Monday
28 February 2022

Volume 709
No. 125

HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

Monday 28 February 2022

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House of Commons

Monday 28 February 2022

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[Mr Speaker *in the Chair*]

Speaker's Statement

Mr Speaker: Before we begin today's business, I wish to thank the hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant) for withdrawing his invitation to the Russian ambassador to address the all-party group on Russia. I was very uneasy about the visit and did not think it appropriate to invite a Russian official who had said only weeks before that there would be no invasion. Therefore, I am grateful for that decision.

I would also like to thank the hon. Member for Henley (John Howell) for his successful efforts in ensuring the suspension of the Russian Federation's right of representation in the Council of Europe.

I also say to all hon. Members, and all those who follow our proceedings: we stand in solidarity with Ukraine and its people and have raised their flag at the House of Commons. I will send around an email about further events planned this week to show our support for them and their fight for freedom.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

The Secretary of State was asked—

PCSOs: Neighbourhood Crime

1. **Daniel Zeichner** (Cambridge) (Lab): What recent assessment she has made of the importance of police community support officers in tackling neighbourhood crime. [905727]

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel): The whole House will be united in horror and revulsion at Putin's war on Ukraine. I will update the House on the action that we are taking to help British nationals and Ukrainians and to hold Russia and Putin's Government to account later in Question Time. For now, I want to reiterate the Government's unequivocal support for the people of Ukraine, who are being truly heroic.

Daniel Zeichner: I echo the Home Secretary's comments and am sure that we will extend a generous and gracious invitation to those fleeing from Ukraine.

In the year to September 2021, 1.7 million cases of antisocial behaviour were reported to the police. In Cambridge, I have more and more people coming to me with problems. We used to have police community support officers, who were a welcoming, reassuring, uniformed presence on our streets. Where are they now?

Priti Patel: Strong local policing is absolutely in the DNA of neighbourhood policing. The hon. Gentleman will be well aware that this Government are not only funding but backing the police, with almost £15.9 billion in this financial year, and increasing police numbers to 20,000. He will also know that his local police recruitment numbers have gone up and that his local force has already recruited 138 police officers.

Mr Steve Baker (Wycombe) (Con): I was very pleased to see Thames Valley police launch a new recruitment campaign for PCSOs. Will my right hon. Friend join me in thanking PCSOs for all they do to support the people in Wycombe and across Thames valley and the whole country? Will she also join me in welcoming that campaign and encouraging people to apply?

Priti Patel: I agree and congratulate Thames Valley police force; it has exceptional leadership and all officers there and across the country are doing great work. That recruitment campaign is vital and is going incredibly well. We have just over 11,000 new police recruits and officers on the streets of England and Wales and the numbers will grow and grow. Of course, this is all about keeping our communities safe.

Emma Hardy (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle) (Lab): The PCSOs are doing a fantastic job of supporting residents with regard to the increase in car crime happening in one area of Hull. What particularly upsets residents, however, is seeing those criminals uploading videos to TikTok and celebrating their crimes. Will the Home Secretary update us on what her Department is doing to work with social media companies to help them identify evidence of criminality and support police investigations?

Priti Patel: The hon. Lady is right, and she will recognise that criminals who upload videos absolutely are pursued by the police and law enforcement agencies to bring them to justice. She asked specifically about work with technology companies and online platforms and providers. That is always ongoing, including through some of the wider work relating to the online harms Bill.

Anthony Mangnall (Totnes) (Con): The increase in police officers in the south-west is welcome, but what is being done to tackle drugs, and will the Home Secretary meet me to see what we can do to stop antisocial behaviour happening in towns such as Brixham and Dartmouth?

Priti Patel: My hon. Friend is absolutely right; drugs are a scourge across society and they blight communities. We have a great deal of work taking place on drugs, and I will happily meet him and any colleagues to discuss that. Not only do we, first and foremost, have the county lines programme, but we believe in supporting individuals who suffer from addiction, and that is exactly what Project ADDER is doing.

Sexual Violence: Nationality and Borders Bill

2. **Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP): What assessment has she made of the potential effect of the Nationality and Borders Bill for people who have experienced sexual violence. [905728]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Tom Pursglove): The Government recognise that sexual violence is a devastating crime that has a long-lasting impact on victims. The Nationality and Borders Bill, which is part of our new plan for immigration, will strengthen our ability to protect vulnerable people. On 16 September, we published an equality impact assessment, which includes an assessment of the potential impact on people who may have experienced sexual violence.

Alison Thewliss: Last week, a joint letter with more than 60 signatories across Scottish civil society, including Rape Crisis Scotland, Amina Muslim Women's Resource Centre, the Trafficking Awareness Raising Alliance, SAY Women and the Women's Integration Network, criticised the Nationality and Borders Bill, saying:

"It is a gift to abusers and exploiters, and we have no doubt that it will harm survivors of sexual violence, gender-based violence and those who flee persecution."

Scotland wants no part of the Bill. It is not in our name. Will the Minister take the opportunity to remove the Bill now?

Tom Pursglove: I hear what the hon. Lady says. I am sure that people in Scotland are as concerned as the Government are about people risking their lives in the hands of evil people smugglers, making dangerous crossings of the channel, and all the risks that that presents to life. The fact is that sensible discretion will be built into the whole approach, with various checks throughout, good reasons and a trauma-informed approach. That is precisely what we have committed to; it is exactly what we will deliver.

Violence Against Women and Girls

4. **Holly Mumby-Croft** (Scunthorpe) (Con): What assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the Government's tackling violence against women and girls strategy. [905730]

5. **Alexander Stafford** (Rother Valley) (Con): What assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the Government's tackling violence against women and girls strategy. [905731]

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel): As part of the violence against women and girls strategy launched last July, we are bringing forward legislation against stalking, forced marriage, female genital mutilation and wider domestic abuse. The strategy is overseen by the VAWG inter-ministerial group, which I chair.

Holly Mumby-Croft: Does my right hon. Friend recognise the importance of the continuing work of police and crime commissioner Jonathan Evison, his team and the Humberside police service on the You Are Not Alone campaign, which aims to raise awareness of support for victims of domestic violence and, indeed, perpetrators? I think that it is really important work, and I hope that she will recognise it.

Priti Patel: I thank my hon. Friend for her comment and for the work that the police and crime commissioner and her local police force are undertaking. The You Are Not Alone campaign was launched during the pandemic. I recommend it to anyone who is a victim of any form of domestic abuse or violence. It is a successful campaign, and I pay tribute to police and crime commissioners and to our police officers across the country, who have been supporting it and making sure that they provide support to victims of abuse.

Alexander Stafford: My right hon. Friend will be aware that the shadow policing Minister, the hon. Member for Croydon Central (Sarah Jones), has said:

"Harsher sentences don't act as a deterrent."

Will my right hon. Friend confirm that that is wrong, that harsher sentences actually do work, and that we are prepared to put domestic abusers and violent and sexual offenders behind bars for longer to make our streets, especially in Rother Valley, safer for women and girls?

Priti Patel: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is right that we change our laws, have tougher sentences and make sure that perpetrators absolutely feel the full force of the law. He is right to make that case. The Government are also undertaking wider work on perpetrator behaviour and education campaigns across all Departments.

Dr Rupa Huq (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab): We all agree that women should be able to go about their lawful business free from intimidation and able to use public spaces, yet every day thousands are affected by protests outside abortion clinics that are designed to shame women out of their legal rights to healthcare. Will the Secretary of State meet me to ensure that we have consistency nationally on the situation and that protesters who seek to control women's bodies and stop them making choices are stopped and moved away from the clinic gates?

Priti Patel: I commend the hon. Lady for much of the work that she has been doing. I would be very happy to meet her. All the points she raises are absolutely valid: women should be able to go about living their lives freely, safely and without harassment.

Ronnie Cowan (Inverclyde) (SNP): The all-party parliamentary group on commercial sexual exploitation is conducting an inquiry into the pornography industry in response to growing concerns that online pornography is fuelling violence against women and girls. Will the Government establish the necessary legal framework to prevent and address the harm associated with the production and consumption of pornography?

Priti Patel: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. I agree with the sentiments that he echoes and would be very happy to meet him to discuss the matter. There are many, many legitimate concerns about pornography and the wider harms—age access, age verification and all sorts of issues, some of which the Government are picking up right now. The online harms Bill is one area, but there are other things that we can and should be doing.

Jess Phillips (Birmingham, Yardley) (Lab): Since the publication of the VAWG strategy, rape charging has fallen to an all-time low, leaving more people accused of

rape in communities than ever before. Operation Bluestone found that the monitoring of previous offenders was failing to use

"intelligence to establish whether suspects had been named in previous offences."

Operation Soteria found that

"officers were not routinely monitoring known offenders of sexual crimes",

leading to a "total lack of morale" among police. This week the inspectorate said that alleged rapists were escaping justice, citing a case in which an alleged rapist was acquitted after the police and the Crown Prosecution Service had failed to present evidence in court showing that he had allegedly raped two other people previously.

I ask the Home Secretary to set out for the House exactly where, in the strategy and in her plans, are the proper monitoring and offender management that will stop any offender, let alone the most violent and repeat rapists, because that is not even nearly happening now.

Priti Patel: As the hon. Lady will know, both the rape review and the criminal justice taskforce have been clear and explicit about the actions that are being taken across Government. Operation Soteria, which she mentioned, is being rolled out to 14 other police forces. It is important for us to fix these key gateways—the way in which the police investigate cases, the handovers to the Crown Prosecution Service, and how it all works throughout the criminal justice system—and that is being done as a result of the rape review and work with the Justice Secretary. *[Interruption.]* I hear the hon. Member for Aberavon (Stephen Kinnock) talking about "12 years", but the rape review report was published last year. This Government are fixing many of the long-established problems in the criminal justice system that have led to some of the most appalling outcomes. We can all agree, if on nothing else, on the need to fix those appalling outcomes for rape victims.

Sarah Atherton (Wrexham) (Con): North Wales police recently received half a million pounds of UK funding for the safer streets and safety of women at night campaigns. Having been out with the police on foot patrol, I ask my right hon. Friend to join me in congratulating Inspector Claire McGrady of Wrexham town police and Wrexham Council on acknowledging the issues involved, increasing CCTV and lighting provision, and providing a weekend welfare centre.

Priti Patel: My hon. Friend is right; the safer streets fund and many other initiatives that the Government are leading to protect citizens and the safety of women across our communities are making a difference. The work of police forces with police and crime commissioners demonstrates how targeted resources can keep the public safe, and give the public, including women, confidence in their communities.

Tony Lloyd (Rochdale) (Lab): The Home Secretary has talked in a muscular fashion about the need for exemplary punishment of the perpetrators of violence against women and girls. She will recall her commitment to the deportation, where appropriate, of offenders in Rochdale, and indeed in other parts of the country. She also committed herself to meeting me to discuss the issue, and I still await that meeting. May I have an update?

Priti Patel: Absolutely. The hon. Gentleman is entirely right. I cannot speak about that case in the House, and he will know exactly why, but I will meet him to go through the specific details.

Kate Griffiths (Burton) (Con): The work of organisations such as the Sexual Abuse and Rape Advice Centre in my constituency is vital. I have seen at first hand how SARAC supports survivors of rape and domestic abuse. Can my right hon. Friend assure me that she will work with such organisations to ensure that they have a chance to feed in their expertise on how we can support victims and tackle violence against women and girls?

Priti Patel: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the work that she has personally led in campaigning and raising awareness, and also on the work of her local organisations—I have visited her constituency in the context of other issues. The role of the third sector is vital; it provides an important gateway and a lifeline for so many, and of course the Government continue to support it.

Citizenship: Legislative Framework

6. **Martin Docherty-Hughes** (West Dunbartonshire) (SNP): Whether she plans to review the legislative framework for granting citizenship. [905732]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Kevin Foster): While we do not plan a wider review, the Nationality and Borders Bill will make several changes to the British Nationality Act 1981, allowing people to acquire citizenship where they had previously been unable to do so because of historical anomalies.

Martin Docherty-Hughes: It is often overlooked that this political state shares a common travel area with our neighbours across the sheuch, as some of us would call it. I dare say that, from citizenship frameworks to asylum policy, this Government have a lot to learn from Ireland about implementing humane and just policy for those coming to the UK. What steps, if any, has the Department taken in recent days to learn from the best practice seen in the Republic of Ireland in terms of its legislative frameworks for citizenship?

Kevin Foster: We always look at the practices in other countries, and I would point out that our visitor route is more generous than the equivalent in the Republic of Ireland. I am actually meeting an Irish Minister later today. We are looking at how we can amend nationality law to make processing slightly easier so that we no longer need to look into people's past immigration history, but we have already done that recently in relation to a grant of indefinite leave to remain or settled status under the EU settlement scheme.

James Gray (North Wiltshire) (Con): I congratulate the Government on changing the rules last week with regard to Commonwealth soldiers, who will no longer have to pay for their citizenship if they have served for six years. That was a great decision and I thank the Government very much for it. Does the Minister agree that similar flexibility will be needed in the near future with regard to Afghan refugees who are based here? A young family came to see me in my surgery last Saturday. They are now well settled, but they are concerned about

how long it will take them to get citizenship. And of course, quite soon, similar questions will be raised with regard to Ukrainians.

Kevin Foster: A lot of nationality law is in primary legislation, which limits some of the flexibility we have, but we will certainly be happy to consider what we can do to support those who want to take that step to become British citizens.

Holly Lynch (Halifax) (Lab): On 8 August last year, the Home Office sent a family from Halifax back to Afghanistan on a voluntary return flight. That family felt they had no choice but to apply for the voluntary return scheme, having had their claim for asylum refused the year before. Kabul fell to the Taliban just seven days later, on 15 August. The family have three children—the youngest is just five years old. Can the Minister explain how the Home Office could ever have allowed this to happen? Can he confirm whether this has happened to others? Can he put on record that the five-year re-entry ban, which would ordinarily apply to someone who leaves the country via the voluntary return scheme, will not apply in these appalling circumstances?

Kevin Foster: I am obviously interested to hear of the case that the shadow Minister raises, and I would be interested to meet her to discuss it further, particularly if the family is in Afghanistan, as it may not be appropriate to share the details on the Floor of the House. I would be happy to meet her and have a conversation about the circumstances of that case.

Sexual Harassment

7. **Caroline Nokes** (Romsey and Southampton North) (Con): What assessment she has made of the potential merits of making public sexual harassment a criminal offence. [905733]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Rachel Maclean): We fully recognise the concern that my right hon. Friend raises. In fact, that same concern has been raised by many Members across the House and many campaigners. We will do all we can to make streets safer for women and girls, and if that includes a new offence, so be it.

Caroline Nokes: I know that my hon. Friend the Minister agrees with the Law Commission that misogyny should not be a hate crime. Does she not also think it appropriate that she should agree with the Law Commission that public sexual harassment should be a specific offence? I would like to echo the words of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, who has just said that women should be able to live their lives

"freely, safely and without harassment".

Can we stop looking hard at this and actually bring forward some legislation to make it happen?

Rachel Maclean: As I have just said, if the work we are doing with the Law Commission, legislators and others makes it clear that we need to make a new offence, that is exactly what we will do. I would like to draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the work that the police are doing to keep women safer. They are recording more VAWG crimes, there is an increased willingness of victims to come forward and there are improvements in police recording. We know we have more to do, which is why this evening we are launching a national communications campaign to tackle the perpetrators of public sexual harassment.

Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab): But last week the Minister could not have been clearer in her view that the test as to whether there should be legislation in these areas was what the Law Commission said about it. She was absolutely clear that, because the Law Commission did not recommend that misogyny should be a hate crime, that should not be the law. Why is she not equally clear on sexual harassment?

Rachel Maclean: Let me be as clear as I can for the whole House. If there is a need for a new offence, we will bring it forward.

Mr Richard Holden (North West Durham) (Con): I welcome the Government's broad support for tackling violence against women and girls, including in public, and for banning virginity testing and hymenoplasty in the Health and Care Bill, which is going through the other place. I also welcome their backing for the private Member's Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid Derbyshire (Mrs Latham)—the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill—to ban child marriage in England and Wales. Our Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill will look to extend some of those issues, for example by outlawing breastfeeding voyeurism and ensuring that violent offenders spend more time in prison. Does the Minister agree that, by voting against that Bill, the Opposition are failing to send the right message on protecting the victims of crime?

Rachel Maclean: I thank my hon. Friend for highlighting the sheer scope of the work we are doing to tackle these atrocious crimes. Violence against women and girls is appalling, and this Government are focused and united on stamping it out. I would like to see the Opposition voting with us this evening to support the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill. Given the very loud comments Opposition Members have made from a sedentary position, I expect to see them in the Lobby with us this evening.

Immigration Policy

8. **Neale Hanvey** (Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath) (Alba): What recent discussions she has had with the Scottish Government on immigration policy. [905734]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Kevin Foster): We have introduced a new global points-based immigration system that works in the interest of the whole of our United Kingdom, including Scotland. We continue to deliver a comprehensive programme of engagement on the new immigration system, including with each of the devolved Administrations.

Neale Hanvey: President Zelensky's formidable leadership and valour should inspire and humble us all. Like many MPs, I have constituents with family and close friends in Ukraine. Given the humanitarian crisis, will the Minister please advise us on what discussions are taking place with the Scottish Government to develop comprehensive, rapid accommodation for Ukrainian refugees, such as Ken Stewart and his family, across these islands now and in the coming days?

Kevin Foster: I briefly spoke with Neil Gray on Friday, ahead of potentially meeting more formally, about potential options for Afghan nationals currently in bridging hotels and those leaving Ukraine to be both housed and settled in Scotland. If there are individual cases at this stage, please feel free to bring them to my attention, and we will look into them.

Mr Speaker: I call the shadow Minister, Neil—sorry, Stephen Kinnock.

Stephen Kinnock (Aberavon) (Lab): I have had that since I was 13 years old, Mr Speaker. You are not the first, and I am sure you will not be the last.

The Opposition support the call of the Welsh and Scottish Governments for the UK Government to offer sanctuary to Ukrainians who are fleeing the horrors of war, but the UK Government's response has, once again, demonstrated the toxic combination of incompetence and indifference that are the hallmarks of this Home Secretary and her ministerial team.

Over the weekend, the Minister, who is responsible for safe and legal migration, tweeted that the Ukrainians who are running for their lives should apply to come to our country on seasonal fruit-picking visas. That tweet was the modern-day equivalent of "Let them eat cake." Thankfully he has deleted it, but will he now come to the Dispatch Box to apologise unconditionally for that tweet? Will he also offer swift, well-managed and safe sanctuary to these victims of Putin's barbarity who require our support?

Kevin Foster: I am interested in contrasting those comments with what the Ukrainian ambassador said yesterday. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will shortly announce more. As I have already said, it was useful to have a constructive conversation with the Scottish Government on Friday.

Stuart C. McDonald (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP): The Minister will have heard loud and clear during his call with Neil Gray on Friday that the Scottish Government fully support replicating the European model and lifting visa requirements for Ukrainian nationals now. The UK Government are now alone among our European allies in asking Ukrainians to jump through visa hoops to reach sanctuary here, and they are even more alone in legislating to criminalise, marginalise and impoverish those who seek asylum through their anti-refugee Bill. Surely basic human decency requires an urgent rethink on both counts.

Kevin Foster: My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will shortly say a bit more on what we are looking to do for Ukrainians. Yes, it was a productive conversation with Neil Gray, but one thing that would certainly help us to support more of those seeking asylum in this country would be if 31 of the 32 local authority areas in Scotland, including the hon. Gentleman's own, were not refusing to be dispersal areas.

Antisocial Behaviour

9. **Luke Hall** (Thornbury and Yate) (Con): What steps her Department is taking to help tackle antisocial behaviour. [905735]

18. **Jacob Young** (Redcar) (Con): What steps her Department plans to take to tackle antisocial behaviour in young people. [905747]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Rachel Maclean): The beating crime plan lays out the Government's commitment to working with local agencies to drive down antisocial behaviour. We ensured that local agencies have flexible tools and powers to tackle it through the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, and in the levelling up White Paper we announced that the safer streets fund will be expanded to include the prevention of ASB as one of its primary aims.

Luke Hall: There has been a spate of antisocial behaviour and a rise in burglary in Thornbury and, particularly, Alveston over the past few weeks. Avon and Somerset police has provided strong support and recruited 670 new officers in the last year and a half alone, which is very welcome, but what steps can my hon. Friend take to make sure these new officers do not just concentrate their activity in the core city areas but support rural south Gloucestershire, too? Will she meet me to discuss what more we can do to keep communities such as Thornbury and Alveston safe?

Rachel Maclean: I completely sympathise with my hon. Friend's constituents, who are suffering from antisocial behaviour and burglaries. I welcome his acknowledgement that the Government have ensured that Gloucestershire has additional police officers. Those officers are deployed by the chief constable and the locally elected police and crime commissioner, so it is absolutely down to them. I am sure that my hon. Friend will be advocating most vociferously to ensure that they are targeting those additional officers where they are needed.

Jacob Young: Despite the best efforts of our fantastic police officers, the careless use of unlicensed off-road motorcycles is a huge aspect of antisocial behaviour in Redcar and Cleveland. The use of these bikes, largely by teenagers and young adults, has resulted in significant damage to private property and to the living environment for local people. Sadly, it often also includes the transportation of illegal drugs. Will the Minister commit to visiting Redcar and Cleveland with me to see the extent of the problem, speak with some of the people affected and help us devise a plan to tackle this criminality?

Rachel Maclean: I would be delighted to visit my hon. Friend's constituency—perhaps I can visit the Gloucestershire constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Thornbury and Yate (Luke Hall) on my way there. My hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Jacob Young) is absolutely right to highlight the detrimental impacts of this type of behaviour. Of course, our legislation gives those responsible the ability to deal with antisocial incidents. I understand that he faces a particular issue in Eston hills, so perhaps he can take me there and we will see what we can do together.

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): Is the Minister aware that some kinds of antisocial behaviour sometimes become violent and that some of the young people swept into that have autism backgrounds? Is she concerned that under joint enterprise it is now believed that many young people are in prison who should not be there? Is she worried about joint enterprise and is she making any investigation to do something about it?

Rachel Maclean: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his question. On the broader issue of those suffering from autism, we absolutely are aware that a number of factors contribute to young people sadly being caught up in crime, either as perpetrators or as victims. We are working widely across government with our colleagues in the Department for Education and the Department of Health and Social Care, and I point specifically to the excellent work we are doing in the violence reduction units up and down the country and through the youth endowment fund, which targets and specifically funds projects to help young people avoid a life of crime. I would be happy to talk to him in more detail about the specific issue he raises with me.

Margaret Ferrier (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (Ind): What assessment has the Minister made of the link between youth antisocial behaviour and a lack of youth-focused community spaces and initiatives? What discussions have taken place across Government about ensuring that communities have the resources to support young people before antisocial behaviour occurs or escalates?

Rachel Maclean: The hon. Lady will be aware that the issue of youth violence is a key priority for the crime and justice taskforce, led by the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister. My colleagues in the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport have recently allocated £540 million to additional youth services up and down the country, which is a fantastic initiative to enable young people to be engaged in productive activities so that they are not tempted by a life of criminality.

Tom Hunt (Ipswich) (Con): I am very happy that Ipswich is getting £25 million through a town deal, but when I talk to town centre businesses and my constituents I find that many of them are very concerned about crime and antisocial behaviour. It is actually putting some people off going into the town, and in Dial Lane a number of businesses have had their windows smashed. Does my hon. Friend agree that as we support our town centres in coming out of the pandemic it is crucial that we tackle antisocial behaviour, and that one way in which we can do that in Ipswich would be by looking at the police funding formula for Suffolk, which I have banged on about quite a lot, to make sure that we get a fair deal and a bigger police presence in the town centre, so that businesses and my constituents feel 110% secure to spend money in the town centre?

Rachel Maclean: I am pleased to say that because of my hon. Friend's ardent campaigning there are more police officers in his area. I wish to highlight for him the safer streets fund, which is exactly the kind of initiative that we are putting into town centres to tackle these issues, through things such as better street lighting, CCTV and additional security for residents. The latest round of our safer streets fund is focused on targeting violence against women and girls. That will specifically look at patrols, safer streets and training and the night-time economy.

Antisocial Behaviour and Organised Crime

10. **Shabana Mahmood** (Birmingham, Ladywood) (Lab): What assessment her Department has made of the relationship between antisocial behaviour and organised crime. [905736]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Rachel Maclean): The beating crime plan laid out the Government's commitments to working with local agencies to drive down antisocial behaviour and tackle the organised criminal business that often drives the most visible crime felt in local neighbourhoods.

Shabana Mahmood: Crooks, fraudsters and those with links to organised crime are exploiting loopholes in the law to access taxpayers' cash in the exempt supported housing sector. The Minister for Crime and Policing is aware of the problem and he knows that the proliferation of this type of housing units is causing an avalanche of antisocial behaviour that is destroying neighbourhoods. He recently promised, when he visited Birmingham, that he would have urgent conversations with colleagues in the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Department for Work and Pensions, but in the Opposition Day debate that took place in this Chamber last week there was no reference to any such conversations having taken place and no Home Office interest in this matter. Can the Minister tell us what steps are being taken by Home Office officials and Ministers after that visit to Birmingham by the Policing Minister to make sure that the Home Office plays an active, cross-Government role in shutting down the loopholes that causing chaos in communities?

Rachel Maclean: The hon. Lady will appreciate that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Crime and Policing is sitting next to me on the Treasury Bench, and I am sure that he would be delighted to follow up on those specific questions.

Stephen Metcalfe (South Basildon and East Thurrock) (Con): As my hon. Friend knows, low-level drug use is sadly commonplace across many towns and cities in the UK. It is the scourge of my community and often acts as an escalator into more serious crime, but is yet rarely challenged by the authorities. Will she therefore agree to reinforce the message that drug use is illegal, that it should be treated as a crime and that it should carry an appropriate penalty enforced by police and courts alike?

Rachel Maclean: My hon. Friend will no doubt be aware of the robust and sweeping action that we have taken to tackle drug use, which is led by my right hon. Friends the Home Secretary and the Minister for Crime and Policing. The 10-year drugs plan sets out how we will eradicate drug taking from our country. Let me also highlight the work that we have done on county lines, which is a hideous scourge that affects many young people. Funded by Government, some of the work that has taken place has closed down county lines programmes—more than 1,500 lines—made more than 7,400 arrests and seized £4.3 million in cash.

Police Accessibility

11. **Justin Madders** (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): What assessment she has made of the accessibility of police (a) stations and (b) services. [905737]

The Minister for Crime and Policing (Kit Malthouse): It is important that the services that the police provide, whether digitally or face to face, are all accessible, so that everyone can come forward to report crime and interact with police officers in any way that suits their

requirements. We are committed to giving the police the resources they need to fight crime and keep the public safe. That is why policing will receive up to £16,900 million in the coming financial year.

Justin Madders: Does the Minister agree that the police and crime commissioner for Cheshire needs to reconsider his priorities when he is talking about closing down Ellesmere Port police station to the public and getting rid of 40 police community support officers while, at the same time, giving his deputy a 33% pay rise despite their having been in the post for five months?

Kit Malthouse: As I understand it, there is a consultation ongoing about how the Cheshire police should interact with the public they serve. I would hate to jump to any conclusion about what may or may not be decided, but, Mr Speaker, you will be aware that all police and crime commissioners should be reviewing their property strategy in the light of the massive expansion in police officer numbers that they are seeing at the moment, to the extent that, in the next 12 months or so, we expect to see the highest number of police officers that the country has ever seen.

Catalytic Converter Theft

12. **Sir Robert Neill** (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con): What steps her Department is taking to tackle catalytic converter theft. [905739]

The Minister for Crime and Policing (Kit Malthouse): We are working with police and manufacturers through the national vehicle crime working group to tackle the theft of catalytic converters.

Sir Robert Neill: In many areas of the country, crime is going down. It is going down in many areas in Bromley and Chislehurst, but one area where it is not is the explosion in catalytic converter thefts in my constituency. Ours has been identified by the National Police Chiefs' Council lead as one of the highest areas for this crime. These are not opportunistic thefts. Does my right hon. Friend agree that these are thefts by organised crime gangs seeking valuable metals that are sold for considerable amounts of money—platinum and palladium—carried out by men armed with baseball bats, threatening violence? Will he ensure that much greater priority is given to this crime and that we clamp down on the handlers of these stolen goods by greater enforcement of the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013?

Kit Malthouse: My hon. Friend, with his usual acuity, has put his finger on the button of this issue. It is cause for significant concern in parts of the country, and he is right that it is a product of prices in the metal market. He will be pleased to hear that just this month the British Transport Police co-ordinated a national week of intensification on acquisitive crime, looking particularly at catalytic converters, and that the work we have done on scrap metal dealers will go some way to dealing with the problem. However, we need to work much more closely with manufacturers to ensure that they do as much as they can to design out the theft of converters. Let us hope that in the years to come, as we all convert to electric vehicles, it will become a problem of the past.

Hate Crime: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities

13. **Mary Kelly Foy** (City of Durham) (Lab): What steps she is taking to tackle hate crime against the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. [905740]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Rachel Maclean): The Government take all forms of hate crime seriously and we will shortly publish a new strategy setting out how we intend to tackle those abhorrent crimes. I assure the hon. Lady that we have sought views from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

Mary Kelly Foy: Following Ministers' welcome criticism of Jimmy Carr's abhorrent joke celebrating the genocide of Roma and Sinti people, the Traveller Movement said that if the Government were serious about reducing discrimination against GRT communities, they would scrap the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill. Does the Minister accept that it is hypocritical for Ministers to condemn racism from others while pushing through a Bill that the Government's own impact assessment confirms will discriminate against Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people?

Rachel Maclean: I am afraid the hon. Lady is completely wrong about the Bill. It is a vital Bill to keep the public safe and protect them from sex offenders, violent rapists and other criminals. The comments she refers to were horrible, and it is clearly unacceptable to mock victims of genocide. We are clear that all forms of hate speech are unacceptable.

Violence Against Women and Girls

15. **Marsha De Cordova** (Battersea) (Lab): What steps her Department is taking to tackle violence against women and girls. [905743]

19. **Paula Barker** (Liverpool, Wavertree) (Lab): What steps her Department is taking to tackle violence against women and girls. [905748]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Rachel Maclean): Tackling violence against women and girls is a top priority for this Government. Our actions include publishing a cross-Government strategy on tackling VAWG, to be followed shortly by a complementary domestic abuse plan; bringing in world-class legislation to tackle stalking, forced marriage and female genital mutilation, as well as the landmark Domestic Abuse Act 2021; further increasing our funding for support services to £185 million a year by 2024-25; and making public spaces safer.

Marsha De Cordova: In December last year the Government rejected the recommendation to create a firewall to enable migrant victims to safely report domestic abuse to the police without fear of being reported to the immigration authorities. Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary and fire and rescue services said that that would be in the public interest. Can the Minister say how exactly the Government plan to protect victims too frightened to come forward, and to protect the public from the rapists and abusers left free to offend with impunity?

Rachel Maclean: Our domestic abuse plan and all the work we have done sets out clearly how we are going to protect the most vulnerable victims of domestic abuse, including those who may find themselves in the immigration system. We have support schemes for those women, and we take this seriously; we work extremely sensitively with our policing partners, who have specialist trained officers to recognise such cases and get support to the victims.

Paula Barker: Remarkably, despite all the talk on violence against women and girls, the Home Secretary and the Minister still fail to grasp that misogyny is the driving force behind it. The offending histories of many perpetrators reveal how they escalate from lower-level criminal behaviour—offences that many do not report because they do not think they will be taken seriously, such as exposure, street harassment and catcalling. Racism, homophobia and ableism are addressed in law, but no such protections are afforded to women and girls. Why do the Home Secretary and the Minister continue to turn a blind eye to the culture that exists and is the root cause of violence against women and girls?

Rachel Maclean: With the greatest respect, I think the hon. Lady completely mischaracterises the Government's comprehensive, sweeping, serious and well-funded response to violence against women and girls, which she has heard me and the Home Secretary refer to earlier in this session. On the specific issue she raises, I highlight the fact that the police are recording more crimes of violence against women and girls, and there is an increased willingness of victims to come forward because of the work we and the criminal justice system have done. There is always more to do, but crime reporting in the VAWG sector is up by 12% to September 2021 on the same period of the prior year.

Sarah Jones (Croydon Central) (Lab): We have heard lots of words on strategies, taskforces, roundtables and action plans, yet many victims will never see justice, and more and more criminals are getting away with it. The House of Lords has voted to introduce a new crime of sex for rent, which Labour Members support and will be voting for tonight. Will the Minister back us?

Rachel Maclean: My colleague the Policing Minister will be speaking to that amendment later, and we will be consulting on this specific issue. However, I want to highlight that there are already offences on the statute book to tackle this particular abhorrent form of behaviour.

English Language Tests

14. **Stephen Timms** (East Ham) (Lab): If she will take steps to resolve the immigration status of overseas students who have been falsely accused of cheating in English language tests. [905742]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Kevin Foster): As I said recently in the House in response to an urgent question, the Home Office is awaiting the findings of the upper tribunal presidential panel, who are currently considering the case known as RK/DK, which we hope will bring further clarity to the ETS TOEIC issue. Once we have received and digested the judgment we will announce our next steps.

Stephen Timms: After 2014, over 30,000 overseas students lost their visas, accused of cheating in English language tests. It is now clear that the great majority of those students were entirely innocent. It is now over 12 months since the Home Secretary rightly told the Home Affairs Committee:

> "We need to find a resolution".

Why wait for the outcome of the court case? There is no need to delay. Why not now bring forward the resolution the Home Secretary has rightly promised?

Kevin Foster: Given that the judgment is believed to be fairly imminent, it makes eminent sense to wait for it and then announce our next steps fully taking into account what it says and what it concludes. As the right hon. Gentleman will be aware, given the passage of time we have already amended our guidance to make it clear that where a person's right to a private and family life in the UK is relevant, the interception of a previous TOEIC test is not an invariable ground for refusal if they make an immigration application.

Mr Speaker: We now come to topicals. I have granted some extra time to the Home Secretary as she wants to make an important announcement.

Topical Questions

T1. [905752] **Mary Robinson** (Cheadle) (Con): If she will make a statement on her departmental responsibilities.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel): Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Putin's war on Ukraine is monstrous and unjustified. I am in regular contact with the Ukrainian Minister of the Interior and the ambassador to London. The United Kingdom stands firmly with the people of Ukraine, and, as this House would expect, Britain is stepping up to play its part in responding to the terrible situation on the ground in Ukraine.

The Government have already announced the first phase of a bespoke humanitarian route for the people of Ukraine. The new route responds directly to the needs and asks of the Ukrainian Government. Every conflict and threat situation is unique and requires a tailored response. Our new route will continue to keep pace with the developing situation on the ground and has so far already supported hundreds of British nationals and their families resident in Ukraine to leave. UK Visas and Immigration staff continue to work around the clock to assist them. The route has also enabled dependents of British national residents in Ukraine who need a UK visa to apply through the temporary location in Lviv or through the visa application centres in Poland, Moldova, Romania and Hungary. Over recent weeks teams have been surged to these areas and applications have been completed within hours.

We are in direct contact with individuals and we have also lowered various requirements and salary thresholds so that people can be supported. Where family members of British nationals do not meet the usual eligibility criteria but pass security checks, UK Visas and Immigration will give them permission to enter the UK outside the rules for 12 months and is prioritising all applications to give British nationals and any person settled in the UK the ability to bring over their immediate Ukrainian

family members. I can confirm that through this extension alone an additional 100,000 Ukrainians will be able to seek sanctuary in the UK, with access to work and public services. We are enabling Ukrainian nationals already in the UK to switch free of charge into a points-based immigration route or to the family visa route. We are extending visas for Ukraine temporary workers in some sectors, and they can now stay until at least December 2022, primarily because no one can return to Ukraine. Anyone in Ukraine intending to apply under the family migration route should call the dedicated 24-hour Home Office helpline for assistance before making an application.

Britain continues to lead and is doing its fair share in every aspect of this Ukraine conflict. I urge colleagues not to attempt casework themselves, but to directly refer people to the helpline number. Duplication of effort would waste precious time and cause confusion. This is the best and most efficient way to help people.

Over the weekend, I have seen Members of this House calling for full visa waivers for all Ukrainians. Security and biometric checks are a fundamental part of our visa approval process worldwide, and they will continue, as they did for the evacuation of people from Afghanistan. That is vital to keep British citizens safe and to ensure that we are helping those in genuine need, particularly as Russian troops are now infiltrating Ukraine and merging into Ukrainian forces. Intelligence reports also state the presence of extremist groups and organisations who threaten the region, but also our domestic homeland. We know all too well what Putin's Russia is willing to do, even on our soil, as we saw through the Salisbury attack and the nerve agents used on the streets of the UK. The approach we are taking is based on the strongest security advice. The Prime Minister has set out myriad other ways we are supporting Ukraine.

There will be other statements in the House today, but there are two other points I would like to add. The Nationality and Borders Bill is at Report stage in the other place. It contains provisions to allow visa penalties to be applied to specific countries that do not co-operate with the return of their nationals. I am now seeking to extend those provisions so that a country can be specified if it has taken significant steps that threaten international peace and security, have led or are likely to lead to armed conflicts or are in breach of international humanitarian law. The extension would draw on the precedents from the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018. Those powers will be available as soon as the Bill receives Royal Assent. The sooner that happens, the sooner this House and all Members can collectively act.

We are ever mindful of the cyber-attacks and disinformation emanating from Russia.

Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab): If you want to do a statement, do a statement.

Priti Patel: I am sure the House would like to listen to the actual measures we are bringing in. The cyber-attacks and disinformation will be met with robust responses, and we have stepped up all international co-operation on that.

Finally, what is happening in Ukraine is utterly heartbreaking and profoundly wrong, but together with our international partners, we stand with the heroic Ukrainian people. Further work is taking place with diplomatic channels, and the Ukrainian Government have today requested that the Russian Government be suspended from their membership of Interpol, and we will be leading all international efforts to that effect.

Mr Speaker: We did try to arrange with the Home Secretary's office that the statement should be up to 500 words. I think we will find that that was beyond 800 words; it took six minutes. I think the House would have benefited from an actual statement. If we cannot have one tomorrow morning, I suggest someone might like to put in for an urgent question, because I believe the House would benefit from that, as there was so much in what the Home Secretary said. I will be extending topicals.

T2. [905753] **Allan Dorans** (Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock) (SNP): Will the Home Secretary listen to the 50 organisations, including Save the Children and Amnesty International, that wrote a joint letter in *The Times* last week calling for the Ukraine crisis to lead to a rethink on the Nationality and Borders Bill, which discriminates against refugees depending on how they reach our shores?

Priti Patel: First, we will not be reconsidering the Nationality and Borders Bill. The hon. Gentleman has already heard about the amendments we will be tabling to deal with countries such as Russia and the actions of President Putin.

T3. [905754] **Scott Benton** (Blackpool South) (Con): Our failure to stop tens of thousands of illegal immigrants crossing the English channel in the last few years has resulted in them being accommodated in hotels, often in completely inappropriate locations, including a site in Blackpool, at a cost of millions of pounds per week to the UK taxpayer. What steps is the Minister taking to ensure that the Home Office can process the claims of those crossing the channel as soon as possible and reduce the huge cost to the taxpayer?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Kevin Foster): I recognise my hon. Friend's concerns about the use of the property in Blackpool, which he has strongly expressed to me on previous occasions. We are looking to double the number of asylum decision makers and to take forward a programme of simplification and modernisation of processing to increase the number of decisions we make, cut down the backlog and reintroduce a service standard for the time taken for an initial decision.

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): The Home Secretary said that she was announcing a bespoke humanitarian route, but it is extremely unclear from what she said what the details actually are or who it will apply to. The Ukrainian people are showing great bravery, but we know that people, particularly mothers and young children and elderly parents, have left to find sanctuary. The UK has always done its bit to help those fleeing war in Europe and it will come as a relief to many people who have been calling for action if the Government are prepared to do more.

I must ask the Home Secretary, however, why there is so much confusion about it. The Russian invasion began five days ago and other countries responded with clear

sanctuary arrangements immediately. Troops have been gathering since mid-January and British intelligence has been warning of an invasion for weeks. We have had a weekend of complete confusion. We still do not know what the arrangements are. Why was nothing worked out already? How on earth is the Home Secretary so poorly prepared for something that she has been warned about for so many weeks?

Priti Patel: Let me refute every single point that the right hon. Lady has made. All intelligence, rightly, has pointed to the invasion for a considerable time, and the Government have been working for that, as we know, in terms of the wider Government response. *[Interruption.]* If I can start to respond to some of those questions, all hon. Members would benefit from paying attention and listening.

When it comes to providing visas and support for Ukrainian nationals in the United Kingdom, our schemes have been put in place for weeks—there is no confusion whatsoever. They have been in place in countries switching routes. They have been well publicised and well documented. We have been working through our visa application centres. *[Interruption.]* Again, perhaps the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Jess Phillips) would like to listen, rather than being responsible for some of the misinformation that has been characterised and put out over the weekend. Those routes have been open and available.

A helpline has been available for weeks. We have had people working in the region and in country in Ukraine for weeks and weeks. We obviously closed down our operations in Kyiv, because we removed staff from there—

Mr Speaker: Order. We have to make some progress. We are on topicals; they are meant to be short. You had six minutes before. I call Yvette Cooper, briefly.

Yvette Cooper: The Home Secretary said that the routes have been in place, but she has been trying to get people to use existing visas, which do not work in a time of crisis. That is why her Immigration Minister was suggesting that people come and pick fruit.

At a time when many people want to stay close to the Ukraine, we know that there are family members or extended family members—people who have connections here in the UK—who want to come and join family and friends. They will still not know what the situation is as a result of the Home Secretary's words today. Let me ask her something very specific about the elderly parents of people who are living here in the UK, who are not covered by her announcement yesterday. Will the elderly parent who tried to join her daughter in the UK, who was turned down and made to go away by UK Border Force at the Gare du Nord, be able to return to the Gare du Nord today and come safely to the UK?

Priti Patel: Yes.

T4. [905755] **Holly Mumby-Croft** (Scunthorpe) (Con): Scunthorpe and Ukraine have deep ties rooted in our steelworks and we are horrified by what is happening to our Ukrainian friends. Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the support that she has just described will stay in place for however long it is needed?

Priti Patel: My hon. Friend makes a very sensible point, because, of course, there is a conflict taking place. The work of the Government is absolutely right now to support the people of Ukraine, and in particular to support those who need to come over to our country.

Stuart C. McDonald (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP): After this weekend I have to say that, not for the first time, I am struggling to understand what the Home Office is announcing and why it is announcing whatever it is. May I ask, for example, about my constituent who is fleeing Ukraine? Is he able to be accompanied by his mother-in-law, sister-in-law and niece? Again, why not do the simple thing and the just thing, and lift visa restrictions altogether?

Priti Patel: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the comments I have made already.

T5. [905756] **Greg Smith** (Buckingham) (Con): The Government should be rightly proud of the action taken to support our police officers, not least through the adoption of Harper's law, which is due before this House later today. What more can my right hon. Friend do to ensure that police officers get all the mental health support they need, as advocated by the Green Ribbon Policing campaign?

Priti Patel: My hon. Friend is absolutely right in the case he makes about mental health, and I know that he is doing some great work on this as well. We are doing a huge amount in Government, working with the Department of Health and Social Care in particular, focusing on mental health support, such as the TRiM—trauma risk management—programme and things of that nature. I know he has a particular interest in this, and it is something I would like to discuss with him further.

T7. [905758] **Patricia Gibson** (North Ayrshire and Arran) (SNP): I listened to the Home Secretary's earlier statement with interest, but clarity is needed. I have constituents who have family members in Ukraine, some of them frail and elderly. Can she assure the House that those Ukrainians who wish to join their families in the UK can do so via a third country without being mired in delays and bureaucracy, and can she further guarantee that those refugees will not be ordered to leave the UK after the nominal 12 months have expired?

Priti Patel: There are no delays and bureaucracy, as the hon. Member has already heard me say, and on her last point, yes.

T6. [905757] **Simon Baynes** (Clwyd South) (Con): North Wales police in my constituency of Clwyd South does an exceptional job in keeping the public safe and tackling crime. Could my right hon. Friend comment on plans to recruit and retain the best and brightest to join our police force, and would he join me in praising our local policing initiatives?

The Minister for Crime and Policing (Kit Malthouse): I am more than happy to lavish praise on North Wales police, which does a fantastic job along the coast there, as do all our police officers up and down the country. I am pleased to say that we are making enormous progress on our recruitment programme. As I hope my hon. Friend knows, we are well over 11,000 now, and I expect to hit the 20,000 target shortly.

Zarah Sultana (Coventry South) (Lab): Jo, a constituent, came to Britain in 2001 and served for five years in the Army, including in Iraq and Afghanistan, where he developed post-traumatic stress disorder. He served time for drink-driving offences, but he sought help for PTSD, stopped drinking and rebuilt his life. He now has two children in Coventry and no connections in Zimbabwe, his birthplace, where he was tortured the last time he was there. However, on Wednesday Jo is set to be deported to Zimbabwe, and I have had no reply from the Minister to my urgent correspondence on this case. So will the Home Secretary step in and stop Jo being deported from the country he has served and where his family lives to a place where he will be at risk of torture?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Tom Pursglove): I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her question. It is fair to say that casework inquiries on these matters are treated urgently, and it is one that will no doubt cross my desk within the coming hours. Of course, the flight in question later this week relates to individuals who have committed very serious criminality, but I will of course ensure that the individual case is looked at.

T8. [905759] **Dr Jamie Wallis** (Bridgend) (Con): In the light of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, does my right hon. Friend agree with me that now is the ideal time to review and reform the 32-year-old Computer Misuse Act 1990, as recommended by the Intelligence and Security Committee's Russia report, and will he meet me and colleagues to discuss how reforming that legislation could not only help to tackle online crime, but unlock our national cyber-defence?

The Minister for Security and Borders (Damian Hinds): My hon. Friend is absolutely right about the importance of the review of the Computer Misuse Act. Since my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary launched that review last year, a number of very good and important suggestions have come forward, which we are currently reviewing. Meanwhile, of course, we continue always to update our approach, including to the National Cyber Security Centre and, more immediately, to the online safety Bill.

Dame Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): In the evidence the Home Secretary gave to the Home Affairs Committee on 2 February, she said that a major obstacle for accepting more people under Operation Warm Welcome for Afghans fleeing the Taliban was the lack of suitable accommodation because of Home Office contracts. The Select Committee has been warning about this for some time. I think that the Home Secretary has announced a bespoke humanitarian policy for those Ukrainians fleeing—[Hon. Members: "No, she hasn't."] Oh, perhaps she has not; I am sorry there is not a statement to clarify that. What I want to know is: what is she going to do about the lack of accommodation that the Home Office provides for asylum seekers and refugees in this country?

Kevin Foster: We are certainly concerned about the lack of suitable accommodation across the United Kingdom in terms of dispersal areas, which is why we are keen to sign up new areas to become dispersal areas. I am pushing my own council and, as I have already said, there are 31 out of 32 areas in Scotland that could do with signing up as well.

T9. [905760] **Chris Loder** (West Dorset) (Con): Dorset police is at the bottom of the funding league table for police forces, coming 40th out of 41 forces, and we continue to battle issues of rural crime, including county lines drug gangs. Will my right hon. Friend commit to ensuring that Dorset gets its fair share, so that we can get more police officers—I particularly want to see the rural crime police team doubled, and I know those aspirations are shared by our police and crime commissioner?

Kit Malthouse: I have committed before, and I am happy to do so again, that before the end of the Parliament we will produce a new funding formula to ensure that my hon. Friend's constituency gets exactly what he deserves, as indeed he should.

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney North and Stoke Newington) (Lab): Does the Home Secretary accept that many Members of this House are dismayed that she did not make a statement in the normal way, so that she could have been questioned in the normal way? Does she further accept that that is not just disrespectful to the House of Commons, but it shows a lack of real concern for those desperate people escaping Ukraine?

Priti Patel: I completely reject the right hon. Lady's latter point, and naturally I will always be happy to return to the House and take questions.

Esther McVey (Tatton) (Con): Constituents in Tatton are increasingly concerned about the growing number and range of online fraud and scams, and the ability of Action Fraud to deal with them. Many of those crimes originate outside the UK, with some from hostile states such as Russia. What is the Minister doing to counter that?

Damian Hinds: My right hon. Friend is right, and we share her constituents' concern. We are looking constantly to upgrade and improve Action Fraud, and I encourage her constituents to carry on reporting those instances of fraud. Together with the rest of our constituents, their forwarding of dodgy emails to report@phishing.gov.uk has so far led to 73,000 scams being removed.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): Will the Home Secretary publish her review into the tier 1 gold-plated visas? Will she suspend all tier 1 visas for people who have connections with the Putin regime, and will she look into the veracity of applications for British citizenship by Russian oligarchs who are connected with Putin?

Priti Patel: I think the hon. Gentleman knows my view and position on that, and of course the answer is yes.

Ben Everitt (Milton Keynes North) (Con): Another young life has been tragically lost to a knife in Milton Keynes. Does the Minister agree that as well as record numbers of police on the streets, the courts and the Crown Prosecution Service need to work with the police to ensure that there are real deterrents to carrying a knife on our streets?

Kit Malthouse: My hon. Friend is right, and I am very sorry to hear of the crime that took place in his constituency. As he will know, the fight against knife crime is at the forefront of the Government's priorities, and as he said, alongside deterrent sentencing and assertive and extensive policing, we need to work on long-term solutions to turn young people's lives away from crime. I am pleased that I was able to visit the Thames Valley violence reduction unit last year to look at the extensive work it is doing to put in place exactly those kind of programmes.

Sanctions

3.38 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (Elizabeth Truss): With permission, Mr Speaker, I wish to update the House on our support for Ukraine in the face of Putin's premeditated, pre-planned and barbaric invasion. Ukraine has suffered horrific attacks. Missiles and air strikes have torn through apartment blocks. Tanks have rolled into once peaceful cities. Innocent people, including children, have lost their lives.

The situation is fluid, but as of today, Putin has not taken any major cities. The advance has been slowed by Ukraine's fierce resistance. Putin's invasion is not proceeding to plan. He expected to take cities quickly. He expected Ukraine to retreat. And he expected the West to be divided. Instead, his forces were met by the heroism of President Zelensky and the resolute determination of the Ukrainian people. He has been met by a united west, together with our friends around the world, and we have taken decisive action.

Today, we have acted with the US, the EU, Japan and Canada to cut off Russia's central bank from our markets. The rouble has fallen by more than 40% as a result. As much as $250 billion has been wiped off the Russian stock market and, today, its stock market is closed. The EU, Germany, Sweden and others are following our lead in providing defensive weapons to Ukraine, and Germany has frozen Nord Stream 2.

Putin has been confounded by our collective response. That is why he is resorting to more and more extreme rhetoric. But, of course, the situation remains dire. The Government and people of Ukraine are facing a continued onslaught. The days ahead are likely to prove tougher still.

The UK and our allies will have to undergo some economic hardship as a result of our sanctions, but our hardships are nothing compared to those endured by the people of Ukraine. Casualty numbers are rising, and more than 300,000 people have already been displaced. This is a struggle for Ukraine's freedom and self-determination, but it is also a struggle for freedom and democracy everywhere and for the survival of a Europe whole and free. We feel a particular responsibility as the UK is a signatory to the 1994 Budapest memorandum, which provided Ukraine with security guarantees.

This premeditated invasion, in violation of international law and multiple international commitments, cannot succeed. Putin must lose. We are doing everything that we can to stop him and to restore Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We will do this by backing Ukraine against unjustified aggression, by degrading the Russian economy and stopping it from funding Putin's war machine, and by isolating Putin on the world stage.

First, we are backing Ukraine with defensive weapons, humanitarian aid and economic support. The UK was the first European nation to send defensive weapons to the country, and those weapons are being used today to halt Russian tanks and defend Ukrainian towns and cities. Our latest consignment of defensive support left Brize Norton over the weekend. We are also leading on humanitarian support. Yesterday, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced a further £40 million of humanitarian aid, which will provide Ukrainians with access to basic necessities and vital medical supplies. We call on Russia to enable humanitarian access and safe passage for civilians to flee the violence. The UK is also supporting Ukraine's economy, including through £100 million of official development assistance and guarantees of up to $500 million in development bank loans.

Secondly, we are cutting off funding for Putin's war machine. We are coming together with the US, the G7 and the EU to take further decisive steps. We have been joined by Australia, Singapore, Switzerland and many more. There is a growing list of countries who are determined that this aggression cannot stand. We have agreed that many Russian banks will be removed from the SWIFT system, kicking them out of international finance. That is the first step towards a total SWIFT ban. Our collective action against Russia's central bank will prevent it from deploying its international reserves to mitigate the impact of our sanctions.

We are also launching a joint taskforce to hunt down the assets of oligarchs hit by our sanctions. The UK is proud to lead by example. We have already put in place the largest package of sanctions in our history. We have sanctioned Putin and Lavrov, Russia's defence industry and a growing list of oligarchs. We have approved asset freezes on several Russian banks and we are banning Russian airlines and private jets from our airspace, but we are determined to go much, much further. We want a situation where they cannot access their funds, their trade cannot flow, their ships cannot dock and their planes cannot land.

Today, I inform the House that I will be laying two new pieces of sanctions legislation. The first will introduce a set of new powers against Russia's financial sector, including powers to prevent Russian banks from clearing payments in sterling. With over 50% of Russian trade denominated in dollars or sterling, our co-ordinated action with the United States will damage Russia's ability to trade with the world, and as soon as this legislation comes into force, we will apply it to Sberbank—Russia's largest bank.

I will also be imposing a full asset freeze on three further banks: VEB, Russia's national development bank; Sovcombank, the third largest privately owned financial institution in Russia; and Otkritie, one of Russia's largest commercial banks. We will bring in a full asset freeze on all Russian banks in days, looking to co-ordinate with our allies. The same legislation will prevent the Russian state from raising debt here, and will isolate all Russian companies—more than 3 million businesses—from accessing UK capital markets. Global giants such as Gazprom will no longer be able to issue debt or equity in London.

The second piece of legislation will ban exports to Russia across a range of critical sectors. This includes high-end technological equipment such as microelectronics and marine and navigation equipment. This will blunt Russia's military-industrial capabilities and act as a drag on Russia's economy for years to come. I appreciate the consequences of this step for British people and British businesses operating in Russia. The Department for International Trade and the Treasury will offer advice and guidance to affected UK businesses. My consular staff will continue to support British nationals in Russia, as well as those in Ukraine.

[Elizabeth Truss]

We will keep ratcheting up our response. More legislation will follow in the coming weeks, sanctioning Russian-occupied territories in the Donbas, extending more sanctions to Belarus, and limiting Russian deposits in UK banks. We will continue working through our hit list of oligarchs, focusing on their houses, their yachts, and every aspect of their lives. In addition, we will introduce the economic crime Bill tomorrow; my right hon. Friend the Business Secretary will set out more in the next statement in the House. This is all about flushing out the oligarchs' dirty money from the United Kingdom. We will continue to work with our G7 allies to cut off the Russian economy and cut the free world's dependence on Russian gas, depriving Putin of his key source of revenue.

Finally, we are leading the diplomatic effort to ensure that there is a chorus of condemnation against President Putin. In the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, a key part of the European security architecture, 45 countries condemned Russia by name. At the UN Security Council on Friday, more than 80 UN members voted for, or co-sponsored, a resolution condemning Russia's aggression. Russia stood alone in opposing it. Putin is isolated. No one is willing to back his war of choice. In recent days, I have spoken to my counterparts in more than 20 countries around the world. Yesterday, I met G7 Foreign Ministers. We were joined by Ukraine's brave Foreign Minister, my friend Dmytro Kuleba. Everyone is clear that Putin must lose, and we will carry on increasing the pressure until he does.

We have all seen Ukraine's determination to fight. Putin's war could end up lasting for months and years, so I say to our Ukrainian friends, "We are with you. In Britain, and around the world, we're prepared to suffer economic sacrifices to support you. However long it takes, we will not rest until Ukraine's sovereignty is restored."

I commend this statement to the House.

3.48 pm

Mr David Lammy (Tottenham) (Lab): I thank the Secretary of State for advance sight of her statement, and for the briefing that she continues to give me on Privy Council terms.

We have all been inspired by the gallant and tenacious actions of Ukrainians in defence of their country. This is true courage under fire. President Zelensky has epitomised the bravery, dignity and resolve of a nation fighting back, and fighting for values that we all share—democracy, freedom and the rule of law. The Foreign Secretary is right when she says that Putin's invasion is not so far going to plan, but does she agree that we must not let our focus slip for even a second? We will continue to stand united with our allies and partners, supporting Ukraine and opposing this outrageous campaign of aggression.

This morning, I had the honour, with the shadow Defence Secretary my right hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth and Dearne (John Healey), of meeting Ukraine's ambassador. He thanks all sides of this House for the united opposition we have shown to Vladimir Putin's illegal war and the support we continue to show for Ukrainian sovereignty. Putin is not only facing a united west; he is facing a truly United Kingdom. Together, we have enacted sanctions that are having a strong effect. The rouble has crashed by over 40%, the main borrowing rate is up 20%, and inflation is reportedly hitting about 65% per year. Oligarchs are being frozen out of their bank accounts and the central bank of Russia is being blocked from part of the $640 billion war chest that it holds in foreign reserves. Labour's priority is to cut off Putin's rogue state from our economic system and to undermine his campaign of aggression in Ukraine.

We recognise that on 24 February the European security order changed. Our continent faces a transformed strategic context. Our world is at the start of a new era. I pay tribute to the political courage shown by all our partners, particularly our allies in Germany who have recognised that by taking the difficult and brave decisions to provide Ukraine with lethal weapons for its fight and to commit to the significant increases in defence spending that this new reality demands.

Yesterday, President Putin raised the alert level of Russian nuclear forces. As the five nuclear weapon states, including Russia, reaffirmed in January, a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. What assessment has the Foreign Secretary made of that decision, given the understandable concern it will have caused among the public?

Turning to sanctions, we welcome the further steps the Government have announced today. Labour has been calling for some time for progress by the UK, the EU and the US on cutting off Russian banks from SWIFT. The moves finally to clamp down on dirty money—so long demanded by Labour and colleagues across the House—are long overdue. It is regrettable that it has taken so long and a crisis of this nature for such action, but we welcome the steps and will study them carefully. However, there is still more the Government can do.

The last time I stood at the Dispatch Box, I asked what steps the Government had taken to ensure that members of Russia's legislature, the Duma, could be sanctioned. Still today, I am waiting for that answer. Similarly, although I welcome the Foreign Secretary's action against Russia's financial sector, the Government should go further to ensure sanctions can also be placed against Russia's extractive industries, energy industries and technological industries. We must ensure that the insurance industry cannot underwrite and de-risk Putin's war. As I said at my last time at the Dispatch Box, it is vital that the sanctions are broad enough to inflict damage on every aspect of Russia's economy. We welcome the moves the Government have taken to ensure Russia is cut out of the SWIFT banking system, but can the Foreign Secretary explain what dialogue she has had with our allies on cutting the country out of the Visa-Mastercard system, too?

Finally, can the Foreign Secretary give assurances that Putin will also feel the consequences of his despicable actions in terms of international opportunities available to the country in sports and culture? The diplomatic unity of the west is crucial, but we must also widen the global coalition opposing the war. Some countries, such as Kenya, have spoken out with clarity and elegance against Putin's imperialism, but others have stayed silent. Some are even allies of the UK and fellow democracies. What steps is the Foreign Secretary taking to ensure the widest possible range of voices speaks up in opposition to this war?

As well as commending the bravery of the Ukrainians defending their country, we must also praise the courage of the ordinary Russians taking to the streets of Moscow, St Petersburg and beyond under the threat of repression to show their opposition to this despot. This is the fifth day of fighting. Ukraine is still facing an all-out war from Putin's army. It is a mark of the bravery of Ukraine's forces that neither Kyiv nor Kharkiv have fallen. We salute their courage, and this whole House will continue to stand with them.

Elizabeth Truss: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his statement of unity; a strong message is going out to Putin and around the world that the United Kingdom is united in our support for Ukraine. We can see that from the demonstrations and from the public concern and interest in this appalling act of aggression and invasion that has taken place.

Yesterday, I joined a call with the G7 Foreign Ministers. We agreed that the sanctions that we had put in place so far are having an impact, but we need to do more. We need to work in unison and act in unity. We also agreed to increase the supply of defensive weapons in Ukraine.

The right hon. Gentleman is correct: Germany has taken courageous steps. It has transformed its energy policy and its defence policy, and we have seen a huge rising of public opinion right across Europe. I also want to praise Japan, South Korea and Singapore, which have put sanctions on for the first time.

I and my Foreign Office colleagues are putting in calls to Foreign Ministries around the world. We are encouraging more countries to put on sanctions and to speak out at the UN. The right hon. Gentleman is right that there are some countries that are democracies which should be standing up against the invasion of a sovereign democracy, and we are making that point to them day and night. What we are seeing is that Putin is completely isolated. There is nobody else backing him up in international forums and there is a growing group of countries prepared to put sanctions on and to supply defensive weapons. We are leading the charge in bringing those countries on board.

On the specific issues that the right hon. Gentleman mentioned, we have a hit list of oligarchs and Duma members that we are working through to sanction as soon as we can. Foreign Office officials are working through the night. We have extra lawyers and have tripled the amount of people in our sanctions department to make that happen. We are looking at more sanctions on the energy industry and the technology industry. We want to see a total ban on SWIFT transactions. We are encouraging our allies across the world to back that. We also want to see a full bank freeze in the coming days.

It is vitally important that we maintain unity with our allies. There are many countries that are heavily dependent on Russian oil and gas. The UK gets only 3% of its energy from Russian oil and gas. The figure for some countries is as high as 90% or 100%; we have to reduce that over time, and that is what we are working on through the G7.

I am very pleased that the right hon. Gentleman has backed the approach we are taking. I want to continue to work cross-party to do all we can to support the brave people of Ukraine and to make sure that Putin loses.

Mr Speaker: I call the Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Tom Tugendhat.

Tom Tugendhat (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con): I very much welcome my right hon. Friend's commitment. She has been working literally through the weekend, night and day, to get these sanctions right and to get them in place. Will she join me in assuring the Russian people that the moneys frozen—the moneys seized—which are, let us face it, very often stolen from them in the first instance, will be held and returned to the Russian people when this criminal conspiracy that laughably calls itself a Government falls and they actually have a proper Administration to which it can be returned? Will she also join me in urging many other countries around the world to join together and create a single fund from which a repayment mechanism can be created for the damage done to Ukraine and the rebuilding of Russia in due course?

Elizabeth Truss: My hon. Friend is right. Our issue is not with the Russian people, many of whom are now protesting against this appalling regime; it is with Putin and his cronies. That is who we are targeting with our hit on oligarchs. My hon. Friend is right that that money should be protected. I will look into the idea that he puts forward.

Mr Speaker: I call the SNP spokesperson.

Alyn Smith (Stirling) (SNP): I am grateful for sight of the statement. The SNP is part of the global coalition in defence of Ukraine in international law. I commend the Foreign Secretary and her Ministers on the openness with which they have dealt with Opposition Members. That trust will be reciprocated; this is too serious a time.

If anything, I urge more. I support the statement and we will support the sanctions measures as they come forward, but I urge more and I urge faster ambition, particularly on refugees. The UK needs to waive visas, not wave flags. The EU has really given the lie to the generosity of the UK's response on refugees by waiving visas for three years for all Ukrainian nationals. The UK needs to do the same. I appreciate that it is not in the Secretary of State's remit, but I really urge the Government to act on the issue, because it is certainly the one most raised with me.

The EU's response through the civil protection mechanism and the peace facility dwarfs the UK's. The EU has acted with one voice: 27 member states are acting together. I really urge the UK to complement those efforts and match their scale and ambition in its measures, which we support but wish to see more of.

I have some specific questions about sanctions. We all agree about tackling oligarchs, but what plans are there to tackle and target the family members of oligarchs? When we were in Kyiv recently, that was mentioned as a particularly effective way of putting on pressure. I also note that there will be an advice facility for UK businesses affected by the sanctions. Is any consideration being given to providing financial aid for UK businesses hit by the sanctions? That seems the morally correct thing to do.

The Foreign Secretary will be aware of reports of a Russian tanker heading for Orkney to pick up oil. Will the legal powers to impound such vessels be in place in time for us to do so?

Elizabeth Truss: I agree that we need to continue to do more on sanctions. We are working night and day, including with our allies, to get tougher sanctions, the full ban on SWIFT payments and the full asset freeze on banks, which we want to introduce in the next few days, as well as targeting the oil industry and the gas industry, which is ultimately the most important thing because it is funding Putin's war machine.

As my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said at Home Office questions, we are creating a new Ukrainian humanitarian route to enable families of British nationals to come to the United Kingdom. It will mean that an additional 100,000 Ukrainians can seek sanctuary in the United Kingdom.

Through the export support service, the Department for International Trade will be helping businesses. The Secretary of State for International Trade will lay out more details in due course.

Mrs Flick Drummond (Meon Valley) (Con): Further to the latest announcement that Switzerland, Japan and other democracies are joining to impose sanctions, what more can we do to convince other democracies that have not condemned this atrocity or implemented sanctions to do so?

Elizabeth Truss: My hon. Friend is right. There is nobody in the world lining up with Vladimir Putin and his unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, but we need more democracies and more sovereign nations to stand up, because we cannot have a world where might is right and international law can just be ridden roughshod over.

We in the Foreign Office and Ministers across Government are making those points to our counterparts around the world, but this is where I think parliamentarians can help: many people in this House have good contacts with overseas Governments. We need to encourage those Governments to stand up and put sanctions in place. I had a call this morning with some Foreign Ministers who had never put sanctions in place before but are now considering it. There are many more who are on the verge of imposing sanctions. I strongly encourage Members across the House to get on the phone to those Ministers and those Governments, because this has created global outrage and we need to see that reflected in complete degradation of the Russian economy.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr Speaker: Order. I am looking to run this statement for about an hour. Short questions and speedy answers would help us all.

Dame Margaret Hodge (Barking) (Lab): I thank the Foreign Secretary for the progress that she is making. I ask just two questions. First, it is still unclear to me and, I think, to most members of the public whether members of the Duma can be sanctioned by this Government. Will the Foreign Secretary clarify that point for us? Secondly, it is not just Russia; jurisdictions such as Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan are also complicit in supporting Putin in his endeavours. Is she taking any action to sanction members of those jurisdictions?

Elizabeth Truss: Members of the Duma can and will be sanctioned. We are working through the list of members in the same way as we are working through our hit list of oligarchs. I will look into the issues surrounding Kazakhstan and other nations. We are already sanctioning Belarus, and we will shortly impose more sanctions on it for its complicity in this abhorrent invasion.

Mr Tobias Ellwood (Bournemouth East) (Con): It is indeed day five of the fighting, but the bells of St Michael's in Kyiv continue to ring as the Ukrainians thwart the progress of the Russian Red Army. Good on them: Slava Ukraini to our friends in Ukraine. But sanctions, although they are so important, will not be enough. May I urge the Foreign Secretary to see how we can widen the sanctions package internationally? Any sanctions that we impose will be mopped up by Russia's new long-term friend China. The United Nations General Assembly is sitting today; may I urge the UK to table a resolution on sanctions which means that China is obliged to follow them along with everyone else?

Elizabeth Truss: This sanctions package has been agreed across the G7, which represents more than 50% of the global economy. That is a significant hit on the Russian economy, and it will help to degrade the Russian economy over time. The key issue is reducing dependency on oil and gas, but, as my right hon. Friend says, we must also ensure that there is no sanctions leakage into other countries. I have spoken to my Chinese counterpart. The Chinese did not vote with the Russians at the UN Security Council. I am making very clear to China, and to other major nations, their responsibilities to protect the sovereignty and self-determination of Ukraine, and we continue to put pressure on them.

Layla Moran (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD): The Foreign Secretary may be aware that last week I named 35 Russian oligarchs who are on the Navalny list, At the top of that list was Roman Abramovich, who curiously decided a couple of days ago—and said it out loud—that he wanted to transfer Chelsea football club into some kind of trust. The concern is, of course, that oligarchs are working with their lawyers and their accountants to do the same. Can the Foreign Secretary assure the House that we will not stop but will follow the money, and no matter where it may or may not be transferred, we will find it and we will seize it?

Elizabeth Truss: I can indeed assure the hon. Lady that that is exactly what we are doing. We have a very large team of people working through our hit list of oligarchs, and we are also looking at their properties and their ownership of yachts. We have already grounded their private jets. My right hon. Friend the Business Secretary will make a statement immediately after this about the economic crime Bill, which will give greater transparency to the opaque corporate structures operated by some of these people and organisations, and will bring much more clarity and sunlight.

Sir Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con): I congratulate my right hon. Friend and all the team on their robust leadership in the course of this. It has brought a great deal of cheer in Ukraine.

My right hon. Friend also spoke about chasing the oligarchs. We should remind everyone that the oligarchs are mostly in possession of Putin's own personal fortune, which is in the order of $200 billion to $250 billion, squirrelled away through their accounts. However, my

right hon. Friend will be slightly hamstrung, because although we pursue the oligarchs and their money, it is still not an offence for those who have worked with them—their lawyers, their estate agents and all the others—to fail to yield the information about what deals they have done. Will she now, in the Bill, make it mandatory for all those in the chain immediately, when someone is sanctioned, to pass that information up directly, or they will themselves be committing a criminal offence?

Elizabeth Truss: My right hon. Friend has made a very good point. We are looking at what we can do to target the families of oligarchs, the people who work for them, the people who support them and the people who enable them, because ultimately all these people are supporting the Putin regime, and we ultimately need to stop the financing of that regime.

Mr Ben Bradshaw (Exeter) (Lab): Will the Foreign Secretary name those London law firms that are sending her threatening letters to try to dissuade her from sanctioning Putin's cronies, who are also their clients?

Elizabeth Truss: I can assure the right hon. Gentleman that it does not dissuade me when people send me letters; it encourages me when people send me letters, and they are on our list.

Mark Pritchard (The Wrekin) (Con): The armed forces and the people of Ukraine are fighting hard and fighting brave, and their courage is an inspiration to us and to all freedom-loving peoples around the world. On financial sanctions, I commend the Government for taking a lead in the west on those sanctions. Following on from the comments of the shadow Secretary of State on Visa, Mastercard and Diners Club, which are of course American companies, I have been on the phone this weekend to the US Congress, as the Foreign Secretary might expect. Can I ask her to get on the phone to Secretary Blinken to put pressure on him for perhaps a temporary ban in order that we have not only external pressure but internal pressure?

Elizabeth Truss: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his leadership of the all-party parliamentary group on Ukraine. We will be doing more with our friendship group for the Ukrainians to raise international support behind the Ukrainian cause. I can tell him that I have been on the phone to Tony Blinken on many occasions in the last few weeks. He is going to travel to Europe this week, and I will be meeting him. I will also be in the United States the following week. The UK does all it can to ensure that the G7 is moving forward in all these areas of sanctions, including financial services, and we will not rest until we have completely cut the Russian economy off, and cut it off from its supply of oil and gas money to ensure that Putin does not have the money to fund his war machine.

Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson (Lagan Valley) (DUP): The people of Northern Ireland stand with the people of Ukraine and we commend the Government for taking a lead in the international community on many of these issues. The Foreign Secretary spoke of humanitarian assistance. Will that extend to the United Kingdom opening its doors to some of the refugees from Ukraine?

Elizabeth Truss: We are already donating £40 million of additional humanitarian assistance to Ukraine. We are also providing direct support in the neighbouring countries, helping our friends the Poles and the Slovaks with the exodus of refugees from Ukraine. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has announced that we will be supporting the immediate families of British citizens here—*[Interruption.]* I understand what the right hon. Gentleman is saying about further support for those refugees.

Jason McCartney (Colne Valley) (Con): I spent yesterday afternoon with dozens of members of Huddersfield and Colne Valley's Ukrainian community, along with other political figures from the area. They really welcome what we are doing on sanctions, as well as our humanitarian aid and military support, but one of the many questions they are asking is about visas. Can the Foreign Secretary please reiterate the announcement that was made in the last hour and explain what it means for getting those people's families and loved ones back to the UK safely?

Elizabeth Truss: My hon. Friend is right to suggest that we have a very strong Ukrainian community right across the United Kingdom. We are determined to do all we can to support the Ukrainians in their fight for freedom and sovereignty. We are introducing the new Ukrainian humanitarian route, which responds directly to the needs and asks of the Ukrainian Government. This gives British nationals and any persons settled in the UK the ability to bring over their immediate Ukrainian family members. This extension alone will mean that an additional 100,000 Ukrainians will be able to seek sanctuary in the United Kingdom. I am sure that the Home Secretary will outline more details of the scheme in due course.

Debbie Abrahams (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab): I also want to say that I stand with Ukraine and support the Foreign Secretary in the measures she has announced this afternoon. I congratulate her on the unifying way in which she is doing that, but does she agree that the language we use is incredibly important in these delicate times? Also, can she say anything about the Commonwealth's involvement?

Elizabeth Truss: The hon. Lady is right that language is very important. This war is not on behalf of the Russian people; this war has been instigated by President Putin, and it is very important that we focus on the personal agency that he has had in mounting this unprovoked attack on Ukraine. I understand that there is huge strength of feeling across the United Kingdom, and we reflect that in everything we do.

Mr Andrew Mitchell (Sutton Coldfield) (Con): I thank my right hon. Friend for the announcement that she and the Prime Minister made about humanitarian relief. I urge her to join other European countries in helping to shoulder the financial burden of the humanitarian load on the frontline states. Most people who flee across the border want to stay as close as possible to the areas from which they have been driven, and all European countries must give the strongest support to those driven out in great fear and terror by this extraordinary and barbaric Russian behaviour.

Elizabeth Truss: The hon. Member for Oldham East and Saddleworth (Debbie Abrahams) asked about our friends across the Commonwealth, and I assure her that we are approaching them to secure their support for the sanctions, for the strong stance against Russia and for the Ukrainian people.

On the subject of humanitarian relief in neighbouring countries, we have sent teams to support Poland and Slovakia. We have launched our campaign, and we will launch a further public appeal to secure further humanitarian donations. In fact, I am due to meet my Polish counterpart in Geneva tomorrow, and we will be working very closely with our allies in eastern Europe to support the people of Ukraine.

Liz Saville Roberts (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC): I welcome BP's decision to divest from Rosneft after I raised the issue with the Prime Minister last week.

International sanctions now include Russia's civilian aircraft fleet. The UK has a part to play in their enforcement because, as of yesterday, 713 leased Russian aircraft are registered in Bermuda, a British overseas territory. For far too long, weak UK regulation of Londongrad and tax haven overseas territories has enabled Putin's regime. What discussions has the right hon. Lady had with the British overseas territories to ensure the immediate and effective implementation of UK sanctions against Russia?

Elizabeth Truss: Like the right hon. Lady, I welcome BP's divestment. We are working closely with the overseas territories to make sure that Putin's oligarchs have nowhere to hide.

Alec Shelbrooke (Elmet and Rothwell) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the sanctions regime must stay in place until every inch of Ukrainian territory is back in Ukraine's control, including Crimea?

Elizabeth Truss: Yes, I completely agree with my right hon. Friend.

Marsha De Cordova (Battersea) (Lab): Many of my constituents are affected by the war in Ukraine. Like me, they recognise the need for the toughest possible sanctions on Russia. The Foreign Secretary's statement is welcome, but it does not go far enough. What steps is she taking to ensure that sanctions are imposed on the extraction and technology industries?

Elizabeth Truss: I announced today that export controls will apply to critical technologies, which will make it much harder to invest in the oil and gas industry, the technology industry and, of course, the military-industrial complex in Russia. The hon. Lady is right that the fundamental issue here is that Putin is reliant on oil and gas revenues, which is where we need to work with our G7 partners. Continental Europe is predominantly dependent on oil, gas and coal from Russia, and we need to help it to reduce that dependency so that Putin has nowhere to source his funds. That is what we are doing through the G7.

Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con): As a matter of superior tactics, does my right hon. Friend accept that the right way to deal with a robotic, sneering psychopath firmly in the grip of small-man syndrome is not to impose sanctions in a piecemeal and gradually escalating way but to seek to inflict maximum economic pain at the earliest possible moment?

Elizabeth Truss: Yes is the answer, and that is what we are doing; we are pushing as hard as we can for the toughest possible sanctions. This is the biggest package of sanctions the UK has ever put in place in our history, and we want to do even more and we want to push it with our allies. Together with the G7, we represent half the global economy, and that is what will really shift Putin's behaviour. That is what will really degrade the Russian economy and stop him being able to fund his war machine.

Kirsten Oswald (East Renfrewshire) (SNP): Listening to the right hon. Lady's comments, I am not entirely sure yet what the hold-up is with clarifying the plans to sanction Russia's political ruling class—members of the Duma, Senate and presidential council; the top echelons of the security and defence services; and public television employees. Is she able to set out for us a little more about how soon we might see that happen, given the need for action to be swift, decisive and clear?

Elizabeth Truss: I assure the hon. Lady that we have a hit list of oligarchs and Duma members—those key personnel we are talking about. We will be announcing those as we build the evidence and case against them, but we need those cases to be legally watertight—that is what is important—so that when we hit them, the hit sticks.

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): Will the Government now allow and encourage more domestic production of oil and gas, to help reduce the cruel dependency of Europe on Russian energy?

Elizabeth Truss: We certainly are committed to using the UK's oil and gas fields. Energy independence is vital. We also need to invest more in nuclear, which my right hon. Friend the Business Secretary is working on.

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): May I offer the Secretary of State a little advice, as I have been in the House for quite some time? No one now likes oligarchs, but some important and substantial figures we call oligarchs in London and in this country are very intelligent people who are influential on Putin. Does she agree that she should consult them as a way of getting a voice of experience and reason to Putin, in order that we could get a better, peaceful resolution of this horrible crisis?

Elizabeth Truss: Let us be absolutely clear: this is unprovoked aggression by Putin, after months of warning that there would be severe consequences and a long-running conflict. I do not believe that this is somebody who is capable of reason on that level at this stage. We have to be tougher than tough. We have to be tough with our sanctions, and with the military aid that we and our allies are supplying, because it is only strength that Vladimir Putin understands.

Alicia Kearns (Rutland and Melton) (Con): The UK and our allies have delivered meaningful economic strikes against Putin, but we now see the encirclement of civilian towns, the illegal and indiscriminate use of cluster weapons, Chechen militia and calls for more

indiscriminate attacks. Will my right hon. Friend reassure me that we will maintain maximum pressure, map and record all atrocities for future prosecution and also commit to drawing up plans for what happens if we see the use of incendiary munitions or chemical weapons?

Elizabeth Truss: Regrettably, my hon. Friend is right; that is the type of action we are seeing being contemplated. Everybody involved, including Putin's advisers and generals, should be aware that the International Criminal Court is already looking at this and at potential war crimes being committed, and we are urging a full investigation to take place.

Mr Kevan Jones (North Durham) (Lab): I thank the Foreign Secretary for her statement. She talks about a hit list of oligarchs. She knows as well as I do that some of the individuals on that list are well-known and some are not so well known, but the one thing they all have in common is that they have all supported and continue to support Putin's regime. Will she tell me about the timescale in dealing with some of these individuals? She says that she wants more evidence, but surely we have the evidence against certain of those individuals. What timescale is she talking about for when we will see lists of these individuals being printed and sanctions taken?

Elizabeth Truss: We have announced more than 120 businesses and oligarchs who have already been sanctioned. There is a list that we are working through, and we will be announcing more as soon as the evidence is ready.

Jeremy Hunt (South West Surrey) (Con): May I commend the resolute approach being taken by my right hon. Friend and ask whether she will consider secondary sanctions—sanctions not against Russian entities but against entities in other countries that seek to profit from the gap left in trade—as it is totally unacceptable for others to profiteer from this invasion. The move will also increase the pressure on Russia, as it did successfully on Iran.

Elizabeth Truss: Yes, we are looking at that, and my right hon. Friend is 100% right.

Hannah Bardell (Livingston) (SNP): I sat on the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Bill Committee and watched in horror as the right hon. Lady's party walked away from the opportunity to sanction Russia on the flow of dirty money through the UK. I am sure that, with the benefit of hindsight, she and her party realise what a grave mistake that was. The action that she has announced is welcome, but will she now take action against Scottish limited partnerships, which are having a profound impact on many nations, and the secrecy havens that are the British overseas territories, notably the British Virgins Islands and the Isle of Man? Given her Government's failure, surely these actions need to come now.

Elizabeth Truss: I thank the hon. Lady for her welcome of the economic crime Bill that we will be introducing tomorrow. My right hon. Friend the Business Secretary will be saying more about that in his statement.

Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con): Will the Foreign Secretary confirm that the secondary legislation being introduced is now in the Vote Office, or that it will be very soon? Will she also please confirm that, from a practical point of view, the consequences of this legislation will be set out in clear and simple language and in an easily understood way so that the people who are affected by it—British businesses and British individuals—can understand precisely and easily what is happening?

Elizabeth Truss: I can assure my hon. Friend that the legislation will be in the Vote Office as soon as possible. It is important that we get it absolutely right. He talks about businesses being affected. There will be advice through the export support service run by the Department for International Trade, making sure that businesses have all the information they need.

Mr John Whittingdale (Maldon) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Russian people are being consistently lied to by Russian state media about both the scale of Russia's military action and the resulting loss of life? Does she agree that that makes the role of the BBC World Service and other trusted media all the more important, and will she bear that in mind when considering any calls for taking action against Russian state media in this country?

Elizabeth Truss: My right hon. Friend is entirely right. There is, quite simply, a pack of lies being produced on Russian state media. He is also right about the vital importance of the BBC World Service and other services from which the Russian people can hear a more balanced and truthful version of events. He is also right about the consequences and the unintended consequences of preventing channels from operating in the UK as there could be reciprocation, which would then make it harder for the Russian people to hear the truth.

Ellie Reeves (Lewisham West and Penge) (Lab): I have been overwhelmed by messages from constituents who are horrified by Russia's action in Ukraine. This morning I visited Lewisham Polish Centre, which is doing brilliant work co-ordinating the local relief effort for those fleeing the country. What everyone I have heard from has asked for, however, is an assurance that we are putting forward the strongest possible package of sanctions, providing humanitarian relief for refugees fleeing to neighbouring countries and offering comprehensive safe sanctuary routes to the UK. May I press the Foreign Secretary to give us those reassurances today?

Elizabeth Truss: I can reassure the hon. Lady that we are doing all of those things. The sanctions that we currently have in place on Russia are the toughest, in terms of the size of the package, that the UK has put on any country in our entire history. Importantly, however, we are doing more; we are working with our allies to do more every day.

Brendan O'Hara (Argyll and Bute) (SNP): My constituents cannot understand why we still allow Russian state-owned oil tankers to use UK ports. The Russian state-owned oil tanker NS Century is currently at the Finnart oil terminal on Loch Long, a port adjacent to Coulport, which is a home to the UK's nuclear arsenal. Why, when we are imposing such harsh economic sanctions on the Kremlin, are we continuing to allow Russian state-owned oil tankers to go freely about their business, particularly so close to this most sensitive military installation?

Elizabeth Truss: They will not be going about their business freely for much longer.

Sir Bernard Jenkin (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): If the BBC World Service comes to my right hon. Friend to ask for additional funding to increase the broadcasting in Russia and among Russia's supporters and allies, will she entertain and agree to such requests?

Elizabeth Truss: I will certainly entertain the request, and I will ensure it is value for money.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): I do not understand why Abramovich and Usmanov have still not been included on the sanction list. I do not really understand why the Prime Minister said last Thursday that we were not going to engage in cultural or sporting boycotts, because we certainly should—we should throw every single thing we have at the Russians. Finally, I do not understand why the Prime Minister also said last Thursday that we will not be sending any Russian diplomats back. Surely we should at least be cutting the Russian embassy here by a half or three quarters, if not deciding that the ambassador, who has lied through his teeth to this House, should go back home.

Elizabeth Truss: As I said earlier, we have a hit list of oligarchs that we are working through. My right hon. Friend the Culture Secretary is taking a very tough line on cultural activities, and we have seen a number of sporting events already cancelled.

Chris Grayling (Epsom and Ewell) (Con): This is an incredibly tough time for the people of Ukraine, but it is also an incredibly nervous time for the people of the three Baltic states, who must undoubtedly feel that they are at risk. These are good friends of the United Kingdom and people who have had good relations with hon. Members across this House. Will my right hon. Friend join me in sending them a message that we are on their side, and will she do everything she can to ensure that we stand firmly alongside the Baltics in these nervous times?

Elizabeth Truss: My right hon. Friend is correct. We know that Putin does not just want to take over Ukraine and restore Russian hegemony over it; he wants to turn the clock back to the mid-1990s, when vast swathes of eastern Europe were under Russian control. That is one of the many reasons why it is so important that his ambitions stop in Ukraine. It is why we are not only supporting the Ukrainians but increasing our strength on the eastern flank. We have doubled the number of troops in Estonia and our allies are also stepping up to support the Baltic states, who are vital allies of the United Kingdom.

Cat Smith (Lancaster and Fleetwood) (Lab): I welcome the sanctions that the Foreign Secretary has set out and her words about getting Putin's dirty money out of UK finance, but can we also get it out of UK politics? Would she support the Conservative party's handing back its £2 million from Russian oligarchs?

Elizabeth Truss: There is a big difference between Russian people and supporters of the Putin regime. It is important that we do not tar every single Russian, many of whom have gained British citizenship and are part of our political process, with the same brush.

Mark Logan (Bolton North East) (Con): Hundreds of people rallied at Bolton town hall on Saturday. We have one of the most established Ukrainian diaspora communities in the UK outside London. Will the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office agree to meet the Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain to discuss the UK's resolve for their friends and family? We are with them, and freedom will prevail.

Elizabeth Truss: We would be absolutely delighted to do that.

Tony Lloyd (Rochdale) (Lab): The House should commend the Foreign Secretary's statement, but does she agree that with any sanctions regime it is the detail that ensures we can police it? In that light, will she look into the case of the plane of Mikhail Gutseriev, a friend of Putin who is already sanctioned under Belarus sanctions? The plane itself was sanctioned by the Foreign Secretary's predecessor, but, I am told, landed twice at Luton airport. That cannot be right.

Elizabeth Truss: I will look into the case the hon. Gentleman raises.

Felicity Buchan (Kensington) (Con): I warmly welcome the leadership that the UK has shown in developing intranational sanctions, but will my right hon. Friend think about going a step further? At the moment, we are freezing the assets of those sanctioned. Would she consider putting a charge on to those assets, monetising the charge, and using the money raised to pay for the support of refugees in eastern Europe and ultimately to rebuild Ukraine?

Elizabeth Truss: I thank my hon. Friend for her very innovative idea and I will certainly have a look at it.

Dr Lisa Cameron (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP): Will the Government be looking to address the fact that cryptocurrency may be utilised to try to mitigate the impact of some of the sanctions imposed? The all-party parliamentary group on crypto and digital assets, which I chair, is very keen to play a responsible role and support the Government in moving forward in that realm.

Elizabeth Truss: We have worked very closely with the Treasury on this package of sanctions, and we are certainly looking at tackling every possible route that could be used to undermine the sanctions, one of which is cryptocurrency.

James Sunderland (Bracknell) (Con): The rhetoric and the statements coming out of the Kremlin this week would appear to indicate that the invasion is not going to plan from the Russian perspective. Could my right hon. Friend please convince the House that the UK, the US and all our allies will not blink when it comes to the global imperative to eject Russian forces from Ukraine, and of the need to ensure that Ukraine is restored as quickly as possible to a free, democratic and proud nation?

Elizabeth Truss: I am very clear that there is a tough road ahead. We are with the Ukrainian people. We know that this could last for some time. At yesterday's meeting of G7 Foreign Ministers we were clear that this tough package of sanctions would increase. We will be

doing more over the coming days and weeks. We will continue to put pressure on the Kremlin, and continue to supply defensive weaponry into Ukraine to support its people in their just cause of pursuing self-determination and sovereignty.

Florence Eshalomi (Vauxhall) (Lab/Co-op): Like Members across this House, I have been contacted by Vauxhall residents who want to express their solidarity with the people of Ukraine. Yesterday I attended a Racial Justice Sunday mass at the Church of the Holy Spirit, where a number of constituents raised with me the reports, which the Secretary of State may have seen, of African migrants in Ukraine trying to flee and being discriminated against. She mentioned that she will be meeting her Polish counterpart in the coming few days. Will she please raise the issue of those migrants in her discussions?

Elizabeth Truss: I am happy to raise that issue.

Craig Whittaker (Calder Valley) (Con): I thank my right hon. Friend, who over the past few weeks has worked tirelessly along with the Prime Minister to do all they can to help to stop the regime of Putin, particularly through sanctions. Does she agree, though, that it is vital that we continue to work to plug the holes in our sanctions regime that allow Putin to ship oil from this country? Is there anything legally we can do to stop the ship that is currently in Orkney waiting to ship oil?

Elizabeth Truss: I am looking very closely at this with my colleague the Transport Secretary to get it addressed as soon as possible.

Mr Alistair Carmichael (Orkney and Shetland) (LD): I have to tell the Foreign Secretary that time is not on her side. The NS Challenger is due to berth at 6 am on Wednesday. In the past hour the Secretary of State for Transport has written to all UK ports requesting them not to grant access to Russian vessels. That is a very welcome move, but the House will have noticed that he used the word "request" rather than "instruct". Can the Foreign Secretary tell me now, or get me early information, that if the terminal operators at Flotta in Orkney refuse to berth the NS Challenger they will not be left financially exposed as a result?

Elizabeth Truss: I am looking at this issue urgently with the Transport Secretary and I will get back to the right hon. Gentleman with that information.

Jane Stevenson (Wolverhampton North East) (Con): When parliamentarians in this place see our counterparts in Ukraine taking up arms to defend their country, it is really sobering. Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is vital that we send the united and clear message that we will continue to support Ukraine for as long as it takes, even if that is for the long haul, and that this is a war that Putin cannot win?

Elizabeth Truss: We have seen the acts of incredible bravery from the Ukrainian population and Ukrainian politicians, including President Zelensky, who has led from the front. It is absolutely inspiring. Our message across the House today should be that however long it takes, however difficult it is and whatever difficulties we have economically, they cannot compare to the sheer hell that the people of Ukraine are going through. We will be with them through thick and thin, until Putin loses and until the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine are restored.

Liam Byrne (Birmingham, Hodge Hill) (Lab): The whole House will welcome the Foreign Secretary's ambition this afternoon, but can we speed up the process of hitting the people on the hit list? There are 23 people on the EU sanctions list who are not on the UK sanctions list as of this morning. The ban on trading in state bonds is in place in Europe, but not in the UK. The ban on import and export from breakaway regions is in place in Europe, but not in the UK. The asset freeze and travel ban on Duma members is in place in Europe, but not in the UK. The asset freeze and travel bans in place in Europe number 22, but there are just eight in the UK announced in the past few days. What further power and resources does the Foreign Secretary need for us to catch up with our American and European allies?

Elizabeth Truss: We are leading from the front. For example, we are banning clearing from Sberbank, which the EU is not doing at the moment. We are freezing more bank assets. We have advocated the SWIFT ban, and we want to get all our allies to agree to a SWIFT ban, but this is not a competition between us and our allies; this is a concerted endeavour, where all of us are doing all we can as quickly as we can to show unity and to deliver a massive hit to the Russian economy. The House will have seen the drop in the rouble today, and the impact that this unity is having. I strongly encourage colleagues across the House to support our package, which is unprecedented in United Kingdom history, and to put pressure on more countries to join us, but there are areas where we are going a lot further than our allies. There are some areas where they have gone further than us. We need to continue to make progress together. That is what sends a strong message to Putin.

David Morris (Morecambe and Lunesdale) (Con): I pay tribute to the bravery of the Ukrainian people. Change often begins at home, and in this particular case, Alexei Navalny, the leader of the opposition, is currently incarcerated in prison in Russia. Does the Foreign Secretary agree that there should be stronger calls for him to be released, so that democracy can truly flourish in Russia once again?

Elizabeth Truss: My hon. Friend is correct about Navalny; he ought to be released. We have seen a terrible suppression of democracy, and we have also seen a terrible suppression of information in Russia, but despite that, we are seeing people in Russia come out on the streets, and we are seeing public figures speak out against the regime. That takes incredible bravery, and I congratulate them. I am humbled by the people in Russia who are prepared to risk their lives to stand up for freedom.

Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab): Following on from that, we know how ruthless Putin can be when it comes to internal opposition. Yesterday was the seventh anniversary of the murder of Boris Nemtsov, Navalny is in prison, and I went out for the trial of Pussy Riot some years ago. What are we doing to offer support to people who will come under increased repression in

[Kerry McCarthy]

Russia? We may not be able to directly support them, but what are we doing to try to bolster their courage and ensure they keep up the opposition to Putin?

Elizabeth Truss: We have always worked to support those who speak out in favour of free speech, free media and democracy in Russia, and we continue to do that. We congratulate those who are prepared to go out and protest against this regime's appalling actions. Our concerns are not with the Russian people; our concerns are with Vladimir Putin and his regime.

Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con): I warmly welcome the leadership shown and the progress made by the Foreign Secretary and the Government with partners on intensifying economic sanctions. The announcements from Switzerland and Singapore were particularly important. What more does she think that we can do to persuade the United Arab Emirates to stand up more strongly for the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity against unwarranted aggression?

Elizabeth Truss: I have had a phone call with my UAE counterpart to make exactly those points. Every country around the world should be aware that if this is allowed to happen—if a bigger and mightier country is allowed to invade a sovereign democracy with impunity—it could happen anywhere. This is about Ukraine, its sovereignty and democracy, and it is about the security of Europe, but it is also about global security and global rules. That is why every single country, including non-democracies, should care about ensuring that Putin loses in Ukraine.

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): I am pleased that the Foreign Secretary has urged Russia to enable safe passage for civilians to flee the violence, but does she recognise that her Government have to do far more to offer sanctuary to those fleeing? Limiting that to immediate family members is simply not good enough. The elderly grandmother of my constituent has been granted a UK visa, but has been told that she has to travel 300 miles from Kyiv to Lviv to get it stamped in her passport. I raised that with the Foreign Secretary last week, who told me to contact the Home Office, which I have to no avail. Since it relates to the operation of the embassy, can she help? Can she assure us that it will not be a repeat of the Afghanistan crisis where hon. Members were bounced between the Home Office and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office with very little success while our constituents suffered?

Elizabeth Truss: Our ambassador, who is in Lviv, is doing a fantastic job in very difficult circumstances. We are doing all we can to support people in Ukraine. As I said, the case is a matter for the Home Office. I am very happy to take it and ensure that the Home Secretary is aware of it.

Mr Jonathan Djanogly (Huntingdon) (Con): I realised that the Government really understood the nature of sanctioning oligarchs when the sanctions on Aeroflot were extended to private jets. In that vein, will my right hon. Friend consider banning insurance for Russian yachts and jets? It would have a worldwide application and make life a lot tougher for those concerned.

Elizabeth Truss: I thank my hon. Friend for his idea. Nothing is off the table.

Dame Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): I welcome what the Foreign Secretary said about banning Russian airlines and Russian ships from docking at our ports, but yesterday afternoon, a Russian-owned and Russian-crewed ship headed from Inverness to the Humber to dock. I know she has made it clear that she is in discussions with the Transport Secretary, but can she give some indication of when we will have sanctions to stop that happening? There was a huge amount of local opposition in the Humber to that ship.

Elizabeth Truss: The local opposition is right and we are working as fast as we can to deal with the issue.

Richard Drax (South Dorset) (Con): I commend my right hon. Friend and her team for all their amazing work in the face of this appalling invasion. Does she agree that the best way to combat the worrying resurgence of Russia and China, and to reassure other countries, is to invest in not only our defence but our diplomatic reach around the world so that we can spread our values of democracy and freedom and proclaim them even more loudly?

Elizabeth Truss: Yes, that sounds like a petition to the Chancellor about the Foreign Office's budget, which I wholeheartedly agree with and support. My hon. Friend is right that this horrific invasion is a massive wake-up call to the west about our defence and the need to invest in NATO. I am pleased to see Germany committing 2% of its GDP to NATO. We need everybody to commit to that and we need to look at what more we can do to strengthen NATO, because we have taken European security for granted and we cannot do that any longer.

Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP): First, I congratulate the Foreign Secretary on the role that she has played in the collective effort the Government have made in seeking to show President Putin that his actions will not be tolerated. I think the fact that some countries that a week ago were not contemplating strict sanctions are now doing so is an important step. Just on the sanctions, I understand that the Foreign Secretary has to go through the legislative process and do the investigations of the people who will be targeted and so on, but many of them are named in the statement today and many others will guess who they are, so is she not concerned that, where assets are mobile and can be quickly hidden, action will be taken to avoid those sanctions?

Elizabeth Truss: I can assure the right hon. Gentleman that the ones named in the statement are either in our legislation or have already been sanctioned. The point about working with our allies across the world is that these people and organisations will have nowhere to hide.

Dr Kieran Mullan (Crewe and Nantwich) (Con): India is a great friend of the UK and a leading democracy, and Indian communities prosper in democracies around the world, including of course in this country. Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is in India's long-term interests to do everything it possibly can to ensure this invasion fails?

Elizabeth Truss: That is absolutely correct. Every sovereign nation that believes in fair play and the rule of law around the world should be doing all it can to stop Putin being successful in Ukraine. That includes India, China and every other country around the world.

Alex Sobel (Leeds North West) (Lab/Co-op): As somebody who had a grandparent born and raised in Ukraine, this war does come emotionally quite close to me, as it does to everybody of Ukrainian descent in this country. From the 1990s onwards, British-headquartered legal, finance, audit and risk companies have helped to create the kleptocracy that exists in Russia. Many of them still have huge offices in Moscow, such as KPMG, PwC and Linklaters, and Ernst and Young actually put Rosneft on the London stock exchange. What action is the Foreign Secretary taking to ensure British companies withdraw from Russia and withdraw their support from the kleptocracy that exists and is funding the war machine, and to delist some Russian companies on the stock exchange?

Elizabeth Truss: We are running through a list, and we have already sanctioned over 120 businesses in Russia and oligarchs. We have prevented the Russian central bank from deploying its international reserves to counteract sanctions. We are freezing bank assets of vast parts of the Russian economy, and we will continue to do more to target individual companies with freezes and sanctions. As I have said, nothing is off the table, and we are working in train with our allies on all of this.

Matt Hancock (West Suffolk) (Con): I congratulate the Foreign Secretary and the Government on the swift action they have taken, including the action against the Russian central bank, and I commend her for her work to go further. Frankly, however, is it not desperate and indeed pitiful to try to blame words from Her Majesty's Government for the outrageous Russian escalation of dangerous rhetoric yesterday, because the truth is that it is imperative for the stability of the international order that Putin fails?

Elizabeth Truss: My right hon. Friend is right. The reality is that Putin has made these threats to distract from his unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. We are being targeted because the UK has been leading on measures both to support Ukraine and to degrade the Russian economy, and the Russians do not like it.

Sam Tarry (Ilford South) (Lab): Earlier, we unfortunately had an opaque response to my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster and Fleetwood (Cat Smith) on oligarchs' financing of the Conservative party, and the right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford) has also raised the question of the £2.3 million of donations. Would the Foreign Secretary like to take this opportunity to commit today to giving that money from Russian oligarchs directly to charities that will be supporting Ukrainian refugees—not, I hope, in picking vegetables, but being in this country in safety?

Elizabeth Truss: As I have said, we cannot tar every single person of Russian origin with the same brush. We are targeting oligarchs close to Putin without fear or favour and freezing bank assets without fear or favour, and we will continue to do so.

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): I thank the Foreign Secretary for coming to the House to update Members. I understand that today she has banned travel from the United Kingdom to Russia. Have we also asked British citizens in Russia to return? Will she confirm that nothing is off the table economically, diplomatically or militarily?

Elizabeth Truss: We have moved our travel advice on Russia to red, which means that we advise against all travel. That is not the same as a ban; it is ultimately Government advice, but I strongly advise people not to go to Russia. That is very clear. On the wider issue, nothing is off the table on sanctions, and we are absolutely clear about that. We are pushing our G7 allies as hard as we can to get a full ban on SWIFT and on all bank assets, and to reduce dependence on oil and gas, which is ultimately the most important economic lever over Putin.

Chris Law (Dundee West) (SNP): In the past eight years there has been a war, not just in the past few days. During that time, it has been not just military warfare, but a war of communications known as hybrid warfare. Yesterday, the EU decided to shut down RT and Sputnik. Just as the Foreign Secretary is leading in some areas, will she confirm that she will follow the EU and shut down RT and Sputnik immediately? Yesterday as I was watching it, there was a documentary completely about Nazification in Crimea in 2014. That is wholly untrue, but it is being put on our television screens today.

Elizabeth Truss: We are looking at what can be done with RT, but if we ban RT in the United Kingdom, that is likely to lead to channels such as the BBC being banned in Russia, and we want the Russian population to hear the truth about what Vladimir Putin is doing. There is a careful judgment to be made, and that is something the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport is looking at.

Sally-Ann Hart (Hastings and Rye) (Con): The vast majority of Russian people are like us. They want to earn money, provide for their families and be happy, but their President, Mr Putin, has taken them down a very dark path, and the world to the brink. Will my right hon. Friend join me in urging the Russian people, and those in the Kremlin who do not agree with Mr Putin, to do whatever it takes to bring Russia back from the brink and stop Putin?

Elizabeth Truss: I completely agree with my hon. Friend that we must do all we can to stiffen the resolve of those in Russia who are disgusted by President Putin's actions in their name. That is why it is important to reach out through channels such as the BBC, and that we communicate clearly. The Foreign Office recently stood up its information unit, which provides communications to challenge disinformation from the Putin regime.

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): My constituent's wife and child are currently fleeing the violence in Ukraine, and they hope to return home. Her sister, who is Ukrainian, and her two children aged 10 and four, are fleeing with them, because the home they had been living in was destroyed by a Russian bomb. Does the Foreign Secretary agree that that is precisely the kind of

[Hilary Benn]

case where the United Kingdom, which has a long history of compassion and welcome to refugees, should be enabling that family, together, to return here?

Elizabeth Truss: It is appalling to hear about the horrific situation that the family of the right hon. Gentleman's constituent find themselves in, and we must be welcoming to refugees from this appalling, pre-meditated war created by Vladimir Putin. I will take his inquiry to the Home Office and get him a response.

John Penrose (Weston-super-Mare) (Con): Four years ago an inquiry was announced into the progress of golden visas that had potentially been misallocated. Will the Foreign Secretary confirm that anybody on her list who becomes sanctioned—I commend her on the ever-growing list of oligarchs who she is sanctioning—will have any golden visas that they may have been granted in the past summarily revoked?

Elizabeth Truss: Well, Mr Speaker, they will not be able to travel.

Barry Gardiner (Brent North) (Lab): The Giorgidze family, the Reckon family and many others in my constituency have family members and loved ones now in Poland or on its border. They want to know what conversations the Foreign Secretary has had with her counterpart in Poland about swift flights to bring those family members to the UK and—perhaps equally importantly—what conversations she has had with the Home Secretary on that matter.

Elizabeth Truss: We have been working closely with the Home Office on this issue as well as the Polish Government. In fact, I am due to meet the Polish Minister tomorrow to discuss it further. We have a forward team of Foreign Office officials in Poland precisely to help with such cases.

Mark Pawsey (Rugby) (Con): I welcome the additional Government measures announced today, but will the Foreign Secretary recognise and indeed encourage the actions of UK individuals and companies who have chosen to dispose of investments and shareholdings in Russian companies, and not least BP's disposal of its stake in Rosneft, which will come at a substantial cost to its shareholders?

Elizabeth Truss: I welcome the actions by companies who are dissociating themselves from working with the Putin regime, including BP's divestment.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald (Glasgow South) (SNP): We have all witnessed the horrifying war crimes taking place against the people of Ukraine. One would have thought, would one not, that there would have been at least some diplomatic expulsions in co-ordination with others as a result of that? However, the Foreign Secretary dodged the question from my good friend the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Alicia Kearns). Is her Department working on plans should those war crimes get worse and chemical weapons are deployed against the people of Ukraine?

Elizabeth Truss: Yes, we are working on that. We are working closely with the International Criminal Court, and the chief prosecutor has already issued a statement about the situation in Ukraine. We are determined that everyone in Russia close to Putin, who is in charge of this appalling invasion, should be aware that they could be prosecuted for war crimes for what they are doing. On diplomatic expulsions, of course we do not rule anything out. We are working closely with our allies.

Rob Butler (Aylesbury) (Con): I very much welcome the Foreign Secretary's robust statement on further sanctions on Russia and strong support for Ukraine. Deliberate misinformation and propaganda are part of Putin's toolbox, so does she agree that while we must safeguard and respect free speech, social media companies have a responsibility to ensure that they are not propagating lies and that they must moderate the content on their platforms extremely carefully?

Elizabeth Truss: My hon. Friend is right. The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport is looking closely at the activities of social media companies.

Justin Madders (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): I am pleased to hear that the Foreign Secretary will not be cowed by letters from oligarchs' lawyers. She will know that, no matter how distasteful we might find it and how damaging it might be to those law firms' reputations, even oligarchs are entitled to legal representation because that is part of what makes us a free and democratic society. Does she agree that the best way to deal with these issues is to ensure that the laws are watertight in the first place? Will she assure us that she has got the best, most expert lawyers available to ensure that no loopholes can be exploited?

Elizabeth Truss: The Foreign Office is currently full of lawyers working through precisely that point.

Jack Brereton (Stoke-on-Trent South) (Con): I very much welcome the UK's robust global leadership against Putin's Russia. The high dependency on Russian energy in parts of Europe has been used by Putin to threaten many of those European countries. What more can the British Government do to help support those countries to reduce that dependency?

Elizabeth Truss: I am working closely with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on helping those countries reduce their dependence. We are working with the G7 so that, over time, there will be less and less oil, gas and coal imported from Russia so that there will be less money to fund Putin's war machine.

Drew Hendry (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey) (SNP): The public would rightly expect Departments and the Cabinet to be working together at a time like this. The Foreign Secretary said in her statement that "we are also leading on humanitarian support" and yet fleeing Ukrainian citizens seeking refuge in the UK are being denied entrance because of outdated and restrictive immigration rules. Will the Foreign Secretary therefore urge her Cabinet colleagues to follow the EU nations in waiving visa requirements for Ukrainian citizens for three years?

Elizabeth Truss: As I said earlier, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has just announced the new Ukrainian humanitarian route, which responds directly to these needs.

Anthony Mangnall (Totnes) (Con): The Foreign Secretary announced the launching of a joint taskforce to hunt down the assets of oligarchs hit by our sanctions. Can she tell us the speed and scale at which that taskforce will be set up, and what conversations have been had with the insurance companies, which presumably have a list of all the assets and names of the individuals?

Elizabeth Truss: This really pertains to a number of questions that have been asked. What we are doing in building up our evidence cases about the oligarchs is sharing information with our G7 allies, so we are working together and getting that information quicker. That work is already under way. That taskforce already exists. Of course, alongside the legal services, the public relations services and the accountancy services, we will look at the insurance services that these oligarchs rely on. This is all about being able to do this quicker, because every single country has the same issue. The US takes time to build up cases against oligarchs because generally their organisations are so complex and opaque. The work that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is doing on the Economic Crime Bill will also help to make it easier for us to understand their corporate structures.

Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab): I think all of us, particularly those of us who were Members of the House in September 2001, realise that a page has been turned in world history and a new chapter has begun that will resonate not just now but for many years. The important thing is our shared values, and the way that we respond in the months and years to come. On the specifics of the Foreign Secretary's statement, she said that over 50% of Russian trade is denominated in dollars or sterling, but so that the House can understand the impact of our Government's actions, how much of Russian trade is denominated in sterling?

Elizabeth Truss: I do not have that figure on me, but I can get it to the hon. Gentleman. The point that I was making is that the action that we have taken on clearing is in conjunction with the United States, so between us we are able to cover 50% of that trade.

Patricia Gibson (North Ayrshire and Arran) (SNP): Can the Foreign Secretary explain why the Russian ambassador to the UK is yet to be dismissed, and will she do all that she can to encourage the Governments of all Western democracies and the wider international community to similarly dismiss their Russian ambassadors in order to further underscore the isolation of Russia under Putin on the international stage?

Elizabeth Truss: It is very important in all that we do that we work with allies, and co-ordinated action is vital to send a message to Russia and the rest of the world. As I have said, nothing is off the table.

Dave Doogan (Angus) (SNP): I listened to the Foreign Secretary correctly detail the importance of avoiding sanctions leakage. She was asked twice in this statement about British overseas territories. I detected a reluctance to go into detail on that. If I was wrong, can she please correct me, and if I was right, can she explain why?

Elizabeth Truss: I have been very clear that we will absolutely include overseas territories in all the measures that we are taking.

Jonathan Edwards (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (Ind): The sister of my constituent, Mrs Roach from Cwmann, has been travelling across Ukraine with her children for three days in an attempt to get to the Polish border. Based on what was said earlier, because it is not clear to me, will my constituent's sister and her children qualify as immediate family in order to obtain access to the UK?

Elizabeth Truss: That is a matter for the Home Office, and I would be very pleased to raise the hon. Gentleman's case with the Home Secretary.

Margaret Ferrier (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (Ind): The World Health Organisation has warned that oxygen supplies are running dangerously low in Ukraine, and that it is working with international partners to get urgent shipments through Poland. Can the Foreign Secretary confirm what medical aid the UK Government are providing to Ukraine to help it to maintain essential services?

Elizabeth Truss: I discussed this issue with my right hon. Friend the Health Secretary this morning. We have a shipment, or rather a cargo, of medical supplies, and our Ministry of Defence is helping to facilitate that into Ukraine.

Corporate Transparency and Economic Crime

5.9 pm

The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Kwasi Kwarteng): With your permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement on the reforms the Government will be bringing forward to improve transparency over the ownership of companies and property in the UK, and to strengthen the enforcement of financial sanctions. These are the key elements of our strategy to tackle dirty money from Russia and elsewhere.

The openness of our economy to investment from all parts of the world is one of our greatest strengths. However, we are determined that we want to attract the right kind of investment. As many Members will know, oligarchs and kleptocrats from Russia and elsewhere have used the veneer of legitimacy provided by UK registered companies and partnerships, and have used high-end property to help launder proceeds of corruption. At present, Companies House has very limited powers to prevent that abuse. In light of Russia's outrageous actions in recent days, it is necessary that we put those criminals on notice and send a clear message that the UK will not tolerate their corruption here. To that end, I am announcing two immediate steps.

First, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is today publishing a White Paper on corporate transparency and register reform. The White Paper sets out a comprehensive package of reforms to Companies House. *[Interruption.]* Stop pre-empting. Just be patient. The agency will be transformed into a custodian of accurate and detailed information, ensuring that we can clamp down on those who seek to abuse UK corporate structures to launder money. Anyone setting up, running, owning or controlling a company in the UK will need to verify their identity with Companies House, which will then be able to challenge dubious information and inform the security agencies. Company agents from overseas will no longer be able to create companies in the UK on behalf of foreign criminals or secretive oligarchs. The reforms will not only tackle illicit finance, but directly support the millions of legitimate enterprises which transact with Companies House every day. Alongside the White Paper, we will be legislating for other measures, including reform of limited partnerships law, new powers to seize crypto-assets, and reforms to help businesses share information on suspected money laundering.

Secondly, we will be introducing legislation to Parliament tomorrow to accelerate other measures that will make an immediate dissuasive effect on dirty money and its purveyors from Russia and elsewhere. The Bill we introduce tomorrow will create a register of overseas entities to crack down on foreign criminals using UK property to launder their money. The new register will require anonymous foreign owners to reveal their real identity to ensure that criminals can no longer hold property behind secretive chains of shell companies. By legislating now, we will send a clear warning to those who have used, or who are thinking about using, the UK property market to launder ill-gotten gains, particularly those linked to the Putin regime. Tomorrow's Bill will reform unexplained wealth orders, removing key barriers to their use by law enforcement. It will also include amendments to financial sanctions legislation, helping to deter and prevent breaches of sanctions.

The new property register and the reforms to Companies House will once more see the UK take innovative and world-leading steps to tackle anonymous shell companies. We have been leading on this agenda since being the first major economy to put in place a public register of beneficial ownership for all domestic companies in 2016. Not only can we pay tribute to the heroic efforts of the people of the Ukraine—Ukraine—to defend their democracy and their freedom; these measures, in a small but significant way, will put pressure on kleptocrats and oligarchs who have abused our hospitality for their own nefarious purposes.

5.14 pm

Seema Malhotra (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op): I thank the Secretary of State for early sight of his statement and for our call with the Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Paul Scully), this afternoon. The Labour party and the House are united in our support for Ukraine and we take very seriously our role in ensuring that Russia's unprovoked and unjustifiable aggression fails.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has shaken the world, with huge concern across Parliament and the country about the invasion and the unfolding humanitarian crisis. It is clear, however, that it has taken the Russian invasion of Ukraine to shake the Conservative party into finally taking the action that is required. These steps are imperative, not just for financial transparency but for our national security, and the Government's action on that to date falls far short of the leadership required. That is why we must urgently take the necessary steps to drag illicit finance out of the shadows and make it clear that the UK will no longer be a home to dirty money.

We therefore support the Government in introducing the emergency legislation in the light of the atrocities that we are seeing in Ukraine. The need for it is clear for all to see, but the Secretary of State will recognise that these steps have been needed for a long time. He will know that Labour and, indeed, some Government Members have been calling for years for the measures that the Government have announced. We were first promised this legislation in 2016, and this draft legislation has in fact been ready since 2018. Although we support the Government's actions today, the Secretary of State needs to take responsibility for the time and progress lost through Government inaction. I hope we will see that lessons are learned for this Bill and future legislation, because time is of the essence.

The UK would have been in a much stronger position to act with speed and our national security would have been better protected if the register had already been up and running. That is why the Government must move quickly, because the dangers of a lack of transparency, particularly in the current climate, are all too plain to see. If the intention, as stated, is to impede Russian money, the register will need to be operational in the coming weeks to have any effect. I assure the Government of Labour's full support in moving through the Bill's stages quickly, and hope in turn that they will act quickly to make the register and other measures a reality.

I wish to press the Secretary of State on some key areas in which the Government must go further to make the measures as effective as they could be, and I do that

in the spirit of cross-party support. I welcome his announcement that the economic crime transparency and enforcement Bill, or some aspects of it, will finally be introduced tomorrow and welcome the White Paper reforms to Companies House, but frankly, we have to ask whether a White Paper is all he is bringing forward on Companies House—*[Interruption.]* We have been promised more before, and the Prime Minister announced that more immediate steps would be taken. Will the Secretary of State confirm when other aspects of the economic crime Bill, such as the reform of Scottish limited partnerships and the power to seize crypto-assets, will come before the House?

Will the Secretary of State confirm that the register of overseas entities will be publicly available and that there will be criminal penalties for non-compliance? Will those criminal penalties apply to those who fail to update the register annually, as well as to those who provide false information? Will he confirm when the register will be up and running? Can he give an update on the Crown dependencies and overseas territories, and will he commit to enacting similar reforms and to the Government taking action if they do not take action?

The freedom of our press will be vital throughout this invasion. Will the Secretary of State confirm whether the Government intend to use Monday's legislation to tackle strategic lawsuits against public participation, so that journalists are not silenced and can freely report on the financial activity of Russian oligarchs? Finally, will he update the House on the discussions that he is having with the devolved Administrations on these important measures? I look forward to his response.

Kwasi Kwarteng: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her points. Clearly, on the time that this has taken, she will remember that in the 2017 to 2019 Parliament, a huge amount of our time was taken up by members of the Labour party and the Opposition parties frustrating Brexit. They absorbed a huge amount of parliamentary time and I am afraid that that was one of the reasons we could not expedite this sort of legislation.

There will be criminal liability for failure to update the register annually and for giving misleading or inaccurate information. We are working with the Crown dependencies to update their transparency; by next year, they will have to have much greater transparency requirements. The hon. Lady will be pleased to know that my Government colleagues and I speak to our counterparts in the devolved Administrations on a very regular basis.

Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con): I welcome the statement, as far as it goes. As a matter of principle, does my right hon. Friend agree that cleansing British public life of dirty Russian money is not quintessentially difficult?

Kwasi Kwarteng: As my right hon. Friend appreciates, this legislation is timely. We are grateful that it seems to have elicited huge support across the House, and we are pleased to be able to expedite it.

Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP): I thank the Secretary of State for advance sight of his statement. I also thank the small Business Minister—the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Paul Scully)—for giving me and my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen South (Stephen Flynn) his time earlier, which was appreciated.

I put on record the concerns that many of my Glasgow Central constituents have expressed over the weekend for the people of Ukraine. They call on the Government to do more. Like me, they will welcome action on sanctions and on the flow of dirty money through the City of London, so I am glad that there will be reform of Companies House. It is long overdue, and SNP Members have not been holding it back; we have been calling for it constantly for years. The Government have had multiple chances to deal with it.

As an interim step to action on Companies House, will the Government use the Verify scheme to ensure that people cannot fill the register with absolute guff, as happens now? Will they give Companies House interim anti-money laundering responsibility until the new Bill comes into force? When it does, will it be retrospective? Will it go back to the register and root out all the nonsense, or will it start again from scratch?

I am glad to hear about the register of overseas entities in the Bill, but I would like to know how it will differ from the draft Registration of Overseas Entities Bill. I sat on the Joint Committee on the draft Bill; our report came out in May 2019. How will the new Bill differ? Will it pick up on issues around definitions of legal entities, the use of trusts and the loopholes that they create? Will it take action on Scottish limited partnerships, which have legal personality and can hold property? Tackling them in the Bill is crucial.

Will we look at the cost to land registries of working on the Bill? In Scotland, the register of persons holding a controlled interest in land will come into force on 1 April 2022 and will include overseas entities, so the Scottish Government are moving on the issue in just over a month's time. What conversations has the Secretary of State had with the Scottish Government on how the Scottish register will interact with the UK register?

Will the Government go after the enablers—the estate agents, the lawyers and the accountants who have facilitated so much of the kleptocracy in this country? They have to be held to account, too. I am glad to see that unexplained wealth orders, which have not been working properly—I understand that there have only been nine since their inception—are being fixed. I look forward with interest to that happening.

Finally, what will the Government do about enforcement? They can have the finest laws in the land, but if there is no action and no investment in enforcement, there is little point in having them at all.

Kwasi Kwarteng: I am grateful for the hon. Lady's remarks. As far as the enablers are concerned, we have legislation already on the statute book. As my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary said in her statement, we are looking at other measures to tighten the regime.

We work with DA Ministers constantly. The Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Paul Scully), has engaged ably and directly with DA Ministers, and we look forward to doing so.

This set of measures is only the beginning of the much tighter regime that we want to bring in. *[Interruption.]* People are chuntering from a sedentary position, but I

[Kwasi Kwarteng]

would like to point out that these matters, particularly those regarding cryptocurrencies and cyber-crime, are complicated. We are trying to expedite legislation on those fronts as quickly as possible.

Mr Andrew Mitchell (Sutton Coldfield) (Con): My right hon. Friend has brought excellent news to the House this afternoon, but will he at least acknowledge that the right hon. Member for Barking (Dame Margaret Hodge), my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Nigel Mills), my hon. Friend the Member for Thirsk and Malton (Kevin Hollinrake) and I have been asking the Government to do these things for the last four years and more? Will he now look at the other measures that we have advocated to clamp down on dirty money and money laundering? He is absolutely right about Companies House, but will he now ensure that it has real monkey glands for investigating, and is not just a library? That will require money and officials with great expertise, but sunlight, as ever, is the best disinfectant.

Kwasi Kwarteng: I welcome my right hon. Friend's remarks. I pay tribute to him, and to Members on both sides of the House, for the excellent work that they have done in ensuring that the measures have been introduced in a timely way. I look forward to working with him to ensure that we have a good regime. Let me also point out that we have £63 million in the spending review to deal precisely with the funding of Companies House.

Dame Margaret Hodge (Barking) (Lab): The Secretary of State is sensing some frustration, and I will tell him why. The public register of beneficial ownership of properties that are foreign-owned was promised when David Cameron was Prime Minister in 2015. That had nothing to do with Brexit; it could have been introduced in that year. Then we come to Companies House. I am dismayed that all we are getting is a White Paper. We had an extensive consultation, completed a year ago, which built plenty of consensus around the reforms that were necessary. We do not need a White Paper; we need legislation, because that is what will stop this situation.

I am not sure that the Minister understands the issue of the enablers. There is hardly any ability for any of our enforcement agencies to get at those who not only collude with the process of dirty money coming into Britain, but facilitate it—lawyers, banks, accountants and others. If we do not stop them doing that, dirty money will continue to come in.

My final point to the Secretary of State is about the unexplained wealth orders. We greeted them with great expectations, but they have let us down. I would urge him to put a cost cap on litigation so that when we fail in an unexplained wealth order, the various recipients of dirty money do not get away with £2 million-worth in legal costs, as they did in one case.

Kwasi Kwarteng: I am sure that my answer will not satisfy the right hon. Lady, but I am pleased that we are introducing this legislation, and I look forward to working with her and colleagues on both sides of the House in ensuring that it is right. As for the cap on unexplained wealth orders, I think it will be the subject of plenty of discussion imminently, when we introduce the legislation.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): Order. I was very generous with Dame Margaret Hodge, for obvious reasons, but I shall be less generous now in respect of the length of questions. You are all warned.

Mr Jonathan Djanogly (Huntingdon) (Con): I welcome the statement. While I fully support efforts to have the means to investigate criminality and sanctions-busting schemes at Companies House—and I hope that that will be properly funded, because it will be expensive to carry out—I also hope that the process of registration will not be burdened to the extent that we lose competitive advantage and throw the baby out with the bathwater.

Kwasi Kwarteng: I think my hon. Friend is right. There is always a balance to be struck in legislation of this sort, but I think that, as he takes the temperature of the House, there is a real feeling that we need to expedite it. I feel confident that it strikes the right balance between fairness and transparency, and will not be overburdening people with bureaucracy.

Liam Byrne (Birmingham, Hodge Hill) (Lab): This is at best a half measure. Companies House has 11,000 shell companies where there is no person of significant control registered, yet there have been only 112 prosecutions, which is just 1%. We have 12 different agencies in charge of economic crime, there is no Minister with clear responsibility, and the National Crime Agency says that its budget needs to be doubled. Irony of ironies, journalist Tom Burgis is being taken to court this Wednesday for daring to reveal the truth about the corrupt company ENRC; our courts are being used as arenas to shut down journalists. We need a far bigger, bolder plan from the Minister.

Kwasi Kwarteng: What the right hon. Member says about Companies House reform is not accurate at all. This set of measures will be the biggest reform to Companies House in 200 years. It is something significant. It has not been done in 200 years and it is something which we are very proud to have expedited—*[Laughter.]* I would have thought there would be a bit more recognition of the fact that this is vitally important legislation that is going to be brought in in a timely way.

Sir Robert Neill (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con): The Secretary of State is right to draw a distinction between that which needs to be done immediately to deal with the appalling behaviour of Putin and his cronies and the long-term reforms that are really important to the business structures of the United Kingdom, for our competitiveness and for company law as a whole, which should rightly not be rushed. In relation to the more urgent and pressing matters, will he undertake to work closely not just with the City but with the large amount of expertise we have in financial and legal services? For example, the Financial Markets Law Committee and others have a great deal of expertise, particularly around such issues as crypto-currency, and we need to harness that. The City and the financial sector want good regulation, because it is in Britain's interests to have a clean and effective set-up and we should not be misled by those who suggest otherwise.

Kwasi Kwarteng: My hon. Friend is right. This idea that the City of London does not want regulation is a travesty and a disgrace. It is a slur on the reputation of our financial services. He is also right to say that there is a distinction to be drawn between what needs to be done immediately and can be done expeditiously, and other matters that need a great deal of thought and consultation, on which I am happy to engage with him and other colleagues.

Andy McDonald (Middlesbrough) (Lab): The introduction of this corporate transparency work is welcome but way overdue; it is a shame that it took the invasion of Ukraine to bring it forward. While he is at it, will the Minister please encourage the chair of his party to conduct a review of the money that has come from oligarchs to Tory MPs and demand to know what was expected of them? Are they going to give that money back?

Kwasi Kwarteng: I would like to make a point about donations to political parties. We all know that we do not have state-funded parties. Any citizen can fund and give donations to political parties. I also want to say gently that not every single person of Russian origin is an oligarch. People come here—many of them have British citizenship—and they give freely of their funds.

Mark Pawsey (Rugby) (Con): It is good that the measures will be with us tomorrow, but my constituents who have gone through the process of buying a property will find it hard to appreciate how, over many years, we have allowed the acquisition of UK property to hide wealth that has often been illegally obtained. Can my right hon. Friend reassure them that these new measures will bring this kind of activity swiftly to an end?

Kwasi Kwarteng: Absolutely. That is the point of this raft of measures. We want to shine the light of transparency on these transactions and to minimise the likelihood of people using our property and our goodwill to hide their ill-gotten gains.

Layla Moran (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD): As the MP whose name is on the Registration of Overseas Entities Bill, which is already tabled, may I express my delight that the Government are taking this up and more? Could I draw the Secretary of State's eye to the amendment to the National Insurance Contributions Bill that was passed in the other place on the ownership of freeports? There is real concern that we may be dealing with one part but leaving a door open somewhere else. Will he assure us either that he will accept the amendment or that the matter will be covered in the Bill?

Kwasi Kwarteng: I am delighted to accept the hon. Lady's warm words on the Bill. I am delighted that she is supporting it enthusiastically, and I am happy to engage with her on the passage of the Bill and to examine the amendment she has referred to.

Robert Jenrick (Newark) (Con): I warmly welcome the creation of a register of overseas entities. Could my right hon. Friend give us a sense of how long it will take for an effective register to be created? Post legislation, it will presumably take months to establish the register, bearing in mind there are 95,000 foreign-owned properties in England according to the Land Registry and the Government propose to give those owners 18 months to register their ownership.

Secondly, further to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Huntingdon (Mr Djanogly), although I strongly support reform of Companies House, today a small businessperson in this country can pay £12 to register their company in less than 24 hours. Whatever we do must be as burden-free as possible to help small businesspeople and entrepreneurs to thrive.

Kwasi Kwarteng: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. He says it may take a few months to get the register up and running, and I am trying to make the process as quick and effective as possible. He also mentions that we must not have a disproportionate effect, that we must not overburden small business people and people who want to incorporate and set up businesses, and we will not be doing that. I would be happy to work with him, as he did brilliant work in government, to make sure the Government get this right.

Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP): It is a pity that it has taken a war in Ukraine to bring forward these measures. Irrespective of that, I have some concerns. First, the statement made no mention of what resources will be available to check whatever information is registered. Secondly, there is no indication of what will be done against those who facilitate money laundering in the first place—the whole professional industry engaged in that. Lastly, change is needed in the legal system to stop long, costly and complicated legal battles in court.

What discussions has the Secretary of State had on this with the Northern Ireland Executive? We do not have Russian oligarchs, but we have plenty of home-grown people who launder money from criminal activities using their past terrorist connections. That needs to be dealt with, too.

Kwasi Kwarteng: As I noted, observed and made very clear, we have a spending review settlement of £63 million for Companies House, which is a considerable uplift on previous budgets. There is a commitment to make sure we have the resources to police this new regime.

We speak to colleagues in the devolved Administrations all the time, and I am even happy to discuss these issues with the right hon. Gentleman, should he be so minded.

Richard Fuller (North East Bedfordshire) (Con): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement, because clamping down on illicit international flows of capital is a good thing. Another good thing is open, legitimate global capital markets, where the City of London excels, supporting entrepreneurs in our country. Can my right hon. Friend assure me that, in bringing forward his legislation and the White Paper, he will pay due regard to the positive aspects of international capital, as well as clamping down on the illegal ones?

Kwasi Kwarteng: Absolutely. I am not embarrassed at all in agreeing with my hon. Friend that London is a hub of international capital, which is one of the great strengths and glories of our economy. I will do all I can, as I am sure he will appreciate, to make sure we protect that precious heritage.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): I am sure it was a slip, but the Secretary of State said "the Ukraine." Four Ministers have said "the Ukraine" in the past few days—

Kwasi Kwarteng: It was a slip.

Chris Bryant: I fully accept that it was a slip. We will move on. "Ukraine" is the country. It is an important point, because Ukrainians hate it being called "the Ukraine."

The point I was going to make is that we would have been in a 10-times better place in dealing with Putin's invasion of Ukraine if all this had already been in place, which is why some of us had been calling for it for many, many years. The Secretary of State says he has expedited something. Well, I do not know what it would have looked like if he had slowed it down because, honestly, apart from anything else, we have world-beating lawyers, accountants and others who facilitate the hiding of all these assets. Do we not need to put on them the onus of having to report their dealings with Putin's cronies, and should it not be a criminal offence if they do not do so?

Kwasi Kwarteng: I fully accept the hon. Gentleman's point and I wish to put on record the fact that I corrected myself immediately—having said "the Ukraine", I changed it to "Ukraine". He makes a perfectly legitimate point about that little bit of grammar and the definite article, which is very important. On the speed with which we have brought forward this legislation, I wish to pay tribute to him and to Conservative colleagues, some of whom are no longer in their place, as they have led huge amounts of work and cross-party engagement. I am delighted that now we can expedite bringing this Bill forward.

Alicia Kearns (Rutland and Melton) (Con): I very much welcome these efforts to rid ill-gotten roubles from our system, but in future packages will my right hon. Friend extend transparency efforts into the private education sector and education corporations? Our sanctions regime should stop sanctioned oligarchs from being able to pay future school fees, because they are sanctioned, but many of them pay school fees through shell companies, cash and cut-outs. So will he make sure that our amazing educational establishments do not continue to receive money from ill-gotten gains?

Kwasi Kwarteng: This issue has been raised already, particularly by my right hon. Friend the Education Secretary, who is absolutely focused on making sure that our education system is not abused in the way that our legislation on property and companies is.

Tulip Siddiq (Hampstead and Kilburn) (Lab): The shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury and I, in my role as shadow Economic Secretary to the Treasury, requested a meeting with Companies House to discuss its role in tackling illicit finance. It initially agreed to the meeting, only to cancel it at the last minute. In the email it wrote to us, it said that it had spoken to its sponsor Department, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, about the meeting and that BEIS was of the view that the issues that we wanted to discuss are best raised with the responsible Minister. Is it the Government's policy to block Companies House from meeting shadow Treasury Ministers? Or does the Secretary of State agree that it is in the national interest for all of us to work together, across the political spectrum, to tackle dirty money and illicit finance?

Kwasi Kwarteng: I have been very clear that it is the responsibility of every Member of this House to engage with these issues. I have not been informed about that interdiction by my Department and I would love to hear more about it. However, as I have said, every Member of this House has an obligation to engage directly with those tackling these kinds of abuses.

Anthony Browne (South Cambridgeshire) (Con): This House is united in agreeing that we need to get rid of dirty money from the so-called London laundromat, and I very much welcome these proposals on reforming Companies House, which is a big step in that direction. As a recent Treasury Committee report showed, the economic crime landscape is littered with agencies that are too weak to clamp down on money laundering and fraud. Will the Secretary of State confirm that Companies House will have not just the right resources—other Members have mentioned that—but sufficient powers to really clamp down on the oligarchs, who will no doubt be determined to try to block this?

Kwasi Kwarteng: My hon. Friend will appreciate that the legislation proposed will set up a range of criminal offences. As is always the case with criminal offences, we will absolutely make sure that the people who are enforcing those penalties are properly resourced. I am very keen to work with him to make sure that we get this right.

Janet Daby (Lewisham East) (Lab): The Secretary of State has taken a similar question to this one, but it is very specific. Will he ask his party chair to conduct a review into the political donations made to the Conservative party and the links that these donors may have to the Kremlin?

Kwasi Kwarteng: I have answered this question before and I say, once again, that not everybody of Russian heritage giving money to any political party is an oligarch. I appreciate that the hon. Lady is not saying this explicitly, but the implication is that they are, and I reject the premise of the question.

John Penrose (Weston-super-Mare) (Con): I warmly welcome these measures, particular the register of overseas entities. As has been widely said, some of us have been waiting for that for a very long time and it is hugely welcome, not just in here, but right the way through civil society outside this place. We cannot sanction an oligarch unless we know where he or she has stashed their money, and this register will make a big difference. May I push the Secretary of State a little further on his response to the question put by my right hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Robert Jenrick) about how long it will take once this new legislation is in place to clean up all the rubbish that is currently on the register, in order to make sure that we have something that is both clean and useful, and we do not have a case of "garbage in, garbage out."?

Kwasi Kwarteng: My hon. Friend makes a very good case. There are two aspects to this. Clearly, there is the immediate signalling aspect, which will affect people's decisions in the here and now. There is also the task of getting the register up and running, which may take a few months. I am open to working with him to make sure that we do that as quickly as possible.

Alyn Smith (Stirling) (SNP): The SNP and the Scottish Government have been pressing for these measures for years. We are glad to see progress, but this is really overdue and it does not go far enough, so if the Secretary of State is holding out the bag for praise, it really is a bit out of bounds. I have two specific questions. To what extent do the Government intend to co-ordinate not just with the devolved Administrations and the home nations, but with the overseas territories, in taking this ethos forward? I note the commitment to properly funding Companies House, but can he undertake to keep the House informed of the discussions about budgets and funding the enforcement mechanisms of this properly, because if we are going to do this, it needs to be done right.

Kwasi Kwarteng: Dare I say it, but I have been a Member of this House for long enough not to bring a bag for praise—or whatever the phrase the hon. Gentleman used. I was not expecting that. What I do want to engage with him on is the fact that we are speaking to counterparts in the devolved Administrations because there must be a greater degree of co-ordination. We are also working with the overseas territories. We are expecting them to have much greater transparency, and we will be making that representation to them.

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): I refer the House to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests—I am a fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales. Further to what many Members have said, there is no point in our having a register if what is on it is untrue. Could we have a requirement for an auditor to verify the truth of a certificate, and if it turns out that it is untrue, that auditor is subject to criminal prosecution?

Kwasi Kwarteng: I am conscious that my hon. Friend would not want me to burden people who are legitimately setting up companies. He will also appreciate that the legislation will create new criminal offences, and I am confident that this will significantly tighten the regime that we have today.

Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab): The Minister said in his statement that the new register will require anonymous foreign owners to reveal their real identity, to ensure that criminals cannot hold property behind secretive chains of shell companies. Will it also deal with the issue of beneficial ownership sometimes just being put in the name of another individual so that, on the face of it, it looks like they are the person who is entitled to beneficial ownership, but really they are not?

Kwasi Kwarteng: The hon. Lady is absolutely right to say that we want to have greater transparency. The example in the statement was merely that; it was an example of how people can hide ownership of assets. We want greater transparency generally.

Kevin Hollinrake (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): I very much welcome my right hon. Friend's statement, particularly the bit about overseas entities. There are a couple of things that he might consider for his White Paper. Some 43% of all financial crime is identified by whistleblowers, so proper whistleblowing protection is absolutely critical to identifying this stuff. The other thing is failure to prevent economic crime. If we want our banks and wealth managers to clamp down on this stuff and to do the right thing, they need to face criminal charges if they do not.

Kwasi Kwarteng: I pay tribute to my hon. Friend, who has been speaking about these affairs with a great deal of knowledge and passion for many years, and I have engaged with him on these subjects. He will also appreciate that what we are doing in bringing forward this legislation does not capture the entire economic crime package. There are other measures that we will be looking to bring in very soon.

Dr Lisa Cameron (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP): There have been desperate calls from Ukraine that Russian and Belarusian crypto-assets be frozen and that blocks be put on users from Russia who may seek to mitigate the impact of sanctions through this means. Will the Secretary of State meet the all-party parliamentary group for crypto and digital assets, which I chair, because we want to work responsibly with the Government to make progress on this important matter?

Kwasi Kwarteng: The hon. Lady raises a key issue. It is of great relevance to me and my Department, and also of relevance to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. I would like to say very briefly that the UK has led on this. The fact that Russian financial institutions are being denied access to SWIFT has been very much a success of our diplomacy, but I am very happy to talk to her about further measures.

Duncan Baker (North Norfolk) (Con): I am pleased to have so much in common with my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr Bone), as I too am a former chartered accountant. The reforms to Companies House could not come soon enough—just getting a fictitious audit report removed proves incredibly difficult these days, so this legislation is much needed. However, if we are to empower Companies House to root out the corrupt filings, it must have the resource because, as we have heard, it is by no means a small issue. Can my right hon. Friend assure me that we will have not just the powers, but the resource, the tools and the capability to carry out those actions?

Kwasi Kwarteng: My hon. Friend will be pleased to learn that, as a consequence of the comprehensive spending review, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has increased the amount in anticipation of the reforms that we are bringing in. I am happy to work with my hon. Friend in future to ensure that we get this absolutely right.

James Murray (Ealing North) (Lab/Co-op): As hon. Members across the House have made clear, the register to make public the overseas owners of property here in the UK is years overdue; it has been a crucial missing part of ridding our system of dirty money. Now that the

[James Murray]

Government have finally accepted it as a priority, there can be no further excuse for delay. Every day we waste now gives those backing and benefiting from Putin longer to hide their dirty money elsewhere. Will the Secretary of State follow our suggestion and commit to requiring all those owners of foreign property in the UK who need to disclose their details on the new register to do so by 31 March this year at the latest?

Kwasi Kwarteng: As I have said to the House, we are introducing legislation and, in the customary way, there will be plenty of scope for right hon. and hon. Members to move amendments and to tweak the legislation in any way they see fit.

Dame Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): The Secretary of State has been challenged several times this afternoon about the need for effective enforcement of any new legislation. What additional resources and support will be given to our law enforcement agencies to ensure that the legislation can be properly enforced?

Kwasi Kwarteng: My right hon. Friend the Minister for Security will address some of those issues in his Department. There is legislation currently under consideration that will give more powers to enforcement agencies. As far as my Department is concerned, we have campaigned successfully for more resources for Companies House so that it can become a much more effective watchdog than it currently is.

Stephen Flynn (Aberdeen South) (SNP): There is something particularly brazen about a Secretary of State whose Government have overseen this very city being referred to as a laundromat saying in his statement that his Government are at the forefront of this agenda. Nothing could be further from the truth. I have a simple question for him on this topic: what financial penalties await those who seek to frustrate the register?

Kwasi Kwarteng: As I have said a couple of times, we did lead the way on SWIFT. I think that has been very effective in terms of the response of the German Government and my understanding is that they have shifted. I make no apology for defending London as a hub of capital, but we need to root out kleptocrats and dirty money.

Debbie Abrahams (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab): It is outrageous that the Government are only just introducing measures to deal with the £100 billion a year of illicit finance that this country, and especially the City, is awash with. Can the Secretary of State say how many of the 30 or so outstanding actions from the Government's own 2019 to 2022 economic crime plan will be achieved by the actions he has identified today?

Kwasi Kwarteng: We are making very good progress on all those cases, but I bring to the hon. Lady's attention the fact that the reform of Companies House that we are mooting is the first time in 200 years that it has been reformed in this way. I also highlight that we have led the way in the debate on SWIFT and on transparency in the international arena. Ministers from around the world are engaging with us directly on the effective measures we are bringing about.

Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD): Can the Secretary of State confirm that any new legislation will make the beneficial ownership of all assets in the UK openly available for view and scrutiny, in a similar way to the Land Registry?

Kwasi Kwarteng: As I have said, we are bringing in a Bill and there will be plenty of scope to examine it and make amendments. I look forward to the hon. Lady's engagement on that.

Andy Slaughter (Hammersmith) (Lab): What the Secretary of State is proposing on a property register sounds very weak and very slow. There are billions in dirty money circulating on the London property market behind shell companies. By the time he has identified corrupt owners, the properties will probably have already been transferred. He also says nothing about seizing assets and imposing criminal penalties. Why is he not freezing assets and transfers now, pending disclosure?

Kwasi Kwarteng: The hon. Gentleman is experienced enough a parliamentarian to know that the idea of freezing assets is outside the scope of this legislation—indeed, it is outside the scope of my Department. The Government are looking at a range of other measures that may well reflect the concerns he has described.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): I thank the Business Secretary for coming to the House, making his statement and answering questions from hon. Members for about three quarters of an hour.

Points of Order

5.55 pm

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. Earlier this afternoon, in response to the Home Secretary's very confusing statement on sanctuary arrangements for Ukraine, I asked her whether the elderly Ukrainian mother of a British resident who was prevented by Border Force from travelling from Paris to the UK to join her daughter would now, as a result of this announcement, be able today to return to Gare du Nord to come to the UK. The Home Secretary said, very simply and clearly, "Yes", which was welcome.

However, the Home Office has since clarified that the arrangements apply only to immediate family—that is, spouses, partners, children under 18 and those in need of care—and do not include elderly parents. In this case, the Ukrainian widow is therefore not covered. Indeed, I have spoken to her daughter this afternoon; she is still waiting in Paris and has been told that there is no family visa route that she can apply for. She is attempting still to find other, quite costly, ways to try to rejoin her daughter here, perhaps through tourist visas instead.

This is totally confusing. Either the Home Office website and the information given to journalists this afternoon about the policy are completely wrong, or the Home Secretary gave wrong information to the House. That is not fair on Ukrainians who are trying to find shelter and solidarity and to rejoin family. Given that Home Office Ministers are in the House all evening, Mr Deputy Speaker, could you endeavour to encourage them to get some clarity for the sake of Ukrainian families? Do the arrangements only cover immediate relatives, as defined by the Home Office, or are elderly parents included? Can elderly parents rejoin their sons and daughters who are resident and settled in the UK?

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): I am grateful to the right hon. Member for giving me forward notice of her point of order. Clearly, this is an incredibly distressful time for so many people, but the Chair does not audit the accuracy of what hon. Members, including Ministers, say in the Chamber. Having said that, those on the Government Front Bench will have heard the right hon. Member's point of order and, if the record needs to be corrected, I am sure it will be. Should a Home Office Minister or the Home Secretary want to come to the House and make a statement later today or at some stage in the future, the House will be notified in the usual way.

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. I apologise for not having given you prior notice; the reason is that, while the Secretary of State has announced emergency legislation for tomorrow, as far as I am aware we have had no business statement changing tomorrow's business, and I do not know how amendments will be made. Will a statement be made today so that the House will know how it can deal with tomorrow's urgent business?

Mr Deputy Speaker: I will just check with the people who know what is going on. It may well be that there will be a business statement either later today or very soon, in order to facilitate the business that the Secretary of State has announced.

The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Kwasi Kwarteng): Further to that point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. The Bill will be introduced but Second Reading will not happen tomorrow.

Mr Deputy Speaker: So it will appear on the Order Paper in the usual way.

Mr Bone: Further to that point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am sorry, but I thought we were told that the House was expecting emergency legislation tomorrow. It seems that this is not going to happen tomorrow and I have perhaps misunderstood.

Kwasi Kwarteng: Further to that point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. As my hon. Friend knows, there are three different stages to a Bill—introduction, publication and then Second Reading and further stages—so Second Reading will not be happening tomorrow.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Now I know what an umpire at Wimbledon feels like. I think we will leave it there and move on.

POLICE, CRIME, SENTENCING AND COURTS BILL: CARRY-OVER EXTENSION

Ordered,

That the period on the expiry of which proceedings on the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill shall lapse in pursuance of paragraph (13) of Standing Order No. 80A shall be extended by 51 days until 28 April 2022.—*(Kit Malthouse.)*

POLICE, CRIME, SENTENCING AND COURTS BILL: PROGRAMME (NO. 3)

Ordered,

That the following provisions shall apply to the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill for the purpose of supplementing the Order of 16 March 2021 in the last Session of Parliament (Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill: Programme), as varied by the Order of 5 July 2021 in this Session (Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill: Programme (No. 2)):

Consideration of Lords Amendments

(1) Proceedings on consideration of Lords Amendments shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion six hours after their commencement.

The proceedings—

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

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

Lords Amendments	Time for conclusion of proceedings
Nos. 2, 70, 72, 114 to 116, 141, 142, 3 to 57, 59, 60, 108 to 113, 117, 147, 153 and 154	Two hours after the commencement of proceedings on consideration of Lords Amendments
Nos. 1, 58, 107, 61 to 69, 94 to 106, 121 to 140, 144, 145, 149 to 152 and 155 to 161	Four hours after the commencement of those proceedings
Nos. 71, 74, 88, 73, 80 to 82, 87, 89, 146, 143, 75 to 79, 83 to 86, 90 to 93, 118 to 120 and 148	Six hours after the commencement of those proceedings

Subsequent stages

(3) Any further Message from the Lords may be considered forthwith without any Question being put.

(4) The proceedings on any further Message from the Lords shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion one hour after their commencement.—(Kit Malthouse.)

Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill

Consideration of Lords amendments

[Relevant documents: Second Report of the Joint Committee on Human Rights, Legislative Scrutiny: Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, Part 3 (Public Order), HC 331/HL 23; Fifth Special Report of the Joint Committee on Human Rights, Legislative Scrutiny: Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, Part 3 (Public Order): Government Response to the Committee's Second Report, HC 724; Fourth Report of the Joint Committee on Human Rights, Legislative Scrutiny: Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill (Part 4): The criminalisation of unauthorised encampments, HC 478/HL 37; Sixth Special Report of the Joint Committee on Human Rights, Legislative Scrutiny: Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, Part 4 (Unauthorised Encampments): Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report, HC 765; Sixth Report of the Joint Committee on Human Rights, Legislative Scrutiny: Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill (Parts 7 and 8): Sentencing and Remand of Children and Young People, HC 451/HL 73; Eighth Special Report of the Joint Committee on Human Rights, Legislative Scrutiny: Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill (Parts 7 and 8): Sentencing and Remand of Children and Young People: Government Response to the Committee's Sixth Report, HC 983; Letter to Baroness Williams of Trafford regarding the Draft Statutory Guidance for Police on Unauthorised Encampments and the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, 17 November 2021; Letter from Baroness Williams of Trafford relating to Part 4 (Unauthorised Encampments) of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, 13 January 2022.]

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): I must draw the House's attention to the fact that financial privilege is engaged in Lords amendments 59 and 60. If Lords amendments 59 and 60 are agreed to, I will cause the customary entry waiving Commons financial privilege to be entered in the *Journal*.

Clause 7

Duties to collaborate and plan to prevent and reduce serious violence

6.1 pm

The Minister for Crime and Policing (Kit Malthouse): I beg to move, That this House agrees with Lords amendment 2.

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

Lords amendment 70, Government motion to disagree, and Government amendments (a) and (b) in lieu.

Lords amendment 72, and Government motion to disagree.

Lords amendments 114 to 116, Government motions to disagree, and Government amendments (a) and (b) in lieu.

Lords amendment 141, and Government motion to disagree.

Lords amendment 142, and Government motion to disagree.

Lords amendments 3 to 57, 59, 60, 108 to 113, 117, 147, 153 and 154.

Kit Malthouse: I propose first to talk about some of the key changes made to the Bill in the other place as a result of amendments brought forward by the Government, then to turn to the Lords amendments with which, sadly, the Government disagree for various reasons.

The Bill as passed by this House already included a number of significant measures to tackle violence against women and girls, and we have added to them during the Bill's passage in the Lords. Lords amendments 13 to 15 make it clear in the Bill that domestic abuse and sexual violence are included within the meaning of the term "violence" for the purposes of the serious violence duty. It was always our wish that the serious violence duty should be all-encompassing, but following representations by Baroness Burton and others who were concerned to emphasise its importance, we are happy to agree to this being included in the Bill. The accompanying statutory guidance, which will be subject to public consultation, will make it clear that local areas, in drawing up their strategies to prevent and reduce serious violence, can and should include measures to tackle domestic abuse and sexual violence based on their local assessments.

With regard to Lords amendments 34 to 55, on Report in this House the Minister of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Louth and Horncastle (Victoria Atkins), reiterated the Government's commitment to ensuring that the provisions of the Bill relating to the extraction of information from electronic devices are accompanied by strong privacy safeguards. These Lords amendments deliver on that commitment. Among other things, they add a new clause setting out the conditions that must be met in order for a device user to be treated as giving agreement to the extraction of information. These changes will increase victim confidence and ensure that the individual's right to privacy is respected and placed at the centre of all investigations.

Lords amendment 56 will create new offences to criminalise recording images of, or operating equipment to observe, a person at a time when they are breastfeeding, without the person's consent or reasonable belief that they consent. On Report, the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy) made a powerful case for introducing such offences. Although at that time we made it clear that the Law Commission is currently reviewing the law in this area, we do believe that this amendment will ensure that parents are protected from non-consensual photography and can feel safe to breastfeed in public, ahead of the publication of the Law Commission report later this year.

Another compelling argument was made on Report last July by the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) and my hon. Friend the Member for East Worthing and Shoreham (Tim Loughton), who is sadly not in his place, to address concerns that the time limit for bringing prosecutions for common assault or battery involving domestic abuse is unfairly short. Currently a prosecution for common assault or battery must be brought within six months of an offence occurring. However, victims of domestic abuse may often, understandably, take some time to report an offence, leaving the police and the Crown Prosecution Service with little time to conduct an investigation and prosecute the offender. In some instances, the time limit has expired before the victim even approaches the police. To address this issue, Lords amendment 57 will extend the time limit for commencing a prosecution for common assault or battery involving domestic abuse so that the six months runs not from the date when the offence occurred but from when it is formally reported to the police through either a witness statement or a video recording made with a view to use as evidence. A prosecution must be commenced within an overall limit of two years of the offence. This amendment will make a real difference to victims of domestic abuse and stop perpetrators hiding behind an unfair limitation on victims' ability to seek justice.

Lords amendments 59 and 60 will ensure that the police's processing of personal data in non-crime hate incident records is made subject to a code of practice issued by the Home Secretary. The amendments will address concerns raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley (Philip Davies), also sadly not in his place, in this House and by Lord Moylan and others in the other place by bringing parliamentary oversight to this process. The College of Policing is currently responsible for producing non-statutory hate crime operational guidance. The Government's statutory code of practice, once in effect, will replace the relevant section of this guidance on non-crime hate incidents. The college's guidance will remain in place until the new code enters into effect. When drafting the code, the Government will work closely with policing partners, including the College of Policing and the National Police Chiefs' Council, to make sure that it will respect the operational importance of recording non-crime hate incidents to help to keep vulnerable people and communities safe while balancing the need to protect freedom of expression.

Let me turn to the Lords amendments that the Government cannot support—at least, not in their current form. Lords amendment 70 would require the Secretary of State to establish a review of the prevalence of, and the response of the criminal justice system to, the offence of administering a substance with intent under section 61 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003—commonly known as spiking. The Government share widespread concern about the offence that has prompted this amendment, whether spiking of drinks or spiking by needles, and we are taking the issue extremely seriously. I particularly commend my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Richard Graham) for bringing forward his recent ten-minute rule Bill on this issue. Everyone should be able to enjoy a night out without fearing that they will be a victim of this dreadful crime.

In September 2021, the Home Secretary asked the National Police Chiefs Council to review urgently the extent and scale of needle spiking. It is clear from what the police have told us that this behaviour is not exclusively linked to sexual activity and that it demands a response that goes beyond the criminal justice system. We have therefore tabled our amendment in lieu of Lords amendment 70, which is drafted more broadly than the Lords amendment and is not linked to any specific offence. It will require the Home Secretary to prepare a report on the nature and prevalence of spiking and to set out the steps that the Government have taken or intend to take to address it. In this context we are also exploring the need for a specific criminal offence to target spiking directly, as my hon. Friend recommended in his ten-minute rule Bill. The Home Secretary will be required to publish this report and lay it before Parliament within 12 months of Royal Assent. In preparing the report we will want to take into account the findings of the current inquiry by the Home Affairs Committee.

[Kit Malthouse]

This approach addresses the concerns that prompted the Lords amendment but in a way that enables the Government to consider the issue in the round.

Lords amendment 72 seeks, in common parlance, to make misogyny a hate crime. Hon. Members may be aware that in December last year, at the Government's request, the Law Commission provided recommendations on the reform of hate crime laws. Looking very carefully at this issue, it found that adding sex or gender to hate crime laws may prove "more harmful than helpful", as well as "counterproductive". The principal reason is that it could make it more difficult to prosecute the most serious crimes that harm women and girls, including rape and domestic abuse. Obviously such an awful unintended consequence is not the intention of those who tabled the amendment in the other place. As such, the amendment seeks to exclude certain offences where the risks to their prosecution are acute.

The Law Commission looked at every possible model and unfortunately also found the one proposed in the amendment unsatisfactory. Time is short and I do not want to dwell on all its problems, but the review identified that to reflect sex and gender in some offences but not others would make the law very complex and imply that very harmful excluded offences such as rape are less serious, would result in tokenistic coverage of many misogynistic crimes, and would create new inequalities in how different groups are protected by hate crime laws.

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): The inner house of the Court of Session, Scotland's highest court, has recently clarified that in the Equality Act 2010 "sex" does indeed have the meaning set out in section 11 —that is, that it refers to one or other sex, male or female. Does the Minister share my concern that this amendment has that definition of "sex" but the word "gender" is undefined? Is he aware that many feminists feel that gender is not the same as sex and that in fact gender is a tool of sex-based oppression?

Kit Malthouse: I acknowledge some of the problems with the amendment that the hon. and learned Lady sets out. I think it is Women's Aid that rejected the amendment and said that it would do more harm than good on the basis that she outlined: it is not specific about targeting crimes against women in particular.

Stella Creasy (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op): I would like to correct the record, because that is not what Women's Aid has said.

The Minister highlighted the issue of a carve-out as being the reason why the Government do not believe in adding sex or gender to ensure that any perpetrator who attacks a woman or someone they believe to be a woman can be captured by the offences in question. I think we would all agree that is important, but he argues that the carve-out is not the right thing to do. Does he also make the same argument then that it is tokenistic to carve out offences based on racial or religious hatred, which we already do in our legislation? We have carve-outs. Stephen Lawrence's killers were not prosecuted for a hate crime, but we recognise the hate behind it. Why does he think that women do not deserve the same protection?

Kit Malthouse: I had hoped to avoid the approach that the hon. Lady takes. Of course we believe that women deserve strong protection—we absolutely do—but all I can say to the hon. Lady is that the Law Commission, in looking at the evidence over a three-year period and consulting widely across the sector and society more generally, found that the additional complexity was likely to make it harder to prosecute these crimes. I ask her to reflect on the fact that in proceedings in this House, she put her name to an amendment compelling the Government to adopt the Law Commission's proposals in full. I am not sure why she has now reversed that position, but I hope she appreciates that we are as dedicated to and interested in the safety of women as she is.

Sir Robert Buckland (South Swindon) (Con): My right hon. Friend and I worked hard on the issues underpinning the Bill and on the Bill itself. May I press him on Lords amendment 72? I accept that the amendment is defective. It does not create a new offence, however, but is about aggravating factors in sentencing. I commend to him the positive findings of the Law Commission, namely its proposal to develop an offence of street harassment, albeit with a sexual motive. I take issue with that—I think it needs to be a wider offence of street harassment, because we need to deal with wider issues than sexual motive—but I press the Minister to commit the Government to getting on with work on the Law Commission's important recommendation to create a new offence based not just on racial hatred, but on hatred motivated against gender or sex.

Kit Malthouse: My right hon. and learned Friend is right that we need to have a serious look at the suite of offences used in this area. He will know that many street harassment offences are classified as some kind of public order offence. That causes a number of problems, not least the lack of transparency with the police's analysis of what is going on out there in our streets.

There are three further areas of work that we want to turn to, as we sadly reject this amendment, well motivated though it absolutely is, on the basis of the Law Commission's evidence. Those three areas are first, as my right hon. and learned Friend says, to adopt the Law Commission's other proposal of looking at a specific offence of public sexual harassment, as my neighbour, my right hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Southampton North (Caroline Nokes), asked for today. Personally speaking, I think it could be a new offence, but it could be some amendment to public order offences to allow us to deal with this particular issue.

The second area is police recording. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for South Swindon has raised the issue a number of times with me outside the Chamber, and he is right that we need to look carefully at the forces recording data at the moment, what they are learning from it and what impact it has, because the Law Commission was equivocal about the value of that recording. I am not convinced personally, and I would like to understand what impact it is having from a policing point of view.

The third area of work I would like to see is encouragement of reporting. One of the key things, whatever the offence type, is that we know a lot of women, particularly in the public realm, who are harassed do not have the confidence to come forward or do not

think anything will happen if they do. I am pleased that the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, my hon. Friend the Member for Redditch (Rachel Maclean), is today launching an extensive communications campaign called "Enough", encouraging bystanders and peers to report this kind of behaviour to the police.

Sir Robert Buckland: I have listened with care to my right hon. Friend, and I accept what he says. I am encouraged by what he says about development of the law. May I press him on reporting and recording? As part of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 process, we undertook to ensure that recording was rolled out nationally. That was more than a year ago. For that to happen, there must be proper expedition on this. It is no good saying that there is not a particular offence on which the police can hang this recording. We need to get on with it, because the time is coming, sooner or later, when there will be a relevant offence, and I would rather that the Government were ahead of the pack rather than behind.

6.15 pm

Kit Malthouse: I completely agree with my right hon. and learned Friend, and I am as impatient as he is, not least because I am keen to kick off some analysis programmes looking at particular patterns of behaviour in particular postcodes. We men all know women who have been subject to this kind of abuse out in the public realm. My personal theory is that this sort of behaviour is not something a man does once. Much of this offending is repeated, and there are prolific offenders in particular neighbourhoods who could and should be identified, and they would be if we were better able to record it and had more transparency from a public order offence point of view. That is what we will be committing to do.

Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con): I am grateful for what the Minister has said, particularly about the early amendment on spiking. On this particular offence of misogyny, can we have it on the record in this House that no one in this House has any time for misogyny? The issue is purely one of law and what will be most effective. Everything that my right hon. Friend the Minister has said in answer to my neighbour, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for South Swindon (Sir Robert Buckland), is extremely relevant. Does my right hon. Friend recognise that some police forces, such as my own—Gloucestershire constabulary—are recording data on this and believe it to be useful? I hope he agrees that that could be an encouraging form of evidence towards the aggravating factor he referred to earlier.

Kit Malthouse: I completely agree with my hon. Friend, and he is absolutely right that we need to look carefully at the recording patterns and what they are telling forces such as Gloucestershire about how they can and should intervene in particular neighbourhoods. We then need to look to other forces exhibiting the same patterns of offending, but not necessarily recording it, so that we can act to spread this kind of practice more widely.

I am encouraged by my hon. Friend's sense of cross-party enthusiasm for this issue. I know that some in the House—I am not sure necessarily anybody present here—would seek to make it a political issue, but as the person who devised and published the first ever violence against women and girls strategy in the entire country when I was deputy Mayor for policing at City Hall, I am proud of the work I have been able to do in this particular area over the past decade or so, and I hope I will do it for many years to come. This issue breaches all divides, because we are all sons, brothers, sisters, fathers—whatever it might be—and we all know people who have been subjected to this crime.

Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD): The amendment to the hate legislation does not create a new offence, and the Minister will be aware of that. I had a long discussion with the Law Commission last week, and it admits that not all women's rights organisations agree with its view. Many organisations, such as the Fawcett Society and the Young Women's Trust, support this amendment.

Kit Malthouse: All I can do for the hon. Lady is quote from the Law Commission's report, which I assume she has read, extensive though it is. It specifically states:

> "We recognise that many people may disagree with our conclusion and find it difficult to understand given the prevalence of sex and gender-based violence and abuse…our recommendations have been decided…on the strength of the evidence and policy considerations before us."

I hope she will understand that notwithstanding the division of opinion there may be, the fact that the Law Commission—after three years, and with weighty legal minds—disagrees with this move, along with large women's organisations, such as Rape Crisis, means that in all conscience we cannot support an amendment that they say will make things worse. We have to commit ourselves to making things better and by other means, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for South Swindon (Sir Robert Buckland) has pointed out. That is exactly what I am doing today.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the Minister for all his work. I am concerned about how ladies and girls will have confidence in the processes coming forward. He has clearly said that the amendment is not acceptable because he feels that, legislatively, the Government are addressing those issues, but the people who speak to me—the ladies and gentlemen, and the young girls in particular—need to have confidence in the processes. I do not see that, so how will he legislatively ensure that that is there for ladies and girls?

Kit Malthouse: I completely sympathise with the hon. Gentleman's sentiment. Having been in this House for nearly seven years, I have often realised that we mistake the introduction of legislation for actually doing something out there on the street. Although we can and should legislate to make things crimes and to better dispose of them, we actually need somebody to take off their bicycle clips, walk out of the office or station and do something different out there on the street to make those of us in society who feel unsafe—particularly, sadly, women and girls—feel safer.

We are trying to give concrete life to that through schemes such as the safer streets fund, where we are specifically spending money on public realm improvements, whether that is CCTV or better street lighting, in areas where women and girls feel unsafe. I hope that the huge increase in police numbers that we are seeing at the moment will see more uniforms out there on the street in those areas where women and girls feel unsafe. There

[Kit Malthouse]

are wider cultural issues that we also need to address. The hon. Gentleman is right to point out, however, that legislation will only take us so far and that what is required is action out there on the streets.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle (Brighton, Kemptown) (Lab/Co-op): It sounds a bit like the Minister is saying that the words we say in here do not really matter, but the legislation that we pass here, including making misogyny an aggravating factor, sends messages to people out there. When I sat on the Committee of the Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019, the Government were clear that although other laws could be used to stop the awful practice of upskirting, it needed to be in a clear law against it. During the passage of that Act, they promised that they would look at and bring forward a measure to make misogyny an aggravating factor in hate crime. Why are they delaying on the promises that they have made?

Kit Malthouse: I am sorry, but I am not sure that the Government ever made that promise. *[Interruption.]* Hold on, I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman has read the Law Commission's report. Has he read it?

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: I have read the section that the Minister is referring to.

Kit Malthouse: The Law Commission report is unequivocal about the dangers that it may present. The hon. Member for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy) is shaking her head, but the report's conclusion says:

> "We recommend that sex or gender should not be added as a protected characteristic for the purposes of aggravated offences and enhanced sentencing."

That is the specific recommendation in the report. The Law Commission has much greater and more skilled legal minds than mine, and other groups do not support the amendment.

I realise that the issue is of great importance to hon. Members, and we must all reflect on the feelings of insecurity that women and girls feel in the public realm, but we are being told by the experts—by the Law Commission—that the measure is likely to do more damage than good. That is not necessarily a substitute for us not doing anything and I have outlined what more we may do, but the point is that we have to listen to the experts. To be honest, I am quite surprised that a party led by a former Director of Public Prosecutions would seek to ignore the Law Commission.

Stella Creasy: I would like to correct the record, because the Minister seemed to suggest that I was against what the Law Commission has said. He is asking all hon. Members whether they have read it so it is worth checking whether he has, because it says that there is a case for there being offences motivated by misogyny—for example, stirring up incitement or public sexual harassment. Those of us who have constituents such as Muslim women who get attacked in the street for being both Muslim and a woman recognise that misogyny is about not just sex but power, so we need offences to tackle that.

Does the Minister recognise that if the Law Commission is saying that there are offences motivated by misogyny, the risk of not including it as an aggravating factor is that we could end up in a whack-a-mole situation? For example, we could end up saying, "In these cases of incitement, what is incitement? In these cases, what might be sexual harassment?" It would be simpler to include it and it would recognise what the police are telling us. I stress that the police are telling us that they want this data and they want the courts to back them. They want misogyny to be treated in the same way as racial or religious hatred, because they see it driving crimes on our streets. I am pleased to hear that he is concerned for women, but women have had concern for donkey's years. What we now want is action.

Kit Malthouse: I can appreciate the hon. Lady's requirement for action. As I say, action is what we are trying to put in place. To be clear, again, we are not saying that the fact that we are declining to make this Lords amendment means that we should not do anything. As I said to my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for South Swindon, there are further offences that we need to consider.

In fact, the Law Commission's report went further and said that if we were to introduce that offence, it would complement other work on offences that may be coming forward, such as cyber-flashing, which my right hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mrs Miller) has raised several times in the House; rape threats; and intimate image abuse. There are several areas where we need to consider interlocking offences, and that work will take time beyond this Bill to get right. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Southampton North urged us, we are committed to adopting both recommendations of the Law Commission, and that is exactly the work that we intend to do in the months to come.

Sara Britcliffe (Hyndburn) (Con): Does the Minister agree that it is important for Opposition Members to understand what Rape Crisis England & Wales has said, which is that:

> "Rape prosecutions are already at an all-time low, and we believe adding sex/gender as a protected characteristic would further complicate the judicial process and make it even harder to secure convictions."?

Kit Malthouse: My hon. Friend has put her finger on the button of the problem. It is not that we are unsympathetic to the issue—of course we are not. I just do not see how, given the views of large organisations and of the Law Commission, somebody could, with any conscience, vote for something that they are being told might be damaging. I understand that the hon. Member for Walthamstow is exercised by the issue—as are all hon. Members present—but we hope to address it in other ways and to look seriously at the further offence that my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for South Swindon has urged us to look at and bring it forward in future.

Joanna Cherry: In support of the English Law Commission—hon. Members should be aware that the legislation applies only in England and Wales—in Scotland, when the Scottish Government were looking at introducing hate crime legislation, they rejected misogyny as an aggravating factor after submissions from Rape Crisis, Women's Aid and Engender in Scotland. Baroness Helena Kennedy is now chairing a panel to look at that with a view to reporting. There are arguments on either side.

I am most concerned that if we are to have an aggravation based on sex or gender, gender must be defined. We already have a protected characteristic of transgender identity, which is very important, but in this Lords amendment, sex is defined but not gender. Does the Minister agree that, in future, we should define what we mean by gender so that people know what it means?

Kit Malthouse: There are a number of definitional issues within the Lords amendment that produce fatal flaws, but I absolutely commend the spirit behind it. It comes from a good place and from a concern that we share. Given that legal expertise advises us against it and advises us to pursue another course, that is our intention and that is what we will do.

I turn now to Lords amendments 114 to 116, which relate to the piloting and national roll-out of serious violence reduction orders. I assure the House that we want to pilot them robustly, which is why the assessment of the pilot will be conducted by an independent evaluator and the Government will thoroughly consider the report's findings before any decision is made to roll them out across the whole of England and Wales.

The report of the pilot will be laid before Parliament, but commencement regulations are not generally subject to any parliamentary procedure and the Government do not agree that that approach should be changed for SVROs. To assuage the concerns that have been raised in relation to the pilot, amendments (a) and (b) in lieu of Lords amendments 114 to 116 will set out in the Bill a non-exhaustive list of matters that must be addressed in the report of the pilot.

Lords amendments 141 and 142 seek to create two new offences to tackle so-called sex for rent. We are clear that exploitation through sex for rent has no place in our society and is a revolting phenomenon. We therefore fully understand the motivation behind these amendments. There are existing offences in the Sexual Offences Act 2003 that can and have been used to prosecute this practice successfully, but we do recognise the need to do more to stamp out this abhorrent practice and to support those at risk of exploitation.

6.30 pm

As we announced earlier this month, the online safety Bill will include relevant offences relating to the incitement and control of prostitution for gain in the list of priority offences that internet companies will need to take proactive steps to tackle. The Bill will capture user-to-user sites where the majority of sex for rent advertising takes place. Notwithstanding the existing offences in the Sexual Offences Act, we recognise the arguments for a more targeted offence to help stamp out this practice. Accordingly, I am pleased to announce that, ahead of the summer recess, the Home Office will launch a public consultation on this issue, which will enable us to engage further with victims groups, the police, the CPS and others on how the current legislation works in practice and to consider the evidence for a new bespoke offence.

Dame Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): On the consultation that the Minister will undertake, is it a very targeted consultation on the specific offence of sex for rent, or does it recognise the sexual exploitation of women in other areas and broaden it out to prostitution more generally?

Kit Malthouse: I am grateful to the Chair of the Home Affairs Committee. I cannot give her a definition as it stands, but I am happy to write to her about the scope of the consultation. If she wishes to make representations about the scope, I am sure we will take them into account. However, we are very focused on the notion of a specific offence, so my assumption is that the consultation will be relatively specific.

Gavin Robinson (Belfast East) (DUP): It does sound, from what the Minister has shared, that this is seen solely through the prism of advertisements online—where there is a suggestion of sex for rent, but through an online medium—but is that right? Will any suggested proposal brought forward in this consultation cover media outside the online sphere?

Kit Malthouse: We do believe that the online harms Bill will cover the vast majority of the offending where this is advertised, and I have to say that the vast majority of that these days does seem to be online. However, the hon. Member raises a very good point, and I will make sure that the team putting the consultation together consider whether we should include that in the scope of the consultation and if a further offence is needed.

Janet Daby (Lewisham East) (Lab): Will the Minister give way?

Kit Malthouse: And finally!

Janet Daby: I thank the Minister for giving way on that point. Shelter states that over 30,000 women since the beginning of the pandemic have been pestered by landlords to exchange sex for a roof over their heads. Does the Minister not think that there is more the Government should be doing to move this forward? How long is the consultation period, and what will happen in the meantime?

Kit Malthouse: As I say, there are already offences being committed in those circumstances, and we have had successful prosecutions in exactly the circumstances the hon. Member outlines. Anybody who has been subjected to that kind of criminality should, I hope, feel in a position to report it. However, we need to look at whether there is scope for a more specific offence in this area, because at the moment some of the offending is dealt with through the prostitution legislation, which may not be entirely appropriate. The consultation that we will undertake before the summer recess will run for the normal period, and I hope we will then bring forward expedited legislation, possibly in the same vehicle in which we bring forward the further offences on street harassment. Let us see how we get on.

The other place has proposed some welcome improvements to the Bill, but it has also put forward some amendments that, while often well meaning and extremely well motivated, I am afraid we cannot commend to the House for the various reasons I have set out. I hope that the House will join me, as we support these various amendments, in sorting out what works and what does not, so that we can all move forward in this important area of policy.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): Order. As everybody can see, the Lords amendments are in three groups. Please speak only to the Lords amendments in

[Mr Deputy Speaker]

group 1 and do not stray into groups 2 and 3, as there will be opportunities to speak about those Lords amendments later.

Sarah Jones (Croydon Central) (Lab): I thank the Minister for his speech. He comes late to this party—he was not part of the Committee stage—and he has done well to catch up at this point.

We believe parts 3 and 4 of the Bill represent a power grab that bans peaceful protests and compounds inequalities, which is why we voted against the Bill in its entirety on Third Reading, but we also think that this Bill is a huge wasted opportunity. With crime up, prosecutions down, victims losing faith and criminals getting away with their crimes, there has never been a more crucial time to get to grips with law and order. Throughout the passage of the Bill, we have urged the Government to use this opportunity to move further and faster to tackle the epidemic of violence against women and girls.

Time and again, however, this Government have failed to act with the urgency that this epidemic requires. During the passage of the Bill, the Government have already rejected minimum sentences for rape and stalking, our plan to make street harassment a crime and our plans to protect victims with proper legal advice, but we still have time tonight, thanks to our friends in the other place, to make some changes. I urge the House to consider two Lords amendments in this group that the Government are rejecting that would make a real different to women's lives.

I will start with sex for rent. Lords amendment 141 introduces a new offence of requiring or accepting sexual relations as a condition of accommodation. There are few things more horrific than someone using their power as a landlord or an agent to get sex. Predators advertise sex for rent blatantly. We can see in internet searches hundreds of adverts offering rooms or beds for free to young people, usually women, in return for sex. I understand the Government saying that they are going to look at this and potentially act at some point in the future, but women are being exploited all over the UK now and they cannot wait for another long Government consultation. As my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham East (Janet Daby) has pointed out—the Minister needs to talk to Shelter to understand this better—the impact of the pandemic means that more people, especially women, are facing financial hardship, which is making them vulnerable to this vile exploitation.

Janet Daby: I thank my hon. Friend for making such a fantastic speech. Does she agree with me that there needs to be a specific offence to punish landlords who engage in this awful practice of exploitation through sex for rent?

Sarah Jones: I absolutely do agree with my hon. Friend, and that is what we are trying to achieve tonight. This is not overly complicated, and I think it is staggering, when the Government are introducing legislation far faster in other cases, that they will not support the Lords amendment—and women—in this way.

The second opportunity we have, thanks to the Lords, is Lords amendment 72, which would add prejudice based on sex and gender to hate crime legislation. This would make misogyny a hate crime, which we have talked about so much already tonight. I know that the Law Commission has some concerns, but this is a simple and straightforward step that will increase public awareness, improve victims' confidence—crucially—in reporting, and enhance the way the police respond to violence against women and misogyny. The symbolism of this is so important. We were all so shocked by the Independent Office for Police Conduct report into Charing Cross station and the misogyny in those messages that we never thought we would see in the police.

Craig Whittaker (Calder Valley) (Con): Would the hon. Lady agree with me that introducing this will require an extra burden of proof to be established through the court process, which as a result may actually make things worse for those reporting a crime?

Sarah Jones: I understand what the hon. Member is saying, but as my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy) said, there is a carve-out clause particularly designed to satisfy that concern. I believe that distinguishing between serious sexual violence crimes and other forms of crime that may be enacted with a misogynistic intent would solve that problem.

These kinds of misogynistic attitudes and this kind of behaviour are more widespread in society than we care to think. We must be absolutely intolerant of it, and the hate law speaks to that. Such attitudes erode the very fabric of society and we should collectively reject them.

Joanna Cherry: I share the hon. Lady's horror of misogyny, but I do not understand why although "sex" is defined in the amendment, "gender" is not. What does she understand by the term "gender" in the amendment? Why is it not defined?

Sarah Jones: I understand the point that the hon. and learned Lady is making. The offences are motivated by hostility towards the sex or gender of the victim, and the amendment is designed to be as inclusive as possible, but I hear what she says. Refuge and some other women's organisations have published a good briefing that tackles some of these issues, and perhaps we could have a conversation about it afterwards. I think her concerns are unfounded, but I understand the point she makes. These issues are complex and difficult, and we must make sure we get them right.

Joanna Cherry: But surely as legislators, if we use a word we have to define it. We all know that there have been problems with conflating sex and gender. The amendment clearly states "sex or gender" and since "sex" is defined, as one would expect, by reference to section 11 of the Equality Act 2010, surely we can define what we mean by "gender". If we cannot define what we mean by "gender", why are we including it as an aggravation?

Sarah Jones: The aim of the amendment is to try to make misogyny a hate crime in whatever form it comes, and to be as inclusive as possible in that definition.

Stella Creasy: Does my hon. Friend agree that given that "gender" is defined in legislation—indeed, the Government rather helpfully defined it in their consultation document, so we have a definition of "gender"—it is

therefore important that we focus on perpetrators? The point behind hate crime is that I could be a victim of antisemitic abuse whether I am Jewish or not. It is about the motivation of the perpetrator. By recognising that sex or gender can motivate hostility based on misogyny, we are ensuring that no perpetrator could have a defence where they demean a victim, and no perpetrator can avoid that hostility being reported because somebody wants to put them in the trans box rather than in the misogyny box. The amendment is inclusive, but it ensures that it protects women, whether they were born or become one, using definitions that already exist in law.

Joanna Cherry *rose—*

Sarah Jones: I feel as if there should be a three-way conversation in another place to tackle some of these questions. But they are real questions, and my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow has campaigned on this issue for a very long time, and it is important that we listen to what she says.

Wera Hobhouse: Perhaps I can help out and say that, although no legislation is a silver bullet, this measure would make powerful progress and take a powerful stance against certain attitudes that are so prevalent and stare us in the face. We should send a signal that such attitudes are unacceptable, in the same way that we have done with other hate crime legislation.

Sarah Jones: The hon. Lady puts it very well, and I completely agree. We have seen with the recording of such crimes in Nottinghamshire and other places that this measure works. It is welcomed by the police, as it is a useful thing for them as well.

Ruth Edwards (Rushcliffe) (Con): The hon. Lady talks about the importance of symbolism, and I agree with her. Is she concerned that if we were to accept an amendment that exempts domestic abuse and sexual offences from the aggravating element of misogyny, that would be a terrible message to send? They are some of the most serious crimes against women, yet they would be exempt from that aggravating factor in sentencing.

Sarah Jones: I thank the hon. Lady for that intervention, but as my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow said, there is precedent for this with the case of the murderers of Stephen Lawrence.

Ruth Edwards: Just to correct the record, surely the issue was that there was no hate crime legislation to prosecute that murder. It was not that it was specifically carved out.

Sarah Jones: By the time that prosecution happened such legislation was in place, and there is precedent for that. I could point the hon. Lady in the direction of a very good briefing that explains all that in much greater detail, and I would be happy to send that to her.

Tonight we have two opportunities—I mean to touch on them briefly, Mr Speaker—for the House to tackle pernicious practices that have no place in society, and we would support the Government if they chose to back the Lords amendments. I should acknowledge properly the work of the other place on this Bill. Members of the Lords did some terrific work voting late into the night, and we are grateful to them. Hard work and strong arguments by many of my Labour colleagues in the Commons and the Lords have already forced the Government into several defeats and U-turns. Indeed there have been more successful Labour amendments to this Bill than to any other Bill this Parliament.

6.45 pm

On data extraction, the Government have conceded Labour's calls to protect victims, particularly victims of rape and sexual abuse, from painful and often unnecessary intrusion into their lives by the mining of their phone data. We welcome that shift. On the serious violence duty, after continued pressure from Members across the House, the Government agreed to make clear in the Bill that the definition of "serious violence" for the purpose of the serious violence prevention duty includes domestic abuse, domestic homicide and sexual offences. We welcome that shift.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) has campaigned on time limits for prosecutions, and the Government have accepted our proposal to stop victims of domestic abuse being timed out of justice. The campaign by my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow on voyeurism means that there will be a new offence of breastfeeding voyeurism. Under pressure from Labour, the Government have agreed to a review into "spiking" to find out how widespread it is and who is being targeted. We welcome that.

However, tackling the horrific prosecution rates, repeat offenders, and making women feel safer on the streets and in their homes will take so much more. We have a list of 50 proposals that we wanted to be included in the Bill to tackle violence against women and girls, and by my count the Government have agreed to two of them. I am happy to give the Minister a copy of the list, and perhaps we could see some more action.

Serious violence is a significant problem, and offences involving knives or sharp instruments increased by 84% between 2014 and 2020. Of course serious violence went down during lockdown, as we would expect, because people were indoors and shops and places of work were closed. The police were able to be proactive in tackling crime—indeed, a senior officer said to me that it was almost like policing used to be when they had proper resources. We are now out of lockdown, and the reports we are getting suggest that serious violence is back on the rise.

Labour will support any measures that tackle violence. That is why we carefully considered the serious violence reduction orders in part 10 of the Bill. We have concerns, which the Government have acknowledged, about the powers that officers would have to stop and search people with an SVRO without reasonable grounds, and whether that would significantly increase disproportionality. Stop and search is a crucial tool for the police, which we all agree with when used alongside good local police intelligence. Badly targeted stop and search is a waste of police resources, and it reinforces lack of trust in local communities. SVROs are to be piloted in four places, and Lords amendment 116 would require the Secretary of State to

"obtain, record and publish all reasonably available data,"

on the effect of SVROs over a period of no less than 12 months before the report of the pilot.

The Government have tabled their own amendments in lieu. We welcome that U-turn up to a point, but we do not believe it goes far enough to address our concerns. We fear that SVROs might be similar to knife crime prevention orders, which were hailed several years ago as the answer to violence, but have not yet been introduced, probably because it is hard to make them work. Good policing and prevention is key, and the Government should focus their attention on that.

In conclusion, we urge the Government to back Labour's sensible amendments through the Lords to tackle violence against women and girls, and to have a relentless focus, not on stopping singing in the street—we will come to that later—but on tackling serious crime. The Government have created this Bill with the objective of being divisive, but Members across the House, and in the other place, have come together and voted to improve this flawed piece of legislation. We are proud of the changes we have delivered, but Labour Members will not stop pushing the Government to get a grip on the issues that matter: reducing crime, improving prosecution rates, supporting victims, and giving people the security they deserve.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): Order. Members should stand only if they want to take part in debate on the first group of amendments, not the second or third groups. We are time-limited, so perhaps Members could focus on the duration of their speeches as well as on the content, to give an opportunity for other Members to take part.

Caroline Nokes (Romsey and Southampton North) (Con): As a woman who is perennially in a hurry and terribly impatient, I will ensure that my contribution is blissfully short. There is much in the Bill that I feel encouraged about. As hon. Members might expect, as Chair of the Women and Equalities Committee, I will focus specifically on those areas that affect women.

Inevitably, I will always say to the Government that they have missed opportunities, that they have not gone far enough and that more could have been done. I very much feel that the Bill could have done more, but I very much welcome the amendment on voyeurism and breastfeeding, which was put forward by the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy) and has been accepted by the Government. That is a step in the right direction for women. I also welcome Government amendment (a) in lieu of Lords amendment 70 on spiking. I am the first to acknowledge that spiking is not necessarily a gendered crime, but in many instances it is, and we know that young women in particular fall victim to it. Although there are concerns around spiking for robbery, for other forms of violence and abuse and, indeed, in some cases, just for entertainment, a massive proportion of it is about taking sexual advantage—usually of women.

As hon. Members might expect—it was inevitable—I turn to amendment 72 on misogyny. Consistency is important, so I have always said that I would accept and welcome what the Law Commission recommended in its review. However, if we are to go to its recommendations on misogyny and the complications that it rightly highlighted—this is an incredibly difficult area—we should also look at public sexual harassment, which it has also said should be a specific crime.

I started by saying that I am a woman in a hurry, and I am. I welcome my right hon. Friend the Minister's comments on what the Government are planning to do on public sexual harassment, but this feels like a missed opportunity. I look for confirmation on whether the specific legislative vehicle—this looks very much like one—will be the victims Bill or something tailored to PSH, because this absolutely matters. If we are to start tackling the cultures that underpin violence against women, we must look at the cultures that mean that some men think it is okay to harass women on the street and on public transport.

Siobhan Baillie (Stroud) (Con): Girls from Stroud High School got me into their school to talk about the public sexual harassment that they receive—often daily and often in their school uniforms—which is outrageous. Under the "Everyone's Invited" campaign, many schoolgirls—and schoolboys as well—have reported exactly what they experience. Does my right hon. Friend agree that while the comments that we have heard from the Minister are incredibly positive, we must recognise that the calls for such changes come not just from this place or from adults but from young girls everywhere who are experiencing really tough times?

Caroline Nokes: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is in our schools that those calls are strongest, which means that young women in their school uniforms are being significantly impacted. They feel scared to walk home alone. They are given advice to stay to well-lit areas, to ensure that they walk in areas with CCTV and to be careful on public transport. Yet again, we are saying, "Girls, be careful," and not, "Men, don't do it." That is why I feel so strongly about specific legislation on public sexual harassment that empowers women to point at behaviours and say, "That is a crime."

Stella Creasy: I completely agree with everything that the right hon. Member said. It is frustrating as always that, yet again, we are asking women to think about how they keep themselves safe rather than thinking how we stop the perpetrators, let alone the focus being somehow on street lighting, as if these incidents happen only in certain places and spaces. She talks about public sexual harassment. One of the challenges, as the Law Commission admits—I have met and talked to the Law Commission about this—is that not all harassment motivated by misogyny is sexual. I go back to the Muslim women targeted to have their hijabs torn off and disabled women, who are targeted in particular. How can we expand our understanding of how misogyny is driving crimes if we think it is only about sex? Does she agree that we need to find a way to recognise that broader concept of harassment, abuse and incitement, as the Law Commission said should happen but did not come up with legislation?

Caroline Nokes: The hon. Lady makes an important and powerful point. It is imperative that we look at this issue not just in terms of sexual harassment. I apologise for detaining hon. Members a moment longer than I intended, but I want to highlight the case of a constituent who came to see me. She was 23-years-old and had a job in Waitrose pushing trolleys around the car park. She said, "I hate lunch time." That seemed an odd comment to make, so I asked, "Is it particularly busy at lunch time?" She said, "No. It's when the white van men turn

up." She told a tale of how, in the depths of winter, when wearing a beanie hat, a puffer coat and a mask—it was at the height of covid—a man walked up to her, put his hands either side of her face and said, "You're too beautiful to be doing this job." I have spoken to colleagues in this place who are eminent lawyers— they know much better than me what is criminal and what is not—and asked them, "Where's the crime?" Not one of them could come up with an actual crime for that. The hon. Lady is therefore right: that was not sex-based; it was just harassment in the same way as we see people stood outside abortion clinics hurling abuse at people going to access those services. We must ensure that abuse directed at women on the grounds of their gender or sex is tackled, and tackled effectively.

The Women and Equalities Committee is about to do an enormous piece of work about the cultures that underpin this problem and hopes to come up with recommendations that the Government will listen to and act on. We want to see legislation that makes women feel safer because they can point at behaviours and say, "That is a specific crime," that allows perpetrators to look at behaviours and think, "Actually, I shouldn't do that—I might get in trouble," and that allows the police and the Crown Prosecution Service to look at behaviours and think, "There's the crime."

Richard Graham: On a small point of clarification, my right hon. Friend quite rightly referred to how the vast majority of spiking cases are about men spiking women's drinks, and there is no question about that, but I am sure she recognises that some cases—I think in particular of the heinous case of Reynhard Sinaga, who was found guilty in Manchester of spiking and raping at least 48 victims man on man—are the other way.

Caroline Nokes: I thank my hon. Friend for that comment. I hope that I did not in any way give the impression that men are not victims, because, yes, they are. When we talk about violence perpetrated against others, sometimes we do not adequately identify the many instances in which young men, and young gay men in particular, can fall victim to such horrific behaviours.

I want to see something on the statute book, and I will press my right hon. Friend the Minister for something quickly. It is not good enough to kick this issue into the long grass and say that we need another review or more consultation. We see that too often. Young women, the girls of the Girl Guides, those from Plan International UK, older women—the Soroptimists have summoned me to tell me that this must be done urgently—and the Women's Institute all want action. Later this evening, I will attend the event downstairs—it is on now—looking at the Government's strategy. If we are serious, we must send a clear and powerful message to both victims and perpetrators about what is and is not criminal. Everyone in this House knows a victim; we also all know a perpetrator.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): Order. To help those people who have asked about the noisy protest and the right to protest, that is in group 3, not group 1 or 2.

Anne McLaughlin (Glasgow North East) (SNP): I will keep my comments to Lords amendments concerning the extraction of information from electronic devices. To be clear, it is not that the Scottish National party does not have views about everything else, and it is certainly not that we do not care; it is because provisions on those other matters are applicable to England and Wales only.

The Scottish Government have been working with the UK Government to refine the draft code of practice for the data extraction provisions to account for Scotland's interests. The UK Government have confirmed that the draft code of practice would not be finalised until after the Bill attains Royal Assent to ensure that it is fit for purpose. They have also confirmed that the data extraction provisions will not be commenced in Scotland until the code of practice has been finalised. The Scottish Government are therefore content that the arrangements for the code provide sufficient scope for Scottish input.

We are generally content with the Government amendments, which improve the powers by, for example, starting to define an "agreement" to a digital search, but some are concerned that they do not go far enough to protect privacy rights and access to justice. Digital strip searches are now a common tool for the police and, as Big Brother Watch has said, experience tells us that policy changes and guidance are not enough.What is required is clear statutory change and retraining. I urge the Government to ensure that that is in place before they consider the widespread use of digital strip searches.

In Scotland, we have concerns about amendments 39, 40 and 44. That needs some further discussion with the Scottish Government. In English law, all children are children until the age of 18, but that is not the legal position in Scotland. The age of legal capacity in Scotland is 16. It certainly does not feel right to us for a nearly-18-year-old to have no say in whether their phone is taken from them and its data extracted.

7 pm

I am conscious of time, you will be glad to hear, Mr Deputy Speaker, so I have kept my points very brief and I will save my main points for group 3, but I will briefly voice my disappointment and dismay at the undemocratic way in which the Government have amended this mammoth piece of legislation. Eleventh-hour amendments introduced in the House of Lords were thankfully defeated in a very public and, I am sure, embarrassing way for the Government. That should never have happened, and I pay tribute to those in the Lords who opposed them. This place is here for a reason. We are here for a reason. It is not for the Government to bypass the scrutiny that this place provides. I have received hundreds of emails from concerned constituents that their rights are being steamrollered by behaviour like that.

Mrs Maria Miller (Basingstoke) (Con): I think, listening objectively to today's debate, there is an enormous level of agreement on both sides of the House that there is a job of work to be done to protect women against abuse, and that there are different options for how we might achieve that. That is the point at debate: what we do, not whether we need to do something. That is really important to acknowledge. I thank my right hon. Friend the Minister for his opening explanation of the resistance particularly to amendment 72, and I commend my near neighbour in Hampshire, my right hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Southampton North (Caroline

[Mrs Maria Miller]

Nokes), the Chair of the Women and Equalities Committee, for her excellent and impassioned speech on why we need to do more.

The Lords amendments show that more can be done. Lords amendments 13 and 57 show that the Government can continue to be pressed to do more on these important issues. I am glad to see that they are doing more to extend serious violence duties to include domestic abuse and sex offenders. Lords amendment 57 extending the time limit in the way that it does will significantly help. The real issue is, if we want to tackle the issue of sexual harassment and the abuse of women, how do we do that most effectively? I think Amendment 72 has been looked at in detail by the Law Commission, which has been looking at the issues since 2018. There is, I am afraid to say, widespread support for the Government's thesis that this is not the right way to tackle the problem.

The Law Commission is very clear that there is demonstrable need for additional law when it comes to supporting and protecting women and girls, and that there is more than ample evidence of the harm that is done. Its real concern is how we tackle this in practice. We have to listen very carefully; otherwise, we risk undoing the good work that has been done. The need for additional law is not under debate; it is the form that that law takes. Sometimes we just have to take a moment, and I think that this is a case in point. We cannot just say, "Something must be done." We have to ensure that we are doing the right thing. We have to accept the role of the Law Commission in helping us to make law that works in practice. It does not see misogyny being a hate crime as the way to solve the problem that has been so eloquently outlined by hon. Members on both sides of the House. Its concern is not because of a lack of understanding of the problem; it is whether the change that is being proposed will work in practice.

Although I listened very carefully to the interventions of the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy), it concerns me that the solution that is being put forward involves carve-outs for domestic violence and sexual offences, which could in a way suggest, or give people ammunition to say, that those issues are not as connected with misogyny as I am frankly sure that most Members of this House would agree that they are. The concern is not about being able to prove that a crime was motivated by hostility to gender—a point made by the CPS and Rape Crisis. In particular, Rape Crisis said that such an approach would make trials even more complex—an issue brought out by an hon. Member earlier. I also fear trial juries being asked to navigate questions around gender-based hate crime, which frankly we in this House find very difficult to navigate our minds around—all of this leaving people very confused.

I really hope that the Minister, although he may not be able to go much further today, can very shortly tell us much more about what he will be doing on issues that the Women and Equalities Committee has been looking at for more than five years. We did Select Committee reports on sexual harassment in schools back in 2015, in universities, in public spaces, online and in the workplace. This is not a new issue; this has been an issue looked at not only by the Law Commission but by the Select Committee for well over six or seven years. It would be disappointing if the Government were coming back now to say that they will be taking further the idea of public sexual harassment, as if it were a new notion that had just emerged from the ether. It is something that many of us have been looking at, and calling for it to be tackled more effectively, for a number of years.

Perhaps my right hon. Friend the Minister can, when he sums up, indicate in a little more detail how he intends to take forward what I think will be a sensible way of trying to tackle the issue that has been so eloquently talked about in today's debate. Adding sex or gender into hate crime law may not be the way to tackle things, but there is extensive evidence of how the harm disproportionately impacts women, especially online. The Government have a VAWG strategy, and today they are launching a communications strategy, but too many of us still see deficits in the law when it comes to sexual harassment. There needs to be more focus on prevention by demonstrating across the board that sexual harassment towards women, in the same way that my right hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Southampton North talked about, is a crime that is utterly unacceptable whenever it occurs, at any stage of our lives. Until we get to that stage, all of us will be calling on the Government to take more action.

Stella Creasy: I will start, because I have had an unintended hiatus from being in the Chamber as a result of having to breastfeed a child, by welcoming the Government's commitment to amendment 56. It is a cross-party amendment, and I pay tribute to Lord Pannick and Baroness Hayman for the work that they did in the House of Lords on it, my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Jeff Smith), who also led on it, and above all to Julia Cooper, who was a much braver woman than me. I experienced someone taking a photograph of me breastfeeding my child without my permission. She did too, but she challenged the person and went to the police. The police said that there was no protection for her. She started a petition. She took that voice and has turned it into this legislation. We should all be grateful for a woman like that, who stood up.

What Julia faced is what we are also here tonight to talk about on amendment 72. I certainly hope that the Minister, who has come to the debate rather late but I appreciate has come with a deep concern for women's rights, has been talking to his colleague Lord Wolfson, whose argument against making it illegal to photograph without her consent a woman who was breastfeeding was that a man might be taking pornographic photographs of his wife on a beach and accidentally catch a woman breastfeeding in his camera lens, and that would be terrible. Of course, many of us think for some time about that husband's discussions with his wife before we think that that is a realistic example.

Time and again on the Bill, we are told that, when it comes to women's safety, matters are complex. It is put in the "too difficult" box. The trouble for Ministers tonight is that next week will be the anniversary of the murder of Sarah Everard. Since Sarah was murdered, we have had more deaths: the murders of Bibaa and Nicole, and of Sabina. In my constituency, I hear countless stories of violence against women. It is the fierce urgency of now that drives this piece of work. I am sure that the Minister is aware, because he has been asking us repeatedly whether we have read the report of the Law Commission, of its provenance. I was on the upskirting Bill, and the

Government agreed to commit to the recommendation of the Law Commission as a result of an amendment that we tabled then, recognising that there were crimes driven by misogyny, and that that was putting women at risk.

It was time to turn the debate around—to stop telling women to keep themselves safe and providing money for lighting, because somehow it is about where they go running, and to start saying that this is about the perpetrators, and holding them to account for what they do. The challenge before the Minister is Lords amendment 72, which, again, is another cross-party effort. I pay tribute to Baroness Newlove, who is a goddess in my mind for her determination to speak up for victims, and Lord Russell, as well as my colleagues on the Government Benches who have been working to look at these issues. We are listening to the police. We are listening to the quarter of police forces that already record sex or gender when it motivates crimes, to help them catch the perpetrators. They recognise that it helps. It helps them to develop the patterns of behaviour.

I gently say to the Minister that when he says the problem is that women do not report, he needs to ask himself, as the policing Minister, not why women are not reporting, but why they do not feel they can come forward to report. It is not about the women; it is about the reporting. It is about the response they get. My colleague, the right hon. Member for Romsey and Southampton North (Caroline Nokes), is absolutely right when she says that everybody knows a victim and everybody probably knows a perpetrator. Many women will have experienced sexual harassment. They will have experienced abuse online, offline and in our daily lives to such an extent that it infuses what we do: the flinch when we come out of a tube station to make sure there is nobody behind us; carrying our keys in our hands; worrying about what our daughter is wearing; and hoping that our son is not one of those people who does it.

The truth for the Minister is that the police are telling us, "Actually, we have a clear policy that helps us to identify people early on." He is right when he talks about patterns of escalation. Many perpetrators start with what people might think of as lower-level offences. I have to tell the Minister that I have always said I will stop campaigning on this issue when I go to the wedding where the bride gets up and says, "Well, he followed me down the street demanding I get in the back of the van because he wanted to grope me and I thought it was the most romantic thing ever." It does not happen. What does happen is that that is the daily experience for women across the country and the truth is that the Bill does not offer anything to resolve that. It does not offer anything to back the police, when they say to us that they want to capture that data.

I understand the concern raised about the carve-out and I will come on to that specifically, but we should be very clear that the first thing the amendment would do is record all that data, including domestic abuse and rape, as misogynistic, because it would help to form a pattern. When we talk to the police in the areas where they are recording it, it is not, frankly, the catcalling that people are reporting. It is serious sexual assault, violence against women, rape and abuse, because they have the confidence that the police are going to recognise it for what it is, which is serious violence.

I also say to the Minister gently that he might want to correct the record, because the Law Commission did not look at this very proposal. This proposal is based on the Bertin amendment. The Bertin amendment carves out a definition of serious sexual violence which we did not have, so by its very definition the Law Commission could not have looked at it to consider whether or not it addresses that concern. It is not that we should not record data where crimes are misogynistically motivated, but how we deal with them in sentencing. Carving these offences out does not mean that they are not misogynistic; it means we ensure that the already pitiful sentencing regime does not go any lower.

There is something crucial in the amendment about how it works with the police and the courts, and what the police are telling us in the areas where they are doing this. I see Government Members who have police who are doing it. The police want the courts to back them. They are gathering the data and using it to track perpetrators, finding them early on in their offending careers before we get to the points that people are talking about in the press. They want the courts to back them, just as they back them when it comes to hatred of someone's skin colour or their religion.

Twenty or 30 years ago, when I was a young woman—a long time ago—there was a culture where things were said on TV and things that people said that we would now rightly recognise as racist or as religious hatred. Hate crime legislation does not just target perpetrators, but cultures. Most of all it changes the culture within the police, because the police forces that are doing this are talking about the mindset change among their members. As a Member for a local community where women have been ignored by the Met police for years, I have to say that that mindset change is something we should all desperately want, so we can recognise the danger when somebody starts following women and how that might escalate. We have all seen it in those reporting histories.

7.15 pm

The Minister wants to hide behind the Law Commission. I understand that. I have said to him that I will uphold—*[Interruption.]* Well, the Minister said I signed an amendment asking him to back the Law Commission. I want him to look closely at what the Law Commission is saying, which is that there are crimes motivated by misogyny, so then it becomes about where the offence is. He said he was not convinced about the reporting. I urge him to speak to North Yorkshire hate crime co-ordinators, and to those in Avon and Somerset, Gloucestershire, West Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire, where they have been doing this for years and getting real results. He should speak to the chief constables who have gone on the record saying that they want him to make this change—after all, he is the Policing Minister.

I also ask the Minister to talk to those people about crimes against women from minority communities. There is something so important about their voices being heard in this process. Muslim women who are targeted not just for being Muslim but for being women have to pick a side of their identity under our current hate crime legislation. They have to be seen for 50% of who they are. That means that the police do not recognise what is going on. Disabled women are not heard by our policing structures, because they do not quite fit the right tick-box. They can be a victim of more than one

form of hate, but right now if you are a disabled woman, a lesbian or a black woman being targeted for being both those things, you are not seen by our legislation. The amendment would correct that.

The carve-out ensures that sentences are not lesser. As we have said, Stephen Lawrence's killers were not tried for a hate crime, but we all recognise the hatred that drove the crime. Carve-outs are not an unusual precedent. They exist within legislation. What the Law Commission was concerned about was how to do the carve-out. The Bertin amendment, which Lords amendment 72 is based on, answers that point.

Mrs Miller: I am listening very closely to what the hon. Lady is saying, but the Law Commission was very clear in saying that this would make matters so much more complex, and it worries about how that would affect securing the sort of convictions that I know the hon. Lady and I want to see.

Stella Creasy: I hope the right hon. Member will understand what I am saying. The Law Commission did not look at this amendment, which has learned from the Bertin amendment. *[Interruption.]* She shakes her head, but the Bertin amendment, which sets out explicitly the offences we would carve out, did not exist during the time of its work. One argument the Law Commission made was with regard to the difficulty of carving those offences out. The amendment builds on where a carve-out can be made.

Kit Malthouse *rose—*

Stella Creasy: I will happily give way to the Minister. I hope he is not going to tell me again to read the Law Commission review.

Kit Malthouse: This is an important issue and I am grateful to the hon. Lady, but I just wanted to point out to her that the Law Commission said in its consultation paper that it thought it might be possible to overcome the challenges involved in excluding certain violence against women and girls contexts and there would still be value in including sex or gender within hate crime laws for the remaining criminal contexts. It specifically considered the notion of carve-outs. However, following further reflection and analysis, and with the benefit of detailed and thoughtful consultation responses, it now believes that all the possible models to do so create more problems than they solve. So the Law Commission did look specifically at this model of carve-outs, and indeed it specifically considered the option of the full recognition of sex or gender in aggravated offences, with enhanced sentences on the same basis as for other recognised characteristics.

Stella Creasy: I am sorry, but the Minister is conflating two different things here. The Law Commission did not look at the Bertin amendment. What it looked at was whether one might inadvertently downgrade sentencing for rape or domestic abuse by including it within this hierarchy. That is why, for example, Rape Crisis was concerned about a generalist clause. I am sure the Minister has spoken to Rape Crisis since the Law Commission's report was made. I certainly have. I talked to it about this amendment, and it has been much more positive about it. I hope, if the Minister is quoting Rape Crisis, that he will listen to it when it says that it recognises what is being tried here.

I am not here to say that the Lords amendment is perfect, but I am here to say the because there are other crimes that could be motivated by misogyny, which it is right to recognise within sentencing and to treat as serious—for example, exposure, cyber-flashing, assault or blackmail targeted at disabled women; we see a lot of that in the evidence base—that means that we should dismiss this entirely and say, "Well, we won't do this at all," is yet again to ask women to wait for something that will never come. That is the challenge we have here.

The Minister wants to say, "Let's not politicise it." I agree. I extend my hand to him to say let us work together to get this right, but let us recognise that misogyny is driving crimes and that the Law Commission has said that. Its arguments were technical ones about how to do the drafting, not about the principle. I hope that the Minister would acknowledge that, because he cannot both argue—

Kit Malthouse: I have said that specifically.

Stella Creasy: That is not what the Minister has said, but I am pleased to hear him say that—*[Interruption.]* Great. Wonderful—consensus is breaking out, but consensus will not deal with the fact that women right now are at risk and are being harmed. This proposal is helping to improve conviction rates and to track perpetrators in the areas where it is operating.

The Minister will be aware that an amendment to the Bill that became the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 was withdrawn in the other place because Ministers committed to making sure that all police forces would do the reporting, but they have not. We can agree that the reporting is necessary, but it is not sufficient to give the police the backing that they need or to say, "This is about street lighting". We have to look at how we tackle violence against women and at why and how we could have a carve-out to make this work. That is essentially what an incitement offence would do—

Kit Malthouse *rose—*

Stella Creasy: I will happily give way to the Minister; I can see him shaking his head and I am keen to hear his male voice about my experience of violence.

Kit Malthouse: I am sorry, but the hon. Lady seems determined to have a fight about this and I really do not want one. She keeps referring to street lighting, but that is one of a suite of things that we need to do generally in the public realm regarding safety. For clarity, I of course acknowledge that there are offences that are motivated by misogyny—I say that clearly, as I did in my opening speech—but this requires a number of approaches and solutions. We are merely saying that the evidence that the Law Commission and other groups put before us is that this particular approach is likely to cause more harm than good. We have committed to look at the other areas that it has highlighted, particularly the crimes that are motivated by misogyny, which I read out from its report. I reassure hon. Members that we are duty-bound to respond to the Law Commission's report in six months, and we will do so.

Stella Creasy: I hope that the Minister will forgive me if I mention that there are, I think, more than 17 Law Commission reports that have been published since 2010 that the Government have not responded to and

acted on—and that is just to look at the Law Commission. He also keeps saying that the Law Commission has looked at this proposal. No—the Law Commission looked at including sex or gender in all instances. It then looked at whether it was possible to have a carve-out, but we did not have the Bertin amendment, which specifically identified the offences in question and helped to shape this Lords amendment.

The Minister has said that he does not want to have a fight about this. Well, he is going to have one, because he is opposing the proposal and not coming up with any alternatives. He is not saying, for example, "We will introduce a proposal in the other place that addresses these issues" or that he will listen not just to all the chief constables across the country who have said that they want to see this happen, but to the organisations that have. Seeing as he is obsessed with major organisations, let us run through them: the Fawcett Society; Citizens UK; Refuge; Stonewall; HOPE not hate; Dimensions; Tell MAMA; the Jo Cox Foundation; and Safe & the City. Many of us have been talking to people who have expressed concerns to identify what those are and learn from them; that is where this amendment has come from.

The Minister will use the Government majority to vote this Lords amendment down, to say that violence against women is a complicated issue and that there are other approaches, and he will wait patiently and in fear that, yet again, there will be another moment as there was a year ago. The trouble is that, for us as women, waiting in fear is our daily experience, because we do not see things changing any time soon. We see the evidence base from Nottinghamshire and from the Met police. We want to know why there is a postcode lottery when it comes to the police taking violence against women seriously. We want to know why our courts want to exclude sex or gender from the protected characteristics that we rightly recognise when crimes are motivated by a hatred of somebody just for who they are, and we will tackle that.

People made many of these arguments 20 years ago on recognising racially and religiously motivated abuse. We now, rightly, all benefit from the protection and the freedom that has been given to people, so that they do not have to live in fear that they will be attacked just because of the colour of their skin or their religious identity. The Minister's problem is that he says that he listens to and knows women and that he understands this area, but if he understands it at all, he should listen to the suffragettes, who told us that it was "deeds not words" that matter. All we have heard tonight is words.

This proposal is backed by the police. Opposition Members and many Government Members want to back the police and want to see the courts back up the police. If he does not accept this amendment, the Minister has the time and the opportunity in the Lords to come up with an alternative. He will have my support and that of the Cross Benchers to make that happen. However, if he continues to ignore women, to say that he understands the challenge and to blame them for not coming forward and reporting things—*[Interruption.]* He is right to shake his head, but he can probably go home without looking over his shoulder. Many of us cannot.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): Order. I am just thinking about protecting a bit of time for the Front Benchers, so if I put on a four-minute time limit, we can hopefully get a few more Members in.

Craig Whittaker (Calder Valley) (Con): I would like to speak in support of the Government and against making misogyny a hate crime, as suggested in Lords amendment 72. It is safe to say that everybody understands the strength of feeling about adding sex and gender to hate crime laws—as I do, not least, from my mailbox—and this debate has shown that. However, I feel unable to support the amendment in the light of the Law Commission's conclusion in its independent review of hate crime laws in December last year. It said that such a step would potentially

> "prove more harmful than helpful, both to victims of violence against women and girls, and also to efforts to tackle hate crime more broadly"—

the Law Commission's words, not mine. It specifically noted that adding those characteristics may make the prosecution of crimes disproportionately affecting women and girls, such as sexual offences and domestic abuse, much more difficult.

That issue arises because establishing whether a hate crime has occurred would require additional proof to be demonstrated in court. The Law Commission notes, by contrast:

> "It might be practically difficult to prove a sex or gender-based aggravation in the context of VAWG crimes that usually take place in private".

As a result, the Law Commission notes:

> "We are particularly concerned about the potential for this to make some sexual offence prosecutions more difficult".

We should not put this in the "too difficult" box; it will just work against women and girls who are the victims.

The Law Commission subsequently recommended against adding these characteristics to the law. Given those and other potential unintended consequences, as we have heard, organisations responding to the consultation support the Law Commission's review in opposing these characteristics being added to the law.

It is also worth Members noting, when they come to their decision today, that the Lords amendment seeks to mitigate the most serious risks identified in what I have spoken about by excluding certain offences from any hate crime designation, including sexual offences and domestic abuse. However, the Law Commission similarly identified that such models would not be helpful, noting that this would then make the addition of the characteristics largely "tokenistic"—the Law Commission's words, not the Minister's—by excluding the most serious offences that frequently harm women and girls. It also noted that the exclusion of these offences risks suggesting that they are, by default, less serious or not rooted in misogynistic hostility, and would treat sex and gender unequally to other characteristics in the scope of hate crime laws.

I therefore share the Law Commission's concern that adding sex and gender to hate crime laws in any form could prove unacceptably counterproductive and work against women and girls.

Wera Hobhouse: I rise to speak in support of Lords amendment 72. Existing hate crime legislation must be extended to include misogyny, and the police must be

[Wera Hobhouse]

required to record hate crimes as misogynistic. The amendment has the backing of such powerful organisations as the Fawcett Society, Refuge, the Young Women's Trust and many more, as well as the police.

Last year was a terrible year for women and girls, with two high-profile cases of young women murdered on our streets by vile sexual predators, peaceful women's protesters pinned to the ground by serving police officers, thousands of women being subjected to spiking, including in my Bath constituency, and countless other horrific crimes against women and girls.

There is growing and very obvious evidence that misogyny is at the centre of violence against women and girls. Nottinghamshire police have led the way to enabling cases of abuse and harassment to be recorded as misogyny; Avon and Somerset police are following suit. I commend all police forces that are doing so, but it should not be a postcode lottery.

Making misogyny a hate crime would send a powerful signal. We need a culture change, and we in this House have a duty to lead it. I have listened carefully to this evening's debate, in which the Government have said that making misogyny a hate crime could lead to unintended consequences, possibly making it harder to prosecute the most serious cases of sexual violence. Of course we need to protect those women who are exposed to the most serious cases of sexual violence, but Lords amendment 72 especially sets out to avoid any such consequences.

7.30 pm

I spoke to the Law Commission a few days ago. Its argument is that if we excluded the most serious offences from our legislation, it would be tokenistic. I disagree, and I think it is okay to disagree, because what we are saying is that making misogyny a hate crime is not a silver bullet, but it is progress. Let us stop making excuses. Women's safety matters every day.

Craig Whittaker: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Wera Hobhouse: I will not, because of time.

We should start sending a very strong signal today. Hate crime legislation has made a difference to religious and racial hate crime, so why should women not have the same right? Let us listen carefully to what is being said and make sure that we make progress. It would not be an entire answer, but making misogyny a hate crime would send such a powerful signal that certain attitudes that lead to harassment and later to more serious crimes are not okay, and they are not lawful.

Ruth Edwards: I spent last Friday evening in St Peter's Rooms in Ruddington with a nurse, councillors, shop owners, a reiki practitioner, childcare professionals and many more members of the community. We were taking part in a training programme to help people to identify signs of domestic abuse, talk to survivors they might come across in their place of work and put them in touch with local professional services. The programme is called J9, after Janine Mundy, who was brutally murdered by her ex-husband. I think I must have taken part about 15 times now in the course, which I am delivering across the constituency with my constituent Nicola Brindley, but it never gets any easier to hear the stories of abuse suffered.

I therefore strongly welcome Lords amendment 57, which extends the time limit for prosecution for common assault or battery in domestic abuse cases. There are so many reasons why it takes time for victims to come forward. We must do everything we can to stand with them and support them when they do.

I also welcome Lords amendment 13, which clarifies the inclusion of domestic abuse and sexual offences in the serious violence duty, and Lords amendment 56, which protects women doing the most natural thing in the world: breastfeeding their child. I commend the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy) for all her work in the area.

Also before the House is the issue of making misogyny a hate crime, as set out in Lords amendment 72. I fully support the intention behind the amendment, as I think every Member does, but having read the Law Commission's report, I share some of the concerns voiced. I take very seriously the concerns raised by organisations such as Rape Crisis, which believes that adding sex or gender as a protected characteristic would further complicate the judicial process and make it harder to secure convictions.

Lords amendment 72 also carves out sexual offences and offences related to domestic abuse from the scope of prosecution as a hate crime motivated by sex or gender, because there are considerable difficulties with keeping them in. As the Law Commission's report shows, research has shown that sex or gender-based hostility is much more likely to be identified or proven in the context of sexual violence perpetrated by strangers in public settings, particularly where it is accompanied by physical violence. Using misogyny as an aggravating factor in such cases would risk perpetuating the highly damaging myth that there is a hierarchy of sexual violence, which already does so much damage to victims whose experience is different, but whose suffering is no less.

In many crimes of violence against women and girls, such as those in cases of domestic abuse where the victim is known to the perpetrator or is in an intimate relationship with them, it may be more difficult to evidence hostility to gender, so I understand why those offences have been left outside the amendment's scope. I understand the very strong views of Opposition Members that the amendment should be made without including them, but I worry what sort of message we would send as a Parliament if we made crimes such as domestic abuse and sexual violence—some of the most serious crimes against women and girls—exempt from an aggravating sentencing factor of misogyny. Those concerns, which have been set out by the Law Council, Rape Crisis and Women's Aid, are the reason I cannot support the amendment.

The findings of the Law Commission, which I believe began its consultation with the expectation of supporting such a change, show why it is so important that changes to law are based on evidence so that we can focus on the most effective measures, which is why I welcome the Home Office's public consultation on the issue of sex for rent—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): Order.

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): The Bill is dangerous and undemocratic and has united a broad church of organisations in opposition. Even if all the

Lords amendments that I rise to support today are agreed to, there would still be a huge amount in it that causes me concern. Our task today, though, is to try to improve what is before us.

Lords amendment 72 would play a key role in updating our existing hate crime laws to give our police forces and courts the vital tools that they need to tackle violence motivated by misogyny. By including sex or gender in hate crime reporting and sentencing, with exceptions for more serious sexual violence offences to ensure that sentences for them remain higher, it would give our police and courts the ability to track and hold to account those who target people for crimes purely because of who they are. As we have heard, selected police forces have already identified when crimes are motivated by hatred of someone's sex or gender. They have already seen an increase in victims' confidence to come forward and report those crimes.

The Government's position is that making misogyny a hate crime goes against the Law Commission's advice, but as the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy) set out extremely eloquently, that is not entirely correct; the Law Commission was not commenting on the Bertin amendment. In line with concerns raised by the Law Commission about changing the burden of proof in relation to sexual or domestic offences, the amendment creates a carve-out whereby it would not apply to such offences. It uses the wording "sex or gender", which is in line with the approach proposed in the Law Commission's report on hate crime, and which would ensure that all crimes motivated by misogyny, or indeed misandry, are captured by the new law rather than leaving loopholes that could undermine the system.

This simple but powerful change would send an incredibly important signal. It would be part of the cultural change that we have been talking about. It would give women and girls the same protections that we give to others who are targeted solely because of who they are. It would show how seriously we take crimes motivated by misogyny. Frankly, the Government have been kicking the issue into the long grass for too long. It is time to step up and do the right thing by women and girls.

I will speak briefly to Lords amendments 114 to 116. As numerous organisations from Liberty to the End Violence Against Women Coalition and the Runnymede Trust attest, serious violence is a human rights issue. It devastates communities across the country and demands an evidence-based approach that works with, rather than against, those communities that bear its brunt. There is simply no evidence that serious violence reduction orders will protect communities from harm, however, and there is a wealth of evidence that they will sanction injustice and discrimination and risk fracturing public trust in public services and in the authorities. There is a risk that they will entrench the harms of ineffective, suspicion-less stop and search and that they will expand the injustice of the doctrine of joint enterprise, with a disproportionate effect on over-policed and marginalised groups, including young women experiencing domestic abuse and criminal exploitation.

It therefore seems entirely right and sensible that a robust pilot be carried out and that decisions to roll out SVROs nationally be informed by its findings and come before Parliament, as Lords amendments 114 to 116 propose. The amendments, which I support, reinstate democratic oversight of laws engaging rights and equalities issues and affirm the importance of an evidence-based approach to tackling serious violence.

I turn to Lords amendments 141 and 142. I have received emails from a number of constituents about how tens of thousands of women are being propositioned by predators offering free or discounted accommodation in exchange for sexual favours. Only one person has ever been charged for that kind of crime, because the law is woefully inadequate, leaving men to get away with sexually exploiting renters in need of a home. The Lords amendments specifically criminalise such landlords; they also implement financial penalties on websites and platforms. That is why they have my support.

Laura Farris (Newbury) (Con): I will confine my remarks to Lords amendment 72. Let me to say at the outset that I understand the laudable intention behind it, but I want to explain why, with the greatest of respect, I believe it to be misconceived.

It was the murder of Stephen Lawrence that set the origins of hate crime in train. He was killed in 1993, and hate crime became a criminal offence in 1998 under the Crime and Disorder Act. There was some confusion about the chronology earlier, but it is set out in paragraph 1.3 of the final report of the Law Commission. A hate crime is not a stand-alone offence, but it elevates another crime, most commonly assault, to an aggravated offence under section 28 of the 1998 Act if the prosecution can show that the offence was motivated wholly or partly by hostility towards another group. In the following year, the Court of Appeal finessed the test that applied, saying, in The Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) *v.* Pal, that the prosecution must prove some demonstration of that hostility, most often a form of language that was used at the time when the crime was committed.

There are two reasons why I do not think that the amendment works in the context of violence against women. First, it sets the jury off down the wrong line of inquiry. Do we really want to legislate for a system that invites juries to judge the seriousness of an offence such as stalking, rape or domestic abuse through the prism of whether the perpetrator demonstrated hostility towards women? Even leading juries down that line of inquiry risks making acquittal more likely if they conclude that the defendant harboured no particular ill will towards women. When would we find examples of that kind of language? It would be much more likely in "stranger" contexts, and less likely when the victim had been on Tinder that night, had been out at a club or had been drinking, and this took place were behind closed doors—we know that that accounts for about 90% of serious sexual assaults—and we already have the greatest difficulties in securing convictions in such cases. Rape Crisis has said that

> "the motivation of hostility is much more likely to apply to stranger perpetrators, and here we see the hate crime framework as propping up harmful myths about violence against women."

My second reason concerns causation. Many offences against women are not motivated by hatred. Subtle, insidious factors are often at play—power, control, obsession, revenge, jealousy—none of which would meet the threshold for hate crime, but which are no less toxic or deserving of criminal punishment. In fact, we as a Parliament have worked collectively in the last decade to see the treatment of women through a more expansive

[Laura Farris]

lens. We recognised these complex causes when we passed the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, with its provisions on revenge porn and coercive control, and when we criminalised stalking in 2012. It is with that in mind that I am regretfully of the view that making misogyny a hate crime would be regressive rather than progressive, and would deliver less, not more, justice for female victims.

Alicia Kearns (Rutland and Melton) (Con): I recently had a conversation with a constituent who has introduced reporting of misogyny as a crime in Nottinghamshire, where she is a senior police officer. She says that it has progressively changed the culture. Does my hon. Friend agree that the culture may change in police forces when acts of misogyny are recorded at an earlier stage?

Laura Farris: My hon. Friend makes an excellent point, and it is the point that the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy) was making about policing. It is true that the police have responded positively in reporting such incidents, but it is also true that the pilot has shown no increase in the number of prosecutions or successful convictions, with which we are primarily concerned. It is an enduring concern that we do not do enough to record violence against women and girls in general, and I think we ought to do more in that regard.

Let me address my final comments to the hon. Member for Croydon Central (Sarah Jones), who said in her opening remarks that this was a simple and straightforward step. The hon. Member for Bath (Wera Hobhouse) said that the evidence was "obvious". Let me gently point out that prominent feminists in the House, including the Mother of the House, do not support this proposal for exactly the same as reasons as me. I hope that the closing remarks from the Opposition will reflect the fact that there is a respected strain of feminist opinion that does not take the same view as the hon. Member for Croydon Central.

7.45 pm

Nick Fletcher (Don Valley) (Con): The Bill contains many good provisions, but I will confine myself to the subject of the serious violence reduction orders. Let me start by thanking the House of Commons Library for its report of September 2021, "Knife Crime in England and Wales", which has been very helpful.

In 2010, stop and search was widely used in the fight against knife crime. It succeeded not only in catching people carrying knives and offensive weapons, but in deterring people from carrying them. However, its success was limited, as it was scaled down because many felt that its implementation was disproportionate and reduced community trust. If it did indeed reduce community trust, especially in the police, it was counterproductive. As a result, by 2020 there were fewer than half as many stop and searches as in 2010: in fact, the reduction was some 56%.

Did this lead to a reduction in the number of fatal stabbings in London? I am all too aware that we know the answer to that question. No, it did not; it had the opposite effect. The number of fatal stabbings increased by 81% in London. Ten teenagers were fatally stabbed in 2010, and a decade later that grim statistic was 27. Twenty-seven teenagers with their lives before them had those lives snuffed out, and for what? If stop and search had not been scaled down, how many of those young men would be alive today? How many lives have been lost because of the reduction in stop and search? I ask again, how many? Who here wants to see a life taken away? Nobody does, but I believe that opposing stop and search has led to that.

Increasing stop and search with serious violence reduction orders would be likely to reduce knife crime, but it must be done along with changes in police practice to avoid the mistakes of the past. The Government's amendment to Lords amendment 116 will play an important role in that. By collecting statistics on who is affected by SVROs and what their impact on reoffending is, we can ensure that police officers are using this tool in a specific and targeted way. What of outside London? It will help there too. Sadly, what we have seen in London seems to be spreading to cities and communities beyond our capital. In the past year in South Yorkshire, we have seen an epidemic of shootings and stabbings.

What has happened to bring this about? What can be done to stem this tide and bring lawfulness back to our communities? The answer is "many things", and we all have a part to play. We in this House must vote for the Bill. It needs to become law so that the police have the tools that they need to combat crime and disorder. Outside the House, each of us can play an important part as well. We can work with the police. If they want to stop and search us, we should let them do so. It will save lives. Stop and search might have saved the lives of two young men who were stabbed to death last month locally.

I say this to every parent in the country, and to every person who is lucky enough to have the responsibility of bringing up children. We are role models to our children, so we should all act like role models. We should all set a good example for them to follow. We should live our lives responsibly, and we should be the good role models in their lives—not some local thug, and definitely not a glamorised thug on television. The best way to teach a child how to behave is to live our lives in the right way. We all have a part to play in making our communities better week by week, year by year. Let us work together, and let us work with the police. I commend this Bill.

Richard Graham: I find this fascinating. So often in these debates, it is entirely understandable for the Opposition to say that the Government have not been in listening mode, and therefore amendments from the Lords have been turned down. Today, however, the evidence is striking. The Government are accepting, I believe, 22 Lords amendments on a wide range of matters, including emergency workers, domestic abuse, breastfeeding, common assault, data, hare coursing and child cruelty. I think that that is a good indication of both Houses working together.

I want to say a few words on Lords amendment 70 on spiking, and the Government amendments in lieu of it, and then on Lords amendment 72 on misogyny. On spiking, I am grateful to the Minister for his kind words about my 10-minute rule Bill, which is supported by Members from five different parties in this House, and which I think has helped to ensure that spiking is covered in this Bill. Certainly, when I originally proposed

it, the thinking was that that would not be possible, so I recognise the movement that the Government have made.

The specific reason that I do not think the Lords amendment does the job that it could do is that it specifically calls for an amendment to the offence under section 61 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003. The truth, as we covered in the 10-minute rule Bill, is that there is more to spiking than sexual offences, although they are a big part of the problem. I am therefore satisfied that the amendments in lieu tabled by the Government will make a significant difference to the issue of spiking. As the Minister has said, it is clear that this behaviour is not exclusively linked to sexual activity, and the requirement on the Home Secretary to provide a report on the wider issues is therefore important. I believe that the Minister's commitment—he might want to nod to repeat it—that the Home Secretary will be required to publish and lay the report before Parliament within 12 months of the Royal Assent of this Bill, is significant.

I note that the Minister has also asked officials to explore the need for a specific criminal offence to target spiking directly. I believe that this would change patterns of behaviour. It would have a preventive effect, and it would give young people—particularly young women—more confidence, especially at university. I would be delighted if he was able to commit to come back to this within six months of Royal Assent with a decision on whether to proceed with this further specific criminal offence, and I hope that he will say something on that in his winding-up speech. I have decided to pull my 10-minute rule Bill from its Second Reading, which had been proposed for 18 March, on the basis that the Minister has given that commitment, and I hope he will give a further one in his winding-up.

On Lords amendment 72, we have heard from distinguished colleagues including my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Laura Farris), the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas), my hon. Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Ruth Edwards) and the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy)—four powerful advocates balancing strength of feeling with legal expertise on this issue. My own feeling is that, since I have just explained why I believe that a spiking Bill will help in terms of having a preventive effect and giving young people more confidence, there is something to this and I am glad that the Minister will come back and report to the House—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): Order. I call the Minister.

Kit Malthouse: With the leave of the House, I shall respond to the debate. I am grateful to all the Members who have spoken, and I hope that what has been exhibited is our shared concern for many of the issues we have talked about today, not least the safety of women and girls, which has naturally and rightly dominated the debate. A number of undertakings were sought from me, latterly by my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Richard Graham), who has done so much work on the offence of spiking. I am happy to give him a commitment that we will come back within a six-month period, as he requested. Obviously we will be producing a wider report within 12 months, but we should be able to give him an indication at the time.

My right hon. Friend and neighbour, the Member for Romsey and Southampton North (Caroline Nokes), asked for a specific legislative vehicle, but I am afraid that I cannot preview the Queen's Speech, much as I would love to. I cannot give her a specific vehicle, but I can tell her that we will be responding to the Law Commission's report within six months. We are giving serious consideration to the work streams that I have talked about. As I have said to her, it is my personal view that we have an issue that needs to be addressed, either through public order offending, through recording or through a specific offence. I hope that on that basis she will feel able to support us this evening.

The work that we will be doing in this area sits alongside an awful lot of other work looking at the issue of street harassment, including our safety of women at night fund and the safer streets fund. In September we launched the new StreetSafe tool, allowing the police to access greater information and data about where people feel, or indeed are, unsafe. I am told that more than 12,000 reports have already been submitted through that line. In December, the College of Policing published new guidance showing what the police can and should do when they receive a report of public sexual harassment. The criminal offence is already available and other protective tools can be used. As I hope my right hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Southampton North has just been to see, we have also launched a new communications campaign this evening. There is an awful lot to cover in this first group of amendments, but I hope that we have looked at a wide range of offences and I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester for pointing out that we have been listening. The number of amendments we have accepted weigh in the balance of support for the votes that we are about to undertake.

On the misogyny issue, I commend the motivation behind the set of amendments that we are sadly declining. We understand people's genuine concern about the safety of women and girls in the public sector, and indeed we share it. We are determined to make significant inroads in this area. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mrs Miller), my hon. Friend the Member for Calder Valley (Craig Whittaker) and my hon. Friend and neighbour the Member for Newbury have pointed out so effectively, we cannot in all conscience support an amendment that the Law Commission and other large groups interested in this area believe runs the risk of damaging the cause of women's safety. That puts an obligation on us to bring forward alternatives that will do something positive for women's safety. That battle is under way, and we commit to doing exactly that.

Lords amendment 2 agreed to.

Lords amendment 70 disagreed to.

Government amendments (a) and (b) made in lieu of Lords amendment 70.

Motion made, and Question put, That this House disagrees with Lords amendment 72.—*(Kit Malthouse.)*

The House divided: Ayes 314, Noes 190.

Division No. 194] [7.57 pm

AYES

Adams, rh Nigel	Aiken, Nickie
Afolami, Bim	Aldous, Peter
Afriyie, Adam	Anderson, Lee

Andrew, rh Stuart
Ansell, Caroline
Argar, Edward
Atherton, Sarah
Atkins, Victoria
Bacon, Gareth
Badenoch, Kemi
Baillie, Siobhan
Baker, Duncan
Baker, Mr Steve
Baldwin, Harriett
Barclay, rh Steve
Baron, Mr John
Baynes, Simon
Bell, Aaron
Benton, Scott
Beresford, Sir Paul
Berry, rh Jake
Bhatti, Saqib
Blackman, Bob
Blunt, Crispin
Bone, Mr Peter
Bottomley, Sir Peter
Bradley, Ben
Bradley, rh Karen
Braverman, rh Suella
Brereton, Jack
Brine, Steve
Bristow, Paul
Britcliffe, Sara
Browne, Anthony
Bruce, Fiona
Buchan, Felicity
Buckland, rh Sir Robert
Burghart, Alex
Burns, rh Conor
Butler, Rob
Campbell, Mr Gregory
Carter, Andy
Cartlidge, James
Cash, Sir William
Cates, Miriam
Caulfield, Maria
Chalk, Alex
Chishti, Rehman
Churchill, Jo
Clark, rh Greg
Clarke, rh Mr Simon
Clarke, Theo
Clarke-Smith, Brendan
Clarkson, Chris
Cleverly, rh James
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse
Colburn, Elliot
Collins, Damian
Costa, Alberto
Courts, Robert
Coutinho, Claire
Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
Crosbie, Virginia
Daly, James
Davies, David T. C.
Davies, Gareth
Davies, Dr James
Davies, Mims
Davies, Philip
Davison, Dehenna
Dinenage, Dame Caroline
Dines, Miss Sarah
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Docherty, Leo
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
Donelan, rh Michelle
Dorries, rh Ms Nadine
Double, Steve
Dowden, rh Oliver
Doyle-Price, Jackie
Drax, Richard
Drummond, Mrs Flick
Duguid, David
Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain
Dunne, rh Philip
Eastwood, Mark
Edwards, Ruth
Ellis, rh Michael
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Elphicke, Mrs Natalie
Eustice, rh George
Evennett, rh Sir David
Everitt, Ben
Fabricant, Michael
Farris, Laura
Fell, Simon *(Proxy vote cast by Christopher Pincher)*
Firth, Anna
Fletcher, Katherine
Fletcher, Mark
Fletcher, Nick
Ford, Vicky
Foster, Kevin
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Frazer, rh Lucy
French, Mr Louie
Fuller, Richard
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Gale, rh Sir Roger
Garnier, Mark
Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Gibb, rh Nick
Gibson, Peter
Gideon, Jo
Girvan, Paul
Glen, John
Graham, Richard
Grant, Mrs Helen
Gray, James
Grayling, rh Chris
Green, Chris
Green, rh Damian
Griffith, Andrew
Griffiths, Kate
Grundy, James
Gullis, Jonathan *(Proxy vote cast by Christopher Pincher)*
Halfon, rh Robert
Hall, Luke
Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, rh Matt
Hands, rh Greg
Harper, rh Mr Mark
Harris, Rebecca
Harrison, Trudy
Hart, Sally-Ann
Hayes, rh Sir John
Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Heappey, James
Heaton-Harris, rh Chris
Henderson, Gordon
Henry, Darren
Higginbotham, Antony
Hinds, rh Damian
Holden, Mr Richard
Hollinrake, Kevin
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Howell, John
Howell, Paul
Huddleston, Nigel
Hudson, Dr Neil
Hughes, Eddie
Hunt, Jane
Hunt, rh Jeremy
Hunt, Tom
Javid, rh Sajid
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenkinson, Mark
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, rh Sir Greg
Kruger, Danny
Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
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
Mackrory, Cherilyn
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, rh Kit
Mangnall, Anthony
Marson, Julie
May, rh Mrs Theresa
Mayhew, Jerome
Maynard, Paul
McCartney, Jason
McCartney, Karl
McPartland, Stephen
McVey, rh Esther
Mercer, Johnny
Merriman, Huw
Metcalfe, Stephen
Millar, Robin
Miller, rh Mrs Maria
Milling, rh Amanda
Mills, Nigel
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Mohindra, Mr Gagan
Moore, Damien
Moore, Robbie
Mordaunt, rh Penny
Morris, Anne Marie
Morris, James
Morrissey, Joy
Mullan, Dr Kieran
Mumby-Croft, Holly
Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Neill, Sir Robert
Nici, Lia
Nokes, rh Caroline
Norman, rh Jesse
O'Brien, Neil
Offord, Dr Matthew
Opperman, Guy
Paisley, Ian
Parish, Neil
Pawsey, Mark
Penning, rh Sir Mike
Penrose, John
Philp, Chris
Pincher, rh Christopher
Poulter, Dr Dan
Pow, Rebecca
Prentis, Victoria
Pursglove, Tom
Quin, Jeremy
Quince, Will
Raab, rh Dominic
Randall, Tom
Redwood, rh John
Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
Richardson, Angela
Robertson, Mr Laurence
Robinson, Gavin
Rosindell, Andrew
Rowley, Lee
Russell, Dean
Rutley, David
Saxby, Selaine
Scully, Paul
Seely, Bob
Selous, Andrew
Shannon, Jim
Shapps, rh Grant
Shelbrooke, rh Alec
Simmonds, David
Skidmore, rh Chris
Smith, Greg
Smith, Henry
Smith, rh Julian
Smith, Royston
Solloway, Amanda
Spencer, rh Mark
Stafford, Alexander
Stephenson, Andrew
Stevenson, Jane
Stevenson, John
Stewart, rh Bob
Stewart, Iain
Streeter, Sir Gary
Stride, rh Mel
Stuart, Graham
Sturdy, Julian
Sunderland, James
Syms, Sir Robert
Thomas, Derek
Throup, Maggie
Timpson, Edward
Tolhurst, Kelly
Tomlinson, Justin
Tracey, Craig
Trott, Laura
Tugendhat, Tom
Vara, Shailesh
Vickers, Martin
Vickers, Matt

Villiers, rh Theresa
Walker, Mr Robin
Wallis, Dr Jamie
Warburton, David
Warman, Matt
Watling, Giles
Whately, Helen
Wheeler, Mrs Heather
Whittaker, Craig
Whittingdale, rh Mr John
Wiggin, Sir Bill
Wild, James
Williams, Craig
Williamson, rh Gavin
Wilson, rh Sammy
Wood, Mike
Wragg, Mr William
Wright, rh Jeremy
Young, Jacob
Zahawi, rh Nadhim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Michael Tomlinson and Scott Mann

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
Abrahams, Debbie
Ali, Rushanara
Ali, Tahir
Allan, Lucy
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Amesbury, Mike
Anderson, Fleur
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Ashworth, rh Jonathan
Barker, Paula
Beckett, rh Margaret
Begum, Apsana
Benn, rh Hilary
Betts, Mr Clive
Blake, Olivia
Blomfield, Paul
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brennan, Kevin
Brown, Ms Lyn
Buck, Ms Karen
Burgon, Richard
Byrne, Ian
Byrne, rh Liam
Cadbury, Ruth
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Carden, Dan
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Chamberlain, Wendy
Champion, Sarah
Charalambous, Bambos
Clark, Feryal
Cooper, Daisy
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Creasy, Stella
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Daby, Janet
Davey, rh Ed
Davies-Jones, Alex
De Cordova, Marsha
Debbonaire, Thangam
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Dodds, Anneliese
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Duffield, Rosie
Eagle, Dame Angela
Eastwood, Colum
Edwards, Jonathan
Elliott, Julie
Elmore, Chris
Eshalomi, Florence
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Farry, Stephen
Ferrier, Margaret
Fovargue, Yvonne
Foxcroft, Vicky
Foy, Mary Kelly
Furniss, Gill
Gardiner, Barry
Gill, Preet Kaur
Glindon, Mary
Green, Kate
Green, Sarah
Greenwood, Lilian
Greenwood, Margaret
Griffith, Nia
Gwynne, Andrew
Haigh, Louise
Hamilton, Fabian
Hanna, Claire
Hardy, Emma
Harris, Carolyn
Hayes, Helen
Hendrick, Sir Mark
Hobhouse, Wera
Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
Hollern, Kate
Hopkins, Rachel
Huq, Dr Rupa
Hussain, Imran
Jardine, Christine
Johnson, rh Dame Diana
Johnson, Kim
Jones, Darren
Jones, Gerald
Jones, rh Mr Kevan
Jones, Ruth
Jones, Sarah
Kane, Mike
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz *(Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore)*
Khan, Afzal
Kyle, Peter
Lake, Ben
Lammy, rh Mr David
Lavery, Ian
Leadbeater, Kim
Lewis, Clive
Lloyd, Tony
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lucas, Caroline
Lynch, Holly
Madders, Justin
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Mahmood, Shabana
Malhotra, Seema
Maskell, Rachael
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonagh, Siobhain
McDonald, Andy
McDonnell, rh John
McGinn, Conor
McGovern, Alison
McKinnell, Catherine
McMahon, Jim
McMorrin, Anna
Mearns, Ian
Miliband, rh Edward
Moran, Layla
Morgan, Helen
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, Grahame
Murray, Ian
Murray, James
Nandy, Lisa
Nichols, Charlotte
Norris, Alex
Olney, Sarah
Onwurah, Chi
Oppong-Asare, Abena
Osamor, Kate
Osborne, Kate
Owatemi, Taiwo
Owen, Sarah
Peacock, Stephanie
Pennycook, Matthew
Perkins, Mr Toby
Phillips, Jess
Pollard, Luke
Powell, Lucy
Qureshi, Yasmin
Rayner, rh Angela
Reed, Steve
Rees, Christina
Reeves, Ellie
Reeves, Rachel
Reynolds, Jonathan
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
Rimmer, Ms Marie
Rodda, Matt
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Shah, Naz
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheerman, Mr Barry
Siddiq, Tulip
Slaughter, Andy
Smith, Cat
Smith, Nick
Smyth, Karin
Sobel, Alex
Spellar, rh John
Stevens, Jo
Stone, Jamie
Streeting, Wes
Stringer, Graham
Sultana, Zarah
Tami, rh Mark
Tarry, Sam
Thomas, Gareth
Thornberry, rh Emily
Timms, rh Stephen
Twist, Liz
Vaz, rh Valerie
Wakeford, Christian
Webbe, Claudia
West, Catherine
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitley, Mick
Whittome, Nadia
Williams, Hywel
Wilson, Munira
Winter, Beth
Yasin, Mohammad
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Noes:
Jessica Morden and Navendu Mishra

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment 72 disagreed to.

8.11 pm

More than two hours having elapsed since the commencement of proceedings on consideration of Lords amendments, the proceedings were interrupted (Programme Order, this day).

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

Lords amendment 114 disagreed to.

Lords amendment 115 disagreed to.

Clause 141

SERIOUS VIOLENCE REDUCTION ORDERS: PILOTING

Motion made, and Question put, That this House disagrees with Lords amendment 116.—*(Kit Malthouse.)*

The House divided: Ayes 315, Noes 189.

Division No. 195] [8.12 pm

AYES

Adams, rh Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Aiken, Nickie
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy

Anderson, Lee
Andrew, rh Stuart
Ansell, Caroline
Argar, Edward
Atherton, Sarah
Atkins, Victoria
Bacon, Gareth
Badenoch, Kemi
Baillie, Siobhan
Baker, Duncan
Baker, Mr Steve
Baldwin, Harriett
Barclay, rh Steve
Baron, Mr John
Baynes, Simon
Bell, Aaron
Benton, Scott
Beresford, Sir Paul
Berry, rh Jake
Bhatti, Saqib
Blackman, Bob
Blunt, Crispin
Bone, Mr Peter
Bottomley, Sir Peter
Bradley, Ben
Bradley, rh Karen
Braverman, rh Suella
Brereton, Jack
Bridgen, Andrew
Brine, Steve
Bristow, Paul
Britcliffe, Sara
Browne, Anthony
Bruce, Fiona
Buchan, Felicity
Buckland, rh Sir Robert
Burghart, Alex
Burns, rh Conor
Butler, Rob
Campbell, Mr Gregory
Carter, Andy
Cartlidge, James
Cash, Sir William
Cates, Miriam
Caulfield, Maria
Chalk, Alex
Chishti, Rehman
Churchill, Jo
Clark, rh Greg
Clarke, rh Mr Simon
Clarke, Theo
Clarke-Smith, Brendan
Clarkson, Chris
Cleverly, rh James
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse
Colburn, Elliot
Collins, Damian
Costa, Alberto
Courts, Robert
Coutinho, Claire
Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
Crosbie, Virginia
Daly, James
Davies, David T. C.
Davies, Gareth
Davies, Dr James
Davies, Mims
Davies, Philip
Davison, Dehenna
Dinenage, Dame Caroline
Dines, Miss Sarah
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Docherty, Leo
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
Donelan, rh Michelle
Dorries, rh Ms Nadine
Double, Steve
Dowden, rh Oliver
Doyle-Price, Jackie
Drax, Richard
Drummond, Mrs Flick
Duddridge, James
Duguid, David
Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain
Dunne, rh Philip
Eastwood, Mark
Edwards, Ruth
Ellis, rh Michael
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Elphicke, Mrs Natalie
Eustice, rh George
Evennett, rh Sir David
Everitt, Ben
Fabricant, Michael
Farris, Laura
Fell, Simon *(Proxy vote cast by Christopher Pincher)*
Firth, Anna
Fletcher, Katherine
Fletcher, Mark
Fletcher, Nick
Ford, Vicky
Foster, Kevin
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Frazer, rh Lucy
French, Mr Louie
Fuller, Richard
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Gale, rh Sir Roger
Garnier, Mark
Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Gibb, rh Nick
Gibson, Peter
Gideon, Jo
Girvan, Paul
Glen, John
Graham, Richard
Grant, Mrs Helen
Gray, James
Grayling, rh Chris
Green, Chris
Green, rh Damian
Griffith, Andrew
Griffiths, Kate
Grundy, James
Gullis, Jonathan *(Proxy vote cast by Christopher Pincher)*
Halfon, rh Robert
Hall, Luke
Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, rh Matt
Hands, rh Greg
Harper, rh Mr Mark
Harris, Rebecca
Harrison, Trudy
Hart, Sally-Ann
Hayes, rh Sir John
Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Heappey, James
Heaton-Harris, rh Chris
Henderson, Gordon
Henry, Darren
Higginbotham, Antony
Hinds, rh Damian
Holden, Mr Richard
Hollinrake, Kevin
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Howell, John
Howell, Paul
Huddleston, Nigel
Hudson, Dr Neil
Hughes, Eddie
Hunt, Jane
Hunt, rh Jeremy
Hunt, Tom
Javid, rh Sajid
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenkinson, Mark
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, rh Sir Greg
Kruger, Danny
Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
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
Mackrory, Cherilyn
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, rh Kit
Mangnall, Anthony
Marson, Julie
May, rh Mrs Theresa
Mayhew, Jerome
Maynard, Paul
McCartney, Jason
McCartney, Karl
McPartland, Stephen
McVey, rh Esther
Mercer, Johnny
Merriman, Huw
Metcalfe, Stephen
Millar, Robin
Miller, rh Mrs Maria
Milling, rh Amanda
Mills, Nigel
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Mohindra, Mr Gagan
Moore, Damien
Moore, Robbie
Mordaunt, rh Penny
Morris, David
Morris, James
Morrissey, Joy
Mullan, Dr Kieran
Mumby-Croft, Holly
Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Neill, Sir Robert
Nici, Lia
Nokes, rh Caroline
Norman, rh Jesse
O'Brien, Neil
Offord, Dr Matthew
Opperman, Guy
Paisley, Ian
Parish, Neil
Pawsey, Mark
Penning, rh Sir Mike
Penrose, John
Philp, Chris
Pincher, rh Christopher
Poulter, Dr Dan
Pow, Rebecca
Prentis, Victoria
Pursglove, Tom
Quin, Jeremy
Quince, Will
Raab, rh Dominic
Randall, Tom
Redwood, rh John
Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
Richardson, Angela
Robertson, Mr Laurence
Robinson, Gavin
Rosindell, Andrew
Rowley, Lee
Russell, Dean
Rutley, David
Saxby, Selaine
Scully, Paul
Selous, Andrew
Shannon, Jim
Shapps, rh Grant
Shelbrooke, rh Alec
Simmonds, David
Skidmore, rh Chris
Smith, Greg
Smith, Henry
Smith, rh Julian
Smith, Royston
Solloway, Amanda
Spencer, rh Mark
Stafford, Alexander
Stephenson, Andrew
Stevenson, Jane
Stevenson, John
Stewart, rh Bob
Stewart, Iain
Streeter, Sir Gary
Stride, rh Mel
Stuart, Graham
Sturdy, Julian
Sunderland, James
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Syms, Sir Robert
Thomas, Derek
Throup, Maggie
Timpson, Edward
Tolhurst, Kelly
Tomlinson, Justin
Tracey, Craig
Trott, Laura
Tugendhat, Tom

Vara, Shailesh
Vickers, Martin
Vickers, Matt
Villiers, rh Theresa
Walker, Mr Robin
Wallis, Dr Jamie
Warburton, David
Warman, Matt
Watling, Giles
Whately, Helen
Wheeler, Mrs Heather
Whittaker, Craig
Whittingdale, rh Mr John
Wiggin, Sir Bill
Wild, James
Williams, Craig
Williamson, rh Gavin
Wilson, rh Sammy
Wood, Mike
Wragg, Mr William
Wright, rh Jeremy
Young, Jacob
Zahawi, rh Nadhim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Michael Tomlinson and Scott Mann

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
Abrahams, Debbie
Ali, Rushanara
Ali, Tahir
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Amesbury, Mike
Anderson, Fleur
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Ashworth, rh Jonathan
Barker, Paula
Beckett, rh Margaret
Begum, Apsana
Benn, rh Hilary
Betts, Mr Clive
Blake, Olivia
Blomfield, Paul
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brennan, Kevin
Brown, Ms Lyn
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burgon, Richard
Byrne, Ian
Byrne, rh Liam
Cadbury, Ruth
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Carden, Dan
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Chamberlain, Wendy
Champion, Sarah
Charalambous, Bambos
Clark, Feryal
Cooper, Daisy
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Creasy, Stella
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Daby, Janet
Davey, rh Ed
Davies-Jones, Alex
De Cordova, Marsha
Debbonaire, Thangam
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Dodds, Anneliese
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Duffield, Rosie
Eagle, Dame Angela
Eastwood, Colum
Edwards, Jonathan
Elliott, Julie
Elmore, Chris
Eshalomi, Florence
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Farry, Stephen
Fovargue, Yvonne
Foxcroft, Vicky
Foy, Mary Kelly
Furniss, Gill
Gardiner, Barry
Gill, Preet Kaur
Glindon, Mary
Green, Kate
Green, Sarah
Greenwood, Lilian
Greenwood, Margaret
Griffith, Nia
Gwynne, Andrew
Haigh, Louise
Hamilton, Fabian
Hanna, Claire
Hardy, Emma
Harris, Carolyn
Hayes, Helen
Hendrick, Sir Mark
Hillier, Dame Meg
Hobhouse, Wera
Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
Hollern, Kate
Hopkins, Rachel
Huq, Dr Rupa
Hussain, Imran
Jardine, Christine
Johnson, rh Dame Diana
Johnson, Kim
Jones, Darren
Jones, Gerald
Jones, rh Mr Kevan
Jones, Ruth
Jones, Sarah
Kane, Mike
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz *(Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore)*
Khan, Afzal
Kyle, Peter
Lake, Ben
Lammy, rh Mr David
Lavery, Ian
Leadbeater, Kim
Lewis, Clive
Lloyd, Tony
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lucas, Caroline
Lynch, Holly
Madders, Justin
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Mahmood, Shabana
Malhotra, Seema
Maskell, Rachael
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonald, Andy
McDonnell, rh John
McGinn, Conor
McGovern, Alison
McKinnell, Catherine
McMahon, Jim
McMorrin, Anna
Mearns, Ian
Miliband, rh Edward
Moran, Layla
Morgan, Helen
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, Grahame
Murray, James
Nandy, Lisa
Nichols, Charlotte
Norris, Alex
Olney, Sarah
Onwurah, Chi
Oppong-Asare, Abena
Osamor, Kate
Osborne, Kate
Owatemi, Taiwo
Owen, Sarah
Peacock, Stephanie
Pennycook, Matthew
Perkins, Mr Toby
Phillips, Jess
Pollard, Luke
Powell, Lucy
Qureshi, Yasmin
Rayner, rh Angela
Reed, Steve
Rees, Christina
Reeves, Ellie
Reeves, Rachel
Reynolds, Jonathan
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
Rimmer, Ms Marie
Rodda, Matt
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Shah, Naz
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheerman, Mr Barry
Siddiq, Tulip
Slaughter, Andy
Smith, Cat
Smith, Nick
Smyth, Karin
Sobel, Alex
Spellar, rh John
Stevens, Jo
Stone, Jamie
Streeting, Wes
Stringer, Graham
Sultana, Zarah
Tami, rh Mark
Tarry, Sam
Thomas, Gareth
Thornberry, rh Emily
Timms, rh Stephen
Twist, Liz
Vaz, rh Valerie
Wakeford, Christian
Webbe, Claudia
West, Catherine
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitley, Mick
Whittome, Nadia
Williams, Hywel
Wilson, Munira
Winter, Beth
Yasin, Mohammad
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Noes:
Jessica Morden and Navendu Mishra

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment 116 disagreed to.

Government amendments (a) and (b) made in lieu of Lords amendments 114 to 116.

After Clause 170

Offence of Requiring or Accepting Sexual Relations as a Condition of Accommodation

Motion made, and Question put, That this House disagrees with Lords amendment 141.—*(Kit Malthouse.)*

The House divided: Ayes 304, Noes 198.

Division No. 196] [8.25 pm

AYES

Adams, rh Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Aiken, Nickie
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Anderson, Lee
Andrew, rh Stuart
Ansell, Caroline
Argar, Edward
Atherton, Sarah
Atkins, Victoria
Bacon, Gareth
Badenoch, Kemi
Baillie, Siobhan
Baker, Duncan
Baker, Mr Steve
Baldwin, Harriett
Barclay, rh Steve
Baron, Mr John
Baynes, Simon
Bell, Aaron
Benton, Scott
Beresford, Sir Paul

Berry, rh Jake
Bhatti, Saqib
Blackman, Bob
Blunt, Crispin
Bone, Mr Peter
Bottomley, Sir Peter
Bradley, Ben
Bradley, rh Karen
Brereton, Jack
Bridgen, Andrew
Brine, Steve
Bristow, Paul
Britcliffe, Sara
Browne, Anthony
Bruce, Fiona
Buchan, Felicity
Buckland, rh Sir Robert
Burghart, Alex
Burns, rh Conor
Butler, Rob
Carter, Andy
Cartlidge, James
Cash, Sir William
Cates, Miriam
Caulfield, Maria
Chalk, Alex
Chishti, Rehman
Churchill, Jo
Clark, rh Greg
Clarke, rh Mr Simon
Clarke, Theo
Clarke-Smith, Brendan
Clarkson, Chris
Cleverly, rh James
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse
Colburn, Elliot
Collins, Damian
Costa, Alberto
Courts, Robert
Coutinho, Claire
Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
Crosbie, Virginia
Daly, James
Davies, David T. C.
Davies, Gareth
Davies, Dr James
Davies, Mims
Davies, Philip
Davison, Dehenna
Dinenage, Dame Caroline
Dines, Miss Sarah
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Docherty, Leo
Donelan, rh Michelle
Dorries, rh Ms Nadine
Double, Steve
Dowden, rh Oliver
Doyle-Price, Jackie
Drax, Richard
Drummond, Mrs Flick
Duddridge, James
Duguid, David
Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain
Dunne, rh Philip
Eastwood, Mark
Edwards, Ruth
Ellis, rh Michael
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Elphicke, Mrs Natalie
Eustice, rh George
Evennett, rh Sir David
Everitt, Ben
Fabricant, Michael
Farris, Laura
Fell, Simon *(Proxy vote cast by Christopher Pincher)*
Firth, Anna
Fletcher, Katherine
Fletcher, Mark
Fletcher, Nick
Ford, Vicky
Foster, Kevin
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Frazer, rh Lucy
French, Mr Louie
Fuller, Richard
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Gale, rh Sir Roger
Garnier, Mark
Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Gibb, rh Nick
Gibson, Peter
Gideon, Jo
Glen, John
Graham, Richard
Grant, Mrs Helen
Gray, James
Grayling, rh Chris
Green, Chris
Green, rh Damian
Griffith, Andrew
Griffiths, Kate
Grundy, James
Gullis, Jonathan *(Proxy vote cast by Christopher Pincher)*
Halfon, rh Robert
Hall, Luke
Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, rh Matt
Hands, rh Greg
Harper, rh Mr Mark
Harris, Rebecca
Harrison, Trudy
Hart, Sally-Ann
Hayes, rh Sir John
Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Heappey, James
Heaton-Harris, rh Chris
Henderson, Gordon
Henry, Darren
Higginbotham, Antony
Hinds, rh Damian
Holden, Mr Richard
Hollinrake, Kevin
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Howell, John
Howell, Paul
Huddleston, Nigel
Hudson, Dr Neil
Hughes, Eddie
Hunt, Jane
Hunt, rh Jeremy
Hunt, Tom
Javid, rh Sajid
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenkinson, Mark
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, rh Sir Greg
Kruger, Danny
Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
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
Loder, Chris
Logan, Mark
Lopez, Julia
Lord, Mr Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Mackinlay, Craig
Mackrory, Cherilyn
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, rh Kit
Mangnall, Anthony
Marson, Julie
May, rh Mrs Theresa
Mayhew, Jerome
Maynard, Paul
McCartney, Jason
McCartney, Karl
McPartland, Stephen
Mercer, Johnny
Merriman, Huw
Metcalfe, Stephen
Millar, Robin
Miller, rh Mrs Maria
Milling, rh Amanda
Mills, Nigel
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Mohindra, Mr Gagan
Moore, Damien
Moore, Robbie
Mordaunt, rh Penny
Morris, Anne Marie
Morris, David
Morris, James
Morrissey, Joy
Mullan, Dr Kieran
Mumby-Croft, Holly
Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Neill, Sir Robert
Nici, Lia
Nokes, rh Caroline
Norman, rh Jesse
O'Brien, Neil
Offord, Dr Matthew
Opperman, Guy
Parish, Neil
Pawsey, Mark
Penning, rh Sir Mike
Penrose, John
Philp, Chris
Pincher, rh Christopher
Poulter, Dr Dan
Pow, Rebecca
Prentis, Victoria
Pursglove, Tom
Quin, Jeremy
Quince, Will
Raab, rh Dominic
Randall, Tom
Redwood, rh John
Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
Richardson, Angela
Robertson, Mr Laurence
Rosindell, Andrew
Rowley, Lee
Russell, Dean
Rutley, David
Saxby, Selaine
Scully, Paul
Seely, Bob
Selous, Andrew
Shapps, rh Grant
Shelbrooke, rh Alec
Simmonds, David
Skidmore, rh Chris
Smith, Greg
Smith, Henry
Smith, rh Julian
Smith, Royston
Solloway, Amanda
Spencer, rh Mark
Stafford, Alexander
Stephenson, Andrew
Stevenson, Jane
Stevenson, John
Stewart, Iain
Streeter, Sir Gary
Stride, rh Mel
Stuart, Graham
Sturdy, Julian
Sunderland, James
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Syms, Sir Robert
Thomas, Derek
Throup, Maggie
Timpson, Edward
Tolhurst, Kelly
Tomlinson, Justin
Tracey, Craig
Trott, Laura
Tugendhat, Tom
Vara, Shailesh
Vickers, Martin
Vickers, Matt
Villiers, rh Theresa
Walker, Mr Robin
Wallis, Dr Jamie
Warburton, David
Warman, Matt
Watling, Giles
Whately, Helen
Wheeler, Mrs Heather
Whittaker, Craig
Whittingdale, rh Mr John
Wiggin, Sir Bill
Wild, James
Williams, Craig
Williamson, rh Gavin
Wood, Mike
Wragg, Mr William
Wright, rh Jeremy
Young, Jacob
Zahawi, rh Nadhim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Michael Tomlinson and Scott Mann

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
Abrahams, Debbie
Ali, Rushanara
Ali, Tahir
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Amesbury, Mike
Anderson, Fleur
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Ashworth, rh Jonathan
Barker, Paula
Beckett, rh Margaret
Begum, Apsana
Benn, rh Hilary
Betts, Mr Clive
Blake, Olivia
Blomfield, Paul
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brennan, Kevin
Brown, Ms Lyn
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burgon, Richard
Byrne, Ian
Byrne, rh Liam
Cadbury, Ruth
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Campbell, Mr Gregory
Carden, Dan
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Chamberlain, Wendy
Champion, Sarah
Charalambous, Bambos
Clark, Feryal
Cooper, Daisy
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Creasy, Stella
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Daby, Janet
Davey, rh Ed
Davies-Jones, Alex
De Cordova, Marsha
Debbonaire, Thangam
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Dodds, Anneliese
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Duffield, Rosie
Eagle, Dame Angela
Eastwood, Colum
Edwards, Jonathan
Elliott, Julie
Elmore, Chris
Eshalomi, Florence
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Farry, Stephen
Ferrier, Margaret
Fovargue, Yvonne
Foxcroft, Vicky
Foy, Mary Kelly
Furniss, Gill
Gardiner, Barry
Gill, Preet Kaur
Girvan, Paul
Glindon, Mary
Green, Kate
Green, Sarah
Greenwood, Lilian
Greenwood, Margaret
Griffith, Nia
Gwynne, Andrew
Haigh, Louise
Hamilton, Fabian
Hanna, Claire
Hardy, Emma
Harris, Carolyn
Hayes, Helen
Hendrick, Sir Mark
Hillier, Dame Meg
Hobhouse, Wera
Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
Hollern, Kate
Hopkins, Rachel
Huq, Dr Rupa
Hussain, Imran
Jardine, Christine
Johnson, rh Dame Diana
Johnson, Kim
Jones, Darren
Jones, Gerald
Jones, rh Mr Kevan
Jones, Ruth
Jones, Sarah
Kane, Mike
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz *(Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore)*
Khan, Afzal
Kyle, Peter
Lake, Ben
Lammy, rh Mr David
Lavery, Ian
Leadbeater, Kim
Lewis, Clive
Lloyd, Tony
Lockhart, Carla
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lucas, Caroline
Lynch, Holly
Madders, Justin
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Mahmood, Shabana
Malhotra, Seema
Maskell, Rachael
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonagh, Siobhain
McDonald, Andy
McDonnell, rh John
McGinn, Conor
McGovern, Alison
McKinnell, Catherine
McMahon, Jim
McMorrin, Anna
Mearns, Ian
Miliband, rh Edward
Moran, Layla
Morgan, Helen
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, Grahame
Murray, Ian
Murray, James
Nandy, Lisa
Nichols, Charlotte
Norris, Alex
Olney, Sarah
Onwurah, Chi
Oppong-Asare, Abena
Osamor, Kate
Osborne, Kate
Owatemi, Taiwo
Owen, Sarah
Paisley, Ian
Peacock, Stephanie
Pennycook, Matthew
Perkins, Mr Toby
Phillips, Jess
Pollard, Luke
Powell, Lucy
Qureshi, Yasmin
Rayner, rh Angela
Reed, Steve
Rees, Christina
Reeves, Ellie
Reeves, Rachel
Reynolds, Jonathan
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
Rimmer, Ms Marie
Robinson, Gavin
Rodda, Matt
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Shah, Naz
Shannon, Jim
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheerman, Mr Barry
Siddiq, Tulip
Slaughter, Andy
Smith, Cat
Smith, Nick
Smyth, Karin
Sobel, Alex
Spellar, rh John
Stevens, Jo
Stone, Jamie
Streeting, Wes
Stringer, Graham
Sultana, Zarah
Tami, rh Mark
Tarry, Sam
Thomas, Gareth
Thornberry, rh Emily
Timms, rh Stephen
Twist, Liz
Vaz, rh Valerie
Wakeford, Christian
Webbe, Claudia
West, Catherine
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitley, Mick
Whittome, Nadia
Williams, Hywel
Wilson, Munira
Wilson, rh Sammy
Winter, Beth
Yasin, Mohammad
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Noes:
Jessica Morden and Navendu Mishra

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment 141 disagreed to.

Lords amendment 142 disagreed to.

Lords amendments 3 to 57, 59, 60, 108 to 113, 117, 147, 153 and 154 agreed to, with Commons financial privileges waived in respect of Lords amendments 59 and 60.

After Clause 2

Required life sentence for manslaughter of emergency worker

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Tom Pursglove): I beg to move, That this House agrees with Lords amendment 1.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): With this it will be convenient to discuss the following:

Lords amendment 58, and Government motion to disagree.

Lords amendment 107, and Government motion to disagree.

Lords amendments 61 to 69, 94 to 106, 121 to 140, 144, 145, 149 to 152 and 155 to 161.

Tom Pursglove: There are no less than 161 Lords amendments for the House to consider this evening. To ensure that as many hon. and right hon. Members as possible who wish to speak can do so, I do not propose to detail all the amendments in this group, as many were uncontentious and will have the support of the whole House. I will, however, outline the key Lords amendments in this group brought forward by the Government,

[Tom Pursglove]

before commenting on the two amendments in this group that were agreed by their lordships contrary to the Government's sound advice.

I know that MPs from across the House will want to share our support for the family and friends of PC Andrew Harper and their campaign to strengthen the law so that no other families go through the same heartbreak they have suffered. We were therefore pleased to announce our amendment in the other place, following our commitment to look at what action may be possible in this area. Lords amendment 1, known as Harper's law, will impose mandatory life sentences on those convicted of unlawful act manslaughter where the victim is an emergency worker acting in the exercise of their functions as such a worker. The amendment will apply to adult offenders and 16 and 17-year-olds. The amendment will also contain judicial discretion for the court to impose an alternative sentence in exceptional circumstances.

In the case of Andrew Harper, the court did not impose life sentences on any of the defendants. Each received sentences of between 13 and 19 years for manslaughter—sentences that were subsequently upheld by the Court of Appeal. They will all be incarcerated for a significant period, but the Government believe that where a person is convicted of unlawful act manslaughter and the person who has been killed is an emergency worker, that should be punished with life imprisonment, except where there are exceptional circumstances relating to the offender or the offence.

The successful campaign of Lissie Harper, PC Harper's widow, and the Police Federation drew this issue to the Government's attention, and we are grateful for that. Lissie has shown incredible bravery, fortitude and courage in campaigning for this change, and I know that it has had a profound impact on Members from all parts of the House and on our constituents in communities across the country, who have come together to support this change.

Barry Gardiner (Brent North) (Lab): Will the Minister simply confirm that where an emergency service worker is off duty but an emergency occurs and they respond to that emergency, Harper's law will apply to them?

Tom Pursglove: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's question. If the scope of this measure was restricted to mandatory life sentences in situations where the emergency worker was directly responding to the unlawful act at the heart of the offence, it would not capture all the cases in which this Government believe the mandatory life sentence should apply. For example, offender A injures a defendant during a fight and, in their attempts to escape the scene, they run over the responding paramedic, who is on their way to save the life of the person injured by person A. In another scenario, offender B commits exactly the same actions, but in fleeing the scene, they run over and kill a police officer responding to a separate incident a mile down the road.

Both defendants have committed the same unlawful act, and in the same dangerous circumstances, and both have caused the death of an emergency worker as a result, but the grounds for implementing the mandatory life sentence would be based on the pure happenstance that one emergency worker was responding to that specific unlawful act, and the other was not. That disparity in sentencing would not accurately reflect the Government's aim to ensure that those who commit the unlawful act manslaughter of emergency workers who are exercising their functions face a life sentence.

It is also worth setting out for the House's benefit who counts as an emergency worker. We will define emergency workers in the same way as the Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act 2018 and section 68 of the Sentencing Act 2020. This definition includes police officers, prison officers, National Crime Agency officers and those employed in fire services, search and rescue services and frontline NHS health services, among others.

Barry Gardiner: The Minister has given us a great deal of information, but has not actually answered my specific question. I am happy for the Minister to continue, and if he can get assistance from the Box and answer it later, I will be very content.

Tom Pursglove: If I may, in the wind-up, I will happily clarify for the House's benefit the point that the hon. Gentleman has raised. The points that I have put on the record are relevant, but I want to ensure that the House has complete clarity around those matters as we move forward.

8.45 pm

Again, I emphasise my appreciation for the work that Lissie Harper has done, along with the Police Federation, which has undoubtedly captured the imagination of the entire country in pressing for the change, which we all welcome. It was not an isolated incident, which is obviously agonising in itself. Although, thankfully, emergency workers are not often killed on duty, they are required to put themselves at particular risk when carrying out their duties and protecting the public. I think I speak for the whole House in expressing enormous thanks and appreciation to them for everything that they do on the frontline day in, day out to keep each and every one of us safe.

Sir Robert Neill (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con): The Minister is absolutely right to pay tribute to Lissie Harper and to our emergency services. He also makes the point that these are not isolated incidents. Will he take on board the broader point that, although there is obviously great support for this piece of legislation, the area that has not been addressed is the difficulty that juries face in deciding whether the offence—the facts made out—is murder or manslaughter?

I hope that the Minister will revisit a missed opportunity, which is the definitions of homicide under our current law. The Law Commission and others have suggested that they ought to be revisited because they create some difficulty and uncertainty, particularly in the difficult area between the intention to kill or to commit grievous bodily harm and gross negligence at the top end. I hope that the Government will consider revisiting the Law Commission's work on that, because other jurisdictions have different categories of homicide, rather than the perhaps now old-fashioned categories of murder and manslaughter. We might then find it easier for juries to more accurately reflect the culpability by their verdicts, which is what we want to achieve.

Tom Pursglove: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's observations. We touched on those matters when we spoke last week when we engaged in advance of these proceedings. I said to him that that was something that I would certainly be willing to take away and consider, and I am willing to do that. He advocates that the Law Commission looks at the issue of homicide in the round and, as I say, I am happy to reflect on and consider that matter in the fullness of time.

To return to the question of the hon. Member for Brent North (Barry Gardiner), I am keen to provide the House with as much information as possible and to further clarify the position around it. If I understand his question correctly, it does apply to emergency workers who are off duty, but they must be acting as an emergency worker—off duty but still responding to an incident. I hope that that provides the House, in the correct terms, with the clarity that it is seeking on that point.

Ruth Edwards: Can I clarify whether the provisions will apply to volunteer emergency services workers, such as special constables or first responders?

Tom Pursglove: Again, I am grateful to my hon. Friend for the question. If I may, I will touch on those matters in the wind-up, because I am conscious that hon. Members have quite a lot of questions and that there are quite a few hon. Members who are keen to speak. I will gladly pick up those points in the wind-up later when we have concluded.

Lords amendment 104 places on statute an aggravating factor for assault committed against anyone providing a service to the public. It will send a strong message that assaults against public-facing workers are totally unacceptable and will reinforce the seriousness with which the courts treat such offences. It has been welcomed by those in the retail sector who have campaigned on this important issue. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton South (Matt Vickers), who has assiduously argued the case in this House for a change in the law in this area. In earlier proceedings, the House expressed a strong desire for such a change and I am proud that the Government are helping to deliver that.

In earlier stages of the Bill in this House, there were also calls for the Government to raise the maximum penalties for child cruelty offences. For years, my hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Tom Tugendhat) has campaigned tirelessly for Tony's law, which is named after Tony Hudgell. As a baby, Tony was abused to such an extent by his birth parents that he is severely disabled. No child should suffer such appalling abuse, especially from those who should love and care for them the most. It is right to ensure that, in such cases, the punishment can fit the crime. Such criminality is truly shocking and heinous.

Tom Tugendhat (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con): May I just place on record the extreme gratitude of Tony's real parents—the parents who actually love him—who have cared for him since a few days after he was born and have restored him to an extraordinary and loving child? May I also place on record my enormous gratitude to the Lord Chancellor for his work on the matter, and to the Minister and the Under-Secretary of State for Justice, my hon. Friend the Member for South Suffolk (James Cartlidge), who are both on the Front Bench, for showing the courage and determination to make sure the measure passes? This changes not, sadly, Tony's life—thank God, he has been cared for well—but, with any luck, the lives of many in deterring such awful crimes from ever happening again.

Tom Pursglove: My hon. Friend puts the case very eloquently, and it is a privilege to be able to stand at this Dispatch Box and announce these changes in the House. He has been a tireless campaigner on this issue, and this change is a great credit to him, to Tony and to his adopted family, with their incredible care and their advocacy on these issues. I think all of them can be hugely proud of the work they have done to bring about this change. I am sure the House will agree, especially in the light of more recent appalling cases, that the courts should, where necessary, have the fullest range of sentencing powers available to deal appropriately with those who abuse children.

Lords amendments 121 and 122 extend the disregards and pardons scheme relating to historical convictions for same-sex sexual activity. The disregards scheme, introduced by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012, enables men with historical cautions and convictions for certain gay sex offences to apply to the Secretary of State to have their cautions and convictions disregarded. If successful, the applicant is treated in all circumstances as if the offence had never occurred, and also receives an automatic pardon. The Government accept that the scope of the current scheme is too narrow, as it is largely confined to the now repealed offences of buggery and gross indecency between men, and excludes other repealed offences that may also have been used to criminalise same-sex sexual activity. Lords amendment 121 will therefore extend the scheme to enable individuals convicted of same-sex sexual activity under any repealed or abolished offence to apply to have that caution or conviction disregarded. Lords amendment 122 ensures that pardons provisions will reflect the extension. Taken together, these amendments will help put right the wrongs of the past when people were unjustly criminalised simply on the basis of their sexuality.

In their lordships' House, there was significant debate on the issue of imprisonment for public protection. Lords amendment 101 will put the Secretary of State's policy of automatic referral of applications to terminate the IPP licence on to a statutory footing. This would enable all eligible IPP offenders to be referred to the parole board for consideration of a licence termination at the appropriate time.

Lords amendments 61 to 69 deliver the Government's commitment, made in our action plan for animal welfare, to crack down further on illegal hare coursing. They do this by broadening the circumstances in which the police can investigate and bring charges for hare coursing-related activity, and by increasing the powers of the courts for dealing with this activity on conviction. In bringing forward these amendments, the Government have acted swiftly and decisively in response to the widespread concern about the impact of hare coursing expressed by hon. Members. I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough and Whitby (Sir Robert Goodwill), who raised this issue eloquently in Committee, and my hon. Friend the Member for North East Bedfordshire (Richard Fuller) for his private Member's

[Tom Pursglove]

Bill on this subject. They have both been assiduous champions of this issue on behalf of their rural communities.

Let me turn to the two amendments in this group on which we have tabled motions to disagree. Lords amendment 58 seeks to confer certain police powers on the national food crime unit of the Food Standards Agency. We agree that food crime is a serious issue, costing billions of pounds each year, and it is right that the FSA should be empowered to respond accordingly, improve resilience and reduce the burden on police forces, but this is not the way to legislate on this issue. We are dealing here with the intrusive powers of the state. As such, we need to ensure that any exercise of PACE powers—powers under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984—by the FSA would be necessary, proportionate and legitimate, with suitable governance and accountability arrangements in place. Amendment 58 puts the cart before the horse. That said, we are committed to working with the FSA, its sponsor the Department for Health and Social Care, and other partners to frame legislation that is fit for purpose.

Finally, Lords amendment 107 would allow local authorities to establish and maintain secure academies, either alone or in consortia. The parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice, Lord Wolfson of Tredegar, made it clear in the other place that it would be legally possible for a local authority to set up an entity capable of entering into academy arrangements directly with the Secretary of State, and that is not prevented by the Academies Act 2010—so there is no legal bar, rendering the amendment unnecessary. Government policy is that academy trusts are not local authority influenced companies, and our position on secure schools is to mirror the procedures of academies. However, to repeat the commitment that Lord Wolfson made in the other place, my Department will assess in detail the potential role of local authorities in running this new form of provision, before we invite applications to run any future secure schools.

Sarah Champion (Rotherham) (Lab): I hear what the Minister is saying, but looking into something is not the same as giving a clear commitment, here and now, that local authorities can run those secure academies.

Tom Pursglove: I am always grateful to the hon. Lady for her interventions, and I repeat my point: we do not believe there is a barrier, but as I say, we will review the matter in the way I have set out to the House. We of course recognise that local authorities have a long established role in children's social care and the provision of secure accommodation for children and young people. In particular, the secure children's home legal framework may present a more straightforward route to the expansion of local authority involvement in the provision of secure accommodation than does the 16-to-19 academies framework. I reiterate: there is no legal bar, and as such the amendment must be unnecessary. Fortunately, there is much agreement on this group of amendments in the House, and I will pick up on points raised during the debate when I wind it up.

Ellie Reeves (Lewisham West and Penge) (Lab): It is a pleasure to follow the Minister. I will not speak to all 58 amendments under debate, as some are straightforward and many in this group at least—I am sure the Minister will be pleased to hear—have full support from the Labour Benches. We particularly welcome Lords amendments 1 and 150, which introduce Harper's law. That has the Opposition's full and strong support, and I join the Minister in paying tribute to Lissie Harper's extraordinary and powerful work. When facing pain and grief unimaginable to most of us, she has campaigned for reform to protect our protectors. My right hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen (Nick Thomas-Symonds) and my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon Central (Sarah Jones) met Lissie Harper during her campaign, and I know they are particularly glad to see these amendments introduced by the Government. It is right that emergency service workers who put themselves at risk to keep the rest of us safe are protected by the strongest shield that the criminal justice system can provide.

We are also extremely pleased to see Lords amendments 27, 28 and 151, which will introduce Tony's law, increasing penalties for those who commit child abuse. Again, I share the Minister's admiration for the inspiring work of young Tony Hudgell and his loving parents, Paula and Mark. I also pay tribute to the hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Tom Tugendhat), and my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Sarah Champion) who have both done fantastic work throughout the passage of the Bill to increase protections for children, and supported Tony's law in Committee. Cases as atrocious and horrifying as Tony's are thankfully extremely rare, but it is right that when they do come before the courts, the judiciary can impose the full range of penalties that reflect the gravity of such horrific offending.

The Opposition welcome Lords amendment 104 which states that if someone who is carrying out a public service, such as a retail worker, is assaulted, the fact that they were carrying out a public service at the time of the offence will be an aggravating factor in sentencing. I am glad the Government have finally listened to the Opposition, trade unions and trade bodies who have been calling for greater protection, particularly for our shopworkers who have been unsung heroes and kept our country running throughout the pandemic. We pay particular thanks to the efforts of the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers, the Co-operative party, The British Retail Consortium, the Association of Convenience Stores, and Tesco, for their fantastic campaigning. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham North (Alex Norris) for his tireless work on this issue in recent years. I also pay tribute to the efforts of my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon Central and my noble Friend Lord Coaker, who throughout the Bill's passage pushed for tougher penalties for those who assault shop workers.

9 pm

The Opposition also support Lords amendments 121 and 122, which will extend the scheme for disregarding convictions and cautions for historical offences relating to certain same-sex sexual activity. Such reform is long overdue, and I am glad that the Government have taken the opportunity of the Bill to introduce it. We are grateful to colleagues in the other place who worked hard to implement the reform. I pay tribute in particular to my noble Friend Lord Cashman for his tireless work in championing LGBTQ rights.

The Opposition also welcome the Government's proposals on hare coursing. That leaves us in agreement with the Government on the majority of proposals in the group, which is perhaps an unusual position for us to find ourselves in on the Bill. However, that underlines the unfortunate approach that the Government have taken with the Bill, which has grown significantly from the already extensive length at which it began. By shoehorning in divisive and draconian measures that impose disproportionate controls on free expression and the right to protest as well as measures criminalising Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, the Government have undermined the positive reforms contained in other parts of the Bill with which the Opposition agree.

The Bill should have also been an opportunity finally to take action on the epidemic of violence against women and girls, but the Government have absolutely failed to do so. For example, there are no measures to increase the pitiful rape prosecution rate, which is now just 1.3%. Shamefully, the Government opposed our amendments to ensure a rape and serious sexual offences unit in every police force area despite evidence clearly showing the importance of specialist support to successful prosecutions.

While we are in agreement with the majority of amendments in the group, there are still some areas where we would like to see the Government go further. On imprisonment for public protection reform contained in Lords amendments 101 to 103, while we of course welcome the Government's intention in the area and are glad to see movement in the right direction, we remain of the opinion that reform could have gone further. I note that in the other place Lord Wolfson of Tredegar said:

"This may be a modest start, but it is a start"

and he added that he was

"sure that the conversation would continue"—[*Official Report, House of Lords,* 25 January 2022; Vol. 818, c. 158.]

I certainly hope that will be the case, and I hope that the Minister will commit to looking seriously at the forthcoming Justice Committee report on IPP sentences with a view to moving IPP reform further along.

The Opposition also support amendment 58 tabled in the other place by my noble Friend Lord Rooker, who has considerable knowledge in this area. While I recognise that the Government have committed to food crime reform, as confirmed by the Minister in the Lords debate, they are not implementing it swiftly enough. Serious and complex cases of food crime need to be taken seriously, and, as Lord Rooker noted in his speech, we are due another big scandal any time now. Extending further powers to the National Food Crime Unit cannot be kicked into the long grass. While I would prefer the Minister to support the amendment and signal the Government's commitment to tackling serious food crime, I hope that at a minimum he will commit to a timetable for reform in the area.

Finally, I turn to Lords amendments 105 to 107, which relate to the running of secure academies and would provide in legislation that a secure academy could be run by a local authority. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham, who raised the issue in Committee, and Lord German, who tabled the amendments in the other place. The Government have so far resisted amendments that would clarify the position of local authorities on running secure academies, but I hope that the Minister will shift his position today.

Sarah Champion: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is illogical that the Government will not make the simple concessions for which the Opposition are asking to clarify the situation in favour of local authorities?

Ellie Reeves: I agree with my hon. Friend. Local authorities have a tremendous amount of experience in caring for vulnerable children with a high level of need in a secure environment. As she said in Committee:

"It makes no sense to exclude this knowledge and learning from the provisions in the Bill."—[*Official Report, Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Public Bill Committee,* 15 June 2021; c. 567.]

Indeed, the failures of secure training centres that we have seen should encourage the Government to widen the pool of expertise as much as possible when moving to this new model of child detention. Charlie Taylor stated in his 2016 report:

"Children who are incarcerated must receive the highest quality education from outstanding professionals to repair the damage caused by a lack of engagement and patchy attendance."

Ms Marie Rimmer (St Helens South and Whiston) (Lab): Does my hon. Friend agree that children who commit crime are vulnerable, and in need of positive attention and support to learn what is wrong and what is right, and what is acceptable in society, so that they may learn to become good citizens and contribute positively to society?

Ellie Reeves: I absolutely agree. My hon. Friend speaks so passionately about this issue. It is absolutely right that those in secure academies are given the support that they need, and that they receive not just a good education but the very best that is available to them. To that end, we believe that local authorities must explicitly be brought into the fold when considering who will run these academies. Although we can argue about whether there is a legal bar, the fact is that having it explicitly in the Bill would put it beyond all doubt that local authorities could run these secure academies, and that education policy would not be a barrier to their doing so.

That is a small clarification, which the Government do not appear to oppose in practical terms, but it would send a signal to potential providers not only that local authorities are technically allowed to bid but that, given their wealth of experience in this area, their bids would be positively welcomed. The failures across the youth estate have been shocking, and the Government need to bring in providers with the necessary expertise and ethos to support children in secure settings, to help to address those failings. I hope that, for that reason, the Minister can today commit to their explicit inclusion as possible providers.

Although we are in agreement with the Government on the majority of the proposals in this group and welcome them, further clarification and action on some aspects are needed. Our support here does not detract from the very serious failings in other parts of the Bill, and the failure to make its focus the very real epidemic of violence against women. If the Government were fully serious about the issues facing our society, they would make that one of the main focuses of the Bill and drop the poorly thought-out draconian measures on protests and further police powers.

Sir Robert Neill: I am grateful for the chance to speak in the debate. This area of the Bill raises a number of important criminal justice matters, and I am grateful to the Minister for his very open approach to engaging with me and others around it. I have much sympathy with both him and the shadow Minister, in observing that there are sensible things that I hope we will broadly agree upon on most of this. I hope that I can make one or two observations on how we might take things forward once we have passed the legislation.

I have made my point in relation to the manslaughter of emergency workers, and I do not seek to repeat it, save to say that the Justice Committee has looked at the law of homicide and I think that we are in danger of missing an opportunity there. That does not mean that what is proposed is wrong, but we should be more ambitious than that, because many other common-law jurisdictions have reformed their law of manslaughter in a way that makes it more comprehensible to a jury. I looked with particular care at, for example, the judge's directions in the PC Harper case and others. Even with the most impeccable directions it is not easy to follow now, against the factual background that we often have. We ought to be prepared to look at evidence from other common-law jurisdictions going forward.

There was an argument, of course, that the victim being an emergency worker is always an aggravating factor, but I understand the point about putting it on the statute book, given the particular value and weight that we place upon the service that these emergency workers have done. Similarly, I welcome the provision for aggravation in relation to assaults upon public service workers. I visited one of the local Co-op stores in my constituency and met some of my constituents who have been assaulted and threatened pretty appallingly by people. They do a great job for the public, and I think that we are right to give them a measure of protection too. I welcome the Government moving on that.

I will just turn to two other matters, one of which concerns IPP—imprisonment for public protection—sentences. The Minister knows that the Justice Committee is currently drawing up a report on this issue. We heard most compelling evidence on this situation, which Lord Brown, a former senior law Lord, described as an enduring blot on the British justice system. I paraphrase his words—that may not be exact—but that was the essence of it. I welcome what the Government are doing. It is a step in the right direction, but we need to ensure that those who are capable of being released safely are processed through the system much more quickly. That has been a blot on our system for too long. Resources have not been made available and all too often the provision to do the courses that were necessary for them to meet the trigger levels for release were not available. The danger was—we heard very powerful evidence on this from clinical psychologists and others—that sometimes the failure of the system to deal with the underlying issues which caused them to be subject to a IPP in the first place had now made them more dangerous to release, because they got to a degree of institutionalisation which makes it harder for them to be reformed. We need to be very alert to that.

Sarah Champion: I am very grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way and for starting the inquiry. One piece of written evidence received is from one of my constituents, who is suffering under an IPP with no hope of getting out and no understanding of why he is stuck there. I fully accept and agree with what he is saying. The impact that this is having on people's mental health, the lifelong torture that these people are being put under, is just totally unacceptable. Of course one should serve one's time, but I cannot even imagine what having an indefinite time ahead must do to someone's psyche.

Sir Robert Neill: I am very grateful to the hon. Lady. We heard very compelling testimony on precisely those points. That is not to say that some people who are serving IPP sentences have not committed very serious offences and that some of them, because of their background, do not present a very real threat to the public. It may well be that in certain cases it will be a very long time before they are capable of being released, if ever, but there are many others who fall below that threshold who are trapped unfairly in the system, and who ought to be capable of being looked at afresh, processed and released safely into the community, but we have not yet managed to do that. The Government's amendment holds the feet of the Parole Board to the fire on that, which is good so far as it goes.

The other point I want to make is that we heard compelling evidence from Lord Blunkett, the originator of the IPP sentences, who accepted that it had not worked out as he had intended. That was powerful and very humbling testimony. There was also very powerful testimony from Lord Thomas of Cwmgiedd, the former Lord Chief Justice, who has taken up this cause. He made the point that what we are doing so far is helpful. Improving the ability of people to access courses and gain the threshold for release is helpful and that is what the Government are, through their amendment, seeking to do. The need to review every case, rather than leaving them in limbo, is really important so we do not get drift.

However, there are two things we are not yet doing. We are not tackling the issue of needless recall. Recall is an important tool to have while we have a licence, but there is a real concern that in many cases the trigger for the recall bears no proportion to either the index offence which had caused the original sentence or the amount of time that might then be spent inside thereafter. In some cases, there was a real concern that recall was triggered for comparatively administrative breaches of the licence, rather than substantive ones linked to reoffending or increasing risk. I urge Ministers, when the Parole Board looks at each case as it will now be obliged to do under the legislation, to ensure that we do not have, frankly, risk-averse recalls. It is always a terrible balance to strike and I am very conscious of the burden on the Parole Board and probation officers in doing that, but we ought to ensure it is not done on a tick-box basis just to make sure we have protected ourselves against criticism—almost a back-covering exercise, I hate to say. There is a temptation for that in the current arrangements, but we can do better than that and I hope we will. We ought to be assessing whether the breach suggests there is an ongoing risk of reoffending or a danger to the public. That ought to be the test.

9.15 pm

All this is fine, but I submit to the Minister that, ultimately, we will not, as Lord Thomas suggested to us, deal with the issue and put this regrettable, misguided

and unjust episode to bed until we have grasped the nettle and made provision to resentence all our PPS offenders under the current arrangements for a proper determinate sentence. That may mean that some end up with very long determinate sentences and some may never be released. We have to be honest about that, but honesty is better than the uncertainty to which the hon. Member for Rotherham (Sarah Champion) referred. We should not be afraid to grasp that, because if we want credible sentencing, we have to be honest and transparent about the hard side of that, which may be bad news for some and for some families, but it may equally give an opportunity and some hope to those who can turn their lives around and be released safely. We should not rule that out as the next step, following on from what is being done.

Finally, on secure training centres, I understand what the Minister said about not seeking to single out one type of provision. Equally, however, I hope that he will know—the evidence to the Justice Committee has been clear—that we have a successful mixed economy, in effect, in the provision of custody, and I support that. We have privately and publicly run prisons in the adult establishment and privately and publicly run provision in the youth estate. There is no reason why we cannot have the same thing in relation to these provisions. I do not think anyone is asking for special highlighting of this, but local authorities have expertise—I speak as a former councillor—and I hope that the Minister will just say, "We don't rule anything out. All those with expertise are welcome to bid and to apply."

Sarah Champion: I want to start with a positive and then I will move on. I begin by welcoming Lords amendment 98, Tony's law, which increases the maximum sentences for causing or allowing a child or vulnerable adult to suffer serious injury or death. That change to the law follows the tireless campaigning by the parents of Tony Hudgell. As a baby, Tony suffered such serious physical abuse by his birth parents that both of his legs had to be amputated and he nearly lost his life. The sentences for cases such as Tony's must reflect the lifelong trauma and harm that was inflicted on him.

I campaigned for that change last year, following in the wake of Tony's parents' MP, the hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Tom Tugendhat), and I thank the Minister for listening to me, the hon. Member and to Tony's family and others who have campaigned for the change in the law. It is so necessary and I am so grateful that that has now been adopted.

And now for the less positive part. I have to speak to Lords amendment 107, which is designed to ensure that local authorities can run secure 16 to 19 academies, either alone or in consortiums. I worked with Article 39 and the National Association for Youth Justice to table an amendment on this in the Bill Committee. I was delighted when peers voted in favour of this vital amendment in the other place, as tabled by Lord German and Lord Marks, and I ask the Minister to please keep it in place. As he knows, I have a huge amount of respect for him because he is very fair and because he listens, but as I said, local authorities are also clear that they need a very strong signal from him that they are eligible. This is not me, but the local authorities asking for that clarity. As I said, I find it illogical that he will not accept this amendment.

In December 2016, the Government committed to phasing out child prisons, young offender institutions and secure training centres and replacing them with a network of secure children's homes and secure schools—now renamed secure 16 to 19 academies. I welcome that progress, because it is very clear that secure training centres were not fit for purpose, as the Youth Justice Board has conceded. However, when the Government looked for an organisation to run the first secure school, they barred local authorities from the tendering process. That decision was heavily criticised by many organisations that specialise on these issues. I find it illogical.

Excluding local authorities risks repeating the serious mistakes of the past, when private providers were contracted to operate secure training centres despite having no prior experience of looking after vulnerable children. There is clear, tragic evidence of what that can lead to. Two children, Gareth Myatt and Adam Rickwood, tragically died following restraint in secure training centres run by the private firms G4S and Serco, respectively, in 2004; the High Court later found that an unlawful restraint regime had persisted in the centres for at least a decade. In a 2016 BBC "Panorama" documentary, staff were filmed verbally and physically assaulting children at the Medway secure training centre, managed by G4S. One manager boasted of stabbing a child's leg and arm with a fork; another recounted deliberately winding up a child so that he could physically assault him. No child deserves to suffer such abuse, no matter their past or present behaviour.

Local authorities are best placed to run secure 16-to-19 academies because they have experience of education, secure schools and, of course, the local social services that manage and support vulnerable young people. As I keep saying, it is entirely illogical to prevent local authorities from carrying out this work: it makes it harder to integrate services for children while they are in custody and when they return to the community.

The Minister has already argued, as Ministers in previous debates have, that nothing in the law prevents local authorities from running secure 16-to-19 academies. However, as Lord German said in the other place:

> "At present, local authorities are excluded simply because there is a view that anything called an 'academy' in England cannot be run by a local authority, which seems to create an absolute block to the opportunity for everyone in these institutions to have the best opportunities for life and education."—[*Official Report, House of Lords,* 17 November 2021; Vol. 816, c. 271.]

It must be clearly stated in the law that local authorities can establish and maintain 16-to-19 academies. I believe—I look to my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham West and Penge (Ellie Reeves) on the Front Bench—that the Opposition will divide the House on the amendment; that is how strongly we feel about it. If Government Members vote against it, what will the chilling effect on local authorities be?

The Minister could accept the amendment this evening without pressing it to a vote. It would then be very clear to local authorities that they are eligible to apply to run 16-to-19 academies. I plead with the Minister to do so, because his actions tonight will make the difference for local authorities thinking that they can apply to run such schemes. It must be really clearly stated in the law and in this debate that local authorities can establish and maintain such academies. I urge the Minister and

[Sarah Champion]

his MPs to support the amendment to avoid another generation of children not getting the best wraparound services they all deserve.

Mr Jonathan Djanogly (Huntingdon) (Con): May I say how pleased I am to see the Government bringing forward proposals to stamp out illegal hare coursing? It is an issue that I and many other rural MPs have campaigned on for the best part of a decade, not least as a result of the extreme violence shown by coursers in Cambridgeshire and many other rural parts of the country to those who try to stop them—farmers, local people and even police. The coursers show disregard for property rights and cause huge amounts of damage to crops and hedges.

Shailesh Vara (North West Cambridgeshire) (Con) *rose—*

Mr Djanogly: I give way to my Huntingdonshire colleague.

Shailesh Vara: As a Cambridgeshire neighbour, I am well aware of the difficulties that the Bill seeks to put right. When the matter has been raised with the police, one of the main points that they make is that until now the legislation has had no teeth. When the Bill becomes law, hopefully they will have what they have always wanted. Does my hon. Friend agree that what we really need, once the Bill is on the statute book, is for the police and the Crown Prosecution Service to ensure that the maximum penalties are inflicted on those who are found guilty, not only as punishment for them but to act as a powerful deterrent to others?

Mr Djanogly: I agree with my hon. Friend in every regard. He has made the important point that when legislation is on the statute book, it must be enforced. I think he will agree with me, given the experiences we have both had in talking to local police, that they seek this legislation, they are waiting for it and they will act on it, and no doubt we are both keen to see that happen.

Farmers have been complaining bitterly to me, with good cause. They have a tough enough job as it is without the worry of these coursing criminals. The basic problem is that the provisions of the Hunting Act 2004 often failed to work owing to their complexity, so prosecutors started to use the old 19th-century anti-poaching laws. While those worked evidentially, they failed to have the penalty clout that was required. Fines of tens or hundreds of pounds were pretty meaningless when there were dogs worth tens of thousands and gambling opportunities worth hundreds of thousands. I even heard that the coursing was being streamed into city pubs for gambling purposes. The problem then became worse, because the threat of intimidation was so high for farmers, versus a low penalty risk for the perpetrators, that many farmers did not want to become involved in prosecutions at all.

Now, with this legislation leading to higher levels of fines and confiscation orders, and the ability to charge for the detained dogs and their living costs, I think that we have a much better chance of significantly reducing coursing. Now, armed with these powers, rural police forces will be able to get to work against the perpetrators. I know that in Cambridgeshire they will have the support of all the county MPs, one of whom we have heard from this evening. All of them have been actively involved in this campaign. These anti-coursing measures represent a great example of the Government's acting in the best interests of the countryside and the farming community to counter rural crime, and they have my full support.

Dr Kieran Mullan (Crewe and Nantwich) (Con): I rise to support Lords amendment 1, commonly known as Harper's Law, and to take this opportunity to welcome a number of key reforms introduced by the Bill while also highlighting areas in which I think we should go further.

Let me begin by commenting on what I consider to be the all too frequent yawning gap between what the public, on whose behalf justice is delivered, see as justice, and what the judicial system delivers. I do so conscious that the debate on sentencing has been polarised and distorted by a sort of intellectual snobbery towards anyone who makes the case for longer sentencing. Anyone who mentions this in polite circles, or to any number of think-tanks or charities involved in justice reform, will be met with variations of what is essentially the same disparaging attitude: "Oh, you must be part of the hang 'em and flog 'em brigade"—as if it were not valid or legitimate to say that justice is a social good, that it is served by punishment as well as rehabilitation, and that in some cases serving the social good is better achieved by an emphasis on punishment.

I noted with interest the comment from the family of Sarah Everard that the fact that the perpetrator was given a whole life term, rather than just a life sentence with a minimum period, was the only thing that gave them comfort. We do not often see that narrative in a documentary or a policy paper about justice. Do we really think that that was because the perpetrator was a policeman, although that was the reason in law that he was given a whole-life order—that if he had not been a policeman and had killed Sarah, her family would have been satisfied with a life sentence without a whole-life order? Of course it was not, I believe that their feelings would reflect those of most people who saw their loved one brutally murdered, whatever the circumstances, although very few of them would see a whole-life order as the outcome.

The term "life sentence" is misleading and is often misreported, and in my view it should be reformed. We must remember that the origins of our justice system were a result of our society saying, "You, as the individual and the family, cannot deliver your own justice. The courts will do it on your behalf." The courts are therefore a servant of the public, and have a responsibility to ensure, at the very least, a broad alignment with what they would want. At present, when it comes to serious offences and hardened criminals, I do not think that they do. That is not to disparage judges; they operate largely within a framework of precedent which they cannot change, so we must recognise that it will take more intervention from us to break some of those precedents.

I would like to highlight child sex offences as another area where there is a yawning gap between what offenders are likely to receive and what the public would consider to be justice. This is not to say that rehabilitation and

diversion are not important, and I welcome the measures in this Bill that will help to achieve that. Ultimately, in the longer term, that will lead to fewer victims of crime, but it will not happen overnight and we must ensure that justice is delivered to families and victims in the meantime. This Bill makes huge gains in that regard.

9.30 pm

Amendment 1 comes as a result of the relentless campaigning by the widow of Andrew Harper, Lissie Harper, who took a terrible experience and tried to turn it into something positive in memory of Andrew. I pay tribute to her today. Our emergency service workers deserve the greatest possible protection and their families deserve to see justice done.

Tony's law is another example of where we are tipping the scales more firmly towards justice, and I pay tribute to Tony and his parents. Our changes to early release from halfway to two thirds, and to sentencing for causing death by dangerous driving are other examples of where the Government are making progress, but we must go further.

I want to draw particular attention to where we can go further in relation to the measures to introduce a new whole-life tariff for child murder. Most of our constituents would ask why that tariff is not applied in the first place, so I welcome the change, but I am concerned that the requirement for the offence to be one of significant premeditation is an unnecessarily high hurdle that will leave our constituents wondering what we have really achieved the next time we see a tragic case like that of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and find that the new law does not apply. I ask the Government to look closely at addressing this gap at the next opportunity, and I would be grateful if the Minister could respond to that point tonight.

I also welcome the changes around protests and illegal encampments. There has been a totally unjustified and hysterical campaign about these measures, but the overwhelming majority of my constituents will see them as what they are: necessary and proportionate updates to our laws. I lose a little bit of respect for Opposition Members with legal training every time they make arguments that fly in the face of well-understood legal concepts, pretending that the ordinary meaning of words is the same as their use in the law and ignoring the well-established approach of our common-law system and its ability to refine and further define concepts such as significant damage, disruption, or distress that were introduced in encampment laws. I note that some of the Opposition Members making those arguments also seem to be the ones most concerned with accusations of undermining the judiciary. To have so little faith in the courts' ability to define the law is pretty undermining in itself.

Through this Bill, the Government, the Home Secretary and the Justice Secretary are delivering long overdue changes to our justice system—changes that I welcome and I know my constituents welcome—but we are still a long way off where we need to be, and I hope to keep pushing the Government to go further.

Robbie Moore (Keighley) (Con): It is once again a great pleasure to be able to speak in favour of this Bill. As we know, the first duty of any Government is to keep their citizens and communities safe, and a huge part of that is guaranteeing that the punishments for those who commit the worst crimes ensure that society receives the justice it deserves and is protected from criminals. On that point, I would like to focus on the amendments that relate to Tony's law. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Tom Tugendhat) and the hon. Member for Rotherham (Sarah Champion), who have campaigned tirelessly to ensure that Tony's law is enshrined in statute.

Child cruelty is abhorrent, and it is simply unthinkable that someone could commit such crimes, yet they do sadly happen. That includes the crimes that caused the tragic death of Star Hobson in Keighley back in 2020, which shook my entire constituency and indeed the whole country. Star suffered sickening abuse and brutality at the hands of her mother, Frankie Smith, and her mother's partner, Savannah Brockhill. Star was punched, kicked and stamped on multiple times by Brockhill, with her mother doing nothing to stop the brutality. It is hard to believe that a human, not least a mother and her partner, could be so cruel. During their trials, the court heard that this physical abuse caused Star unsurvivable injuries, including a skull fracture. Following the trial, many of my constituents and I expressed our real concerns about the sentences given to Brockhill and Smith, particularly as Smith initially received only eight years in prison. That was in spite of the fact that she had facilitated the horrible abuse that killed her daughter. It is right that the sentence was referred to the Court of Appeal following a letter that I and many others sent to the Attorney General, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fareham (Suella Braverman).

We need to ensure that sentencing for child cruelty is fit for purpose. Unfortunately, the tragic death of Star Hobson is not an isolated incident. Child cruelty happens across the country, which is why the Lords amendments to enact Tony's law are so important. These amendments will ensure that anyone who causes or allows the death of a child in their care will face up to life imprisonment, instead of the current 14-year maximum. Likewise, the punishment for those who cause or allow serious physical harm to a child will toughen from 10 to 14 years.

The crimes I have spoken of are some of the worst imaginable. It is simply incomprehensible that someone could treat a child so cruelly. This abuse must not be allowed to stand, which is why I am so delighted that the Government are encompassing Tony's law in the Bill.

I finish by putting on record my thanks to my hon. Friends the Members for Stockton South (Matt Vickers) and for Crewe and Nantwich (Dr Mullan), who have campaigned tirelessly in this place to make sure that Harper's law is included in this legislation. It is commendable that the Government have made these amendments to the Bill.

Matt Vickers (Stockton South) (Con): I am delighted to see a Bill that will do so much to deliver justice and make our communities safer. There is so much to be said, but I will speak briefly on two changes to our law that are very much overdue.

First, we are making it a statutory aggravating offence to assault someone who is providing a public service. When the pandemic struck, many fled to the safety of their home, but our army of key workers bravely rolled up their sleeves and got on with their job to keep this

[Matt Vickers]

country going. Health and social care workers, transport workers and retail workers are owed a huge debt of gratitude, but not everyone in our society has shown them that gratitude.

As chair of the all-party parliamentary group on the future of retail, I hear the horrific and increasing abuse suffered by retail workers in town centres and shopping parades across the country. Last year there were 455 assaults on retail workers—not every month, not every week, but every single day. The youngster with their first job stacking shelves and the semi-retired person with an extra part-time job on the tills to top up their income to buy their grandkids something nice for Christmas: these are normal people just doing their job. They are often not well paid, they do not have stab-proof vests or body-worn cameras, and every day they have to return to the scene of the crime.

These people are not assaulted because they wear shirts with Tesco or Co-op written on them; they are assaulted because they are upholding the rules that are in place to protect us. They verify people's age when buying knives or alcohol, and during the pandemic they checked people's masks and social distancing, undertaking statutory duties and responsibilities that we in Parliament have placed on them. It is right that they will now have statutory protections.

Lords amendment 1 enacts Harper's law, and I cannot imagine that anyone has not been touched by the horrific and devastating circumstances of PC Harper's death. I cannot imagine anyone was not moved by the unbelievable heroism, bravery and determination of his family and his wife, Lissie, in campaigning for this change to ensure that no one else will have to go through such terrible misjustice. When our amazing emergency service workers run towards danger to protect others, it is right that our legal system will now have their back by delivering justice for them and their families.

Ruth Edwards: Pointy black-tipped ears, furry and brown, and the ability to make a getaway at 45 mph. This is the description of the suspect I found digging in our veg patch the other week. I am, of course, talking about the brown hare. The occasional episode of vegetable vandalism aside, we feel privileged to share our home with these fascinating creatures that we often see streaking over the fields around our house or lolloping through our garden.

I strongly welcome Lords amendments 61 to 69, which create tougher penalties for hare coursing by increasing the maximum penalty for trespassing in pursuit of game to up to six months' imprisonment. New offences have also been created: trespass with the intention of using a dog to search for or pursue a hare; and, secondly, being equipped to do so.

Hare coursing is a huge problem in rural parts of Rushcliffe and throughout the Vale of Belvoir. Last night, I spoke to a local farmer, who told me that hare coursers had been trespassing on his land for as long as he could remember; several times a month they vandalise his property, destroying locks and pulling gates off their posts to gain access. They destroy his crop by driving all over it and, obviously, they destroy the local hare population. He told me there were now hardly any left. Worst of all, he told me, "We know who is doing a lot of it. It's a couple of local families but they seem to be above the law." Farmers who had challenged them had their workshops broken into and vandalised, which is why I am not sharing his name today.

I hope these new offences will give the police better powers to target such criminals. I welcome the new powers for courts to order the reimbursement of the police for kennelling dogs seized in relation to hare coursing, because taxpayers certainly should not be paying for it. I also welcome new powers for courts to disqualify offenders from owning a dog—no one engaged in this sort of cruelty to animals should be owning one.

Tom Pursglove: I thank Members from across the House for their many and varied contributions to the various amendments we are considering this evening. I wish to respond to a number of the points made.

First, let me respond to my hon. Friend the Member for Bromley and Chislehurst (Sir Robert Neill) on IPPs. I have heard his view that the amendment does not go far enough and does not take action to help IPP offenders who are still in prison. The number of IPP offenders in prison, having never been released, stood at 1,661 on 30 September 2021, which represents enormous progress when we compare it with the peak of 6,000 in 2012. The IPP action plan, produced and regularly refreshed by Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service, remains the best means of providing all those continuing to serve the IPP sentence with every opportunity to show they can be safely released by the Parole Board. The action plan sets out a series of measures designed to rehabilitate IPP prisoners, including through psychology-led reviews, and improved central and regional strategic oversight of IPP progression. There is clear evidence that these measures are working, and the number of IPP prisoners has decreased. IPP prisoners continue to be released in significant numbers and have a high chance of a positive outcome from Parole Board hearings. In 2020-21, more than two thirds of IPP Parole Board oral hearings resulted in a positive outcome, either a release or a progressive move to open prison.

Despite all that, I hope I can reassure my hon. Friend by saying that, as Ministers have said during the passage of this Bill, in this House and in the other place, we are mindful that the Justice Committee in this House is currently conducting an inquiry into IPP sentences, and we look forward to hearing the recommendations of his Committee and we will certainly consider them closely. I, along with my fellow Ministers, will continue to engage with IPP stakeholders in this House and elsewhere, and we will continue to give full consideration to any options recommended. I hope that that gives him the reassurance that he is looking for as to our intentions.

Sir Robert Neill: I am grateful to the Minister, as it does. I hope that he makes sure that we have a timely response; perhaps he can meet me once our Committee has reported.

Tom Pursglove: Yes, I am always keen that the Department is as timely as possible in engaging with my hon. Friend's excellent Committee. We are always grateful for the tireless, thorough and considered work that he and colleagues do.

Let me turn to the issue of Harper's law. Again, I was very grateful to Members from across the House, including the hon. Member for Brent North (Barry Gardiner)

and my hon. Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Ruth Edwards), for their clear, full-throated support for these changes. I was able to address one of the technical issues to provide clarity for the House earlier, and I just wish to provide further clarity, as I promised I would, on whether volunteers can be emergency workers under Harper's law. The answer is yes, it applies to emergency workers who are engaged to supply emergency services in a voluntary capacity as well as to paid employees. It uses exactly the same definition as in the 2018 Act, and I hope that that helps to put the technical aspects of this provision on the record for the House's benefit.

Lords amendment 107 covers the issue of secure schools. I am always conscious that I do not want to disappoint the hon. Member for Rotherham (Sarah Champion). We have always had a very constructive working relationship on a whole host of issues, including on the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill, which I know she will be delighted completed its Commons consideration on Friday. None the less, on this occasion, I am afraid that I cannot deliver precisely on what she wishes to see. However, I reiterate the point that, before we invite applications for any future secure schools, the Ministry of Justice will assess in detail the potential role of local authorities in running this new form of provision. The Department for Education remains committed to moving towards a school system where every school has the benefits of being part of a family of schools in a strong multi-academy trust. The DFE will set out its plans in a schools White Paper to be published in the coming months.

Sarah Champion: Will the Minister give way?

Tom Pursglove: I will give the hon. Lady another opportunity.

Sarah Champion: Round 5, Minister.

Will the Minister please clarify what the objection is to making it very clear that local authorities can apply to run and maintain 16 to 19 academies? Moreover, is he able to explain why they were prevented from doing so in the first round of tendering?

Tom Pursglove: The hon. Lady is persistent in these matters. All I can do, I am afraid, is simply refer her back to the comments that I have already made during the course of this debate. I will happily take away—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Lady is chuntering from a sedentary position. I am not sure whether she was here for the duration of this debate. We have covered this matter in some detail. I will gladly take away a copy of *Hansard* and study the points that she has raised in the course of this debate. If there is any further detail that I am able to provide, I will happily do so.

Sir Robert Neill: Are local authorities ruled in or ruled out?

Tom Pursglove: I refer to the point that I made earlier, which is that we believe there is no barrier.

Lords amendment 58 covers food standards. I hope that I can offer some comfort to the House. We are broadly supportive of the intention to confer such powers, which would be consistent with powers available to other bodies, but reject the amendment on the basis that there is further work to do before any legislative amendments are made. The current chairman of the Food Standards Agency, Susan Jebb, wrote to the Minister for Crime and Policing on 11 August 2021 expressing concern that the existing powers of the National Food Crime Unit were insufficient for their purposes. The Minister responded in October, expressing support for the request and indicated the Home Office's intent to work with the NFCU to find a suitable legislative vehicle. In order to fully support any extension of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 powers to the NFCU, we would need reassurance that this is necessary, proportionate and legitimate and that suitable governance, accountability and oversight of investigations and complaints arrangements will be in place. There is also a lack of clarity over the necessary protocols when PACE powers would be exercised, which will need consideration with the NFCU before legislative amendments are made, but we will of course legislate at the next available opportunity.

I am also grateful to Members for their strong support for the hare coursing changes that the Government are introducing, particularly the observations made by my hon. Friends the Members for Huntingdon (Mr Djanogly) and for Rushcliffe (Ruth Edwards), and by my hon. Friend the Member for North West Cambridgeshire (Shailesh Vara), who is my neighbour, from just over the border. This issue matters a great deal. We have listened carefully to a wide range of voices, telling us just that. Hare coursing is not a quaint country tradition. It involves horrible cruelty to a much loved wild animal. It is associated with illegal gambling and other criminality. It brings serious harm to the rural areas where it takes place. Subject to parliamentary approval, we intend to get the tougher sentences in place before the start of the next hare coursing season.

I conclude by again thanking Members from across the House for their thoughtful contributions to this debate and also Members in the other place for their thorough consideration of these matters and for the engagement that colleagues have provided throughout the Bill. As a Minister coming to this rather late in the day, may I also place on record my sincere appreciation to my hon. Friends the Member for Louth and Horncastle (Victoria Atkins) and for Croydon South (Chris Philp) as well as to my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for South Swindon (Sir Robert Buckland) for all their work in getting us to this stage.

Lords amendment 1 agreed to.

Lords amendment 58 disagreed to.

Clause 139

SECURE 16 TO 19 ACADEMIES

Motion made, and Question put, That this House disagrees with Lords amendment 107.—*(Tom Pursglove.)*

The House divided: Ayes 314, Noes 190.

Division No. 197] [9.50 pm

AYES

Adams, rh Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Aiken, Nickie
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Anderson, Lee
Andrew, rh Stuart
Ansell, Caroline
Argar, Edward

Atherton, Sarah
Atkins, Victoria
Bacon, Gareth
Badenoch, Kemi
Baillie, Siobhan
Baker, Duncan
Baker, Mr Steve
Baldwin, Harriett
Barclay, rh Steve
Baron, Mr John
Baynes, Simon
Bell, Aaron
Benton, Scott
Beresford, Sir Paul
Berry, rh Jake
Bhatti, Saqib
Blackman, Bob
Blunt, Crispin
Bone, Mr Peter
Bottomley, Sir Peter
Bradley, Ben
Bradley, rh Karen
Braverman, rh Suella
Brereton, Jack
Bridgen, Andrew
Brine, Steve
Bristow, Paul
Britcliffe, Sara
Browne, Anthony
Bruce, Fiona
Buchan, Felicity
Buckland, rh Sir Robert
Burghart, Alex
Burns, rh Conor
Butler, Rob
Campbell, Mr Gregory
Carter, Andy
Cartlidge, James
Cash, Sir William
Cates, Miriam
Caulfield, Maria
Chalk, Alex
Chishti, Rehman
Churchill, Jo
Clark, rh Greg
Clarke, rh Mr Simon
Clarke, Theo
Clarke-Smith, Brendan
Clarkson, Chris
Cleverly, rh James
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse
Colburn, Elliot
Collins, Damian
Costa, Alberto
Courts, Robert
Coutinho, Claire
Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
Crosbie, Virginia
Daly, James
Davies, David T. C.
Davies, Gareth
Davies, Dr James
Davies, Mims
Davies, Philip
Davison, Dehenna
Dinenage, Dame Caroline
Dines, Miss Sarah
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Docherty, Leo
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
Donelan, rh Michelle
Dorries, rh Ms Nadine
Double, Steve
Dowden, rh Oliver
Doyle-Price, Jackie
Drax, Richard
Drummond, Mrs Flick
Duddridge, James
Duguid, David
Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain
Dunne, rh Philip
Eastwood, Mark
Edwards, Ruth
Ellis, rh Michael
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Elphicke, Mrs Natalie
Eustice, rh George
Evennett, rh Sir David
Everitt, Ben
Fabricant, Michael
Farris, Laura
Fell, Simon *(Proxy vote cast by Christopher Pincher)*
Firth, Anna
Fletcher, Katherine
Fletcher, Mark
Fletcher, Nick
Ford, Vicky
Foster, Kevin
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Frazer, rh Lucy
French, Mr Louie
Fuller, Richard
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Gale, rh Sir Roger
Garnier, Mark
Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Gibb, rh Nick
Gibson, Peter
Gideon, Jo
Girvan, Paul
Glen, John
Graham, Richard
Grant, Mrs Helen
Gray, James
Grayling, rh Chris
Green, rh Damian
Griffith, Andrew
Griffiths, Kate
Grundy, James
Gullis, Jonathan *(Proxy vote cast by Christopher Pincher)*
Halfon, rh Robert
Hall, Luke
Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, rh Matt
Hands, rh Greg
Harper, rh Mr Mark
Harris, Rebecca
Harrison, Trudy
Hart, Sally-Ann
Hayes, rh Sir John
Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Heappey, James
Heaton-Harris, rh Chris
Henderson, Gordon
Henry, Darren
Higginbotham, Antony
Hinds, rh Damian
Holden, Mr Richard
Hollinrake, Kevin
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Howell, John
Howell, Paul
Huddleston, Nigel
Hudson, Dr Neil
Hughes, Eddie
Hunt, Jane
Hunt, rh Jeremy
Hunt, Tom
Javid, rh Sajid
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenkinson, Mark
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, rh Sir Greg
Kruger, Danny
Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
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
Mackrory, Cherilyn
Maclean, Rachel
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, rh Kit
Mangnall, Anthony
Marson, Julie
May, rh Mrs Theresa
Mayhew, Jerome
Maynard, Paul
McCartney, Jason
McCartney, Karl
McPartland, Stephen
McVey, rh Esther
Mercer, Johnny
Merriman, Huw
Metcalfe, Stephen
Millar, Robin
Miller, rh Mrs Maria
Milling, rh Amanda
Mills, Nigel
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Mohindra, Mr Gagan
Moore, Damien
Moore, Robbie
Mordaunt, rh Penny
Morris, Anne Marie
Morris, David
Morris, James
Morrissey, Joy
Mullan, Dr Kieran
Mumby-Croft, Holly
Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Neill, Sir Robert
Nici, Lia
Nokes, rh Caroline
Norman, rh Jesse
O'Brien, Neil
Offord, Dr Matthew
Opperman, Guy
Paisley, Ian
Parish, Neil
Pawsey, Mark
Penning, rh Sir Mike
Penrose, John
Philp, Chris
Pincher, rh Christopher
Poulter, Dr Dan
Pow, Rebecca
Prentis, Victoria
Pursglove, Tom
Quin, Jeremy
Quince, Will
Randall, Tom
Redwood, rh John
Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
Richardson, Angela
Robertson, Mr Laurence
Robinson, Gavin
Rosindell, Andrew
Rowley, Lee
Russell, Dean
Rutley, David
Saxby, Selaine
Scully, Paul
Seely, Bob
Selous, Andrew
Shannon, Jim
Shapps, rh Grant
Shelbrooke, rh Alec
Simmonds, David
Skidmore, rh Chris
Smith, Greg
Smith, Henry
Smith, rh Julian
Smith, Royston
Solloway, Amanda
Spencer, rh Mark
Stafford, Alexander
Stephenson, Andrew
Stevenson, Jane
Stevenson, John
Stewart, rh Bob
Stewart, Iain
Streeter, Sir Gary
Stride, rh Mel
Stuart, Graham
Sturdy, Julian
Sunderland, James
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Syms, Sir Robert
Thomas, Derek
Throup, Maggie
Timpson, Edward
Tolhurst, Kelly
Tomlinson, Justin
Tracey, Craig
Trott, Laura
Tugendhat, Tom
Vara, Shailesh
Vickers, Martin
Vickers, Matt
Villiers, rh Theresa

Walker, Mr Robin
Wallis, Dr Jamie
Warburton, David
Warman, Matt
Watling, Giles
Whately, Helen
Wheeler, Mrs Heather
Whittaker, Craig
Whittingdale, rh Mr John
Wiggin, Sir Bill
Wild, James
Williams, Craig
Williamson, rh Gavin
Wilson, rh Sammy
Wood, Mike
Wragg, Mr William
Wright, rh Jeremy
Young, Jacob

Tellers for the Ayes:
Michael Tomlinson and Scott Mann

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
Abrahams, Debbie
Ali, Rushanara
Ali, Tahir
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Amesbury, Mike
Anderson, Fleur
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Ashworth, rh Jonathan
Barker, Paula
Beckett, rh Margaret
Begum, Apsana
Benn, rh Hilary
Betts, Mr Clive
Blake, Olivia
Blomfield, Paul
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brennan, Kevin
Brown, Ms Lyn
Buck, Ms Karen
Burgon, Richard
Byrne, Ian
Byrne, rh Liam
Cadbury, Ruth
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Carden, Dan
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Chamberlain, Wendy
Champion, Sarah
Charalambous, Bambos
Clark, Feryal
Cooper, Daisy
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Creasy, Stella
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Daby, Janet
Davey, rh Ed
Davies-Jones, Alex
De Cordova, Marsha
Debbonaire, Thangam
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Dodds, Anneliese
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Duffield, Rosie
Eagle, Dame Angela
Eastwood, Colum
Edwards, Jonathan
Elliott, Julie
Elmore, Chris
Eshalomi, Florence
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Farry, Stephen
Fovargue, Yvonne
Foxcroft, Vicky
Foy, Mary Kelly
Furniss, Gill
Gardiner, Barry
Gill, Preet Kaur
Glindon, Mary
Green, Kate
Green, Sarah
Greenwood, Lilian
Greenwood, Margaret
Griffith, Nia
Gwynne, Andrew
Haigh, Louise
Hamilton, Fabian
Hanna, Claire
Hardy, Emma
Harris, Carolyn
Hayes, Helen
Healey, rh John
Hendrick, Sir Mark
Hillier, Dame Meg
Hobhouse, Wera
Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
Hollern, Kate
Hopkins, Rachel
Huq, Dr Rupa
Hussain, Imran
Jardine, Christine
Johnson, rh Dame Diana
Johnson, Kim
Jones, Darren
Jones, Gerald
Jones, rh Mr Kevan
Jones, Ruth
Jones, Sarah
Kane, Mike
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz *(Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore)*
Khan, Afzal
Kyle, Peter
Lake, Ben
Lammy, rh Mr David
Lavery, Ian
Leadbeater, Kim
Lewis, Clive
Lloyd, Tony
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lucas, Caroline
Lynch, Holly
Madders, Justin
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Mahmood, Shabana
Malhotra, Seema
Maskell, Rachael
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonagh, Siobhain
McDonald, Andy
McDonnell, rh John
McGinn, Conor
McGovern, Alison
McKinnell, Catherine
McMahon, Jim
McMorrin, Anna
Mearns, Ian
Miliband, rh Edward
Mishra, Navendu
Moran, Layla
Morgan, Helen
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, Grahame
Murray, Ian
Murray, James
Nandy, Lisa
Nichols, Charlotte
Norris, Alex
Olney, Sarah
Onwurah, Chi
Oppong-Asare, Abena
Osamor, Kate
Osborne, Kate
Owatemi, Taiwo
Peacock, Stephanie
Pennycook, Matthew
Perkins, Mr Toby
Phillips, Jess
Pollard, Luke
Powell, Lucy
Qureshi, Yasmin
Rayner, rh Angela
Reed, Steve
Rees, Christina
Reeves, Ellie
Reeves, Rachel
Reynolds, Jonathan
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
Rimmer, Ms Marie
Rodda, Matt
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Shah, Naz
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheerman, Mr Barry
Siddiq, Tulip
Slaughter, Andy
Smith, Cat
Smith, Nick
Smyth, Karin
Sobel, Alex
Spellar, rh John
Stevens, Jo
Stone, Jamie
Streeting, Wes
Stringer, Graham
Sultana, Zarah
Tami, rh Mark
Tarry, Sam
Thomas, Gareth
Thornberry, rh Emily
Timms, rh Stephen
Turner, Karl
Twist, Liz
Vaz, rh Valerie
Wakeford, Christian
Webbe, Claudia
West, Catherine
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitley, Mick
Whittome, Nadia
Williams, Hywel
Wilson, Munira
Winter, Beth
Yasin, Mohammad
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Noes:
Jessica Morden and Sarah Owen

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment 107 disagreed to.

10.2 pm

More than four hours having elapsed since the commencement of proceedings on consideration of Lords amendments, the proceedings were interrupted (Programme Order, this day).

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

Lords amendments 61 to 69, 94 to 106, 121 to 140, 144, 145, 149 to 152 and 155 to 161 agreed to.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): We now move to the third set of amendments. When I call the Minister to move the motion, it would be useful if those who are trying to catch my eye indicate they wish to speak.

After Clause 54

Accountability of public authorities: duties on police workforce

Kit Malthouse: I beg to move that this House disagrees with Lords amendment 71.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): With this it will be convenient to discuss the following:

Lords amendment 74, and Government amendment (a) thereto.

Lords amendment 88, and Government amendment (a) thereto.

Lords amendment 73, and Government motion to disagree.

Lords amendment 80, Government motion to disagree, and Government amendments (a) to (f) to the words so restored to the Bill.

Lords amendment 81, and Government motion to disagree.

Lords amendment 82, and Government motion to disagree.

Lords amendment 87, Government motion to disagree, and Government amendments (a) to (f) to the words so restored to the Bill.

Lords amendments 89 and 146, Government motions to disagree, and Government amendments (a) and (b) in lieu.

Lords amendment 143, Government motion to disagree, and Government amendments (a) to (c) in lieu.

Lords amendments 75 to 79, 83 to 86, 90 to 93, 118 to 120 and 148.

Kit Malthouse: Lords amendment 71 would introduce a duty of candour for the police workforce. I am sure that hon. Members know that the Government take police integrity and accountability extremely seriously. So much so that, in February 2020, we introduced a statutory duty of co-operation for serving police officers as part of wider integrity reforms.

A failure to co-operate in that way constitutes a breach of the statutory standards of professional behaviour by which all officers must abide and could therefore result in a formal disciplinary sanction. It is our view that the duty to co-operate puts a greater onus on officers than the duty of candour provided for in the Lords amendment, as they could ultimately be dismissed for a breach. In essence, the Lords is proposing a dilution.

Hon. Members will also be aware of the Government's forthcoming response to the Daniel Morgan independent panel and to Bishop James Jones' report concerning the bereaved Hillsborough families' experiences, and we will set out our view on a wider duty of candour for all public authorities. Before the Government respond to those reports, however, it is clearly imperative that the Hillsborough families are given the opportunity to share their views.

None the less, we are closely monitoring the impact of the new legislation on police co-operation with inquiries and investigations. As we consider the case for a wider duty of candour for other public servants and bodies, we will determine whether there are gaps in the existing framework that need to be filled to ensure public confidence. I assure the House that we will set out our conclusions later this year.

Before I turn to the Lords amendments to part 3 of the Bill, I point out to hon. Members that over the last couple of years, with regard to public order, we have all seen that the police have struggled with some of the demonstrations that we have seen on our streets. Last autumn, Insulate Britain's new tactics put a lot of police officers in danger, caused a significant amount of misery to many thousands of people who simply wanted to get to work or to otherwise go about their daily lives, and were difficult to address. Since, we have seen further examples of wholly unacceptable forms of protest. I am afraid that their lordships may regret the day that they voted down the significant number of measures that we had inserted in the Bill.

The House of Lords did, however, recognise that freedom of speech and assembly are qualified rights under the European convention on human rights, and there are times when it is appropriate to restrict those rights to protect the rights of non-protesters. For that reason, we are sympathetic to Lords amendment 143, which would introduce fast-track public space protection orders. The Government have listened to the concerns raised in the other place about the harm caused by disruptive protests outside schools and vaccination centres. We agree in principle with the amendment, and our amendments (a) to (c) in lieu of Lords amendment 143 will have a similar effect but will ensure that provision for expedited PSPOs works with the grain of the existing legislative framework.

Jim Shannon: I very much look forward to the tightening of the laws, but I am also conscious that I look for balance. As one who has protested on the streets of Northern Ireland on many occasions—legally—with an important desire to do so, I ask whether the Minister feels that the balance is right in this legislation. In our words, the right to protest should be done in a peaceful manner, not to obstruct anybody.

Kit Malthouse: I do indeed believe that the balance is right, but the hon. Gentleman does not have to take my word for it. Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary and fire & rescue services was specifically tasked with looking at the balance of legislation and protest. After some examination, it decided that the balance had swung too far in favour of protest and too much away from the rights of others to go about their daily lives.

Jesse Norman (Hereford and South Herefordshire) (Con): My right hon. Friend knows that I have real concerns about the noisy protest legislation. How often does he expect it to be applied and how many past protests have been subject to something like that kind of police discretion?

Kit Malthouse: Obviously, it is hard for me to predict how often these things will be used. I will come on to talk about the noise provision more specifically, but it is worth pointing out that it is not common for conditions to be placed on protest generally. The National Police Chiefs' Council tells us that in the three months to April '21, there were 2,500 protests, and conditions were put on them no more than a dozen times. The Metropolitan police has confirmed that in 2019—hon. Members have to remember that in London, a protest takes place pretty much every day, and sometimes several in one day—it put conditions on only 15 times and, in 2020, only six times. Admittedly, 2020 saw a suppressed number of protests because of the pandemic, but this is nevertheless rare, and the police take care in placing such conditions.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: Will the Minister give way?

Kit Malthouse: I will make a little bit of progress.

On my previous point about the Lords accepting the need for protection outside schools and vaccination centres, we believe it should not just be people working in those two types of facility who are protected from highly disruptive protests. The Government continue to believe it is essential that the police are able in some circumstances to place conditions on protests to prevent noise causing serious harm or impinging on the rights of others. The vast majority of protests in England and Wales will be unaffected by this legislation. The power may be used only in the most exceptional circumstances where police assess the noise from protests to be unjustifiable and damaging to others. I can assure the House that conditions will, by law, be imposed only where necessary and proportionate, with due consideration to all our freedoms of expression and assembly. The police are already legally bound to assess this balance with the powers they currently have.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Kit Malthouse: I will come to the hon. Members in a moment.

I am sure that all hon. Members will recall vividly how proceedings in St Margaret's church were intruded on by protesters' noise when we were paying our respects to our colleague Sir David Amess. I am not sure we could call that intrusion damaging; if anything, it made us sing all the loudly and filled the church with an air of defiance as we mourned. However, we have to reflect on the fact that developments in amplification mean that noise can be used as a weapon and can cause significant psychological damage. This is why most local authorities have a noise enforcement team with powers to act. We need to recognise that, in a protest situation, noise could be used to make worship, business or residence impossible in particular premises, and our fellow citizens would expect protection from the police in those circumstances.

Barry Gardiner: To assure the House that there will be an objective standard rather than a subjective one, can the Minister explain either what decibel level there would have to be or for how long such a noise nuisance would have to continue for enforcing the powers to be reasonable and objective?

Kit Malthouse: As the House would expect, we are not prescribing limits in the way the hon. Gentleman is asking for, not least because the varying circumstances with which the police are presented mean that hard and fast rules do not necessary obtain. For example, it could be that one person with an amplifier attempting to drown out—I do not know—pursuit of worship in a particular church, temple or synagogue could be deemed over time to be a nuisance, and therefore be damaging and impinging on the rights of worship of others, whereas a crowd of individuals outside making a similar noise for a shorter time may not. As I have just laid out, I did not regard the noise that intruded on our grief in St Margaret's as damaging—I would not have thought that that hit the bar—but if someone was outside the hon. Gentleman's constituency office protesting day in, day out with a large and powerful amplifier, he might quite rightly in those circumstances seek protection from the police or indeed from the local authority. There is a series of these situations that the police are now presented with because of developments in amplification.

Caroline Lucas: Would the Minister acknowledge that our public order laws already make it harder to protest than in practically any other democracy, and that the kind of legislation he is bringing in now, as we have just seen, is completely subjective and puts the police in an impossible position? Laws already exist to deal with the so-called problems that he is raising. This is about throwing red meat to his Back Benchers so that he can try to get a bit more popularity, and it stinks.

Kit Malthouse: I do not know who is throwing the red meat here, but it is certainly not me. Obviously the hon. Lady has a constituency that will lap up her remarks, no doubt released on social media. In truth, the police have been asking for some time for improvements to the elderly public order legislation. We put the measures through consideration by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services, which felt they were proportionate and sensible for us to pursue.

Joanna Cherry: The Minister is implying that the police and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services in some way wanted this new noise trigger. Will he accept that I am correct when I say that neither the police, nor Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services, requested the noise trigger at all?

Kit Malthouse: The inspectorate obviously would not request that because that is not its job, but we certainly asked it to look at the balance that we are trying to present with what I think are relatively modest improvements to public order legislation. Indeed, from memory of the report, it felt we should go further, which we are unable to do because of the structure of the Bill. That means that on the rare occasion where noise is causing other people's rights to be impinged on, and where worship or business or residence is impossible, we would seek protection.

10.15 pm

I understand that hon. Members are concerned about this issue. There have been all sorts of wild claims about the Government stopping singing in the street and that sort of rubbish, but I ask hon. Members to think of situations where they might seek protection of their own rights from the police, in circumstances where noise is being used as a weapon. Because of developments in amplification over the past 10 or 15 years, amplifiers are smaller, easier to move around, and much louder than they were, and we have seen occasions where they have been used offensively to stop other people going about their business.

Jesse Norman: I think it would help me, and it might help others in the Chamber, if the Minister would consider putting in place a review, perhaps a year or two years into the use of this power, if the House chooses to grant it.

Kit Malthouse: I am happy to commit to reviewing the offence. I would love to put a time limit on it but, as I said when I outlined the number of times conditions would be met, this measure may be used on only a very small number of occasions. We will have to consider the range of situations in which it is used, and obviously review it as we do with all public order legislation. We take very seriously the fact that protest is a fundamental building block of any liberal democracy, and now more than ever that is writ large. This is an important freedom for us in this country, and I am sure that lots of Members from all side of the House have been on protests of all kinds over the years. We must ensure that legislation moves with the times and reflects changes in technology, and that we give the police the powers they need, albeit in rare and often exceptional circumstances.

Anne Marie Morris (Newton Abbot) (Ind): The Minister is being generous in accepting interventions. Does he think that, while well intended, the Bill may have the unintended consequence that individuals who think they are within the law in the way they demonstrate, because of the Bill's subjectivity find themselves unexpectedly criminalised? That for them would be devastating.

Kit Malthouse: No, not necessarily—*[Laughter.]* No, no. As a former Westminster councillor and London Assembly member for central London, who was subjected to dozens of protests of all sizes, shapes and forms, I would encourage all people who are protesting, wherever they are, to engage with the police first and discuss their own safety and the safety of others. In any democracy it is responsible to ensure that people give forewarning of what they are about to do.

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Ind): Does the Minister appreciate that many people listening to this debate will be very suspicious of his words? They will see in the proposed regulations and discussions with the police a fundamental desire by him and his Government to shut down, control, and eliminate protest within our society. People have a right to protest, a right to make their voices heard, and a right to dissent. Surely that is fundamental to a democratic society. It is no good praising people in Russia if we close down protest here.

Kit Malthouse: Of course we are not closing down protest. The right hon. Gentleman is right that people have a fundamental right to dissent, to protest and to make their views known in the public sphere as they do in the private sphere, but, as the House of Lords and the European Court of Human Rights have said, the right to protest is not unqualified, and I am afraid that, in the last couple of years, we have seen protestors using tactics that are massively disruptive to other people's lives. People just wanting to go about their business have been so frustrated that they have been leaping out of their cars and taking things into their own hands. We have seen protestors running on to the fast lane of motorways, causing danger to themselves and motorists, and distracting police officers from stopping people from being stabbed or burgled in all our neighbourhoods. We have a duty to address that, and the role of the House and that of the police is to strike a balance between competing rights. That is what we do, and that is what we are trying to do with these modest measures.

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): Will the Minister give way?

Kit Malthouse: No. I have given way lots of times. There will be many speakers, and I do not want to use up all the time. We have only got until midnight to get through all of this stuff. I will move on from the noise powers, which, as I say, we think will be used only in exceptional circumstances but must be available given changes in amplification.

Lords amendment 80 would prevent the alignment of the police's ability to place conditions on public assembly with their existing powers to place conditions on public processions. HMICFRS found that a distinction between processions and assemblies was no longer appropriate. In the light of the practical challenges of safely policing protests, there is an unjustifiable inconsistency in the current law. When does a procession become an assembly and vice versa?

Lords amendments 74 to 79 implement a recommendation to the Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee to the effect that the term "serious disruption" should be defined in the Bill rather than in regulations. I trust that the amendments have allayed the concerns raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May), who is not in her place, in our previous debates on the matter.

I am afraid that Lords amendments 81 and 82 arise from a misunderstanding of the effect of the provisions in clause 58, which are designed, in the words of the Joint Committee on Human Rights, to protect the rights of access to the parliamentary estate for those with business there. The changes to the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, which governs prohibited activities in the vicinity of Parliament, will not prevent protests outside Parliament, nor will they prevent the Greater London Authority from authorising assemblies outside Parliament. Clause 58 will simply enable a police officer to direct an individual to cease or not to begin obstructing the passage of a vehicle into or out of the parliamentary estate. That is extremely important for those who are disabled or otherwise need a vehicle to access the estate, either to work here or to exercise their democratic rights. We expect police officers to use their sound judgements to determine when it is appropriate to make use of the power, and I do not see how it can lead to a prohibition of any kind on protests outside Parliament. Lords amendments 81 and 82 are therefore unnecessary.

Lords amendment 88 is a stripped-out version of the Government's proposal to increase the maximum penalty for those who obstruct the highway. It would limit the increase in the maximum penalties to the obstruction of the strategic road network. Many major roads lie outside the SRN; indeed, some 98% of all roads in England do not form part of it. Were we to limit the increase in the maximum penalty in that way, protestors could continue to cause extensive and wholly disproportionate disruption to commuters and parents dropping their children off at school without facing sentences proportionate to the harm they have caused. Amendment (a) to Lords amendment 88 will ensure that the full extent of our road network is protected with the increase in maximum penalties.

Tonia Antoniazzi (Gower) (Lab): Will the Minister give way?

Kit Malthouse: I thought I was going to get away with it. Yes, go on.

Tonia Antoniazzi: The Minister talks about the cost of demonstrations—those on the road networks in particular—to people's lives, and he has made statements about the costs of those protests. I tabled a written question asking him what assessment has been made of the cost to the public purse of the prison sentences being given out to Insulate Britain activists. That is a problem, because those sentences are not proportionate to what is happening. Surely there are better ways that are more cost-effective.

Kit Malthouse: At the moment, those incarcerations are at the behest of a judge in a civil matter relating to the injunctions, and there is nothing that the Government can necessarily do about that. However, I point out that deterring people from such action may result in cost savings further down the line for the wider population. I urge Opposition Members, and anybody looking at this issue, to ask themselves whether they believe that protests should not be restrained in any way, shape or form, or that there is a balance to be struck. If they believe, as the ECHR does, and as the House of Lords has accepted in some of its amendments to the Bill, that a balance should be struck, the only question is where.

Our view, which is backed up by evidence from HMI and elsewhere, is that the balance has swung too far away from the general public, who want to go about their lives, recognising the very many important issues that are raised by protest. While they acknowledge those problems, they want to get on with their lives, and they want protection from the state of their right to get to school, to hospital and to work. That is not a right to be taken lightly. One of the most frustrating things about some of these protests has been their self-defeating result. Notwithstanding the cause, important or otherwise, the protestors have turned off millions of their fellow citizens and caused a level of intolerance towards issues such as climate change, which is regrettable. We have a job to balance those rights, and that is what we are attempting to do.

Alex Sobel (Leeds North West) (Lab/Co-op): The Minister seeks to take public opinion as a whole, but people have had to take these matters into their own hands because air quality is killing their children, and because of the Government's inaction on the very simple act of insulating housing. The proportionality is in the wrong place, and he is seeking to take on public opinion where it does not exist. If the Government took the right actions, surely there would be no need for the protests in the first place. People should be allowed to protest proportionately.

Kit Malthouse: We cannot operate a democracy on the basis that, unless the Government agree with everything that someone wants, they will protest. It is a crazy thing to say, I am afraid. Much progress in this country has been brought about by protest, but much more has been brought about by political campaigning and winning elections. Frankly, if someone wants to make a change in the country, as all Opposition Members are proving, that is the way to go about it. I hope that the House will appreciate that we are trying hard to strike a balance between competing rights.

Tonia Antoniazzi: Will the Minister give way?

Kit Malthouse: No, I have given away enough; I have to move on. We acknowledge the fundamental importance of the right to protest in this country. We live in a liberal democracy. The right of someone to dissent and to go out on the street and make their views known is critical, but so is my right to get to hospital, to work or to church, and to do so without somebody blasting me out with noise. We have been balancing competing rights for decades, if not centuries, in this country. We are a mature democracy that can cope with that kind of responsibility—have no fear. We are ringed around by independent courts, a bicameral Parliament, all sorts of checks and balances on the power of Government to strike this balance, legislation, and our participation in supranational treaties. There are lots of ways that we protect ourselves and our human rights, but in the end, fundamentally, all democratic Governments have to strike that balance, and that is what we are attempting to do.

Lords amendments 118 to 120 give effect to a commitment made by the Prime Minister following the final of Euro 2020, in response to disgraceful online racist abuse directed at certain England players. The amendments would enable a court to impose a football banning order against persons convicted of online hate offences connected to football. That will prevent such offenders from spreading their criminal, hateful views at football matches, and I very much hope that the measure will also deter others from engaging in similar behaviours that are so harmful to victims and to our national game.

Lords amendments 89 and 146 would repeal the Vagrancy Act 1824. The Government are committed to ending rough sleeping, and as a result of our actions we have seen an historic reduction in rough sleeping in recent years. We agree that no one should be criminalised simply for sleeping rough, and that the time has indeed come to repeal the antiquated Vagrancy Act 1824. I know that that sentiment is keenly shared by a number of hon. Members. I pay tribute to the campaign that has been run by my hon. Friend the Member for Cities of London and Westminster (Nickie Aiken), my right hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Robert Jenrick), my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow East (Bob Blackman) and my predecessor in my constituency of North West Hampshire, Lord Young, in the other place.

However, we must balance our role in providing essential support for the vulnerable with ensuring that we do not weaken the ability of the police to intervene where needed. Therefore, while our amendments in lieu will provide for the Vagrancy Act to be repealed in full in England and Wales, we intend to enact replacement legislation in the coming Session before bringing the repeal of the 1824 Act into force. To allow for that, and ultimately to ensure that the police have the tools they need, we will delay commencement of the repeal for up to 18 months. In the meantime, we will publish a bold new strategy to end rough sleeping. The strategy will set up how we will ensure that rough sleeping is prevented in the first instance and is effectively responded to in the rare cases where it does occur, and that our police have the ability to intervene where needed and keep everybody safe, including the person at issue.

10.30 pm

As with the previous group of amendments, it is again the case that the House of Lords has made some helpful improvements to the Bill, but we reject their watering down of the public order provisions in part 3 and their dilution of the existing duty on police officers to co-operate with public inquiries and other investigations.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): Order. We have very limited time, so after the next speaker from the Opposition Front Bench there will be a time limit of five minutes. I suspect that that may have to come down during the course of the debate. Priority will be given to people who have not spoken previously.

Sarah Jones: I want to begin by making a comment in this House on the Government's procedure in the other place. The Government tried to sideline the Commons from its role in the democratic process by bringing into the Lords substantial but last-minute amendments on protests that would have had a fundamental impact on our rights. The Lords had very little time to scrutinise them and that is generally considered to be very poor form. Instead of chasing headlines and rushing in last-minute sweeping amendments clearly not thought through, they should be focusing on driving up prosecution rates, improving their woeful record on crime and dealing with the problems that really matter to the British people.

Labour voted against the Bill in its entirety on Second Reading and Third Reading because of parts 3 and 4, which represent a power grab that effectively bans peaceful protests and will compound the inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers. I want to pay particular thanks to colleagues in the other place who have stood up for democracy and prevented the draconian provisions on protests that the Government tried to get through at the last minute.

Before I come to the protest amendments, I want briefly to touch on the other amendments in this grouping. First, we are grateful that the Government have listened to reason on so many of our amendments. I want to mention two in this grouping in particular. I pay tribute to the hard work of Lord Bassam in pressuring the Government to extend football banning orders to online racist abuse in Lords amendments 148, 118, 119 and 120. Racists who abuse football players do not deserve to be anywhere near a game of football. The amendments send a strong message that disgraceful racist behaviour has no place in the world of football, online or in person.

We are also glad that Lords amendment 89, which will repeal the Vagrancy Act 1824, has been accepted by the Government and that they have finally decided to act. No one should be criminalised simply for sleeping rough. But I hope the Minister can provide some reassurance to the House that this crucial change will not be kicked into the long grass and that the new legislation will be brought in at the earliest opportunity.

I want to touch on Lords amendment 71. The Government are refusing to introduce a duty of candour on police officers at this stage to co-operate with inquiries. The Minister claimed that the existing schedule on standards of professional behaviour is sufficient, but we do not believe that it is. It states that police officers must act with honesty and integrity, which of course they should, but the amendment passed in the Lords goes significantly further to ensure that where the police are required to provide information to inquiries or other such proceedings, they must have regard to the pleadings allegations terms of reference and parameters of the relevant proceedings, but not be limited by them, in particular where they hold information that might change the ambit of the proceedings inquiry or investigation. That is a really important distinction. The Lords amendment goes significantly further than the statutory duty of co-operation.

In June 2021, the Daniel Morgan independent panel, which took eight years to report, recommended the creation of a statutory duty of candour to be owed by all law enforcement agencies to those whom they serve. It is time for decisions to be made and for actions to be taken to restore public confidence in the police service.

Part 4 of the Bill represents an attack on the Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities, even though the police have made it clear that they neither want nor need these powers. The Government have rejected our calls to remove part 4, and that is one of the major reasons why we voted against the Bill in its entirety. Although Lords amendments 91 to 93 are very small technical amendments, they confirm the principles around the powers of seizure of property that we Opposition Members believe are unfair.

The problem that many Government Members seem to articulate whenever we debate this issue is actually one of antisocial behaviour. The solution to antisocial behaviour, wherever it comes, is tougher antisocial behaviour action. Under this Government, we saw 1.7 million incidents in the year to September 2021 and nothing has been done. Marginalising an entire minority is not the answer to antisocial behaviour. We need to distinguish between the two and not criminalise a minority.

I turn to the Lords amendments on protest. Over the past five days, thousands of people have been arrested and detained at anti-war protests across Russia. We would all defend their right to protest and yet here we are, in the mother of all democracies, debating an amendment to a Bill that would criminalise singing at a peaceful protest in this country. Britain has a long-standing and important democratic freedom to gather and to speak or to protest. The Minister quoted an HMICFRS report, but he misunderstood its conclusions. The report said that we need a

"modest reset of the scales"

because police forces are usually good at planning protests but the "balance may tip". The report's recommendations were not legislative; they were to update and improve guidance to senior police officers, to improve the way in which the police assess the impact of protests, to improve police intelligence and to improve debrief processes, all of which are very sensible.

The Government asked the HMICFRS to look at some legislative options, which it did, and it gave some qualified support to some of them, but at no point was noise any part of that conversation. I have spoken to many senior police officers and at no point have any of them asked for any changes to the law on noise. The Bill goes way beyond the right balance between the right to protest and the right for others, which we agree with, to go about their daily lives.

Mike Amesbury (Weaver Vale) (Lab): Does my hon. Friend concur that those who protested in Peterloo were probably a little bit noisy, as were those who protested for women's suffrage and those who protested against the poll tax? Indeed, she mentioned the international situation in Russia. This is about freedom and democracy. I am sure that she would concur with that.

Sarah Jones: I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend, who put it so well.

Rachael Maskell: Protests occur so that people can be heard, and if people need to be heard, they need to make a noise. I was particularly struck over the weekend not only by the masses who have stood up against an authoritarian state, but by the actions that the police have had to take against those people. If we are to criminalise people for exercising their rights, is that not just going down the same path?

Sarah Jones: My hon. Friend is right: this is about getting the right balance. We believe that the measures in part 3 of the Bill already threaten that careful balance by putting too much power into the hands of the Home Secretary, undermining rights, and hindering, rather than helping, the police to do their job. Labour's Lords amendment 73 therefore focuses on the imposition of conditions related to noise on public processions. It would omit subsections (2) and (3) from clause 55, which broadens the circumstances in which conditions can be imposed by a senior police officer based on the noise generated by the people taking part and the impact that that has on the people in the area. Essentially, part 3 provides a trigger for imposing conditions on public assemblies, public processions and one-person protests if a protest is too noisy. The Opposition want those provisions removed from the Bill.

We also support Lords amendment 80, which was tabled by Lord Paddick and removes clause 56 from the Bill altogether, and we urge hon. Members to vote for Lords amendment 81 to ensure that permission can be granted for major protests in Parliament Square despite new rules on obstructing vehicle access.

Barry Gardiner: Does my hon. Friend agree that the level of nuisance caused by any noise or vocalisation at a protest may be a matter not just of decibels, but of content? Because somebody might perceive one kind of content to be more of a nuisance than another, the level of nuisance, in and of itself, is subjective.

Sarah Jones: That is an important point. The way the police interpret the laws we give them will always be subjective to some degree. We have to be very careful to define in law exactly what we mean, because the police implement the laws we give them and their job needs to be as clear as possible.

Mr Alistair Carmichael (Orkney and Shetland) (LD): If we consider what the future will hold if the House follows the route that the Government suggest, there are two options: either the police will be left constantly at odds with those who wish to protest, or we will be left with legislation on the statute book that the police do not want and will never use. In either instance, what is the point?

Sarah Jones: That is a very valid point. On the noise issue, I cannot see that the police will find a way to use the legislation. It would be a waste of legislation: it would not be implemented.

The Government motion to disagree and amendments in lieu of Lords amendment 80 would restore the original wording of clause 56 and add a vague definition of "serious disruption" that would apply to the noise provisions in the Bill. The Opposition do not believe that it is adequate; it could apply to singing in the street outside a place of worship or a transport facility. It does not work, and we do not support it. Additionally, although the provision would be in the Bill, the amendments in lieu would allow the Home Secretary to change it at any point, so it is slightly pointless.

On public spaces protection orders, the Opposition believe that rather than introducing sweeping powers that could catch people protesting against the closure of their local library or singing songs in the street, the Government should focus on genuine problems such as those considered in the clauses that Labour introduced to stop intimidatory protests outside schools or vaccine clinics. That is why we tabled a targeted amendment, Lords amendment 143, so that schools, local councils and the NHS could fast-track local buffer zones to prevent intimidatory anti-vax protests outside schools and vaccine clinics. We won that vote in the Lords and are pleased that, after a period of inaction, the Government have accepted Labour's proposals to crack down on those dangerous protests and give schoolchildren and NHS staff the protection that they need.

We also supported giving the courts the ability to increase sentences if protesters put lives at risk by blocking motorways. Labour's Lords amendment 88 limits the Government's original amendment so that it applies only to motorways and A-roads rather than to any highway, which could include a path. It is not proportionate to apply a maximum six-month sentence to the blocking of a grass verge or a public footpath. We need a common-sense and balanced approach instead. The Government should look at the HMICFRS report and focus on improving training, guidance, co-ordination and resources to manage public order policing as the inspectorate has recommended, rather than new powers that either are too wide-ranging or replicate powers that the police already have.

The point of protest is to capture attention. Protests are noisy and sometimes annoying—I find them annoying; we all find it annoying to have to listen to some of the ongoing singing that we hear in this place—but they are fundamental to our democracy. If the public order provisions on noise in the Bill had been in place earlier, they would have stopped the suffragettes who marched for the right to vote, the children shouting loudly for action on climate change, or the Whitehall protesters against the Russian invasion. That is why Labour will keep pushing to limit the harmful provisions in this Bill.

There are elements of the Bill that we welcome, and it has been improved thanks to the hard work of Labour colleagues and, indeed, colleagues in all parts of the House. However, the Government have included disproportionate and draconian provisions that risk undermining our human rights and dividing communities. The right hon. Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May) is not present, but if she were, she might say that there is a fine line between being "popular" and being "populist".

[Sarah Jones]

We on these Benches want to see the Government stop chasing headlines and get back to the core duties of the Home Office: to keep people safe, bring criminals to justice, and uphold the rights and responsibilities of the rule of law.

10.45 pm

Jesse Norman: I want to speak in particular about the issue of noisy protest, but I should begin by saying that, as the Minister outlined very well, there is a great deal of good in the Bill, covering many different areas.

There are facts on which I think everyone in the House would agree from the off. No one can doubt that in recent years the capacity for effective protest has been dramatically enhanced by technology, and enhanced a second time through the use of social media. No one can doubt, I think, that there are irresponsible and aggressive individuals and organisations who seek to inflict the maximum interruption and difficulty on the lives of others in the causes that they promote. And no one can doubt that the public have a right to go about their business without undue impediment. I do not think that any Member would contest those points.

I thank the Minister for engaging with me on this issue and for his clarifications this evening, both on the number of protests that this measure would be likely to affect and on the possibility of a review over a suitable but, I hope, not too long period, but—in my view at least—the measure should not be on the statute book. No serious case has been made that noise is a genuine problem. The Minister has conceded, and one understands why, that the measure is not likely to be used except in the tiniest minority of cases. We therefore have to ask whether the justification for it is adequate and proportionate. The offence is still vague and poorly defined, which is never a good thing in law. The police, as has been conceded, already have significant legal powers in relation to protests, and I regret to say that, worse, in some quarters they are the subject of a degree of public mistrust, which may be increased by our adding to their discretionary powers. Furthermore, I suspect that the measure will be extremely difficult for the courts to handle and adjudicate, even it proves to be compliant with article 11 of the Human Rights Act. All those are conservative—with a small and a large "c"—concerns that people might have about the operation of the rule of law in this country.

When people in Kyiv are dying for their beliefs and for the rights of freedom of speech and of association, the timing is unfortunate. I understand the motivations, and I understand that this has been lightly and sparingly applied, but an increase in discretion to qualify rights of protest that have been fundamental to our society and democratic traditions for hundreds of years is, I think, highly regrettable.

Anne McLaughlin: Let me begin by speaking about Lords amendments 73 to 89, which broadly cover the provisions in part 3, on public order. Part 3 does not technically extend to Scotland, but we are still very keen to lend our voice of complete opposition. As I mentioned on Second Reading, we support amendments that seek to mitigate the worst elements of part 3 because they will have an impact on everyone in these islands. We all have the right to speak up and hold power to account, including anyone travelling from Scotland to protest here, at the seat of power. While decisions are made on behalf of the people of Scotland by this place—and we hope that that may not be the case for much longer—the people of Scotland must retain the right to protest outside it.

In the past, I have made the journey from Scotland to this place to protest against many things, including the Iraq war, and I genuinely look forward every week to seeing who will be outside and what they will be bringing to the demonstration, whether I agree with what they are demonstrating about or not. Who can forget the wonderful WASPI women and the numerous noisy protests they held in the streets around Parliament? Rosie Dickson from WASPI Glasgow has told me how concerned she is that Scottish women born in the 1950s who have been unfairly denied their pensions by a Westminster Government now face

"having their human right to protest against it removed".

They are being unfairly denied their right to their pensions, and now unfairly denied their right to object to that.

We support Lords amendments 73, 80 to 82 and 87, which I will speak to. I have concerns about Lords amendment 88, although on balance it is probably better than what was there before. Lords amendment 73 would remove subsections (2) and (3) from clause 55, which, unamended, would allow the police to impose conditions on a protest if they had a reasonable belief that the noise generated by the participants in the protest may result in

"serious disruption to the activities of an organisation which are carried on in the vicinity of the procession",

or may have a significant and

"relevant impact on persons in the vicinity".

The attention these noise restrictions have received from the wider public and the media is telling. Everybody knows that protests are noisy—that is how people get their point across. The louder they shout, the more we listen. Every day we are witnessing people protesting against the atrocities in Ukraine. Why on earth would we usher in legislation to curtail that?

Mr Carmichael: The hon. Lady will have heard the noisy protests in this Chamber every Wednesday between 12 and 12.30. We are okay, because we are protected by parliamentary privilege, but surely if Conservative Members want to end noisy protests, they should be prepared to practise what they preach.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): Some of us do try to keep that under control. We try our very best amid a lack of co-operation.

Anne McLaughlin: I was trying to find a way to work that into what I was saying, so I thank the right hon. Gentleman for that.

We know that without demos and protests, a lot of things would not change. The Minister said that things changed through political campaigning and getting elected, but actually things change because people in local communities rise up and tell us what they want us to do. That is how democracy should function.

Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP): My hon. Friend is making some very good points on the importance of protests. One of the most significant protests in my constituency of late was when the people of Kenmure Street came together to try to stop their neighbours being removed from their homes by the Home Office. Does she agree that the Government should be trying to protect that kind of protest—the community involved and standing up for what is right for their neighbours—not trying to remove it?

Anne McLaughlin: I absolutely do, because if people feel empowered by being part of that democracy, other than getting to vote every four years, that can only be a good thing.

The notion that the police can intervene on any kind of noise threshold—as we have heard, we do not know what the threshold is—puts the fundamental right to protest at risk. This Bill will create a situation where people who are simply trying to have their voices heard will be dragged into the criminal justice system. We are going to need extremely large prisons by the time this Government have finished with all this legislation. The reduced knowledge threshold, where a person ought to have known that restrictions were in force, is an Orwellian nightmare. A protester will have to second-guess how the authorities will judge their behaviour.

The language used in clause 55 is vague at best: "serious unease", "alarm" and "distress". A protest may seem more alarming or distressing to one police officer than to another. This hands far too much discretion to the police, and there is a point when too much discretion becomes a burden. That was echoed by former police chiefs and senior officers, who have warned against the political pressure that this Bill will place on frontline officers. If the police do not think these powers are necessary, why do the Government? As we have heard from a number of speakers, the powers already exist for them to deal sufficiently with a protest that could result in serious public disorder, serious damage to property or serious disruption to the life of the community. I just do not think the Government have made a good enough argument that the powers are insufficient. For those reasons, we support Lords amendment 73.

We also support Lords amendment 80, which would remove the police's ability to impose greater conditions on static demonstrations. The Public Order Act 1986 was careful to delineate and differentiate the conditions that can be imposed on static demonstrations and those that can be imposed on a march or moving protest, which is sensible as it reflects the relative ease with which a static demonstration can be policed. Clause 56, which the amendment seeks to remove, will see the distinction removed.

In the words of Big Brother Watch, clause 56 could potentially hand the police

"unfettered discretion to impose any condition they see fit including, for example, restrictions on the words or slogans that can be expressed on placards."

That is a democratic outrage. This is an attempt by the Government to level the distinction between static and moving protests. As they tend to do, they are levelling down, not levelling up. For that reason, we support Lords amendment 80.

We also lend support to Lords amendment 87, which removes the police's ability to impose conditions on a one-person protest. What a situation. The might of the Government and their legislative power is bearing down on single protesters, which is ridiculous and disproportionate in equal measure. Worryingly, it has the potential to snare anyone who even stops to engage with that protester as committing a criminal offence. As I said, we are going to need much larger prisons.

Lords amendment 88 would narrow the scope of the offence of wilful obstruction of the highway to include only highways that are part of the strategic road network. We are caught in a trap where, on the one hand, I am glad to see this offence is restricted to the strategic road network but, on the other hand, I am alarmed to see the associated sentence increased from a fine to 51 weeks' imprisonment—much larger prisons. This amendment is targeted at some very specific protesters whom we have all witnessed taking their protests to the streets and roads, but I feel this severe penalty has the potential to create a chilling effect—I have used that term all too often in the past six months during our consideration of the Judicial Review and Courts Bill and the Nationality and Borders Bill, although, from what I am hearing from the other place tonight, there is now not much left of the latter.

Turning to Government amendments 90 to 93, I am disappointed that the only amendments to part 4, on unauthorised encampments, appear to be technical clarifying amendments that do nothing to row back on the measures expanding the criminalisation of trespass and the accompanying police powers. Again, this is an area where existing powers are available to the police. This is more to do with targeting a minority than targeting trespass.

We know this Bill will disproportionately interfere with the right of respect for the private and family life of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller groups. The new seizure powers in respect of vehicles—vehicles often being the home of Gypsies and Travellers, in particular—are very likely to mean that people will end up facing homelessness. I can only hope that, in mitigation, the Government will focus on providing further support and funding to local authorities across these islands for authorised sites and implementing a national sites strategy. They might want to speak to the Scottish Government about some of their work on this. The Court of Appeal has set out that this community has an enshrined freedom to move from one place to another, and that the state has a positive obligation to protect Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities' traditional way of life.

What are the Government so afraid of? From the man outside Parliament today adorned in plastic bottles to make a point about the overuse of plastics, to the many who finally found their voice in the last two years through the Black Lives Matter movement, and who are using that voice to make a very simple point that black lives matter every bit as much as white lives. From our Ukrainian brothers and sisters here on these islands who feel so helpless right now and who need to come together to protest against what is happening in their country, to people who simply wish to save the planet. What are the Government so afraid of? Well, I thank and applaud those protesters. This Government want to stop and criminalise them.

Robert Jenrick (Newark) (Con): I will be brief and speak to two issues: first, in praise and thanks; and secondly, by way of caution.

[Robert Jenrick]

In praise and thanks, I am delighted that the Government have accepted the amendment moved in the other place by the noble Lord Best and the noble Lord Young repealing the Vagrancy Act 1824.

Almost 200 years ago, as the cities were filling with the dispossessed at the end of the Napoleonic wars, our forebears in this place came together and passed a piece of legislation that today seems anachronistic and wrong. As a result of the votes later tonight, we will consign that legislation to history. Our understanding of rough sleeping and homelessness has transformed unrecognisably over the course of those two centuries. Today, we see it as a crisis of housing, of health, of social justice and of the criminal justice system. We do not see it as a criminal offence for someone to find themselves sleeping rough on the streets, and we should not live in a country where it is a criminal offence.

11 pm

I am grateful to the Minister for his remarks earlier. He has been exceptionally helpful to me, to my hon. Friends the Members for Harrow East (Bob Blackman) and for Cities of London and Westminster (Nickie Aiken) and to others across the House who have taken this issue seriously. I urge him to make sure that this legislation is repealed as swiftly as possible, as there is no good argument for further delay. When I was Secretary of State I heard it argued that there may be some powers in the Vagrancy Act that need to be retained and modernised, but I have not seen any convincing arguments to back that up, so whatever review or consultation takes place, I hope that it is done quickly. I suspect that it will conclude that no further powers are required. I hope then that this part of the Bill will be commenced as quickly as possible, because we as a House will have done a good thing, and our society will have moved forward.

By way of caution, I will just speak briefly to the point about noisy protest. To me, the right to protest is fundamental to a free society. None of us enjoys being the subject of protests. In my time as a Minister, I was the subject of protests. They can be awkward and difficult and they can be noisy—the protests outside the Russian embassy were noisy this weekend—but we do have to exercise great caution when we start to limit those freedoms.

In the past week or two, I have been thinking about Canada, another great liberal society, and the way in which the protests in Ottawa were handled, or rather mishandled, by the Canadian Government. Even in a society that we might respect, admire and see ourselves akin to, Governments, police forces and law authorities can make mistakes. I echo the comments of my right hon. Friend the Member for Hereford and South Herefordshire (Jesse Norman), but wonder whether the Government are going too far in this respect. I accept his comments that this measure is very unlikely to be used often; it may never be used at all. For that reason, I wonder whether it is the right step to put it onto the statute book. I will not be voting against the Government and opposing the measure tonight, but I do hope that the Minister or his successors will carry forward their commitment to review this in the years ahead, because I suspect that this measure is a step too far and that we are pushing up against the limits of what we as a free society should be doing, particularly in the context of what we see around the world, where we want to be a shining light for liberty and freedom.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): I shall have to reduce the time limit to three minutes if there is a chance for most people to make a short contribution.

Imran Hussain (Bradford East) (Lab): I rise to speak in favour of Lords amendments 73 and 80.

Like many of my hon. Friends, I marched and protested in opposition to the Iraq war. They were some of the largest and most important protests that we have ever seen. Anyone who attended or saw them would agree they were big, they were noisy and, by their very nature, they caused some disruption. None the less, it was absolutely right that the people were allowed to protest against one of the biggest injustices of our time, even if it was in direct opposition to the policy of the Government. Let us be clear: if protests of this kind, or protests such as those against the poll tax, were to take place today under the measures in the Bill, there would be a real fear that they could be stopped by this Government.

As has been reiterated time and again in this Chamber, the right to peaceful protest, however disruptive it may be to Ministers and Members of Parliament, is one of the fundamental tenets of our democracy. Yet the restrictions that the Government want to impose in the Bill would allow the police to render protests inert, amounting to what is an effective ban. Of course, we have yet to be given any clarity about why the Government are giving themselves such draconian powers, especially when the Government and the police already have ample powers to prevent protests that threaten public order and to take action against those protests they deem disruptive.

It could not be clearer that the powers that the Government want to hand themselves are an extreme overreach, which should leave us all worried about their ability to stifle popular protests against their policies. The reality is that these measures are nothing more than a petty vengeance against protesters by Ministers who are too thin-skinned to accept any criticism. Frankly, they are measures that put the protection of ministerial egos and business interests before the protection of human rights, as part of an intentional journey towards the creation of a Big Brother state that stifles protest and dissent.

Let there be no doubt: this is an extraordinary ideological attack on our civil liberties, with draconian laws, from the undermining of our trade unions to the taking away of our British citizenship without notice, all passed by this Government to curb our freedoms and restrict our rights. That is why this Government must be challenged on every occasion to stop the further erosion of our civil liberties.

Nickie Aiken (Cities of London and Westminster) (Con): In the time given, I wish to speak on Government amendments (a) and (b) to the Bill in lieu of Lords amendments 189 and 146. Of course, I am speaking about the amendment to repeal the Vagrancy Act 1824,

which brings us a massive step closer to ending rough sleeping and would drastically change how we view and help those on the streets.

For almost 200 years, the criminalisation of the homeless has shamed our country, but at long last the Vagrancy Act's days are numbered. I thank the Minister for his constructive discussions with me, and my right hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Robert Jenrick) for being beside me, both when he was on the Front Bench and now on the Back Benches, fighting for the repeal of the Vagrancy Act.

I know there has been some concern in our discussions about the Vagrancy Act's disappearing and our inability to deal with aggressive begging. I want to make the point that there are powers in place today in the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 which are now used by the police in the majority of cases against aggressive begging. It should be no surprise, therefore, that arrests and prosecutions under the Vagrancy Act have plummeted since 2014. From the conversations I have had with the Met and the City of London Police, I believe alternative powers to deal with aggressive begging are already available.

I am a pragmatist, so I accept the Government's position of seeking a thorough and comprehensive review, but I ask the Minister to ensure that that is done quickly and concisely; up to 18 months is a very long time, so I ask him to please bring it forward. I hope that during the review he and the Home Secretary might consider revising the specific guidance on aggressive begging under the 2014 Act. I would welcome his response on that.

Finally, in my constituency of the Cities of London and Westminster we have the largest number of rough sleepers in the United Kingdom. I hope that the repeal of the Vagrancy Act will send a clear message to those sleeping on the street, tonight and every night that we will help and support them to turn their lives around and we will no longer criminalise them.

Olivia Blake (Sheffield, Hallam) (Lab): I am really proud to represent Sheffield Hallam for so many reasons, but one that is particularly relevant to today's debate is the city's long and proud tradition of protest. In the 1800s, Sheffield's Chartists took part in mass demonstrations, holding nightly meetings in Sheffield's Paradise Square to protest against the then royal ban on open-air meetings. Sheffield played a pivotal role in the struggle for women's suffrage, and our city's suffragettes took to the streets time and again to fight for the right to vote. My point is that protests have formed the world around us. They are the reason that I stand here today. They have made our world a better place. Protest is often the start of change. Yes, it is often loud and often messy, because people have been ignored for too long and we need to listen.

Without protests, our country would be unrecognisable. Women would not have won the vote. There would be no NHS. Parliament would be less democratic. The right to protest is a person's right to shape the world around them—to stand up for what they believe is right and to oppose what they believe is wrong. It is a fundamental cornerstone of our democracy. As such, the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill is a flagrant attack on the core principles of that democracy. When this Bill was first proposed, we rightly saw people come together and spread out into the streets because what was being proposed was utterly draconian. I am proud to have worked with the Bishop of Sheffield and many others to talk about how this will impact on Sheffield's history but also our future.

Having heard what has happened in the other place, I am glad that several amendments have been proposed that would mitigate the worst impacts of the Bill—particularly amendment 73 removing the ability of the police to impose noise-based restrictions on public processions, amendment 80 on giving police the power to impose greater conditions on static demonstrations, and amendment 87 removing their ability to impose conditions on one-person protests. The idea that one person cannot protest or should not be allowed to express themselves is completely at odds with what our democracy should stand for.

We live in a climate and ecological emergency where the future is not only for our country but for the whole planet, and it will be determined by the actions that are taken over the next few years. It is absolutely right that people should be able to hold us to account by raising their voices on our inaction. We have seen a brilliant wave of young people standing up for our environment—for a liveable planet for future generations. We should hold on to those thoughts as we protect protest.

Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con): I rise to consider Lords amendments 89 and 146 and the Government's amendments in lieu. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Robert Jenrick) and my hon. Friend the Member for Cities of London and Westminster (Nickie Aiken) on their speeches on this subject. I declare my interest as the co-chairman of the all-party parliamentary group on ending homelessness.

There are two aspects to the Vagrancy Act. The first, of course, is being homeless. I have always taken the view that someone should be assisted and not arrested if they have nowhere to live. That is one of the reasons it is desperately important that we end the Vagrancy Act as fast as we possibly can. One of the considerations is that when we go and speak to people who are homeless, rough sleeping on the street, they will say that they fear authority—they fear the police. They should not fear the police; the police should be able to assist in trying to direct them to charities or other bodies that can help them to find a secure place to live instead of their being threatened with either being moved on or literally being arrested. That is one of the most important reasons why we want this off the statute book as fast as possible.

The other aspect is begging. Antisocial behaviour, begging under false pretence of need, forcing others to beg and trespassing are all outlawed under our much more modern legal actions. The police have the powers to deal with this without using the Vagrancy Act, but they will use it because it is a catch-all. In 2014, 2,219 people were prosecuted under the Vagrancy Act, but in 2019 this dropped to 742, demonstrating that we do not need it any more and we must get rid of it.

During the pandemic, my right hon. Friend the Member for Newark led the way on ensuring that everyone was taken off the streets, for which I commend him and the whole Department. However, the rough sleeper count is now back to 4,500—half what it was in 2019 but still far too high.

[Bob Blackman]

I am glad that the Government have given way, finally, on abolishing the Vagrancy Act, but I am worried, because we cannot afford to wait 18 months. We will then reach the 200th anniversary of that Act being brought in, which was way before any of us were thought of, let alone born. The reality is, Minister, that you are considering the introduction of a new Bill that will delay things yet further. Can you give us—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): "Can he give us".

11.15 pm

Bob Blackman: Sorry, Madam Deputy Speaker. Will the Minister make sure that the consultation is very short? I see no reason to extend it beyond four weeks, and then the measure can be introduced and we can get rid of that Act once and for all.

Layla Moran (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD): Much of what the Liberal Democrats have issue with in the Bill has been covered by my right hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr Carmichael) in previous consideration. We are making a dangerous and draconian move today. We are told that it will be small steps, and I hope that is true, but in the light of what is happening in Ukraine, it is not a good look.

I will focus today on a chink of light in the Bill—a piece of positivity to take home with us tonight—which is the Vagrancy Act and Government amendment 146. I am delighted, genuinely, that the Government have tabled the amendment. It is four years and 21 days since I asked the then Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May), a question about the Vagrancy Act. I laid the first repeal Bill on that day, and there have been three since then and countless homelessness Ministers—we have lost count. I know that the Government want to claim credit for all these things like they were all their idea, and that is fine, but I end with a genuine thank you to all those Members on the Government Benches and the Opposition Benches, because this has been a cross-party proposal from the moment it was conceived.

Above all, I give credit to the students who brought me this idea in the first place. I have had many emails from them in the past couple of days saying they were in their third year at university, they had been kicked out of the clubs and they had talked to the homeless people on the streets of Oxford. They had asked them what scared them, and the homeless people told them about the Vagrancy Act. That started a petition, and that is how this began. It was the citizen creating change—that is democracy. It is extraordinary for them to start a petition and for it to end here, and I genuinely thank the Government for listening to their voices.

I echo the words and sentiments of the hon. Member for Harrow East (Bob Blackman) and others when they say there is no need to delay and that lawyers have looked at this. There are parts of the country where the police do not use the Vagrancy Act at all. We have tried and tested ways of dealing with this issue. We have already got the legislation. Every day that Act continues is another day that a homeless person is sleeping rough on our streets, scared that one single person—this Act is old, so no witness is needed—can come up to them and prosecute them under this Dickensian, outdated law. We do not need it one day more; this is a better country than that. We should not be saying to homeless people, "You are a criminal." Instead, we should be acting with compassion and care, and I hope that is what we have started today.

David Simmonds (Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner) (Con): Like many colleagues, I welcome enormously the steps that the Government are taking in respect of the Vagrancy Act. I will say no more about that and seek to concentrate on two of the most important aspects of the Bill for my constituents. They are two of the most important aspects where we need to be steadfast in not accepting some of the amendments that would weaken some of those key provisions.

The first is a point that has been aired a great deal in a lot of public correspondence: noise nuisance. The Environmental Protection Act 1990 set the legal framework and definitions that local authority noise teams need to use when seeking to address the disturbance being caused to the peaceful enjoyment of one's home or property and the peaceful enjoyment and ability of people to go about their duties in their place of work. The Minister, like me, is an emanation of local government, so he will be aware of the frustrations that so many people express time and again, when they are unable to gain that peaceful enjoyment. The powers are weak, and the ability to ensure that action is taken to address disturbance is found to fall short. Many of my constituents will welcome the fact that the Government are taking steps not just to make protests, which sit outside the definitions of that Act, actionable under law and by the police, but to address the persistent disruption that can be created by noises that are not exceptionally loud, but designed to make it difficult for people to go about their duties or to enjoy their home or place of work in peace. Given the age of that legislation, the Bill takes a reasonable step.

The Bill mentions that the Minister is of the view that nothing is incompatible with the rights under the European convention. I am a member of the Joint Committee on Human Rights—I know that other members are present in the Chamber—which has taken evidence on a point that the hon. Member for Croydon Central (Sarah Jones) highlighted. I simply say how much I welcome the unamended powers in part 4 of the Bill, which seek to strengthen the position in respect of unauthorised encampments.

Again, as an emanation of local government, I am aware that my local authority and my neighbouring local authority spend hundreds of thousands of pounds of council tax payers' money every year to clean up the consequences of unauthorised encampments in public parks and places that are normally enjoyed by our constituents going about their business, but who are prevented from enjoying those spaces by their unauthorised and unlawful use. The strengthening of those powers will make a material difference to our ability to maintain our constituents' quality of life. For those reasons, I strongly support the Government in taking forward those powers unamended.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: When people complain to me about the noise at Prime Minister's questions, I always tell them that they can tune into any of the two-hour

hearings of the Select Committees that I sit on and listen to some calm forensic questioning, but they do not, because shouting—the impassioned barrage of noise—is a fundamental of PMQs and of democracy. Democracy is noisy. Democracy is irritating, but that is democracy.

It will come as no surprise to hon. Members that I have attended a good number of protests and never once—never once—have I attended a protest without the intention to disrupt or to make a noise. Quite frankly, what would be the point? When our constituents feel that they cannot be heard through other means, they stand outside and they shout. Even if they are fox hunting supporters or Brexiteers, I smile when I walk past them as they are performing that basic level of democracy—from the agora to Parliament Square. The idea that we would criminalise those people is frankly disgusting.

Clive Lewis (Norwich South) (Lab): My hon. Friend is making some excellent points. Does he see the irony that as we watch Putin's tanks roll into Ukraine and protesters having their peaceful protests broken up by the police, we in this place are debating a Bill that would take away the right to protest?

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: I do. The expansion of police powers is highly disproportionate. In the words of a former police chief and senior officers who have written to the Government, it will place an "onerous burden" on and apply "greater political pressure" to frontline police. Ultimately, it will be up to the police to determine whether the low threshold has been met.

Ruth Walshe, a volunteer from Green and Black Cross, detailed her experiences of the police during the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020. She heard the police say to her:

"'who does that b**** think she is', 'can't we lock them and put them in a cell', 'what do those f****** want'".

Reports of that type of behaviour are corroborated by the Charing Cross report, which found that officers present at those protests had made horrific homophobic, sexist and racist remarks. There are very many good police officers, but collectively, there is a problem in the police. Rather than trying to deal with those systemic problems, the Government are saying, "Make racist, sexist or homophobic abuses and you get more powers to control woman, people of colour and queer people." It is outrageous.

I also rise to speak in support of Lords amendment 87, which would remove clause 61, which should really be called the "Get Steve Bray" clause. I have found Steve bloody irritating at times, but creating an unprecedented and disproportionate law to go after a man who interrupts the Minister's Sky News interviews is quite frankly pathetic. Some hon. Members may remember Brian Haw, the peace campaigner who lived opposite. It was wrong then for the Labour Government to try to get rid of him from Parliament Square and it was right that Conservative Members stood up for him to stop the law being changed. They should be doing it now.

I will end with this observation. The Government did not like the Black Lives Matter protests when tens of thousands of young people went on to the streets for racial equality, they were embarrassed by the anti-Trump demonstrations during his state visit and they despised the 1 million people who marched to try to stop Brexit, so we are here with a Bill that tries to make the snowflakes opposite feel better. That, frankly, is what they are: the Secretary of State is a snowflake, and the Minister's Back Benchers are snowflakes. They cannot cope with a bit of robust debate. They cry into their port in the evening when people say things they do not like or they are too noisy. Rather than debate them back or viscerally argue back, what they do is shut them down and make them illegal. It is nasty, it is wrong and it should go.

Ian Levy (Blyth Valley) (Con): I will be brief, as I realise that time is pressing.

My father, sadly, passed away in September last year. Some years earlier, on his way home from work, he was involved in road traffic accident that left him almost dead and crippled, lying in a field. He never walked again. He was crippled by a hit-and-run driver, but because he received treatment in hospital very quickly, he survived, and because protesters were not blocking the road to the hospital he attended, he survived. My father went on to see marriages, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. My parents enjoyed years of marriage and had their 63rd wedding anniversary. I strongly believe that if protesters had blocked that road to the hospital A&E where I saw my father with his leg just about hanging off—it was absolutely horrific—*[Interruption.]* Thank you very much. In that case, I would not have had that time with my father, so I will be supporting this Bill tonight in memory of my father.

Joanna Cherry: I rise to support Lords amendments 73, 80 and 87, and to remind the House that they are very much in line with the recommendations made by the Joint Committee on Human Rights, when we looked at part 3 of the Bill and reached the conclusion that the restrictions on non-violent protest in the Bill were inconsistent with our rights.

Given the short amount of time, I am going to focus on the noise trigger, because I think that that is the most egregious part of this. A restriction on the right to protest that targets noise strikes at the very heart of why people gather together to protest—to have their voices heard about an issue that is important to them and which they want other people to treat with importance. We noted in the Committee that the larger and better supported a demonstration is, the louder it is likely to be, so restrictions on noise could disproportionately impact on the demonstrations that have the greatest public backing.

Much of the written and oral evidence we received emphasised the centrality of noise to effective protest. For example, Liberty and Big Brother Watch highlighted:

"Protests, by their very nature, are noisy. Noise is also a crucial means of expressing collective solidarity or grief and, quite literally, making voices heard by those in power."

This was echoed in oral evidence by Zehrah Hasan, the director of Black Protest Legal Support, who said:

"Creating noise at a protest is quite literally a part of people making their voices heard."

Another witness told us that

"this new trigger, which is noise, is an absolute affront to the right to protest. This noise trigger should not exist for the purposes of imposing any conditions on assemblies and processions. It is essentially an existential threat to the right to protest."

That is just a flavour of the evidence we heard.

[Joanna Cherry]

The Minister has referred to the European convention on human rights, but that is intended to provide rights that are "practical and effective", not "theoretical and illusory". If the police have discretion to shut down protests because they are noisy, the right to protest will become theoretical and illusory in England and Wales. Thankfully, these laws are not going to apply in Scotland, but as my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow North East (Anne McLaughlin) said, many Scots come to London to protest and they will be affected by these laws. I emphasise that, because it was made clear to the Joint Committee on Human Rights that neither the police, nor Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services, requested this noise trigger. They may have requested other changes, but they did not request that. As even Conservative Members have said, this measure is a fundamental threat to the right of freedom of speech and assembly in this country, and as the JCHR said in our report, it should not be in the Bill and it should go.

11.30 pm

Mr Steve Baker (Wycombe) (Con): I rise to speak to the amendments about noise, including Lords amendment 73 on processions, Lords amendment 80 on assemblies, and Lords amendment 87 on one-person protests. I am pleased that the Stop Brexit man, Mr Steve Bray, has come up, because I completely agree: he is profoundly annoying. He is very persistent, and he seems to have singled me out personally on a great many occasions—*[Interruption.]* I can't think why. No indeed, I am grateful to Members for raising that. I cannot imagine why. The thing about Steve Bray is that he has become a great British institution. He is an oddball, he is a novelty, he is entertaining and, yes, he is annoying. Indeed, he could often be quietened down just by being offered an interview, and I would recommend that course of action to anyone.

The crucial point about Mr Bray is that he did not make one blind bit of difference to the course of events in this country—an entire waste of money for whoever has been paying for him to be there. Indeed, on his birthday one year he ran into me and my right hon. Friend the Member for Rayleigh and Wickford (Mr Francois), and posed for a beautiful selfie so that together we could, cheekily, enjoy his birthday. He is a great British institution, entirely pointless, and willing to celebrate with his opponents on his birthday. I do not think we should accept any amendments in order to target hard cases, because hard cases make for bad law.

I also wish to mention an article written jointly by me and the former right hon. Member for Beaconsfield, Dominic Grieve QC. In the aftermath of the protests over the Sarah Everard vigil, he and I wrote an article contextualising this Bill. I had then, and I have now, considerable concerns about what we are doing on protest, but I decided to hold my nose and vote with the Government. I have often said to people that I cannot be fighting on every front; nor should I be since I was elected as a Conservative. However, one person alone has persuaded me that I should agree with their lordships on the Bill. That person is the ostensibly Liberal Prime Minister of Canada, Mr Trudeau, and his treatment, ostensibly from a left liberal perspective, of protesters with whom he disagreed.

I note that the hon. Member for Croydon Central (Sarah Jones) condemned anti-vax protesters, and yes, they may well have a dangerous point of view. I have been pro-vaccine throughout this crisis, but we cannot condemn protesters because we happen to disagree with them politically. Goodness knows, right now I am the victim of a defamatory campaign in my constituency by people who evidently have not bothered to trouble themselves to look at my views.

Sarah Jones: Just to be clear, I am not against people having a position; our amendment seeks to make sure that clinics ensure that people get their vaccines, that NHS workers can get to work, and that we do not have anti-vax protesters stopping people going to work and doing their business.

Mr Baker: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for that clarification. Like her, I would like people to have the freedom to get vaccinated, and I have said that throughout the crisis.

With apologies to my right hon. Friend the Minister—and he is a friend—I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Hereford and South Herefordshire (Jesse Norman) and others. I commend to my right hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Robert Jenrick) just flirting with it—just get in that rebel Lobby with us. Let us say to the Government that actually this is going too far on noise. It is time to say, as the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Lloyd Russell-Moyle) vividly demonstrated, that yes protests are inherently noisy and annoying. If noise is ever used as a weapon, I am sure other instruments of law could be used.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Slough) (Lab): As the dogs of war are unleashed in Ukraine, and women and men are dying defending their independence and freedom, it is timely to reflect on our own freedoms as citizens. We are debating one of the most egregious attempts to stifle our most fundamental rights, with ill thought through reforms without evidence-based justification. I am not alone in that assessment: more than 800,000 petitioners, ex-police chiefs and senior advisers as well as three UN special rapporteurs and Members of the House of Lords from across the political spectrum all have deep-rooted concerns about the Bill and its lasting implications in limiting our freedoms and dividing our communities.

Surely the freedom to protest is one of the most important freedoms. Protest has been the engine of reform throughout Britain's history from the peasants' poll tax protest of 1381 to the recent Black Lives Matter movement. The rights to challenge authority, to speak up, to chant and to march are freedoms that are part of who we are; we relinquish them at our peril.

Conservative Members will complain that the Bill does not remove the freedom to protest. Not in so many words, but the right to protest must include the right to be noisy. A quiet, supine protest or a protest denied because the shouting was too loud is no protest at all. The point of protest is to give a collective voice to those who feel that they have not been listened to, particularly for marginalised and oppressed communities who have been told too many times to keep quiet. The Public Order Act 1986 was introduced by the Thatcher Government in the wake of the miners' strike. Are

Ministers really saying that Thatcher did not go far enough and that she was a soft touch on protestors? That is not how I remember it. I beseech the Home Secretary and Ministers to think again, even at this late stage.

Caroline Lucas: The hon. Member is giving a good speech. Does he agree that the Bill is part of a wider pattern that makes it even more dangerous? When we consider it alongside voter suppression measures, attacks on the Electoral Commission and judicial review, the extension of the Official Secrets Act and threats to the Human Rights Act, it is part of an attack on the very heart of our democracy.

Mr Dhesi: I completely agree with the hon. Lady. As she says, the damage from the many things being combined by the Government will have a devastating impact on our democracy.

The measures proposed by the Government to tackle crime are also deeply worrying. They are failing to tackle the roots of crime and antisocial behaviour, and yet I am hardly surprised. Their record is of taking more than 20,000 police officers off our streets and ceding ground to criminals, and even now they have not made up for the numbers of police, civilian staff and police community and support officers that they cut. When people do not see police in their communities, as has been the case in my constituency, they feel less safe and secure, and crime goes up. In actual fact it is up 14%, according to the Office for National Statistics—not to mention the huge reduction in convictions for rape and domestic abuse. Why are the Government, through the Bill, making such an appalling attack against the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities even though the police do not want the extra powers?

There is chaos in the criminal justice system with a backlog of years for cases. Victims and witnesses are simply giving up and criminals are laughing up their sleeves. The Government's response is to close courts, with 300 closed since 2010. They simply do not get it. We must defend the right to protest, to picket and to make a racket when we feel that we are not being listened to.

Richard Fuller (North East Bedfordshire) (Con): I rise to speak to the amendments on noise and protest. Frankly, I should not have to. At the beginning of the Bill process, I was discussing the Bill with a friend of mine who said, "This is a ridiculous thing to put in the Bill." I said, "Don't worry—the Government will accept amendments in Committee." They did not. Then I said, "Don't worry—if they do not do it in Committee, they will surely accept their lordships' amendments." I have certainly yet to see the Government make enough concessions on that. That has led me to worry.

I worry that at a time when Conservatives should be promoting freedom of speech, we have created a weapon for our opponents to say that we oppose it. We should not be doing that. I worry that Government Members give the impression that we think that demonstrations are okay as long as they are nicely decorous, barely audible and easy to miss, and we forget that anger and frustration are natural human emotions that find their expression in a democratic society through the ability to protest and, yes, make a noise. I worry that, while Opposition Members have talked about the concern regarding large protests, the measures will actually have more effect on more marginal issues and smaller groups. I think back to the 1980s and the group AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, which was protesting to provide AIDS treatment to people. There was never a noisier, more active, disruptive group than ACT UP in my memory. They were representing a group that was marginalised, so they could only make a noise to make their voice heard. I worry that the Bill will have an undue impact on marginal groups.

I worry that, at a time when we need clarity so much in the way in which the law affects people's lives, the Bill is so vague that people will say, "Why are we 'noisy' and not them?" How on earth does that help us to create a calmer discourse between those who have different opinions? I worry that we are asking the police to make too many judgments at a time when the police themselves want clarity, and not to be put into the mix. I love the fact that the British police do not care what people are protesting about, so why are we creating something where, in the moment, they have to make a judgment? I worry ultimately that, at a time when in our society we need trust between people with profoundly different opinions, the provisions in the Bill do nothing at all to help in that regard.

Liz Saville Roberts (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC): Recent days have indeed underlined the importance of peaceful protest and freedom of expression. Only this weekend I helped to organise, alongside my hon. Friend the Member for Arfon (Hywel Williams), a rally for solidarity in Caernarfon for the people of Ukraine against the illegal invasion of their country. We joined, of course, a wave of demonstrations that have been sweeping across Europe. Meanwhile, the whole world is witnessing the bravery of protestors in Russia, who are defying Putin's authoritarian regime to take to the streets against the illegal invasion of Ukraine. Thousands of Russians have been arrested, some simply for holding up anti-war signs—a clear violation of people's right to peacefully protest. Yet what do we find ourselves discussing here?

While the UK Government are quick to denounce the authoritarianism of Putin's Russia, they are set on implementing part 3 of the Bill, which is a direct threat to people's right to protest in Wales—a right that is integral to the history of Wales as a nation. From protests against the enclosure of land in Gwynedd in the 1810s, the Chartist uprising in Newport in the 1830s, the Rebecca riots by tenant farmers against the payment of tolls in the 1840s, language rights—the very essence of noise—protests in the 1960s, and the miners' strikes in the 1980s, to recent protests on racial injustice and the cost-of-living crisis, it is clear that the act of protest is woven through the past and present of Wales.

I welcome the changes to part 3 in the other place to remove the limits on our protest rights, such as Lords amendment 30, which removes new restrictions from public assemblies, but the Government have made it clear that they have no intention whatsoever of listening to the overwhelming cross-party opposition on these issues. Not content with clamping down on our right to protest, the UK Government have launched a new attack on Welsh Gypsies, Romas and Travellers through part 4 of the Bill. Despite already being marginalised by society, it will criminalise their way of life and allow for the confiscation of their homes. Importantly, it will directly undermine existing devolved Welsh legislation.

[Liz Saville Roberts]

The criminalisation of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller adults will have a knock-on effect for their children, who are at greater risk of being taken into care, directly undermining the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011, which places a duty on Welsh Ministers to have due regard for the rights of children as set out under the United Nations convention on the rights of the child. Criminalisation contravenes part 3 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, which places a legal obligation on local authorities in Wales to both assess and provide for residential and transit provision for Gypsies and Travellers. Our Senedd rightly refused to grant consent for the changes to part 4. It would therefore be wrong to apply it in Wales. That is just one example of the creeping effect of this place on devolved legislation. We must stand firm against it; otherwise, our Senedd in Wales will be being ignored.

Brendan Clarke-Smith (Bassetlaw) (Con): I will always defend the right to protest. Members could say that it is part of the glue that binds us together, which I will come on to a little later. Recently, Unite the union decided to picket a jobs fair that I organised in Worksop, which I thought was quite a bizarre thing to protest against. It was well attended by people from outside the constituency. We had people from Broxtowe Labour and *Socialist Worker*, and people bussed in from Nottingham and Chesterfield, but nevertheless I defend their right to do that, not least because it helps to support my pledge to increase footfall in Worksop town centre. While it was unpleasant for some of the more vulnerable job seekers, it did not put people off. Hundreds attended and many secured jobs there and then.

What I will certainly not defend is mindless hooliganism, breaching the rights of others, putting livelihoods at risk and indeed putting lives at risk. Some of the worst episodes I have witnessed involved so-called protesters gluing themselves to trains and buses. Aside from the mindless damage caused by those protesters—be they from groups such as Extinction Rebellion or others—we witnessed first-hand these people preventing ambulances getting to hospitals, which happened right here on Westminster Bridge. We also saw them blocking motorways such as the M25 and preventing people from getting to work. And this coming at a time when people were desperate to protect their livelihoods in the face of the huge challenges of the covid-19 pandemic. Our children have been prevented from getting to school at a time when their education has already been affected by disruption on numerous occasions. I asked those people, "How are you helping to protect the environment when you are stopping people from using public transport?"

I have sadly succumbed to the parliamentary stone since entering this place. I have been told many times that I look nothing like my official photograph on the website or my roller banner and a little more worse for wear. Yet as bad as it is getting, I still do not quite feel the need to glue my face to the floor as an Insulate Britain protester decided would be a good idea, although I gather that was to disrupt traffic rather than for aesthetic reasons.

It is not just about roads. We have also seen disruption around schools and vaccination centres, but it would be a mistake to limit legislation to those areas. We must make sure we protect our critical national infrastructure and we need to make sure that happens all over the country and in constituencies like mine. Whether it is dealing with harmful acts by legislating to stop them being reprobates in Retford, hoodlums in Harworth or—I am going to stop with the alliteration before I get back to Worksop—the Bill will make action that is tough but fair a reality. That is why we should not accept amendments that water down this excellent Bill.

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Ind): I want to refer to two parts of the Bill: on protests and on Travelling communities.

I was one of the organisers of the huge 2003 demonstration against the war in Iraq. It was obvious that whatever restrictions the police or the Government wanted to put on that demonstration, they could not because the numbers—1 million in Hyde Park and hundreds of thousands more in the streets—were so huge. That demonstration was historic for its size and effect. What we have before us now is far too much discretion being given to the police to decide whether a demonstration should go ahead or not, or whether it is appropriately noisy or not. I do not think that many police even want that discretion. The Minister was very vague on when there would be any review of the legislation, should it go through tonight. He conceded that it should be reviewed, but did not say when that would happen.

If a demonstration is to mean anything, it must be effective, it must be loud and it must cause some degree of disruption. What I see coming ahead is the police trying to arrest samba bands and taking away PA equipment and so on. That will send a message all around the world that this country is closing down on demonstrations at the very time we are saying we support demonstrations in other parts of the world. Every single one of the rights we have was won by people being brave enough to protest. The Chartists and many others put themselves at enormous risk to get a message across and bring about a change in society. Protest is an essential part of a decent, free and democratic society. We should not be voting for restrictions and we should not be giving the police the powers to prevent protests in our society. That is a very bad move.

The other side of the Bill that I will refer to in the little time that I have left is the attitude towards Travelling communities. They are abused and discriminated against all over this continent of Europe, and they are treated abominably. They get a very bad press and are treated like pariahs by much of the media, yet we claim to support the European convention on human rights and, through our Human Rights Act 1998, we claim to support the right to lead that nomadic life, the right to be Travellers and the right to access appropriate sites.

What we are doing is bowing down before some unpleasant anti-Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community pressures to restrict that right. We should not be doing it, because if we restrict that right and go against Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, we go after many, many other communities as well. In my view, it is discrimination, pure and simple, against an historic tradition of the right to roam in our society.

Paula Barker (Liverpool, Wavertree) (Lab): Ever since I entered this place, not one Bill has occupied as much space in my inbox as this one, and I am sure that many

Government Members have been similarly inundated with messages from their constituents. Many of my constituents are horrified, disturbed and frankly suspicious of this Government's attempt to severely suppress the right to protest. Some of those who are getting in contact with me have never attended a protest, but like me, they are absolutely committed to preserving and protecting our fundamental rights. These constituents are currently watching the autocratic President Putin on their TV screens arresting hundreds of his own people for peacefully protesting and demonstrating against his country's barbaric assault on Ukraine.

The Conservative party of the 21st century has shed all illusions of being a party that is committed to conserving, protecting and defending our liberal democracy and, indeed, of being a party that is committed to the liberalism that I had assumed was a key tenet of its ideology. Thankfully, the other place has rejected a string of proposals that would have given the police in England and Wales increased powers, including the power to stop and search anyone at a protest without suspicion. Even many Conservative peers did not support the Government's proposals.

Sadly, however, the likes of clause 55 still exist in the Bill. Make no mistake, the noise clause is a crack-down on dissent. It provides more tools in the establishment's armoury. It is authoritarian and draconian. The clause effectively ends the right to protest as we know it and provides yet another example of this virtue-signalling Government—

Mike Wood (Dudley South) (Con): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Paula Barker: I am sorry; I will not, because the hon. Member has just come in, and lots of Opposition Members wish to speak and have been here since the start of the debate.

The clause is yet another example of this Government giving extra powers to the police that they have neither asked for nor do they need. I have long given up appealing to Government Members to do the right thing. Rather, it is best that we just tell them that they are doing the wrong thing, and they will be doing the wrong thing if the Bill passes. Hundreds of solidarity protesters gathered on Downing Street at the weekend to express support and solidarity to Ukraine and her people. Those sentiments have been expressed right across the House. The protesters were noisy, and they were loud. Are this Government telling me and everyone else in the Chamber today that they would shut them up next time? What a sorry state of affairs.

Allan Dorans (Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock) (SNP): I wish to speak in support of Lords amendments 73 and 80, which would remove the ability of the police to impose noise-based restrictions on processions and greater conditions on static demonstrations. Peaceful protest is a legitimate and integral part of our unwritten constitution and for the Government to interfere with those rights and to try to impose restrictions and unnecessary conditions that affect and violate basic human rights is nothing less than appalling.

If Lords amendments 73 and 80 are not accepted, there are great concerns that police officers will be placed in the unenviable position of having to adjudicate between different stakeholders on the basis of broad and ambiguous criteria about whether to allow a "noisy" or "disruptive" protest to take place or continue. Far from enabling the police to maintain public order, these provisions will place an onerous burden on police officers in the exercise of their professional discretion, subjecting the police to even greater political pressure.

The police already have sufficient powers under the Public Order Act 1986. The additional powers in clauses 55 and 56 of the Bill are neither necessary nor welcomed by many senior police officers. As a uniformed police inspector in the Metropolitan police, I had extensive experience of dealing with public order and with processions and demonstrations of all sizes, and I can say honestly that none of them needed any further legislation; they could all be effectively dealt with by the current legislation.

There are serious concerns that the police, who serve a vital function in enforcing the law, are being instrumentalised for political purposes. That will erode the trust of the public, seriously damage the relationship between the police and the public, and adversely affect the cherished tradition of policing by consent that is at the heart of policing and our society.

Despite the disparaging remarks made by the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Lloyd Russell-Moyle), I pay tribute to the police officers out there policing our streets, who are overwhelmingly honest, trustworthy and hardworking. I commend them for putting themselves at risk and in danger to keep us all safe.

Kit Malthouse: I am grateful to all hon. Members who have spoken in what at times has been an impassioned debate. I have to say that it has been quite a rich experience to hear a defence of democracy from an Opposition whom I watched for month after month using every technical device at their disposal to try to overturn the democratic decision that the British people took in the 2016 referendum. Those months, happily, are long behind us, and the British people gave their verdict on that attempt to circumvent democracy in the 2019 general election, from which I am happy to say we all benefited.

Much of tonight's debate has been about the difficult job for any democratic Government of balancing the rights of competing groups: the rights of people who own land, and of those who use land; the rights of public authorities that have parks, and of the Travelling community; the rights of those who want to go about their business and access hospitals, schools or businesses, and of those who wish to protest. These are difficult balances that democratic Governments have to strike from time to time. The Labour party has had to do it in the past; I well remember it banning any protest within 1 km of Parliament. The first arrest was of a woman reading the names of the Iraq war dead at the Cenotaph, if I remember rightly. That, I will admit, was a step too far.

We believe that the package of measures that we have put forward on protest represents a modest rebalancing.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Kit Malthouse: I am not giving way. It is a modest rebalancing of the rights of the majority of British people who want to go about their business and the rights of those who quite legitimately want to protest.

[Kit Malthouse]

We yield to no man or woman in our desire to protect those inalienable rights of protest and dissent in this country. Our party has been in the position of protesting and dissenting in the past, as have many parties represented in this House. We do not take it for granted; we wish to protect it, and we believe that we are doing so while striking a balance.

On the undertaking that I was asked to give about the Vagrancy Act, let me say that 18 months is a maximum. If we can act faster, we will, but intensive work will obviously be required to get us there.

I believe that the Bill in its entirety represents a solid step forward, both for the safety of the country and for the difficult job of balancing our competing rights in what is now and will always be a liberal democracy.

Lords amendment 71 disagreed to.

Government amendment (a) made to Lords amendment 74.

Lords amendment 74, as amended, agreed to.

Government amendment (a) made to Lords amendment 88.

Lords amendment 88, as amended, agreed to.

More than six hours having elapsed since the commencement of proceedings on consideration of Lords amendments, the proceedings were interrupted (Programme Order, this day).

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

Motion made, and Question put, That this House disagrees with Lords amendment 73.—*(Kit Malthouse.)*

Lords amendment 73 disagreed to.

The House divided: Ayes 288, Noes 238.

Division No. 198] [12.01 am

AYES

Adams, rh Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Aiken, Nickie
Aldous, Peter
Anderson, Lee
Andrew, rh Stuart
Ansell, Caroline
Argar, Edward
Atherton, Sarah
Atkins, Victoria
Bacon, Gareth
Badenoch, Kemi
Baillie, Siobhan
Baker, Duncan
Baldwin, Harriett
Barclay, rh Steve
Baynes, Simon
Bell, Aaron
Benton, Scott
Beresford, Sir Paul
Berry, rh Jake
Bhatti, Saqib
Blackman, Bob
Blunt, Crispin
Bone, Mr Peter
Bottomley, Sir Peter
Bradley, Ben
Bradley, rh Karen
Braverman, rh Suella
Brereton, Jack
Bridgen, Andrew
Brine, Steve
Bristow, Paul
Britcliffe, Sara
Browne, Anthony
Bruce, Fiona
Buchan, Felicity
Buckland, rh Sir Robert
Burghart, Alex
Burns, rh Conor
Butler, Rob
Carter, Andy
Cartlidge, James
Cates, Miriam
Caulfield, Maria
Chalk, Alex
Chishti, Rehman
Churchill, Jo
Clark, rh Greg
Clarke, rh Mr Simon
Clarke, Theo
Clarke-Smith, Brendan
Clarkson, Chris
Cleverly, rh James
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse
Colburn, Elliot
Collins, Damian
Costa, Alberto
Courts, Robert
Coutinho, Claire
Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
Crosbie, Virginia
Daly, James
Davies, David T. C.
Davies, Gareth
Davies, Dr James
Davies, Mims
Davison, Dehenna
Dinenage, Dame Caroline
Dines, Miss Sarah
Docherty, Leo
Donelan, rh Michelle
Double, Steve
Dowden, rh Oliver
Doyle-Price, Jackie
Drax, Richard
Drummond, Mrs Flick
Duddridge, James
Duguid, David
Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain
Dunne, rh Philip
Eastwood, Mark
Edwards, Ruth
Ellis, rh Michael
Elphicke, Mrs Natalie
Eustice, rh George
Everitt, Ben
Fabricant, Michael
Farris, Laura
Fell, Simon *(Proxy vote cast by Christopher Pincher)*
Firth, Anna
Fletcher, Katherine
Fletcher, Mark
Fletcher, Nick
Ford, Vicky
Foster, Kevin
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Frazer, rh Lucy
French, Mr Louie
Fuller, Richard
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Gale, rh Sir Roger
Garnier, Mark
Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Gibb, rh Nick
Gibson, Peter
Gideon, Jo
Glen, John
Graham, Richard
Grant, Mrs Helen
Gray, James
Grayling, rh Chris
Green, Chris
Green, rh Damian
Griffith, Andrew
Griffiths, Kate
Grundy, James
Gullis, Jonathan *(Proxy vote cast by Christopher Pincher)*
Halfon, rh Robert
Hall, Luke
Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, rh Matt
Hands, rh Greg
Harris, Rebecca
Harrison, Trudy
Hart, Sally-Ann
Hayes, rh Sir John
Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Heappey, James
Heaton-Harris, rh Chris
Henderson, Gordon
Henry, Darren
Higginbotham, Antony
Hinds, rh Damian
Holden, Mr Richard
Hollinrake, Kevin
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Howell, John
Howell, Paul
Huddleston, Nigel
Hudson, Dr Neil
Hughes, Eddie
Hunt, Jane
Hunt, rh Jeremy
Hunt, Tom
Javid, rh Sajid
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenkinson, Mark
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, rh Sir Greg
Kruger, Danny
Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
Lamont, John
Largan, Robert
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Levy, Ian
Lewer, Andrew
Lewis, rh Brandon
Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Loder, Chris
Logan, Mark
Lopez, Julia
Lord, Mr Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Mackinlay, Craig
Mackrory, Cherilyn
Maclean, Rachel
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, rh Kit
Mangnall, Anthony
Marson, Julie
Mayhew, Jerome
Maynard, Paul
McCartney, Karl
McPartland, Stephen
Mercer, Johnny
Merriman, Huw
Metcalfe, Stephen
Millar, Robin
Miller, rh Mrs Maria
Milling, rh Amanda
Mills, Nigel
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Mohindra, Mr Gagan
Moore, Damien
Moore, Robbie
Mordaunt, rh Penny

Morris, David
Morris, James
Morrissey, Joy
Mullan, Dr Kieran
Mumby-Croft, Holly
Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Nici, Lia
Nokes, rh Caroline
O'Brien, Neil
Offord, Dr Matthew
Opperman, Guy
Parish, Neil
Pawsey, Mark
Penning, rh Sir Mike
Penrose, John
Philp, Chris
Pincher, rh Christopher
Prentis, Victoria
Pursglove, Tom
Quin, Jeremy
Quince, Will
Randall, Tom
Redwood, rh John
Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
Richardson, Angela
Robertson, Mr Laurence
Rosindell, Andrew
Rowley, Lee
Russell, Dean
Rutley, David
Saxby, Selaine
Scully, Paul
Seely, Bob
Selous, Andrew
Shapps, rh Grant
Shelbrooke, rh Alec
Simmonds, David
Skidmore, rh Chris
Smith, Greg
Smith, Henry
Smith, rh Julian
Smith, Royston
Solloway, Amanda
Spencer, rh Mark
Stafford, Alexander
Stephenson, Andrew
Stevenson, Jane
Stevenson, John
Stewart, rh Bob
Stewart, Iain
Stride, rh Mel
Stuart, Graham
Sturdy, Julian
Sunderland, James
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Syms, Sir Robert
Thomas, Derek
Throup, Maggie
Timpson, Edward
Tolhurst, Kelly
Tomlinson, Justin
Tracey, Craig
Trott, Laura
Tugendhat, Tom
Vara, Shailesh
Vickers, Martin
Vickers, Matt
Villiers, rh Theresa
Walker, Mr Robin
Wallis, Dr Jamie
Warburton, David
Warman, Matt
Watling, Giles
Whately, Helen
Wheeler, Mrs Heather
Whittaker, Craig
Whittingdale, rh Mr John
Wiggin, Sir Bill
Wild, James
Williams, Craig
Williamson, rh Gavin
Wood, Mike
Wright, rh Jeremy
Young, Jacob
Zahawi, rh Nadhim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Michael Tomlinson and Scott Mann

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
Abrahams, Debbie
Ali, Rushanara
Ali, Tahir
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Amesbury, Mike
Anderson, Fleur
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Ashworth, rh Jonathan
Baker, Mr Steve
Bardell, Hannah
Barker, Paula
Beckett, rh Margaret
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
Buck, Ms Karen
Burgon, Richard
Byrne, Ian
Byrne, rh Liam
Cadbury, Ruth
Callaghan, Amy
Cameron, Dr Lisa
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Campbell, Mr Gregory
Carden, Dan
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Chamberlain, Wendy
Champion, Sarah
Charalambous, Bambos
Cherry, Joanna
Clark, Feryal
Cooper, Daisy
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Cowan, Ronnie
Crawley, Angela
Creasy, Stella
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Daby, Janet
Davey, rh Ed
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
Dorans, Allan
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Duffield, Rosie
Eagle, Dame Angela
Eastwood, Colum
Edwards, Jonathan
Elliott, Julie
Elmore, Chris
Eshalomi, Florence
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Farry, Stephen
Fellows, Marion
Ferrier, Margaret
Flynn, Stephen
Fovargue, Yvonne
Foxcroft, Vicky
Foy, Mary Kelly
Furniss, Gill
Gardiner, Barry
Gibson, Patricia
Gill, Preet Kaur
Girvan, Paul
Grady, Patrick
Grant, Peter
Green, Kate
Green, Sarah
Greenwood, Lilian
Greenwood, Margaret
Griffith, Nia
Gwynne, Andrew
Haigh, Louise
Hamilton, Fabian
Hanna, Claire
Hardy, Emma
Harris, Carolyn
Hayes, Helen
Healey, rh John
Hendrick, Sir Mark
Hendry, Drew
Hillier, Dame Meg
Hobhouse, Wera
Hollern, Kate
Hopkins, Rachel
Hosie, rh Stewart
Huq, Dr Rupa
Hussain, Imran
Jardine, Christine
Johnson, rh Dame Diana
Johnson, Kim
Jones, Darren
Jones, Gerald
Jones, rh Mr Kevan
Jones, Ruth
Jones, Sarah
Kane, Mike
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz *(Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore)*
Khan, Afzal
Kyle, Peter
Lake, Ben
Lammy, rh Mr David
Lavery, Ian
Law, Chris
Leadbeater, Kim
Lewis, Clive
Linden, David
Lloyd, Tony
Lockhart, Carla
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lucas, Caroline
Lynch, Holly
MacNeil, Angus Brendan
Madders, Justin
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Mahmood, Shabana
Malhotra, Seema
Maskell, Rachael
Mc Nally, John
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonald, Andy
McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
McDonald, Stuart C.
McDonnell, rh John
McGinn, Conor
McGovern, Alison
McKinnell, Catherine
McLaughlin, Anne
McMahon, Jim
McMorrin, Anna
Mearns, Ian
Miliband, rh Edward
Mishra, Navendu
Moran, Layla
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, Helen
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, Anne Marie
Morris, Grahame
Murray, Ian
Murray, James
Nandy, Lisa
Newlands, Gavin
Nichols, Charlotte
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
Rayner, rh Angela
Reed, Steve
Rees, Christina
Reeves, Ellie
Reeves, Rachel

Reynolds, Jonathan
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
Rimmer, Ms Marie
Robinson, Gavin
Rodda, Matt
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Shah, Naz
Shannon, Jim
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheppard, Tommy
Siddiq, Tulip
Slaughter, Andy
Smith, Alyn
Smith, Cat
Smith, Nick
Smyth, Karin
Sobel, Alex
Spellar, rh John
Stephens, Chris
Stevens, Jo
Stone, Jamie
Streeting, Wes
Stringer, Graham
Sultana, Zarah
Tami, rh Mark
Tarry, Sam
Thewliss, Alison
Thomas, Gareth
Thompson, Owen
Thomson, Richard
Thornberry, rh Emily
Timms, rh Stephen
Turner, Karl
Vaz, rh Valerie
Wakeford, Christian
Webbe, Claudia
West, Catherine
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitford, Dr Philippa
Whitley, Mick
Whittome, Nadia
Williams, Hywel
Wilson, Munira
Wilson, rh Sammy
Winter, Beth
Yasin, Mohammad
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Noes:
Mary Glindon and Liz Twist

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause 56

IMPOSING CONDITIONS ON PUBLIC ASSEMBLIES

Motion made, and Question put, That this House disagrees with Lords amendment 80.—*(Kit Malthouse.)*

The House divided: Ayes 289, Noes 237.

Division No. 199] [12.14 am

AYES

Adams, rh Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Aiken, Nickie
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Anderson, Lee
Andrew, rh Stuart
Ansell, Caroline
Argar, Edward
Atherton, Sarah
Atkins, Victoria
Bacon, Gareth
Badenoch, Kemi
Baillie, Siobhan
Baker, Duncan
Baldwin, Harriett
Barclay, rh Steve
Baynes, Simon
Bell, Aaron
Benton, Scott
Beresford, Sir Paul
Bhatti, Saqib
Blackman, Bob
Blunt, Crispin
Bone, Mr Peter
Bottomley, Sir Peter
Bradley, Ben
Bradley, rh Karen
Braverman, rh Suella
Brereton, Jack
Bridgen, Andrew
Brine, Steve
Bristow, Paul
Britcliffe, Sara
Browne, Anthony
Bruce, Fiona
Buchan, Felicity
Buckland, rh Sir Robert
Burghart, Alex
Burns, rh Conor
Butler, Rob
Carter, Andy
Cates, Miriam
Caulfield, Maria
Chalk, Alex
Chishti, Rehman
Churchill, Jo
Clark, rh Greg
Clarke, rh Mr Simon
Clarke, Theo
Clarke-Smith, Brendan
Clarkson, Chris
Cleverly, rh James
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse
Colburn, Elliot
Collins, Damian
Costa, Alberto
Courts, Robert
Coutinho, Claire
Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
Crosbie, Virginia
Daly, James
Davies, David T. C.
Davies, Gareth
Davies, Dr James
Davies, Mims
Davison, Dehenna
Dinenage, Dame Caroline
Dines, Miss Sarah
Docherty, Leo
Donelan, rh Michelle
Double, Steve
Dowden, rh Oliver
Doyle-Price, Jackie
Drax, Richard
Drummond, Mrs Flick
Duddridge, James
Duguid, David
Dunne, rh Philip
Eastwood, Mark
Edwards, Ruth
Ellis, rh Michael
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Elphicke, Mrs Natalie
Eustice, rh George
Everitt, Ben
Fabricant, Michael
Farris, Laura
Fell, Simon *(Proxy vote cast by Christopher Pincher)*
Fletcher, Katherine
Fletcher, Mark
Fletcher, Nick
Ford, Vicky
Foster, Kevin
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Frazer, rh Lucy
French, Mr Louie
Fuller, Richard
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Gale, rh Sir Roger
Garnier, Mark
Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Gibb, rh Nick
Gibson, Peter
Gideon, Jo
Glen, John
Graham, Richard
Grant, Mrs Helen
Gray, James
Grayling, rh Chris
Green, Chris
Green, rh Damian
Griffith, Andrew
Griffiths, Kate
Grundy, James
Gullis, Jonathan *(Proxy vote cast by Christopher Pincher)*
Halfon, rh Robert
Hall, Luke
Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, rh Matt
Hands, rh Greg
Harper, rh Mr Mark
Harris, Rebecca
Harrison, Trudy
Hart, Sally-Ann
Hayes, rh Sir John
Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Heappey, James
Heaton-Harris, rh Chris
Henderson, Gordon
Henry, Darren
Higginbotham, Antony
Hinds, rh Damian
Holden, Mr Richard
Hollinrake, Kevin
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Howell, John
Howell, Paul
Huddleston, Nigel
Hudson, Dr Neil
Hughes, Eddie
Hunt, Jane
Hunt, rh Jeremy
Hunt, Tom
Javid, rh Sajid
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenkinson, Mark
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, rh Sir Greg
Kruger, Danny
Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
Lamont, John
Largan, Robert
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Levy, Ian
Lewer, Andrew
Lewis, rh Brandon
Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Loder, Chris
Logan, Mark
Lopez, Julia
Lord, Mr Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Mackinlay, Craig
Mackrory, Cherilyn
Maclean, Rachel
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, rh Kit
Mangnall, Anthony
Marson, Julie
Mayhew, Jerome
Maynard, Paul
McCartney, Karl
McPartland, Stephen
Mercer, Johnny
Merriman, Huw
Metcalfe, Stephen
Millar, Robin
Miller, rh Mrs Maria
Milling, rh Amanda
Mills, Nigel
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Mohindra, Mr Gagan
Moore, Damien
Moore, Robbie
Mordaunt, rh Penny
Morris, David
Morris, James
Morrissey, Joy
Mullan, Dr Kieran
Mumby-Croft, Holly

Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Neill, Sir Robert
Nici, Lia
Nokes, rh Caroline
O'Brien, Neil
Offord, Dr Matthew
Opperman, Guy
Parish, Neil
Pawsey, Mark
Penning, rh Sir Mike
Penrose, John
Philp, Chris
Pincher, rh Christopher
Pow, Rebecca
Prentis, Victoria
Pursglove, Tom
Quin, Jeremy
Quince, Will
Randall, Tom
Redwood, rh John
Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
Richardson, Angela
Robertson, Mr Laurence
Rosindell, Andrew
Rowley, Lee
Russell, Dean
Rutley, David
Saxby, Selaine
Scully, Paul
Seely, Bob
Selous, Andrew
Shapps, rh Grant
Shelbrooke, rh Alec
Simmonds, David
Skidmore, rh Chris
Smith, Greg
Smith, Henry
Smith, rh Julian
Smith, Royston
Solloway, Amanda
Spencer, rh Mark
Stafford, Alexander
Stephenson, Andrew
Stevenson, Jane
Stevenson, John
Stewart, rh Bob
Stewart, Iain
Stride, rh Mel
Stuart, Graham
Sturdy, Julian
Sunderland, James
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Syms, Sir Robert
Thomas, Derek
Throup, Maggie
Timpson, Edward
Tolhurst, Kelly
Tomlinson, Justin
Tracey, Craig
Trott, Laura
Tugendhat, Tom
Vara, Shailesh
Vickers, Martin
Vickers, Matt
Villiers, rh Theresa
Walker, Mr Robin
Wallis, Dr Jamie
Warburton, David
Warman, Matt
Whately, Helen
Wheeler, Mrs Heather
Whittaker, Craig
Whittingdale, rh Mr John
Wiggin, Sir Bill
Wild, James
Williams, Craig
Williamson, rh Gavin
Wood, Mike
Wright, rh Jeremy
Young, Jacob
Zahawi, rh Nadhim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Michael Tomlinson and Scott Mann

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
Abrahams, Debbie
Ali, Rushanara
Ali, Tahir
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Amesbury, Mike
Anderson, Fleur
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Ashworth, rh Jonathan
Baker, Mr Steve
Bardell, Hannah
Barker, Paula
Beckett, rh Margaret
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
Buck, Ms Karen
Burgon, Richard
Byrne, Ian
Byrne, rh Liam
Cadbury, Ruth
Callaghan, Amy
Cameron, Dr Lisa
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Campbell, Mr Gregory
Carden, Dan
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Chamberlain, Wendy
Champion, Sarah
Charalambous, Bambos
Cherry, Joanna
Clark, Feryal
Cooper, Daisy
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Cowan, Ronnie
Crawley, Angela
Creasy, Stella
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Daby, Janet
Davey, rh Ed
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
Dorans, Allan
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Duffield, Rosie
Eagle, Dame Angela
Eastwood, Colum
Edwards, Jonathan
Elliott, Julie
Elmore, Chris
Eshalomi, Florence
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Farry, Stephen
Fellows, Marion
Ferrier, Margaret
Flynn, Stephen
Fovargue, Yvonne
Foxcroft, Vicky
Foy, Mary Kelly
Furniss, Gill
Gardiner, Barry
Gibson, Patricia
Gill, Preet Kaur
Girvan, Paul
Grady, Patrick
Grant, Peter
Green, Kate
Green, Sarah
Greenwood, Lilian
Greenwood, Margaret
Griffith, Nia
Gwynne, Andrew
Haigh, Louise
Hamilton, Fabian
Hanna, Claire
Hardy, Emma
Harris, Carolyn
Hayes, Helen
Healey, rh John
Hendrick, Sir Mark
Hendry, Drew
Hillier, Dame Meg
Hobhouse, Wera
Hollern, Kate
Hopkins, Rachel
Hosie, rh Stewart
Huq, Dr Rupa
Hussain, Imran
Jardine, Christine
Johnson, rh Dame Diana
Johnson, Kim
Jones, Darren
Jones, Gerald
Jones, rh Mr Kevan
Jones, Ruth
Jones, Sarah
Kane, Mike
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz *(Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore)*
Khan, Afzal
Kyle, Peter
Lake, Ben
Lammy, rh Mr David
Lavery, Ian
Law, Chris
Leadbeater, Kim
Lewis, Clive
Linden, David
Lloyd, Tony
Lockhart, Carla
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lucas, Caroline
Lynch, Holly
Madders, Justin
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Mahmood, Shabana
Malhotra, Seema
Maskell, Rachael
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonald, Andy
McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
McDonald, Stuart C.
McDonnell, rh John
McGinn, Conor
McGovern, Alison
McKinnell, Catherine
McLaughlin, Anne
McMahon, Jim
McMorrin, Anna
Mearns, Ian
Miliband, rh Edward
Mishra, Navendu
Moran, Layla
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, Helen
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, Grahame
Murray, Ian
Murray, James
Nandy, Lisa
Newlands, Gavin
Nichols, Charlotte
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
Rayner, rh Angela
Reed, Steve
Rees, Christina
Reeves, Ellie
Reeves, Rachel
Reynolds, Jonathan
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
Rimmer, Ms Marie
Robinson, Gavin
Rodda, Matt
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Shah, Naz
Shannon, Jim

Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheppard, Tommy
Siddiq, Tulip
Slaughter, Andy
Smith, Alyn
Smith, Cat
Smith, Nick
Smyth, Karin
Sobel, Alex
Spellar, rh John
Stephens, Chris
Stevens, Jo
Stone, Jamie
Streeting, Wes
Stringer, Graham
Sultana, Zarah
Tami, rh Mark
Tarry, Sam
Thewliss, Alison
Thomas, Gareth
Thompson, Owen
Thomson, Richard
Thornberry, rh Emily
Timms, rh Stephen
Turner, Karl
Vaz, rh Valerie
Wakeford, Christian
Webbe, Claudia
West, Catherine
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitford, Dr Philippa
Whitley, Mick
Whittome, Nadia
Williams, Hywel
Wilson, Munira
Wilson, rh Sammy
Winter, Beth
Yasin, Mohammad
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Noes:
Mary Glindon and Liz Twist

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment 80 disagreed to.

Government amendments (a) to (f) made to the words restored to the Bill.

Clause 58

OBSTRUCTION OF VEHICULAR ACCESS TO PARLIAMENT

Motion made, and Question put, That this House disagrees with Lords amendment 81.—*(Kit Malthouse.)*

The House divided: Ayes 298, Noes 236.

Division No. 200] [12.27 am

AYES

Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Aiken, Nickie
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Anderson, Lee
Andrew, rh Stuart
Ansell, Caroline
Argar, Edward
Atherton, Sarah
Atkins, Victoria
Bacon, Gareth
Badenoch, Kemi
Baillie, Siobhan
Baker, Duncan
Baker, Mr Steve
Baldwin, Harriett
Barclay, rh Steve
Baynes, Simon
Bell, Aaron
Benton, Scott
Beresford, Sir Paul
Berry, rh Jake
Bhatti, Saqib
Blackman, Bob
Blunt, Crispin
Bone, Mr Peter
Bottomley, Sir Peter
Bradley, Ben
Bradley, rh Karen
Braverman, rh Suella
Brereton, Jack
Bridgen, Andrew
Brine, Steve
Bristow, Paul
Britcliffe, Sara
Browne, Anthony
Bruce, Fiona
Buchan, Felicity
Buckland, rh Sir Robert
Burghart, Alex
Burns, rh Conor
Butler, Rob
Carter, Andy
Cartlidge, James
Cates, Miriam
Caulfield, Maria
Chalk, Alex
Chishti, Rehman
Churchill, Jo
Clark, rh Greg
Clarke, rh Mr Simon
Clarke, Theo
Clarke-Smith, Brendan
Clarkson, Chris
Cleverly, rh James
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse
Colburn, Elliot
Collins, Damian
Costa, Alberto
Courts, Robert
Coutinho, Claire
Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
Crosbie, Virginia
Daly, James
Davies, David T. C.
Davies, Gareth
Davies, Dr James
Davies, Mims
Davies, Philip
Davison, Dehenna
Dinenage, Dame Caroline
Dines, Miss Sarah
Docherty, Leo
Donelan, rh Michelle
Double, Steve
Dowden, rh Oliver
Doyle-Price, Jackie
Drax, Richard
Drummond, Mrs Flick
Duddridge, James
Duguid, David
Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain
Dunne, rh Philip
Eastwood, Mark
Edwards, Ruth
Ellis, rh Michael
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Elphicke, Mrs Natalie
Eustice, rh George
Everitt, Ben
Fabricant, Michael
Farris, Laura
Fell, Simon *(Proxy vote cast by Christopher Pincher)*
Firth, Anna
Fletcher, Katherine
Fletcher, Mark
Fletcher, Nick
Ford, Vicky
Foster, Kevin
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Frazer, rh Lucy
French, Mr Louie
Fuller, Richard
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Gale, rh Sir Roger
Garnier, Mark
Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Gibb, rh Nick
Gibson, Peter
Gideon, Jo
Glen, John
Graham, Richard
Grant, Mrs Helen
Gray, James
Grayling, rh Chris
Green, Chris
Green, rh Damian
Griffith, Andrew
Griffiths, Kate
Grundy, James
Gullis, Jonathan *(Proxy vote cast by Christopher Pincher)*
Halfon, rh Robert
Hall, Luke
Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, rh Matt
Hands, rh Greg
Harper, rh Mr Mark
Harris, Rebecca
Harrison, Trudy
Hart, Sally-Ann
Hayes, rh Sir John
Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Heappey, James
Heaton-Harris, rh Chris
Henderson, Gordon
Henry, Darren
Higginbotham, Antony
Hinds, rh Damian
Holden, Mr Richard
Hollinrake, Kevin
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Howell, John
Howell, Paul
Huddleston, Nigel
Hudson, Dr Neil
Hughes, Eddie
Hunt, Jane
Hunt, rh Jeremy
Hunt, Tom
Javid, rh Sajid
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenkinson, Mark
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, rh Sir Greg
Kruger, Danny
Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
Lamont, John
Largan, Robert
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Levy, Ian
Lewer, Andrew
Lewis, rh Brandon
Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Loder, Chris
Logan, Mark
Lopez, Julia
Lord, Mr Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Mackinlay, Craig
Mackrory, Cherilyn
Maclean, Rachel
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, rh Kit
Mangnall, Anthony
Marson, Julie
Mayhew, Jerome
Maynard, Paul
McCartney, Jason
McCartney, Karl
McPartland, Stephen
McVey, rh Esther
Mercer, Johnny
Merriman, Huw
Metcalfe, Stephen
Millar, Robin
Miller, rh Mrs Maria
Milling, rh Amanda

Mills, Nigel
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Mohindra, Mr Gagan
Moore, Damien
Moore, Robbie
Mordaunt, rh Penny
Morris, Anne Marie
Morris, David
Morris, James
Morrissey, Joy
Mullan, Dr Kieran
Mumby-Croft, Holly
Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Neill, Sir Robert
Nici, Lia
Nokes, rh Caroline
O'Brien, Neil
Offord, Dr Matthew
Opperman, Guy
Parish, Neil
Pawsey, Mark
Penning, rh Sir Mike
Penrose, John
Philp, Chris
Pincher, rh Christopher
Pow, Rebecca
Prentis, Victoria
Pursglove, Tom
Quin, Jeremy
Quince, Will
Randall, Tom
Redwood, rh John
Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
Richardson, Angela
Robertson, Mr Laurence
Rosindell, Andrew
Rowley, Lee
Russell, Dean
Rutley, David
Saxby, Selaine
Scully, Paul
Seely, Bob
Selous, Andrew
Shapps, rh Grant
Shelbrooke, rh Alec
Simmonds, David
Skidmore, rh Chris
Smith, Greg
Smith, Henry
Smith, rh Julian
Smith, Royston
Solloway, Amanda
Spencer, rh Mark
Stafford, Alexander
Stephenson, Andrew
Stevenson, Jane
Stevenson, John
Stewart, rh Bob
Stewart, Iain
Stride, rh Mel
Stuart, Graham
Sturdy, Julian
Sunderland, James
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Syms, Sir Robert
Thomas, Derek
Throup, Maggie
Timpson, Edward
Tolhurst, Kelly
Tomlinson, Justin
Tracey, Craig
Trott, Laura
Tugendhat, Tom
Vara, Shailesh
Vickers, Martin
Vickers, Matt
Villiers, rh Theresa
Walker, Mr Robin
Wallis, Dr Jamie
Warburton, David
Warman, Matt
Watling, Giles
Whately, Helen
Wheeler, Mrs Heather
Whittaker, Craig
Whittingdale, rh Mr John
Wiggin, Sir Bill
Wild, James
Williams, Craig
Williamson, rh Gavin
Wood, Mike
Wragg, Mr William
Wright, rh Jeremy
Young, Jacob
Zahawi, rh Nadhim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Michael Tomlinson and Scott Mann

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
Beckett, rh Margaret
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
Buck, Ms Karen
Burgon, Richard
Byrne, Ian
Byrne, rh Liam
Cadbury, Ruth
Callaghan, Amy
Cameron, Dr Lisa
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Campbell, Mr Gregory
Carden, Dan
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Chamberlain, Wendy
Champion, Sarah
Charalambous, Bambos
Cherry, Joanna
Clark, Feryal
Cooper, Daisy
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Cowan, Ronnie
Crawley, Angela
Creasy, Stella
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Daby, Janet
Davey, rh Ed
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
Dorans, Allan
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Duffield, Rosie
Eagle, Dame Angela
Eastwood, Colum
Edwards, Jonathan
Elliott, Julie
Elmore, Chris
Eshalomi, Florence
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Farry, Stephen
Fellows, Marion
Ferrier, Margaret
Flynn, Stephen
Fovargue, Yvonne
Foxcroft, Vicky
Foy, Mary Kelly
Furniss, Gill
Gardiner, Barry
Gibson, Patricia
Gill, Preet Kaur
Girvan, Paul
Grady, Patrick
Grant, Peter
Green, Kate
Green, Sarah
Greenwood, Lilian
Greenwood, Margaret
Griffith, Nia
Gwynne, Andrew
Haigh, Louise
Hamilton, Fabian
Hanna, Claire
Hardy, Emma
Harris, Carolyn
Hayes, Helen
Healey, rh John
Hendrick, Sir Mark
Hendry, Drew
Hillier, Dame Meg
Hobhouse, Wera
Hollern, Kate
Hopkins, Rachel
Hosie, rh Stewart
Huq, Dr Rupa
Hussain, Imran
Jardine, Christine
Johnson, rh Dame Diana
Johnson, Kim
Jones, Darren
Jones, Gerald
Jones, rh Mr Kevan
Jones, Ruth
Jones, Sarah
Kane, Mike
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz *(Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore)*
Khan, Afzal
Kyle, Peter
Lake, Ben
Lammy, rh Mr David
Lavery, Ian
Law, Chris
Leadbeater, Kim
Lewis, Clive
Linden, David
Lloyd, Tony
Lockhart, Carla
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lucas, Caroline
Lynch, Holly
Madders, Justin
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Mahmood, Shabana
Malhotra, Seema
Maskell, Rachael
Mc Nally, John
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonald, Andy
McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
McDonald, Stuart C.
McDonnell, rh John
McGinn, Conor
McGovern, Alison
McKinnell, Catherine
McLaughlin, Anne
McMahon, Jim
McMorrin, Anna
Mearns, Ian
Miliband, rh Edward
Mishra, Navendu
Moran, Layla
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, Helen
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, Grahame
Murray, Ian
Murray, James
Nandy, Lisa
Newlands, Gavin
Nichols, Charlotte
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
Rayner, rh Angela
Reed, Steve
Rees, Christina
Reeves, Ellie
Reeves, Rachel
Reynolds, Jonathan
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
Rimmer, Ms Marie
Robinson, Gavin
Rodda, Matt
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Shah, Naz
Shannon, Jim
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheppard, Tommy
Siddiq, Tulip
Slaughter, Andy
Smith, Alyn
Smith, Cat
Smith, Nick
Smyth, Karin
Sobel, Alex
Spellar, rh John
Stephens, Chris
Stevens, Jo
Stone, Jamie
Streeting, Wes
Stringer, Graham
Sultana, Zarah
Tami, rh Mark
Tarry, Sam
Thewliss, Alison
Thomas, Gareth
Thompson, Owen
Thomson, Richard
Thornberry, rh Emily
Timms, rh Stephen
Turner, Karl
Vaz, rh Valerie
Wakeford, Christian
Webbe, Claudia
West, Catherine
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitford, Dr Philippa
Whitley, Mick
Whittome, Nadia
Williams, Hywel
Wilson, Munira
Wilson, rh Sammy
Winter, Beth
Yasin, Mohammad
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Noes:
Mary Glindon and Liz Twist

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment 81 disagreed to.

Lords amendment 82 disagreed to.

Clause 61

IMPOSING CONDITIONS ON ONE-PERSON PROTESTS

Motion made, and Question put, That this House disagrees with Lords amendment 87.—*(Kit Malthouse.)*

The House divided: Ayes 292, Noes 238.

Division No. 201] [12.41 am

AYES

Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Aiken, Nickie
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Anderson, Lee
Andrew, rh Stuart
Ansell, Caroline
Argar, Edward
Atherton, Sarah
Atkins, Victoria
Bacon, Gareth
Badenoch, Kemi
Baillie, Siobhan
Baker, Duncan
Baldwin, Harriett
Barclay, rh Steve
Baynes, Simon
Bell, Aaron
Benton, Scott
Beresford, Sir Paul
Berry, rh Jake
Bhatti, Saqib
Blackman, Bob
Blunt, Crispin
Bone, Mr Peter
Bottomley, Sir Peter
Bradley, Ben
Bradley, rh Karen
Braverman, rh Suella
Brereton, Jack
Bridgen, Andrew
Brine, Steve
Bristow, Paul
Britcliffe, Sara
Browne, Anthony
Bruce, Fiona
Buchan, Felicity
Buckland, rh Sir Robert
Burghart, Alex
Burns, rh Conor
Butler, Rob
Carter, Andy
Cartlidge, James
Cates, Miriam
Caulfield, Maria
Chalk, Alex
Chishti, Rehman
Churchill, Jo
Clark, rh Greg
Clarke, rh Mr Simon
Clarke, Theo
Clarke-Smith, Brendan
Clarkson, Chris
Cleverly, rh James
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse
Colburn, Elliot
Collins, Damian
Costa, Alberto
Courts, Robert
Coutinho, Claire
Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
Crosbie, Virginia
Daly, James
Davies, David T. C.
Davies, Gareth
Davies, Dr James
Davies, Mims
Davison, Dehenna
Dinenage, Dame Caroline
Dines, Miss Sarah
Docherty, Leo
Donelan, rh Michelle
Double, Steve
Dowden, rh Oliver
Doyle-Price, Jackie
Drax, Richard
Drummond, Mrs Flick
Duddridge, James
Duguid, David
Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain
Dunne, rh Philip
Eastwood, Mark
Edwards, Ruth
Ellis, rh Michael
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Elphicke, Mrs Natalie
Eustice, rh George
Everitt, Ben
Fabricant, Michael
Farris, Laura
Fell, Simon *(Proxy vote cast by Christopher Pincher)*
Firth, Anna
Fletcher, Katherine
Fletcher, Mark
Fletcher, Nick
Ford, Vicky
Foster, Kevin
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Frazer, rh Lucy
French, Mr Louie
Fuller, Richard
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Gale, rh Sir Roger
Garnier, Mark
Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Gibb, rh Nick
Gibson, Peter
Gideon, Jo
Glen, John
Graham, Richard
Grant, Mrs Helen
Gray, James
Grayling, rh Chris
Green, Chris
Green, rh Damian
Griffith, Andrew
Griffiths, Kate
Grundy, James
Gullis, Jonathan *(Proxy vote cast by Christopher Pincher)*
Halfon, rh Robert
Hall, Luke
Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, rh Matt
Hands, rh Greg
Harper, rh Mr Mark
Harris, Rebecca
Harrison, Trudy
Hart, Sally-Ann
Hayes, rh Sir John
Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Heappey, James
Heaton-Harris, rh Chris
Henderson, Gordon
Henry, Darren
Higginbotham, Antony
Hinds, rh Damian
Holden, Mr Richard
Hollinrake, Kevin
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Howell, John
Howell, Paul
Huddleston, Nigel
Hudson, Dr Neil
Hughes, Eddie
Hunt, Jane
Hunt, rh Jeremy
Hunt, Tom
Javid, rh Sajid
Jenkinson, Mark
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, rh Sir Greg
Kruger, Danny
Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
Lamont, John
Largan, Robert
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Levy, Ian
Lewer, Andrew
Lewis, rh Brandon
Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Loder, Chris
Logan, Mark
Lopez, Julia
Lord, Mr Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Mackinlay, Craig
Mackrory, Cherilyn
Maclean, Rachel
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, rh Kit
Mangnall, Anthony
Marson, Julie
Mayhew, Jerome

Maynard, Paul
McCartney, Jason
McCartney, Karl
McPartland, Stephen
Mercer, Johnny
Merriman, Huw
Metcalfe, Stephen
Millar, Robin
Miller, rh Mrs Maria
Milling, rh Amanda
Mills, Nigel
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Mohindra, Mr Gagan
Moore, Damien
Moore, Robbie
Mordaunt, rh Penny
Morris, David
Morris, James
Morrissey, Joy
Mullan, Dr Kieran
Mumby-Croft, Holly
Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Neill, Sir Robert
Nici, Lia
Nokes, rh Caroline
O'Brien, Neil
Offord, Dr Matthew
Opperman, Guy
Parish, Neil
Pawsey, Mark
Penning, rh Sir Mike
Penrose, John
Philp, Chris
Pincher, rh Christopher
Pow, Rebecca
Prentis, Victoria
Pursglove, Tom
Quin, Jeremy
Quince, Will
Randall, Tom
Redwood, rh John
Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
Richardson, Angela
Robertson, Mr Laurence
Rosindell, Andrew
Rowley, Lee
Russell, Dean
Rutley, David
Saxby, Selaine
Scully, Paul
Seely, Bob
Selous, Andrew
Shapps, rh Grant
Shelbrooke, rh Alec
Simmonds, David
Skidmore, rh Chris
Smith, Greg
Smith, Henry
Smith, rh Julian
Smith, Royston
Solloway, Amanda
Spencer, rh Mark
Stafford, Alexander
Stephenson, Andrew
Stevenson, Jane
Stevenson, John
Stewart, rh Bob
Stewart, Iain
Stride, rh Mel
Stuart, Graham
Sturdy, Julian
Sunderland, James
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Syms, Sir Robert
Thomas, Derek
Throup, Maggie
Timpson, Edward
Tolhurst, Kelly
Tomlinson, Justin
Tracey, Craig
Trott, Laura
Tugendhat, Tom
Vara, Shailesh
Vickers, Martin
Vickers, Matt
Villiers, rh Theresa
Walker, Mr Robin
Wallis, Dr Jamie
Warburton, David
Warman, Matt
Watling, Giles
Whately, Helen
Wheeler, Mrs Heather
Whittaker, Craig
Whittingdale, rh Mr John
Wiggin, Sir Bill
Wild, James
Williams, Craig
Williamson, rh Gavin
Wood, Mike
Wragg, Mr William
Wright, rh Jeremy
Young, Jacob
Zahawi, rh Nadhim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Michael Tomlinson and Scott Mann

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
Abrahams, Debbie
Ali, Rushanara
Ali, Tahir
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Amesbury, Mike
Anderson, Fleur
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Ashworth, rh Jonathan
Baker, Mr Steve
Bardell, Hannah
Barker, Paula
Beckett, rh Margaret
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
Buck, Ms Karen
Burgon, Richard
Byrne, Ian
Byrne, rh Liam
Cadbury, Ruth
Callaghan, Amy
Cameron, Dr Lisa
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Campbell, Mr Gregory
Carden, Dan
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Chamberlain, Wendy
Champion, Sarah
Charalambous, Bambos
Cherry, Joanna
Clark, Feryal
Cooper, Daisy
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Cowan, Ronnie
Crawley, Angela
Creasy, Stella
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Daby, Janet
Davey, rh Ed
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
Dorans, Allan
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Duffield, Rosie
Eagle, Dame Angela
Eastwood, Colum
Edwards, Jonathan
Elliott, Julie
Elmore, Chris
Eshalomi, Florence
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Farry, Stephen
Ferrier, Margaret
Flynn, Stephen
Fovargue, Yvonne
Foy, Mary Kelly
Furniss, Gill
Gardiner, Barry
Gibson, Patricia
Gill, Preet Kaur
Girvan, Paul
Glindon, Mary
Grady, Patrick
Grant, Peter
Green, Kate
Green, Sarah
Greenwood, Lilian
Greenwood, Margaret
Griffith, Nia
Gwynne, Andrew
Haigh, Louise
Hamilton, Fabian
Hanna, Claire
Hardy, Emma
Harris, Carolyn
Hayes, Helen
Healey, rh John
Hendrick, Sir Mark
Hendry, Drew
Hillier, Dame Meg
Hobhouse, Wera
Hollern, Kate
Hopkins, Rachel
Hosie, rh Stewart
Huq, Dr Rupa
Hussain, Imran
Jardine, Christine
Johnson, rh Dame Diana
Johnson, Kim
Jones, Darren
Jones, Gerald
Jones, rh Mr Kevan
Jones, Ruth
Jones, Sarah
Kane, Mike
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz *(Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore)*
Khan, Afzal
Kyle, Peter
Lake, Ben
Lammy, rh Mr David
Lavery, Ian
Law, Chris
Leadbeater, Kim
Lewis, Clive
Linden, David
Lloyd, Tony
Lockhart, Carla
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lucas, Caroline
Lynch, Holly
Madders, Justin
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Mahmood, Shabana
Malhotra, Seema
Maskell, Rachael
Mc Nally, John
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonald, Andy
McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
McDonald, Stuart C.
McDonnell, rh John
McGinn, Conor
McGovern, Alison
McKinnell, Catherine
McLaughlin, Anne
McMahon, Jim
McMorrin, Anna
Mearns, Ian
Miliband, rh Edward
Mishra, Navendu
Moran, Layla
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, Helen
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, Anne Marie
Morris, Grahame
Murray, Ian
Murray, James
Newlands, Gavin
Nichols, Charlotte
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
Rayner, rh Angela
Reed, Steve
Rees, Christina
Reeves, Ellie
Reeves, Rachel
Reynolds, Jonathan
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
Rimmer, Ms Marie
Robinson, Gavin
Rodda, Matt
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Shah, Naz
Shannon, Jim
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheppard, Tommy
Siddiq, Tulip
Slaughter, Andy
Smith, Alyn
Smith, Cat
Smith, Nick
Smyth, Karin
Sobel, Alex
Spellar, rh John
Stephens, Chris
Stevens, Jo
Stone, Jamie
Streeting, Wes
Stringer, Graham
Sultana, Zarah
Tami, rh Mark
Tarry, Sam
Thewliss, Alison
Thomas, Gareth
Thompson, Owen
Thornberry, rh Emily
Timms, rh Stephen
Turner, Karl
Twist, Liz
Vaz, rh Valerie
Wakeford, Christian
Webbe, Claudia
West, Catherine
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitford, Dr Philippa
Whitley, Mick
Whittome, Nadia
Williams, Hywel
Wilson, Munira
Wilson, rh Sammy
Winter, Beth
Yasin, Mohammad
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Noes:
Marion Fellows and Richard Thomson

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment 87 disagreed to.

Government amendments (a) to (f) made to the words so restored to the Bill.

Lords amendments 89 and 146 disagreed to.

Government amendments (a) and (b) made in lieu of Lords amendments 89 and 146.

Lords amendment 143 disagreed to.

Government amendments (a) to (c) made in lieu of Lords amendment 143.

Lords amendments 75 to 79, 83 to 86, 90 to 93, 118 to 120 and 148 agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 83H), That a Committee be appointed to draw up Reasons to be assigned to the Lords for disagreeing to their amendments 58, 71, 72, 73, 81, 82, 107, 141 and 142;

That Kit Malthouse, Scott Mann, James Daly, Gagan Mohindra, Sarah Jones, Chris Elmore and Anne McLaughlin be members of the Committee;

That Kit Malthouse be the Chair of the Committee;

That three be the quorum of the Committee.

That the Committee do withdraw immediately.—(*David T.C. Davies.*)

Question agreed to.

Committee to withdraw immediately; reasons to be reported and communicated to the Lords.

Business without Debate

DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): We now come to motion 4 on legal aid and advice, which I propose to put along with motion 5 on local government, and motions 6 and 7 on social security.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),

Legal Aid and Advice

That the draft Early Legal Advice Pilot Scheme Order 2022, which was laid before this House on 19 January, be approved.

Local Government

That the draft Somerset (Structural Changes) Order 2022, which was laid before this House on 24 January, be approved.

Social Security

That the draft Pneumoconiosis etc. (Workers' Compensation) (Payment of Claims) (Amendment) Regulations 2022, which were laid before this House on 13 January, be approved.

That the draft Mesothelioma Lump Sum Payments (Conditions and Amounts) (Amendment) Regulations 2022, which were laid before this House on 13 January, be approved.—*(David T.C. Davies.)*

Question agreed to.

Business of the House

12.58 am

The Leader of the House of Commons (Mark Spencer): Madam Deputy Speaker, I should like to make a short business statement.

Business later today will now be a debate on motions to approve the Russia (Sanctions) (EU Exit) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2022 and the Russia (Sanctions) (EU Exit) (Amendment) (No. 3) Regulations 2022, followed by consideration of Lords amendments to the National Insurance Contributions Bill, followed by a motion to approve the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Self-Isolation etc.) (Revocation) (England) Regulations 2022

The business for the rest of this week remains unchanged to that previously announced and I shall make a further business statement in the usual way on Thursday.

Thangam Debbonaire (Bristol West) (Lab): I thank the Leader of the House for the business statement and advance notice of it. The Opposition support the Government's work on sanctions. Indeed, we have called for them. We want to work in a collaborative, cross-party and constructive way. In order to facilitate my colleagues in the shadow Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office team, I wonder if the Leader of the House could pass on to the Government team the request that they make themselves available and meet my colleagues at the earliest possible opportunity, technically tomorrow in parliamentary day terms and today in calendar terms. That would be extremely helpful, because we want to be constructive and we want to be able to facilitate the smooth passage of regulations that are going to sanction Russia, as they rightly should, for its egregious actions in Ukraine.

Mark Spencer *indicated assent.*

Thangam Debbonaire: I thank the Leader of the House for his co-operation and I hope that his nodding from a sedentary position indicates assent.

Mark Spencer: Of course, we will facilitate that. We are grateful for the Opposition's support in this matter. A united House is the right message to send.

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): I thank the Leader of the House for coming to the House to give us the supplementary business statement. I entirely agree with the shadow spokesman, the hon. Member for Bristol West (Thangam Debbonaire), and nothing I am going to say in any way criticises the Government. My point is about how we found ourselves here tonight in the House.

We are considering very grave and important matters relating to sanctioning Russia. The Russia (Sanction) (EU Exit) (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations 2022 (SI, 2022, No. 194) is 11 pages long, with five pages of explanatory notes. The Russia (Sanctions) (EU Exit) (Amendment) (No.3) Regulations 2022 (SI, 2022, No. 195) is 29 pages long and has five pages of explanatory notes. It is difficult consider SIs that have actually already come into force—they came into force a few minutes' ago—and were only laid before the House two hours ago, at 10 pm. One problem is that some Members may want to change things and put in tougher sanctions. I think the answer will be that it cannot be done, but it would be useful if we could find a mechanism so that they could be amended and we could go further if that is possible. None of that is a criticism. It is just the position we find ourselves in tonight.

Mark Spencer: It is not for me to encourage my hon. Friend to amend Government business, but of course there will be a Bill coming very shortly which he will be able to scrutinise. He will understand that the House is making very rapid decisions on trying to tackle a very aggressive action in Ukraine by a very desperate leader in Russia.

Owen Thompson (Midlothian) (SNP): I echo the comments of the shadow Leader of the House, the hon. Member for Bristol West (Thangam Debbonaire), and the hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr Bone). I think everybody recognises that things are moving very, very quickly and at very short notice, but at the same time we all want to be constructive. Therefore, as much notice and as much sight as possible on any kind of sanctions and statutory instruments would be very much appreciated, I think, by all Members, if the Leader of the House could bear that in mind. I absolutely recognise the situation, but it is not a lot of time for Members to prepare for what they would hope to be very detailed scrutiny of such important sanctions.

Mark Spencer: I am sure the House will recognise my enthusiasm to be here earlier was evident, but unfortunately business went on late, which is why we are doing it at this time.

David Linden (Glasgow East) (SNP): I do not think anybody in the House would disagree with the need to move ahead with sanctions, but the Lord President of the Council will be aware that we already have legislation on statute that allows us to issue unexplained wealth orders. As far as I am aware, the UK Government have not proceeded down that route. That could make life very difficult indeed for about 2,000 people in the City of London. So, yes, absolutely look at sanctions, but can the Leader of the House come forward with a statement on what we are going to do with unexplained wealth orders, which is a tool that we have available to us?

Mark Spencer: The hon. Gentleman will have to wait for the Bill. This is a further step on the way to sanctioning Russia. This is part of a suite of measures which are being brought forward. We did a substantial amount last week. We are doing more tomorrow. I am sure if he is here on Thursday for the business statement, there will be more in the statement on Thursday.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I very much welcome the commitment from the Leader of the House to the sanctions Bill tomorrow. It is very important that we have the correct amount of time set aside to make our contributions on that as well as on the two SIs, which are equally important. Will extra time be set aside for the sanctions Bill and the SIs, so that we can all debate these things fully and comprehensively?

Mark Spencer: Just to be clear, the SIs are being debated tomorrow. They will be allowed three hours, subject to the business motion being supported by the House, and there will then be a further update on the timetabling for any future legislation in the usual way on Thursday.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle (Brighton, Kemptown) (Lab/Co-op): We all support exactly what the Government are doing, even if we sometimes want to go quicker, but these are fast-moving events. It would be useful with some of the sanctions to compare them directly with what our NATO allies are doing and to make sure that we are keeping up with them—*[Interruption.]* And leading, I am sure. A clear table for Members for the debate would be extremely useful, if that could be fed back. That is the case not just for sanctions, but for the humanitarian response and, for example, accepting Ukrainian refugees. We need to lead on all fronts and to be able to do that with a clear table that all Members can use.

Mark Spencer: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his question; he is right to be supportive and I am grateful for his comments. I am sure that he will be able to question a Minister at the Dispatch Box tomorrow.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): I thank the Leader of the House for coming here with his statement, which we have all heard.

PETITION

National Insurance payments

1.6 am

David Linden (Glasgow East) (SNP): I wish you a good morning, Madam Deputy Speaker. There is no one that I would rather spend time breakfasting with than a daughter of Elderslie.

I rise to present a petition on behalf of my constituents. I was out yesterday in the Garthamlock area of my constituency campaigning with Ruairi Kelly and Mandy Morgan, and a number of constituents raised with me the proposed national insurance hike. We know that this will impact on the lowest-paid and youngest earners in our community, so I present the following petition on their behalf.

The petition states:

The petition of residents of the constituency of Glasgow East,

Notes that Her Majesty's Government proposes a rise in National Insurance payments for all to offset costs related to reforms of health and social care policy in England; and declares that these measures will be deeply regressive to low income and young earners.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urge the Government to abandon proposals to raise National Insurance payments with immediate effect.

And the petitioners remain, etc.

[P002713]

Firefighters' Pension Scheme

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*(David T. C. Davies.)*

1.7 am

Jane Hunt (Loughborough) (Con): I begin by thanking all the firefighters, who, day in and day out, put themselves in harm's way to protect the public. Last summer, ahead of Public Service Day, I had the pleasure of visiting Loughborough fire station to meet some of our fantastic local firefighters from Loughborough and Shepshed to hear more about their work and, importantly, to thank them for all that they do.

One such firefighter from Shepshed sadly died in 2016 while on duty at Castle Donington fire station. Paul Wilkens, at the time of his death, was enrolled in the legacy 1992 pension scheme and was in the process of being tapered on to the 2015 pension scheme. As the Minister will know, the new pension scheme was introduced as part of the then Government's reforms to public service pensions, which would see pension benefits based on career average revalued earnings rather than final salary.

Crucially, the transitional provisions of the new scheme created three groups of members, determined by the age of the individual. The first group were active members of the legacy scheme born on or before 1 April 1967, who would remain in the scheme and receive full protection. The second group were active members of the legacy scheme born between 1 April 1967 and 2 April 1971, who would be entitled to tapered protection under the transitional provisions, allowing them to remain in the legacy scheme for an extra 53 days for each month by which their age on 1 April 2012 was over 41. The last group were active members of the legacy scheme born after 1 April 1971, who would receive no transitional protection but would be transferred to the new scheme from 1 April 2015. Mr Wilkens fell into the second category because he was born in 1969 and was due to be tapered into the new scheme in 2017, the year after his death.

As well as the change to pensions benefits based on career average, the new scheme introduced an important new provision concerning the surviving partner's pension payable on death of an active member. Regulation 76(1) of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme (England) Regulations 2014 states:

"For the purposes of these Regulations, a person is a surviving partner in relation to a member if, at the date of the member's death, that person is—

(a) the spouse or civil partner of the member;

(b) cohabiting with the member and—

(i) is not married or in a civil partnership with that member, and

(ii) is not the spouse or civil partner of any other person, and

(iii) could enter into a marriage or civil partnership under the law of England and Wales with the member but has not done so,

(iv) is financially dependent on the scheme member, or is, with the scheme member, in a state of mutual financial dependency, and

(v) is in a long-term relationship with the scheme member."

That differs significantly from the legacy scheme, the equality impact assessment for which dealt with marriage, civil partnership and other aspects of relationships, but not with those who were cohabitating in a heterosexual relationship.

This has had an adverse impact on Mr Wilkens's partner, Melanie Perry, with whom at the time of his death he had been in a relationship for 10 years, for nine of which they had been cohabiting. They also owned their house and paid their mortgage and bills jointly. They had one child together, and the children from Melanie's previous marriage lived with them, along with Mr Wilkens's daughter from a previous marriage. Mr Wilkens loved and cared for all the children equally, both emotionally and financially. They were in every sense a family and a single household living in one property together.

After Mr Wilkens's death, however, Melanie was informed by the pensions manager at Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Combined Fire Authority that although they had investigated their ability to award her the death grant, they were unable to do so because Melanie and Mr Wilkens were not married. As I have set out, had Mr Wilkens died just one year later after he had tapered into the new scheme, Melanie would have been eligible to succeed his pension. Had it not been for the decision to taper the transition to the scheme and Mr Wilkens's date of birth, Melanie would therefore not have been in the difficult position that she is in now. It should also be noted that Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Combined Fire Authority was able to award all four of the children a fire service pension while they were in education because it was satisfied that they—even those from Melanie's former marriage—met the criteria of "substantially dependent" on Mr Wilkens.

Melanie has been trying to rectify the situation since 2016, having initially approached my predecessor for assistance. As my predecessor's caseworker, I attended a meeting with Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service's assistant chief, the pensions manager and two Fire Brigades Union officials to discuss the case. The combined fire authority and the then Fire Minister were also contacted in writing, but unfortunately no further progress was made at the time.

In May 2018, a further letter was sent to the pension trustees appealing for reconsideration. In their response, they were clear that they had no power to apply discretion to the case. That was reiterated in September last year in a response that I received from Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service's chief fire officer, who stated that

"it has never been a case of not wanting to resolve the situation...it has always been around the technical ability and then the legality of doing so. Sadly, the rules around the 1992 pension scheme are clear. They allow no discretion on the interpretation of the scheme by the scheme manager, the Combined Fire Authority or myself".

A response that I received shortly before that from the Fire Minister stated:

"The responsibility for applying the rules of the 1992 Scheme and deciding an individual's pension entitlement ultimately rests with each employing Fire and Rescue Authority, in this case Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service. Notwithstanding this, each employer is required to comply with the scheme's legislation and does not have discretion to pay benefits to an individual where there is no entitlement."

I therefore ask the Minister that the fire and rescue authority be allowed to have discretion in this unique matter.

Understandably, Mr Wilkens's death and Melanie's subsequent efforts to rectify this pension issue have had a profoundly negative effect on her. In her own words,

"When I answered the door to a Firefighter on Tuesday 23rd August 2016 at approximately 10.30am and the words that came from his mouth were telling me that Paul had died at work on duty, my life, as I knew it also came to an end.

Nothing in my life has or ever will be as hard as living with the trauma and grief that follows the death of your life partner. Imagine living with a scream inside you and the scream is yours but no one else hears it—that is grief!

Not only have I had to learn to continue to live without Paul by my side, I've had four children to navigate through the minefield of grief that is forever on going. As they grow older and mature, their emotions and understanding of the finality of death is sometimes impossible to be able to help them to comprehend. It is just so devastatingly unfair.

Challenging the decisions made in relation to a survivors pension these past five years have taken so much of the time and energy that would have been far better placed supporting my children and myself in learning to live without Paul and without the financial provision that he would have expected us to receive. The pension changes were made to ensure that all firefighters were treated equally yet this is far from how we have been treated.

Paul devoted his life to serving for his country, as a Royal Engineer in the British Army serving in Bosnia and the Gulf War and then as a firefighter for Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service, of which he was immensely proud.

He would be so bitterly disappointed that he had spent his life protecting others yet nothing had been done to protect and support his surviving partner."

Of course, more widely, the discretional protections have been heavily criticised, with the Court of Appeal finding them to be discriminatory against younger members. I therefore welcome the Government's proposals to remedy this discrimination. I am particularly supportive of the proposals surrounding the deferred choice underpin and the retrospective remedy, which is due to come into force by 1 October 2023. It is right that members already receiving pensions are given a choice as soon as practicable as to which pension benefits they would prefer to receive in respect of any remediable service rendered between 31 March 2015 and 1 April 2022.

Unfortunately, however—as I said in my response to the consultation on firefighters' pensions prospective remedy—this will not address all the discrimination that the protections caused, the effects of which are still having a substantial impact on Mr Wilkens's surviving family members. I therefore ask for the secondary legislation to contain provisions to ensure that surviving partners who would have been eligible to succeed a pension under the 2015 scheme had their partner not died during the transition period before they were tapered on to the reformed scheme are able to succeed the pension. As well as advancing the moral argument for such a change, I should add that the financial burden would be minimal, given that neither my office, Melanie nor the Fire Brigades Union has been able to find any other instances of this.

This was, unfortunately, a "perfect storm" of being the wrong age, sadly passing away at the wrong time, and not being married. Had Mr Wilkens been two years younger, had he passed away two years later, or had he and Melanie been married, Melanie would not have had to fight for access to his pension and to endure so much

[Jane Hunt]

hardship at an already difficult time. We know that issues have been identified with the tapered protections, so may I ask the Minister please to consider new provisions to allow Melanie to succeed Mr Wilkens's pension?

I am glad to have brought this issue to the House's attention. How can it be that, in the 21st century, we have a situation in which a woman cannot claim the pension of a man with whom she had a home, a family and a mortgage, simply because they were not married?

1.19 am

The Minister for Security and Borders (Damian Hinds): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Jane Hunt) on securing this debate. I am grateful to her, and I welcome the opportunity to address the House on the important issue of firefighters' pensions. The Government hugely value the unique roles that our firefighters undertake and it is only right that their pensions remain among the best pension schemes available in the public sector. Our brave firefighters keep us safe. They do the most extraordinary job day in, day out, in the most difficult situations.

The Government also recognise that the cost of providing public service pensions must be fair to the schemes' members, the employers and the taxpayer. It is important that the costs of public service pensions are understood and fully acknowledged by Government so that they remain affordable and sustainable for generations to come.

Jane Hunt: I absolutely understand that, but this is about the discretionary element. As I see it, there is only one instance of this happening. The Prime Minister said at the time that the fire service could look at this, but the fire service does not believe that it can do so because of the rules and regulations. It is the discretionary element that I am interested in.

Damian Hinds: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention. There is some limited ability under the rules for fire authorities to exercise some discretion on some decisions. That would involve, for example, determining whether a person was on duty or not at the time of an injury or death. However, the rules of the 1992 scheme do not provide a fire authority with the discretion to pay a pension to an individual who does not qualify for it.

Jane Hunt: The point is that Mr Wilkens was on the 1992 scheme at the time and that, due to his age, he was being tapered over to the 2015 scheme. If he had not been that age, he would not have been tapering at the time and might already have been on the scheme, in which case his partner would immediately have got the pension.

Damian Hinds: I am grateful for that clarification, and I will come on to that point in a moment.

My hon. Friend has spoken movingly of the sad circumstances of the case of Ms Melanie Perry, whose partner Mr Wilkens passed away in 2016 and who did not qualify for any survivor pension entitlement. I appreciate that this is an extremely sensitive matter. It is the current legislation underpinning the firefighters' pension schemes that provides the qualifying criteria for an individual's pension entitlement and therefore sets the parameters on what payments can be made by an employer out of the pension scheme. On the death of a scheme member, the 1992 firefighters' pension scheme, of which I understand Mr Wilkens was a member, provides benefits to the surviving spouse or civil partner. These benefits do not extend to unmarried partners. As my hon. Friend will know, that was quite common among pension schemes of that time.

It has been the position of successive Governments not to make retrospective changes to public service pension schemes, and that has not changed. A new pension scheme was introduced for all newly recruited firefighters in April 2006. While the 2006 scheme has a higher retirement age than that of the 1992 scheme, it does provide survivor benefits that extend to unmarried partners. At the time the 2006 scheme was introduced, fire and rescue authorities offered existing 1992 scheme members the option to transition to the 2006 scheme if they wanted to benefit from the modernised scheme design. I understand that a letter was sent to Mr Wilkens from his employing fire and rescue authority in August 2006 providing this option. Ultimately, it appears that Mr Wilkens did not take this option.

Jane Hunt: The Minister has mentioned the 2006 changes. At the time of Mr Wilkens' passing in 2016, he and his partner had been together for 10 years, so that letter would have come at the beginning of their relationship. I think we can therefore forgive them for not taking up that offer at the time.

Damian Hinds: I understand my hon. Friend's point.

In 2010, the coalition Government established the Independent Public Service Pensions Commission, chaired by Lord Hutton of Furness. The commission undertook a comprehensive review of the main public service pension schemes, including the firefighters' schemes. Following the review, public service pensions underwent a significant period of change with the introduction of new, reformed unfunded pension schemes from April 2015. At that time, full and tapered protections were afforded to those scheme members who were closest to retirement. For firefighters, this included those who were within 14 years of their normal pension age.

In 2018, as my hon. Friend alluded to, these protections were found by the courts to be unlawfully discriminatory in respect of the firefighters' and the judicial pension schemes on the grounds of age. In effect, the courts found that younger pension scheme members suffered a disadvantage as a result of the Government's efforts to protect those nearest to retirement from the impact of the reforms. The Government accepted that ruling and that the remedy to remove the discrimination should apply to all public service pension schemes. The Government are now in the process of removing the discriminatory elements. This is a careful and complex process to get right.

The deferred choice underpin, referred to by my hon. Friend, will be introduced by the Government via the Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Bill currently before Parliament and will be enacted by regulations to be laid by the Home Office. It is the Government's

intention that the underpin will give the beneficiaries of deceased members the opportunity to choose from which pension scheme to receive their survivor benefits for any service during the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2022.

From the information provided, it appears that Mr Wilkens's pension would qualify for that remedy. The impact of the remedy on Mr Wilkens's survivor benefits will not be known until the remedy is fully implemented by October 2023. At that stage, fire and rescue authorities will start the process of contacting all those entitled to the remedy with details of their options, as the statutory pensions administrator for each area.

In closing, I thank my hon. Friend again for securing this important debate and for the elegant way in which she made her points in the House this evening.

Question put and agreed to.

1.27 am

House adjourned.

Westminster Hall

Monday 28 February 2022

[SIR ROGER GALE *in the Chair*]

Online Abuse

[Relevant documents: Second Report of the Petitions Committee, Tackling Online Abuse, HC 766; Report of the Joint Committee on the Draft Online Safety Bill, Draft Online Safety Bill, HC 609; and the Eighth Report of the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee, The Draft Online Safety Bill and the legal but harmful debate, HC 1039.]

4.30 pm

Sir Roger Gale (in the Chair): I remind Members to observe social distancing and to wear masks as appropriate, please.

Before I call the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne North to move the motion, I wish to make a short statement about the sub judice measures. There are issues pertinent to the debate that may be relevant to specific cases. I remind Members that, under the terms of the House's sub judice resolution, no reference should be made to legal proceedings that are currently live before UK courts. For clarification, that applies to coroners' courts as well as to law courts.

Catherine McKinnell (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered e-petitions 272087 and 575833, relating to online abuse.

Thank you for chairing this incredibly important and timely debate, Sir Roger. The way that we view social media in this country has changed dramatically in the 12 years that I have been in Parliament. In the early days, people saw it as a force for good, whether they were activists using Twitter and Facebook to organise when the Arab spring began in 2011 or just groups of likeminded people sharing photos of their cats and clips from their favourite video games. Many people took the anonymity it offered to be an unqualified positive, allowing people to share deeply personal things and be themselves in a way that, perhaps, they felt they could not be in the real world. All that potential is still there.

Social media has been an invaluable tool in keeping us connected with friends and family during these incredibly challenging two years, but the dark side of social media has also become depressingly familiar to us all. We now worry about what exactly these giant corporations have been doing with our personal information. We read research describing echo chambers that fuel political polarisation and we see the unfolding mental health impact, particularly on young girls, of the heavily edited celebrity images that always seem to be just one or two swipes away.

As the Putin regime's disastrous invasion of Ukraine proceeds, Ukrainians do not just face the Russian troops who have entered their country. Moscow has, predictably, stepped up its misinformation campaigns on social media, with the intention of sowing confusion and undermining Ukrainian morale. Meanwhile, the ease of creating, editing and sharing videos that appear to document events has left many uncertain what to believe or where to turn for reliable information. The Ukrainian people are seeing their worst nightmare unfold in a tragic, bloody war that they did not want. Before I make my main comments, I am sure I speak for us all here in saying that our thoughts, our solidary and our resolve are with Ukraine today. I know that many Members wanted to be in this important debate, but events and issues in the main Chamber have rather taken over.

What prompted the Petitions Committee inquiry into online abuse and the report we are debating is the growing concern expressed by petitioners about the abuse that people receive on social media platforms and the painfully slow progress in making online spaces less toxic. The scale of public concern is shown by the popularity of the e-petitions that our Committee has received on this subject in recent years, particularly the petitions created by television personalities Bobby Norris and Katie Price.

Bobby, who is sitting in the Public Gallery, is a powerful advocate and has started two petitions on this issue. The first called for the online homophobia of which he has been a target to be made a specific criminal offence. The second, which prompted our inquiry, was created in September 2019 and called on the Government to require online trolls to be blocked from accessing social media platforms via their IP addresses. It received over 133,000 signatures before closing early due to the 2019 general election.

Members will also be aware that Katie Price has spoken movingly about the vile abuse to which her son Harvey has been subjected. She and her mum Amy told the Committee that platforms fail to take down racist and anti-disability abuse aimed at Harvey and continue to respond poorly to complaints and reports about abusive posts. Katie's petition was created in March 2021 and called on the Government to require social media users to link their accounts to a verified form of ID, so that abusive users can be more easily identified and prosecuted. The petition said:

"We have experienced the worst kind of abuse towards my disabled son and want to make sure that no one can hide behind their crime."

It received almost 700,000 signatures by the time it closed in September 2021, with more than 500,000 coming in the weeks after the deplorable racist abuse aimed at England footballers last summer.

The inquiry that we have just concluded took place in the context of the Government's draft Online Safety Bill. There is not time for me to talk through the Bill in detail today, but I know it will be the subject of intense scrutiny and debate in the coming months, and it is expected to impose new legal requirements on social media and other online platforms, including any platform that enables UK users to post content such as comments, images or videos, or to talk to others via messaging or forums online. I look forward to hearing the Government's comments on that, although I appreciate that we await the publication of the Bill.

Online abuse is not something that just affects people in the public eye; it is something that most of us have at least witnessed, if not been subjected to ourselves. Ofcom's pilot online harms survey in 2020-21 found that over a four-week period, 13% of respondents had experienced trolling, 10% offensive or upsetting language, and 9% hate speech or threats of violence. It is not an unfortunate side-effect of social media that victims can just shrug

[Catherine McKinnell]

off. Although the abuse takes place online, we know that it can have a significant and devastating impact on the lives of victims offline. Glitch, which we spoke to as part of our inquiry, collated testimonies of online abuse as part of its report, "The Ripple Effect: Covid-19 and the Epidemic of Online Abuse". One woman said:

"I shared a post on the rise in domestic abuse during lockdown and received dozens of misogynistic messages telling me I deserved to be abused, calling me a liar and a feminazi. My scariest experience, however, was when I shared a photograph of my young son and me. It was picked up by someone I assume to be on the far right, who retweeted it. Subsequently, throughout the day I received dozens of racist messages and threats directed at my son, at his father, and at me. It was terrifying."

Sadly, distressing accounts of fear, isolation, difficulty sleeping, anxiety and depression are alarmingly familiar for people who are targeted for online abuse and harassment. However, the abuse is not directed equally, and the online world does not stand apart from real-world inequalities. Our inquiry found that women, disabled people, those from lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities, and people from ethnic minority backgrounds are not only disproportionately targeted for abuse; often it is their very identities that are attached. International research conducted by the Pew Research Centre found that 70% of lesbian, gay and bisexual adults have encountered online harassment, compared with about 40% of straight adults.

We heard not only that incidents of antisemitic abuse have increased, but that Jewish women are disproportionately singled out for abuse. Similarly, although women are generally subjected to more online bullying than men are, ethnicity further influences a woman's vulnerability. Amnesty International's research suggests that black women are around 84% more likely than white women to be abused online. In this way, online abuse can reflect and amplify the inequalities that exist offline. It also reinforces marginalisation, discouraging the participation of such communities in online spaces. Demos, which we spoke to as part of our inquiry, catalogued the effect of misogynistic abuse on women's mental health as part of its 2021 report, "Silence, Woman". Many women quoted in the report talked of wanting to stop their social media presence altogether and leave activities that they otherwise enjoy. One said:

"At the moment, it makes me want to quit everything I do online."

Another said:

"I can't even look at social media because I'm so scared that I'll see more sexism. It's really affecting my mental health."

It is essential that any measures to tackle online abuse also recognise and respond to inequalities in the volume and severity of that abuse. Therefore, our report makes several recommendations to Government. First, we recommend that a statutory duty be placed on the Government to consult with civil society organisations representing communities most affected by online harassment. These organisations best understand the needs of victims, and such consultation will ensure that legislation is truly effective in tackling online harms. Their involvement is an important counterbalance to the lobbying efforts of social media companies.

Secondly, we believe that the draft Online Safety Bill should align with protections already established in the Equality Act 2010 and hate crime laws, and should include abuse based on protected characteristics as priority harmful content. It should list hate crime and violence against women and girls offences as specific relevant offences within the scope of the Bill's illegal content safety duties and specify the offences covered under those headings.

Finally, platforms should be required in their risk assessments to consider the differential risks faced by certain groups of users. Those requirements should be made explicit in the risk assessment duties set out in the draft Online Safety Bill. The evidence is clear: if someone is female, from an ethnic minority or from the LGBT community, they are much more likely to be abused online. Any legislation that assumes online abuse affects everybody equally, separate from real-world inequalities, does not address the problem. For the draft Online Safety Bill to be effective, it must require platforms to assess the vulnerability of certain communities online and tackle the unequal character of online abuse.

The related issues of online anonymity and identification of users also emerged as important and controversial issues, not only in our inquiry and the petitions that prompted it, but in the wider public and policy discussion about online abuse. The evidence we heard on the role of anonymity in facilitating abuse was mixed. Danny Stone of the Antisemitism Policy Trust, with whom I have worked closely as chair of the all-party parliamentary group against antisemitism, told us that the ability to post anonymously enables abusive behaviour and pointed to research demonstrating disinhibition effects from anonymity that can lead to increased hateful behaviour. Danny cited a figure suggesting that 40% of online antisemitic incidents over the course of a month originated from anonymous accounts. Nancy Kelley from Stonewall and Stephen Kinsella from Clean Up The Internet also argued that anonymity should be seen as a factor that increases the risk of users posting abuse and other harmful content.

However, other witnesses took different views, arguing that evidence of a causal link between anonymity and abusive behaviour is unclear. Chara Bakalis from Oxford Brookes University argued that

"focusing so much on anonymity and trying to make people say who they are online"

risks misconstruing the problem as a question of individual behaviour, rather than the overall toxicity of online spaces. We also heard that the ability to post anonymously can be important for vulnerable users. Ruth Smeeth from Index on Censorship told us how valuable it is for victims of domestic abuse to be able to share their stories without fear of being identified, and Ellen Judson from Demos warned that there is no way to reduce anonymity in a way that only hurts abusers.

Tackling the abuse itself, whether or not it comes from anonymous users, should therefore be the focus of efforts to resolve this problem. Allowing users to post anonymously always entails a risk. We recommend that online platforms should be required to specifically evaluate the links between anonymity and abusive content on their platforms, in order to consider what steps should be taken in response to it.

A related question is whether users should be required to identify themselves if they want to use social media, as a way of preventing online abuse. On Friday, the Government announced that the draft Online Safety Bill would require the largest social media companies to

allow users to verify their identities on a voluntary basis, and users will therefore have the option to block other users who choose not to verify their identity. This is a positive forward, giving users control over who they interact with and what they see online.

However, that would not be a silver bullet and should not be presented as such. It is an extra layer of protection, but it should not be the main focus for tackling online abuse. It absolutely does not absolve social media companies of their responsibility to make online spaces less toxic, which must be our focus, nor is it without risks. The Committee heard counter-arguments about users having to choose to use the option to block unverified users, which could mean that domestic abuse victims and other vulnerable users might be less likely to want to verify themselves, and therefore their voices will not be heard by other users. When Ofcom draws up its guidance, it must therefore offer ways to verify identity that are as robust but as inclusive as possible.

Bobby Norris's petition argues that it is "far too easy" for social media users who have been banned to simply create a new account and continue the abuse. Katie Price and her mum Amy also raised the issue of banned users who seemingly have no problem returning and behaving in the same appalling way. The major social media platforms told us that they already have rules against previously banned users returning, as well as the tools and data to identify users and prevent them from starting new accounts. However, the evidence that we heard does not support that.

Our inquiry found that preventing the return of abusive banned users is not a priority for social media companies, and some users are taking advantage of the lax enforcement of bans to continue abusing their victims. That is a significant failing, and platforms must be held accountable for it. Robust measures must be put in place to require social media platforms to demonstrate that they can identify previously banned users when they try to create new accounts and must discourage—or, even better, prevent—unstable accounts from posting abusive content.

Where a platform's rules prohibit users from returning to the platform, they should be able to show that they are adequately enforcing those rules. The regulations must have teeth, so we also recommend that Ofcom should have the power to issue fines or take other enforcement action if a platform cannot demonstrate that.

We also took evidence from the Law Commission, which has recommended the creation of two new offences covering online communications. The proposed introduction of a harm-based offence would criminalise communications

"likely to cause harm to a likely audience",

with harm defined as

"psychological harm, amounting at least to serious distress".

An additional new offence covering threatening communications would criminalise communications that convey

"a threat of serious harm",

such as grievous bodily harm or rape.

We also heard that if the proposed new offences were introduced, some abusive content may be treated as

"a more serious offence with a more serious penalty"

than if it were prosecuted under existing law. The Committee believes that is a positive step forward that would better capture the context-dependent nature of some online abuse. A photograph of someone's front door, for example, may be entirely innocent in some contexts, but can take on quite sinister connotations in others, where it quite clearly implies a threat to a person's safety.

The Government should also monitor how effectively any new communications offences, particularly the Law Commission's proposed harm-based offence, protect people and provide redress for victims of online abuse, while also protecting freedom of expression online. The Government should publish an initial review of the workings and impact of any new communications offences within the first two years after they come into force. We have to make sure we take this opportunity to get this right and review it within two years to make sure it is as effective as it can be.

The Law Commission also recently concluded a review of hate crime law. It acknowledges two points highlighted in the Petitions Committee's 2019 report: the unequal treatment of protected characteristics in hate crime law, and the failure to classify abuse of disabled people as a hate crime in cases where the offence may have been motivated by a sense that disabled people are easy targets, rather than being clearly motivated by hostility to disabled people.

The commission recommended extending existing aggravated hate crime offences to cover all characteristics currently protected under hate crime law, and reforming the motivation test for an offence to be treated as a hate crime, proposing an alternate test of motivation on the grounds of "hostility or prejudice". The Government have stated that hate crime offences will be listed in the draft Online Safety Bill as priority illegal content. That means that the legislation will require platforms to take steps to proactively prevent users from encountering hate crime content.

There is some confusion, however, as we do not yet know if this will be limited to the existing stand-alone racially and religiously aggravated and stirring up hatred offences, or if the intention is to require platforms to proactively prevent users from encountering, for example, communications that involve hostility based on a protected characteristic such as disability. When the Minister responds, will he tell us what the Government expect the practical impact to be on how platforms are required to deal with, for example, the abuse of disabled people online?

Our inquiry heard again and again that changes to the law on online abuse risk becoming irrelevant, when we lack the capacity to even enforce the law as it stands. The uncomfortable truth is that, despite the dedication of our officers, police resources have been diminished to the point where even relatively simple crimes in the offline world go unsolved more often than not, according to Home Office statistics. Meanwhile, the proportion of reported crimes leading to successful prosecutions has reached an all-time low.

It is not surprising that we found such scepticism about the state's capacity to enforce a law against criminal online abuse, which, in many cases, will be complex and time-consuming to investigate. Ruth Smeeth gave the following evidence to the Committee:

"When I got my first death threat in 2014, at that point the police did not have access to Facebook. It was banned…Although they can now see it, they do not have the resources available to help them prosecute. Whether the legislation is amended or not, it is so incredibly important that the criminal justice system can do its work. To do that, they need resources."

[Catherine McKinnell]

While we believe the Law Commission's proposals are eminently sensible, we are deeply concerned that the inadequate resourcing of our police and criminal justice system is the real elephant in the room. It could prevent us from dealing with the most serious forms of online abuse, such as death threats, the sending of indecent images and illegal hate speech.

I suspect that the Treasury is unlikely to look favourably on this resourcing issue any time soon, but the Committee would be neglecting its duty if we failed to draw attention to it. Resources in the police and criminal justice system have to be an essential part of the conversation on tackling online harms. If the Government are serious about tackling the most serious forms of online abuse, they must ensure that our police and courts have the resources to enforce the laws against it.

Although we talk a lot about Twitter, Facebook and TikTok in these discussions, abusive content hosted on smaller platforms also plays a significant role in encouraging prejudicial attitudes and real-world harm. Some of these platforms have become safe havens for some of the most troubling material available online, including holocaust denial, terrorist propaganda films and covid-19 disinformation. From an internet browser today, anyone can easily access videos that show graphic footage of real-world violence and allege the attacks are part of a Jewish plot, or find an entire channel dedicated to the idea that black people are a biological weapon designed to wipe out western civilisation—I could go on. Danny Stone of the Antisemitism Policy Trust told the Committee:

> "It is not just the Twitters and Facebooks of this world; there are a range of harms occurring across a range of different platforms. It is sinister, we have a problem and, at the moment, it is completely unregulated. Something needs to be done."

We have heard no evidence to suggest that the negative effects of abuse on people's wellbeing or freedom of expression are any less serious because the abuse comes from a smaller platform. Failure to address such content would risk significantly undermining the impact of the legislation. The duties set out in the draft Online Safety Bill relating to content that is "legal but harmful" to adults must apply to a wide range of platforms to ensure that abusive content is removed from the online sphere, not merely shifted from the larger platforms to darker corners of the internet.

The Committee therefore recommends that the draft Online Safety Bill require smaller platforms to take steps to protect users from content that is legal but harmful to adults, with a particular focus on ensuring that such platforms cannot be used to host content that has the potential to encourage hate or prejudice towards individuals or communities. They do not get a free pass just because they are smaller platforms.

The Minister has previously indicated that the Government have considered amending the conditions for classing a platform as category 1, so that it covers platforms with either a high number of users or posing a high risk of harm to users, rather than both conditions having to be met, as is the case in the draft Bill. We would welcome an update on whether the Government are minded to take that forward.

Legislators have a way of making the debate around online safety sound incredibly complicated and inaccessible. However, the fundamental issue is simple: too many people are exploiting online platforms to abuse others, and not enough has been done to protect the victims and create online spaces where people are free to express themselves in a constructive way. In the offline world, there are rules on acceptable behaviour and how we treat other people. We invest huge amounts of time and energy into ensuring that those rules are followed as much as possible. The same simply cannot be said of the digital sphere.

The online world has changed dramatically in such a short time. Our laws and regulations have not kept up. They have allowed a culture to develop where abuse has become normalised. It was deeply troubling to hear in every single one of the Committee's school engagement sessions that pupils believe that abuse is just a normal part of the online experience. Is that really what we want our children to grow up believing? We can do so much better than that.

Social media companies make so much money. It is not too much to ask that they invest some of that in ensuring that their platforms are safe, and that people cannot inflict enormous harm on others without consequences. Of course, there will always be some abuse and inappropriate behaviour online, and nobody expects any Government to prevent it all, just as no home security system could stop every clever and determined burglar, but we can certainly do a lot better.

The Committee welcomes the opportunity provided by the draft Online Safety Bill, and our report sets out several ways the Government can improve the legislation. Ministers must recognise the disproportionate way that women, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and LGBT people are targeted, so that nobody feels they cannot express themselves or engage with others online. We need to hold the platforms accountable if they fail to prevent banned users from rejoining, and we must ensure our police have the resources they need to tackle the most dangerous forms of online abuse. We look forward to the Government addressing our recommendations when their formal response to our report is published, and to the Minister's response today.

Social media offers such fantastic opportunities to connect with others and is a real source of positivity and enjoyment for so many people. If we get the Bill right, we will be taking the first step towards bringing some much-needed light to the dark side of social media and amplifying the benefits of the unprecedented connectivity of the world we live in. Our report and today's debate are important steps in bringing to Parliament the concerns of hundreds of thousands of members of the public who want a safer and more equal online world. We will continue to hold Ministers to account on behalf of the petitioners, so that the draft Online Safety Bill makes its way through Parliament and achieves what we know petitioners want.

4.57 pm

Damian Collins (Folkestone and Hythe) (Con): It is a pleasure to speak in the debate and address the petitions on online abuse, which reflect the understandable growing public concern about the prevalence of abusive material and behaviour online, in particular on social media. I chaired the Joint Committee on the Draft Online Safety Bill—the pre-legislative scrutiny Committee. We had consistent evidence from people about the nature of the

abuse they had faced online, and how that abuse creates spaces online where not only are people targeted, but hate speech, racist speech, vile abuse and extremism have become normalised within the echo chambers of certain sectors of social media.

People are frustrated because they have raised these concerns directly with social media platforms, their Member of Parliament and the Government. The sort of action that they think should be taken to combat abusive behaviour, and that would be taken if the behaviour took place in a public space, is not being taken online. People cannot just log out of their accounts. We cannot just say, "Well, the easiest way to avoid online abuse is not to be online." Many people are required to be online due to the nature of their work. Why should people not be able to go online and enjoy, as the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne North (Catherine McKinnell) said, the connectivity that comes from being on social media without being the victim or target of abuse? We do not create spaces for abuse in the physical world; we should not create such spaces in the online world either.

As the hon. Member said, the draft Online Safety Bill is big and quite complicated. I urge everyone to read the 60,000-word report by the Joint Committee. The Bill becomes a lot simpler and clearer after reading the report. At the heart of the Bill is something simple: activity that is illegal offline should be regulated online, and the laws that Parliament has created and that our courts enforce offline should be applied online as well. Offences are committed not just by someone who is abusing another person, but by a platform that actively hosts, amplifies and creates an audience for that content, and platforms should be liable to combat abuse. Indeed, without that liability, we will not be able to combat it.

Online platforms should not be amplifying abusive behaviour to others. In a shocking incident last summer—one of many—members of the English national football team were the subject of racist abuse after the final of the European championships. That was foreseen by the football authorities, who warned social media companies that this would be a problem, but the companies did nothing to combat it. The issue is not just that foreseeable abuse was not acted on and stopped; it is that social media companies' systems were making people aware that the abuse was taking place, and even highlighting the key words. People were prosecuted in the courts following that event because of their use of racist language, and the racial abuse directed towards others.

We know what the offences are, and we know what the thresholds are for legal action. That standard should be enforced online. The draft Online Safety Bill should, by regulating illegal activity online, set the minimum standards required. It should allow us to set the safety standards that we think should be set, so that they are based not on terms of service written by American technology companies in California, but on our laws and the thresholds we set to keep people safe. They should be proactively enforced. The company should not be waiting for people to complain; they should be proactively looking for this content.

I will focus my remarks on a part of the Bill that it is important to get right: priority harms. The term that has been used is "legal but harmful". Clearly illegal content exists; content that constitutes child abuse or a terrorist offence is clearly illegal and no context is needed to understand why it is bad. The Government propose creating a schedule of priority harms of other offences. I am pleased to see the steps the Government have taken since the Joint Committee report was published; they are writing more of those offences into the Bill, and making it absolutely clear when they apply. However, we do need certainty; victims need to know that an offence has been committed. They should be seeking redress based on the fact that an offence has been committed against them. The social media companies need to know which offences are in scope, and what they are expected to do in different situations. The regulator needs to give certainty, based on the law and its regulatory powers, about where those thresholds are.

That is why the Joint Committee recommended removing the definition of "legal but harmful" from the Bill, and instead writing into the Bill those offences that it applies to, making it really clear which offences are in scope. Once the regulator is established, its first job will be to create the risk registers from which it will create the codes of practice that apply to the different companies. Then the regulator will be well placed to act if Ofcom feels that there are gaps in the regulatory regime—if there are offences that should have been included but were not, or if new offences need to be added to the priority harm areas. It is much better if offences in the regulatory regime are based on laws that are understood, that Parliament has passed and that the courts enforce, so that there is no ambiguity. I understand the desire to future-proof the legislation, and to say, "Something bad may happen that we cannot foresee; there should be provision to regulate for that." However, it is difficult to take enforcement action against a social media company for not acting against content that was not proscribed or recognised by the regulator.

The Government have done a good job of bringing so many offences into the Bill. One of the concerns was whether equalities legislation was enforceable online—how would we enforce race hate, and other abuse, online? The Government have made clear how that could be done. However, it would be better if the regulatory regime was based on offences named in the Bill, rather than our having an additional general definition of something that is "legal but harmful".

I do not believe that the Government's intention is for the regulator to start creating new offences; the Government want to bring clarity. Having a tight focus on existing offences, as regulated through the codes of practice that set the minimum safety standards, gives more clarity and more certainty. That is what people want. They want to know what they are being protected from, that the companies have to be proactive in removing certain sorts of content, and that there is no ambiguity or confusion over what that is and how it should be done. When the Minister responds and the Government give their thoughts about the final draft of the draft Online Safety Bill, they should bear that in mind. The Bill will provide a lot more clarity if we give people certainty—both those who are concerned about freedom of expression, and those who want to know that certain offences will be covered by the Bill.

5.4 pm

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I am very pleased to participate in this debate. I congratulate the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne North (Catherine McKinnell) on setting the scene so well, and on representing the Petitions Committee. My office faces online abuse

[Jim Shannon]

regularly; the draft Online Safety Bill will lead to changes. I give credit to the Minister, who has always been very responsive to the issues that we bring to his attention. Today I seek confirmation that the commitment that the Minister has given will actually lead to the changes that we want. The petitions come at a pertinent time, as we are waiting to see the next stages of the draft Online Safety Bill. The Minister today has an opportunity to hear the points raised by our constituents.

As the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne North said, covid-19 has moved many people online. Undoubtedly, people say things they should not online. They think there is no recrimination or accountability, but there is, and I hope the draft Online Safety Bill will give us the change that I wish to see. The online harms White Paper of April 2019 said that

"all pornography sites should have duties to stop children from accessing them, regardless of whether the sites hosted user-to-user content",

that

"individual users should be able to complain to an Ombudsman when platforms failed to comply with their obligations",

and that

"a senior manager should be designated as the 'safety controller' with liability for a new offence—failing to comply with their obligations when there was clear evidence of repeated and systemic failings that resulted in a significant risk of serious harm to users."

That was the request in April 2021. Perhaps the Minister can indicate whether we have got to that stage.

The hon. Members for Newcastle upon Tyne North, and for Folkestone and Hythe (Damian Collins), referred to attacks on disabled people. The Minister is well aware of the disgraceful and disgusting comments made by an anonymous internet user to my colleague Diane Dodds MLA. They were absolutely despicable, atrocious, hurtful and dirty comments regarding the tragic death of her wee son, who was disabled. Politics had nothing to do with the response whatever. There was a cry from mothers and fathers throughout my constituency, urging me to make clear the changes that are needed to remove anonymity and remove the power from the unknown and faceless warrior trolls—those who pick on the most hurtful aspects of life and spew bile.

The person responsible happened to be from the Republic of Ireland, and I am very pleased that the investigation, which is ongoing, has ascertained who they are. My mailbox contained much correspondence from people who do not necessarily vote for my party. They were expressing their support for a lady who does not deserve such comments, regardless of her politics. That is an example of online abuse and its impact. That sums up one of the issues that I do not believe is fully addressed in the draft Online Safety Bill. I would like much stronger restrictions, to remove anonymity and to give platforms the responsibility to immediately remove posts and users once a complaint has been made. The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children—I declare an interest; I contribute regularly to the charity—argues for a regulator, who would enforce a duty of care, and a duty to protect children on social media. I make that plea again to the Minister, who I know is keen to respond.

Barnardo's welcomed the draft Online Safety Bill, although it cautioned that the devil is in the detail, as it always is, and said that it would work with the Government to make sure that the legislation was effective as possible. Again, perhaps the Minister can respond to the comments from Barnardo's and the NSPCC. Anne Longfield, the former Children's Commissioner, said she was pleased that the Government would introduce a duty of care. However, she said it was essential that the draft Online Safety Bill was introduced as soon as possible to keep children safe. I do not pretend to have expertise—I have enough difficulty turning on my laptop, to be honest—but for those who use the internet regularly, there has to be protection.

Another great concern is about access to pornography. A survey carried out by Middlesex University, which was jointly commissioned by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and the Children's Commissioner for England, showed that around 53% of 11 to 16-year-olds have seen graphic porn content online and that 94% of them had viewed adult content by the time they were just 14. In total, 1,001 children aged between 11 and 16 were questioned and the survey found that 65% of the 15 to 16-year-olds had viewed pornography and that 28% of 11 to 12-year-olds had done so. More than half of the boys surveyed—53%—said they thought that pornography was a realistic portrayal of sex, as did 39% of the girls surveyed.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne North talked about that issue, and I totally agree with her because it shows the destructive effect that pornography has on our young people if they think that it is the norm, when quite clearly it is not. We need to correct that. I thank the hon. Lady for making that point; it was one of the issues that I wanted to talk about as well.

More than a third of 13 to 14-year-old boys and a fifth of 11 to 12-year-old boys also said they wanted to copy the action that they had seen. What will society be like if what is perverted and wrong is seen as normal? We have to address that very harshly, very strongly, very firmly and with great focus. I look forward to hearing the Minister's response on that issue.

This is a problem and we need to ask if it is being addressed in the Online Safety Bill thus far. I have my reservations and they are shared by Christian Action, Research, and Education, which says:

"The Bill is silent in respect to commercial pornographic websites that fall outside the scope of the Bill at present. It is also silent on whether the Bill will specifically cover some of the most violent pornography that is concerning because of its impact on violence against women and girls.

In its final submission to the Online Safety Bill Select Committee, CARE said it 'disagreed with the Government's claim that the most accessed pornographic sites will be covered by the Bill. The current definition of "user-generated" content means porn sites could simply amend how they operate to make sure they are outside of scope.'"

The Minister is always forthcoming with his responses and he is always incredibly helpful, but will he explain on the record how the Government will ensure that that will not happen? CARE's concern is to thwart porn sites, to stop them acting outside the guidelines and laws by getting the rules moved slightly and then suddenly finding themselves protected.

The protection of innocents is something we must get right. We cannot protect our children from the world indefinitely—I know that—but we have to make every

effort to do the best we can. However, the ability of children to access dangerous and harmful pornography must be curtailed. I would very much appreciate it if the Minister could outline how we can guard against certain user-generated content and keep it away from our children. With respect, I remain unconvinced that the Bill goes far enough.

The Library briefing for this debate notes that the Minister has said that priority offences will include encouraging or assisting suicide. That is so important. We all know of people in our constituencies who have lost their lives after listening to what someone said on a website. There are also offences relating to sexual images, including revenge and extreme pornography, which I have referred to already. We really need to address those priority offences. Other offences include incitement to and threats of violence, hate crime, public order offences, harassment and stalking, which many constituents have come to see me about. There are also drug-related offences, weapons and firearm offences, fraud and financial crime, money laundering, exploiting prostitutes for gain—it is despicable how pimps exploit ladies for their own gain—and organised immigration offences.

I am glad that the Minister has said that all of those offences will be priority offences. I want to ensure, however, that legislation, including the Online Safety Bill, can give us the confidence that our children will be protected, that vulnerable ladies will not be challenged, and that those who use online means for their perverted and evil deeds will be held accountable.

With that in mind, I believe that more needs to be done to get the Bill right. I look forward to the Government and the Minister, who is particularly interested in this subject—there is no dispute about that—doing the best they can to put the right Bill in place to provide the protection and confidence that I and my constituents need.

5.15 pm

Siobhan Baillie (Stroud) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Roger. I thank the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne North (Catherine McKinnell) for her wide-ranging and powerful opening speech, and my hon. Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Damian Collins) for the incredible work he has done with the Committee.

I am grateful for the opportunity to talk about online harms and online abuse. We have heard some positive announcements from the Government, thanks to the Minister's hard work; no doubt, we will hear more about that in due course. I have spoken before about the misery of the dark cyber streets and alleyways. Our constituents around the country are looking to us to help clean up digital Dodge City. The Government have responded by creating a wide-ranging draft online harms Bill and by taking the extra step of having prelegislative scrutiny, which was incredibly thorough and created the report on which we are concentrating our minds today.

Not all abuse is anonymous—I know that because I get quite a lot of it myself—but the most frightening threats are often from faceless, nameless and cowardly perpetrators, who prevent us from being able to assess and understand the true risk of a post because we do not know who is behind it. I have focused my time on campaigning to tackle anonymous abuse. I promoted a ten-minute rule Bill seeking verification measures, so that social media users could verify their own accounts. Why should only celebrities and MPs, for example, have blue ticks? That should be open to all and be clearly labelled. The Bill would also allow social media users to only follow and be followed by verified accounts. On the issue of verification, the petitions have attracted nearly 700,000 signatures. I thank everybody who has worked so hard to raise this issue.

I have spoken to the new Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and her team on a number of occasions. She has genuinely listened to the concerns of victims and I can see an incredible change of tack in the draft legislation, which addresses much more clearly the daily experience of social media users and the ways in which we can improve that experience.

I came to this issue originally because I received a lot of abuse when I announced my pregnancy, which is bonkers in this day and age. After that, Stroud residents spoke to me about their own experience of online abuse. They were everyday people, such as social workers, Army veterans and schoolgirls. The cyber-flashing issues faced by so many young girls are appalling, and the majority of that comes from anonymous accounts.

This job is very weird on a normal day, but I have been able to talk to some incredibly glamorous, popular and well-followed celebrities. I thank Bobby Norris, Katie Price, Emily Atack, Malin Andersson and others I have spoken to. They have brought to the fore the fact that, while we may look at them as glamorous people who are to be envied, behind the scenes they are suffering so much because of online abuse, which is scary, debilitating and damaging to mental health. Given all the people who are suffering, it is right that the Government have listened and made changes.

A few months ago, I gave a speech on this subject and tried to explain how parents had received abuse following the death of their children or babies. I really struggled, as I will never understand why people wake up in the morning and think it is okay to start sending nasty, threatening, scary or harassing messages to people. It is completely mindless and it needs to be shut down.

Briefly, we know that anonymity and lack of verification mean less self-policing, because users feel less accountable and responsible for their actions. We know that there is less actual policing because it is so difficult to trace people who are anonymous, and the preventive and protective measures can often be dodged—if we block or ban an abusive user on a platform, they just start a new account, as we have heard from other Members present today.

It is worth going over some of the challenges that my proposals to tackle anonymity and to introduced verification rightly received. First, people said that anonymity is a source of protection for marginalised and endangered people—there is a force for good in it. I completely agree that anonymity can not only fuel abuse, but offer a means of protection to enable people to get online. That is why the nuanced approach of giving social media users more choice, as we are suggesting, is so important.

Secondly, this is no magic bullet. The proposal would not stop all abuse online, and it would be wrong to suggest that that would be the case. That will not happen. We have not been able to eradicate bullying in the playground over all the years that that has been going on. However, our proposed measures, which have been added to the Online Safety Bill—I am so grateful

[Siobhan Baillie]

for that—along with the creation of a regulator and other measures, will really help to significantly reduce abuse of all forms, but anonymous abuse in particular. People who choose that option can in effect opt out of seeing it.

I will conclude. I have kept my comments relatively short because I talk so often about this matter. I am keen to hear from the Minister and his opposite number, the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Alex Davies-Jones), about what is to come. What we are seeing so far is very positive. It will be a very lively piece of legislation, not least because it is massive. It is right for such a serious piece of legislation to receive so much scrutiny and challenge. If it has the victims of abuse at its heart, and if we think about the whole range of different people who experience abuse daily and about the campaigning that is happening—supporting the FA with Kick It Out, and the racism and antisemitism groups—it is pretty obvious that this is the right course of action. We will be on the right side of history pushing the Bill through. I thank the Minister and his team for everything that they are doing.

5.22 pm

Alex Davies-Jones (Pontypridd) (Lab): I am very glad to respond to this important debate on behalf of the Opposition. It is also brilliant to serve under your chairmanship again, Sir Roger. I place on the record my thanks to my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne North (Catherine McKinnell) for her excellent work on the Petitions Committee inquiry, for introducing both e-petitions and for outlining the issues facing us and why we desperately need the Online Safety Bill.

Clearly, there is a strong appetite among constituents across the UK for a change in regulation of the online space. The strength of feeling about the need to strengthen online protections is crystal clear. Colleagues across the House noted that this afternoon. I also pay tribute to the hard work of campaigners, including Katie Price, Emily Atack, Amy Hart and Bobby Norris, whom I was hoping to have with us today. They have called for action for some time now, along with so many others. As has been noted, the petitions have amassed more than 800,000 signatures—a significant number that cannot be ignored. It is abundantly clear that the Government must now take notice and, most importantly, take decisive action.

The experiences and stories shared in the debate bring a very human issue into sharp relief. As others have said, it is easy to get lost in technical language when speaking about internet regulation, so let me be clear: the Government can and should do more. The Conservatives promised that the Government would bring what was billed in their online harms White Paper as "world leading" legislation urgently to the forefront of the parliamentary agenda. Yet here we are, more than three years later, and we are still waiting.

Never has such legislation been more timely, given what we are seeing with the disinformation and misinformation being spread online about the appalling situation in, and the invasion of, Ukraine. All our thoughts are with the people of Ukraine and we stand in solidarity with them today.

The Government's first attempt at a comprehensive draft online harms Bill was widely seen as too narrow, hard to follow and confusing in parts, and it was indeed in need of significant strengthening. That opinion was shared throughout the sector. The children's charity the NSPCC conducted its own analysis and found that the first draft of the Bill failed in 10 of its 27 indicators for the protection of children. Those damning concerns were shared elsewhere. A 2021 study by the online safety group Internet Matters found that the 2 million most vulnerable children in Britain are seven times more likely to come to harm online than their peers across the globe. Of course, colleagues and, I am sure, the Minister will already know that.

The need for change and real regulation online has been well reported and the reality is that without robust change, more and more people will continue to suffer abuse at the hands of an unregulated internet. We need only to reflect on last summer and the England side's success at the men's UEFA Euros final to scratch the surface of the power of the internet to perpetuate hate and abuse. Although I know that colleagues will be aware that I am an immensely proud Welsh MP and will therefore always naturally believe that the Welsh side was utterly robbed of glory—not just then, but at the weekend, too—the Euros final was a hugely exciting time for all our country and the nation as a whole. However, despite the incredible work of the team and the pride and unity that those football matches brought to so many, their achievements were hugely tarnished by the utterly shocking abuse a number of players faced online following an impossibly difficult penalty shoot-out. It is beyond reprehensible that social media companies defended the use of a monkey emoji—we all know what was meant—saying that it was out of scope and could not be regulated because it was an emoji.

It is not just about the football last summer. Only this afternoon, I saw a great, brilliant and prominent black Welsh rugby player, Ashton Hewitt, reaching out and begging Twitter to block an anonymous troll with the username LladdPoblDduon. For the non-Welsh speakers in the room, that username literally translates as "killing black people". How are people even allowed to create an account with that handle?

That is why the Labour party has long called for tougher penalties for those at the top of social media companies. Ofcom will take on some of the biggest tech firms in the world, with all the power and resources at their fingertips. It is a David and Goliath situation and Ofcom must have access to a full range of tools in its belt, including a provision to make top bosses criminally liable for persistently failing to tackle online harm. We all want to see effective and fit-for-purpose legislation that cracks down on harms and the hate and fake news that flourish online. I reach out to the Minister and to his Government—he has the cross-party support to ensure that that happens.

Labour believes that it is only by making senior social media executives personally liable for failures to prevent dangerous content from spreading, including that which glorifies violence, racism, antisemitism, homophobia or misogyny, that we will ensure that the social media companies begin to take it seriously. Instead of doing the right thing, the Government U-turned on the commitment for the Bill to have its Second Reading before Christmas.

The Minister knows that the scale of the problem is huge, yet despite years of warnings from Labour alongside campaigning groups and charities alike, the Government have persistently delayed robust action. The vast range of people, from young to old, being impacted by online trolls hiding behind anonymity is truly massive, and we heard powerful testimony from the hon. Member for Stroud (Siobhan Baillie) about her experiences of suffering at the hands of anonymous trolls. It is a sad fact that women in public life see it as the norm that we are treated online as an easy target for abuse. By all means, debate my politics and my voting record, talk to me about my politics and my policies, but criticising my appearance, my accent, how I look and how I dress, just because I am a woman in public life, is completely unacceptable.

Although we welcome some of last week's announcements, including the one that large social networks will be forced to let people filter out unverified accounts in an attempt to tackle anonymous abuse, there are still some gaping holes. They failed to address the back-of-house issues, especially those to do with illegal activity online. Moreover, the smaller social networks are yet to be factored in, as outlined by the Antisemitism Policy Trust.

The Government need to wake up and recognise that, sadly, when it comes to perpetuating hate, fake news or other negative behaviours online, the reality is that where there is a will, there is a way. The upcoming draft Online Safety Bill is a unique opportunity to put those wrongs right. That brings me to Labour's key asks of the Minister this afternoon. I am keen to give the Minister plenty of time to respond, and we have that this afternoon, so I will keep my questions brief.

Given the urgency, and the devastation that an unregulated internet is having on users every day, will the Minister finally confirm exactly when this long-awaited legislation will be brought back to Parliament? We are looking for an exact date. Surely, given the long delays already incurred, giving clarification is the least that the Minister can do.

As I and others have already mentioned, anonymous abuse occurs not just on large platforms. In fact, some of the smaller platforms can be the most problematic in hosting, promoting and perpetuating abuse. Will the Minister confirm exactly how the upcoming legislation will ensure that the issues with smaller but high-harm platforms are also addressed?

I know that the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) raised this point, and it is an issue that I am personally concerned about. The Minister recognises the horrifying content that is so easily accessed online by anyone with an internet connection. I welcome the Government's recent commitment to introduce age-verification technology to prevent under-18s from accessing pornography online, but the Minister must also know that the technology is far more advanced than ever before. Only this week, the BBC reported the extremely disturbing story about the Metaverse app, which, in essence, allows children into virtual strip clubs online. A researcher was able to pose as a 13-year-old girl and quickly witnessed grooming, sexual material, racist insults and a rape threat in a virtual reality world. I encourage colleagues who are not familiar with the story to read up on it and see the graphics for themselves, because they are utterly shocking and appalling. It just cannot be right. It is all very well banning access to pornography, but Twitter has a minimum age threshold of 13 and fails to block pornographic content on its site. It is simply unfathomable that that is allowed to continue.

The internet is an inherently creative space and the legislation must keep up. How will the Minister ensure that the Bill is future-proofed, to prevent it from being out of date—the next generation of technology is already coming through—by the time it is finally put in place?

Lastly, I repeat the calls made by the hon. Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Damian Collins) and the Joint Committee on the draft Online Safety Bill. Labour firmly believes that the online space must be kept in check by an independent regulator, instead of by distant bodies in Silicon Valley. That is what is urgently needed, and what we have urgently needed for a long time. I hope that the Minister is listening.

5.32 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Chris Philp): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship once again, Sir Roger. Colleagues will be pleased to hear that I do not anticipate taking up the entire two hours that remain.

First, I associate myself with the remarks made by the shadow Minister, the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Alex Davies-Jones), and by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne North (Catherine McKinnell) about the terrible events unfolding in Ukraine, which are being debated in the Chamber at the moment. I know that we are all deeply concerned and want to send our thoughts, prayers and more to the people of Ukraine, who are suffering so terribly.

I congratulate and thank the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne North for introducing the debate with such eloquence and passion. I extend those thanks and congratulations to the hundreds of thousands of people across the whole United Kingdom who signed the petitions, whose voices are being heard today, and especially to those who took the time and the trouble to organise the petitions, including Bobby Norris, who has done a huge amount of work in this vital area. I am sure that we all want to pay tribute to him.

Although the online world presents enormous opportunities for communication, research and better understanding one another, there is no question but that, as the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne North put it at the very beginning, in many areas of enormous concern people are suffering terrible abuse that affects their day-to-day lives in the most awful and unimaginable ways. More than that, on occasion, people are subjected to abuse that is straightforwardly illegal and deserves criminal prosecution.

The Government fully recognise the problems in the online space, and the devastating impact that they can have on victims. We also recognise the fact that women, girls, people in the LGBT+ community, members of ethnic minorities, and others, very often—as the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne North said at the beginning—suffer disproportionately severe forms of abuse online, simply because of who they are. That is a point that the shadow Minister also made very powerfully. It is simply unacceptable, and it is essential that we take action.

[Chris Philp]

The draft Online Safety Bill is the principal vehicle through which action will be taken. It is a huge piece of legislation, as Members have mentioned, and I want to touch on some of the points raised about it during the debate. The shadow Minister asked about timing. It is true that it has been some time in preparation—from the White Paper, to the draft Bill presented last May, to the Joint Committee's prelegislative work through the autumn and up until just before Christmas. I would like to take the opportunity to pay particular tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Damian Collins), who chaired that Committee, which did fantastic work. Its report has almost 200 pages and we have been devouring every single one of them. To answer the question about timing, the introduction of the updated Bill is very imminent. I will not give a precise date, because it is still subject to collective Government agreement, but it is a matter of a small number of weeks, if I can put it that way. I hope that that gives an indication that it is extremely imminent and that all that work is about to come to fruition.

I want to make it clear that the Government have been in very careful listening mode for the past nine or 10 months since publication. We have, of course, listened to the Joint Committee and its report. The Select Committee on Digital, Culture, Media and Sport also produced a report, and Members who have been raising points about the Bill in Parliament and elsewhere. As Members will have gathered, significant changes will be made to the Bill on introduction. It will be very different, in a number of significant ways, when it is introduced very shortly, compared with the draft version published last May. That is due to the work that parliamentarians and other stakeholders—some children's charities were mentioned earlier—have done. We want to take every opportunity to make sure that the Bill is as good as it can be. It is not really a party political issue, is it? I am sure there will be areas to improve, but when the Bill is introduced I hope that the House of Commons will get behind it and speak as one for the whole country, because we all have the same objectives. I think that the scrutiny that has already taken place has been an example of Parliament at its best, and I hope that when the Bill goes through the House it will be another example of Parliament working at its best.

I want to pick up on a few points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe. Obviously, I cannot pre-announce all of the updates that will be in the Bill. Some have been announced already. He made important points about ensuring clarity on how the different provisions will operate. We have already made it clear that we will specify the priority illegal offences, and social media firms will have to be proactive in preventing such illegal things from appearing online. That will be a first step towards providing some of the clarity referred to by my hon. Friend. There is then the question of how we bring similar clarity in the area of legal but harmful; there will be more to say on that in the very near future.

Whether or not the illegal act or illegal thing is a priority item, there will be a duty to take action where any illegal activity occurs online. Critically, that particular duty applies to all platforms, regardless of size, so even the smaller ones that are not category 1 will have to take action—proactive action for priority illegal harms, and retrospective action for everything else that is illegal. Similarly, on things that are legal but harmful to children, which is obviously a major area of concern, that duty will apply to all platforms where children are likely to be significantly present, regardless of the size of the platform. The only qualification on size applies to the area of legal but harmful to adults, where the obligations sit with the larger, category 1 companies. I want to make clear, however, that the Bill as previously drafted in May also applied to all platforms, regardless of size, the obligations relating to content that is illegal and legal but harmful to children. That point came up a couple of times.

The hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon), who unfortunately has had to go to another meeting, raised points in his speech about the exposure of children to pornography. He was quite right to raise those points: 51% of 11 to 13-year-olds are exposed to online pornography. The overwhelming majority of parents want that to stop and, as the shadow Minister said, just a couple of weeks ago the Government made an announcement making it clear that the provisions on pornography would be expanded to cover all online pornography, including commercial pornography, which was previously outside the scope of the Bill. That vital change has been announced already and will be in the Bill on introduction, as will the obligations on the face of the Bill to adopt age-assurance measures to prevent children under 18 from accessing pornography. Again, that is an important change to make the Bill a lot stronger than it was in its first draft. I hope that that gives a foretaste, a flavour, of the way changes are being made to the Bill to ensure that we really do prevent the terrible abuse that we have heard about this afternoon.

A number of hon. Members asked about enforcement, because clearly it is all very well writing in obligations to stop illegal activity and to control abuse, but if the enforcement measures are not there, then, as the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne North and others said, the legislation is toothless. I will not comment on the police, the prosecution, side of this—because that is for my colleagues in the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice—other than to observe that 20,000 extra police officers are being recruited and I hope that some of them can direct their attention to such issues.

The shadow Minister has said that it is important that the Bill is enforced domestically, here in the United Kingdom, and that we do not rely on people in California. That is of course why Ofcom is being appointed as the regulator. There was a question about resourcing. Between the Government and Ofcom, we will put an extra £110 million over two years into resourcing up in order to prepare for the Bill's coming into force, and thereafter Ofcom will raise the money that it needs to operate by charging fees to the social media companies themselves. The £110 million has been agreed already; that was in the spending review a few months ago, so the resourcing for Ofcom is hardwired in. As for its ability to then take enforcement action, it clearly has the power to levy fines of up to 10% of global income for these social media firms. Although it depends on the geographic distribution of sales, 10% of global income is almost certain to be more than 100% of UK income, because the UK tends to be responsible for between 5% and 8% of those firms' global revenue, so the fines amount to over a year's worth of UK revenue. That obviously is for any company a significant amount of money.

The Bill already contains criminal liability provisions that make named individuals liable if they do not, for example, provide information to Ofcom as regulator. They commence a couple of years down the line. I do not want to pre-empt what we may do in that area, but we have been listening very carefully to parliamentarians and we are studying extremely carefully proposals that have been made. We may well have some more to say on that topic in the near future.

The shadow Minister asked about the Metaverse, which has been around for only a few weeks, and what the Bill will mean for that. The Bill has been crafted as it has to make it technology-agnostic and future-proof, because we realise that what is around today will be different tomorrow. The fact that the Metaverse has popped up in the last few weeks is evidence of that. The horrifying abuse of children in the Metaverse that the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne North described will be covered by the Bill as drafted, because what she described is clearly harmful to children. When the Bill passes, as I hope it will, there will therefore be a duty on Meta to prevent that from happening. In fact, that would be the case even if it was not Meta and was a smaller company, because the bits of the Bill on content that is harmful to children apply to all companies where children are likely to be significantly present. Therefore, what the shadow Minister described on Meta would be in the scope of the Bill as we will present it.

I want to touch on the contribution from my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Siobhan Baillie) and on anonymity. I pay enormous tribute to the campaign that she has run. She has been a persuasive, powerful and persistent —in a nice way—advocate for changes, and her ten-minute rule Bill had enormous support from both sides of the House. On Friday, in response to the campaign that my hon. Friend and other MPs from both sides of the House ran, we therefore announced with great pleasure that we would make changes to the Bill and have a requirement for category 1 firms to give all users the choice to have their identity verified, and then give users the choice about whether or not to interact with people. That level of user choice and user empowerment will be powerful. I thank my hon. Friend again and congratulate her on her campaign. I agree, as the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne North said in her speech and as my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud acknowledged, that although that measure will go a long way towards helping, it is not in itself a silver bullet. It is a very good measure, but we need to do more to prevent online abuse. The Bill will do more to tackle abuse, whether it is perpetrated by those who are anonymous or those who are not, because, as my hon. Friend said, much of the abuse is not anonymous. Shamefully, much of it is done in people's own name, so that needs to be tackled as well.

I have tried to touch on the comments that colleagues have made, but I hope that everybody here and those listening will clearly understand that the Government and the whole House of Commons strongly sympathise and agree with the points made by the petitioners, and I suspect by millions of our fellow citizens up and down the country. When the updated Bill is introduced in the very near future, we aim to make it better and stronger to ensure that our fellow citizens—especially children, but including everybody who suffers abuse—are far better protected than they are today. I hope the Bill will serve as an example around the world and keep people in this country safe online for many years to come.

5.47 pm

Catherine McKinnell: I thank the Minister for that response. I appreciate there are a range of issues that will become clearer once the Bill is introduced, but it is reassuring to hear so clearly the Government's commitment to listening to the voices of the petitioners and to take forward the changes that we need to see.

I also want to thank and pay tribute to the hon. Members for Folkestone and Hythe (Damian Collins), for Stroud (Siobhan Baillie), and for Strangford (Jim Shannon), and I thank also the shadow Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Alex Davies-Jones). The Minister expressed correctly that this is a cross-party issue and we work together on it. It is not party political and we all want to see the changes. That is the power of petitioners, because we work together as parliamentarians, heeding the call from the public and from petitioners who want to see changes.

We know that social media offers fantastic opportunities to interact and connect in a way that previous generations —certainly when I was growing up—could never have imagined. It has been a lifeline for the last two years for so many people to be able to stay connected and see our families when we have been horribly deprived from interaction with others. But it has also allowed a horrible, toxic world to develop, which we need to get a handle on. We need to ensure not only that we create a more positive atmosphere but that we defend our freedom of speech, because parts of the online world are so toxic that they actively disallow the voice of those being targeted disproportionately for abuse online. It has not been better expressed than by Bobby himself, who said:

> "I'm not here to bash social media. I love it, and 95% of it is an amazing tool…When used in the right way, it's amazing, and especially during lockdown".

He spoke of the ability to use technology to stay in touch with family and friends, and how it has been a lifeline, adding:

> "But there is a very dark side to social media as well."

Bobby and Katie have done the work, which cross-party colleagues have responded to to bring forward this legislation, working together to make it as strong, robust and long-term as it can be to get ahead of the social media companies that, quite frankly, are profiting from the pain of millions of people who are abused online. That needs to change.

We will continue to work with the Government but will very much hold their feet to the fire to make sure that the legislation is as strong as it can be. The Government will hear not only from the likes of me and my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd, but from their own Back-Benchers and most, importantly, from petitioners and the public, if we do not get this right. Let us work together to make sure we can truly create a positive online world for us and, most importantly, for the young people coming up in an online world that most of us did not grow up in.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has s considered e-petitions 272087 and 575833, relating to online abuse.

5.51 pm

Sitting adjourned.

Written Statements

Monday 28 February 2022

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Russia Sanctions

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Trade (Mr Ranil Jayawardena): Further to the measures announced by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister (Boris Johnson) in his statement yesterday, we are suspending the approval of new export licences for dual-use items to Russia with immediate effect. All extant licences for those items will be suspended and military exports to Russia remain prohibited.

[HCWS643]

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Rare Diseases Action Plan: England

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Maria Caulfield): The Government have published the first England Rare Diseases action plan today, on international Rare Disease Day.

This action plan is part of our continued commitment to improve the lives of those living with rare conditions, such as muscular dystrophies and Huntington's disease. It follows the UK rare diseases framework, published in January 2021, which set out priorities for all four UK nations to speed up diagnosis, raise awareness of rare diseases among healthcare professionals, provide better co-ordination of care, and improve access to specialist care, treatment and drugs.

England's action plan has been developed collaboratively with our delivery partners across the health landscape and in close consultation with members of the rare disease community. Through the action plan we aim to achieve significant breakthroughs for people living with rare diseases, including:

- making it easier for more rare disease patients to access the co-ordinated care of multiple specialists without the need to travel long distances;
- developing world-class new-born screening so diagnoses can be made earlier, and patients can benefit from groundbreaking new therapies as they become available;
- ensuring all healthcare professionals are aware of rare diseases and know where to go to access further information and advice; and
- supporting rapid and affordable access to cutting-edge therapies across all regions of England.

Building on advances in therapeutics during the covid-19 pandemic, we will also continue investing in the development of nucleic acid therapies, for example, through the world-class gene therapy innovation hubs and the nucleic acid therapy accelerator. These initiatives have the potential to allow rapid development of new therapies, transforming care for millions of patients, including those with rare and life-threatening genetic diseases.

Under the action plan, the millions of people with rare diseases in England will see more efficient access to care and new treatments introduced. Over the course of the coming year, we will monitor the progress of these actions closely, seeking input from those living with rare diseases to ensure we are measuring the outcomes that matter most.

Since the UK rare diseases framework runs over five years, implementation will be phased, with this first action plan focused primarily on actions taking place over the coming year. While delivery of this first action plan is underway, we will therefore also continue to explore future directions and develop new actions, informed by the needs of the diverse rare disease community.

Through this action plan we will take the first steps in England towards achieving our overarching vision: delivering improvements in diagnosis, awareness, treatment and care, and creating lasting positive change for those living with rare diseases.

[HCWS644]

Ministerial Corrections

Monday 28 February 2022

WORK AND PENSIONS

Benefit Sanctions

The following is an extract from Work and Pensions questions on 7 February 2022.

Dr Coffey: The sanction regime has not changed. In fact, sanctions have been at a record low over the past year. We are applying a sensible approach, recognising the number of vacancies, so that we can help people to get back into work as quickly as possible.

[Official Report, 7 February 2022, Vol. 708, c. 677.]

Letter of correction from the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, the right hon. Member for Suffolk Coastal (Dr Coffey).

An error has been identified in the response given to the hon. Member for Glasgow East (David Linden) in Work and Pensions questions.

The correct response should have been:

Dr Coffey: The sanction regime has not changed. In fact, sanctions have been at a record low **in the past year**. We are applying a sensible approach, recognising the number of vacancies, so that we can help people to get back into work as quickly as possible.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Special Educational Needs and Children's Mental Health Services

The following is an extract from the Westminster Hall debate on Special Educational Needs and Children's Mental Health Services on 9 February 2022.

Maria Caulfield: The issue for many years has been the lack of a national strategy, but that is changing. What we want, when pilot studies show good initial results, is to roll them out across the country. In the next year, on top of the £1.5 billion spent in the past two years, we are providing an additional £1 billion of high-needs funding for the education of children with more complex needs. The aim of that funding is to reduce waiting lists and variations in practice, make navigation pathways less complex, and improve the speed and quality of diagnosis.

[Official Report, 9 February 2022, Vol. 708, c. 383WH.]

Letter of correction from the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, the hon. Member for Lewes (Maria Caulfield).

Errors have been identified in my remarks in the Westminster Hall debate on Special Educational Needs and Children's Mental Health Services.

The correct remarks should have been:

Maria Caulfield: The issue for many years has been the lack of a national strategy, but that is changing. What we want, when pilot studies show good initial results, is to roll them out across the country. In the next year, on top of the £1.5 billion spent in the past two years, we are providing an additional £1 billion of high-needs funding for the education of **children with SEND**. The aim of that **£13 million funding** is to reduce waiting lists and variations in practice, make navigation pathways less complex, and improve the speed and quality of diagnosis.

EDUCATION

Skills and Post-16 Education Bill *[Lords]*

The following are extracts from debate on remaining stages of the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill [Lords].

Nadhim Zahawi: From 2025, our lifetime loan entitlement will give people access to loan funding to gain qualifications at levels 4 to 6, whether they are an 18-year-old leaver from Bradford, a 40-year-old career changer from Plymouth or a parent in Newcastle looking to return to paid work after a career break.

[Official Report, 21 February 2022, Vol. 709, c. 139.]

Letter of correction from the Secretary of State for Education, the right hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim Zahawi).

An error has been identified in my speech.

The correction information should have been:

Nadhim Zahawi: From 2025, our **lifelong** loan entitlement will give people access to loan funding to gain qualifications at levels 4 to 6, whether they are an 18-year-old leaver from Bradford, a 40-year-old career changer from Plymouth or a parent in Newcastle looking to return to paid work after a career break.

Alex Burghart: I am afraid I simply do not recognise the remarks of those who say the apprenticeship levy has failed. The figures often quoted on the Opposition Benches in respect of the drop in apprenticeships do not take account of the radical reforms that we made to apprenticeships a few years ago. We now have apprenticeships of higher quality and starts are improving year on year.

[Official Report, 21 February 2022, Vol. 709, c. 123.]

Letter of correction from the Under-Secretary of State for Education, the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Alex Burghart)

An error has been identified in my speech.

The correction information should have been:

Alex Burghart: I am afraid I simply do not recognise the remarks of those who say the apprenticeship levy has failed. The figures often quoted on the Opposition Benches in respect of the drop in apprenticeships do not take account of the radical reforms that we made to apprenticeships a few years ago. We now have apprenticeships of higher quality and starts are improving **so far this academic year**.

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