s. I think that is right. There is no point in re-rehearsing those arguments. We will not convince each other of our positions at this point. He talked about a rising tide of funding. We now have a rising tide of funding. For the last couple of years, our core spending power in local government has started to go up. At the spending review, the Treasury backed councils with an average annual increase in the core spending power of local government of 3% in real terms per year.

**Ian Byrne:** The issue when talking about levelling up and moving on from 2010 is that in 2022 the budget cuts affecting my city once again will mean that, potentially, four community libraries will be shut down in some of the poorest wards in the country. Does that equate to levelling up? Last week, a study by Feeding Liverpool found that a third of my city is experiencing food insecurity. Again, how that does chime with levelling up and moving on from 2010, if in 2022 we will still be facing savage austerity? Austerity kills, and austerity enables poverty.

**Neil O'Brien:** As I said, the core spending power of local government will be going up in real terms each year by 3%, on top of all the other things we are doing through the future high streets fund, the levelling-up fund and the forthcoming UK shared prosperity fund, to invest heavily in areas such as Liverpool and the wider Merseyside area. All those things are, at their heart, about investing in locally delivered early help for families—help of the exact kind that the hon. Gentleman would like.

**John McDonnell:** The example of Liverpool has been given. It would be incredibly helpful, just to bring the Minister up to speed on a specific example of what is happening, if he would meet a delegation of the Liverpool MPs, maybe with the council leader, to talk about issues there.

**Neil O'Brien:** I am planning to meet various leaders from Liverpool city region as part of the Mersey Dee alliance discussions, so I would be delighted to have that conversation. I am very proud of the progress we made for that city through the devolution deal, bringing new powers, new funding and the defragmentation of local government that I think we all agree on in principle.

In the months ahead we will set out in more detail our plans for the levelling-up agenda, with the White Paper that will give us the long-term blueprint, but that is not the end of the story. We have a levelling up Department that will continue to power ahead with this agenda over the coming years. The Prime Minister already gave a clear indication of our position in July when he said we take a flexible approach to devolution, so local leaders in our great cities and historic towns have the tools they need to make things happen for their communities.

Exceptional Mayors are already making a huge difference. If anyone wants to see levelling up in action, I suggest they take a trip to Teesside where, during his four years at the helm, Ben Houchen has managed to secure a brand-new economic campus in Darlington with civil servants from the Treasury, moving the Tees crossing to alleviate congestion and bringing the Teesside airport into public ownership, on top of the freeport that I mentioned. That shows that local areas do not need to be micromanaged out of SW1; they can get ahead if they are given the financial power and the local powers and leadership that they need.

There is no reason we cannot bottle and replicate the brand of leadership embodied in people such as Ben Houchen and Andy Street, our fantastic West Midlands Mayor, and apply it to other areas of the country, and so use local leadership and local government to drive forward this incredibly important levelling-up agenda that we all agree on.

*Question put and agreed to.*

## Magnitsky Sanctions: Human Rights Abuses

*[Relevant documents: e-petition 554150, Implement sanctions against the Nigerian Government and officials, e-petition 300146, Impose sanctions on China over its treatment of Uyghur Muslims, and e-petition 585237, Sanction Hong Kong officials responsible for human rights violations.]*

5.23 pm

**Mrs Maria Miller (in the Chair):** Before we begin, I remind Members that they are expected to wear face coverings when they are not speaking in the debate, in line with guidance. I also remind Members to have a lateral flow test twice a week if they come to the parliamentary estate. Please be aware of one another as you move in and out of the room.

5.24 pm

**Chris Bryant** (Rhondda) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered Magnitsky sanctions and human rights abuses.

It is a great delight to serve under your chairmanship, Mrs Miller, and always a delight to be in the same room as you.

If global Britain is to mean anything, it has to mean a passionate commitment by the United Kingdom, in every corner of the globe, to liberty, personal freedom, a fair trial, the rule of law, freedom from torture, freedom from slavery, freedom of association, freedom of religion, freedom of speech and the right to a family life. Sometimes that will be inconvenient for us and for other countries. We may want strong trading partnerships with Colombia or Saudi Arabia, but we will always find it difficult to do business where human rights are trampled underfoot.

I have been banging on about all this for many years, and I will explain where it started. It goes back to 1986 when I was living in post-dictatorship Argentina. One night I was having a drink with a friend, who I knew had had a difficult time during the dictatorship, when someone came in and sat at the next table to us. A few moments later, my friend disappeared. I presumed he had just gone to the toilet, but he did not come back for a long time. I went to look for him. He was in a shuddering mess on the floor of the toilets. I said, "What's wrong?" He said, "That man at the table next to us tortured me for four months." I asked him how he could possibly know that, because he had told me that he was blindfolded throughout that time.

My friend then said, "Well, the thing is, if somebody has every single day for four months grabbed you, shoved your face into a bucket of shitty ice cold water until you nearly drown, has tied you to a metal bed and applied electrodes to your tongue, the back of your ears and your testicles, and has beaten you senseless every single day for four months, you get to know not just what their voice sounds like or the smell of their breath, but the way they come into a room and sit down at a table. That's how I know." Ever since that day, I have thought how fortunate we are in this country to enjoy liberties and freedoms, which are guaranteed to us by our democracy and by battles that people have fought in previous centuries.

*[Chris Bryant]*

That is why I still fight today to end human rights abuses. I am proud that, in memory of the lawyer Sergei Magnitsky, a suite of Magnitsky sanctions is now available in British law. I pay tribute to the Government for introducing them. For me, building a "network of liberty", to use the Foreign Secretary's phrase from this morning, must mean more than just expanding free trade. It must mean expanding freedom. Sometimes, I have to say, it has felt like the Government have been reluctant to act. How many times did we have to urge the Foreign Secretary to act on Hong Kong? I still find it perplexing that Carrie Lam is not on any list. Why is the UK list of those sanctioned so much shorter than the US version? Do they care more than we do about human rights? I do not think so.

As co-chair of the new all-party parliamentary group on Magnitsky sanctions, I asked the Government to consider some names. My co-chair and I are going to be doing this on a fairly regular basis—that is our aim. It is important that we have privilege in Parliament. We do not want to abuse that privilege, but we want to be able to speak without fear or favour on human rights abuses around the world.

Let me start with China and the situation in Xinjiang, where—

**Layla Moran** (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD): Will the hon. Member give way?

**Chris Bryant:** That was very quick, but yes.

**Layla Moran:** I want to thank the hon. Gentleman for his speech and for giving way. I want to put on record the Liberal Democrats' support for the Magnitsky sanctions. Indeed, we welcome the cross-party support on this issue, which is shown in this room.

Members will be aware that the Uyghur Tribunal is going to report tomorrow. In that tribunal, Uyghur families have given harrowing stories of what they have suffered. Does he agree that tomorrow would be an ideal time for the Minister to announce sanctions against Chinese Communist party officials such as Chen Quanguo, who, as the Communist party secretary of Xinjiang, will have overseen these crimes against humanity? We all know that those would potentially amount to the crime of genocide.

**Chris Bryant:** That was pretty much going to be my next but one paragraph. Of course, I completely agree. The Uyghur population have been and continue to be subject to mass detention, forced sterilisation, forced abortion, the forced removal of children and other forms of torture. To my mind and, I think, in law, that is genocide. It meets all the criteria that are laid down in the conventions. The UK Government have so far omitted to sanction several of those most responsible for these atrocities, all of whom have been sanctioned by the United States. I understand that some of the detail on that has already been provided by non-governmental organisations to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, and I am sure the Minister has that.

The hon. Member for Oxford West and Abingdon (Layla Moran) mentioned Chen Quanguo. He is referred to as the architect of the human rights abuses in both Xinjiang and Tibet. He is the party secretary to the Communist party in the region. He is responsible for the mass detention, torture, and cruel and degrading treatment of over 1 million people from ethnic and religious minorities. I still find it perplexing that parts of the middle east, where there are fellow Muslims, still fail to condemn that.

The recently released Xinjiang papers confirm Quanguo's role in directing the Government's policies in the region and he should be sanctioned.

**Afzal Khan** (Manchester, Gorton) (Lab): My hon. Friend is making an excellent speech. The Xinjiang papers talk about Chen Quanguo and the fact he was assisted by deputies, Zhu Hailun and Zhu Changjie, in implementing the mass internment of the Uyghurs. I understand the Government have sanctioned four Chinese officials, but that is not enough. Does my hon. Friend agree that the Government must now take steps to introduce further Magnitsky sanctions, including on Chen Quanguo, the architect of the Xinjiang genocide, and his deputies?

**Chris Bryant:** I am normally very reluctant to draw direct parallels with what happened in Nazi Germany, but when we see detention camps, people being taken away from their families and people being identified by virtue of their genetic make-up, it feels remarkably similar. If the world chooses to turn away at this point, in the end it will regret it.

There is an important point here about the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, which is known as the XPCC. It is a state-owned paramilitary organisation, known for its involvement in the mass imprisonment and severe physical abuse of the Uyghurs, and its use of forced labour to produce the majority of the region's cotton. As the recent report by the Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice shows, this cotton ends up in the global supply chain and people often cannot spot that the clothes they are wearing come from slave labour.

While the UK has recognised this use of forced labour and sanctioned a subsidiary of the XPCC, it has yet to sanction the corporation as a whole, despite the fact that it controls large swathes of the region's industries, associated with widespread labour abuses. In relation to that, it is important that Peng Jiarui and Sun Jinlong, who have both held senior positions in the XPCC and have had command and control over the arbitrary detention, ill treatment and forced labour of Uyghur Muslims, should also be added to the Magnitsky list.

Huo Liujun, the former party secretary for the public security bureau in the region, oversaw the use of artificial intelligence to racially profile, track and imprison members of the Uyghur community. Recent reports indicate this same system was used to target and forcibly sterilise Uyghur women. He should also be on the list.

Let me turn to Iran. As many Members will know, Iran's arbitrary detention, torture and ill treatment of foreign and dual nationals for diplomatic leverage over other states has escalated since 1979, with state hostage taking becoming an institutionalised part of its foreign policy. We have seen this most notably with some of our own nationals, including Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, who is being held hostage in Iran and is now spending her sixth Christmas away from her husband, Richard Ratcliffe,

and their daughter, Gabriella. Also, Anoosheh Ashoori has now been detained in Iran for four and a half years. Our hearts go out to them.

I understand that detailed evidence about this has already been provided to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, but let me list some people who I think should be added to the sanction list. Ali Ghanaatkar has acted as head of interrogations and as judge in Evin prison. In his role, he has been involved in the ill treatment of detainees, particularly in the use of forceful interrogations and threats, and in bringing false charges against them. He should be on the list.

Gholamreza Ziaei is the former head of Evin prison, which has become synonymous with torture and death and is where a number of British nationals, including Nazanin and Anoosheh, have been detained. As the head of the prison, he was responsible for the inhuman and degrading treatment of prisoners and was sanctioned by the European Union in April this year. He has been sanctioned by the EU, but not yet by us. I think he should be on the list.

Ali Rezvani is an Iranian state media journalist for the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-controlled 20:30 News. He has not only been involved in the interrogation of detainees but has revealed detainees' interrogation files, broadcast forced confessions, forcibly detained family photos and spread misinformation regarding political prisoners, dissidents and hostages. He has peddled propaganda against victims to justify and encourage their ill treatment, thereby promoting, inciting and supporting Iran's practices. He should be on the list.

On 25 October 2021, the military staged a coup in Sudan, overthrowing the joint civilian-military transitional Government. Since then, violence has escalated rapidly, with reports of the military torturing and killing protestors and carrying out enforced disappearances. It all sounds remarkably like Argentina. Again, I understand that evidence has been provided to the FCDO, but let me give some names. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan is the leader and public face of the military coup in Khartoum. Security forces under his command targeted activists, members of resistance committees and journalists, ordering their arbitrary detention or enforced disappearance. Al-Burhan has also implemented an ongoing internet blackout, trying to prevent news of his human rights abuses from leaving Sudan. He has failed, but he should be on the list.

Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as Hemedti, is the commander of the Rapid Support Forces, previously known as the Janjaweed—Government-supported militias that committed gross human rights abuses in Darfur. Under his leadership, the RSF played a critical role in the planning and execution of the coup and has repeatedly used excessive force to beat and kill protesting civilians in Khartoum. He should be on the list. Abdul Rahim Hamdan Dagalo is reportedly an active member of what security analysts describe as a small security council responsible for the planning and execution of the coup. The council has directed the militarised response to the protest, including the use of live fire against peaceful protestors. He should be on the list.

I turn finally to Rwanda. In August last year, Paul Rusesabagina, the subject of the film "Hotel Rwanda", which many Members may have seen, and a vocal critic of President Kagame and a cancer sufferer, was drugged, bound and forcefully returned to Rwanda, where he has been imprisoned and tortured. I have met his daughters online, and it is a very upsetting story. A large number of international human rights organisations have recognised this case as one enforced disappearance. Two individuals are directly involved.

The first is Johnston Busingye, Minister of Justice at the time of Mr Rusesabagina's arrest and under whose authority he was detained and tortured. During a televised interview, Johnston Busingye admitted that the Government of Rwanda paid for the flight that transported Mr Rusesabagina back to Rwanda. He has since been removed as Minister of Justice and appointed high commissioner to the United Kingdom. As far as I understand, the UK Government have still not given their agrément to the appointment. I hope they will announce today that they have absolutely no intention of doing so. He should be on a list of sanctioned individuals, not of people to be escorted to Buckingham Palace to have their credentials agreed by Her Majesty. Secondly, Colonel Jeannot Ruhunga, secretary general of the Rwanda Investigation Bureau, was also heavily involved with that unlawful kidnapping and the associated human rights violations. All these names should be added to the list of those sanctioned by the United Kingdom.

**Gareth Thomas** (Harrow West) (Lab/Co-op): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for securing the debate and for his work as one of the co-chairs of the APPG. If I am fortunate enough to catch your eye, Mrs Miller, I hope to raise the case of General Shavendra Silva, current chief of defence staff in Sri Lanka and apparently responsible for gross human rights violations including torture and extra-judicial killings. I appreciate my hon. Friend's need to focus his remarks today, but I ask his APPG to consider that case at a further session down the line.

**Chris Bryant:** My co-chair, the right hon. Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Sir Iain Duncan Smith), is telling me that we will, but my hon. Friend makes a really good point, which is that we need a proper process whereby we can feed into the Government all the suggestions and concerns that individual Members have from their connections with other parts of the world, and get good outcomes.

Right at the beginning of the process, I think I asked the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May), something like 27 times when the Government would introduce Magnitsky sanctions. We now have them in place, but the whole idea was that there would be a parliamentary process for assessing who else should be added. We want to work with the Government to achieve that, because in the end we all share our humanity. If a child goes hungry in Botswana, that is a problem for the children of this country. If somebody is deprived of their freedom in Russia, Chechnya or any part of Africa, that is a matter for our freedom too. We all share in the same humanity.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mrs Maria Miller (in the Chair):** Order. I plan to call the Front-Bench spokespeople at around 6.4 pm. We have four speakers on the list. If you do the maths, five minutes each means that everyone will get in. I call Iain Duncan Smith.

5.41 pm

**Sir Iain Duncan Smith:** It is a pleasure to serve under your stewardship, Mrs Miller. As was referred to earlier, I am a co-chair of the APPG and we are in complete agreement about this. I will résumé the list, as it were, though not in the detail laid out by my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant)—and he is my hon. Friend in this case. We should do so without fear of retribution, because that is the natural form of debate. I say that as someone who is already sanctioned by the Chinese Government. My answer to them is: "Yeah, so what?" Several countries have been mentioned. I congratulate the Government on having introduced the Magnitsky sanctions. There is no question but that they have shown a willingness to take some actions, and we have put some people on the sanctions list. However, as has been said, we are not going far and fast enough, and that is the whole point of the APPG and of today's debate.

I will start with China. As I said, I am sanctioned. Today the Prime Minister said categorically, as I understood it, that the policy of Her Majesty's Government is to have a diplomatic boycott of the winter Olympic games in China. I think I was not alone in hearing him say that. He even illustrated it by saying clearly that not only Ministers but officials would not attend. Thus it is, de facto, a diplomatic boycott. I put that on the record and hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take back to the Foreign Office the clarity of that statement. As far as we in the Chamber are concerned, and now publicly, this country now has an official diplomatic boycott of the winter Olympics, and there can be no difference of opinion on that matter.

The abuses in China are phenomenal. It leaves all other countries behind it. The level, scale and ferocity of the abuses is unprecedented in modern times, when we think about the Uyghurs and the genocide. I know that the Government do not want to say genocide because they stand by the legal stuff about having to get it either through the UN or the International Criminal Court, but China is not a member of one and we know that it blocks the other. Every other country that I know of—many of great potency, such as the Americans—has declared it a genocide.

The hon. Member for Oxford West and Abingdon (Layla Moran) is quite right that tomorrow there will be the final outcome of the tribunal. There is no question in my mind that new names will come from that in due course, and we will look to get them sanctioned, but there is the genocide of the Uyghurs, the oppression and suppression of the Tibetans over decades, and forced labour camps. We should actually call them what they are, which is concentration camps, not forced labour camps. Why do we try to find another phrase that takes the meaning out of it? As my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda said earlier, they are concentration camps and this is redolent of that terrible time when we turned our back on so many, and so many people died as a result. In addition there are the Christians, the Falun Gong and now the Inner Mongolians. China is arresting and persecuting peaceful democracy campaigners on a daily basis, threatening its neighbours, taking over the South China sea, killing Indian soldiers and threatening to declare war on Taiwan.

I do not know how much more a country can do to tell us its direction of travel. It is not as though the Chinese are hiding it or that it is a secret from us any more—they are very clear. We need to react to that and to make it clear that they will not get away with it. That is why I will repeat the names that have just been mentioned.

In China, we have Chen Quanguo, the Xinjiang Communist party secretary who has been talked about and is the architect of and key to the whole design of what is being done. He was also the key to what was done in Tibet—the Minister will no doubt make that point. We also have the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps. It is interesting, and unusual, to ban an organisation through Magnitsky sanctions, but it is state owned and clearly a paramilitary organisation, and it is up to its eyeballs in what is going on in Xinjiang.

We also have Sun Jinlong, who has a senior position in XPCC, as mentioned earlier, and very clearly part of the Uyghur genocide suppression. Huo Liujun is the former party secretary of the Xinjiang public security bureau. Critically, he has overseen the area of artificial intelligence and racial profiling—how can we say now, in this day and age, that people are being profiled and chased because of their race? It is almost like reading a book about the 1930s.

In going to Iran, I will not make any more of what has been made of it already, because we are limited in time, except to say simply that Iran is another despotic state that cares nothing for human rights or the rule of law. Again, I will repeat the names that have already been mentioned. Ali Ghanaatkar is head of interrogations and the judge at Evin prison. With the ill treatment of detainees and all the rest that has been mentioned, that man should be on the list. Gholamreza Ziaei, the former head of Evin prison, should also be on the list—no question at all about that—as should Ali Rezvani, an Iranian state media journalist who has also been involved in the interrogation and brutalisation of detainees.

In Sudan, Abdel Fattah al-Burhan—his name has been mentioned, but I repeat it—is the leader and public face of the military coup in Khartoum. He is a brutal individual who commands security forces and is hugely implicated in the ongoing arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance of key players in that area. Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo is commander of the Rapid Support Forces, known for being the Government-sponsored militias that committed gross human rights abuses in Darfur. Many others have been mentioned, but I want to come to Abdul Rahim Hamdan Dagalo, who is reported to be an active member of what security analysts have described as the small security council. He is a brutal individual responsible for the planning and execution of the coup, plus the detention and torturing of many people in that country.

Finally, I mention Johnston Busingye in Rwanda. I reiterate this point: what exactly do the Rwandan Government think they are doing in nominating that well-known and abusive individual who has been responsible for so much of what is going on in that country as an ambassador to London. Goodness gracious me, I have no idea! Do they think that the UK is an easy touch, for some reason, and that they can easily get that individual in here and it will all be all right? We need to see a strong statement from our Government, first and foremost, and secondly—

**Mrs Maria Miller (in the Chair):** Order. Will the right hon. Gentleman bring his comments to a close?

**Sir Iain Duncan Smith:** I am just finishing now, Mrs Miller.

Finally, I name Colonel Jeannot Ruhunga, secretary-general of the Rwanda Investigation Bureau, heavily involved in detention and torture. I simply say to my hon. Friend the Minister that the reason I am repeating the list mentioned by my co-chair, my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda, is that, whatever happens after this, I want to share a part of that. The Government must now sanction those people, at least as a start.

**Mrs Maria Miller (in the Chair):** I call Afzal Khan.

**Afzal Khan:** I did not wish to speak, Mrs Miller.

**Mrs Maria Miller (in the Chair):** You were on the list. I call Gareth Thomas.

5.49 pm

**Gareth Thomas** (Harrow West) (Lab/Co-op): I cannot compete with the quality of the two previous speeches. They were both excellent. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant) for securing the debate.

I simply want to raise the case of one particular individual, who now holds the position of chief of the defence staff and commander of the Sri Lankan army, General Shavendra Silva. Those who have followed the terrible events in Sri Lanka at the end of the conflict in 2009 will be aware that evidence has emerged over the last 12 years of widespread human rights abuses at that time, including extrajudicial killings and extensive use of torture, deliberate attacks on civilian targets, including hospitals, and the use of weapons that have been banned internationally, such as white phosphorus and cluster munitions.

Despite repeated efforts by the international community, the Sri Lankan Government have resisted any efforts to bring to account any of those responsible for those abuses. Despite their best efforts, however, groups of individuals and non-governmental organisations have chronicled the evidence of those human rights abuses.

I hope that the Minister is aware that on 9 April the International Truth and Justice Project submitted to her Department a 50-page dossier setting out General Shavendra Silva's complicity in the human rights violations that took place in the north of Sri Lanka towards the end of 2008 through to May 2009. General Silva was then commander of the elite 58 Division of the Sri Lankan army, which was very much involved in the conflict.

The US has already imposed a travel ban on General Silva and his family, having found him accountable through command responsibility for

"gross violations of human rights, namely extrajudicial killings, by the 58th Division of the Sri Lanka Army".

The question is why we as a country have not followed suit and imposed similar restrictions on Mr Silva, particularly around travel but also around financial assets and so on, or used the tools available to us under the Magnitsky package of measures to hold at least one person properly responsible for those terrible abuses at the end of that conflict.

Although the Minister will quite rightly feel a responsibility to answer the questions and points put by my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda, I will be very interested to hear, as will my constituents and many others across the UK, what her Department's reaction is to the dossier that the ITJP submitted back in April.

5.53 pm

**Tim Loughton** (East Worthing and Shoreham) (Con): I do not know whether I have to declare an interest as a fellow sanctioned MP. Slightly ironically, it means that I have a negative financial interest in this issue, because if I had any assets in China they would have been frozen, but let me put that on the record for good measure.

I know that I am very much the secondary or support act to the two proposers of the motion: my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Sir Iain Duncan Smith) and the hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant). I congratulate them on securing this debate and on their work with the all-party parliamentary group. This is a really important subject and I am very proud that we have taken a lead with the Magnitsky sanctions that have already been announced. However, I am frustrated that we have not gone further and faster, and if the APPG can continue to put pressure on the Government to do so, it will be doing very good work indeed.

We must become a leader in the way in which we apply and enact Magnitsky sanctions, to encourage as many other like-minded Governments around the world as possible to follow suit. It is really important that we maintain a multilateral and co-ordinated approach, so that the impact is such that the targets of the sanctions and the countries in which, in most cases, they are part of the regime simply have to sit up and take note, causing them maximum disturbance, annoyance and inconvenience. It is really important that we do not just name people under Magnitsky sanctions, but follow through to make sure that they are very effective and have the desired impacts, so that they are not just a box-ticking exercise. We should also be doing a lot more to investigate their assets. I am afraid that London has too often become the home to some of those despotic regimes and the despotic people who prop them up through property and other, largely hidden, assets. We should be redoubling our efforts to investigate the laundering of money through London, particularly the London property market.

I am not going to alarm the *Hansard* Reporters by going through a whole list of names that are difficult to pronounce and even harder to spell, but I will reinforce the references made by both opening speakers to Chen Quanguo, the architect of the genocide in Tibet. It is under his watch that many of the more than 1 million Tibetans who have lost their lives since the invasion by the Chinese Communist party Government back in 1959 have died. He has overseen the eclipse of the teaching of the language, the culture, and the religion of many ethnic Tibetans, putting hundreds of thousands of nomadic farmers—who were simply getting on with their lives in the ways that generations of their ancestors have done for centuries—into concentration camps under the guise of retraining, slaughtering their herds and forcing them into a Sinicised lifestyle that is very alien to many of those people. That was the training ground for what he is now doing in Xinjiang, and we have heard all about the forced sterilisation, the concentration camps—let us call them out for what they are—the slave labour farming of cotton, and other things.

*[Tim Loughton]*

Magnitsky sanctions must be just the start of our clamping down on all of those things. There is a limit to what we can do, but we can have trade boycotts, we can have limitations on businesses doing business in certain parts of the world, and we can, I hope, have a full diplomatic boycott of China's winter Olympics. When the Prime Minister refers to an effective boycott, and the Foreign Secretary repeats those words in a meeting I was in a little earlier, that can only mean a full boycott, which must include diplomats based in Beijing. It would be absurd if UK Ministers, officials and members of the royal family did not go to China but our ambassador in Beijing still turned up to the Olympics, as she apparently wants to. That must be made absolutely clear.

The second person I will re-emphasise, who has already been mentioned, is Carrie Lam. It is inconceivable that she should not be on a list, given that we are seeing the impact of the oppression that is snuffing out freedom, liberty and entrepreneurship in that country now, because many Hong Kong citizens are already coming to this country. We welcome them, and we will welcome many more who are fleeing the crushing abuses against their freedoms.

I will conclude—leaving plenty of time for all of our questions to be answered—by asking three questions of the Minister. First, how does the Foreign Office decide who goes on the sanctions list? What information does it require? Is there some sort of algorithm that decides it? If so, the list that the algorithm has come up with does not, strangely, include some names. What more could we, including the APPG, do to provide information that might make the Foreign Office's job easier, making sure that the right people and more people go on that list?

Secondly, and really importantly, how do we co-ordinate our list with other countries? I know that when the initial Magnitsky names were announced, it was on the same day as some announcements were made by the EU and the US. As I said earlier, it is really important that these sanctions are internationally co-ordinated, but there is a question as to why the UK has sanctioned only 24% of the individuals and entities already sanctioned under the Magnitsky sanctions regime of the United States. We have common interests and we share the same values, so why have we not applied those sanctions to three quarters of the people who the United States thinks they should be applied to? Have we just not got round to it yet? Is the Foreign Office under-resourced in examining their credentials? Do we not trust the judgment of our allies in the United States? Some explanation of how the system works would be helpful because this is a really important innovation and a powerful tool that the UK can proudly use to stand up for the values, freedoms and liberties that we take for granted here, but which, alas, many other countries do not. Working with those like-minded countries, we can bring the change, and the freedom and the liberty, to many people who do not enjoy the luxuries that we do in this country.

6 pm

**Martin Docherty-Hughes** (West Dunbartonshire) (SNP): It is great to see you in the Chair, Mrs Miller. Let me congratulate the hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant) on gaining the debate and the members of the all-party group on the work that they have undertaken to highlight the deep and profoundly worrying human rights abuses across the world.

I am sure we all agree that the abuse of individuals, political and religious groups, and, indeed, minorities across the world by a range of global state actors is well documented, but less well documented are the lesser-known non-state actors now participating in the field of human rights abuse. Nevertheless, the systematic utilisation of global finance to enable those crimes against humanity in many ways remains cloaked in secrecy, underpinned by the rightly named—at least as I see it—dark money.

Dark money is an issue that I and many of my SNP colleagues have taken a keen interest in since 2015. Like the hon. Member for Rhondda in relation to today's debate, we do so for good reason, believing in an open, transparent political process founded on the rule of law, and believing in parliamentary democracy—a model that seeks to hold Government to account for their actions.

It used to be said that all roads lead to Rome—a very lovely place indeed—yet from my perspective in the political world today, especially in the age of dark money, the road always seems to lead to the Kremlin. The debate takes its name from the late Sergei Magnitsky, a Russian lawyer to whom the hon. Gentleman alluded. Magnitsky uncovered large-scale tax fraud while working for Hermitage Capital based here in London. Sergei, as we know, died in a Russian prison owing to mistreatment.

It is also well known that the previous Government believed that the then existing fraud legislation was actually enough. In February 2018, the then Foreign Secretary, now the Prime Minister, argued that the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Bill provided enough powers. At least some of us would say that, luckily, the then Prime Minister recognised the opportunity to improve existing legislation, and the tone changed with the Government saying they would consider changes to Bill, which has been mentioned by Members previously. We are glad that those came forward.

During the debate, various Members have highlighted some of the most egregious abuses of the dignity of the rights of people and peoples across the globe, from the profoundly familiar way in which the Uyghur people are treated and herded by the Communist party of China to the killing and torture of protestors during the military coup in Sudan. Given that Members have gone into some detail on those points, I will not give another detailed exposition of inhumanity, so let me follow the money that might finance those abuses and undermine democratic governance. Specifically, I want to refer to Scottish shell companies that have siphoned billions of dollars, including from the former Soviet Union, and, in particular, the link, cited by David Leask of openDemocracy, to an Uzbek business empire.

Mr Leask highlights the fact that in a rather unassuming southside-of-Glasgow trademark tenement lies the official headquarters of a company known as Yardrock Development. The investigation by openDemocracy revealed that the company in question is linked to the Uzbek President, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, and it will come as no surprise that this company is a Scottish limited partnership—a company structure known globally as the UK's "homegrown secrecy vehicle". Indeed, in recent years, some SLPs have been blacklisted by the United Nations Development Programme, and even by the World Bank, given the ongoing concerns relating to

their ability to undermine transparency and good governance. SLPs are safe ports in a storm in murky waters for dark money. They are harbours offering access to doubtful financial probity and dodgy dealings.

Let us go back to Mr Leask's investigation, which states that:

"In a report published this month, UzInvestigations, a group led by Professor Kristian Lasslett of Ulster University and supported by the Uzbek Forum for Human Rights, found that eight SLPs, including Yardrock Development, owned a total of more than $128m worth of equity in Orient Group companies… UzInvestigations said the Orient Group had risen in prominence with the support of the Uzbek state"

and its leadership—a company with direct links to the President via one of the owning group's founders and shareholders, Oybek Umarov, who is

"a brother of Otabek Umarov, deputy head of the Presidential Security Service and Mirziyoyev's son-in-law".

Additionally, UzInvestigations has highlighted that another senior executive is even the

"son of a serving minister."

Mr Leask's investigation also states:

"Umida Niyazova, director of the Uzbek Forum for Human Rights, echoed Lasslett's concerns. 'As more wealth accumulates in the hands of those close to senior state officials, the link between extreme economic and political power becomes stronger,' she said, adding: 'This is a significant threat to any prospect of democratisation in Uzbekistan.'"

This is a slippery slope of authoritarianism, ably assisted by nepotism and Scottish limited partnerships. If allowed to go unchallenged, corruption in a political process undermines the rule of law, undermines the courts and undermines public confidence in liberal democracy. Corruption opens the door to the abuse of the person, a collective of people, a culture and a political movement. It emboldens those who use dark money to facilitate it. The role of SLPs in Uzbekistan cannot be glibly ignored.

We need only look at what is happening in Hong Kong, which has been mentioned briefly. Hong Kong might not have been in the news as much as it was previously, but that is largely due to the Communist party's national security law. Let us be under no illusion: what we are witnessing is the death of democracy in Hong Kong.

**Mrs Maria Miller (in the Chair):** Order. May I encourage the hon. Gentleman to wrap up his speech?

**Martin Docherty-Hughes:** I will indeed, Mrs Miller; I will come to a conclusion in just a moment.

What we are seeing in Hong Kong are freedoms being destroyed and the rule of law, democracy and the right to freedom of expression being totally undermined by the Communist party. Will the Minister give us some clarity on the position on Hong Kong and those in the Communist party of Hong Kong? Can the Minister state that the Government recognise the impact of Scottish limited partnerships on the future of democracy—not only on these islands, but in Uzbekistan—and their role in facilitating the movement of finance that is used to undermine human rights across the globe?

6.7 pm

**Stephen Doughty** (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairpersonship, Mrs Miller. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant), everyone in the all-party parliamentary group and all Members who have contributed to the debate on the many serious issues that they have raised, and on the work that they are doing to highlight individuals who they believe should be sanctioned under the Magnitsky regime. I reiterate the official Opposition's previous welcome to the Government's implementation of the regime, which many in this House had long called for, including some in this room and the Opposition. I put on the record again our heartfelt condolences to the family of Sergei Magnitsky and I salute all those who have campaigned in his honour.

Tragically, human rights abuses are on the rise globally. Unfortunately, as we have seen, the pandemic has exacerbated such abuses around the world: criminals have been using the global disarray as a vessel to broaden their operations and corruption, and dictators have been using the pandemic as an excuse to crush political dissent. Indeed, 70% of the countries covered by the Economist Intelligence Unit's democracy index have recorded a decline in their overall democracy scores, with the lowest scores since 2006. The Opposition have pledged to put human rights at the heart of our international policies with consistency and with a commitment and resolve to act to defend liberties, the rights of all around the world and our international obligations. This debate is therefore very welcome.

The Magnitsky sanctions have given us the power to stop violations against civilians without subjecting them to the consequences of broader-brush sanctions, which could harm them. They provide accountability, a deterrent against carrying out gross violations of human rights, compliance with international human rights law, respect for human rights, and respect for democracy, the rule of law and good governance.

We know that sanctions work and have a significant impact, especially if we adopt them in further partnership with allies. They have little impact if they are just used unilaterally, but when we work in concert with our allies, such as the United States and European Union, they can have a huge impact. Together, the UK, the US, the EU and Canada represent one third of global GDP, yet they are also the locations where billions of pounds' worth of dirty blood money passes through. The potential to have an impact on individuals responsible for human rights abuses and corruption is at our fingertips, not least those who use London as their bolthole, as has been referred to.

It is welcome that corruption has been included in the regime of offences for which sanctions can be applied under the 2021 regulations. We hope that will act as a huge deterrent to the activity that sees £100 billion illegally flowing through the UK every year, according to the National Crime Agency. We have seen the FCDO designate 49 individuals with sanctions, including visa restrictions and asset freezes: Saudis involved in the death of Jamal Khashoggi, Russians involved in the murder of Sergei Magnitsky, Myanmar generals involved in genocide against the Rohingya and those involved in North Korean concentration camps.

A year later, we saw 78 designations identified by Redress, with 24 sanctions specifically on the basis of corruption. They included those in Russia, the Guptas in relation to South Africa, Sudanese businessmen and Latin Americans involved in bribery. I understand that the FCDO will not publish the list of individuals it is investigating to designate for sanctions. I appreciate the

*[Stephen Doughty]*

reasons for that but I agree with Members that the sanctions regime is not going far enough with the individuals designated. There is a great contrast between the UK, which has applied only 78 designations this year, and the US, which has designated 340 individuals. As the hon. Member for East Worthing and Shoreham (Tim Loughton) said, the UK sanctioned only 24% of individuals and entities already sanctioned by the United States Magnitsky regime. We must go further.

Many important examples have been raised today; I hope the Minister will listen to them all. I want to draw attention to a few others. My former brief related to sub-Saharan Africa; my understanding is that sanctions have been issued only relating to South Africa and Gambia, when of course there are many other individuals who should be dealt with. We heard of Sudan; I want to draw the Minister's attention to the situation of Eritrea and the horrific human rights abuses, including horrific sexual violence and sexual human rights abuses, taking place in Ethiopia. I hope the Minister will actively consider individuals who have been involved in perpetrating crimes there and, of course, the wider crimes by the Eritrean regime against its own citizens.

We have heard about Sudan and Rwanda, and we should be considering locations from Cameroon to Zimbabwe when it comes to individuals responsible for heinous acts, as well as Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. We have rightly heard a huge amount of attention on China and Hong Kong; there have only been three designations against officials in the Chinese regime, despite horrific abuses against the Uyghur population. I agree with colleagues who raised the situation of Chen Quanguo—a prime example of an individual who should face sanctions. It is absurd that the US has designated that individual but we have not.

I hope the Minister will listen closely. We have heard excellent contributions about Sri Lanka. I have raised in this place other regimes, including Bahrain in the middle east. We also heard today of Iran. We need consistency in policies. If we are to apply sanctions, we cannot cosy up to regimes in other ways. Let us look at the situation of Saudi Arabia, which the former shadow Foreign Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Wigan (Lisa Nandy), raised in relation to Saudi acquisition of assets here. I also want to raise concern about parliamentary scrutiny. They have that in the United States Congress; we should have it here.

I hope the Minister can outline the practical ways in which we can provide information confidentially—not just in debates such as this, with due regard to privilege—and how we will work across Government to ensure that information is fed in from all Government Departments, not just the FCDO.

6.13 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (Wendy Morton):** I thank the hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant) for tabling this debate, and for his valuable co-operation as chair of the all-party parliamentary group, along with the other colleagues on the APPG. I am grateful to all hon. Members for their insightful contributions. I will try to address all the points raised and the countries mentioned within the time that I have.

On 6 July 2020, the Government established the global human rights sanctions regime under the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018. The regime gave the UK a powerful new tool to hold to account those involved in serious human rights violations or abuses. It was intended to target individuals and entities involved in serious human rights violations or abuses, rather than entire countries.

Our global human rights sanctions regime reinforces our ability to defend the rules-based international system. It complements and enhances our global leadership on the promotion and protection of human rights around the world and enables us to use asset freezes and travel bans against those involved in serious human rights violations and abuses and those who profit or benefit from them. The human rights included in the scope of the regime are the right to life, the right not be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, and the right to be free from slavery and forced labour.

Since launching our global human rights sanctions just under a year ago, the Government have designated nearly 80 individuals and entities. Those designations demonstrate the Government's commitment to standing up for human rights and minority groups, including those in Belarus, Myanmar, China, Russia and North Korea.

On 22 March, the UK sanctioned four Chinese Government officials and the public security bureau of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps for their role in the serious human rights violations that have taken and continue to take place against Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang. Those measures were taken alongside measures by the US, Canada and the EU, sending the clearest possible signal that the international community is united in its condemnation of China's human rights violations in Xinjiang and signalling the need for Beijing to end discrimination and oppression in the region.

**Afzal Khan:** We heard earlier about the horrifying stories coming out of the Uyghur Tribunal. Will the Minister commit to examining the findings of the Uyghur Tribunal when its judgment comes out this Thursday?

**Wendy Morton:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his contribution, and I intend to cover the tribunal later in my speech. Just last week, alongside the EU, US and Canada, we imposed further sanctions against individuals responsible for human rights violations in Belarus, under our Belarus regime. We imposed an asset freeze on a key state-owned entity in order to maintain economic pressure on the repressive Lukashenko regime.

In addition to our new human rights sanctions, on 26 April we launched our global anti-corruption sanctions regime, which gives us the means to impose anti-corruption sanctions on individuals anywhere in the world. It represented a significant step forward for the UK's global leadership in combatting corruption around the world and promoting fair and open societies.

Since the launch, we have designated 27 individuals who have been involved in serious corruption from nine different countries. We will continue to pursue such designations and promote our values around the world, using powers under both our global human rights and anti-corruption sanctions regimes throughout the year of action, starting with the US-hosted summit for

democracy taking place over the next two days on International Anti-Corruption Day and International Human Rights Day.

I recognise that Members today referred to certain named individuals, and I am sure that they will fully understand that I cannot speculate—it would be inappropriate for me to do so.

**Chris Bryant:** There is one person that the Minister could undoubtedly speculate on, because he has been appointed as the Rwandan high commissioner. Surely the Government can announce whether they or not will accept his agrément.

**Wendy Morton:** I will come to that specific case a little later. I want to cover the points about how Parliament will be consulted and be part of the process, which was raised by several hon. Members. We recognise the range of views expressed by parliamentarians on the best approach to take on the designations proposals and we are grateful for the interest that they take in that. Of course, they can continue to engage with the Government in the usual ways—such as this debate—or they can write to the Foreign Secretary.

I will turn to some of the more specific questions and countries that were raised. On Sudan, we have condemned the abuses and we will continue to press for accountability, including by considering sanctions. However, we also note the fragile situation there, following the 21 November deal which reinstated Prime Minister Hamdok as a first step back towards democratic transition.

On Rwanda, which the hon. Member for Rhondda raised, I assure him that we are following the case of Paul Rusesabagina—the hon. Gentleman pronounces it better than I do—very closely. I assure him that the Minister for Africa has raised our concerns about due process. On Kashmir, I recognise the concerns. We have raised them with the Governments of India and Pakistan.

On the Uyghur Tribunal, we welcome any initiative that is rigorous and balanced, and that raises awareness of the situation faced by the Uyghurs and other minorities in China. I assure the hon. Gentleman that we are following the work of the Uyghur Tribunal very closely, and will study any resulting report very carefully. Of course, the policy of successive UK Governments is that any determination of genocide or crimes against humanity is a matter for a competent court.

We and our partners continue to press for an end to hostilities in Ethiopia, and for Eritrean forces to withdraw, and we fully support all mediation efforts. I think it is fair to say that the scale of the human rights abuses detailed by the joint investigation report is horrific. I note that the Government of Ethiopia have set up a taskforce to take forward recommendations from the report, and we will continue to consider a full range of policy options, including sanctions.

As I explained, we work very closely with our partners, in particular the US, Canada and the EU, which have Magnitsky-style sanctions legislation. We co-operate very closely with Australia, which last week introduced legislation to its Parliament that grants it the power to impose global human rights and anti-corruption sanctions, because UK sanctions are most effective when backed up by co-ordinated collective action.

The global human rights sanctions and anti-corruption sanctions regimes have given the UK new very important and powerful tools. The designations that we have already made show that we will act to hold to account those involved in serious human rights violations or abuses, or serious corruption, without fear or favour. In close co-ordination with our allies, we will carefully consider future designations under the regulations. Through concerted action, we will provide accountability for serious human rights violations or abuses and serious corruption around the world, and deter those who might commit them in the future.

**Mrs Maria Miller (in the Chair):** I call Chris Bryant to wind up.

6.22 pm

**Chris Bryant:** Thank you very much, Mrs Miller. I am afraid that the Minister wound me up at the end. Why can the Government not simply say that somebody who has blatantly been involved in the drugging and illegal extradition of somebody to Rwanda will not be accepted as a representative of Rwanda to the Court of St James's as a high commissioner? I cannot understand that. It is a very simple ask. I understand why Ministers always say, and say endlessly to us, "We don't want to speculate about sanctions because that undermines the system." We do not want Ministers to speculate; we want them to implement. It is quite simple.

I like the Minister enormously; she knows that I do. We want more action. Only 24% of those people who are sanctioned by the United States of America are sanctioned by this country. Why? Is it because we are more picky? Is it because we are more cowardly? I do not understand. There is no argument for it so far. I hope that in the new year, the Government will set aside a whole day for us to debate this matter in Government time, to understand how we can ensure that the UK is, and will always be, the beacon for liberty, freedom of association, freedom of speech, freedom of religion and the right to life.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered Magnitsky sanctions and human rights abuses.

6.24 pm

*Sitting adjourned.*

# Written Statements

*Wednesday 8 December 2021*

## DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### Telecoms Diversification: Taskforce Recommendations

**The Minister for Media, Data and Digital Infrastructure (Julia Lopez):** I would like to update the House on a package of measures and policy interventions we are announcing today to progress the Government's 5G diversification strategy and the recommendations of the telecoms supply chain diversification taskforce.

Following a 5G diversification taskforce recommendation, the Government have worked closely with industry to confirm a date by which 2G and 3G networks will be switched off. The Government can now confirm that the mobile network operators do not intend to offer 2G and 3G mobile networks past 2033 at the latest. The Government welcome that some individual operators will switch off their networks, particularly their 3G networks, earlier than this date, and will announce their own plans about when and how they intend to do this. The Government welcome the responsible switching off of these networks, and will continue to work with network operators to ensure a smooth transition that meets the needs of business users and consumers, including vulnerable groups.

The Government are also announcing, together with UK mobile network operators, a joint ambition for 35% of the UK's mobile network traffic to be carried over open and interoperable radio access network (RAN) architectures by 2030. The RAN is the part of the network that communicates directly with our devices, typically visible in the radio masts we see across the UK. Most networks today are characterised by closed "black boxes" in which all of the components are highly integrated and provided by a single, highly scaled vendor. "Opening" the RAN seeks to disaggregate these components and functions, lowering barriers to entry and promoting innovation. The Government welcome the steps taken by operators and suppliers to position the UK as a leader in the development of open and interoperable RAN technology and are pleased to commit £250 million of investment to support and accelerate this programme of work.

As part of this work to promote interoperable RAN, the Government will be providing just over £36 million of investment to fund projects that span key technology challenges to Open RAN adoption as part of the Future RAN Competition (FRANC). This investment will also support industry, academia and local authorities across the UK to realise the benefits of high-speed networks and create new commercial opportunities. Finally, the Government are investing a further £15 million in the SmartRAN Open Networks Interoperability Centre (SONIC Labs) to expand it into a fully-fledged interoperability testing facility that will break down barriers and support industry in developing interoperable solutions. This investment will enable the lab to expand its programme of interoperability testing and international engagement. These projects will be subject to final grant funding agreement.

The interventions demonstrate the Government's commitment to delivering their diversification strategy and building lasting and sustainable supply for the infrastructure that underpins our entire digital economy. The Government will continue to update the House as this work progresses. Full details of the announcement will be published on www.gov.uk today.

[HCWS450]

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Asylum Seekers: Right to Work Policy

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice (Tom Pursglove):** Following the October 2018 publication of the Lift the Ban coalition's report into asylum seeker right to work policy, which concluded that amending the policy could generate £42 million per year for the Government, the former Home Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Sajid Javid), committed to a review. Today I would like to announce the findings of that review.

For clarity, current asylum seeker right to work policy allows asylum seekers to apply for permission to work if a decision on their asylum claim has been outstanding for 12 months or more, where the delay is no fault of their own. If granted permission to work, asylum seekers may then apply for jobs on the shortage occupation list.

Lift the Ban's report recommended relaxing policy to allow asylum seekers to work after six months, with no restrictions on access to the labour market such as limiting eligible jobs to the shortage occupation list. In July 2020, a follow-up to their 2018 report was published with the same policy recommendation but with updated estimated benefits to the Government of £98 million per year. A further update in summer 2021 revised this further upwards to £180.8 million per year.

The Home Office has carried out a comprehensive review of the Lift the Ban report; however, our evidence indicates the assumptions underpinning the recommendations are highly optimistic. Having considered a wide range of available evidence the Home Office believes that a more realistic set of assumptions would present a more nuanced picture. In particular, the Home Office believes that a more realistic set of assumptions would consider the following:

- demographic characteristics (such as family groupings and likelihood of care responsibilities impacting access to the labour market)
- how employment rates for migrant groups tend to increase gradually over time
- the propensity for part-time employment
- the likelihood that any employment is more likely to be close to the minimum or living wage rather than the UK median wage.

In addition, a significant proportion of the fiscal benefits calculated by Lift the Ban are predicated on an assumption that once asylum seekers are granted access to the workforce they will no longer require financial support. The Home Office believes that given the likelihood for part-time and insecure employment this benefit is unlikely to fully materialise. This is because it expects that the administrative cost associated with moving asylum seekers on and off support as they cycle through periods of employment and support will be substantial.

The Home Office has therefore concluded that the fiscal benefits arising from a relaxation of the right to work policy are likely to be significantly lower than the figures claimed by Lift the Ban. In light of wider priorities to fix the broken asylum system, reduce pull factors to the UK, and ensure our policies do not encourage people to undercut the resident labour force, we are retaining our asylum seeker right to work policy with no further changes.

It is key this policy continues to protect our immigration system from those lodging unfounded asylum claims in an attempt to avoid work visa rules, particularly at a time when dangerous journeys made by small boat are increasing.

Ultimately we must ensure asylum claims are considered without unnecessary delay. Our resources are therefore better deployed to pursuing an ongoing programme of transformation and system improvement initiatives that will speed up decision making, reducing the time individuals spend in the system awaiting an interview or decision.

We recognise there are extraordinary circumstances affecting certain parts of the labour market at present. In response to these, we are offering time-limited visas to 4,700 HGV drivers in the food supply chain, 5,500 poultry workers, and 800 butchers to ease supply chain pressures this year. We will look at how the sectors concerned make use of these routes which were created in response to their requests.

The Government continue to support industries in solving such issues in the long term through making roles more attractive to UK workers, with better pay and working conditions.

[HCWS452]

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE

### Export Control Regime

**The Secretary of State for International Trade (Anne-Marie Trevelyan):** HM Government are committed to a robust and transparent export control regime for military, dual-use and other sensitive goods and technologies. The purpose of these controls is to promote global security and facilitate responsible exports. They help ensure that goods exported from the United Kingdom do not contribute to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) or a destabilising accumulation of conventional weapons. They protect the United Kingdom's security and our expertise by restricting who has access to sensitive technologies and capabilities. Export controls also help ensure that controlled items are not used for internal repression or in the commission of serious violations of international humanitarian law. They are one of the means by which we implement a range of international legal commitments, including the arms trade treaty.

The controls also support the UK's defence and security industry. The legitimate international trade in military equipment and technology, as well as in dual-use items, enables Governments to protect ordinary citizens, to preserve law and order against terrorists and criminals, and to defend against external threats. The Government therefore remain committed to supporting the UK's defence and security industry and to promoting the legitimate trade in items controlled for strategic reasons.

We keep our controls under regular review to ensure that they continue to properly address the threats we face, keep pace with new technologies, and adapt to changing circumstances such as our exit from the EU, while providing an efficient service which does not impose an unworkable administrative burden on the defence and security industry.

That is why today I am announcing a package of measures to update the export control regime.

First, I am laying before Parliament a revised version of the licensing criteria for strategic export controls, to be known as the strategic export licensing criteria, as set out at the end of this statement.

These criteria will be applied with immediate effect to all licence decisions—including decisions on appeals—for export, transfer, trade (brokering) and transit/transhipment of goods, software and technology subject to control for strategic reasons—referred to collectively as "items"; and to the extent that the following activities are subject to control, the provision of technical assistance or other services related to those items. Certain of the criteria may also be applied to MOD Form 680 applications alongside other considerations and assessment of proposals to gift controlled equipment to other nations' Governments.

As before, they will not be applied mechanistically but on a case-by-case basis, taking into account all relevant information available at the time the licence application is assessed. While the Government recognise that there are situations where transfers must not take place, as set out in the following criteria, we will not refuse a licence on the grounds of a purely theoretical risk of a breach of one or more of those criteria. In making licensing decisions, I will continue to take into account advice received from FCDO, MoD and other Government Departments and agencies as appropriate.

The application of these criteria will be without prejudice to the application to specific cases of specific measures, as may be announced to Parliament from time to time. This statement does not impact upon existing specific measures which remain extant until revoked.

Secondly, the Government will be taking steps to enhance the military end-use control. Currently, the control can only be applied to the export of otherwise non-controlled items which are intended for use as components in, or production equipment for, military equipment in an embargoed destination. This does not allow us to fully address threats to national security, international peace and security, and human rights arising from the use of non-listed items by the military, police or security forces, or entities acting on their behalf, in an embargoed destination.

We will therefore be amending the definition of "military end-use" to remove this limitation. The control would only be applied where the Government inform the exporter that the proposed export is or may be intended for a military end-use in an embargoed destination. To minimise the impact on legitimate trade, there will be exemptions for medical supplies and equipment, food, clothing and other consumer goods.

The review also concluded that there were anomalies and inconsistencies within the UK's export control regime. As a result of this review, China will be added to the list of those destinations subject to military end-use controls.

Taken together, these changes will also strengthen our ability to prevent exports that might be used directly or indirectly to facilitate human rights violations in all destinations subject to military end-use controls. It also completes the export control review announced to Parliament on 12 January 2021 by the then Foreign Secretary.

Both of these changes concerning military end-use controls require amendments to the Export Control Order 2008. We intend to lay the secondary legislation to implement these changes in the spring of 2022.

*The Strategic Export Licensing Criteria*

This statement of the criteria is guidance given under section 9 of the Export Control Act 2002. It replaces the consolidated EU and national arms export licensing criteria announced to Parliament on 25 March 2014.

*Criterion One*

Respect for the UK's international obligations and relevant commitments, in particular sanctions adopted by the UN Security Council, agreements on non-proliferation and other subjects, as well as other international obligations.

The Government will not grant a licence if to do so would be inconsistent with, inter alia:

the UK's obligations and its commitments to enforce United Nations and organisation for security and co-operation in Europe (OSCE) sanctions, as well as national sanctions observed by the UK and other relevant commitments regarding the application of strategic export controls;

the UK's obligations under the United Nations Arms Trade Treaty;

the UK's obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention;

the UK's obligations under the United Nations Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, the Convention on Cluster Munitions (the Oslo convention), the Cluster Munitions (Prohibitions) Act 2010, and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction (the Ottawa convention) and the Land Mines Act 1998;

the UK's commitments in the framework of the Australia Group, the Missile Technology Control Regime, the Zangger Committee, the Nuclear Suppliers Group, and the Wassenaar Arrangement;

the OSCE principles governing conventional arms transfers.

*Criterion Two*

Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in the country of final destination as well as respect by that country for international humanitarian law.

Having assessed the recipient country's attitude towards relevant principles established by international human rights instruments, the Government will:

Not grant a licence if they determine there is a clear risk that the items might be used to commit or facilitate internal repression;

Internal repression includes, inter alia, torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment; summary or arbitrary executions; disappearances; arbitrary detentions; and other serious violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms as set out in relevant international human rights instruments, including the universal declaration on human rights and the international covenant on civil and political rights.

For these purposes, items which might be used for internal repression will include, inter alia, items where there is evidence of the use of these or similar items for internal repression by the proposed end-user, or where there is reason to believe that the items will be diverted from their stated end-use or end-user and used for internal repression. The nature of the items to be transferred will be considered carefully, particularly if they are intended for internal security purposes.

Exercise special caution and vigilance in granting licences, on a case-by-case basis and taking account of the nature of the equipment, to countries where serious violations of human rights have been established by the competent bodies of the UN or the Council of Europe.

Having assessed the recipient country's attitude towards relevant principles established by instruments of international humanitarian law, the Government will:

Not grant a licence if they determine there is a clear risk that the items might be used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of international humanitarian law.

In considering the risk that items might be used to commit or facilitate internal repression, or to commit or facilitate a serious violation of international humanitarian law, the Government will also take account of the risk that the items might be used to commit or facilitate gender-based violence or serious acts of violence against women or children.

*Criterion Three*

*Preservation of internal peace and security*

The Government will not grant a licence if, having assessed the potential that the items would either contribute to or undermine internal peace and security, they determine there is a clear risk that the items would, overall, undermine internal peace and security.

When assessing the potential that the items would contribute to or undermine internal peace and security, the Government will take into account, inter alia and where relevant:

Whether the grant of the licence would provoke or prolong armed conflicts;

Whether the items are likely to be used other than for the legitimate national security or defence of the recipient;

Whether the items would be likely to cause, avert, increase or decrease conflict or instability in the country of final destination, taking into account (inter alia):

the balance of forces between states or actors concerned;

the potential for the equipment to have a significant impact on the effectiveness of existing capabilities or force projection;

humanitarian purposes or impacts;

the nature of the conflict, including the conduct of all states or actors involved, and any involvement by the UK and allied states;

border stability and legitimate national security interests of the recipient.

Whether the items might be used to commit or facilitate gender-based violence or serious acts of violence against women or children.

*Criterion Four*

*Preservation of peace and security*

The Government will not grant a licence if, having assessed the potential that the items would either contribute to or undermine peace and security, they determine there is a clear risk that the items would, overall, undermine peace and security.

When assessing the potential that the items would contribute to or undermine peace and security, the Government will take into account, inter alia and where relevant:

The existence or likelihood of armed conflict in which the recipient would take part;

Whether the recipient has in the past tried or threatened to pursue, by means of force, a claim against the territory of another country;

The likelihood that the items would be used in the territory of another country other than for legitimate purposes including national or collective self-defence;

Whether the items would be likely to cause, avert, increase or decrease conflict or instability in the region, taking into account (inter alia):

the balance of forces between the states or actors in the region concerned;

their approach to expenditure on defence;

the potential for the equipment to have a significant impact on the effectiveness of existing capabilities or force projection;

humanitarian purposes or impacts;

the nature of the conflict, including the conduct of all states or actors involved, and any involvement by the UK and allied states;

border stability and legitimate national security interests of the recipient.

Whether the items might be used to commit or facilitate gender-based violence or serious acts of violence against women or children.

*Criterion Five*

The national security of the UK and territories whose external relations are the UK's responsibility, as well as that of friendly and allied countries.

The Government will take into account:

the risk of the items undermining or damaging the UK's national security or those of other territories and countries as described above;

the risk of the items being used against UK forces or against those of other territories and countries as described above;

the need to protect classified information and capabilities.

*Criterion Six*

The behaviour of the buyer country with regard to the international community, as regards in particular its attitude to terrorism and transnational organised crime, the nature of its alliances and respect for international law.

Having assessed the potential that the items could be used to commit or facilitate an act constituting an offence under international conventions or protocols to which the UK is a party relating to terrorism or transnational organised crime, the Government will not grant a licence if it determines there is a clear risk that the items could be used to commit or facilitate such an act.

In making this assessment, the Government will also take account of the risk that the items might be used to commit or facilitate gender-based violence or serious acts of violence against women or children.

The Government will also take into account, inter alia, the record of the buyer country with regard to:

its compliance with relevant international obligations, in particular on the non-use of force, including under international humanitarian law applicable to international and non-international conflicts;

its commitment to non-proliferation and other areas of arms control and disarmament, in particular the signature, ratification and implementation of relevant arms control and disarmament instruments referred to in Criterion One.

*Criterion Seven*

The existence of a risk that the items will be diverted to an undesirable end-user or for an undesirable end-use

In assessing the risk that the items might be diverted to an undesirable end-user or for an undesirable end-use, the Government will take into account:

the legitimate defence and domestic security interests of the recipient country, including any involvement in United Nations or other humanitarian or peace-keeping activity;

the technical capability of the recipient country to use the items;

the capability of the recipient country to exert effective export controls;

the risk of re-export to undesirable destinations;

the risk of diversion to terrorist organisations, individual terrorists or to transnational organised crime;

the risk of reverse engineering or unintended technology transfer;

the risk of an undesirable end-use either by the stated end-user or another party.

*Criterion Eight*

The compatibility of the transfer with the technical and economic capacity of the recipient country, taking into account the desirability that states should achieve their legitimate needs of security and defence with the least diversion for armaments of human and economic resources.

The Government will take into account, in the light of information from relevant sources such as United Nations Development Programme, World Bank, IMF and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development reports, whether the proposed transfer would seriously undermine the economy or seriously hamper the sustainable development of the recipient country.

The Government will consider in this context, amongst other factors, the recipient country's relative levels of military and social expenditure, taking into account also any bilateral or multilateral aid, and its public finances, balance of payments, external debt, economic and social development and any IMF or World Bank-sponsored economic reform programme.

*Other Factors*

In exceptional circumstances the Government may decide not to grant a licence for reasons other than those set out in criteria one to eight where the items may have a significant negative impact on the UK's international relations.

[HCWS449]

## UK Export Finance: Ukraine

**The Secretary of State for International Trade (Anne-Marie Trevelyan):** The UK enjoys a strong relationship with Ukraine and is committed to supporting its security and economic prosperity. UK Export Finance (UKEF) has recently committed most of its market risk appetite for Ukraine to support a programme led by UK suppliers to upgrade the country's naval capability. To ensure that UKEF can continue to support UK exporters to assist Ukraine with improvements to its national infrastructure, and in line with wider HM Government objectives, the Government have concluded that it is in the national interest to increase UKEF's market risk appetite for Ukraine to £3.5 billion and have instructed UKEF to make appropriate arrangements. This will leave around £1.2 billion available for UKEF to support further priority projects, supporting skilled UK jobs and enabling additional UK exports to Ukraine.

[HCWS451]

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