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7 November 2023**

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No. 1**



**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

Tuesday 7 November 2023

Chronology of The Parliamentary Debates

The Parliamentary History contains all that can be collected of the Legislative History of this country from the Conquest to the close of the XVIIIth Century (1803), 36 vols. The chief sources whence these Debates are derived are the Constitutional History, 24 vols.; Sir Simonds D'Ewes' Journal; Debates of the Commons in 1620 and 1621; Chandler and Timberland's Debates, 22 vols.; Grey's Debates of the Commons, from 1667 to 1694, 10 vols.; Almons Debates, 24 vols.; Debrett's Debates, 63 vols.; The Hardwicke Papers; Debates in Parliament by Dr. Johnson, &c. &c.

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House of Commons

Alphabetical List of Members

[Returned at the General Election, 12 December 2019]

A

Abbott, Rt Hon. Diane Julie (Hackney North and Stoke Newington) (Ind)
Abrahams, Deborah Angela Elspeth Marie (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab)
Adams, Rt Hon. Nigel (Selby and Ainsty) (Con) *[Resigned, June 2023]*
Afolami, Abimbola (Hitchin and Harpenden) (Con)
Afriyie, Adam (Windsor) (Con)
Ahmad Khan, Imran Nasir (Wakefield) (Ind) *[Resigned, May 2022]*
Aiken, Nicola Jane (Cities of London and Westminster) (Con)
Aldous, Peter James Guy (Waveney) (Con)
Ali, Rushanara (Bethnal Green and Bow) (Lab)
Ali, Tahir (Birmingham, Hall Green) (Lab)
Allan, Lucy (Telford) (Con)
Allin-Khan, Rosena Chantelle (Tooting) (Lab)
Amesbury, Michael Lee (Weaver Vale) (Lab)
Amess, Sir David Anthony Andrew (Southend West) (Con) *[Died, October 2021]*
Anderson, Fleur (Putney) (Lab)
Anderson, Lee (Ashfield) (Con)
Anderson, Stuart Paul (Wolverhampton South West) (Con)
Andrew, Rt Hon. Stuart James (Pudsey) (Con)
Ansell, Caroline (Eastbourne) (Con)
Antoniazzi, Antonia Louise (Gower) (Lab)
Argar, Rt Hon. Edward John Comport (Charnwood) (Con)
Ashworth, Rt Hon. Jonathan Michael Graham (Leicester South) (Lab/Co-op)
Atherton, Sarah Elizabeth (Wrexham) (Con)
Atkins, Victoria (Louth and Horncastle) (Con)

B

Bacon, Gareth Andrew (Orpington) (Con)
Bacon, Richard Michael (South Norfolk) (Con)
Badenoch, Rt Hon. Olukemi Olufunto (Saffron Walden) (Con)
Bailey, Shaun Stephen (West Bromwich West) (Con)
Baillie, Siobhan Kathleen (Stroud) (Con)
Baker, Duncan Charles (North Norfolk) (Con)
Baker, Steven John (Wycombe) (Con)
Baldwin, Harriett Mary Morison (West Worcestershire) (Con)
Barclay, Rt Hon. Stephen Paul (North East Cambridgeshire) (Con)
Bardell, Hannah Mary (Livingston) (SNP)
Barker, Paula (Liverpool, Wavertree) (Lab)
Baron, John Charles (Basildon and Billericay) (Con)
Baynes, Simon Robert Maurice (Clwyd South) (Con)
Beckett, Rt Hon. Margaret Mary (Derby South) (Lab)
Begley, Órfhlaith Acife (West Tyrone) (SF)
Begum, Apsana (Poplar and Limehouse) (Lab)
Bell, Aaron Stuart (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Con)
Benn, Rt Hon. Hilary James (Leeds Central) (Lab)
Benton, Scott Lloyd (Blackpool South) (Ind)
Beresford, Sir Alexander Paul (Mole Valley) (Con)

Berry, Rt Hon. Sir James Jacob Gilchrist (Rossendale and Darwen) (Con)
Betts, Clive James Charles (Sheffield South East) (Lab)
Bhatti, Mohammad Saqib (Meriden) (Con)
Black, Mhairi (Paisley and Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
Blackford, Rt Hon. Ian (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP)
Blackman, Kirsty Ann (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
Blackman, Robert John (Harrow East) (Con)
Blake Dagnall, Olivia Frances (Sheffield, Hallam) (Lab)
Blomfield, Paul Christopher (Sheffield Central) (Lab)
Blunt, Crispin Jeremy Rupert (Reigate) (Ind)
Bone, Peter William (Wellingborough) (Ind)
Bonnar, Steven (Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill) (SNP)
Bottomley, Sir Peter James (Worthing West) (Con)
Bowie, Andrew Campbell (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (Con)
Brabin, Tracy Lynn (Batley and Spen) (Lab) *[Resigned, May 2021]*
Bradley, Benjamin David (Mansfield) (Con)
Bradley, Rt Hon. Karen Anne (Staffordshire Moorlands) (Con)
Bradshaw, Rt Hon. Sir Benjamin Peter James (Exeter) (Lab)
Brady, Sir Graham Stuart (Altrincham and Sale West) (Con)
Brady, Michael (Newry and Armagh) (SF)
Braverman, Rt Hon. Sue-Ellen Cassiana (Fareham) (Con)
Brennan, Kevin Denis (Cardiff West) (Lab)
Brereton, Jack Edgar (Stoke-on-Trent South) (Con)
Bridgen, Andrew James (North West Leicestershire) (Reclaim)
Brine, Stephen Charles Brine (Winchester) (Con)
Bristow, Paul (Peterborough) (Con)
Britcliffe, Sara Alice (Hyndburn) (Con)
Brock, Deidre Leanne (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP)
Brokenshire, Rt Hon. James Peter (Old Bexley and Sidcup) (Con) *[Died, October 2021]*
Brooks-Osborne, Katharine Helen (Jarrow) (Lab)
Brown, Alan (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
Brown, Lyn Carol (West Ham) (Lab)
Brown, Rt Hon. Nicholas Hugh (Newcastle upon Tyne East) (Ind)
Browne, Anthony Howe (South Cambridgeshire) (Con)
Bruce, Fiona Claire (Congleton) (Con)
Bryant, Sir Christopher John (Rhondda) (Lab)
Buchan, Felicity Christiana (Kensington) (Con)
Buck, Karen Patricia (Westminster North) (Lab)
Buckland, Rt Hon. Sir Robert James (South Swindon) (Con)
Burghart, Michael Alex (Brentwood and Ongar) (Con)
Burgon, Richard (Leeds East) (Lab)
Burns, Rt Hon. Sir Conor (Bournemouth West) (Con)
Butler, Dawn Petula (Brent Central) (Lab)
Butler, Robert (Aylesbury) (Con)
Byrne, Ian Robert (Liverpool, West Derby) (Lab)
Byrne, Rt Hon. Liam Dominic (Birmingham, Hodge Hill) (Lab)

C

Cadbury, Ruth Margaret (Brentford and Isleworth) (Lab)
 Cairns, Rt Hon. Alun Hugh (Vale of Glamorgan) (Con)
 Callaghan, Amy (East Dunbartonshire) (SNP)
 Cameron, Lisa (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (Con)
 Campbell, Rt Hon. Sir Alan (Tynemouth) (Lab)
 Campbell, Gregory Lloyd (East Londonderry) (DUP)
 Carden, Daniel Joseph (Liverpool, Walton) (Lab)
 Carmichael, Rt Hon. Alexander Morrison (Orkney and Shetland) (LD)
 Carter, Andrew John (Warrington South) (Con)
 Cartledge, James Roger (South Suffolk) (Con)
 Cash, Sir William Nigel Paul (Stone) (Con)
 Cates, Miriam Joy (Penistone and Stocksbridge) (Con)
 Caulfield, Maria Colette (Lewes) (Con)
 Chalk, Rt Hon. Alexander John Gervase (Cheltenham) (Con)
 Chamberlain, Wendy Anne (North East Fife) (LD)
 Champion, Sarah Deborah (Rotherham) (Lab)
 Chapman, Douglas (Dunfermline and West Fife) (SNP)
 Charalambous, Charalambos (Enfield, Southgate) (Ind)
 Cherry, Joanna Catherine (Edinburgh South West) (SNP)
 Chishti, Atta-Ur-Rehman (Gillingham and Rainham) (Con)
 Chope, Sir Christopher Robert (Christchurch) (Con)
 Churchill, Johanna Peta (Bury St Edmunds) (Con)
 Clark, Feryal Demirci (Enfield North) (Lab)
 Clark, Rt Hon. Gregory David (Tunbridge Wells) (Con)
 Clark, Rebecca Faye (Taunton Deane) (Con)
 Clarke, Rt Hon. Sir Simon Richard (Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland) (Con)
 Clarke, Theodora Roosevelt (Stafford) (Con)
 Clarke-Smith, Brendan (Bassetlaw) (Con)
 Clarkson, Christopher Mark (Heywood and Middleton) (Con)
 Cleverly, Rt Hon. James Spencer (Braintree) (Con)
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey Robert (The Cotswolds) (Con)
 Coffey, Rt Hon. Thérèse Anne (Suffolk Coastal) (Con)
 Colburn, Elliot (Carshalton and Wallington) (Con)
 Collins, Damian Noel Thomas (Folkestone and Hythe) (Con)
 Cooper, Daisy (St Albans) (LD)
 Cooper, Rosemary Elizabeth (West Lancashire) (Lab) [*Resigned, December 2022*]
 Cooper, Rt Hon. Yvette (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab)
 Corbyn, Rt Hon. Jeremy Bernard (Islington North) (Ind)
 Costa, Alberto Castrenze (South Leicestershire) (Con)
 Court, Robert Alexander (Witney) (Con)
 Coutinho, Rt Hon. Claire Coryl Julia (East Surrey) (Con)
 Cowan, Ronald Jack (Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Cox, Rt Hon. Sir Charles Geoffrey (Torridge and West Devon) (Con)
 Coyle, Neil (Bermondsey and Old Southwark) (Lab)
 Crabb, Rt Hon. Stephen (Preseli Pembrokeshire) (Con)
 Crawley, Angela (Lanark and Hamilton East) (SNP)
 Creasy, Stella Judith (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op)
 Crosbie, Virginia Ann (Ynys Môn) (Con)
 Crouch, Tracey Elizabeth Anne (Chatham and Aylesford) (Con)
 Cruddas, Jonathan (Dagenham and Rainham) (Lab)
 Cryer, John Robert (Leyton and Wanstead) (Lab)
 Cummins, Judith Mary (Bradford South) (Lab)
 Cunningham, Alexander (Stockton North) (Lab)

D

Daby, Janet Jessica (Lewisham East) (Lab)
 Dalton, Ruth Ashley Charman (West Lancashire) (Lab) [*By-election, February 2023*]
 Daly, James Barry (Bury North) (Con)
 Davey, Rt Hon. Edward Jonathon (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD)
 David, Wayne (Caerphilly) (Lab)
 Davies, Rt Hon. David Thomas Charles (Monmouth) (Con)
 Davies, Gareth Mark (Grantham and Stamford) (Con)
 Davies, Geraint Richard (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op)
 Davies, James Michael (Vale of Clwyd) (Con)
 Davies, Miriam Jane Alice (Mid Sussex) (Con)
 Davies, Philip Andrew (Shipley) (Con)
 Davies-Jones, Alexandra Mary (Pontypridd) (Lab)
 Davis, Rt Hon. David Michael (Haltemprice and Howden) (Con)
 Davison, Dehenna Sheridan (Bishop Auckland) (Con)
 Day, Martyn (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP)
 De Cordova, Marsha Chantol (Battersea) (Lab)
 Debbonaire, Thangam Elizabeth Rachel (Bristol West) (Lab)
 Dhesi, Tanmanjeet Singh (Slough) (Lab)
 Dinenage, Dame Caroline Julia (Gosport) (Con)
 Dines, Sarah Elizabeth (Derbyshire Dales) (Con)
 Dixon, Samantha Kate (City of Chester) (Lab) [*By-election, December 2022*]
 Djanogly, Jonathan Simon (Huntingdon) (Con)
 Docherty, Leo (Aldershot) (Con)
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin John (West Dunbartonshire) (SNP)
 Dodds, Anneliese Jane (Oxford East) (Lab/Co-op)
 Donaldson, Rt Hon. Sir Jeffrey Mark (Lagan Valley) (DUP)
 Donelan, Rt Hon. Michelle Emma May Elizabeth (Chippenham) (Con)
 Doogan, David Michael (Angus) (SNP)
 Dorans, Allan Hopkins (Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock) (SNP)
 Dorries, Rt Hon. Nadine Vanessa (Mid Bedfordshire) (Con) [*Resigned, September 2023*]
 Double, Stephen Daniel (St Austell and Newquay) (Con)
 Doughty, Stephen John (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op)
 Dowd, Peter Christopher (Bootle) (Lab)
 Dowden, Rt Hon. Oliver James (Hertsmere) (Con)
 Doyle-Price, Jacqueline (Thurrock) (Con)
 Dromey, John Eugene Joseph (Birmingham, Erdington) (Lab) [*Died, January 2022*]
 Drummond, Felicia Jane Beatrix (Meon Valley) (Con)
 Duddridge, Sir James Philip (Rochford and Southend East) (Con)
 Duffield, Rosemary Clare (Canterbury) (Lab)
 Duguid, David James (Banff and Buchan) (Con)
 Duncan Smith, Rt Hon. Sir George Iain (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con)
 Dunne, Rt Hon. Philip Martin (Ludlow) (Con)
 Dyke, Sarah (Somerton and Frome) (LD) [*By-election, July 2023*]

E

Eagle, Dame Angela (Wallasey) (Lab)
 Eagle, Rt Hon. Maria (Garston and Halewood) (Lab)
 Eastwood, Colum (Foyle) (SDLP)
 Eastwood, Mark Simon (Dewsbury) (Con)

Edwards, David Jonathan (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (Ind)
 Edwards, Ruth Rosamond (Rushcliffe) (Con)
 Edwards, Sarah Siena (Tamworth) (Lab) [*By-election, October 2023*]
 Efford, Clive Stanley (Eltham) (Lab)
 Elliott, Julie (Sunderland Central) (Lab)
 Ellis, Rt Hon. Sir Michael Tyrone (Northampton North) (Con)
 Ellwood, Rt Hon. Tobias Martin (Bournemouth East) (Con)
 Elmore, Christopher Philip James (Ogmore) (Lab)
 Elphicke, Natalie Cecilia (Dover) (Con)
 Eshalomi, Florence (Vauxhall) (Lab/Co-op)
 Esterson, William Roffen (Sefton Central) (Lab)
 Eustice, Rt Hon. Charles George (Camborne and Redruth) (Con)
 Evans, Christopher James (Islwyn) (Lab/Co-op)
 Evans, Luke Morgan (Bosworth) (Con)
 Evans, Rt Hon. Nigel Martin (Ribbles Valley) (Con)
 Evennett, Rt Hon. Sir David Anthony (Bexleyheath and Crayford) (Con)
 Everitt, Ben (Milton Keynes North) (Con)

F

Fabricant, Sir Michael Louis David (Lichfield) (Con)
 Farris, Laura Rose (Newbury) (Con)
 Farron, Timothy James (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD)
 Farry, Stephen Anthony (North Down) (Alliance)
 Fell, Simon Richard James (Barrow and Furness) (Con)
 Fellows, Marion (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Ferrier, Margaret (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (Ind) [*Recalled, September 2023*]
 Finucane, John (Belfast North) (SF)
 Firth, Anna (Southend West) (Con) [*By-election, February 2022*]
 Fletcher, Colleen Margaret (Coventry North East) (Lab)
 Fletcher, Katherine (South Ribble) (Con)
 Fletcher, Mark Peter (Bolsover) (Con)
 Fletcher, Nicholas Anthony (Don Valley) (Con)
 Flynn, Stephen Mark (Aberdeen South) (SNP)
 Foord, Richard John (Tiverton and Honiton) (LD) [*By-election, June 2022*]
 Ford, Rt Hon. Victoria Grace (Chelmsford) (Con)
 Foster, Kevin John (Torbay) (Con)
 Fovargue, Yvonne Helen (Makerfield) (Lab)
 Fox, Rt Hon. Liam (North Somerset) (Con)
 Foxcroft, Victoria Jane (Lewisham, Deptford) (Lab)
 Foy, Mary Kelly (City of Durham) (Lab)
 Francois, Rt Hon. Mark Gino (Rayleigh and Wickford) (Con)
 Freeman, George William (Mid Norfolk) (Con)
 Freer, Michael Whitney (Finchley and Golders Green) (Con)
 French, Louie Thomas (Old Bexley and Sidcup) (Con) [*By-election, December 2021*]
 Fuller, Richard Quentin (North East Bedfordshire) (Con)
 Furniss, Gillian (Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough) (Lab)
 Fysh, Marcus John Hudson (Yeovil) (Con)

G

Gale, Rt Hon. Sir Roger James (North Thanet) (Con)
 Gardiner, Barry Strachan (Brent North) (Lab)
 Garnier, Mark Robert Timothy (Wyre Forest) (Con)

Gibb, Rt Hon. Nicolas John (Bognor Regis and Littlehampton) (Con)
 Gibson, Patricia (North Ayrshire and Arran) (SNP)
 Gibson, Peter Alexander (Darlington) (Con)
 Gideon, Joanna Mary (Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Con)
 Gildernew, Michelle Angela (Fermanagh and South Tyrone) (SF)
 Gill, Preet Kaur (Birmingham, Edgbaston) (Lab/Co-op)
 Gillan, Dame Cheryl Elise Kendall (Chesham and Amersham) (Con) [*Died, April 2021*]
 Girvan, William Paul (South Antrim) (DUP)
 Glen, Rt Hon. John Philip (Salisbury) (Con)
 Glindon, Mary Theresa (North Tyneside) (Lab)
 Goodwill, Rt Sir Hon. Robert (Scarborough and Whitby) (Con)
 Gove, Rt Hon. Michael Andrew (Surrey Heath) (Con)
 Grady, Patrick John (Glasgow North) (SNP)
 Graham, Richard Michael John Ogilvie (Gloucester) (Con)
 Grant, Helen (Maidstone and The Weald) (Con)
 Grant, Peter (Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gray, James Whiteside (North Wiltshire) (Con)
 Gray, Neil Charles (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP) [*Resigned, March 2021*]
 Grayling, Rt Hon. Christopher Stephen (Con) (Epsom and Ewell)
 Green, Christopher James (Bolton West) (Con)
 Green, Rt Hon. Damian Howard (Ashford) (Con)
 Green, Katherine Anne (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab) [*Resigned, November 2022*]
 Green, Sarah Louise (Chesham and Amersham) (LD) [*By-election, June 2021*]
 Greenwood, Lilian Rachel (Nottingham South) (Lab)
 Greenwood, Margaret (Wirral West) (Lab)
 Griffith, Andrew (Arundel and South Downs) (Con)
 Griffith, Dame Nia Rhiannon (Llanelli) (Lab)
 Grundy, James Nelson (Leigh) (Con)
 Gullis, Jonathan Edward (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Con)
 Gwynne, Andrew John (Denton and Reddish) (Lab)

H

Haigh, Louise Margaret (Sheffield, Heeley) (Lab)
 Halfon, Rt Hon. Robert Henry (Harlow) (Con)
 Hall, Luke Anthony (Thornbury and Yate) (Con)
 Hamilton, Fabian (Leeds North East) (Lab)
 Hamilton, Paulette Adassa (Birmingham, Erdington) (Lab) [*By-election, March 2022*]
 Hammond, Stephen William (Wimbledon) (Con)
 Hancock, Rt Hon. Matthew John David (West Suffolk) (Ind)
 Hands, Rt Hon. Gregory William (Chelsea and Fulham) (Con)
 Hanna, Claire Aisling (Belfast South) (SDLP)
 Hanvey, James Neale (Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath) (Alba)
 Hardy, Emma Ann (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle) (Lab)
 Harman, Rt Hon. Harriet Ruth (Camberwell and Peckham) (Lab)
 Harper, Rt Hon. Mark James (Forest of Dean) (Con)
 Harris, Carolyn (Swansea East) (Lab)
 Harris, Rebecca Elizabeth Scott (Castle Point) (Con)
 Harrison, Trudy Lynne (Copeland) (Con)
 Hart, Sally-Ann (Hastings and Rye) (Con)
 Hart, Simon Anthony (Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire) (Con)
 Hayes, Helen Elizabeth (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab)

Hayes, Rt Hon. Sir John Henry (South Holland and The Deepings) (Con)
 Hazzard, Christopher John (South Down) (SF)
 Heald, Rt Hon. Sir Oliver (North East Hertfordshire) (Con)
 Healey, Rt Hon. John (Wentworth and Dearne) (Lab)
 Heappey, Rt Hon. James Stephen (Wells) (Con)
 Heaton-Harris, Rt Hon. Christopher (Daventry) (Con)
 Henderson, Gordon Leonard (Sittingbourne and Sheppey) (Con)
 Hendrick, Sir Mark Phillip (Preston) (Lab/Co-op)
 Hendry, Andrew Egan Henderson (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey) (SNP)
 Henry, Darren George (Broxton) (Con)
 Higginbotham, Antony (Burnley) (Con)
 Hill, Michael Robert (Hartlepool) (Lab) [*Resigned, March 2021*]
 Hillier, Dame Margaret Olivia (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/Co-op)
 Hinds, Rt Hon. Damian Patrick George (East Hampshire) (Con)
 Hoare, Simon James (North Dorset) (Con)
 Hobhouse, Wera Benedicta (Bath) (LD)
 Hodge, Rt Hon. Dame Margaret Eve (Barking) (Lab)
 Hodgson, Sharon (Washington and Sunderland West) (Lab)
 Holden, Richard John (North West Durham) (Con)
 Hollern, Catherine Malloy (Blackburn) (Lab)
 Hollinrake, Kevin Paul (Thirsk and Malton) (Con)
 Hollobone, Philip Thomas (Kettering) (Con)
 Holloway, Adam James Harold (Gravesham) (Con)
 Holmes, Paul John (Eastleigh) (Con)
 Hopkins, Rachel Louise (Luton South) (Lab)
 Hosie, Rt Hon. Stewart (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Howarth, Rt Hon. Sir George Edward (Knowsley) (Lab)
 Howell, John Michael (Henley) (Con)
 Howell, Paul (Sedgefield) (Con)
 Hoyle, Rt Hon. Sir Lindsay Harvey (Chorley) (Speaker)
 Huddleston, Nigel Paul (Mid Worcestershire) (Con)
 Hudson, Neil Peter Hammerton (Penrith and The Border) (Con)
 Hughes, Edmund Francis (Walsall North) (Con)
 Hunt, Jane Marion (Loughborough) (Con)
 Hunt, Rt Hon. Jeremy Richard Streynsham (South West Surrey) (Con)
 Hunt, Thomas Patrick (Ipswich) (Con)
 Huq, Rupa Asha (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab)
 Hussain, Imran (Bradford East) (Lab)

J

Jack, Rt Hon. Alister William (Dumfries and Galloway) (Con)
 Jardine, Christine Anne (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Jarvis, Daniel Owen (Barnsley Central) (Lab)
 Javid, Rt Hon. Sajid (Bromsgrove) (Con)
 Jayawardena, Rt Hon. Ranil Malcolm (North East Hampshire) (Con)
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard Christison (Harwich and North Essex) (Con)
 Jenkinson, Mark Ian (Workington) (Con)
 Jenkyns, Dame Andrea Marie (Morley and Outwood) (Con)
 Jenrick, Rt Hon. Robert Edward (Newark) (Con)
 Johnson, Rt Hon. Alexander Boris de Pfeffel (Uxbridge and South Ruislip) (Con) [*Resigned, June 2023*]
 Johnson, Caroline Elizabeth (Sleaford and North Hykeham) (Con)
 Johnson, Rt Hon. Dame Diana Ruth (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab)

Johnson, Gareth Alan (Dartford) (Con)
 Johnson, Kim Marie (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab)
 Johnston, David Mervyn (Wantage) (Con)
 Jones, Andrew Hanson (Harrogate and Knaresborough) (Con)
 Jones, Darren Paul (Bristol North West) (Lab)
 Jones, Rt Hon. David Ian (Clwyd West) (Con)
 Jones, Fay Alicia (Brecon and Radnorshire) (Con)
 Jones, Gerald (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney) (Lab)
 Jones, Rt Hon. Kevan (North Durham) (Lab)
 Jones, Rt Hon. Marcus Charles (Nuneaton) (Con)
 Jones, Ruth Lorraine (Newport West) (Lab)
 Jones, Sarah Ann (Croydon Central) (Lab)
 Jupp, Simon James (East Devon) (Con)

K

Kane, Michael Joseph Patrick (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab)
 Kawczynski, Daniel Robert (Shrewsbury and Atcham) (Con)
 Kearns, Alicia Alexandra Martha (Rutland and Melton) (Con)
 Keegan, Rt Hon. Gillian (Chichester) (Con)
 Keeley, Barbara Mary (Worsley and Eccles South) (Lab)
 Kendall, Elizabeth Louise (Leicester West) (Lab)
 Khan, Mohammed Afzal (Manchester, Gorton) (Lab)
 Kinnock, Stephen Nathan (Aberavon) (Lab)
 Knight, Rt Hon. Sir Gregory (East Yorkshire) (Con)
 Knight, Julian Carlton (Solihull) (Ind)
 Kniveton, Kate Elizabeth (Burton) (Con)
 Kruger, Daniel Rayne (Devizes) (Con)
 Kwarteng, Rt Hon. Kwasi Alfred Addo (Spelthorne) (Con)
 Kyle, Peter John (Hove) (Lab)

L

Laing, Rt Hon. Dame Eleanor Fulton (Epping Forest) (Con)
 Lake, Ben Morgan (Ceredigion) (PC)
 Lammy, Rt Hon. David Lindon (Tottenham) (Lab)
 Lamont, John Robert (Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk) (Con)
 Langan, Robert (High Peak) (Con)
 Latham, Pauline Elizabeth (Mid Derbyshire) (Con)
 Lavery, Ian (Wansbeck) (Lab)
 Law, Christopher Murray Alexander (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Leadbeater, Kim Michele (Batley and Spen) (Lab) [*By-election, July 2021*]
 Leadsom, Rt Hon. Dame Andrea Jacqueline (South Northamptonshire) (Con)
 Leigh, Rt Hon. Sir Edward Julian Egerton (Gainsborough) (Con)
 Leigh, Lucy Claire (South East Cambridgeshire) (Con)
 Levy, Ian (Blyth Valley) (Con)
 Lewell-Buck, Emma Louise (South Shields) (Lab)
 Lewer, Andrew Iain (Northampton South) (Con)
 Lewis, Rt Hon. Sir Brandon (Great Yarmouth) (Con)
 Lewis, Clive Anthony (Norwich South) (Lab)
 Lewis, Rt Hon. Sir Julian Murray (New Forest East) (Con)
 Liddell-Grainger, Ian Richard Peregrine (Bridgwater and West Somerset) (Con)
 Lightwood, Simon Robert (Wakefield) (Lab/Co-op) [*By-election, June 2022*]
 Linden, David Melvyn (Glasgow East) (SNP)
 Lloyd, Sir Anthony Joseph (Rochdale) (Lab)

Lockhart, Carla Rebecca (Upper Bann) (DUP)
 Loder, Christopher Lionel John (West Dorset) (Con)
 Logan, Mark Rory (Bolton North East) (Con)
 Long-Bailey, Rebecca (Salford and Eccles) (Lab)
 Longhi, Marco (Dudley North) (Con)
 Lopez, Julia Louise (Hornchurch and Upminster) (Con)
 Lopresti, Giacomo Lopresti (Filton and Bradley Stoke) (Con)
 Lord, Jonathan George Caladine (Woking) (Con)
 Loughton, Timothy Paul (East Worthing and Shoreham) (Con)
 Lucas, Caroline (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green)

M

MacAskill, Kenny Wright (East Lothian) (Alba)
 McCabe, Stephen James McCabe (Birmingham, Selly Oak) (Lab)
 McCarthy, Kerry Gillian (Bristol East) (Lab)
 McCartney, Jason (Colne Valley) (Con)
 McCartney, Karl (Lincoln) (Con)
 McDonagh, Siobhain Ann (Mitcham and Morden) (Lab)
 McDonald, Andrew Joseph (Middlesbrough) (Ind)
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm (Glasgow South) (SNP)
 McDonald, Stuart Campbell (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP)
 McDonnell, Rt Hon. John Martin (Hayes and Harlington) (Lab)
 McFadden, Rt Hon. Patrick Bosco (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab)
 McGinn, Conor Patrick (St Helens North) (Ind)
 McGovern, Alison (Wirral South) (Lab)
 Mackinlay, Craig (South Thanet) (Con)
 McKinnell, Catherine (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab)
 Mackrory, Cherilyn (Truro and Falmouth) (Con)
 McLaughlin, Elizabeth Anne (Glasgow North East) (SNP)
 Maclean, Rachel Helen (Redditch) (Con)
 McMahon, James (Oldham West and Royton) (Lab/Co-op)
 McMorris, Anna Rhiannon (Cardiff North) (Lab)
 Mc Nally, John Joseph (Falkirk) (SNP)
 MacNeil, Angus Brendan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (Ind)
 McPartland, Rt Hon. Stephen Anthony (Stevenage) (Con)
 McVey, Rt Hon. Esther Louise (Tatton) (Con)
 Madders, Justin Piers Richard (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab)
 Mahmood, Khalid (Birmingham, Perry Barr) (Lab)
 Mahmood, Shabana (Birmingham, Ladywood) (Lab)
 Mak, Alan (Havant) (Con)
 Malhotra-Saluja, Seema (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op)
 Malthouse, Rt Hon. Christopher Laurie (North West Hampshire) (Con)
 Mangnall, Anthony James Holland (Totnes) (Con)
 Mann, Scott Leslie (North Cornwall) (Con)
 Marson, Julie (Hertford and Stortford) (Con)
 Maskell, Rachael Helen (York Central) (Lab/Co-op)
 Maskey, Paul John (Belfast West) (SF)
 Mather, Keir Alexander (Selby and Ainsty) (Lab)
 [By-election, July 2023]
 Matheson, Christian John Patrick (City of Chester) (Lab) [Resigned, November 2022]
 May, Rt Hon. Theresa Mary (Maidenhead) (Con)
 Mayhew, Jerome Patrick Burke (Broadland) (Con)
 Maynard, Paul Christopher (Blackpool North and Cleveleys) (Con)

Mearns, James Ian (Gateshead) (Lab)
 Menzies, Mark Andrew (Fylde) (Con)
 Mercer, Rt Hon. John Luther (Plymouth, Moor View) (Con)
 Merriman, Huw William (Bexhill and Battle) (Con)
 Metcalfe, Stephen James (South Basildon and East Thurrock) (Con)
 Miliband, Rt Hon. Edward Samuel (Doncaster North) (Lab)
 Millar, Robin John (Aberconwy) (Con)
 Miller, Rt Hon. Dame Maria Frances Lewis (Basingstoke) (Con)
 Milling, Rt Hon. Dame Amanda Anne (Cannock Chase) (Con)
 Mills, Nigel John (Amber Valley) (Con)
 Mishra, Navendu Prabhat (Stockport) (Lab)
 Mitchell, Rt Hon. Andrew John Bower (Sutton Coldfield) (Con)
 Mohindra, Gagan (South West Hertfordshire) (Con)
 Molloy, Francis Joseph (Mid Ulster) (SF)
 Monaghan, Carol Frances (Glasgow North West) (SNP)
 Moore, Damien (Southport) (Con)
 Moore, Robert Peter (Keighley) (Con)
 Moran, Layla Michelle (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD)
 Mordaunt, Rt Hon. Penelope Mary (Portsmouth North) (Con)
 Morden, Jessica Elizabeth (Newport East) (Lab)
 Morgan, Helen Margaret Lilian (North Shropshire) (LD) [By-election, December 2021]
 Morgan, Stephen James (Portsmouth South) (Lab)
 Morris, Anne Marie (Newton Abbot) (Con)
 Morris, David Thomas (Morecambe and Lunesdale) (Con)
 Morris, Grahame Mark (Easington) (Lab)
 Morris, James (Halesowen and Rowley Regis) (Con)
 Morrissey, Joy Inboden (Beaconsfield) (Con)
 Mortimer, Jillian Wendy (Hartlepool) (Con)
 [By-election, May 2021]
 Morton, Rt Hon. Wendy (Aldridge-Brownhills) (Con)
 Mullan, Kieran John (Crewe and Nantwich) (Con)
 Mumby-Croft, Holly (Scunthorpe) (Con)
 Mundell, Rt Hon. David Gordon (Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale) (Con)
 Murray, Ian (Edinburgh South) (Lab)
 Murray, James Stewart (Ealing North) (Lab/Co-op)
 Murray, Sheryll (South East Cornwall) (Con)
 Murrison, Rt Hon. Andrew William (South West Wiltshire) (Con)

N

Nandy, Lisa Eva (Wigan) (Lab)
 Neill, Sir Robert James MacGillivray (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con)
 Newlands, Gavin Andrew Stuart (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP)
 Nichols, Charlotte Louise (Warrington North) (Lab)
 Nici-Townend, Lia (Great Grimsby) (Con)
 Nicolson, John MacKenzie (Ochil and South Perthshire) (SNP)
 Nokes, Rt Hon. Caroline Fiona Ellen (Romsey and Southampton North) (Con)
 Norman, Rt Hon. Alexander Jesse (Hereford and South Herefordshire) (Con)
 Norris, Alexander James Jorden (Nottingham North) (Lab/Co-op)

O

O'Brien, Neil John (Harborough) (Con)
 Offord, Matthew James (Hendon) (Con)
 O'Hara, Brendan (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Olney, Sarah Jane (Richmond Park) (LD)
 Onwurah, Chinyelu Susan (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab)
 Opperman, Guy Thomas (Hexham) (Con)
 Oppong-Asare, Abena (Erith and Thamesmead) (Lab)
 Osamor, Kate Ofunne (Edmonton) (Lab/Co-op)
 Oswald, Kirsten Frances Oswald (East Renfrewshire) (SNP)
 Owatemi, Taiwo (Coventry North West) (Lab)
 Owen, Sarah Mei Li (Luton North) (Lab)

P

Paisley, Ian Richard Kyle (North Antrim) (DUP)
 Parish, Neil Quentin Gordon (Tiverton and Honiton) (Con) [*Resigned, May 2022*]
 Patel, Rt Hon. Dame Priti Sushil (Witham) (Con)
 Paterson, Rt Hon. Owen William (North Shropshire) (Con) [*Resigned, November 2021*]
 Pawsey, Mark Julian Francis (Rugby) (Con)
 Peacock, Stephanie Louise (Barnsley East) (Lab)
 Penning, Rt Hon. Sir Michael (Hemel Hempstead) (Con)
 Pennycook, Matthew Thomas (Greenwich and Woolwich) (Lab)
 Penrose, John David (Weston-super-Mare) (Con)
 Percy, Andrew Theakstone (Brigg and Goole) (Con)
 Perkins, Matthew Toby Perkins (Chesterfield) (Lab)
 Phillips, Jessica Rose (Birmingham, Yardley) (Lab)
 Phillipson, Bridget Maeve (Houghton and Sunderland South) (Lab)
 Philp, Rt Hon. Chris Ian Brian Mynott (Croydon South) (Con)
 Pincher, Rt Hon. Christopher John (Tamworth) (Con) [*Resigned, September 2023*]
 Plunkett-Ernlé-Drax, Richard Grosvenor (South Dorset) (Con)
 Pollard, Luke (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Lab/Co-op)
 Poulter, Daniel Leonard James (Central Suffolk and North Ipswich) (Con)
 Powell, Lucy Maria (Manchester Central) (Lab/Co-op)
 Prentis, Rt Hon. Victoria Mary Boswell (Banbury) (Con)
 Pritchard, Rt Hon. Mark Andrew (The Wrekin) (Con)
 Pursglove, Thomas Christopher John (Corby) (Con)

Q

Qaisar, Anum (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP) [*By-election, May 2021*]
 Quin, Rt Hon. Jeremy Mark (Horsham) (Con)
 Quince, William James (Colchester) (Con)
 Qureshi, Yasmin (Bolton South East) (Lab)

R

Raab, Rt Hon. Dominic Rennie (Esher and Walton) (Con)
 Randall, Thomas William (Gedling) (Con)
 Rayner, Rt Hon. Angela (Ashton-under-Lyne) (Lab)
 Redwood, Rt Hon. Sir John Alan (Wokingham) (Con)
 Reed, Steven Mark Ward (Croydon North) (Lab/Co-op)
 Rees, Christina Elizabeth (Neath) (Ind)

Rees-Mogg, Rt Hon. Sir Jacob William (North East Somerset) (Con)
 Reeves, Eleanor Claire (Lewisham West and Penge) (Lab)
 Reeves, Rt Hon. Rachel Jane (Leeds West) (Lab)
 Reynolds, Jonathan Neil (Stalybridge and Hyde) (Lab/Co-op)
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bellavia Janet (Streatham) (Lab)
 Richards, Nicola Faye (West Bromwich East) (Con)
 Richardson, Angela Joy (Guildford) (Con)
 Rimmer, Marie Elizabeth (St Helens South and Whiston) (Lab)
 Roberts, Robert Joseph (Delyn) (Ind)
 Robertson, Laurence Anthony (Tewkesbury) (Con)
 Robinson, Gavin James (Belfast East) (DUP)
 Robinson, Mary Josephine (Cheadle) (Con)
 Rodda, Mathew Richard Allen (Reading East) (Lab)
 Rosindell, Andrew Richard (Romford) (Con)
 Ross, Douglas Gordon (Moray) (Con)
 Rowley, Lee Benjamin (North East Derbyshire) (Con)
 Russell, Dean (Watford) (Con)
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd (Brighton, Kemptown) (Lab/Co-op)
 Rutley, David Henry (Macclesfield) (Con)

S

Sambrook, Gary William (Birmingham, Northfield) (Con)
 Saville Roberts, Rt Hon. Liz (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC)
 Saxby, Selaine Rachel (North Devon) (Con)
 Scully, Paul Stuart (Sutton and Cheam) (Con)
 Seely, Robert William Henry (Isle of Wight) (Con)
 Selous, Andrew Edmund Armstrong (South West Bedfordshire) (Con)
 Shah, Naseem Akhtar (Bradford West) (Lab)
 Shanks, Michael (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (Lab) [*By-election, October 2023*]
 Shannon, Richard James (Strangford) (DUP)
 Shapps, Rt Hon. Grant (Welwyn Hatfield) (Con)
 Sharma, Rt Hon. Sir Alok Kumar (Reading West) (Con)
 Sharma, Virendra Kumar (Ealing, Southall) (Lab)
 Sheerman, Barry John (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op)
 Shelbrooke, Rt Hon. Alec (Elmet and Rothwell) (Con)
 Sheppard, Thomas (Edinburgh East) (SNP)
 Siddiq, Tulip Rizwana (Hampstead and Kilburn) (Lab)
 Simmonds, David Timothy (Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner) (Con)
 Skidmore, Rt Hon. Christopher James (Kingswood) (Con)
 Slaughter, Andrew Francis (Hammersmith) (Lab)
 Smith, Alyn Edward (Stirling) (SNP)
 Smith, Catherine Jane Smith (Lancaster and Fleetwood) (Lab)
 Smith, Rt Hon. Chloe Rebecca (Norwich North) (Con)
 Smith, Greg (Buckingham) (Con)
 Smith, Henry Edward Millar (Crawley) (Con)
 Smith, Jeffrey (Manchester, Withington) (Lab)
 Smith, Rt Hon. Julian Richard (Skipton and Ripon) (Con)
 Smith, Nicholas Desmond John (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab)
 Smith, Royston Matthew (Southampton, Itchen) (Con)
 Smyth, Karin Marguerite (Bristol South) (Lab)
 Sobel, Alexander David (Leeds North West) (Lab/Co-op)
 Solloway, Amanda Jane (Derby North) (Con)
 Spellar, Rt Hon. John Francis (Warley) (Lab)
 Spencer, Ben (Runnymede and Weybridge) (Con)
 Spencer, Rt Hon. Mark Steven (Sherwood) (Con)

Stafford, Alexander Paul Thomas (Rother Valley) (Con)
 Starmer, Rt Hon. Sir Keir (Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab)
 Stephens, Christopher Charles (Glasgow South West) (SNP)
 Stephenson, Rt Hon. Andrew George (Pendle) (Con)
 Stevens, Joanna Meriel (Cardiff Central) (Lab)
 Stevenson, Andrew John (Carlisle) (Con)
 Stevenson, Jane Fiona Catherine (Wolverhampton North East) (Con)
 Stewart, Iain Aitken (Milton Keynes South) (Con)
 Stewart, Rt Hon. Robert Alexander (Beckenham) (Ind)
 Stone, Jamie Hume (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Strathern, Alistair Luke (Mid Bedfordshire) (Lab)
[By-election, October 2023]
 Streeter, Sir Gary Nicholas (South West Devon) (Con)
 Streeting, Wesley Paul William (Ilford North) (Lab)
 Stride, Rt Hon. Melvyn John (Central Devon) (Con)
 Stringer, Graham Eric (Blackley and Broughton) (Lab)
 Stuart, Rt Hon. Graham Charles (Beverley and Holderness) (Con)
 Sturdy, Julian Charles (York Outer) (Con)
 Sultana, Zarah (Coventry South) (Lab)
 Sunak, Rt Hon. Rishi (Richmond (Yorks)) (Con)
 Sunderland, James (Bracknell) (Con)
 Swayne, Rt Hon. Sir Desmond Angus (New Forest West) (Con)
 Syms, Sir Robert Andrew Raymond (Poole) (Con)

T

Tami, Rt Hon. Mark Richard (Alyn and Deeside) (Lab)
 Tarry, Samuel Peter (Ilford South) (Lab)
 Thewliss, Alison Emily (Glasgow Central) (SNP)
 Thomas, Derek Gordon (St Ives) (Con)
 Thomas, Gareth (Harrow West) (Lab/Co-op)
 Thomas-Symonds, Rt Hon. Nicklaus (Torfaen) (Lab)
 Thompson, Owen George (Midlothian) (SNP)
 Thomson, Richard Gordon (Gordon) (SNP)
 Thornberry, Rt Hon. Emily (Islington South and Finsbury) (Lab)
 Throup, Margaret Ann (Erewash) (Con)
 Timms, Rt Hon. Sir Stephen Creswell (East Ham) (Lab)
 Timpson, Anthony Edward (Eddisbury) (Con)
 Tolhurst, Rt Hon. Kelly Jane (Rochester and Strood) (Con)
 Tomlinson, Justin Paul (North Swindon) (Con)
 Tomlinson-Mynors, Michael James (Mid Dorset and North Poole) (Con)
 Tracey, Craig Paul (North Warwickshire) (Con)
 Trevelyan, Rt Hon. Anne-Marie Belinda (Berwick-upon-Tweed) (Con)
 Trickett, Jon Hedley (Hemsworth) (Lab)
 Trott, Laura (Sevenoaks) (Con)
 Truss, Rt Hon. Elizabeth Mary (South West Norfolk) (Con)
 Tuckwell, Steven (Uxbridge and South Ruislip) (Con)
[By-election, July 2023]
 Tugendhat, Rt Hon. Thomas Georg John (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con)
 Turner, Karl (Kingston upon Hull East) (Lab)
 Twigg, John Derek (Halton) (Lab)
 Twist, Mary Elizabeth (Blaydon) (Lab)

U

Ul-Ghani, Nusrat Munir (Wealden) (Con)

V

Vara, Rt Hon. Shailesh Lakhman (North West Cambridgeshire) (Con)
 Vaz, Rt Hon. Valerie Carol Marian (Walsall South) (Lab)
 Vickers, Martin John (Cleethorpes) (Con)
 Vickers, Matthew Alexander (Stockton South) (Con)
 Villiers, Rt Hon. Theresa Anne (Chipping Barnet) (Con)

W

Wakeford, Christian (Bury South) (Lab)
 Walker, Sir Charles Ashley Rupert (Broxbourne) (Con)
 Walker, Robin Caspar (Worcester) (Con)
 Walker-Lynch, Holly Jamie (Halifax) (Lab)
 Wallace, Rt Hon. Robert Ben Lobban (Wyre and Preston North) (Con)
 Wallis, Jamie Hamilton (Bridgend) (Con)
 Warburton, David John (Somerton and Frome) (Ind)
[Resigned, June 2023]
 Warman, Matthew Robert (Boston and Skegness) (Con)
 Watling, Giles Francis (Clacton) (Con)
 Webb, Suzanne (Stourbridge) (Con)
 Webbe, Claudia Naomi (Leicester East) (Ind)
 West, Catherine Elizabeth (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab)
 Western, Andrew Howard (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab) *[By-election, December 2022]*
 Western, Matthew Raymond (Warwick and Leamington) (Con)
 Whately, Helen Olivia Bicknell (Faversham and Mid Kent) (Con)
 Wheeler, Heather Kay (South Derbyshire) (Con)
 Whitehead, Alan Patrick Vincent (Southampton, Test) (Lab)
 Whitford, Philippa (Central Ayrshire) (SNP)
 Whitley, Michael (Birkenhead) (Lab)
 Whittaker, Rt Hon. Craig (Calder Valley) (Con)
 Whittingdale, Rt Hon. Sir John Flasby Lawrance (Maldon) (Con)
 Whittome, Nadia Edith (Nottingham East) (Lab)
 Wiggin, Sir William David (North Herefordshire) (Con)
 Wild, James Oliver (North West Norfolk) (Con)
 Williams, Alun Craig (Montgomeryshire) (Con)
 Williams, Hywel (Arfon) (PC)
 Williamson, Rt Hon. Sir Gavin Alexander (South Staffordshire) (Con)
 Wilson, Munira (Twickenham) (LD)
 Wilson, Rt Hon. Samuel (East Antrim) (DUP)
 Winter, Bethan Winter (Cynon Valley) (Lab)
 Winterton, Rt Hon. Dame Rosalie (Doncaster Central) (Lab)
 Wishart, Peter (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP)
 Wood, Michael Jon (Dudley South) (Con)
 Wragg, William Peter (Hazel Grove) (Con)
 Wright, Rt Hon. Sir Jeremy Paul (Kenilworth and Southam) (Con)

Y

Yasin, Mohammad (Bedford) (Lab)
 Young, Jacob (Redcar) (Con)

Z

Zahawi, Rt Hon. Nadhim (Stratford-on-Avon) (Con)
 Zeichner, Daniel Stephen (Cambridge) (Lab)

HIS MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

(FORMED BY THE RT HON. RISHI SUNAK, MP, OCTOBER 2022)

PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY, MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE AND MINISTER FOR THE UNION—
The Rt Hon. Rishi Sunak, MP
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER AND SECRETARY OF STATE IN THE CABINET OFFICE—
The Rt Hon. Oliver Dowden CBE, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—The Rt Hon. Jeremy Hunt, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT AFFAIRS—The Rt Hon. James Cleverly, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT—The Rt Hon. Suella Braverman, KC, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE—The Rt Hon. Grant Shapps, MP
LORD CHANCELLOR AND SECRETARY OF STATE FOR JUSTICE—The Rt Hon. Alex Chalk, KC, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY—The Rt Hon. Michelle Donelan, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES, AND MINISTER FOR INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS—The Rt Hon. Michael Gove, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE—The Rt Hon. Steve Barclay, MP
LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—The Rt Hon. Penny Mordaunt, MP
LORD PRIVY SEAL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—The Rt Hon. Lord True CBE
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR BUSINESS AND TRADE, PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE, AND MINISTER FOR WOMEN AND EQUALITIES—The Rt Hon. Kemi Badenoch, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO—The Rt Hon. Claire Coutinho, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS—The Rt Hon. Dr Thérèse Coffey, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WORK AND PENSIONS—The Rt Hon. Mel Stride, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION—The Rt Hon. Gillian Keegan, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT—The Rt Hon. Mark Harper, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT—The Rt Hon. Lucy Frazer, KC, MP
MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO—The Rt Hon. Greg Hands, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND—The Rt Hon. Chris Heaton-Harris, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND—The Rt Hon. Alister Jack, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WALES—The Rt Hon. David T. C. Davies, MP

DEPARTMENTS OF STATE AND MINISTERS

Business and Trade—

SECRETARY OF STATE, PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE, AND MINISTER FOR WOMEN AND EQUALITIES—
The Rt Hon. Kemi Badenoch, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

Nusrat Ghani, MP (Minister for Industry and Economic Security) §
The Earl of Minto (Minister for Regulatory Reform)
Nigel Huddleston, MP (Minister for International Trade)
Lord Johnson of Lainston CBE (Minister for Investment)

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Lord Offord of Garvel §
Kevin Hollinrake, MP
The Rt Hon. Stuart Andrew, MP (Minister for Equalities) §
Maria Caulfield, MP (Minister for Women) §

Cabinet Office—

PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY, MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE AND MINISTER FOR THE UNION—
The Rt Hon. Rishi Sunak, MP

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER AND SECRETARY OF STATE—
The Rt Hon. Oliver Dowden CBE, MP

PAYMASTER GENERAL AND MINISTER FOR THE CABINET OFFICE—The Rt Hon. Jeremy Quin, MP

MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO—The Rt Hon. Greg Hands, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

The Rt Hon. Johnny Mercer, MP (Minister for Veterans' Affairs)
Baroness Neville-Rolfe DBE CMG
Nusrat Ghani, MP §

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY—Alex Burghart, MP

Culture, Media and Sport—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Lucy Frazer, KC, MP

MINISTER OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Sir John Whittingdale OBE, MP (Maternity Cover) §

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

The Rt Hon. Stuart Andrew, MP §

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay

MINISTER ON LEAVE—Julia Lopez, MP (Minister of State) §

Defence—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Grant Shapps, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

The Rt Hon. James Heappey, MP (Minister for Armed Forces)

James Cartledge, MP (Minister for Defence Procurement)

Baroness Goldie DL

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Dr Andrew Murrison, MP (Minister for Defence People, Veterans and Service Families)

Education—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Gillian Keegan, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

The Rt Hon. Nick Gibb, MP (Minister for Schools)

The Rt Hon. Robert Halfon, MP (Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education)

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

David Johnston OBE, MP

Baroness Barran MBE

Energy Security and Net Zero—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Claire Coutinho, MP

MINISTER OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Graham Stuart, MP (Minister for Energy Security and Net Zero)

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Andrew Bowie, MP

Amanda Solloway, MP §

Lord Callanan

Environment, Food and Rural Affairs—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Dr Thérèse Coffey, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

The Rt Hon. Lord Benyon (Minister for Biosecurity, Marine and Rural Affairs)

The Rt Hon. Mark Spencer, MP (Minister for Food, Farming and Fisheries)

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Trudy Harrison, MP

Rebecca Pow, MP

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. James Cleverly, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon

The Rt Hon. Andrew Mitchell, MP

The Rt Hon. Anne-Marie Trevelyan, MP

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Leo Docherty, MP

David Rutley, MP

Health and Social Care—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Steve Barclay, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

Will Quince, MP (Minister for Health and Secondary Care)

Helen Whately, MP (Minister for Social Care)

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Neil O'Brien OBE, MP

Maria Caulfield, MP §

Lord Markham CBE

Home Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Suella Braverman, KC, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

The Rt Hon. Tom Tugendhat MBE VR, MP (Minister for Security)

The Rt Hon. Robert Jenrick, MP (Minister for Immigration)

The Rt Hon. Chris Philp, MP (Minister for Crime, Policing and Fire)

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Sarah Dines, MP

Lord Murray of Blidworth

Lord Sharpe of Epsom OBE

Justice—

LORD CHANCELLOR AND SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Alex Chalk, KC, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

The Rt Hon. Edward Argar, MP

The Rt Hon. Damian Hinds, MP

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Mike Freer, MP

Lord Bellamy, KC

Law Officers—

ATTORNEY GENERAL—The Rt Hon. Victoria Prentis, KC, MP

SOLICITOR GENERAL—Michael Tomlinson, KC, MP

ADVOCATE GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND—Lord Stewart of Dirleton, KC

Leader of the House of Commons—

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—The Rt Hon. Penny Mordaunt, MP

Leader of the House of Lords—

LORD PRIVY SEAL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—The Rt Hon. Lord True CBE

DEPUTY LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—The Rt Hon. Earl Howe

Levelling Up, Housing and Communities—

SECRETARY OF STATE AND MINISTER FOR INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS—The Rt Hon. Michael Gove, MP

MINISTER OF STATE—Rachel Maclean, MP

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Felicity Buchan, MP

Jacob Young, MP

Lee Rowley, MP

Baroness Scott of Bybrook OBE

Northern Ireland Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Chris Heaton-Harris, MP

MINISTER OF STATE—Steve Baker, MP

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Lord Caine

Science, Innovation and Technology—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Michelle Donelan, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

George Freeman, MP (Minister for Science, Research and Innovation)

The Rt Hon. Sir John Whittingdale OBE, MP (Minister for Data and Digital Infrastructure) (Maternity Cover) §

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Paul Scully, MP

Viscount Camrose

MINISTER ON LEAVE—Julia Lopez, MP (Minister of State) §

Scotland Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Alister Jack, MP

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

John Lamont, MP

Lord Offord of Garvel §

Transport—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Mark Harper, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

Huw Merriman, MP

The Rt Hon. Jesse Norman, MP

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Richard Holden, MP

Baroness Vere of Norbiton

Treasury—

PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY, MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE AND MINISTER FOR THE UNION—
The Rt Hon. Rishi Sunak, MP

CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—The Rt Hon. Jeremy Hunt, MP

CHIEF SECRETARY—The Rt Hon. John Glen, MP

FINANCIAL SECRETARY—Victoria Atkins, MP

ECONOMIC SECRETARY—Andrew Griffith, MP

EXCHEQUER SECRETARY—Gareth Davies, MP

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES—

Simon Hart, MP (Chief Whip)

Baroness Penn

LORDS COMMISSIONERS—

Amanda Solloway, MP §
 Steve Double, MP
 Scott Mann, MP
 The Rt Hon. Andrew Stephenson, MP
 Stuart Anderson, MP

ASSISTANT WHIPS—

Ruth Edwards, MP
 Joy Morrissey, MP
 Gagan Mohindra, MP
 Robert Largan, MP
 Julie Marson, MP
 Fay Jones, MP
 Mike Wood, MP

UK Export Finance—

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR BUSINESS AND TRADE, AND PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE—The Rt Hon. Kemi Badenoch, MP
 PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Lord Offord of Garvel (Minister for Exports) §

Wales Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. David T. C. Davies, MP
 PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—DR JAMES DAVIES, MP

Work and Pensions—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Mel Stride, MP
 MINISTERS OF STATE—
 Guy Opperman, MP (Minister for Employment)
 Tom Pursglove, MP (Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work)
 PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
 Mims Davies, MP
 Laura Trott MBE, MP
 Viscount Younger of Leckie

His Majesty's Household—

LORD CHAMBERLAIN—The Rt Hon. Lord Parker of Minsmere GCVO KCB
 LORD STEWARD—The Earl of Dalhousie
 MASTER OF THE HORSE—Lord de Mauley
 TREASURER—The Rt Hon. Marcus Jones, MP
 COMPTROLLER—Rebecca Harris, MP
 VICE-CHAMBERLAIN—Jo Churchill, MP
 CAPTAIN OF THE HONOURABLE CORPS OF GENTLEMEN-AT-ARMS—The Rt Hon. Baroness Williams of Trafford
 CAPTAIN OF THE KING'S BODYGUARD OF THE YEOMEN OF THE GUARD—The Earl of Courtown
 BARONESS IN WAITING—Baroness Swinburne
 LORDS IN WAITING—
 Lord Davies of Gower
 Lord Harlech
 Lord Evans of Rainow
 Lord Mott OBE

§ *Members of the Government listed under more than one Department*

SECOND CHURCH ESTATES COMMISSIONER, REPRESENTING THE CHURCH COMMISSIONERS—Andrew Selous, MP
 REPRESENTING THE SPEAKER'S COMMITTEE ON THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION—Cat Smith, MP
 REPRESENTING THE SPEAKER'S COMMITTEE FOR THE INDEPENDENT PARLIAMENTARY STANDARDS AUTHORITY—
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OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FOURTH SESSION OF THE FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT OF THE
UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 17 DECEMBER 2019]

SECOND YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HIS MAJESTY KING CHARLES III

SIXTH SERIES

VOLUME 740

FIRST VOLUME OF SESSION 2023-2024

House of Commons

Tuesday 7 November 2023

*The House met at twenty-five minutes past
Eleven o'clock*

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

MESSAGE TO ATTEND HIS MAJESTY

*Message to attend His Majesty delivered by the Lady
Usher of the Black Rod.*

*The Speaker, with the House, went up to attend His
Majesty; on their return, the Speaker suspended the sitting.*

Speaker's Statement

2.30 pm

Mr Speaker: The House has directed the Speaker to make a statement at the beginning of each Session about the duties and responsibilities of hon. Members. I begin by reminding hon. Members of their duty to observe the code of conduct agreed by the House and to behave with civility and fairness in all their dealings. The behaviour code applies to Members as it applies to others who visit or work within Parliament, and it provides very clear guidance. Unacceptable behaviour will be dealt with seriously, independently and with effective sanctions.

The House asserts its privilege of freedom of speech. That privilege is enjoyed by Members of Parliament only in their work in this House; as private individuals, we are equal under the law with those whom we represent. It is there to ensure that our constituents can be represented by us without fear or favour. It is an obligation upon us all to exercise that privilege with responsibility.

I now come to the accuracy of Members' contributions, which is more tricky. The Speaker does not have the power to police the accuracy of Members—[HON. MEMBERS: "Shame."] It may be a shame, but these are the facts. The Speaker does not have the power to police the accuracy of Members' contributions, including those of Ministers. It is therefore incumbent on Members to be accurate in what they say in this House, but if a Member is inaccurate by mistake, they should correct that mistake as soon as possible.

Let us now turn to courtesy and temperate language. Members must also be mindful of the impact of what we say, not only on other Members but on those who follow our proceedings, and Members should be heard courteously whatever their views. I draw the House's attention to the guidance on rules of behaviour and courtesies in the House of Commons. A new version for this Session is now available, clarifying those areas.

Turning to criticism of Members, in this place we are honourable Members, and the language we use about each other should reflect that. If a Member falls short of the standards expected of us all, there are ways of dealing with that, but not by accusations made as sideswipes during questions or debates. If we fail to treat each other with respect in debate, that diminishes our work, but it also risks raising the temperature of discussions outside this place, particularly on social media, which already too often descend into online abuse against hon. Members.

It is so important that hon. Members are able to raise matters with me freely. For that reason, I keep such correspondence confidential, including applications for urgent questions. I remind Members that it is equally important that my responses, particularly on matters of privilege, are treated with the same respect. I hope that certain Members are listening.

I also wish to give some advice about seeking to speak within the Chamber. The Deputy Speakers and I take into account a number of factors when determining whom we call during business that is not balloted, and one factor we consider carefully is how often a Member speaks. In other words, if you have spoken much more

than a colleague then, other things being equal, that colleague is more likely to be called—or certainly more likely to be called earlier—especially in the next debate for which you both apply. [HON. MEMBERS: “Poor Jim!”] Don’t worry; I am coming to him. [*Laughter.*]

I know that it can be frustrating not to be called in a debate, or to be called very late. That frustration may continue, but putting it on Twitter is not a good way of trying to be called earlier. My response will be that I cannot call you earlier because you have already told the world, so think carefully before using Twitter to try to intimidate the Speaker. Prioritising debates, question times, urgent questions and statements in which you seek to participate is one way of trying to avoid that happening.

Now that we have started a new Session, the reset button starts everybody’s scores at zero. That even includes Jim Shannon—[*Laughter.*] I should make it clear that when counting scores, different principles apply to Front Benchers from the three largest parties who are nominated to speak on behalf of their parties. Staff in my office are happy to offer further advice and help.

Let us come to something very important: security and safety. I want all Members and everyone in the parliamentary community to be able to go about their work safely, both online and here in Westminster. The security of this building and those who work here depends on us all. We have a duty to be vigilant and to assist those whose job it is to maintain this place as a safe place of work. Yes, we are Members of Parliament and we were elected to be here, but remember that those who carry out security duties here are doing so to ensure that we are all safe. Please, try not to abuse them—you should not abuse them—and do not take advantage of your position.

Before moving to the first business of the new Session, I would like to express my very best wishes to all hon. Members and all those who work in this House. I thank the staff of the House, whether they work in security or elsewhere. They are looking after us, so please realise that they have a job to do. I thank all the catering staff, because without them we could not function properly.

OUTLAWRIES BILL

A Bill for the more effectual preventing Clandestine Outlawries was read the First time, and ordered to be read a Second time.

King’s Speech

Mr Speaker: I have to acquaint the House that this House has this day attended His Majesty in the House of Peers, and that His Majesty was pleased to make a Most Gracious Speech from the Throne to both Houses of Parliament, of which I have, for greater accuracy, obtained a copy.

I shall direct that the terms of the Gracious Speech be printed in the *Votes and Proceedings*. Copies are available in the Vote Office.

The Gracious Speech was as follows:

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons

It is mindful of the legacy of service and devotion to this country set by My beloved Mother, The late Queen, that I deliver this, the first King’s Speech in over 70 years. The impact of Covid and the war in Ukraine have created significant long-term challenges for the United Kingdom. That is why my Government’s priority is to make the difficult but necessary long-term decisions to change this country for the better.

My Ministers’ focus is on increasing economic growth and safeguarding the health and security of the British people for generations to come. My Government will continue to take action to bring down inflation, to ease the cost of living for families and help businesses fund new jobs and investment. My Ministers will support the Bank of England to return inflation to target by taking responsible decisions on spending and borrowing. These decisions will help household finances, reduce public sector debt, and safeguard the financial security of the country.

Legislation will be introduced to strengthen the United Kingdom’s energy security, and reduce reliance on volatile international energy markets and hostile foreign regimes. This Bill will support the future licensing of new oil and gas fields, helping the country to transition to net zero by 2050 without adding undue burdens on households. Alongside this, my Ministers will seek to attract record levels of investment in renewable energy sources and reform grid connections, building on the United Kingdom’s track-record of decarbonising faster than other G7 economies. My Government will invest in Network North to deliver faster and more reliable journeys between, and within, the cities and towns of the North and Midlands, prioritising improving the journeys that people make most often.

My Ministers will strengthen education for the long term. Steps will be taken to ensure young people have the knowledge and skills to succeed, through the introduction of the Advanced British Standard that will bring technical and academic routes into a single qualification. Proposals will be implemented to reduce the number of young people studying poor quality university degrees and increase the number undertaking high quality apprenticeships.

My Ministers will take steps to make the economy more competitive, taking advantage of freedoms afforded by the United Kingdom’s departure from the European Union. A bill will be brought forward to promote trade and investment with economies in the fastest growing region in the world. My Ministers will continue to negotiate trade agreements with dynamic economies, delivering jobs and growth in the United Kingdom.

My Ministers will introduce new legal frameworks to support the safe commercial development of emerging industries, such as self-driving vehicles, introduce new

competition rules for digital markets, and encourage innovation in technologies such as machine learning. Legislation will be brought forward to support the creative industries and protect public interest journalism. Proposals will be published to reform welfare and support more people into work. My Government will promote the integrity of the Union and strengthen the social fabric of the United Kingdom.

Working with NHS England, my Government will deliver its plans to cut waiting lists and transform the long-term workforce of the National Health Service. This will include delivering on the NHS workforce plan, the first long-term plan to train the doctors and nurses the country needs, and minimum service levels to prevent strikes from undermining patient safety. Record levels of investment are expanding and transforming mental health services to ensure more people can access the support they need. My Government will introduce legislation to create a smokefree generation by restricting the sale of tobacco so that children currently aged fourteen or younger can never be sold cigarettes, and restricting the sale and marketing of e-cigarettes to children.

My Ministers will bring forward a bill to reform the housing market by making it cheaper and easier for leaseholders to purchase their freehold and tackling the exploitation of millions of homeowners through punitive service charges. Renters will benefit from stronger security of tenure and better value, while landlords will benefit from reforms to provide certainty that they can regain their properties when needed. My Government will deliver a long-term plan to regenerate towns and put local people in control of their future. Legislation will be brought forward to safeguard the future of football clubs for the benefit of communities and fans. A bill will be introduced to deal with the scourge of unlicensed pedicabs in London.

My Government is committed to tackling antisemitism and ensuring that the Holocaust is never forgotten. A bill will progress the construction of a national Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre in Victoria Tower Gardens. My Government will act to keep communities safe from crime, anti-social behaviour, terrorism and illegal migration. A bill will be brought forward to ensure tougher sentences for the most serious offenders and increase the confidence of victims. My Ministers will introduce legislation to empower police forces and the criminal justice system to prevent new or complex crimes, such as digital-enabled crime and child sexual abuse, including grooming.

At a time when threats to national security are changing rapidly due to new technology, my Ministers will give the security and intelligence services the powers they need and will strengthen independent judicial oversight. Legislation will be introduced to protect public premises from terrorism in light of the Manchester Arena attack. My Government will deliver on the Illegal Migration Act passed earlier this year and on international agreements, to stop dangerous and illegal Channel crossings and ensure it is the government, not criminal gangs, who decides who comes to this country.

My Government will continue to champion security around the world, to invest in our gallant Armed Forces and to support veterans to whom so much is owed. My Ministers will work closely with international partners to support Ukraine, strengthen NATO and address the most pressing security challenges. This includes the consequences of the barbaric acts of terrorism against the people of Israel, facilitating humanitarian support into Gaza and supporting the cause of peace and stability in the Middle East.

My Government will continue to lead action on tackling climate change and biodiversity loss, support developing countries with their energy transition, and hold other countries to their environmental commitments. The United Kingdom will continue to lead international discussions to ensure that Artificial Intelligence is developed safely. My Government will host the Global Investment Summit, the European Political Community, and the Energy Conference, leading global conversations on the United Kingdom's most pressing challenges.

I look forward to welcoming His Excellency the President of the Republic of Korea and Mrs. Kim Keon Hee for a State Visit later this month.

My Government will, in all respects, seek to make long-term decisions in the interests of future generations. My Ministers will address inflation and the drivers of low growth over demands for greater spending or borrowing. My Ministers will put the security of communities and the nation ahead of the rights of those who endanger it. By taking these long-term decisions, my Government will change this country and build a better future.

Members of the House of Commons

Estimates for the public services will be laid before you.

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons

Other measures will be laid before you.

I pray that the blessing of Almighty God may rest upon your counsels.

Debate on the Address

[1ST DAY]

Mr Speaker: Before I call the mover and seconder, I want to announce the proposed subjects of debate during the remaining days on the Loyal Address: today, debate on the Address; tomorrow, breaking down barriers to opportunity; Thursday, making Britain a clean energy superpower; Monday, building an NHS fit for the future; Tuesday, securing high, sustained economic growth in every part of the country; and Wednesday, reducing violent crime and raising confidence in policing and the criminal justice system. I have the pleasure to call Sir Robert Goodwill to move the motion on the Address, and then I will call Siobhan Baillie to second it.

2.38 pm

Sir Robert Goodwill (Scarborough and Whitby) (Con): I beg to move,

That an humble Address be presented to His Majesty, as follows:

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.

It is a great honour to move the Humble Address. This is the first time that King Charles has opened a Session as monarch, and today's pomp and ceremony are tinged with sadness as we remember the late Queen with affection and with gratitude for 70 years of service to our kingdom and Commonwealth. We look forward to another significant reign as the baton is passed to the next generation.

So, Mr Speaker, it has finally come to this. It is official: I was the future once. The seconder of the Humble Address, my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Siobhan Baillie), for whom I am the warm-up act today, is always described as up and coming. I am not really sure what that makes me. I recall the last occasion, when my right hon. Friend the Member for Beverley and Holderness (Graham Stuart) was proposing the Humble Address and we all thought he was on the scrapheap, but less than two months later he was back on the Front Bench attending Cabinet, so you never know—although, the Chief Whip has assured me that there is no danger of that happening to me.

Scarborough and Whitby has to be the best constituency in the country. Of course, Mr Speaker, it has a head start by being in Yorkshire. They say you should never ask someone if they are from Yorkshire, because if they are, they are bound to mention it in the first five minutes; and if they are not, why humiliate them unnecessarily? I am pleased to see our colleagues in the Scottish National party sporting the white rose of Yorkshire today, although I must point out that Yorkshire Day is 1 August, so not for the first time they have got things wrong.

The arrival of the railways created Scarborough as our first seaside destination, and we are still Britain's premier coastal resort and second only to London for the number of visitors. In fact, there could be more if some of the £36 billion recouped from HS2 could be redeployed on dualling the A64. Culturally, we are the home of Sir Alan Ayckbourn and also the birthplace of the McCain oven chip, as well as Plaxton's coaches and

the electric buses that we are increasingly seeing on the streets in places such as Blackpool—that is, if the Labour council there does not order Chinese ones. Whitby is famous for Bram Stoker's "Dracula", the Goth weekend and, of course, fish and chips from the famous Magpie restaurant—although I hasten to add that that is not the only place you can get good fish and chips in Whitby.

Before mass tourism, the area was dotted with ironstone, alum and jet mines. Fast-forward a century or two and we are the biggest mining area in the country, with Anglo American investing £1 million every single day and employing around 1,000 people developing the new polyhalite mine just outside Whitby, with its 23-mile connecting tunnel to Teesside, where Mayor Ben Houchen is delivering so much economic development. The North Yorkshire Moors national park was made famous as the location of Aidensfield in ITV's "Heartbeat" police drama, and it is home to many important ground-nesting birds on the heather moorland, sustained and managed in traditional ways by generations of farmers and keepers.

I do not know if you have noticed, Mr Speaker, but we seem to be having a lot of by-elections at the moment—[HON. MEMBERS: "More!"] Not so fast. It was a by-election in Ryedale in 1986 that whetted my appetite for frontline politics. The seat was held with a thumping 16,000 Conservative majority, but it fell to the Liberals with a 19% swing, giving Elizabeth Shields a 5,000-vote margin. While the rest of the Liberal party were going back to their constituencies to prepare for government, I was not going to put up with the situation, so rather naively I put my name forward—along with 200 others—to be the candidate at the subsequent general election. I was not selected, but did come second to John Greenway, who, for Members who do not remember or who were not even born—I am looking at the hon. Member for Selby and Ainsty (Keir Mather)—won the seat back only 13 months later with a 10,000 majority. The moral is: don't count your chickens on the basis of by-election results.

Not put off, my next move was to try to find a safe Labour seat to fly the flag for Margaret Thatcher. Living in the north-east, there was no shortage of rock-solid Labour citadels—places like Sedgefield, Hartlepool, Bishop Auckland, North West Durham and Redcar—and it was in Redcar that I was selected to challenge the wonderful Mo Mowlam. By then, John Major had taken over from Mrs Thatcher. When that happened, I remember my children asking me, "Daddy, is it really possible that a man can be Prime Minister?" We have now had three women Conservative premiers, assuming the most recent one counts, of course, and we now have the first Prime Minister who represents a Yorkshire seat. Is that a big deal? It certainly is. I must say that my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Rishi Sunak) could not be a better neighbour or better friend to me.

Labour was well ahead in the polls in the run-up to the 1992 election, and Mo had a car at the count, with the engine running, ready to take her down to sit in Neil Kinnock's Cabinet as Northern Ireland Secretary, but once again the polls were wrong.

I stood in North West Leicestershire in the 1997 Blair landslide election, which I will quickly pass over. Suffice it to say that both seats in which I stood, Redcar and North West Leicestershire, eventually returned Conservative Members. I like to think that the Goodwill effect was a slow burn.

After what I will call a five-year sabbatical in the European Parliament, I was selected to stand for Scarborough and Whitby, a seat that had been consistently blue since 1918 but had been red in both 1997 and 2001. Even though the exit poll said I would lose, we managed to prevail on 5 May 2005 and I entered the House at last. I put our victory down to one deciding factor. On the eve of poll, of all the places that Tony Blair could have chosen for his big election rally, he chose Scarborough. Maybe the Leader of the Opposition could indulge me next time round and come to Scarborough on the eve of the poll to see if he can replicate the Blair effect—or better still, he could have a rally in Sheffield and go the full Kinnock.

At the following election, I was the victim of a fly-poster campaign. All over town, there were A4 photocopies asking, “What is the difference between Robert Goodwill and a supermarket trolley?” The local newspaper picked up on this and concluded that a supermarket trolley has a mind of its own. I must admit that I have never voted against the Tory Whip, so that might explain it. However, having been here a while, I can now reveal the real answer to the question. The difference between an MP and a supermarket trolley is that there is a physical limit to the amount of food and drink that you can get into a supermarket trolley.

I certainly welcome the Bills that have been announced. In particular, I would like to see convicted criminals attend their sentencing. Life for some of the most severe crimes must mean life. Fairness is part of what it means to be British, and we must ensure that the dynamic between freeholders and leaseholders is intrinsically fair, in the same way as we should show equal respect for landlords and tenants when they are doing the right thing. I was pleased to see that the ban on live animal exports for slaughter will happen, now we are outside the European Union and have the freedom to do that. Those who are successful in the ballot for private Members’ Bills will not be short of other suggestions, both from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and from animal welfare organisations, to carry forward some important measures in that area, which I know is important to the Government. The Bill to tackle unlicensed and uninsured pedicabs, which can rip off unsuspecting tourists, is not before time.

Today’s focus is on the legislative agenda, but we cannot ignore what is going on outside our borders. The butchery we saw from Hamas on 7 October was evil beyond anything most of us could even imagine—and, yes, BBC, these thugs are terrorists. If those atrocities had been on our soil and against our people, we would have been expected to launch a robust response—Israel has that right, too. Indeed, what else did Hamas expect would happen? The conflict in Ukraine may be off the front pages, but we must not waver in our support for the courageous Ukrainian people.

Good government is not so much about how many laws we have and how many new laws we announce, but about how we respond to changing and unexpected events such as the pandemic. Hindsight is a wonderful thing, but the Prime Minister’s furlough scheme and help for businesses were the right thing to do. The universal credit system was also robust in the face of unprecedented demand.

With small boat crossings of the channel down by more than a fifth year on year, we are making progress in curbing the organised criminal gangs engaged in this dangerous, exploitative trade. Furthermore, if we can stand up the Rwanda scheme, it will be a game changer. Our help should be for those most in need, not those most able to pay.

Finally, I come to a true story from the 2019 winter general election; I heard your strictures about being truthful to the House, Mr Speaker, and this absolutely happened. One of the strongest Labour areas in my patch is a former council estate called Eastfield—we usually go there early in the campaign to get it out of the way—but this time it was different: people were crossing the street to shake my hand. They had voted for Brexit and wanted to get it done, and they were sick of being ignored. When my wife, Maureen, knocked on one door, the lady who answered was effusive in her admiration for Prime Minister Johnson. When I arrived, I asked her why she was so enthusiastic. She said, “Boris is one of us.” When I politely pointed out that he had been to Eton and Oxford, she replied, “You don’t understand. He had a row with his wife and the police came round. That’s what happens on this street all the time.” [*Laughter.*]

I commend the Gracious Speech to the House.

2.53 pm

Siobhan Baillie (Stroud) (Con): It is an honour to second the Loyal Address and I am proud that the Stroud constituency is playing its part in history, given that this is the first state opening by His Majesty the King. The late Queen was an inspiration for everyone across this great nation. For Members of this House, she reminded us that, despite the melodrama of politics, we are all here to serve the public. The King is already following in his mother’s footsteps and making us all proud, although when I told my non-political family that I was going to be talking about the King’s Speech, the response I got was, “Oh, great, that’s a really good film.” [*Laughter.*]

Talking about hard acts to follow, my right hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough and Whitby (Sir Robert Goodwill) had me doing a fair few “lols”; I know exactly the areas he is talking about. He has definitely landed that promotion with that speech, in his final furlong. We have many connections, which I will touch on today, but Scarborough Athletic FC will play Stroud’s Forest Green Rovers in the FA cup next week, so we have another rumble to come. I know my right hon. Friend will be missed when he gets his pipe and slippers out to retire next year, but his lovely new grandchildren will keep him very busy.

I went to school in my right hon. Friend’s constituency. If I could tell the younger me in Scarborough, a young fashionista wearing Spice Girl platforms, Adidas trackie bottoms and a second-hand Umbro jumper—it was a very strong look, although I am grateful that there were no camera phones then—that I would have the privilege of representing the beautiful constituency of Stroud, speaking ahead of the Prime Minister, after being in the same room as the King and the Queen, I think young me would have thought I had lost the plot. What did the Conservative party do for a free school meal kid, who left home at 15 and did not go to university? It gave her

[Siobhan Baillie]

a seat at the most famous palace in the world, led by the son of a pharmacist, who is also leading the most diverse Cabinet we have ever known.

The public service bit of this job motivates me, but that is not what hits the headlines. I am often asked, “How do you survive with everybody backstabbing, doing their own thing and out to get each other?” I just smile and say, “I don’t hang around with the Labour party.” [Interruption.] I love you all really. To be honest, the parliamentary Labour party has absolutely nothing on the Stroud Labour party, whose members have all resigned or fallen out with each other. What I actually say is that to survive in this place you have to find some friends, and then fully expect them to push you into the Thames in the run-up to a reshuffle.

We also get new friends for very short periods of time, come Select Committee elections. I sort of miss the daily messages from the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Liam Byrne). His text messages are less famous than his scary handwritten notes about the economy, but they are still persistent.

Back to navigating a workplace that is mad as a box of frogs. Early on, I came up with “Operation Green Benches”, whereby I shunned history books and *Hansard* and researched parliamentary sketches instead, because I love them. Quentin Letts once wrote that the area of the Government Benches where I am now sitting is the “naughty corner”, so that sorted out where I would sit. It sounded fun and he was right.

I then realised that identifying the loudest colleagues to sit with, and effectively hide behind, could be crucial to avoid the wrath of the Speaker. My right hon. Friend the Member for Elmet and Rothwell (Alec Shelbrooke) seemed to fit that bill. He was described as being “expansively waistcoated” and having “lungs like bagpipes”—perfect. He is not in his place. He is watching at home on the tellybox, but no doubt he is wearing a waistcoat.

My hon. Friend the Member for North Dorset (Simon Hoare) and my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for South Swindon (Sir Robert Buckland) are often depicted as noisy and boisterous. Those two appeared to come free with “bagpipe lungs”, in a creative BOGOF-style deal that probably should be banned, but this strategy has served me well and given me a slightly dysfunctional, but always hilarious and caring Chamber family whom I love dearly. The other five Gloucestershire MPs are also guiding lights, not least my right hon. Friend the Member for Forest of Dean (Mr Harper), who taught me that consistent rebelling does not hinder one’s career. It’s okay, Chief Whip, I’m not going to follow that lead.

My kids come to work with me, so they support me in their own chaotic way. Gigi, aged 3, dressed as a witch on Hallowe’en. She merrily skipped up the steps of one house, turned to me and said loudly, “Mummy, this is just like canvassing.” Then the door opened and she went, “Trick or treat!” and I said, “I blame those CCHQ canvassing scripts”—an absolute disaster.

A myriad of female colleagues naturally support each other, on both sides of the House. I especially congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnorshire (Fay Jones) on her wedding at the weekend. She looked absolutely radiant and I wish her and her husband a long, happy life together.

I am chuffed to be the first MP from Stroud to be asked to second the Loyal Address. Stroud, with its valleys and vale, is gorgeous, so please visit. We have the quirky bit of the Cotswolds with a creative, innovative and industrial spirit throughout. People rightly expect a lot of their public servants in our neck of the woods, so I mainly sit in the House of Commons Library, as others know, dealing with endless amounts of casework and correspondence. I am having some successes: I am steadily chipping away at 20-year-old problems such as Tricorn House and accessibility at Stroud station and at newer challenges, including Rush skatepark and Stroud Maternity’s postnatal beds.

People take the mick out of me sitting in the Library, but I really like it. It is never dull. My hon. Friend the Member for Totnes (Anthony Mangnall), another denizen of the Library, excitedly texted me one day, saying, “Come see my tortoise.” I have heard about these public schoolboys and how they like to give nicknames to things, so it was not without fear and trepidation that I came into his bit of the Library to see his tortoise. Happily, Mr Speaker, it was actually your tortoise that I got to see; he was eating merrily on the Terrace. May I also say that your decision to add giant cats and other creatures to this already odd place is very welcome?

I listened carefully to what His Majesty the King had to say earlier. It is customary to be jolly in seconding a speech, but we all know that these are difficult times. To hear that the Government’s focus is on security challenges, both domestic and international, was extremely important. Thereafter, I can get behind all actions to increase economic growth and help our constituents with day-to-day pressures or injustices. By way of an example, Stroud constituents should not be ripped off by rogue property management companies. I commend the campaigning work of local people and my hon. Friends the Members for North East Bedfordshire (Richard Fuller) and for Cities of London and Westminster (Nickie Aiken) to get leasehold reform and protections for homeowners on the agenda.

The King’s comments about putting people in control of their futures and the focus on town regeneration give me hope for high streets, businesses and fantastic areas such as Berkeley and Stroud towns. With the Prime Minister gripping artificial intelligence and new technology, we are poised and ready to fly with innovation in renewables, hydrogen internal combustion engines, nuclear and many other science, technology, engineering and maths fields.

The Government’s NHS long-term workforce plan must get lift-off if we are to help Stroud Maternity midwives. I have long campaigned for more apprentices as well, so let us get rid of all barriers in further education. My excellent friend and constituency neighbour, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Alex Chalk), will clearly have a lot to do as Secretary of State for Justice, but I still hope that he will look closely at family law reform to keep cases involving children out of the courts system. Although I was not expecting new childcare announcements, I urge the whole Government to get behind the Chancellor’s investment in families by urgently boosting the early years workforce.

His Majesty the King said that the Government will lead on action to tackle biodiversity loss. With COP28 approaching, the Prime Minister should get familiar

with WWT Slimbridge's flamingos on our patch. I will take all the help that I can get to have a dedicated domestic wetlands team and strategy in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. If he is not persuaded, flamingos are absolutely marvellous for that wonderful Instagram account of his. The King is the WWT president, and wetlands can genuinely help us to reach our net zero targets.

I said earlier that public service was a privilege and I genuinely meant it. It gives us the chance to change things for everyday families and champion those who deserve and need our support. It also allows the hardest working Prime Minister that I have known—and I have known quite a few recently; even my baby had met three Prime Ministers by the time she was three months old—to show the country, week in, week out, how we can bring long-term change against global headwinds, and I second this Loyal Address.

Mr Speaker: I call the Leader of the Opposition.

3.4 pm

Keir Starmer (Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab): Before I turn to the Humble Address, I am sure the whole House will join me in paying tribute to His Majesty the King on the occasion of his first Gracious Speech as our sovereign. Of course, he gave the speech last year, and has for some time enjoyed the best view in the House on how it should be done. None the less, this is a new chapter for him and our country, so we pay tribute to him.

I also congratulate both the mover and seconder of the Humble Address for their fantastic speeches. The right hon. Member for Scarborough and Whitby (Sir Robert Goodwill) once again showed us his deep love for his constituency and delivered a truly great speech. He has been a good servant and is well respected across the House, but he is now wanted again on his farm. I can inform the House that he is also one of this country's leading steam engine enthusiasts and the proud owner of a Fowler K5 ploughing engine, which is not a tractor, but is none the less a beautiful machine that on a good day, when he really steps on it, can still give the TransPennine Express a run for its money. However, I warn him to be careful: there are some weird and wonderful details in all those Network North announcements, and the Prime Minister might commandeer his Fowler—for illustrative purposes only, of course.

It was great to hear the hon. Member for Stroud (Siobhan Baillie) make a powerful speech to this House. It is only right that the Prime Minister selected someone with good sense to second the Humble Address, and so of course he had to turn to a working-class lawyer with a connection to Camden. I can say from personal knowledge, and from many people in Camden, that as a Camden councillor she was respected across parties, as she is here. A year ago, she rightly pointed out that

“there are many ways to boost domestic energy security using nuclear, solar, marine energy...and onshore wind”—

an argument that shows exactly why she has a bright future within her party. It is a shame that, instead of choosing her to second the Humble Address, the Prime Minister did not ask her to write the energy section of the King's Speech.

We are lucky enough not to have lost any Members of this House since the last Address, but, as we approach the end of this cycle, it is only right that we once again remember those whom we all still miss so much, who left us earlier in this Parliament. On the Opposition Benches we lost our beloved friend Jack Dromey, a champion of working people for the ages. On the Government Benches we lost Dame Cheryl Gillan, James Brokenshire and of course Sir David Amess, who was taken from us in the vilest and cruellest of circumstances. We on the Opposition Benches still mourn the loss of Jo Cox, one of our brightest lights, seven years ago now in similar fashion, so we reach out across the aisle and say of Sir David, as does the plaque put up in the Chamber in recent weeks, “His light remains.”

Mr Speaker, it is also customary to welcome new Members to the House—although, given that you are a stickler for parliamentary time limits, that could be difficult. I welcome all 11 new Members to the first of these debates: one for the Conservative party, two for the Liberal Democrats and eight for Labour. Those are victories that show, without question, that Britain is ready for change; victories that have reduced the Conservative party—now nearly 14 years in power—to the desperate spectacle of claiming that it offers change away from itself.

Today's speech shows just how ridiculous that posturing is, because what we have before us is a plan for more of the same: more sticking plasters; more division; more party first, country second gimmicks; and no repudiation of the utterly discredited idea that economic growth is something that the few hand down to the many. In fact, today we reached something of a new low, because the Conservatives are not even pretending to govern any more. They have given up on any sense of service. They see our country's problems as something to be exploited, not solved. In doing that, they underestimate the British people, because what Britain wants is for them to stop messing around and get on with the job. People want action, not inaction; solutions to real problems, not the imaginary ones that haunt the Conservative party's imagination; a Government who are committed to the national interest, not desperately trying to save their own skin.

Our schools are crumbling, waiting lists are rising, rivers and streams are dying, infrastructure is being cancelled, violent criminals are being released early, the Conservatives' mortgage bombshell is blowing up the finances of millions, growth is set to be the lowest in the G7 next year, and taxes are higher than at any time since the war—the Prime Minister raised them himself 25 times. The Tory recipe for British decline: low growth, high tax, crumbling public services, with the Prime Minister serving up more of the same.

Of course, there are steps we can welcome: Jade's law, Martyn's law and an independent regulator in football. We have said that on smoking and public health, the Prime Minister can count on our votes. We will always serve the national interest. That is why this House has stood united in our support for Ukraine since the start of Putin's aggression, and we must never lose our resolve or focus.

The speech mentions the terrible events in Israel and Palestine. It is now one month exactly since the senseless murder of Jews by the terrorists of Hamas and the taking of hostages on 7 October. Every new day in

[*Keir Starmer*]

Gaza brings with it more pain, more suffering, more agony. Hostages are still held; thousands of civilians are dead, including so many innocent women and children; millions are struggling for the basics of life—food, water, sanitation, medicines and fuel. We cannot and we will not close our eyes to their suffering. We need a humanitarian pause now and for the hostages to be released now. Israel has the right and duty to defend herself, but that is not a blank cheque; it must comply with international law. This House must commit to doing whatever it can to keep alive the light of peace, so we welcome the clear commitment in the speech to supporting the two-state solution.

To return once more to the Conservatives' plan for Britain, the biggest question is how they think that this is anywhere near good enough. After all the chaos they have unleashed—after levelling up, “No rules were broken,” “We’re all in it together,” and all the other broken promises of the last 13 years—this is the plan that they put to the working people of this country and say, “Trust us, we’ve changed.” It’s laughable. They cannot see Britain: that is the only possible conclusion. The walls of this place are too high. But let me assure the House that Britain sees them, and Britain sees today that they offer no change on public services, no change on the cost of living crisis, and no change to the economic model that has failed to give working people the security and opportunity that they deserve. That is the change that Britain needs, and today was a missed opportunity.

We needed a King’s Speech that would draw a line under 13 years of Tory decline—a King’s Speech for national renewal and a serious plan for growth. But instead, we have a party so devoid of leadership that it is happy to follow a Home Secretary who describes homelessness as a “lifestyle choice” and believes that the job of protecting us all from extremists—the most basic job of government—is legitimate terrain for her divisive brand of politics. As Director of Public Prosecutions, I worked closely with the police and counter-terrorism forces. Their job is hard enough already without the Home Secretary using it as a platform for her own ambitions. I say to the Prime Minister: think very carefully about what she is committing your Government to do, and think very carefully about the consequences of putting greater demands on public servants at the coalface of keeping us safe—because without a serious Home Secretary, there can be no serious Government, and he cannot be a serious Prime Minister.

Homelessness is a choice—it is a political choice. Constant U-turns on no-fault evictions are political choices. Not facing up to the blockers of aspiration on the Government Benches is a political choice. And it is not that there aren’t better choices. On the Opposition Benches, we have a plan to build 1.5 million homes across the country, with a reformed planning regime that will unlock our potential, because you can’t fix homelessness without increasing the supply of housing, you can’t boost growth unless workers have the homes they need, and you can’t escape the cost of living crisis unless there is more affordable housing.

We all know why the Prime Minister finds himself in this position, but if he is prepared to stand up to the blockers, and if he shows he can radically improve the

supply of housing by bringing back national housing targets, then yes, he can count on Labour votes, because that is what this country needs most: a credible plan for growth; a Britain where growth comes from the grassroots and growth serves the grassroots, with higher living standards in every community—an ambition that can only be delivered if we roll up our sleeves and get building. At the moment, just to get a tunnel built in this country can require a planning application 30 times longer than the complete works of Shakespeare. That is why today we needed a planning Bill to strip out the red tape and get Britain building.

We also needed a bold commitment to train the next generation, with new technical colleges, apprenticeship levy reform and expert teachers in every classroom, giving British businesses the skills they need. We needed a modern industrial strategy on a statutory footing, with a Bill to match—a signal of intent to the world that we are serious about fighting for the jobs of the future. We needed an employment Bill. Time and again, this Bill has been promised; time and again, it fails to materialise, when we could be scrapping fire and rehire, ending zero-hours contracts, making work pay with a real living wage and saying unambiguously that strong workers’ rights are good for growth. What we got instead is an exercise in economic miserabilism: an admission that his Government have no faith in Britain’s ability to avert decline.

Take the oil and gas Bill announced today—a Bill that everyone in the energy sector knows is a political gimmick and even the Energy Secretary admits will not take a single penny off anyone’s bills. I do not know which of his seven bins the Prime Minister chucked her meat tax in, but this one will follow soon. None the less, it is a gimmick that tells a story: a King’s Speech with no concern for the national interest, wallowing in a pessimism that says the hard road to a better future isn’t for Britain.

It has been this way for 13 years now: a failure to seize the opportunities, perhaps even to see the opportunities; working people hit because the Conservatives did not build the gas storage, they did not invest in clean British energy, and they scrapped home insulation. And they are doing it all again: moving the targets back, and passing it on to the next generation, even as costs rise and rise. This is sticking-plaster politics—an approach as riven through the foundations of our security as the crumbling concrete in our schools. The never-ending cycle of Tory Britain: party first, country second; drift, stagnate, decline.

We have to turn the page. The Government are wrong about clean energy—it is cheaper, it is British and it can give us real security against tyrants like Putin. More importantly, they are wrong about Britain. We can win the race for jobs of tomorrow; we can work hand in glove with the private sector and invest in critical infrastructure—the gigafactories, the new ports and the clean British steel that can once again light the fire of renewal in British industrial communities.

Today was the day we could have struck the match for that light, embraced a new sense of mission and tackled the cost of living crisis with a new plan for growth. There was a chance to get Britain building again—take back our streets, get the NHS back on its feet, deliver cheaper bills with real energy security, and tear down

the barriers to opportunity—but for the 14th year in a row, the Government passed it up, severed their relationship with Britain's future and gave up on the national interest.

The speech shows with ever greater clarity that the only fight left in the Government is the fight for their own skin—a Government who have given up, dragging Britain down with them, ever more steadily towards decline; a day on which it became crystal clear that the change Britain needs is from Tory decline to Labour renewal.

Mr Speaker: I call the Prime Minister.

3.21 pm

The Prime Minister (Rishi Sunak): This is the first King's Speech in 70 years, and the first of His Majesty's reign, which is already defined by the same wisdom, grace and compassion that marked a long record of service. May I take this opportunity on behalf of the whole House to express our admiration and gratitude to His Majesty the King?

Before we get into the traditional debate, let me first address the situation in Israel and Gaza. All of us in the House care deeply about the suffering of innocent people and the scenes we have witnessed. We abhor the way in which Hamas have used innocent Palestinians as human shields. It is right that the United Kingdom is doubling our aid funding for Palestinian civilians. We have been consistent throughout in our calls for a humanitarian pause as soon as possible to get aid in and hostages and foreign nationals out, but a unilateral and unconditional ceasefire would simply allow Hamas to entrench their position and continue their attacks against Israel. Only last week, Hamas reiterated their intentions, stating clearly:

"We will repeat the October 7 attack time and again until Israel is annihilated."

Faced with such a threat, no country could reasonably be expected not to act.

Last week, I spoke with Prime Minister Netanyahu to reiterate the United Kingdom's backing for Israel's right to defend itself; it is the first duty of any Government. I also stressed the need to allow more aid into Gaza, to take all possible measures to minimise civilian casualties, and to avoid inflaming tensions in the west bank, where settler violence must stop. I can update the House that now well over 100 British nationals have been able to leave Gaza, thanks to our diplomatic efforts to reopen the Rafah crossing. The Development Minister will make a full statement to the House tomorrow.

Let me also reiterate this: we will not stand for the hatred and antisemitism we have seen on our streets. It sickens me to think that British Jews are looking over their shoulder in this country, and that children are going to school covering up their school badges for fear of attack. This Government will do whatever it takes to keep the Jewish community safe, just as we will do whatever it takes to keep every community safe. We will fight hatred and extremism in all its forms, wherever it is found, today, tomorrow and always. We are the world's most successful multi-ethnic, multi-faith democracy, and we will protect our democracy from all threats to it.

This King's Speech is about what this Government are about—taking long-term decisions to build a brighter future for our country. It builds on foundations that

were far stronger than they were just a year ago: inflation falling and on track to be halved; an economy now growing faster than France and Germany; national debt on track to fall; more support for the NHS this winter; and we are stopping the boats, with crossings this year down by over a fifth, as we ensure that it is this Government, not criminal gangs, who decide who comes to our country.

Now that we have strengthened the foundations, this King's Speech turns to the future, taking long-term decisions with a single objective—to change our country for the better: change in our economy with new legislation to improve our energy security, join a huge trade pact with the fastest-growing region in the world and prepare to seize the opportunities of a new technological age; change in our society with new protections for leaseholders and renters, a Bill to safeguard the future of football clubs and fans, and the historic legislation that will finally create the first smoke-free generation; and change to keep our nation secure and our communities safe with tougher sentences for criminals, more powers for the police and security services, and tough new action to clamp down on antisocial behaviour.

What will all this mean for the British people? More jobs, more investment and higher growth; more police on the streets with stronger powers to keep us safe; places people are proud to call home; and a country strong at home, confident abroad and with a better future ahead for all our people. That is the change that this King's Speech and this Government will deliver.

The Loyal Address was brilliantly proposed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough and Whitby (Sir Robert Goodwill). I will always be grateful to him, because when I was first selected as the Conservative candidate for Richmond (Yorks), my right hon. Friend took a call from a prominent farmer in my local community who had expressed some consternation about the revelation that I did not eat beef. Quick as a flash, my right hon. Friend replied, "Don't worry, he's the perfect candidate—there'll be more for me and thee!"

As a proud Yorkshireman, my right hon. Friend has a reputation for being very careful with money. Just the other day, he went shopping for a new pair of shoes, and when the shop assistant tried to throw away the old pair, he said, "Hang on a second, I want to keep those laces—there's still life in them yet!" I have often regarded myself as a trainee Yorkshireman, and it turned that out that, with him, I was also a trainee fiscal Conservative. That is why I asked my right hon. Friend to apply his same zeal for savings to efficiencies that we could make across Whitehall. He came back with a great list: Yorkshire teabags are perfectly fine for another three or four goes, the DEFRA thermostat was set far too high at 17° and seven bins are simply far too many.

My right hon. Friend is probably the only Member of this House who is the proud owner of his own graveyard. Apparently, he even does some of the digging himself. No wonder he is such a staunch supporter of the Government's plan to protect renters: he fully supports the right of his tenants to be left undisturbed over the very long long-term. In his maiden speech, my right hon. Friend proudly boasted that Whitby in his constituency was

"voted No. 1 weekend holiday destination by the readers of *Saga Magazine*".—[Official Report, 6 June 2005; Vol. 434, c. 1052.]

[*The Prime Minister*]

I am delighted, as my right hon. Friend retires and lifts his gaze from his own copy of *Saga*, that he already finds himself in the home of blue skies, blue waters and blue rinses. Whitby is, as he reminded us, where Dracula made landfall—that shadowy, pale, haunting figure aged beyond his years. And that is what two decades in this House can do for you!

As a Government Whip, a Minister in four Departments, and a dedicated constituency MP, my right hon. Friend has had an extraordinary career. Among his many achievements, I would particularly highlight his introduction of the first ever roadside drug tests. Before that we had no way of clamping down on dangerous drug driving, and that landmark policy has saved untold numbers of lives. It is a legacy he should be proud of, and a reminder of the good that politics can do. My right hon. Friend is a great parliamentarian, and I am proud to call him a friend. His speech was in the finest traditions of this House, and his wit, integrity and sound good sense will be much missed on all sides.

Continuing the North Yorkshire theme, the Loyal Address was brilliantly seconded by someone who was also born and bred in God's own county, my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Siobhan Baillie). I am sure the whole House will join me in paying tribute to our fantastic NHS, and send our very best wishes to her daughter Tilly. Some may think of my hon. Friend as a shy, retiring and studious type. After all, as she said today, she often prefers to be in the Library. But we are discovering another side to my hon. Friend; we have heard about her time in the naughty corner, and about the Spice Girl platforms. I can also reveal today that back in the 1990s she won the prestigious, fiercely contested crown of "Yorkshire rock 'n roll dancing queen".

In a rich and varied career, my hon. Friend was also a highly regarded yoga teacher. So when she read in *The Times* that the shadow Cabinet were being encouraged to take up yoga in the office, she was waiting for the phone call. It turns out that no Conservative, not even one as supremely talented as my hon. Friend, can teach the Labour party anything when it comes to constantly changing from one contorted position to another.

My hon. Friend also mentioned taking advice and inspiration from a certain parliamentary sketch writer. If she is hoping that one day he might make her the target of his acerbic wit, I would just say this: be careful what you wish for. I have been called many things in my time, but I am not sure that I will ever forget being branded

"the titch in vacuum-packed underpants".

On a serious note, my hon. Friend has already made a huge impact in her short time in this place, and nowhere more than in her fantastic campaign to improve childcare provision, inspiring my right hon. Friend the Chancellor to announce 30 hours of free childcare a week for under-fours in England in the March Budget. That landmark policy will make an enormous difference to millions of families up and down the country, and my hon. Friend should be incredibly proud of her part in making that happen.

My hon. Friend overcame great odds to reach her place today. Growing up on free school meals, she left home as a teenager and worked her way up as a family

lawyer, without attending university, before becoming the first female MP of Stroud in 2019. Sometimes people ask me what being a Conservative is all about, and I can think of no greater example than that. My hon. Friend is a remarkable person, a dedicated MP, and someone with a huge future ahead. Her speech was in the finest traditions of this House.

Let me also thank the Leader of the Opposition for his contribution to this debate, and indeed his first U-turn of it. As a former republican, he used to think that this country should not even have a King's Speech, but at least that is one U-turn the whole country will welcome. The right hon. and learned Gentleman is prone to changing his position, but in fairness his speech did strike a few consistent notes: higher inflation, more strikes, more immigration and higher borrowing. The Labour party's plan to unnecessarily borrow £28 billion more every year and give in to inflation-busting pay demands from its union paymasters is dangerous, inflationary, and the British people would pay the price in higher interest rates and higher taxes. In truth, Labour will borrow anything—people's money or people's ideas—and it now turns out that his copy-and-paste shadow Chancellor is happy to borrow other people's work, too, but she is not the only Member on the Opposition Benches to get unstuck by a book. Earlier this year, the Leader of the Opposition had to abandon writing his own book and return the deposit. It was supposed to be his vision for Britain, but his publishers discovered what the British people already know: he simply does not have one. While he stands for the same old ideas, we are focused on the long-term decisions that will provide a better and brighter future for everyone. That is what this King's Speech will deliver.

That change starts with changing our economy. We have already delivered the largest fall in inflation since the 1980s, a faster recovery from the pandemic than Germany, France and Japan, and tens of billions of pounds of new investment from around the world. We believe that the role of Government is to create the conditions for the private sector to thrive. That is where new growth and new jobs come from. It is why we have given business a £27 billion tax cut on investment, launched 12 freeports around the UK to create jobs and investment, and introduced legislation in this King's Speech so that we can confirm our membership of the comprehensive and progressive agreement for trans-Pacific partnership, a huge trading pact with the fastest growing region in the world. [*Interruption.*] I hear from those on the Opposition Benches that it will make no difference. We can only do that because of our new freedoms outside the European Union—freedoms that the Leader of the Opposition wants to abandon, instead locking the United Kingdom into a new European deal that would tie us into EU rules and regulations that we would have no say over and opening our borders to 100,000 additional EU migrants every single year.

As well as failing to secure our borders, the Opposition would also fail to secure our energy supplies. We know that economic growth requires energy security. We have already invested record amounts in renewables such as offshore wind. We backed Sizewell C, the first new nuclear in decades. The King's Speech introduces new legislation for North sea oil and gas, supporting hundreds of thousands of British jobs. We can compare and contrast that with the Opposition's energy policy—

Sir Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): Will the Prime Minister give way? [*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. Members have the right to intervene. If the Prime Minister wishes to give way, that is up to the Prime Minister. If he wishes not to do so, that is also fine.

The Prime Minister: We can compare and contrast—

Sir Chris Bryant: Will the Prime Minister give way? [*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister is not giving way.

The Prime Minister: We can compare and contrast the proposed new legislation with the Opposition's energy policy, and there is one word for it: naive. That is not my word, but that of their own union paymasters. I will happily give way.

Sir Chris Bryant: I am very grateful to the Prime Minister. Bearing in mind that a significant proportion of people who sleep rough are Army veterans and people with acquired brain injuries, does the Prime Minister agree with the Home Secretary when she says that homelessness—sleeping rough—is “a lifestyle choice”? If he does not, will he sack her?

The Prime Minister: I am not sure about the link between that and energy security, but I can tell the hon. Gentleman that thanks to the efforts of my right hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Moor View (Johnny Mercer), veterans' homelessness is at record low levels in this country. Rough sleeping overall is down by around a third since the peak, thanks to the actions of this Government and in particular the landmark Homelessness Reduction Act 2017—passed by this Government—which has helped relieve or prevent more than 640,000 people from becoming homelessness.¹

Returning to energy security, the Opposition want to ban all new oil and gas licences, risking our becoming even more dependent on Putin's Russia for our crucial supplies of energy. What is even more absurd about their policy is this: the Leader of the Opposition is not against all oil and gas; he is just against British oil and gas. Unlike the Opposition, who want to pursue net zero with an ideological zeal—going even faster and further no matter what the cost or the disruption—we on the Conservative Benches are cutting the cost of net zero for working people, saving British families £5,000, £10,000 or £15,000, and that is the choice.

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): I am grateful to the Prime Minister for giving way. I want to ask him when he will start being straight with the British public. He pretends that new oil and gas licences will somehow guarantee our energy security, when he knows that that oil and gas is sold on international markets to the highest bidder. He pretends that it will get people's bills down, yet his own Secretary of State for Energy has said that it will not. When will he stop governing by gimmick, and when will he start actually rolling out the home insulation programme that will get people's bills down?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady talks about being straight. It is the Conservative party and me who were straight with the British people about the cost of getting to net zero—something that she and the Labour party would do well to follow. Because we have been honest and transparent and have cut those costs, we will save British families £5,000, £10,000 or £15,000—

Caroline Lucas *indicated dissent.*

Mr Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister gave way to the hon. Lady. She should at least do him the courtesy of hearing the answer.

The Prime Minister: That is the simple choice: a Government on the side of hard-working people or an Opposition and the hon. Lady on the side of the eco-zealots.

If we want truly to change our country, we need a stronger society. That is why this King's Speech introduces a landmark Bill to create the first smoke-free generation. It will prevent deaths, improve people's lives and free the NHS to support others. It is the most significant public health intervention by any Government for generations—historic change from a historic King's Speech.

But that is not all that the Government are doing for the NHS. We have invested record sums, created 50 million more primary private care appointments and brought more beds and more ambulances. Through the NHS's first ever long-term workforce plan, we will recruit more doctors, nurses and dentists than ever before. That is what the NHS needs, not the damaging strike action that Labour refuses to condemn, even though it is adding tens of thousands of people to waiting lists every single day. The Opposition also opposed our plans to provide a minimum safety level during the strikes. Do they and the Leader of the Opposition think that vulnerable patients do not deserve life-saving healthcare, or are they just too weak to stand up to the unions? Either way, the conclusion is clear: you simply cannot trust Labour with the NHS.

Let me turn to the most important part of a stronger society: education. Of all that we have achieved since 2010, this is what I am most proud of. Under the Labour party, only two thirds of schools were rated “good” or “outstanding”; now it is about 90%. They took us down the international league tables; we are now soaring up them. They devalued apprenticeships; we are investing in them. They backed rip-off degrees, and we are ending them. We are also introducing the new advanced British standard, so that everyone will study maths and English to 18, learn a broader range of subjects, with more hours in the classroom, and we will finally break down the barriers between academic and technical education. More teachers, higher standards and more apprenticeships: on the Government side of the House, a stronger society is an opportunity society, and this Conservative Government are delivering.

We can only build that stronger society with stronger communities, and that is what this King's Speech does. We are reforming the housing market to empower leaseholders and to give renters more security; establishing a new independent football regulator to give fans a greater voice in their clubs; and delivering our promise to level up with record investment in local areas. We are

1. [*Official Report*, 13 November 2023, Vol. 740, c. 6MC.]

[*The Prime Minister*]

building a million more homes, all the while protecting the green belt—unlike the charter for sprawl that we see from the Labour party.

That brings me to transport. Every single penny that would have been spent on High Speed 2—a repeatedly delayed, expensive project that failed to meet people's real needs—is now being invested in the north, in the midlands and right across the country, with £36 billion of investment in projects that people really need and actually want. Network North is without question the most ambitious scheme for northern transport that any Government have developed, ever. Yet first the Leader of the Opposition was against it, then he was for it, and now he is not really sure. One thing is for sure: you simply cannot trust a word he says.

None of those important changes will mean anything if people do not feel safe in their communities. The facts are clear: it is this Government that is on the side of law and order. This King's Speech introduces legislation to better support victims, as well as new measures to combat the scourge of antisocial behaviour, all building on a proud record of tackling crime—20,000 more police officers on the streets, more police on the streets than ever before. [*Interruption.*] We have heard a lot about 13 years, but since 2010: crime halved; violent crime halved; burglary also halved; antisocial behaviour down by 70%; tougher sentences for rapists and sex offenders, which is something the Labour party voted against; and, for the worst offenders, life finally means life—all while the Leader of the Opposition and those on the Opposition Front Bench campaigned to stop the deportation of dangerous foreign criminals.

We are just days away from Remembrance Sunday, so let me close by paying tribute to our armed forces. At this moment, over 7,000 servicemen and women are deployed overseas. From the frozen waste of the High North to the streets of Kosovo, they are the best of us. We owe to all our veterans a lifelong debt of gratitude. I am proud of our work, led in Cabinet by my right hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Moor View, to make this the best country in the world to be a veteran. That is what you get with this Government. We are on the side of Britain's armed forces. We are investing record amounts in defence, we are an unwavering ally to the Ukrainian people and we are proud to be one of the largest contributors to NATO. But in contrast, Mr Speaker, what do you get with the Opposition? They tried to install—[*Interruption.*] They never like being reminded about it, but Labour Members tried to install as Prime Minister a man who wanted to abolish the armed forces, withdraw from NATO and back the UK's enemies over its allies. Labour cannot be trusted with our nation's security.

This King's Speech builds on the strong foundation of an economy well on its way to recovery. It rejects big Government and instead backs people and businesses to thrive. It strengthens society, with historic measures to support the nation's health and education. It secures our streets and borders, with tougher sentences for criminals and powers for police. Above all, this King's Speech delivers change—change in our economy, change in our society, change in our communities. It takes long-term decisions for a brighter future, and I commend it to the House.

Mr Speaker: I call the leader of the SNP. [*Interruption.*] Members should please leave quietly.

3.47 pm

Stephen Flynn (Aberdeen South) (SNP): Thank you, Mr Speaker; was it something I said? Like snaw aff a dyke.

I wish to begin, as is customary, by passing on my thanks to King Charles and the Queen for their most Gracious Speech today. I am sure it was a momentous occasion for them both. I have been goaded a wee bit about my flower, but notwithstanding that, I intend to start by offering some consensus across the Chamber, because I believe that is incredibly important in these times. First, in relation to Ukraine, it is fast approaching the two-year anniversary of Vladimir Putin's decision to enter Ukraine in an extremely forceful manner—to start a war, to kill civilians and to attack Ukraine's democracy, building upon the steps that he had taken in 2014 by invading and annexing Crimea. It has been said in the public domain that the resolve of the west is perhaps shaking in the face of the fact that the conflict continues; but I think we are all united across this Chamber, right across parties, in our steadfast commitment to the Ukrainian people in their fight to protect their democracy against that most abhorrent of tyrants.

We say that because these are our values. It is what we believe in. We believe in peace, we believe in protecting civilians and we believe in democracy. Of course, that view extends beyond just Ukraine; it extends to the situation in Israel and Gaza, too. I know I am at risk of repeating myself here—as indeed many of us do in this Chamber from time to time—but it is important to reiterate that all of us in this Chamber are united in our unequivocal condemnation of what Hamas did exactly a month ago. There can never be a justification for the senseless killing of men, women and children in the way that that terrorist organisation did. What we have seen off the back of that on our streets is equally—not perhaps equally—concerning. We all have grave concerns about the rise of antisemitism and the fear so many people have walking the streets of these isles. I want to send my heartfelt support to all those in the Jewish community and to make it very clear—if, indeed, it ever needed to be clear—that we all oppose antisemitism, no ifs and no buts.

Finally on that point, I think what we all so urgently want to see is diplomacy in action to release the hostages who are still under Hamas's control. There can be, as I said in relation to other matters, no justification for that and we all want to see those people returned to their families as quickly as possible. As I have said previously, I wish the Prime Minister well in that diplomatic pursuit.

The conflict in Israel and Gaza cannot be forgotten without mentioning what we are seeing in Gaza itself. Thousands upon thousands of people have been killed. People do not have access to food. They do not have access to clean water. They do not have access to fuel. They cannot turn on the lights. They do not have access to medicine. In many instances, the hospitals they go to no longer exist, the schools they once went to no longer exist, the universities they once went to no longer exist. What we are seeing—this is perhaps where the agreement across the Floor goes away—is collective punishment. What we so badly need to see is a humanitarian ceasefire.

No, not a humanitarian pause, which fills people's bellies, only for them to be blown up in the days to follow. What we believe in unequivocally is a humanitarian ceasefire. I sincerely hope that Members across the Chamber will join us in coming to that position in the not too distant future, because those are our values. We believe in peace and we believe in the protection of civilians.

To the King's Speech itself, I was listening very closely, like others were, and I heard the term "economic growth". That intrigued me, because we all know that Britain is broke and Brexit broke it, and we so obviously need economic growth. For those of us on the SNP Benches there is an obvious solution on that front. There are perhaps three or four things that we could and should do. They may not be popular with Members—certainly not with those on the Government Benches, or indeed with some in the Official Opposition—but they are necessary. All of us, I think, would agree that to have economic growth we need the tax base to expand. The easiest way to do that is to actually increase working age migration to these isles.

Beyond migration, the easiest way is to ensure that the businesses we all want to thrive are able to export directly to the biggest markets possible. In our case, there is one sitting just across the channel: the EU single market. We should be more robust and confident about saying that we need not only more migration to these isles but access to the EU single market. The argument the Prime Minister puts forward is that the trade deal reached with our friends in Asia is the start of something better. Well, I had a wee look, and that trade deal is worth 0.08% of GDP. The Government would need 50—50—of those trade deals just to match the 4% hit caused by leaving the European Union.

Beyond migration and access to the single market, another way to guarantee economic growth is to enshrine the rights of workers into law through the likes of an employment Bill. It is a damned disgrace that since 2017 this Government have been promising an employment Bill and have still not delivered.

Another strand to achieve economic growth, if colleagues were so willing, would be to double down on investment in net zero—to do as the Americans are doing, and to follow the lead of Joe Biden with the Inflation Reduction Act. It makes sense. It makes sense to invest in the technologies of tomorrow, so that we are not left behind and can compete for the decades to come. Net zero is not a hindrance; it is a growth opportunity.

I am pleased that in the speech we heard today we were given an indication that the grid was to be upgraded—that is to be welcomed, long overdue as it is—but what we do not have is any insight into to whether there will be a financial mechanism to deliver pumped storage hydropower in Scotland, in Cruachan or Coire Glas. There was no indication that there would be further or new financial mechanisms to support tidal power in Scotland, which is world-leading. There was no indication that there would be financial mechanisms to deliver green hydrogen at scale, not just for people in these isles but throughout the European continent. There was no indication whatsoever that this Government were going to fix the failure of the offshore wind auction round, which delivered not a single bid this year: a shameful indictment, and damaging, oh so damaging, to Scotland's burgeoning renewables sector.

For folk sitting at home, none of this is tangible, none of it is real, because people living in Scotland, an energy-rich nation, are nevertheless living in fuel poverty. We already produce six times more gas than we consume, yet people cannot afford to turn on their heating. In 2022 we produced enough energy, enough electricity, to power all the homes in Scotland for three and a half years, yet people cannot afford to keep the lights on. There are two things that the Government could have done to support those people. First, they could have finally separated the cost of gas from the cost of electricity to protect consumers immediately. Secondly, they could and should have reinstated the £400 energy bill rebate, because we know that people are going to be worse off this year than last. Those are the facts. They may not be popular in this place, but we will continue to champion them, because they are our values.

The challenges that people face, however, extend beyond just their energy bills; they involve their mortgage bills as well. Why is there no action in relation to mortgage relief? Why is there no action in relation to a price cap on some staple foods in the supermarkets? It was suggested by a member of the Government that that would be communism. Someone should have told Emmanuel Macron, because the French have done it: they have managed to protect their citizens. Why is it good enough for them, but not good enough for us?

When we look at the cost of living crisis in its entirety, we see that ultimately it exists because of decisions made in this place. People cannot afford to pay their energy bills because of decades of incompetence on energy policy in this place. People cannot afford to pay their mortgage bills because the Tories crashed the economy. People cannot afford to pay their food bills because Brexit pushed up the prices—and that was delivered by politicians in this place. We have had enough of it.

Douglas Ross (Moray) (Con): The hon. Gentleman spoke at length about energy, and never once mentioned oil. He represents Aberdeen North. I wonder whether, when the Government's Bill on oil and gas licences comes to this Chamber, he will stand up for his constituents and vote with the Government, or support the position of the Scottish National party, which is to turn its back on oil and gas workers.

Stephen Flynn: The hon. Member for Moray is always one for detail, but I represent Aberdeen South, not Aberdeen North.

It is just seven days since the Government announced 27 licences for offshore oil and gas, and now they have come forward with a proposal to do so on an annual basis. *[Interruption.]* I hear the hon. Gentleman chuntering from a sedentary position like a wee daft. If he chooses to listen, I will get to my point. What he knows I believe is that there must be an evidence-based approach to oil and gas extraction—an evidence-based approach which is anathema to this Government. We need to be considering our energy security and our commitment to net zero, to jobs and opportunities and, of course, to our investment in renewables. What I would like to see the Government do—I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would agree with me in this regard—is to ensure that in regard to the pre-existing licences for the likes of offshore wind, where the Government have failed, we see improvements to ensure that this actually happens.

[Stephen Flynn]

When the people of Scotland see the cost of living challenges, they know that they emanate from the decisions taken in this place and their minds are very much refocused on the fact that where power is devolved, power is retained. What we so badly need to see is the powers over our economy, energy policy and employment law transferred from this place to Holyrood, and here is why. When we look at the record of Holyrood in comparison to this place, the difference could not be more stark. If you are a young person in Scotland, you will be born into a baby box; if you go to nursery, you will receive 1,140 hours of care; if you go to primary school, you will get free school meals; if you go to secondary school and want to go into higher education, that will be paid for you; and if you enter the workplace in Scotland and become a nurse, you will be paid more than you would be paid here.

The majority of Scots pay less tax than those in England. They pay less council tax than those living in England, and they will be able to get crisp, clean water included as part of that bill. Of course, if you want to be—[*Interruption.*] The hon. Member for Moray is very keen. Would he like to rise to his feet?

Douglas Ross: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way again. He has spoken a lot about economic growth. Does he agree with several SNP Back Benchers that there should be no place in the SNP Scottish Government for the Greens because they are anti-economic growth?

Stephen Flynn: I believe that I was talking about nationalised water in Scotland, and it is not just water that is nationalised in Scotland; our railways are nationalised as well. If you want to open a business in Scotland, you will have access to the small business bonus, and as you get older you will be able to live in comfort, knowing that you will have access to free personal care.

All those things came about because those are our values. They are tangible and real, and what the Scottish Parliament has done is deliver them. What it is going to deliver next is the council tax freeze—a council tax freeze that comes in the face of some Labour councillors in Scotland advocating for a 32% rise in council tax. Only the SNP, using the powers that we have, is protecting the Scottish people during the cost of living crisis, in stark contrast to the failing establishment in front of us here. But of course, it is not all bad news. We do have one glimmer of hope: the fact that this is not just the Prime Minister's first King's Speech; it is the Prime Minister's last King's Speech.

Mr Speaker: I call the Father of the House.

4.3 pm

Sir Peter Bottomley (Worthing West) (Con): Having heard the parliamentary leader for the Scottish National party, the hon. Member for Aberdeen South (Stephen Flynn), the question in my mind is whether he anticipates the result of the next general election being better or worse than 2017, when his party got 37% of the vote in Scotland. My guess is that it will be worse. My constituents would like to have Barnett formula funding for local government for all the kinds of things he was speaking

about. They would welcome having the extra money, and perhaps as we get the economy to grow, we will get that extra money and services that will go on improving.

One point that the hon. Gentleman could have made would have been to welcome the leasehold reform for England, which Scotland has had for some time. If he had spoken about that, he would have had a welcome from across the House for saying that we are catching up by ending the unfairness, the uncertainty and the life of misery that too many residential leaseholders have had for too long.

I am glad that the Government are now moving forward on that, and I pay tribute to Gavin Barwell—now Lord Barwell—who was the first Housing Minister to recognise that there was a problem. I am glad that the Secretary of State for Levelling Up and his colleagues are now taking this forward. If the Bill, when it comes forward, gives us three quarters of what we want, the Prime Minister can rely on colleagues on both sides of the House and in both Chambers to make improvements so that we get all that is needed. Freeholders, residential leaseholders and tenants ought to be able to have the same kinds of protections, and I am glad that the Government are bringing forward those improvements.

Overhanging our debate is the misery and terror both from the attack on Israel and the Israelis, and from the conditions of people in Gaza. We need to keep in mind that until Hamas releases hostages, until it can honestly say that it will not repeat that kind of attack, and until it recognises the state of Israel, it will be a continuing problem. We cannot close our eyes and say that an instant, lasting ceasefire will solve all the problems.

Although many people have criticised the Leader of the Opposition, I think that what he and the shadow Foreign Secretary have said is worth reading. We have to have an end to the violence. We have often talked about how the aggressive settlements have destroyed people's lives in the west bank and about the conditions of people in Gaza, but we have to recognise that the bigger reality is that what happened on 7 October was another pogrom, which prompted one of my constituents to say, "There are only 16 million Jews around the world. Why do they keep picking on us?"

In this country we have to protect Muslims and Jews against hatred, and we need to make sure that we do not have one-sided demonstrations. Everyone needs protection.

Returning to the King's Speech, I am grateful for the opportunity to raise the holocaust memorial, which the Prime Minister mentioned. The original proposal was that the holocaust memorial would be up within two years—by the end of 2017. Eight years on from 2015, and there is no prospect of it possibly being open in the next five years.

The holocaust memorial galleries have since been developed at the Imperial War Museum, and I propose that those in charge of the project should get together with Baroness Deech, me and Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, who played in the Auschwitz women's orchestra and survived Bergen-Belsen, to have a private—not secret—meeting to discuss how we can have a memorial that meets the task without taking over so much of Victoria Tower Gardens, while separating the learning centre. Having a double basement in the middle of a small park south of the House of Lords is not appropriate.

There are things outside the legislative programme that overhang this House. One is the Privileges Committee report on interference in its consideration of a complaint. I believe the House has to take up the challenges outlined in the report, which is available from the Vote Office, and make sure that, when standards are challenged, those who have to consider such cases can do so without interference. I have seen who has been in the press recently and, of the 12 examples of interference, four involved one former Cabinet Minister. We ought to make sure that, in future, people do not interfere with Privileges Committee investigations.

I invite the new Chair of the Standards Committee, the right hon. and learned Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman), to reopen the proposed changes to all-party parliamentary groups. For the country groups, we should find a way to have an umbrella under which the UK branches of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association provide admin support, so that we do not have all the kerfuffle of an annual general meeting with eight people present, sometimes supervised by others. Let the groups come under that umbrella.

We should also consider why we are restricting Members to being officers of no more than six APPGs. I have taken part in APPGs throughout my time in this House. Very few MPs were initially interested in the APPG on leasehold and commonhold reform, until they realised that 6 million leaseholders are at risk. Those who are interested should come to our meeting in Committee Room 11 at 6 pm, when we will be considering the Government's proposals and what we propose to do about them. I ask the Standards Committee to review APPGs.

The Leader of the Opposition is always welcome in Worthing. If he comes to Worthing West, he could say how his proposals to ignore local objections and to let in the bulldozers will affect the Goring gap. If he comes to East Worthing and Shoreham, he could talk to hard-working Labour councillors, who are offended that they cannot be shortlisted as the parliamentary candidate.

4.9 pm

Ed Davey (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD): May I, like others, start by paying tribute to His Majesty for delivering his first King's Speech? It was clearly an historic moment, but for our King it must have been an emotional one. He made reference to his late mother, our late, amazing Queen, and many of us listening to him felt that he delivered that speech with grace and aplomb, and we are very grateful to him.

May I also pay tribute to the right hon. Member for Scarborough and Whitby (Sir Robert Goodwill) and the hon. Member for Stroud (Siobhan Baillie) for their speeches? I have always rather admired the right hon. Gentleman, for many reasons. His speech today was extremely entertaining, but I have always liked the fact that he, like many on our Benches, opposed the third runway at Heathrow and that he was a constructive, if unfashionable, Conservative in his views on a constructive relationship with our European partners. But perhaps what makes him more at home with the current Government is his romantic enthusiasm for the steam engine, as we have heard: more noise than substance and going nowhere in the modern world.

My mother-in-law, an expert beekeeper and honey producer—and the swarm officer for North Dorset, no less—would join the seconder of today's motion in congratulating Stroud on being the world's first bee guardian town. I am sure that Stroud has a real buzz about it, but the House will be pleased to hear that I do not intend to drone on and on. Given your strictures at the beginning of this debate, Mr Speaker, I should like to clarify that I was not referring to any other Members in talking about droning on.

Today's Gracious Speech is overshadowed by horrifying events around the world, with the monstrous terrorist attacks by Hamas on Israel one month ago—more than 1,400 Israelis were slaughtered and hundreds were taken hostage, and they are in our thoughts today—and now the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza. Innocent Palestinians have been cut off from food, water and medicine. Their homes have been destroyed, and more than 10,000 have been killed.

We also have war on our continent, as the brave Ukrainian people continue to resist Vladimir Putin's war machine. At times of global crisis such as this, the UK can be a force for good, when it stands tall in the world. But the British voice can be at its strongest only when we have a Government that are strong and united. I am afraid that that is sadly lacking now.

As the Gracious Speech shows, we do not even have a Government strong and united enough to take real action here on the challenges that people face at home. These are very tough times for the British people. They are working hard, showing remarkable decency and strength, but people are finding it harder and harder just to make ends meet. Instead of helping, what have this out-of-touch Conservative Government done in this King's Speech and over the past few years? They have put up taxes, energy bills and mortgage payments. They have been adding to the pain, instead of soothing it.

Let us look just at energy, where today the Government could have brought forward plans to ensure Britain's energy security and to bring down energy prices, with sustainable energy price cuts, for the long term. The Government could have announced plans to insulate homes to cut people's energy bills and to invest properly in cheap, clean, renewable energy for the future. Instead, the Conservatives are choosing, once again, to shackle us to the expensive, dirty fossil fuels of the past.

Today's Speech is yet more proof that this Government simply do not care. Just last week, the covid inquiry heard that during the pandemic the Government thought that older people should just "accept their fate". That callous approach reveals an attitude that stretches far beyond the pandemic. By failing to address the cost of living crisis, the NHS and care crisis, the sewage crisis and many other crises like them, this King's Speech, in essence, tells families and pensioners struggling to get by to "accept their fate". This Government tell the pensioner, waiting weeks to see her GP, to accept her fate, and the cancer patient, waiting months just to start treatment, to accept his fate. They tell communities who are seeing their rivers polluted and their countryside destroyed to accept their fate. They tell the British people, fed up with being taken for granted by an out-of-touch Government, to accept their fate.

However, whatever this Government might want, the people of our great country—the British people—have never been ones to sit back quietly and accept their fate.

[Ed Davey]

They will not accept a Government who are so weak and divided that they cannot tackle the country's challenges. They will not accept a Conservative party that is out of touch and out of ideas; they will kick it out of office. They will get that chance soon. No matter how long the Prime Minister delays it, an election is coming, so the British people do not have to accept the miserable fate of this tired Conservative Government. They can choose a better future and I believe they will.

4.15 pm

Mrs Theresa May (Maidenhead) (Con): I draw the House's attention to two entries in the Register of Members' Financial Interests: I am director and chair of the Global Commission for Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking, and I chair the Aldersgate Group, which brings businesses, non-governmental organisations, academics and others together to champion a prosperous, net zero emissions, environmentally-sustainable economy. Both of those roles are unpaid.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Mid Bedfordshire (Alistair Strathern) is no longer in his seat. I wanted to take the opportunity to welcome him to the House, despite the fact that I worked to make sure he did not get here. The reason I wanted to welcome and congratulate him is that he is my first cousin once removed. I am not sure whether that connection will do more damage to his career or mine. In case hon. Members are wondering about the family, we share a relative who, I am told, toyed with communism in his youth and another relative—my cousin, the hon. Member's uncle—who was the former Liberal Democrat leader of Brighton and Hove City Council, so we cover all bases.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough and Whitby (Sir Robert Goodwill) and my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Siobhan Baillie) on what I thought were witty, incisive, thoughtful and excellent speeches proposing and seconding the Humble Address.

There are things in the King's Speech that I welcome, some of which may not have been spotted by other Members of the House. I welcome the fact that it is proposed to amend the Investigatory Powers Act 2016, which was important groundbreaking legislation when it was brought through when I was Home Secretary. As things have developed, it is right that we look at it again, so we ensure we have the right legislation to keep us safe.

I also welcome the important references to taking more action on child sexual abuse, including grooming. Having seen T-levels introduced and having long thought we need to ensure an equivalent between academic and technical or vocational qualifications, I welcome the Government's intention to do just that. Indeed, I welcome the long-term ambition that the Government have expressed. They need to take long-term decisions because good government is not about grabbing at short-term decisions to get a headline, but about doing what is in the national interest and the long-term interest of the country.

On that point, I was surprised to receive an email in the name of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, sent out, I think, by the Conservative party, that read:

"From net zero to HS2, smoking to education, we are going to tackle the challenges that other politicians have been afraid to even talk about."

Since I read that, I have been racking my brains as to which Prime Minister put net zero in 2050 into legislation. Answers on a postcard, please.

As I say, I welcome the long-term approach that has been taken by the Government, but some elements should have been in the King's Speech and I am concerned that they are missing. The first is on modern slavery. Back in 2022, the legislative reform agenda published by the then Prime Minister's Office for the late Queen's Speech outlined plans to reform the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and, in particular, to introduce stronger measures in relation to businesses and their supply chains. Businesses can be transformative if they really look into their supply chains and take action if they find forced labour and exploitation in those supply chains. So I am very sorry that we have not seen amendments to the Modern Slavery Act brought forward in this Gracious Speech.

I am also concerned about the lack of commitment to a new mental health Act. It was back in 2017 that the review into the Mental Health Act was announced. That was completed in 2018. There was a White Paper in 2021 and a draft Bill in 2022. The Joint Committee finished its legislative scrutiny of that draft Bill in January this year. Several months on, we have not seen a Government response to that report and, from 2017 to 2023—six years on—we have not seen a commitment to a new mental health Act. It is important that we do this. Many voters will want to see it being done. I hope that, in the other measures that the Government bring forward, they will consider including a mental health Bill.

Sir Robert Buckland (South Swindon) (Con): I am extremely grateful to my right honourable Friend for making that powerful point about a mental health Act. Does she agree that ending the archaic elision of conditions such as autism and neurodiverse conditions with mental health would be another benefit of bringing that legislation forward? The legislation is needed now, not next year.

Mrs May: My right hon. and learned Friend has been a champion for those on the autistic spectrum. He has long raised the issues in relation to autism and neurodiversity. He is absolutely right that these changes are needed now—they should not be delayed further. I sincerely hope that, in the other measures, the Government will consider bringing that new mental health Bill forward.

A couple of weeks ago, I spoke to pupils at Cox Green School in my constituency. We talked about various issues. The teacher asked them to raise their hands if they were concerned about mental health—the majority did—and then to raise their hands if they were concerned about climate change and the environment. Again, the majority raised their hands. In relation to the King's Speech and the Government's programme on climate change and environmental degradation, the Government are missing an opportunity. What we need to do now is to press the accelerator on transition to a green economy, not try to draw back. The King's Speech says that

"my Ministers will seek to attract record levels of investment in renewable energy sources,"

but I fear that that ambition is not sufficiently strong to make sure that the Government make that transition quickly enough to ensure that we reach net zero in 2050. It is no good waking up on 1 January 2045 and saying,

“We have five years to do something, let’s do it now” because that will be even more costly for members of the public.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP) *rose*—

Mr Speaker: I call Jim Shannon.

Jim Shannon: This is my maiden intervention in this term.

I commend the right hon. Lady for what she is saying. In Northern Ireland, we do not have the contract for difference scheme, but people have it here on the mainland. I have been keen to pursue this matter with the Government. It would help the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to meet its net zero figures if Northern Ireland were part of that. It needs to be a part of it, but the contract for difference scheme—

Mr Speaker: Order. Mr Shannon, sit down for a second. We know that this is on net zero, but the point is that this is a speech, not a question, so quickly come to the end.

Jim Shannon: Does the right hon. Lady agree that we in Northern Ireland want to be part of the net zero scheme? Is it not right that we should do that through the contract for difference scheme?

Mrs May: I am tempted to say to the hon. Gentleman that, when he was called to speak, it was only 4.23. Of course we want to make sure that all parts of the United Kingdom are part of our plans. I do not know the contract for difference details that he talks about, but we want to make sure that every part of the United Kingdom is able to contribute to the work to reach net zero, and there are things the Government must do to enable that.

Vicky Ford (Chelmsford) (Con): My right hon. Friend is making an excellent speech and I completely agree on the need to keep focused on the pathway to net zero. I am a member of the Energy Security and Net Zero Committee, and we are told that unlocking the grid and making faster approvals for new energy schemes to come on to the grid is most vital in that pathway. Does she welcome what there was in the King’s Speech about transforming the speed at which decisions can be made about new power coming on to our grid?

Mrs May: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right that getting those grid connections right and making it easier and faster for people to make them are critical for us to reach net zero. I am pleased that the reform of grid connections was in the King’s Speech; we wait to hear the details of what the Chancellor and the Secretary of State will bring forward on that.

There is one other aspect of the move to the green economy that the Government need to address now, and not in 10 years’ time when the advanced British standard comes on board: the green skills agenda. We must ensure that the young people of today are being trained in the skills needed for the green economy and that people already in work are being retrained. Gas engineers must be retrained to deliver heat pumps, for example. There are many areas where we must make sure that we have a workforce fully trained to meet the needs of that new economy. I hope that the Government are going to press the accelerator on that.

Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD) *rose*—

Sir Robert Goodwill *rose*—

Mrs May: I am being inundated. I will give way to the hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross (Jamie Stone) first.

Jamie Stone: The right hon. Lady is making a most interesting contribution. In years gone by, we had the skills to construct massive structures for the North sea. If we can pass those skills on to the next generation, they can contribute to the green economy. The trouble is that the people who did that in the past are getting old and near to retirement, so surely time is of the essence.

Mrs May: The hon. Gentleman makes an important point. I think time is of the essence anyway, regardless of whether we are looking at people who have had those skills in the past. We must look at our training and skills and at our education system to make sure it is training people up for those future requirements.

Sir Robert Goodwill: I am sure my right hon. Friend will be pleased to know that, in Scarborough, a green construction skills village was part of our town deal, and those skills are already being delivered to young people and to older people who need to reskill.

Mrs May: That is absolutely excellent and I thank my right hon. Friend for informing me of it. I am sorry, Mr Speaker, but yet again it would seem that Scarborough is leading—I am reliably informed it is not in Lancashire.

Green skills are important, but I also worry that we are sending mixed messages to investors. They need to have the confidence to invest in our transition to a green economy and we need to show that the Government are pressing the accelerator on that. The best long-term decision we can make is on climate change. The long-term future of this country and its people depends on us dealing with climate change and environmental degradation, so I want the Government to press the accelerator, not to roll backwards.

4.28 pm

Dame Meg Hillier (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/Co-op): Before I start, I must declare an interest—I am a leaseholder and, as per my entry in the Register of Members’ Financial Interests, I am a landlord—since I want to comment on both those issues.

First, however, I congratulate the right hon. Member for Scarborough and Whitby (Sir Robert Goodwill) and the hon. Member for Stroud (Siobhan Baillie) on proposing and seconding the Humble Address. Both were entertaining, and it is one of the pleasures of the parliamentary year to sit back, relax and have a few laughs. I thank them both for giving us that as we move on to the serious business.

It is always a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May). I think she needs to join me on my campaign for slow politics, because clearly we have the same agenda here. Some of the best political decisions are those where we are looking 10, 20 or even 30 years ahead, and she is right that we need to be looking at net zero now and planning ahead. Unfortunately,

[*Dame Meg Hillier*]

though, this King's Speech, and indeed the record of this Government led by the party of which she is a member, are thin gruel in that respect.

We have in this King's Speech the offerings of what has really now become a zombie Government. I do not use that word lightly—I am not just a soundbite woman—but in a Parliament, where we too often break early because there is not enough business to carry on, there are many things that could have been in this King's Speech to deliver for the people of Hackney South and Shoreditch and for those up and down the country.

It has to be acknowledged that this King's Speech is not landing out of the blue in a new parliamentary term; it comes on the back of 13 years of this Government, who have led through chaos and created chaos. Austerity has left a long shadow and a lack of resilience in our public sector, and it is telling now. The wage freezes brought in by the former Chancellor George Osborne are now hitting and have, with the cost of living, created a perfect storm for our constituents up and down the country.

On the handling of Brexit, which the right hon. Member for Maidenhead knows about only too painfully, it was poorly delivered in the end, in the hands of her successor, and none of the promises of the early days of that campaign was delivered. We on the Public Accounts Committee see that through our work. We have produced 12 reports on the delivery of Brexit, all of which found the Government wanting. We have seen gimmicks at Budgets. Again, the former Chancellor was one of the worst for that—or best, depending on our point of view. The lifetime ISA, for example, has withered on the vine as a novel financial product that was not kept up, either by that Chancellor or by subsequent Chancellors. I will touch on that in a moment.

Of course, we cannot look at the King's Speech without mentioning the premiership of the right hon. Member for South West Norfolk (Elizabeth Truss), who crashed the economy and has caused havoc in the lives of our constituents. In this Chamber, on these green Benches, it can sometimes seem that we are remote, but week in, week out I am on doorsteps in Hackney South and Shoreditch seeing the reality of people struggling to pay for the food that they need, living without food, going to the food bank when they can, and living in massively overcrowded conditions.

It is not long covid that is leading to a lot of those issues; it is long austerity—that lack of resilience in public services and the public sector; that lack of investment in schools, hospitals and other areas such as defence. Basically, most capital spending was frozen or reduced, and that has led to a growing problem. Whichever party is in power after the next general election, which cannot come soon enough, will have—to borrow the words of Laurel and Hardy—another fine mess to deal with in so many areas of the public sector. The Public Accounts Committee, which I have the privilege of chairing, regularly examines capital spending, as well as day-to-day spending, and we see the problems. Report after report highlights that issues were missed or not dealt with, and that we are now reaping the problems.

This King's Speech and this Prime Minister promise change, but we see nothing of that in what has been announced. There is no real hope here for renters or

those who want to buy their own home, and no plans to tackle poverty and to really level up. In Hackney South and Shoreditch—in fact, across the whole borough of Hackney—one in two children lives in poverty. In London in 2023, we have that level of poverty. In the borough of Hackney as a whole, which comprises two constituencies, 28% of people are private renters, 28% are owner-occupiers and 44% are social renters, while 77% of properties—nearly four in five—were leasehold properties, which means that leasehold reform is of particular interest to me and my constituents. The median house price in Hackney South and Shoreditch is £600,000. That is more than 16 times the median Hackney household income, so home ownership is out of reach for generation rent and for the people living in social housing, which is massively overcrowded, often with four children to a bedroom and many teenagers sharing bedrooms with their mothers because there is nowhere else to sleep. They have no opportunity to get on the housing ladder or to rent privately.

That brings me to the lifetime ISA. I have not seen the detail of the King's Speech because I came here to talk about it, but the lifetime ISA cap for first-time buyers is still £450,000. The average first-time buyer in Hackney paid £595,000 in August this year, so that cap does not reach anywhere near what is needed. Even the Government's proposed solutions do not keep up with demand, and their complete detachment from the reality of the choices that people have to make is a real issue.

Sir Peter Bottomley: I have two brief points. First, will the hon. Lady join me in commending Martin Lewis for spelling this out on MoneySavingExpert.com? Ministers ought to pay attention to it. Secondly, through her, may I say that I too am a leaseholder? I do not think I am affected by the Government's proposals, but I should have put it on the record.

Dame Meg Hillier: The Father of the House and I obviously share support for the work that Martin Lewis does in bringing these consumer finance issues to the mainstream and managing to explain things that people think are complicated in an incredibly simple way.

No Chancellor should make these policies up at the Dispatch Box, because they wither. The Chancellor himself loses interest, as do subsequent Chancellors and the Treasury. The child trust fund has not kept up since the Government withdrew it, and there are many other examples like that.

I have a lot of constituents who are trapped in the private rented sector, with no security. The average two-bed rent in Hackney was just £2 shy of £2,000 a month this year. We have a huge challenge in that there is no security for those residents, including the security that is needed to bring a family up, because they get moved on far too quickly, yet we have seen the lack of the promised abolition of section 21 evictions in the Renters (Reform) Bill, which was introduced just before the King's Speech and is expected to continue in this Session of Parliament.

The reason is that the courts are backed up. That is a valid reason, but whose fault is it that the courts are backed up? It is due to a lack of investment by this Government over the years. It is not just covid, because as we have highlighted on the Public Accounts Committee, the delays in the courts were there before covid hit;

covid had an impact, but the delays were there. We will not be back to pre-covid court delay times until 2025. It is no wonder that private renters are living in despair. The promise of this measure being delivered has been dangled repeatedly, and once again we see it whisked away, leaving tenants with no security and no knowledge of whether they can make a house a home.

We have a big shortage of social housing in Hackney. We have 8,351 households on the wait list for council housing in Hackney. That is after stringent rules were brought in to reduce it, so that people had some hope. The current waiting time for social housing in Hackney is about 12 years for a three-bedroom property. It is simply unacceptable.

Renting is out of reach, home ownership is out of reach and there is not enough house building, which is why I welcome my party's proposal to build significantly more homes. The Under-Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, the hon. Member for North East Derbyshire (Lee Rowley) is on the Front Bench. He knows, because he does the maths and he has been a member of the Public Accounts Committee, that even the Government's downward revised targets for affordable housing have not been met. They set a target and had to reduce it, and even that reduced target has not been met. That is happening while people are living in overcrowded and difficult conditions.

Leasehold reform is oft promised, but nothing has yet been delivered, and I would like to see it voted through. As a Labour and Co-op MP, I would like to see a move towards commonhold. There is work being done on that in other countries that we can build on. It is not a quick path—it is slow to deliver this—but that is another reason we need to get moving and start on it now. I commend the Father of the House for his pioneering work to champion the issues of leaseholders in this place.

The King's Speech talks about delivering on the NHS workforce plan. Of course, the Public Accounts Committee took an interest in that as well. I welcome the NHS workforce plan, because it is a good start, but it is only funding the training of people listed in the NHS workforce plan for the first five years. There is no plan or long-term strategy for how we fund those health professionals who are working in frontline healthcare and hospitals, delivering for patients, which will cause a problem down the line. It is another fine mess waiting for any future Government.

I welcome discussion about how artificial intelligence is handled. I agree with the right hon. Member for Maidenhead about making sure that we keep the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 up to date with how the modern digital world is working. We need to do that in a calm, professional, cross-party way, because this should not be a political football. There will be difficult choices at the margins about—rightly—protecting civil liberties, rights and access to data and about protecting the most vulnerable in our society. We need to make sure that, in the heat of an election year, that discussion is had sensibly.

I also welcome the Prime Minister's personal commitment to reduce smoking, which I think will be a game changer in public health for our children's generation. I was pleased with the proposal on safeguarding of the future of football. It sounds like a bold promise, but I would like to see more detail. As a Co-op MP, I am a

long-standing champion of Supporters Direct, which enables fans to part-own their club. If we go down that route, I am happy to support the Government, but we will wait to see the exact details. I am pleased that unlicensed pedicabs will finally be dealt with. I have worked with the hon. Member for Cities of London and Westminster (Nickie Aiken) to tackle that issue, and it is time that it is dealt with.

We have had too many broken promises from the Government. We now need delivery, but the King's Speech does not do that. We have chaos in this country. People are struggling with the cost of living and we need change. Frankly, we need a general election. We need opportunity and hope, and the only way we are going to get that is with a Labour Government.

4.40 pm

Mr David Davis (Haltemprice and Howden) (Con): It is a privilege to follow the Public Accounts Committee Chairman. She will understand that I have a certain affection for her in these debates because of her position.

The hon. Lady made a comment about looking forward 30 years. The whole western world faces a paradox that goes back 30 years. In the 1990s, three massive things happened in the world: first, there was a dramatic reduction in tariffs, which led to a huge increase in global trade; secondly, there was the collapse of the Soviet empire; and finally, there was a dramatic acceleration in the creation and adoption of new technology. All those things raised well over 2 billion people out of oppression by starvation and out of political oppression. They changed the world dramatically for the better, but those dramatic changes have had a number of effects.

Today, we face a series of challenges in the western world, not just in Britain, that are more complex and more difficult to deal with than any I can remember since 1979, whether it is Ukraine and the series of wars that are breaking out, whether it is the migration that results from that, whether it is domestic challenges such as the impact on the wages of the western working class—much of the impetus for Brexit was the result of working-class wages across the west being depressed by competition with the rest of the world—whether it is the impact on public finances, which derives partly from that, or whether it is the impact on public services, which are failing not just in Britain but in many countries, to some extent for the same reasons.

That is why, unlike the hon. Lady, I welcome what I think of as the common sense in the King's Speech. There are a number of sensible measures, including on crime and justice to promote safety, justice and closure for victims, which is important, and on net zero, where the approach is intelligent and measured, rather than headline driven. That is important—the old net zero strategy would not have survived the public reaction. Like the hon. Lady, I vehemently welcome the policy on smoking. We have done far too little for many decades to focus on public health, rather than patching people up in the last three years of their life, which is what our national health service has been reduced to doing. In education, we are building on some of our successes, including in PISA—the programme for international student assessment—and our international competitiveness. There is much to recommend in the proposals in the King's Speech, particularly with respect to apprenticeships

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and vocational education. The Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education is brilliant and is making a great difference.

Broadly, the proposals are sensible, but the House would be surprised and disappointed if I did not find something to criticise in the Home Office proposals. I will not surprise the House—I am going to pick up on something that I think is a fundamental mistake. I hope that Ministers will think hard before they introduce the proposal, which has been aired in briefings in the last day or two, to allow the police to search homes without a warrant. This is one of the fundamental foundation stones of a free British society, along with jury trials and the presumption of innocence. The right not to have the state kick your door down and search your house without judicial approval is a massively important British value. If anybody has any doubt about that, I have two words to say to them: “Damian Green”. They should go back and look at what happened with the Metropolitan police’s handling of the case, as it were, of my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Damian Green). The Leader of the Opposition was then the Director of Public Prosecutions, and he in effect struck down the Metropolitan police’s behaviour. We have to think about that very hard indeed, because the judicial control of the police is vital and must be preserved.

Beyond that, the education measures are good as far as they go—as I have said, particularly on skills—but I would go further, as I will explain in a moment. Indeed, all King’s Speeches are basically just frameworks, not the whole agenda for the coming year, and this one is the same. As a result, the last line of every King’s Speech is always the same:

“other measures will be laid before you.”

I want to talk about what I think those other measures ought to be.

What should those measures be? I think most of them should be in areas where the state is struggling to cope with the worldwide problem I have talked about arising over the last 30 years. By the way, it is not an accident that I say “30 years”; that covers Governments of both persuasions, and neither have managed—in some cases, I might say they have failed—to solve the things I am going to talk about. The one advantage we have when it comes to the problems I am about to lay out in education, health and housing—the three critical areas on which we need to go further—is that for the first two, technology may come to our aid to some extent. I, like the Public Accounts Committee Chairman, welcome the move on AI. I thought it was quite risky to have that conference, but it worked diplomatically. It has not got a solution yet, but that has got us on the first step.

Let me talk about health for a second. All parties have taken the approach for my entire lifetime, which is much the same as the lifetime of the health service, of putting more and more money into the health service. We are now talking about a huge amount of money; it swallows the entire amount of national insurance contributions, and what was supposed to cover health and pensions now simply covers health. We spend more money than the OECD average on health—that in itself is quite extraordinary—but it does not deliver. We can put all sorts of excuses in the way, but this is more about

management than it is about money. Before we got to covid, from 2017-18 to 2018-19 we put about £3 billion extra into health in real terms—and what happened? Productivity went down by 0.75%. The next year, we put in £7 billion, and productivity went down by over 2%. That was before covid started.

Those dry numbers sound bad, but they do not quite carry the terror of the actual effect, and I am going to give an example from my own constituency to explain what I mean. I had a constituent whose name was Richard. He had had cancer, and had been operated on and cured, and as a result he had regular six-monthly check-ups thereafter to watch for any outbreak. But through administrative failure, he did not get the check-ups, so was at least six months behind the timetable. We all know that the later we diagnose a cancer, the more difficult it is to solve. The operation he was supposed to have was then delayed as well, and it got to the point where basically there was no chance of recovery for Richard. He came into my life, as it were, as I was his constituency MP and his family wanted him out of hospital for Christmas so that he could die among his friends and family rather than surrounded by strangers. That is what we are talking about thousands and thousands of times over. That is the impact of this failure. I think there are a lot of things we can do with respect to the re-management of the health service, but I will talk about one.

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Office for National Statistics published figures for the three years from 2020 to 2022, which state that public service productivity in general fell by an unprecedented 7.5%? That means that we needed to put roughly £30 billion extra into public services to achieve the same thing.

Mr Davis: My right hon. Friend is right: it is a systemic problem. It does not just affect Britain or the health service. Indeed, I think that numbers for those years for the health service were about 25%—so huge, huge numbers. I bring this back to the reality of the individual. If we delay diagnosis and treatment, we sentence people to death. It is as harsh as that.

I would like us dramatically to increase the amount of diagnostic capacity we have. If we look at OECD numbers on CT scans, I think we are third from worst. This is why I say it is not a single Government problem—we do not get to be third from worst in one term; it happened over the course of the whole 30 years. On MRI scans, we are the worst in the OECD. How on earth a country such as ours gets to that position is astonishing.

Dame Meg Hillier *rose—*

Mr Davis: I give way to the PAC Chairman.

Dame Meg Hillier: The right hon. Gentleman is making some interesting points, and the total amount of Whitehall day-to-day spending on health is phenomenal. On the point about scanners, I am afraid that lies directly at the door of his Government—well, I am not afraid; it does. The lack of capital investment in the big bits of kit has led to deterioration and lack of availability.

Such investment would have saved money, and been better for the patient and better generally for the health of the nation.

Mr Davis: I agree with the hon. Lady on the saving money element, and I will come back to that in a second. The truth is that this Government have poured more money into the health service than anybody ever predicted, and more money than they intended over time, but decisions within the health service—I come back to management rather than money—led to some of those decisions. The hon. Lady is dead right that it is a waste of money not to do the diagnosis. I am talking about MRI and CT scans, blood tests, and all the other things that help us get ahead of the disease.

I talked to Randox, one of the diagnostic companies, which is based in Northern Ireland, and asked about this issue. It has technology that it says will reduce a seven-day analysis of blood samples, for example, to 30 minutes. My view is that we should break clear of the ideology and look dramatically to increase the amount of scans and diagnostic procedures—when I say “dramatically”, I mean a multiple of what we currently do—and we should use the private sector to do it. I know that causes a bridle and a backing off, but the only way we can do this fast enough is to do that. That would save about £3 billion and reduce waiting lists for millions of people. Most importantly of all, it would save thousands of lives. If there were one thing I would do within healthcare, that would be it; there would be other things, but that would be that.

Jim Shannon: The right hon. Gentleman is talking a lot of sense in relation to cancer diagnosis and better treatment. One way of doing that is through research and development. For example, there have been advances in prostate cancer at Queen’s University, with that centre of excellence in Belfast, and news today of pills that can reduce the risk of breast cancer. Those are just two examples. Does the right hon. Gentleman feel that research and development is key to advancing and saving lives, and getting better results for cancer patients?

Mr Davis: That is exactly right, which brings me to my other health topic, and the whole question of national health service data and the use of data. It is widely accepted that we have one of the greatest information treasure troves in the world in the form of national health service data—data about all our citizens. There have been two or three attempts—certainly two in my memory—to bring that data together and manage it in one block, so that it is available for managing the treatment of patients and for research. A third attempt is happening right now, with contracts out to introduce a new data management system for the whole health service. The two previous attempts failed because the national health service executive and management do not understand the importance of privacy. Each time they tried to do it, the reaction from GPs and patients was, “We are not going to co-operate with this.” There was a vast waste of money, and the projects crashed and were over. More importantly than the money, we missed the opportunity to do exactly what the hon. Gentleman says: use that data for research to advance this country to the front of the world.

The Government are doing the same again this time, because the contract has gone out, and it looks likely that the company that will win it is Palantir. For those

who do not know Palantir, it started, I think, with an investment from the CIA. Its history is largely in supporting the National Security Agency in America. Bluntly, it is the wrong company to put in charge of our precious data resource; even if it behaved perfectly, nobody would trust it. The thing that destroyed the last two attempts will destroy this one: people will not sign up and join up. The health service has got to get its act together on this. If it does, and privacy is protected, we can do things like having a complete nationwide DNA database. If privacy is not protected, that will not happen. There is an opportunity there, and the Government should grasp it, not drop it.

Technology also has a large possible application to education. I was lucky that when I was a teenager, social mobility in Britain was probably as great as it ever has been, for a variety of reasons, ranging from grammar schools, which I know are controversial, through to the fact that post war, there was huge growth in the middle classes, which expanded opportunities. Those combinations together created a massive social mobility advantage for people like me. I was very lucky in that respect. Today, while I think we are about No. 10 or 11 in the PISA—the programme for international student assessment—tables, we are No. 21 in the social mobility tables, and we should not be that far down.

We need to do something about that issue. One reason it happens is that 35% of children by the age of 11—children going through their primary education—are unable to cope with their maths and English sufficiently to make progress in other subjects. In essence, they are failed by the age of 11. For free school meal kids—I am looking at my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Siobhan Baillie)—it is 50%. Half of children on free school meals have been failed by the state by the time they are 11, and there are all sorts of reasons why. Even with vast amounts of effort, with committed teachers, headteachers and so on putting all their effort in, it still comes apart.

One thing we can do about it—and the Department has begun to talk about it—is to start to use AI in the classroom, so that children can have tailored teaching. A kid who is falling behind gets diagnostic responses from AI, which then generates appropriate teaching patterns to pull them back up. We already have such technology. In fact, a British firm called Century Tech does exactly that. I saw it in action in Springhead Primary School in my constituency, where there was an intervention class for children who were falling behind, and they were pulled back up using this technology. If we applied such technology right across the board, it would raise the average performance in our schools by one grade per subject. That is an enormous change. That is my judgment, not anybody else’s. If we did that, our competitive advantage and our social mobility advantage would be enormous.

We have to think very hard. The Department for Education has to be a lot more imaginative than it has been so far in this area, and it has to look hard at improving the options for all those children we currently let down. That is not because the Government intend it, or because this Government or previous ones have fallen down on it; this statistic has been going on for a long time.

The last thing I want to talk about is not technology, but bricks and mortar. I have some sympathy with the comments of the PAC Chairman, in that it is as plain as

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a pikestaff that we have a supply problem, however we analyse it and whoever we blame for it. Our population has grown by about 10%—6 million or 7 million—over a couple of decades, for all sorts of reasons; we can get into controversy on that, but the truth is that housing has not grown to match. One of the problems—I guess the primary problem—is the planning system. This is not the first time the country has faced this problem. We faced it after both the world wars, when “Homes fit for heroes” and so on were the slogans of the day. How did we deal with it? We had a movement to create well-designed and well-created garden towns and cities in the right places, not by trying to tack on 100 houses to this village, 100 houses to that village and 100 houses over there, in each case overwhelming the schooling, transport arrangements or whatever. We need to look hard at cutting this Gordian knot, and it seems to me that the only way we will do that is by creating well-designed, well-financed garden towns and villages, not by going through the mechanism we have been pursuing so far.

Health, education and housing: if we add those to what we have now, we have a winning King’s Speech.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): Order. There is not huge pressure on time, but by my calculation we have 24 more people to get in, so my advice is not to go much over 12 minutes. That would mean that each person could have 12 minutes. If people go longer than that, we will get into some problems.

5.1 pm

Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP): I appreciate the fact that you have called me so early in the debate, Madam Deputy Speaker. Despite the fact that Mr Speaker has reset the clock so that it appears that my hon. Friend the Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) has never spoken in the House—[*Laughter.*] I have been called before him, so thank you very much for that.

May I first, on behalf of the Democratic Unionist party, congratulate the King on his first King’s Speech and the way in which he delivered it? Our gratitude also goes to his mother, who for so long served our nation. I also congratulate the proposer and seconder of the Loyal Address. However, when the right hon. Member for Scarborough and Whitby (Sir Robert Goodwill) was being praised by some Members on the Opposition Front Bench, I must say that I wondered how they married up their commitment to net zero with the right hon. Gentleman’s pride in having three coal-guzzling steam engines and what that does to the carbon footprint in Yorkshire. Nevertheless, I am glad that some of the mad ideas—that we should change our lifestyles because of the threat from carbon dioxide being put into the atmosphere—have not put him off.

I want to note three things about the Gracious Speech. First, there are the things that I am glad about. I am glad that the Government have once again restated their commitment to stand by those who are under attack from tyrants and from terrorism, with their commitment to Ukraine and their commitment to Israel, both of which are under huge pressure at present. Indeed, across the world there appears to have been a tiring in support for the war in Ukraine and for the Ukrainian Government

as well as, almost immediately, condemnation of the nation of Israel for standing up and doing its duty by its citizens who were brutally murdered by terrorists. Many people—some of them may be well-meaning, and some may be simply reacting to the cruelty of war—are calling for an immediate ceasefire. While the Government of Israel have their citizens held captive and while Israel’s very existence is under threat because of a huge terrorist army on its doorstep, regardless of how strong the siren calls are from the UN, nations across the world and all the non-governmental organisations, it would be foolish to go for a ceasefire.

It is a typical terrorist tactic: when terrorists are under pressure or the state comes after them, they call for a ceasefire. What for—because they want to stop the violence? No. It is because they want to regroup. We have seen it in Northern Ireland. When the terrorists in Northern Ireland were under pressure, they declared ceasefires. It gave them time to regroup, and I do not think the situation in the middle east is any different. There will be difficult days ahead—I am sure there will be pictures on our TV screens that will make us all sorrowful—but I hope our Government stand by the resolution in the King’s Speech and stand by the state of Israel in defence of its citizens.

The second thing that I am glad about is the Government’s willingness to grant licences to exploit the resources that we have in the earth and in the sea around our country. Whether we like it or not, we are going to use oil and gas for many decades in the future, so I cannot for the life of me understand why such a policy is even controversial. What is controversial about replacing imports with our own oil production? What is controversial about defending 200,000 jobs in that industry? What is controversial about ensuring energy security? We have already heard speeches today about the difficulties in financing our public services. What is controversial about promoting an industry that will pay billions in taxation, which can then be used to finance Government services?

I am pleased that the Government have made a commitment to grant licences; the only thing I will say, given that the right hon. Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May) is in her place, is this. The one threat that I see to the ability to deliver on that pledge is that those who oppose it have been handed a sledgehammer, which they will be able to use in judicial reviews and court cases, and so on, because we still have a commitment in legislation to reach net zero by 2050. We have seen it already. Every time an infrastructure project is proposed that requires the use of oil and gas, it is challenged in the courts on the basis that to allow it will detract from the ability to meet our target of net zero by 2050.

The Government can issue licences and invite applications for licences, but I have absolutely no doubt that every one of them will be challenged in court on the basis that we still have legally binding targets for 2050, and I suspect that it will be the same for some of the other measures that the Government have introduced. In fact, although there was a song and dance about how the Government were no longer banning the sale of diesel and petrol cars by 2030, I note that legislation has been announced—I suspect this is to create a defence in court—to ensure that, whether or not there is a ban on buying cars, there will be a ban on making them. The manufacturers will be obliged to increase the percentage

of electric vehicles they sell every year, despite the fact that the demand side of the market will not be controlled in that way—unless, of course, we find that quotas have to be set for sales, as well as for manufacturing.

The third thing that I am glad about is that the Government will introduce a trade and investment Bill that will enable us to benefit from leaving the EU. I know that there are those who will tell us that leaving the EU is the most disastrous decision we ever made—we get it every week in this House. The truth of the matter is that all the doomster forecasters have been wrong. I can remember debates in this place when we were told that people would be queuing up in the supermarkets, unable to get food. The Office for Budget Responsibility told us that our GDP would fall by 4% because our trade would fall, yet statistics this week show not only that our trade with the EU has increased by 13%, but that our trade with the rest of the world has increased by 14%. One reason is that we no longer have to rely on trade deals that require 27 countries to agree policy and arrangements, and we can do what is best for Britain.

I am glad the Government intend to build on that. People think that we do not make anything any longer as a result of Brexit, but only this week we find that we are the seventh biggest manufacturing nation in the world, having overtaken France, so there are good things. I am glad the Government intend to build on that and I hope they do so. When I see how they back off when there is a little opposition to moving away from EU law, I sometimes wonder whether we are prepared to use the best of our freedoms.

I am sad about one thing: the fact that in the King's Speech the Government had to make a promise to promote the integrity of the Union and strengthen the social fabric of the United Kingdom. I am sad that such a promise even had to be made. It is only necessary because successive Prime Ministers have played fast and loose with the Union in negotiations with the European Union. Relations with the European Union were regarded as more important than relations within the United Kingdom. We even had Ministers defending their decision about the withdrawal Bill in court, admitting that when the Bill went through this House we impliedly removed article 6 of the Act of Union, the very economic basis of the Union that there should be freedom of trade and freedom of movement.

During recess, the Government introduced yet another statutory instrument, on plant health regulations. As a result of the negotiations with the EU, Northern Ireland is now regarded by the EU as a third country in relation to the rest of the United Kingdom. In the plant health regulations introduced during recess, the Government of our own country are now, for the very first time, regarding Northern Ireland as a third country. So, there is much that needs to be done to promote the Union. The hon. Member for Stroud (Siobhan Baillie) is a yoga specialist. I hope we will not see the same kind of yoga contortions from the Government when it comes to their position on the Union and Northern Ireland's position within it.

My last point is about one of those things that I think is mad, but others have praised: introducing legislation—albeit well meaning and everything else—to ban smoking. In 20 years' time, some poor shopkeeper is going to have to decide, "Is that person who came in here asking

for 20 fags 48 or 47? Is he going to have to send his 48-year-old mate in to buy the cigarettes for him?" Introducing legislation of that nature is just mad.

I hope we will see delivery on some of the good things. I hope we will see the Government deliver on strengthening the Union, undoing the damage of the Windsor framework and the protocol, and restoring Northern Ireland's position within the Union.

5.13 pm

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): I have declared my business interests in the Register of Members' Financial Interests.

I hope the Government are listening to the right hon. Member for East Antrim (Sammy Wilson) on those important matters for Northern Ireland. It is vital that there are changes to the Windsor framework, so that Northern Ireland is properly a part of our United Kingdom and can accept our commonly agreed laws on everything from taxation through to the arrangements over products and trading.

I welcome very much the emphasis in the King's Speech on the United Kingdom's producing more of our own oil and gas in substitution for that which we are currently importing. The logic of substitution is most obvious in the case of gas. We have gas pipelines already installed to bring gas from the fields to the mainland, with capacity in them because gas output has been declining; and, of course, if we deliver it directly through gas pipelines we have none of the extra cost and trouble of transit involved in importing liquefied natural gas, usually from the United States or Qatar. Those who are keenest on the road to net zero should recognise that having our own gas down a pipe greatly reduces the amount of world carbon dioxide because so much more carbon dioxide is generated if it is necessary to liquefy the gas, to transport it for long distances, and then to recreate it as gas when it arrives. All those are very energy-intensive processes which we do not need if we generate more of our own gas from the North sea.

I have good news for Ministers. Let me remind them that although they say they think we need a bit of additional legislation for future licensing rounds, what we really need to do is concentrate on developing the existing fields and the new discoveries that have been well known about, in many cases, for a great many years, and maximising the output of what we already have so that the gas and the oil come more quickly and at lower cost, because we need it now. Most of our constituents still need gas for their domestic heating and will need it for the foreseeable future, most of our industrial plants run on gas as their main source of energy, and most of us have petrol or diesel cars, so we still need the fractions of oil to run our transport. It is important for us to get on with that—and, as the right hon. Member for East Antrim has said, another great bonus for all of us, including the Treasury, is that the sooner we get that oil and gas landed, the sooner we will secure a big increase in tax revenues from which we could benefit, enabling us to get the deficit down and support the public services that we wish to see.

I am very pleased that the King's Speech began with the mighty topic of the economy. I am sure that the Government and the Prime Minister would agree that what we do over the next year to get inflation down more quickly, to bring about faster growth to create

[John Redwood]

more and better-paid jobs, and to secure the extra investment that we want to see is absolutely vital. Again, I have good news for the Government. I think there are measures that they can take in a future Finance Bill—which, I am sure, will constitute part of our proceedings over the next year—that would help to achieve all those aims. They are not incompatible, and we do not have to wait. Some people seem to think it is necessary to sequence it and to spend a year of misery—with a massive credit squeeze and an austerity Budget—to get inflation down before we can think about doing the other things, but if we cut the right taxes, we can bring forward the reduction in inflation, and that, of course, has a direct knock-on effect on the cost of running public services. One of the reasons we have seen such a big increase in public spending in the last year or so is the massive rise in inflation, because so many things are directly geared to the inflation rate.

So, Government, let us have a year of temporary tax cuts on energy, because British energy is far too expensive. It makes us much less competitive, and it is a burden on household budgets. I would pay for that—because I do not want to increase the overall deficit—by selling all those NatWest shares that we still have. Interest rates have gone up a lot, and banks should be making a lot more money. Let us just sell all the shares and use that for a one-year advantage while the oil and gas prices are still very elevated, and to ease the transition from slow growth to higher growth and to a faster reduction in inflation, which will then help reduce the deficits.

We also need measures to help small business and the self-employed. It is of great concern to me, as it should be to many other Members, that we have 800,000 fewer self-employed people today than were known about, at least, in February 2020. Some of that is due to covid and lockdowns or to natural retirements, but some of it is due to the sharp change in the tax system called IR35, which took place in two tranches, one at the end of the last decade and one at the beginning of this one. It is now very difficult for people to grow businesses, particularly if they want contracts from other businesses. This has put many people off, and we are not seeing the new generation of self-employed people coming through that we have seen in previous generations—and that is mightily important, because they provide much of the flexibility in our economy, and can also provide extra capacity. Such measures would also help to provide worthwhile things for people to do, because some will be currently without a job and will be on benefits generally. So, Government, change the tax system back to the pre-2017 one which allowed a phenomenal growth in the number of self-employed people, and helped the workings of not only products and services markets but the job market itself.

We all have many small businesses in our constituencies and we know how important they are to the services and output of our local community. We know how flexible they are, how hard so many of them work and how prepared they are to go the last mile to win clients and to look after clients and customers. They need a tax break, and the first thing we should do—now that we no longer have to accept the EU rules on VAT registration—is to have a big increase in the threshold level at which businesses register for VAT, because this is now a major

constraint. I am sure we all know small businesses that turn down work or close down for a month extra during the year because they do not want to go over the £85,000 turnover, with all the burdens of the compliance, regulation and paperwork that that would cause, as well as having to put 20% on prices and so forth.

Let us allow small businesses to enjoy their flexibility for longer and to get to a bit bigger size—let them have one or two employees—before they have to go through all the hassle of registration and the legal pressures that that generates. I think that would generate more revenue from other types of taxes, and even on the strange Treasury arithmetic it would be quite a cheap item. For example, we could easily pay for it out of modest improvements in productivity, which we will need to ensure if we are to deal with the collapse in public sector productivity identified by my right hon. Friend the Member for Haltemprice and Howden (Mr Davis). There must be ways to do something about that, and I believe that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury is working on them.

My final point relates to the Bank of England. The Bank is independent in the setting of the base rate and the work of the Monetary Policy Committee, but it is not independent in managing the mighty portfolio of bonds that it currently owns on behalf of the institution and wider taxpayers. The proof of that is the fact that successive Chancellors from Alistair Darling onwards signed a concordat with the Bank of England giving it permission to buy bonds and agreeing to pay any losses, should losses be made, when it came to sell them or when they matured. The Bank of England now wishes to sell £100 billion-worth of bonds over the next few months, now that they have crashed on the markets because of the Bank of England's changes in interest rate policy and bond policy, meaning that huge bills are being sent to the Treasury. I believe that the bill was £24 billion of losses in the first four months of the current fiscal year, and the theoretical liability is over £170 billion of losses of that kind and of the kind of running losses due to the way in which the Bank holds bonds at the moment.

I would like to advise the Chancellor and the Governor of the Bank of England to look at what the European Central Bank is doing. It too made the colossal mistake of overinflating, over-creating money and buying too many bonds at very expensive prices, just as the Bank of England did, and it too ended up with the predictable excess inflation that we have seen. But the ECB is not panicking out of those bonds; it is holding them until they repay, which will result in fewer losses for it. There will still be losses, because it often paid more for the bonds than their actual repayment value, but it is not incurring big losses by selling them at very depressed prices on the market, now that the central banks have decided to smash the asset values of the bonds that they spent quite a lot of time acquiring just two or three years ago in many cases.

We need to do this because the Treasury should not have to make those huge losses and because money has now lurched from being crazily too expansive and likely to generate inflation to being far too tight and likely to overshoot in slowing the economy too much. So please, Government—listen, watch and on this occasion I say learn from the European Central Bank, which seems to be getting this just a bit more right than we are. Then we might start to make progress in bringing together the

perfectly compatible aims of getting some growth, which we will not get if we have too severe a credit squeeze, and getting inflation down, which could be speeded up with the right type of tax cuts.

5.24 pm

Dame Nia Griffith (Llanelli) (Lab): Even if we were not expecting a great deal, the King's Speech is even more disappointing than we could have imagined. It is weak, empty and full of platitudes. To make matters worse, it builds on a very poor track record.

The Government say that they want to create growth in the economy, but there is nothing in the King's Speech to explain how. Their track record is abysmal. They have completely failed over 13 years to get any proper growth in the economy. Wages have stagnated while inflation has skyrocketed, leaving people struggling in a massive cost of living crisis.

Creating growth in the economy really matters. It is about people having good jobs and wages that keep pace with inflation, and it is about our having the money to invest in improving our sorely overstretched public services. Labour would prioritise growth and invest in the green jobs of the future. That is why we need a change of Government, a Labour Government, and we need that change urgently.

We saw just last week how big international companies are now making their investment decisions for the future. Although other countries are wooing companies for their investment in the green jobs of the future, this Conservative Government are letting down workers who worked hard, often in difficult circumstances, during covid and adapted rapidly to change.

Take steel, which is a vital foundation industry. For years, this Conservative Government have been half-hearted in their support for the steel industry. They have failed to tackle the high energy prices that make our steel uncompetitive, and they have failed to invest in the future. Worse, there are 20-plus projects across Europe looking at how to decarbonise the blast furnace process, but there is not one project in the UK.

The Conservative Government, in their so-called big announcement back in September, promised only £0.5 billion to invest in an electric arc furnace in Port Talbot, whereas Labour has recognised and committed £3 billion to decarbonise the steel industry. That is the sort of investment needed to get the necessary technologies to green the blast furnace process. Yes, we need electric arc furnaces to recycle more of the 800 million tonnes of steel that are currently exported for recycling, but we also need to develop the necessary technology to transform the blast furnace process for extracting iron from iron ore.

Just yesterday, we heard the dreadful news that the Chinese-owned British Steel is closing down blast furnace steel production in Scunthorpe, replacing it with two electric arc furnaces. This comes hot on the heels of the devastating news in south-west Wales this past week that Tata Steel is planning to close down the blast furnaces at Port Talbot by the spring of next year, long before the electric arc furnace will be operational. This means a massive loss of income for thousands of workers and their families, and for the associated contractors, transport companies and businesses in the community. This affects not just Port Talbot but the whole of south-west Wales.

Workers are fearful for the future of the Trostre tinplate works in my constituency. Trostre needs steel of a quality that can currently be produced only by the blast furnace process. We have assurances that, when the blast furnaces in Port Talbot close, Tata will import steel from abroad to feed Trostre. But it makes no sense to lose all those jobs here in the UK and then to import steel made in blast furnaces abroad, quite likely with much lower environmental standards than our own. That does nothing to cut emissions.

Furthermore, if we lose the means to produce virgin steel in this country, we will be at the mercy of other countries for the price we have to pay. If there is a world shortage, we may even not be able to get the steel we need for our vital industries. The fear at Trostre is about the medium and long-term future. If we no longer have steel produced just down the railway track in Port Talbot, and if we have to import it from abroad, how economically viable will we be in comparison with competitor factories in the same company elsewhere?

Tata's timescale to close down the blast furnaces in Port Talbot by March next year has come as a massive shock for Port Talbot and for us in Trostre. The prospect of Port Talbot colleagues losing jobs and Trostre becoming dependent on imported steel is very worrying. We now need proper consultation between Tata and the unions, but I also urge the Government to do everything possible to ensure that we keep steel production in this country.

We are at a turning point in our industrial history but, with this Government, we are in very real danger of being left behind. It is as if they are turning back to the horse and cart when everybody else is moving on to the steam train. I am sure many Members will remember the 2012 Olympic opening ceremony in which, alongside the celebration of our NHS, we saw a portrayal of the industrial revolution, for which the UK is globally renowned. Just as we took the lead on that industrial revolution, we should be leading the way now on the green industrial revolution. But with this Government we are not—we are being left behind.

I have met representatives of international companies that have factories in the Llanelli constituency, and they are desperate to see cheaper energy and a proper industrial strategy from this Government. Car manufacturers and others are making crucial decisions about where to invest in new production lines and to build new factories. They recognise the loyalty of the workforce in Llanelli and other parts of the UK, who have adapted to many changes over the years, and they would be keen to invest. However, when companies have factories spread across the globe, and they see the USA offering incentives through its Inflation Reduction Act and the EU with similar programmes, and they compare the cheaper energy prices in competitor countries and the proper industrial strategies in other countries, but see nothing coming from the UK Government, will it be any surprise if they choose to invest elsewhere? We will be left just with the current production lines limping along until their products are no longer required, while the shiny new factories will go elsewhere.

There is no time to waste. The rest of the world is forging ahead with the green industrial revolution and they are not going to wait for the UK Government when other countries are providing real incentives, as well

[*Dame Nia Griffith*]

as cheaper energy. It is all very well mentioning growth in the King's Speech, but we absolutely need to see some flesh on the bones.

This Conservative Government's reference to energy in the King's Speech beggars belief. While the rest of the world is going forward, making huge investment in green energies and technologies, we see the UK Government going backwards, promoting the issuing of more oil and gas licences, which, by the Government's own admission, will not bring down energy bills for consumers. We have huge potential in the UK to produce cheap energy through renewables, slashing prices for households, businesses and industry, while also cutting our emissions to zero—this is a win-win situation. We have huge potential for wind energy, both onshore and offshore, and some of the highest tidal ranges in the world, with capacity around the UK to produce electricity 24/7, not to mention the potential for wave technologies, hydro and solar. By fast-tracking the development of renewables, we can both slash domestic energy bills and fuel a new green industrial revolution, with a massive roll-out of energy.

That is precisely what we in the Labour party intend to do. We have a plan to supercharge investment in renewables, including with the creation of GB Energy. However, we are seeing an abject failure by this Conservative Government to develop renewables. What do we see on renewable energy in the King's Speech? The Government are going to “seek to attract” investment in renewables. That went well in the Celtic sea offshore energy auction, didn't it? Not a single bid was made because the Government failed to respond to the companies' pointing out that inflation was driving up costs. The Republic of Ireland recognised the problem and got a successful auction; we got not one single bid, but it got a successful auction. The Government have to do better than just trying to attract investment.

Of course, that comes on top of years of banning the development of onshore wind in England and a failure to lift that ban properly; stalling on solar; shilly-shallying and then cancelling the electrification of the south Wales mainline to Swansea; and long waits for connections to the grid. In contrast, Labour has a plan to supercharge investment in renewables. Time is of the essence, and I urge the Government to do much more to develop renewables, to develop an industrial strategy and to invest. That would give companies real incentives and the certainty that they need to invest in green jobs in the UK. Sadly, this Government's record is abysmal, which is why we desperately need a change and the hope that a Labour Government could bring by investing in the jobs of the future, fast-tracking the development of renewables, improving our NHS, increasing opportunities for our young people and making our streets safer. That is why I urge the Prime Minister to think again about his King's Speech and to put more in it to provide the investment that we need. If he cannot do that, we need change and we need an election as soon as possible.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): Order. I remind colleagues that, as it says in the “Rules of behaviour and courtesies in the House of Commons”, it is customary to stay for at least two speeches after you

have spoken. Particularly if people have made quite a long speech, I would expect them to be here to hear what others have to say.

5.34 pm

Sir Jacob Rees-Mogg (North East Somerset) (Con): I certainly welcome this King's Speech, particularly because at the end of the King's Speech we saw—I see a former Lord Chancellor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Chris Grayling), looking at me with a beady eye—the reintroduction of an important tradition: the Lord Chancellor went backwards down the stairs, rather than the modern innovation that we have been infected with in recent years of the Lord Chancellor turning his back on his sovereign. So we have one occasion when the Tories, after 13 years of Government, have at last turned the clock back. Evelyn Waugh complained that in all his life the Tories had never turned the clock back, but we now have one good example.

In the King's Speech, we also have an opportunity for growth. I endorse every word said by my right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (John Redwood) on growth, the need for growth and the need for us not to treat the withdrawal from quantitative easing in the way the Bank of England is doing it, which is insanity. The men in white coats, who were once called upon by John Major, could be sent in a different direction on this issue.

Two key parts of growth are set out in His Majesty's Gracious Speech. The first is in the comprehensive and progressive agreement for trans-Pacific partnership and in having legislation for that. Free trade is the real opportunity to make this country and the world richer. My right hon. Friend the Member for Haltemprice and Howden (Mr Davis) pointed out that, since 1990, the growth in free trade has had a phenomenal effect in reducing absolute poverty from 36% of the globe's population to 9.2%—from about 1.9 billion people to seven hundred and something million people. That phenomenal success in prosperity comes from free trade. With the CPTPP, we have the opportunity to push that further, but we should go further still.

We should get rid of tariffs and barriers to trade unilaterally, because opening up our market is beneficial for our consumers. Protectionism is always the provider of the port for vested interests, but free trade is to the advantage of consumers and individuals. So yes, the Government are going in the right direction and the King's Speech is going in the right direction, but I would encourage His Majesty's Government to go further, as I would on the issue of using the Brexit opportunities.

We have a chance to become a light-touch regulated economy that can be efficient and competitive. Again, we should be challenging vested interests. Many Members will remember that, when the REACH regulations came in, the chemical industry was up in arms, saying “These are terrible, awful European innovations. We don't want them, they are costly, they are ghastly.” Then industry said, “Oh, these regulations are marvellous because they keep out any competitors.” We want to change things like the REACH regulations, so that we recognise regulators around the world that provide a similar level of safety, rather than allowing regulations to be used as a means of covert protectionism. That is the challenge for this Government.

Using these advantages is mentioned in the King's Speech; we need to use them aggressively. I have an interest in financial services, declared in the Register of Members' Financial Interests, but these advantages should be used particularly in financial services, where we should restore our position as one of the most competitive areas in the world. We should be using them in agriculture to take the burden off the backs of our farmers because, when I advocate free trade, it is only fair that the quid pro quo is that we allow those who produce to do so in an easier way—in a way that takes burdens off their backs.

Talking of taking burdens off backs, there is a part of the King's Speech that is essential, but does not go far enough. A few weeks ago, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made an excellent speech about lifting some of the net zero burdens and some of that will be coming forward to this House in the coming months, but it is nothing like enough. On the motor cars issue, most of the regulations, as I think my right hon. Friend the Member for East Antrim (Sammy Wilson) pointed out, will remain and will still make it harder for people to buy cars; they will make it more expensive. That is a burden on British people. We want to be getting rid of things such as that. We do not want to force people to do things; we want the technology to be there first so that they want to do it. No one had to regulate to make people give up the horse and carriage and move to the motor car—the horseless carriage, as I used to call it—even though His Majesty came to Parliament in a horse and carriage. They did so not because of a regulation or a penalty, but because market forces meant that we favoured the motor car. If an electric motor car is so good, people will buy it; if it is not so good, they will stick to petrol—I am certainly going to stick to petrol for the time being.

John Redwood: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it does not work in its own terms? If somebody gets an electric vehicle today and goes home and plugs it in, they will have to burn more gas in a gas power station, because there will not suddenly be more renewable power to recharge that car.

Sir Jacob Rees-Mogg: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right but at least, thanks to this King's Speech, it may be a little bit more British gas that we will be getting out, and that of course should be pushed further. There has been some talk that the proposals have been watered down. Well, they should be watered back up again, so that we get as much out of the North sea as we possibly can. It is in our economic interests and our environmental interests because the emissions are lower when we use domestically produced resources. But, as I say, we have to go further.

We have heard the news about our steel industry. The reason our steel industry is being changed, so that we will have no pure steel manufacturing, is because of Government policy. It is because of the emissions trading scheme. It is because of having the third most expensive electricity costs in the world. It is about putting burdens on industry that make it impossible for it to operate and this utterly bogus view that, if something is made in China, the emissions are Chinese and, if it is made in the UK, they are British emissions, even if the steel is used for exactly the same purpose. This is the ridiculous

thing about Drax. The chips put into the Drax machine count as Canadian emissions even though they are burnt in the UK. This is barmy in wonderland stuff. We need to be putting British industry first, and not using silly statistics—legerdemain of carbon emissions—to try to pretend that we are doing something that we are not.

This ties in with the growth agenda. Let us look at what we have already achieved. Since 1990, the UK has reduced emissions by 44.1%, the United States has reduced emissions by 2.6 %, and the People's Republic of China, our red friends, has increased emissions by 426.5%. We have done our bit. Our economic growth has been lower in that period than it otherwise would have been because we have forced upon ourselves the high cost of energy, which the Americans and the Chinese have not done.

Therefore, we need a growth strategy with cheap energy, but there are problems that we have to deal with. There is a bit about enforcing the rules against the small boats, but we have to go further than that. We are not building enough houses, as the Leader of the Opposition pointed out. We are not building the infrastructure for 606,000 net migrants to come to this country a year, and we are finding, as we see there is trouble on our streets, possibly even on Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday, that the integration that we hoped we had in this country is not as deep as we thought it was. That is something that should concern us. I thought that we could be very proud of the integration that we have in this country and the good relations, and we want to keep those, and the way to keep them is to control migration and to have it at levels that allow for integration to take place.

Therefore, I am disappointed that we are still focusing on illegal flows. I am afraid we are caught up in the HMT-OBOR understanding of migration that is wrong because it focuses on total GDP, rather than GDP per capita. We are actually making ourselves poorer as a nation by the excess of migration that we are having, and we are risking what I might call the comfort of the nation—the ease with which we all live together—by allowing the arguments of countries away from the United Kingdom to be heard on the streets of the United Kingdom, which is unwelcome. We want a growth strategy, we want cheap energy, we want to control migration, but we do not want to abandon our ancient liberties.

I was not planning to mention this, but I was inspired by my right hon. Friend the Member for Haltemprice and Howden, who is standing at the Bar of the House, when he talked about warrantless entry. If the police always got things right, we might think that was a good idea, but over the last few years we have had any number of problems of police behaviour and police leadership.

I say that cautiously, and I concentrate on leadership because when we go around this Palace, we speak to as fine a body of men and women as we could hope to meet, who keep us safe every day, and whenever I meet constables in North East Somerset, I find exactly the same—fine, brave people who look after us. But their leadership, we must acknowledge, has been pretty poor, and this seems to me not the time to give them a power that goes against one of our most ancient constitutional safeguards.

[*Sir Jacob Rees-Mogg*]

I know that there is a rule in this House that discourages tedious repetition, Madam Deputy Speaker, so I hope I can assume that the House was not paying sufficient attention in March 1763 to a comment made by our old friend Pitt the Elder, because he said:

“The poorest man may in his cottage bid defiance to all the forces of the Crown. It may be frail—its roof may shake—the wind may blow through it—the storm may enter—the rain may enter—but the King of England cannot enter!—all his force dares not cross the threshold of the ruined tenement!”

That is such an important liberty. It does not mean that the police cannot run in after someone if they are caught in the act, but it means that if they are to come through someone's door, they need evidence and a warrant. It is a foundation of our liberties, and I do not think a King's Speech, as a prelude to a manifesto, is a place in which to water down our ancient liberties.

5.47 pm

Alex Cunningham (Stockton North) (Lab): Here we are in the 14th year of consecutive Tory-led Governments that have failed on everything from the economy to immigration. The number of children living in poverty has soared, the gap between the richest and poorest has continued to widen, the number of people homeless has increased and social housing construction has all but collapsed. Families, businesses and industry alike have been crippled by the huge hike in energy prices and some of the highest interest rates in the western world. Our NHS has been devastated through political mismanagement. Waiting lists are lengthening and people are struggling to get a GP appointment or to see a dentist. Health inequalities remain a blight on our communities, and many are desperate to access mental health services but cannot.

Our asylum system is broken, with a never-ending backlog of claims still to be heard. Class sizes in schools have increased as teachers leave the profession. Serious crime and antisocial behaviour blight our communities as police numbers remain well below the levels of 10 years ago. The majority of people in our country know that life for them has got worse, not better, since 2010. Add to that the disgusting rhetoric from Ministers and others on immigration, protest, homelessness, benefits and unemployment, and we know our country is in a bad place.

In my speech, I plan to concentrate on poverty, health and inequalities, crime and policing, and industry and growth, but first I must get the compliment out of the way. I am delighted at the decision to increase annually the age at which people can buy cigarettes, which cost our NHS billions. As vice chair of the APPG on smoking and health, I appeal to the Government to back up that policy with the resources needed to tackle the illegal trade and, more importantly, to invest in public health measures to help people quit and to stop young people starting. It need not cost them a penny—they can make the polluter pay by placing a levy on the tobacco companies, who know they can afford it. I welcome, too, the reference to the sale and management of vapes. Anything that can stop children taking up that habit has got to be good.

The north-east has had the steepest regional rise in child poverty in the UK. In Stockton North, almost 7,000 are living below the poverty line. The Joseph Rowntree

Foundation says that 1.8 million households—that is 3.8 million people—have experienced destitution in 2022. A million of those people are children; some are homeless. We need to do so much more on poverty and homelessness. The covid pandemic showed us that we do not have to have rough sleepers, but the Government lack the ambition to sort that out now. Instead, we have a Home Secretary who characterises homelessness as a “lifestyle choice”. The homelessness charity Crisis says that it is caused by a lack of affordable housing, poverty and unemployment; people leaving prison, care or the forces with no home to go to; or women escaping violent or abusive relationships. As the coldest winter nights approach and a growing number of people struggle to afford the most basic physical needs to stay warm, dry, clean and fed, I am appalled that the Government have not taken the opportunity to tackle that crisis.

Nor is there anything in the Government's programme to tackle the crisis in our NHS, with the most basic care simply not available and many waiting lists getting longer. That means that people are suffering, many with excruciating pain. People are anxious about when they will get their operation. Family members are beside themselves knowing that their loved ones may not get the treatment they need before it is too late. I know that the Government will troop out the usual excuses—the pandemic, and doctors and nurses striking—but they do not stack up. The covid inquiry has demonstrated not only a lack of preparation and incompetence by Ministers, but a “couldn't care less” attitude from the Prime Minister of the day, and a Health Secretary who thought that he should have the right to say who lived or died. That failure continues today, nowhere more so than in Stockton. We are getting a diagnostic centre, which I welcome, but we actually need a 21st-century hospital.

Let me address primary care. My constituent tells me that, despite being told of the importance of seeing a dentist after suffering multiple miscarriages, she has been struggling to see a dentist for over three years. She has searched within a 50-mile radius to no avail. She is at a loss as to how she is supposed to get any help when private practice is on the rise and NHS providers are facing recruitment problems. What is my constituent to do? The North East and North Cumbria integrated care board said she should continue contacting her local practice to ask to be put on the waiting list—that is not good enough. Last year, 1,095 people were forced to attend A&E at both North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust and South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust because of dental decay—885 were unable to get an NHS dental appointment for dental abscesses caused by tooth decay, and 210 for dental cavities.

The inadequate system for getting a GP appointment is also a cause for despair. One constituent tells me of her struggle to get either a face-to-face or phone appointment for the past two weeks—neither is available. She is in need of a prescribed medicine. She has tried to use eConsult, but the system is only available after 1 pm. She logged on at exactly 1 pm several times, only to receive a message advising of no availability and saying to try again tomorrow. Another constituent had tonsillitis a few weeks ago and found it impossible to get an appointment. She said the practice procedure is to phone up at 8.30 am to make an appointment. She tried, but at

8.35 am she was told that all appointments were gone, and that she would need to phone 111 or go to urgent care.

Many of my constituents are concerned about mental health services and support for people with dementia. They asked me to raise the concerns raised by the Alzheimer's Society and to press the Government for change. Sadly, no change was indicated today.

I will never forget the sight of two thugs attacking the home of a rival—actually, it was the home of the rival's ex-girlfriend—near Stockton town centre. While one smashed in the windows, the other deployed a chainsaw to cut his way through the door. Who knows the fear that that woman felt? Sadly, serious crime of that nature is quite commonplace. The police do their best, but they are fewer in number and have increased responsibilities.

Crime is on the rise: the number of police-recorded crimes in Cleveland in the year 2022-23 was 83,890—a 9% increase on the previous year, when the number of crimes recorded nationally went up by only 2%. The substantial rise is in violent crime, which also rose by 9% in Cleveland to 31,497. Cleveland recorded 25% more residential burglaries than in the previous year, and it has been reported that the number of home burglaries in Stockton has shot up by 42%. Based on the crime survey, the Office for National Statistics estimates that, in Cleveland, almost 45% of people over 16 have experienced or witnessed antisocial behaviour in the last year, compared with 34% nationally. For sexual offence cases being heard at Teesside Crown court, the average time from receipt to completion is 93 weeks, compared with a 59-week national average. That is not justice.

Against that backdrop, we are seeing a failure by the Cleveland police and crime commissioner to recruit more police. The number of male officers has decreased since 2010 across the board. The number of constables is down by 242, sergeants by 68 and special constables by 99. There has, however, been a growth in the number of women police officers.

Finally, on industry and growth, I welcome this week's announcement by British Steel of its plan to invest in Teesside, which has both an amazing industrial heritage—iron ore from the Cleveland hills led to the foundation of our once extensive steelmaking industry—and a local workforce that is equipped with the skills and expertise needed to grow our local steelmaking base once more. Establishing an electric arc furnace in Teesside is a good step forward, but we need much more if we are to reverse the industrial sabotage of the Conservatives, who abandoned steelmaking in Teesside in 2015, and if we are to create more than a fraction of the jobs that were lost as a result of their disastrous decision making—more than 3,000 jobs were lost at that time. We need to be more ambitious, and the investment needs to be part of a sustainable industrial strategy that puts clean, green steelmaking at its heart.

Several years ago, we were promised tens of thousands of jobs at the Teesworks site. Few have so far materialised and, because of secrecy and Tory politicians and others hiding behind company law, we cannot find out what is guaranteed to happen and what is a stream of hopeful promises. That is why I would like the Government to come up with a plan to extend the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to all boards, companies and organisations that spend public money. Maybe that would help us to find out how the bulk of the major

assets at the Teesworks site and Teesside airport ended up in the hands of two private companies, and where the tens of millions spent subsidising the airport actually went.

We could have the bright future that the Government talk about, we could see our health service restored to health, we could see transparency in the way Government agencies and companies do business, we could see a growing economy, we could see people getting a GP or dental appointment, and we could see millions of people lifted out of poverty, but not with this lot. It is time for a general election.

5.57 pm

Chris Grayling (Epsom and Ewell) (Con): I rise for the first and last time to speak in a King's Speech debate in this House. It is a moment of big change for us all. The fact that it is all too tempting to start talking about the Queen's Speech is just a sign of how used we were to having the late Queen after her 70 years of incredible service to this country. It is a big year for her son in taking over as King, and in delivering his first King's Speech. Although he has an incredibly hard act to follow, I pay tribute to him for the way in which he has taken up his responsibilities, for his first year in his position, and for what he has done today in starting the new parliamentary Session. He has clearly already shown himself to be a monarch we can be proud of.

There are a number of points in the King's Speech that I will pick up on. First, I echo the comments of my right hon. Friend the Member for North East Somerset (Sir Jacob Rees-Mogg) about the importance of signing up to the CPTPP and the provisions in the King's Speech for doing that. He is absolutely right to highlight the benefits of free trade for people around the world. It is a matter of deep distress to those of us who believe in free trade that so many countries seem to be taking a step away from it. In the end, that will not lead to a more prosperous world; it will not lead to fewer people being in poverty. If we revert to a world of tariffs, protectionism and subsidies, we will end up in a position where the world is a poorer place, not a richer place. I see our joining the CPTPP as a step in this country's commitment towards the free trade environment that is needed around the world. It is, as my right hon. Friend says, a crucial part of the world for future economic growth. We are right to seek partnerships there, to do business there and to work closely with countries that are, after all, our friends.

On energy, my right hon. Friend the Member for North East Somerset mentioned the Drax power station and, in doing so, drew attention to a really important issue for this country. The Government are absolutely right to seek to continue to exploit oil and gas from the North sea. The Climate Change Committee itself expects us to still need significant amounts by 2050, so why on earth is it better for this country to ship oil and gas from the middle east in large tankers with higher emissions than simply producing it off the coast of Scotland, creating and protecting jobs in Scotland? It baffles me as to why the SNP seems keen to destroy jobs in Scotland, but it is.

At the same time, we see the continued shipping and burning of vast amounts of timber from North America as being somehow a renewable source of energy. In some

[Chris Grayling]

respects, biomaterials can be and are a renewal source of energy, but I have increasing misgivings about the sheer volume of deforestation in the forests of the northern part of the world to generate the amount of energy that comes from the Drax power station. Over the next two or three years, as we move to the point where its contract for difference is to be reviewed, we have to ask, is this really the right thing to do? Are we absolutely certain that it is coming from sustainable sources and that the forests being cut down are being replanted and harvested properly? I have my questions. Before we continue to develop biomass in this country, we have to ask some hard questions about whether it is the right thing to do.

I welcome the provision on leasehold and freehold in the King's Speech. I have seen examples in my constituency of development companies and construction companies behaving in ways that are, frankly, among the worst practices in capitalism, exploiting those who have saved to buy their own homes and have ended up just about able to afford them. These people take pride in what they have, and then a few months or years later, the developer looks to put up the cost of not having the freehold—they put up the cost of the leasehold. My view is straightforward: if someone buys a house, it should be freehold. The application of leasehold tenure to what would in the past have been freehold homes is an unacceptable practice. It should stop, and I am very pleased that it is going to stop as a result of this King's Speech and the legislation that lies ahead, which I hope will have support on both sides of the House.

I would like to talk about a couple of things on which I want to see action in the Session ahead through secondary legislation and changes to the Government's approach. The first is in relation to the measures that were put in place in the Environment Act 2021, 18 months ago, dealing with the issue of deforestation around the world. I chair the all-party parliamentary group on global deforestation. Deforestation is one of the great environmental challenges for our planet. We are losing forest at a rate of knots. It has a huge impact on biodiversity and on carbon emissions. It has to stop and to be reversed.

We were pioneers, through the Environment Act, in saying that we will take practical action to require companies that deal in forest risk products to do proper due diligence, to ensure that those products are not coming from areas that have been illegally deforested. That was the right thing to do. It was a pathfinding piece of legislation and a sign of this Government's commitment on the issue of biodiversity and the environment. However, the secondary legislation that underpins the Environment Act has yet to materialise. It is complicated to do, and I know that officials are working hard to identify the right way to do it, but this has to happen before the general election. We need to have adequate measures in place on products such as palm oil and soy to ensure that we are not importing those products from areas of illegal deforestation. I ask those on the Front Bench to use all their efforts to ensure that that secondary legislation comes forward soon.

There is a flipside to the issue, which is what we do about financial services and institutions that invest in companies that are involved in illegal deforestation. We

had some good debates last summer, when considering the Financial Services and Markets Bill, about the need to extend the due diligence provisions to the financial services sector. The Government made some positive noises and agreed to start a consultation process to look at how that could be done. I hope we will see tangible progress during this Session, and potentially even legislation coming forward when there is a Finance Bill off the back of the autumn statement.

These changes are needed, because the issue of illegal deforestation is not simply about the products themselves; it is about the finance that supports the companies that exploit those parts of the world. I want to see proper measures in place. The financial services sector already does due diligence on the investments it makes and the loans it provides, but I want to see it inserting into that due diligence process the knowledge that the companies it is lending to are not simply using that money to support the cutting down of rainforests.

Anna McMorris (Cardiff North) (Lab): I thank my right hon. Friend—or, rather, the right hon. Member—for giving way. He is making some very important points on due diligence and the need to ensure that consumers and companies know where they are investing and the impact of that on people who live in illegally deforested areas. Does he agree that City investors and companies are crying out for this secondary legislation to be in place as well?

Chris Grayling: Absolutely, and I hope the hon. Member does see me as her friend, because she and I co-chaired the APPG on global deforestation until she, sadly, had to give up the role; I congratulate her on her recent elevation on the Opposition Front Bench. I agree with her: there is demand from investors around the world and from consumers.

This is the right thing to do. I speak as a Conservative who believes passionately in free trade and free markets, but we are also conservative with a small c, and we have always been conservatives who believe in looking after the natural environment and ensuring that we have the right balance and do not destroy the natural world. It is really important that we have in place the checks and balances to ensure that the rogue operations that sadly exist around the world cannot simply tap into financial sources that enable them to do their business.

There is one other change that I want to see happen, or at least see significant progress on, during this Session, and that is around sustainable aviation fuel. We are going to see the aviation industry change to move towards a lower-emission environment. We are already seeing it, in fact, with the arrival of new engine technology that reduces fuel use and so forth. The development of aviation fuel is crucial if we are to see the step change that the Government in this country and Governments around the world are asking for from the aviation sector. Sustainable aviation fuel is now required by law in this country to play an increasing part in the future of our aviation sector. I very much believe—and I have listened to comments made on both sides of the House—that we need to produce sustainable aviation fuel in the United Kingdom, and we need to create a regulatory environment which enables that to happen.

We had some good discussions in the latter stages of the last Session. The Government have started a process that I hope will lead to the incentives, support and

structures that those emerging markets in sustainable aviation fuel will need, but we need to see further progress in this Session, so that by the time of the election we have a clear path forward to deliver in this country a product that will be essential to what is still one of our biggest and most important business sectors.

There is a lot to do. We have a year until an election, and I listened to what the Prime Minister said about what we can achieve in a year—assuming it is a year. I heard a lot in the King's Speech that will make a difference to this country, but there is a lot that we need to change and a lot we need to get on with, and the work starts now.

6.8 pm

Julie Elliott (Sunderland Central) (Lab): I would like to send my good wishes to the King on the first occasion of his Gracious Speech. It cannot have been an easy thing to do. We have to remember that it follows the long reign of his mother, Queen Elizabeth II. There will have been mixed emotions today, and it is important to recognise that; it is not just a job.

It has been interesting listening to the speeches today. I have found myself agreeing with Members I do not always agree with. The right hon. Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May) made some important points on net zero, and I agree entirely with the right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell (Chris Grayling) on the secondary legislation around deforestation. But the debate on the Humble Address has already signalled the difference between the two sides of this House. On our side, we have a Labour party that is a Government in waiting, with plans to cut the cost of living, improve education once and for all, and get Britain building again. On the other side, we have a Government who have simply run out of ideas. They have nothing new to offer to the people of Sunderland or to the country. My constituents expected the Government to finally understand the damage they have caused up and down the country—the damage they have done to our communities because of a lack of investment, to education through lack of care, and to household budgets as the country still reels from the disastrous mini-Budget of the previous Prime Minister.

It is clear that the Government do not understand that. This was an opportunity for them to admit that they had got it wrong and let the country down, but they did not. There was a total absence of a plan in the King's Speech. There was an absence of ideas and an absence of care—for the electorate, for the economy, and for the people of Sunderland. The city I represent is a thriving place, thanks to the work of local people and the city council. It has incredible new investment plans to regenerate the city, and it is full of people who work hard to provide for their families. But if we look at the situation that Sunderland is in thanks to this Government, we see that the total school block allocation since 2015 and funding for the local council since 2010 are down, and child poverty and central Government taxes are up. What do people get in return for the highest tax burden in 70 years? They get crumbling schools, rampant inflation and a Prime Minister who prefers to take a helicopter around the country to travelling on public transport.

I agree with the Prime Minister that the public transport system is woeful and creaking at the seams, but it is his party and his Government who broke it. While the

King's Speech rekindles the idea of Network North, I am not sure how far north that goes, and whether it extends to Sunderland, which I represent. We know that the Government do not care about northern transport. They decided to cancel HS2 and then announce plans that included projects that had been completed, mainly in the south, with a flip-flop on the Leamside line—it was in, then two hours later it was out—although that project would have made a real economic difference to the north-east region. There was a total misunderstanding of the transport system, and we saw the Government's real agenda.

Today, we have seen the introduction of long-trailed legislation such as the Media Bill. I engaged in pre-legislative scrutiny of the draft Media Bill as a member of the Culture, Media and Sport Committee. Reform of the media landscape in this country is long overdue. The importance and prominence of public service broadcasters like the BBC, ITV and Channel 4—institutions that produce great British content and vital skills training for our next generation—must be protected, and I am glad that legislation has been introduced that brings us closer to where we need to be.

Finally, I welcome the announcement of a football regulator, which is a matter of concern to people in Sunderland and around the country. Sunderland is a great footballing city that has produced inspirational stars such as Jill Scott and great programmes such as “Sunderland 'Til I Die”, which is based on our love of football and produced by the incredible Fulwell 73. The fanbase and the city care about sustaining the game for future generations and ensuring that the financial playing field is legitimate and fair. The Government have had ample time to formulate a new system since the publication of the very, very good Crouch review, and I am worried that there have been many delays. I am glad that the proposals have been introduced, and I can assure football fans that if there are any more delays and the Government fail to bring in a football regulator, a future Labour Government will act and introduce one.

I also welcome leasehold reform. It is quite clear that the Government's plans do not go far enough to fully protect homeowners, but I am pleased that they have taken action. After the Conservative mortgage rate hike and a total failure to build new homes, the Government are no longer on the side of homeowners, but the Labour party is.

Although I welcome some measures in the King's Speech, I am extremely concerned about the fact that the Government have brought back the Economic Activities of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill, which is designed to put undue controls on public bodies and limit their ability to express their beliefs. This is a time when language and actions matter—we have heard a lot about the horror that is unfolding in the middle east; about the horror inflicted on Israeli citizens by Hamas; and about the tens of thousands of innocent Palestinians who have died in the horror unfolding in Gaza—and there has never been a more sensitive time in the middle east, so to introduce the Bill at this moment shows a lack of sensitivity by the Government. It is adding fuel to the fire, and it is not sensible to introduce it at this time.

The absence of measures to ban conversion therapy is extremely alarming, and is a sign of the Prime Minister's inability to stand up to his Back Benchers—a weak Prime Minister at a time when we need the very opposite.

[Julie Elliott]

What is clear today, and what has become increasingly clear over the past few years, is that the Conservative party is out of ideas. They do not know how to solve the problems that they have caused, and they are making the public pay for their mistakes. The King's Speech was an opportunity to introduce legislation to improve the lives of ordinary people, to do something to bring down the cost of living, and finally to act to increase the hope, aspiration and life chances of our young people. Yet again, the Government have failed to do so.

Today's speech by His Majesty has raised many questions about the Government's priorities, but it has answered three questions definitively. Can people really say they are better off after 13 years of Conservative Government than they were in 2010? No. Does the King's Speech give them any hope whatsoever that the Government know what they are doing to the lives of working people up and down this country? No. Does this country need a general election to kick out the Conservatives? An emphatic yes. Labour has a plan to fix the economy; the Conservatives are happy to let the economy flounder. The people of my constituency of Sunderland Central and the people of this country deserve so much more.

6.17 pm

Theresa Villiers (Chipping Barnet) (Con): I would like to begin by highlighting my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests, which includes some shareholdings and a long-leasehold flat let to tenants.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Siobhan Baillie) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough and Whitby (Sir Robert Goodwill) on the wonderful start that they provided for the debate. They both performed brilliantly, but I want to single out my right hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough and Whitby. We first met many years ago in 1999, when we were candidates in the European elections. He is a truly great parliamentarian, and he has always been a very good, kind and wise friend to me.

There is much to welcome in an ambitious and important set of legislative proposals in the first King's Speech for 70 years. For example, the Data Protection and Digital Information (No. 2) Bill will modernise data regulation so that firms can grow while protecting privacy and ensuring that people can exert control over information held about them. Brexit makes that kind of regulatory reform possible. I advocated it as part of the work done by the Taskforce on Innovation, Growth and Regulatory Reform. Like my right hon. Friend the Member for North East Somerset (Sir Jacob Rees-Mogg), I think that this is just the beginning and that we need to go further, as it is crucial to our becoming more competitive and raising living standards.

The carry-over of the anti-boycott Bill is welcome. Singling out Israel for boycotts by councils is divisive and unjustified. The boycott, divestment and sanctions movement has driven increases in antisemitism, so I welcome the continuation of that Bill.

I am really pleased to see progress on leasehold reform, which is important to a number of my constituents who have suffered distress, anxiety and financial hardship as a result of the current system. I welcome the fact that the proposals announced today will make it cheaper

and easier for leaseholders to extend their lease. This is a complex area, and we do need to take care to avoid unintended consequences that could jeopardise investment or unfairly penalise the funds on which so many people's retirement income depends and which they may well have invested in freehold interests. However, I feel that, with careful scrutiny in Parliament, we can deliver reform that works for leaseholders and tackles the abuses that have occurred.

The ban on selling new houses on a leasehold basis is absolutely right, and I also welcome the additional protections and transparency measures for leaseholders, but constituents tell me that the rights they already have to challenge unreasonable charges are cumbersome and expensive to operate and it can feel like a very unequal struggle with the freeholder. I hope Ministers will bear in mind that the measures they are announcing today will work only if leaseholders can actually use the new rights they are being granted. With that in mind, scrapping the presumption that leaseholders pay freeholder legal costs when they challenge poor practice is a much needed change, and I welcome that aspect of today's announcements.

Another landmark measure in this King's Speech is the Renters (Reform) Bill, which is continuing its progress. It is absolutely right that we legislate to help renters and encourage more stable and longer-term tenancies. We also need to remember that landlords play a crucial role as housing providers. We should absolutely be tough on bad landlords, but we do not want to end up unfairly penalising the whole sector when a majority of landlords look after their tenants and their properties, and act responsibly.

Sadly, a number of landlords are already leaving the sector and selling their properties. We must ensure that we do not inadvertently intensify that and jeopardise the good rental stock available. Key to that is ensuring that the removal of section 21 is accompanied by a major improvement in the way the courts system operates. My constituent Paul Shamplina, the founder of the solicitors firm Landlord Action, believes that delays are worse than he has experienced in his 33 years in the sector. He has told me of three bailiff applications with Willesden court that have taken six months to be issued. In Swindon, it took three months to send a notice of issue for a basic N5B claim, and Central London county court took seven months to appoint a bailiff and grant transfer to the High Court for enforcement. Other constituents have told me about bailiff delays in removing tenants who have not paid rent for many months.

The Minister for the courts—the Under-Secretary of State for Justice, my hon. Friend the Member for Finchley and Golders Green (Mike Freer)—assures me that the courts are working flat out, that 1,000 new judges have been recruited and that digitisation is under way. That is welcome, but we need to make progress to ensure that our courts are working as efficiently as possible.

Action against crime is another crucial element of the programme in the Gracious Speech. Concern about crime is one of the issues raised most often with me on the doorstep in Chipping Barnet. In particular, I find it shocking that in modern Britain the Jewish community have such great fears for their security. The antisemitism and hate crime on display at recent mass protests have been both frightening and unacceptable. I have appealed directly to Sir Mark Rowley, the head of the Met, to

apply the full force of the law against any law breaking at these protests. I was one of the signatories to a letter from Conservative MPs and Assembly Members asking last week that the protest planned for Armistice Day on Saturday does not go ahead. It would seem to be both insensitive and disrespectful to have such a protest on 11 November.

Turning to policing more widely, the Conservatives have delivered on our pledge of 20,000 additional police officers. That means the Met has more uniformed officers than at any time in its history. It could actually have had 1,000 more, and it is a regret that it fell short of its recruitment target. I am afraid that that is just one of a significant number of failures on policing by London's Mayor, Sadiq Khan, who is the police and crime commissioner for London. In his seven years in office, we have seen the Met in crisis and poor clear-up rates for offences such as burglary, car crime and shoplifting. These are not victimless crimes, and they need to be taken seriously. Of course, we also need a tough approach on antisocial behaviour.

One thing that I am disappointed was not in the King's Speech is a Bill to ban the import of trophies hunted from endangered animals. Such legislation has strong support, but the private Member's Bill—the Hunting Trophies (Import Prohibition) Bill—has been blocked in the House of Lords. The ban is a manifesto commitment. We must do this, and I call on Ministers to bring forward such a Bill.

Lastly, I want to welcome the Bill to ban the live export of animals for slaughter and fattening. I have campaigned for two decades for that ban. This trade leads to serious and unnecessary animal suffering both on the long journeys and in destination countries that have lower standards of animal welfare than we do. These exports would have been banned years ago if that had not been forbidden by single market rules. Although no exports have taken place in recent months, there is as yet no law to stop them starting again. I regret the demise of the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill, though I appreciate that there were issues and problems with amendments, but now that we have a dedicated Bill to end this trade once and for all, let us get on with it. This Conservative Government have led the way on many animal welfare matters. Banning live exports would be a historic step towards a more compassionate and kinder treatment of animals. It is a benefit from Brexit, and I urge the House to support the Bill when it comes forward.

6.26 pm

Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Chipping Barnet (Theresa Villiers), and indeed to be called to speak on the King's Speech. It is probably worth putting it into context: this is 13 years into a Tory Government, but there is a new Prime Minister, and we know that we are going to be facing a general election at some point over the next few months. Given those circumstances, where is the vision and where is the hope? They are sadly lacking from this King's Speech.

We should remember that each and every one of us who has been sent to this House is here, individually and collectively, to show responsibility and leadership, and to do that at times of challenge both at home and abroad. I am glad that so many Members have made reference both to Ukraine and to the situation in the

middle east. We should remember every single day the responsibility that we have to our friends in Ukraine. We should recognise the unity of purpose we have had across this House in relation to those who are in Ukraine, those who are fighting on the frontline and those who have given so much to defend their freedom and democracy. With everything else that is going on, we need to remain absolutely resolute in relation to the people in that country, and to recognise that, for however long it takes, we stand with President Zelensky and the people of Ukraine and that that illegal invasion has to be defeated. Putin can never win, and whether it is today, tomorrow or after the next election, that resolve to support Ukraine must remain.

Of course, much of the attention over the past few weeks has rightly been on the appalling events that unfolded in Israel on 7 October. It is right that each and every one of us in this House should call out that act of terrorism, that attack on the people of Israel that took place, and that slaughter of men, women and children. Yes, we call out Hamas as the terrorist organisation it is, and yes, Hamas must be destroyed—it must be defeated—but we also need to recognise that, sadly, what we have seen over the past few weeks is the inhumane slaughter not just of the Israelis, but of those who live in Gaza and are casualties of a war that is not of their making. We must remember the responsibility that we have, yes, to support Israel, but also, yes, to support those who desire peace on the Palestinian side.

We must recognise that for far too long many of us right across this Chamber have been calling for a two-state solution. To get to that prize, where Israelis and Palestinians can live in peace together, yes, we must ensure that those who are held hostage by Hamas are returned to their families and loved ones, but we must also recognise that we cannot have the slaughter of innocent civilians—the children who have given their life. All of us across these islands, and across the western world, have a responsibility to ensure that the case for a humanitarian solution to protect innocent lives must be at the forefront of our minds.

The international situation must be front and centre, but we must also think about the circumstances that all our people face across these islands. The right hon. Member for Haltemprice and Howden (Mr Davis) went through some of the major geopolitical events that have taken place over the past 25 to 30 years. One event that has not been reflected on today, but that had a huge influence on us, was the financial crisis of 2008. Rightly, we had the quantitative easing programme that has been reflected on by many Members, but the biggest mistake made in the United Kingdom was the disconnect between monetary and fiscal policy. In particular, the poor have paid the price for the failures of financial markets, and the austerity that we have lived with in the period since then. We must reflect on the fact that the decade that has passed is the first decade in 200 years in which people have become poorer in real terms and real wages have declined.

When we think about the pressures on our public services today, we rightly talk about the debt that we have, and a desire to get that down. We heard in the King's Speech about the desire for economic growth. I welcome that. Of course we must deliver sustainable economic growth, but I say to colleagues on the Government Benches, where are the plans? Where are the concrete plans to drive investment into the economy, to drive up

[*Ian Blackford*]

productivity and living standards, to make people wealthier, and to deliver the tax receipts that allow us to invest in our public services? Frankly, there is no detail; there is nothing of any substance. That has to be seen in context of the fact that on a relative basis in the world, the UK has been going backwards. Let us not forget that the UK is no longer a major manufacturing economy. It is a trading economy, and that fact, together with the damage that was done to us by Brexit and the removal of our largest trading partner, is something we should reflect on.

I want to give the Government some credit, perhaps unusually—I see some friends on the Government Benches smiling at me—because there are certain things that the Government are good at. They are very good at soundbites: long-term economic plan, northern powerhouse, levelling up, get Brexit done. We can go through those, and others—

Kevin Foster (Torbay) (Con): Better together.

Ian Blackford: Better together—don't start me on that one. I heard High Speed 2 mentioned as well. To be serious for a second, those slogans have been rolled out in election campaigns, and they have seduced people perhaps to vote for the Conservatives and put them into power. But as we would say in certain parts of Scotland, it's all fur coat and nae knickers. The result is that these 200 years have come to an end with a fall in real living standards. There is an absence of confidence in the economy to drive investment, and that is before we get to the cost of living crisis. We need investment, we need growth, and we need it for a purpose. We need to show the people of this country that we can get through this economic crisis.

I asked the Government where the plan is, and I want to refer to some of the work that the SNP Westminster group has done over the past year. We have published two papers, and I commend them both to colleagues. One is "The Economic Opportunity for Scotland from Renewable Energy and Green Technology", and the other is the "Roadmap for a Scottish Green Industrial Strategy". We have done the hard work in terms of where opportunities for growth, prosperity and jobs will come from. We have heard a lot today about oil and gas, but the Government must be careful about the signalling that is taking place. Whether they like it or not, we have to get to net zero, whether we are talking about Scotland's aspiration of 2045, or Westminster and 2050. We need to drive that investment in green energy to come to this country.

In response to the King's Speech, the Institute for Public Policy Research said:

"By far the best way to improve energy security, cut bills and support workers is through investing more into renewables. New oil and gas fields would only cut fossil fuel imports by 2-4%. Alternatively, faster renewable rollout would cut them by 12-17% respectively."

That is the reality. We either recognise the importance of driving faster to deliver that green energy revolution, and doing so will give us an industrial advantage, or we face the wrong way by prioritising oil and gas, which will not fundamentally make a difference to us or anyone else. Let me just expand on that because in the report that I referred to, which was published last year, we considered the green energy output of Scotland at that point, which was 12 GW. Based on what we know

from plans that already exist—there is no fantasy and I challenge anybody to refute the numbers we have published—in Scotland alone we can increase our green energy output to 80 GW by 2050, a fivefold increase.

When we start to think about that, we start to think about all sorts of things. How do we create grid connectivity? Some reference was made to that in the King's Speech, which I welcome. Where is the plan to ensure that we develop the grid capacity we need to deliver that green energy? For goodness' sake, let us think about—and let us be honest about—some of the mistakes we have made in the past. We never benefited to the fullest extent from the opportunities for the supply chain in oil and gas, and we certainly have not done that with the first generation of green energy. This is not just about plans on paper to increase green energy production; it is about how we ensure that we benefit from that. How do we ensure that we have the planning and consent, and that the energy revolution, whether onshore, offshore, wind, tidal, solar, or pump storage, actually happens?

I commend my colleagues in the Scottish Government, because just a few weeks ago it was announced that Sumitomo would be building a cable manufacturing facility in the highlands. Reference was made earlier to the opportunity of tidal. We lead the world in tidal energy, but the UK Government have not got behind that to the fullest extent, and are not thinking about the fact that we could deliver 15% of our energy from tidal. This is not just about delivering 15% of our energy; we can deliver the investment, deliver the jobs, and have turbine manufacturing. Where is the industrial strategy? Where is the joined up thinking that will lead to the creation of jobs? Those things are in our report. I know some reference was made to jobs in oil and gas. Yes, we need a proper transition and to support the workers in the oil and gas industry today, but in that Skilling report we highlight the potential of delivering up to 325,000 jobs. That is the prize, but where is the ambition? Where is the potential? Where is the hope? How do we drive up living standards?

There is more I could say, but I recognise that others wish to speak so I will stop here. We have a choice in Scotland of two futures. The United Kingdom is in long-term relative decline. I am saddened that when I look at my country, the country of Scotland, our relative population in the United Kingdom has declined every decade since 1850, and I want to change that. The only way we will change that record is if we drive investment into the Scottish economy. What an opportunity we have with green energy. So I say to the people of Scotland that there is a choice. We can stay where we are, or we can recognise that if we want to drive up our economy and productivity, and create better paid jobs and the resources to invest in our public services, then come with us. Ultimately, Scotland's future will be as an independent country and away from this place. There is not a single mention of Scotland in the King's Speech, and people in Scotland need to reflect on that.

6.39 pm

Iain Stewart (Milton Keynes South) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford). We do not often agree on issues, but if I may say so, his points about Ukraine were well made, and I certainly echo them. Many Ukrainians have settled in Milton Keynes, and I know

they remain deeply worried about their loved ones back in Ukraine and the future of their country, so I am happy to echo the right hon. Gentleman's points on that.

As Chair of the Transport Committee, I wish to devote the majority of my remarks to that subject. Before I do, I will touch on a couple of areas of particular relevance to my constituency. The first is the proposals in the King's Speech for leaseholder reform. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Theresa Villiers) made the points very well, and I will not repeat them, but I add one additional point that I hope the proposed legislation will capture. We often talk about the unfair levels of service charges that leaseholders have to pay, and often think of that in terms of the cost for the maintenance of and repairs to the bricks and mortar. Often, however, leaseholders have to pay extortionate service charges for the maintenance of common grounds and landscaping. I very much hope that that can be captured as part of the legislation.

I very much welcome the focus in the King's Speech on keeping the United Kingdom at the forefront of global technology development and growing those industries in this country, because that is where I see considerable possibilities for growth. Milton Keynes is home to many world-leading companies in forms of new technologies. The world's eyes were on Bletchley Park in my constituency last week for the global AI summit. I commend the Government on all their work in bringing that summit to the UK.

The summit was never going to be the end point of the discussion, but the Bletchley declaration was a landmark that will shape the debate for the months and years ahead. I also put on record my thanks to Iain Standen, the chief executive of Bletchley Park, and his team for all they did to make it such a success. Milton Keynes takes great civic pride in being able to host that session. I did notice, as I entered Bletchley Park last week, that there was a sign on the way in that directed people to the "Digital Ministers Lounge". I wondered whether that was for our colleagues in the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology and their international colleagues or whether Ministers and, indeed, all politicians had already been replaced by artificial intelligence. I will leave that hanging for colleagues to wonder whether artificial intelligence will supplant us at some point. On the point of growth, it was a stroke of genius that the Bletchley Park management opened up the gift shop. I am told that sales were buoyant, and the Chancellor can look forward to some additional receipts from that.

I will focus my main remarks on transport, and there was certainly much to be welcomed on that subject in the King's Speech. The automated vehicles Bill will certainly be of critical importance. I am delighted that it is being introduced. It was a central recommendation of a recent report from my Committee that the technology has got to the point where if we are to secure further investment in this country, we need to give regulatory certainty to investors. We have been at the forefront of the development of that technology. I am pleased that that certainty will be there and that we can continue to attract investment from around the world.

I have just three small additional points to add, and I hope the legislation will capture them. First, the legislation rightly will focus on what we might call "on the road" self-driving vehicles. There are other types of automated

vehicles that we need to consider, including pavement robots, which we have in Milton Keynes. We have little robots from Starship Technologies trundling around our streets delivering groceries and food, but the company needs certainty in regulation if that investment is to continue. If we do not do that, other countries will.

Secondly, on e-scooters, which I know are a controversial subject—we have many trials in towns and cities around the country—we are at the point where if we are to continue with them, we need certainty. I very much hope that the legislation will capture that.

Finally, maritime is often an overlooked part of the transport world, but it is critical. In my Committee's "Maritime 2050" report, we noted that while the UK has been at the forefront of innovation in marine autonomy, we cannot afford to lose momentum. There is always a balance to be struck between innovation and safety. The Department for Transport is consulting on this matter, but I hope that it can be expedited and included in the Bill.

Sir Robert Goodwill: In my hon. Friend's talk about autonomous vehicles, he made no mention of trains. These vehicles already have advanced signalling systems and they do not need to be steered, because they are on rails. Does he think we can make more progress on trains—we already have the docklands light railway—to ensure that we can have more reliable train systems that are possibly less susceptible to being targeted by union action?

Iain Stewart: My right hon. Friend makes an excellent point, and I take this opportunity to add my congratulations to him on a superb opening speech in the King's Speech debate. He is absolutely right that we already have high degrees of automation on many of our rail and light rail systems. People think nothing of going on a docklands light railway or Victoria line train that is controlled by computers. In the skies, 95% of a flight is controlled by a computer, yet people have justifiable concerns about other levels of automation in other areas. It is important that we strike that balance. I absolutely agree that we should look at all forms of automation in the transport world.

That brings me on neatly to my second point on transport, which is my pleasant surprise that we have a draft rail reform Bill in the King's Speech. The mood music in the sector was not positive. Few people expected that the Government would take forward legislation in this area, but I am pleased that they will. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport delivered his Bradshaw lecture earlier in the year, which was widely applauded in the industry and wider as a way forward for the renaissance of railways in this country, yet people have felt a sense of drift as nothing concrete has happened. If the House will pardon the pun, I hope we can get back on track quickly in giving the industry the certainty that it needs. I hope that the Government will be able quickly to provide some clarity on the timetable for introducing the draft legislation. I appreciate that there are processes that need to be gone through, but if my Committee can help in the scrutiny of that draft legislation, I am happy to work with Ministers and the House authorities to expedite that, so that we can have the legislation as quickly as possible.

There is much consensus within industry on what needs to happen. We need an end to the micromanagement that for understandable reasons was put in place during

[Iain Stewart]

the covid period to ensure that services continued, but we are out of that, and we need to let the professionals get on with the job that they know best: growing the sector, growing revenues in industry and having Great British Railways as a light-touch, guiding mind that does not micromanage the sector. Of course, much can be done without legislation, but giving GBR its legislative status and powers over contract making will send a good signal to the industry.

Finally, colleagues have touched on the importance of improving grid connections. That is absolutely right in the transport world. It is easy to think of transport as a stand-alone policy area, but it touches so many other areas. If we are to decarbonise and electrify large parts of our transport system, we need to ensure that we have sufficient generating capacity and distribution capacity. Otherwise, those ambitions will not be realised.

There is much to be welcomed in the King's Speech, particularly on transport. My colleagues on the Select Committee and I very much look forward to playing our part in taking it forward.

6.50 pm

Catherine McKinnell (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab): I, too, pay tribute to His Majesty on delivering his first Gracious Speech as monarch. Unfortunately, when we see the scale of the challenge facing our country, the programme for government is clearly not up to the task. There is no ambition or vision to get the economy growing again or to break down the barriers that are holding people back. It was one of the longest Gracious Speeches with the fewest actual Bills proposed. Anyone would be forgiven for thinking that the Government have given up. All it seems to contain is sticking plasters, gimmicks and divisive politics. I fear that the nasty party is well and truly back.

I rise to speak in the debate on behalf of my constituents. At this stage in the evening, there may be few of them watching, given the champions league game that is happening tonight, but I am sure they will catch this speech on catch-up.

The Government have finally announced some reforms to leaseholds, yet, despite the wait, they do not go nearly far enough. This weekend, I was out speaking to residents in Newcastle Great Park in my constituency, which is one of the largest new housing estates in the north-east. Some residents have lived there for over a decade. They are paying service charges on top of their council tax, yet they are left with hazardous pavements and roads and have been waiting for promised community facilities for years on end. Residents are left in limbo without any real plan for when their estate will be finished and adopted. Children are growing up and leaving home before a proper pavement appears outside their house.

Residents deserve certainty at the very least about the timescales within which adoption should take place. Since 2017, the Government have promised to

“legislate to ensure that freeholders who pay charges for the maintenance of...facilities on a private or mixed use estate can access equivalent rights as leaseholders to challenge the reasonableness of service charges.”

That would provide real hope for residents, but it seems that this is yet another missed opportunity.

On top of people's frustrations about the state of their estate, they tell me that they cannot get to work or school because of the lack of buses—that is despite the Government cancelling the largest rail infrastructure project in a century and using some of that money to maintain the £2 bus fare subsidy. Across Newcastle, we have lost vital bus services that were essential for accessing local services, visiting family and friends, and getting to school or work. While the extended £2 cap on the bus fare is clearly welcome, it is just not enough. If there was ever an example of a short-term sticking-plaster solution, that must be it: capital funding spent on a short-term revenue fix that does not even fix the problem. We have a broken Government presiding over a broken system, which is preventing people from getting on. Residents want a much greater say over their bus routes, and Labour has a plan to deliver that.

What was there in the speech to offer hope that the increasing challenges we see in health, transport, education and living standards will be addressed? Child poverty is up, mortgage costs are up and the strain on family finances is getting worse by the day. What happened to levelling up? It is not happening round my way.

Newcastle and the north-east have outstanding universities, yet 40% of graduates are working in roles where a degree is not required. That figure is much higher than the national one and even more so when compared to London. We have an incredible pool of talented graduates who are forced to either leave the north-east or chase too few graduate jobs, yet the Government, instead of focusing on spreading opportunity around the country, are focused on reducing the number of graduates. Why should bright, ambitious and hard-working people in the north-east settle for that?

It does not have to be this way. We do not have to settle for this. The north-east, with our proud industrious history and our current untapped potential, could lead the world in skilled jobs in clean energy power generation, whether in onshore or offshore wind, or electric car manufacturing. We could be investing in skills in the north-east, giving employers the tools and resources to ensure that there is a workforce that meets local demand and grows the local, regional and national economy. Far from steaming ahead, we are actually rolling back on previous green commitments. Where is the ambition? Where is the hope for a better future?

Labour's plan to quadruple offshore wind, double onshore wind and triple solar would not only provide those jobs now but bring energy bills down and secure our future. We could power Newcastle and the north-east and lead the world in offshore wind and electric car manufacturing by delivering infrastructure projects rather than dither, delay and more cancellations. Newcastle and the north-east could drive investment and drive economic growth.

Everyone in the Chamber can feel it: we are in the dying embers of this Government. They are tired, out of ideas and lacking direction. They have given up on levelling up; they are more interested in dividing communities than in making life better for working people. Rather than sticking-plaster politics, we need a mission-driven Government focused on our national renewal. The country is crying out for change—even the Conservative party is—but the answer to that is clearly not more Conservative Government.

We have the ideas and the ambition for this country, and we are ready to serve. It is time for a Labour Government.

6.57 pm

Mary Robinson (Cheadle) (Con): I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak in the first King's Speech debate for 70 years, not least because of its historic nature but also because the first day of the debate affords an ideal opportunity to speak about whistleblowing and whistleblowers' protection, which is an issue that crosses all Departments and sectors.

While legislation keeps whistleblowing siloed as an employment and, thus, Department for Business and Trade matter, evidence shows that it is everyone's issue, affecting every area. I will attempt to set out just a few of them. First, I welcome the measures in the King's Speech to give the police more powers to tackle serious, complex economic and organised crime and to crush grooming gangs. We know that often the single most effective way to detect crime is through whistleblowers and informed insiders.

Whistleblowers are responsible for uncovering about half of economic crime in the UK. They play an important role in identifying wrongdoing across all sectors and all of society, from flagging medical negligence and cover-up to shining a light on sexual assault and the abuse of power. They are people who do the right thing, despite the risks to their reputation, the risk of retribution and the risk to their personal wellbeing. The problem is that those risks are high, so there is little incentive to take such a risk at all.

Further, whistleblowers are often ignored. While I welcome the measures that will rightly provide the police with additional powers to help them tackle child sexual abuse, including grooming, particularly when it occurs online, when grooming gangs were operating in Rotherham and Rochdale, the whistleblowers who brought attention to what was taking place were ignored or—worse—silenced, and the gangs were able to carry on for far too long.

On the occasions when whistleblowing is debated in this place, those debates are responded to by a Business Minister. I am delighted that the current Minister—the Under-Secretary of State for Business and Trade, my hon. Friend the Member for Thirsk and Malton (Kevin Hollinrake)—is a former vice-chair of the all-party parliamentary group for whistleblowing, which I chair. However, given that there are whistleblowers in every sector, whistleblowing should be within the remit of a Minister in every Department and ultimate oversight should be with the Cabinet Office, as many have suggested.

As we know, omission from the King's Speech does not mean that there is no scope for legislation, which is why I continue to call on the Government, following their framework review, to introduce laws to protect and support whistleblowers and to recognise that whistleblowing is more than just an employment matter. It is rare for there to be cross-party support on an issue, but I believe that protecting whistleblowers is one of those issues. We need a speaking-out protection for everyone, but at the moment the Government's definition of a whistleblower is a worker who reports "certain types of wrongdoing." The guidance clarifies that this wrongdoing will

"usually be something you've seen at work—though not always."

The current legislation—which incidentally specifically mentions all Members of Parliament as having legal duties towards whistleblowers—is the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, or PIDA. This 25-year-old piece of legislation was a groundbreaking part of UK employment law, but is now not fit for purpose. It leaves myriad people, such as contractors, volunteers, trustees and the families of employees who may have witnessed or have evidence of wrongdoing, misconduct or even criminal activity, unprotected from any negative consequences that may ensue if they blow the whistle.

Openness and transparency should be the cornerstone of our society and institutions. Therefore, I look forward to hearing more about some of the measures that the Government intend to introduce, such as a legal duty of candour for police officers, requiring them to tell the truth to inquiries, investigations and public authorities. People would ask why we do not expect candour from all public servants anyway, backed up by legislation that encourages all people to speak out and to feel safe in doing so. In the NHS, following the recommendations of Sir Robert Francis's inquiry into Mid Staffs, a statutory duty of candour was put into law for NHS trusts and other providers in 2014 and 2015. This duty plays an important role in a culture of openness and transparency, which is vital for patient safety, but despite that we continue to hear about whistleblowers being penalised for speaking up and raising concerns.

A statutory duty of candour must be backed up by a change in culture and whistleblower protections. We do not need to be reminded of the doctors who raised the alarm over the murders of seven babies and the attempted murder of six more at the Countess of Chester Hospital. They should have been listened to from the start, not silenced or made to apologise to the killer. Their jobs hung in the balance, and while they ultimately kept their livelihoods and have since been vindicated, it is extraordinary that it took so long for them to be heard and for the matter to be taken seriously. I have heard from one of the doctors at first hand, and I was shocked at how the situation unfolded. Not only is it reasonable to believe that lives could have been saved if concerns had been taken seriously, but the killer was treated like the victim and the whistleblowers like the offenders.

Many of those doctors have suffered personal detriment as a result of that treatment—details that we know discourage people from speaking up. The law, PIDA, does not incentivise speaking up and, if anything, is an effective deterrent. Whistleblowers, including even those who come within its scope, all say the same thing: PIDA does not work. That is confirmed by the evidence provided by the courts that less than 4% of cases succeed at employment tribunal and that not a single case of wrongdoing has been escalated in the 25 years of PIDA's existence.

In transport, the measures in the rail reform Bill to improve our rail network and ensure an efficient service and particularly accountability will be welcomed by my Cheadle constituents. I mention the importance of accountability because it relates to HS2 and the report just the other week in *The Times*, which revealed that an individual who blew the whistle on HS2 Ltd's alleged cover-up of mounting costs not only did not have his contract renewed, but struggled for more than a year to find other employment in his industry, which he attributes to his whistleblowing. He is not alone. In the media,

[Mary Robinson]

it was a whistleblower who exposed the use of fake bank statements by Martin Bashir to support false claims in his interviews with Earl Spencer, yet his whistleblowing led to him being sacked after raising concerns. In some industries, whistleblowers are still deterred by the fear of blacklisting.

We tend to focus on deterring negative or criminal behaviour, as we should; however, perhaps now is the time to consider incentivising positive behaviours as well. I met someone from a local business this summer and was told how important the furlough scheme and covid-19 business loans were to their firm, but, having struggled to do the right thing and pay back the loan, they were frustrated that so many businesses are simply leaving the loans unpaid—some in the hope, perhaps, that they might never need to repay them.

I am pleased that the Government are taking action to deal with that, because we know that public sector fraud has grown since the covid-19 pandemic began. The Public Accounts Committee reported recently that these swiftly rolled out schemes were vulnerable to fraud and error, and were exploited to the tune of millions. They were good schemes that kept people in work and businesses afloat. Both the Cabinet Office and HM Treasury have committed to recovering as much public money as possible, but they accept that most of the £21 billion lost to fraud during the pandemic will not be recoverable, so a commitment to that recovery is welcome.

While it is vital that our laws and penalties are robust—the King's Speech sets out many further measures and laws that will be put in place—we must not just deter individuals from committing crimes, but punish the ones who do, and punish them properly. We should support and perhaps also compensate those who come forward to share information about wrongdoing—those who are sometimes at risk of personal detriment.

It is rare that I would reference speeches given at the Labour party conference, but on this occasion I will. I noticed that the shadow Foreign Secretary commented in a speech at the conference that his party would introduce a new whistleblower scheme to reward those who expose stolen assets and sanction breaches and help to recover misappropriated funds. In my view, this should perhaps go even further and not be limited to whistleblowers who expose stolen assets and sanction breaches. We should seek to recover the estimated £350 billion lost to economic crime in the UK annually. We should recognise that all those who come forward to do the right thing and bring criminals to justice, stop negligence and malpractice, and highlight flaws in the system are doing it for all our benefit. We should be a country where doing the right thing is encouraged and celebrated, not a cause for punishment and detriment. We should be the country that makes whistleblowing work for everyone.

7.7 pm

Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): It was indeed a special occasion to be there today for His Majesty's first King's Speech and particularly to see him continuing the remarkable tradition of service and duty of his late mother, our dearly missed Queen

Elizabeth. I declare my interests in relation to the armed forces, Ukraine and my role as co-chair of the LGBT+ parliamentary Labour party, and the relevant APPGs.

The speech today, as an occasion, was very special; the content, I am afraid, was far from that. It was short, it was inadequate and it simply did not rise to the challenges we face as a country. This is fundamentally a Government who are out of ideas. Stuck in a high-tax, low-growth economy, they have abandoned their promises in many areas and failed to invest in our public services, and instead engage in cheap, divisive politics. What a contrast with the clear, mission-led agenda set out by the Leader of the Opposition, which would be at the heart of a future UK Labour Government.

It is always there in the talking points for Ministers at the Dispatch Box, and we heard some barracking today from Conservative Back Benchers, but I am fed up with the cheap shots and the talking down of Wales that we regularly hear from the Government Benches. There is a stark contrast between what we have seen from this Tory Government at the UK level and what we have seen from a Labour-led Government in Wales, and indeed from my Labour-led councils in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan. I have seen the reality on the doorstep and in my communities. I have seen new schools being built, such as Eastern High and Penarth Learning Community. I have seen a new further education college. I have seen new hospital facilities being built at Llandough. I have seen new stations being built, right at this moment, on a metro line into Cardiff Bay.

I have seen new economic investment in our city centre and bay. Indeed, as the topic of homelessness has been so shamefully spoken about by the Home Secretary, I have also seen Labour councils in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan building new sustainable housing to deal with the challenges facing those who tragically find themselves on the street. That is what we need to see: action on housing and action on homelessness, not divisive and shameful comments from the Home Secretary. The Leader of the Opposition was absolutely right to highlight that.

I am conscious that there is always more to do. I have been out and about in my constituency in Cardiff South and Penarth in the last few weeks, engaging with lots of different communities and lots of different concerns. We continue our campaign to see a new station built in St Mellons, the St Mellons parkway station. I have been raising concerns about poor performance on the great western main line. I have been arguing for reforms to, and the protection of, local bus services. I have been listening to the concerns of those on low incomes struggling to make ends meet, including local taxi drivers, and those struggling with their energy bills and the rent and mortgage hikes as a result of the Conservative Government. I have also been meeting those concerned about local GP services. We need adequate and fit-for-the-future services across Cardiff and Penarth. But of course that can only come with adequate investment across the United Kingdom and a co-operative relationship between a UK Government—hopefully a UK Labour Government—and a Welsh Labour Government, along with Welsh Labour councils in Wales.

One of the starkest contrasts in approach between Wales and those of us on the Labour Benches, and the current Government, is on climate change and the green transition. The Government have abandoned targets

and are going backwards when we need to be moving forward with green transition, green jobs, green investment, sustainable housing and adaptation. Communities in my local area, in places such as Sully and Dinas Powys, are already experiencing the consequences of severe flooding and rainfall events. But I also see the opportunities, for example in green steel, the recycled steel already in produced in my constituency, and in green industries and green technologies of the future, many being piloted at our fantastic universities in Cardiff and south Wales.

Let me turn to some of the other issues in the King's Speech. On leaseholder reform, I am interested to see the details of the proposals. There has been a lot of cross-party work on the issue and concern raised on behalf of many constituents. I have many leaseholders—tens of thousands—in my constituency who have been struggling with defective buildings, fire and building safety issues, extortionate and often inexplicable service charges, and being caught in mortgage prisons. There is a whole industry around conveyancing, surveying and so on, which has failed many of my residents who find themselves caught up in untenable situations. In particular, I have met some of them in recent weeks who have been telling me about shocking service charges, which I am trying to follow up with management companies. Companies are still failing to move forward quickly enough, or indeed at all, on remediation, and to take responsibility for their failings in the construction of buildings, particularly in Cardiff Bay.

I raised concerns with the Welsh Government on those issues, but we need co-operative action across the United Kingdom. A lot of the problems predate devolution. The leasehold system is decades and decades old—I think hundreds of years old. I want Bills on this issue to come forward in this place, with co-operation between officials at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Welsh Government, not the silly political gameplaying we have seen, unfortunately, from some Conservatives. There is a willingness; the Welsh Government are taking a constructive approach. Let us see that met from the other side to benefit my residents and the residents of Members from across the House.

We also need to look at what is missing from the King's Speech. I could talk about that for hours, but I want to highlight two issues in particular. One is, of course, the ban on conversion therapy that we were promised again and again and again by the Government. Conversion therapy is a despicable, abusive practice. Frankly, the fact that it is not included in the speech is a betrayal not only of the victims of conversion therapy across the country, but of all the campaign groups, and all the cross-party, cross-religious and cross-community groups who have argued for it to be banned. Conversion therapy is a dangerous, life-threatening practice that leads to decades of consequences for those who go through it. I contrast that again with Labour's commitment to a fully inclusive ban on conversion therapy.

I am sorry to say—this follows on from a debate we had in Westminster Hall in the previous Session just a few weeks ago—that this does not come as any surprise, despite some very passionate speeches from Conservative Members. I acknowledge that there were Members in that debate from, I think, all parties in the House and from all parts of the United Kingdom. The Government have abandoned their LGBT+ action plan and disbanded their LGBT+ advisory board. I was told by a Home

Office Minister that we were hysterical for raising concerns about the significant rises in hate crime faced by the LGBT+ community. The Government are failing LGBT+ people and are instead using this issue as part of their divisive culture wars. It is simply unacceptable, and I know that many Conservative Members—indeed, many Ministers, I am told—feel exactly the same way.

Another area missing from the King's Speech—a deep shame given the motion that was passed unanimously by the House—is an issue I raised a few weeks ago: legislation on the seizure of Russian state assets to repurpose them for reconstruction in Ukraine. The motion we passed was for legislation to be passed in 90 days. The King's Speech would have been an apt opportunity, albeit a little bit late, but it is absent. Again, what is happening? I hope the Government will have some answers soon.

I have to say, and it is good to see my right hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth and Dearne (John Healey) the shadow Defence Secretary on the Labour Front Bench, that it was deeply disappointing to hear the Prime Minister's divisive comments about the armed forces and security. They were a disservice to those on the Labour Benches who have served, as well as to families and communities. The reality is that Labour fully supports NATO and fully supports our independent nuclear deterrent. We want security co-operation, with NATO as our bedrock, across Europe, our Atlantic partners and other allies. This Government have slashed the Army, wasted billions and left those who served us bravely in Afghanistan languishing in hotels for months and months on end at great cost to the public purse. It would be nice to see a bit more of a consistent approach and more truth about Labour's positions. We will defend this country, we will defend our armed forces and we will work to support our veterans as we rightly should, particularly as we are coming up to Remembrance Sunday this weekend.

I normally talk from the Opposition Front Bench on international issues, but I want to reflect as a constituency MP on some of the challenges facing the world at the moment. That is important in a constituency such as mine, because of its nature as a port and having had people come from all over the world for over 150 years. What happens elsewhere in the world—in Israel and Palestine, Afghanistan, Sudan, Libya, the Sahel, south Asia, Yemen, Nigeria, Syria and many, many other regions and countries—matters deeply to my constituents. In the past weeks I have heard from constituents about their anguish at the deaths, loss of civilian life and destruction in Gaza, and their horror at the terrorism, hostage taking and killing that Israel and its citizens have had to endure. I have heard about the need to ensure we protect civilians, aid workers, hospitals and schools; to secure humanitarian pauses and get humanitarian aid in, particularly into Gaza; and to move back to a pathway to peace and a two-state solution, and to an adherence to international law and international humanitarian law. I have also, with other hon. Members and neighbours in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan, heard face to face from those who have families who are directly affected in both Gaza and Israel—a genuine fear about what divisions can mean for us in our communities.

I am also proud of the resilience and response from communities in Cardiff South and Penarth, whether in raising funds for aid and relief efforts in many different

[Stephen Doughty]

situations around the world, including in the middle east at the moment, or in working to promote inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue here in the UK. That is absolutely critical when we are faced with a shocking rise in antisemitism and Islamophobia, and a wider rise in race and religious hate crime.

I want to conclude by saying that this weekend I saw communities in my area at their very best. I joined Indian—Hindu, Sikh and others—communities celebrating Diwali together. I joined a very diverse group of Christian and other faith communities who were celebrating with the Greek Orthodox Church 150 years of the Greek and Greek-Cypriot communities in Cardiff South and Penarth. I also met young Muslims and others with Citizens Wales to discuss their hopes and aspirations for the future. We need more dialogue in this country and less division. I would hope that that would be the heart of any Government's programme. I know it would be the heart of a Labour Government's programme.

7.19 pm

Simon Hoare (North Dorset) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Cardiff South and Penarth (Stephen Doughty). As he will know, his is a part of the world that I know well, coming from the western part of the city, and having contested his seat back in the 2010 general election. I fought Cardiff South and Penarth, and Cardiff South and Penarth won! I was interested by the hon. Gentleman's final remarks about the Greek Orthodox Church: my late maternal grandmother was married to a Greek so she knew that Church pretty well, and it was very nice to hear the hon. Gentleman mention it.

Let me begin by saying how much I agreed with the assessment of the right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford) of the devastatingly sad situation in the middle east, and also with what was said by the hon. Member for Llanelli (Dame Nia Griffith) about the vital importance of maintaining domestic steel production. If we learned anything from the mad international scramble for personal protective equipment during the covid pandemic, it was the need for domestic production of materials that are often vital but are susceptible to fragilities in international supply chains. A country that cannot produce its own steel is not, I would suggest, an independent country in industrial terms. I should add that my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Chris Grayling)—along with others, including the hon. Member for Cardiff North (Anna McMorrin)—made some good points about forestry.

The hon. Member for Sunderland Central (Julie Elliott) made a telling observation about the sad moment it would have been for the Sovereign, who was delivering the King's Speech only because his late mother the Queen had passed away. However, it is a pleasure for me to speak following the first Gracious Speech delivered by a male sovereign for 71 years. I always think that the key phrase in the Gracious Speech is

"Other measures will be laid before you."

It is that great catch-all which means "Something on which we could not quite get agreement before it went to print can now be looked at." It also means that people have suddenly said, "Well, we thought we did

not have time to do this, but we find that we have", and it means that when legislation is needed, opportunities can be addressed.

I would issue a caution about assessing a governmental programme, even at such a late stage in a Parliament, purely on the basis of the number of Bills involved. We are obsessed with quantity, deeming success to lie in having passed hundreds of Bills and thousands of statutory instruments, but we rarely think about quality. We rarely pause to ask ourselves whether stuff is on the statute book in any event but we are not drawing on it; we are always thinking that every problem is a new problem which requires new legislation.

Having said that, however, and without wishing to shoot my own argument down in flames if I go any further, I should emphasise that I was encouraged by what was said by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister during the final session of Prime Minister's Questions before Prorogation, when I raised with him the need to continue the process of review and reform of the funding formulae for a number of key service delivery agencies—the Environment Agency, policing, local government and education—in the context of rural areas. We inherited funding formulae devised by the Labour party, which were tilted principally towards the urban and metropolitan at the expense of the rural. I am not advocating a system in which Peter must pay Paul, but we need greater equity, and an understanding of the difficulties of delivering rural services, in the formulae that are deployed in the making of funding decisions. Progress has been made, particularly in education and certainly in respect of the rural sparsity fund, but I am hopeful that within those "other measures"—that great catch-all—we may well see more changes.

Anyone who has read as well as listened to the Gracious Speech, as I am sure many of us will have done, may have been struck by what I thought was the most important sentence in it:

"That is why my Government's priority is to make the difficult but necessary long-term decisions to change this country for the better."

What could be more Conservative, more traditionally Tory, than that? Taking difficult decisions, not for party advantage but in the national interest: that is a golden thread that runs through my strand of "one nation" moderate conservatism, and I applaud it warmly while also cautioning Labour Members, all of whose speeches have indicated a preference for party interests rather than public service. They say, "Let us have a general election now, because all this will change after it", as if that would help to solve any problems in the short to medium term. We on this side of the House will continue to govern in the national interest, taking those long-term and difficult decisions.

I have little or no doubt that North Dorset residents will welcome the proposals for education, and will be interested in seeing the details of the advanced British standard, which will merge technical and academic routes into a single qualification. My area has excellent high schools—my three daughters attend one of them—but we are continually trying to motivate our young to access the excellent local colleges in Weymouth, Salisbury and Yeovil and grasp the opportunities that they present, while also saying to parents that apprenticeships and non-academic education are important as well. It is long overdue, but His Majesty's Government are right

to assess the utility of some degree courses. I do not wish to reduce education to a utilitarian equation, but a lot of people are spending a lot of money on a lot of degree courses that will never recoup the expenditure, and I think we are right to look at that in order to secure a better future for our young people.

A key theme in the speech was security, and it was defined in a number of key areas. It is perfectly sensible to focus on national energy security, just as it is perfectly sensible to support the production of domestic steel, as we have heard. It is bonkers to be reliant on foreign energy production and products when we can produce them here, with not only employment and tax benefits but environmental benefits: if we are to use these products, it is much better to reduce the number of miles for which they have to travel, and also to monitor our very high standards, as deployed by the Environment Agency, the Health and Safety Executive and, of course, others.

I shall be particularly interested, as will many people in North Dorset, to see the details of the reform of grid connections. The problem of grid capacity and access to it is clearly hampering economic growth, as I know only too well from the situation in my part of Dorset and, indeed, throughout the county. I think I am correct in saying that there is still not a single business park in the county of Dorset that could be developed to its full potential, not through lack of interest on the part of potential employers but merely because there would not be enough electricity to serve those employers' needs. That, one would have thought, is a fairly basic issue: just as access to clean water or to sewerage is important, access to electricity is key to growing businesses and creating jobs.

There was a huge amount of emphasis in the Gracious Speech on physical security as we usually define it—our armed forces and security sources—in an ever-changing and increasingly dangerous world. The first duty of the state, as we know, is to keep her people safe, and that, I think, will be at the heart of any legislation that the Government introduce. As for financial security, the light appears to be at the end of the tunnel, but we are not at the end of the tunnel yet—we are not out of the woods—so we must try to deliver as much financial security as possible for individuals, families and businesses through calm, competent, rational common-sense Treasury and Government decisions.

I think that those who are saying that the King's Speech should have been much more full of Bills, and far more exciting and all the rest of it, miss the point. I think the electorate are broadly exhausted and actually just want to see a few things being done supremely well, rather than lots of headline-chasers being done incredibly badly. They just want a sensible Tory Government, and I know that my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Chancellor will deliver that in spades.

My right hon. Friend the Member for North East Somerset (Sir Jacob Rees-Mogg) was right to reference the benefits of free trade to the world's poorest and to our UK exporters. I agree with him on that, but I usually disagree with him on the issue of the race to the bottom with regard to standards and regulation. I do not detect a huge appetite in the House for a *de minimis* approach to regulation, particularly—I say this as one who represents a rural and farming constituency—with regard to agricultural standards. When my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister assumed that important office last year, he made it clear that parity of standards

and regulation—the level playing field on which I tabled amendments to the Agriculture Bill, as did the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee—for our farmers on animal welfare, the use of chemicals and the like would be absolutely front and centre in future negotiations of free trade agreements, and I support that.

I speak as a Welshman who represents an English constituency and who chairs the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee—confused, Mr Deputy Speaker? You will be; I sometimes am. We are the Conservative and Unionist party and it does not take a great constitutional expert to realise that some of the threads and fabrics of the rich tapestry of our United Kingdom are under great stress and strain. We have seen it in the phenomenon of the rise of Scottish nationalism; my native Wales is starting to see a little bit more of it, and we have a nationalist First Minister designate in Northern Ireland.

I always make the point, and I hope that the Government will make it during this legislative year, that to be a Unionist, you do not have to be uniform. The strength of our Union is in the differences of the four nations that make up our kingdom: cultural, historical, political, linguistic in some areas, and musical—the whole kit and caboodle. But what unites us and makes us stronger, as was clearly demonstrated in our united response to the horrors of Ukraine and the middle east, are our shared values: freedom of speech; the rule of law; an independent judiciary; the ability of our military and overseas aid workers to do good in some of the most difficult and challenging parts of the globe; and the soft power reach of our language, the BBC, our armed forces and our diplomatic corps. All these things are drawn from the riches of the four quarters of this kingdom. We should never, ever lose sight of that fact and we should never dodge the opportunity to stress that across the four parts of the United Kingdom.

Kevin Foster: My hon. Friend is rightly passionate about the need to strengthen the Union, which was referenced in the King's Speech. Does he agree that that has to be one of the founding principles of this Government as they take this legislative agenda forward?

Simon Hoare: I do agree, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention.

As a parent I hugely welcome the renewed focus on vaping and its dangers. I do not think it is readily understood by parents, by teachers or indeed by teenagers themselves. In Gillingham in my constituency, we have two vape shops that are far too close to the high school for comfort. We can understand where the marketing goes. Which of us has not lost a loved one or family member to a smoking-related disease? I am sure that there will be some who argue about libertarian principles and the infringement of civil liberties in response to the Government's proposals, but when we know that a product can do such enormous harm and that it has such huge costs to public health and to the taxpayer, what Government would not act to improve public health? This will be the equivalent of the Clean Air Act 1956, and I welcome it and give it my full support.

This is an exciting King's Speech. There is plenty in it and it will keep us busy. There is lots to do and I look forward to it playing an important part in showing that my party is alive and kicking, full of ideas, committed to our country and able to govern us, both this year and in the future.

7.34 pm

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): It is a real pleasure to follow the hon. Member for North Dorset (Simon Hoare). In responding to the King's Speech I must open where His Majesty ended, reflecting on the horrendous situation in Israel and Gaza. My constituents have overwhelmingly expressed their call for an immediate ceasefire across Israel and Gaza, putting the humanitarian cause at the forefront of our response. Our hearts are breaking for the hostages, the casualties and their families caught up in this war. While I utterly condemn the horrific violence perpetrated by Hamas, I cannot be silent about the barbarity of the bombing in Gaza. As Israeli citizens are suffering, the civilians of Gaza are suffering too. They have neither perpetrated any violence nor have any means of defence. Last night Antonio Guterres, the UN Secretary General, described this as "a crisis of humanity" and said that Gaza was fast becoming "a graveyard for children". Over 4,100 innocent children are dead. Every life is a precious gift and we carry a heavy responsibility to do everything in our power to stop the killing.

I therefore call for an immediate ceasefire, with the return of all hostages. I call for justice for those whose human rights have been stolen. I call for talks to be taken to a new level and note the dereliction of duty of this Government over many years in focusing on the situation in the middle east. If we join the majority of nations calling for a ceasefire and work for a ceasefire, it is more likely to come about than if we do not. A humanitarian pause might be the first step, but we cannot let the killing then resume. We know that 10,000 Palestinians and 1,400 Israelis are already in their graves.

We must also ensure that this conflict is not fuelled by the further supply of defence weapons into the hands of any actors in this war. The UK arms trade has sold equipment into Israel and I call for that to stop today while working internationally to prevent Hamas from regrouping and rearming. With 1.5 million people now displaced in Gaza, we also demand an escalation in the Government's humanitarian response. They must use all their power, their ships and planes, their diplomacy and persuasion and, as necessary, their resources to get food, water, medical aid and other humanitarian supplies into Gaza. History will not judge this nation well unless we refocus to bring about the cause of peace. It is possible, but we carry a heavy responsibility to join the majority of nations who now make this call.

Today I would also have hoped for a Bill to enable a homes for refugees scheme, following the support that the UK was able to provide for Ukrainians and the learning from that. We must recognise that Palestinian survivors of wars should be granted similar opportunities by the generosity of the public. Today the Government sought to build barriers, not bridges, and that is something I vehemently oppose at a time when people are in desperate need. Such a Bill would establish not only the principles of how we support people who are displaced through the brutality of war and our international contribution to such a debate, but also a framework through which the UK fulfils its obligations under the refugee convention.

York holds the international chair for Human Rights Cities this year, and as England's only human rights city, we stand ready to step up and play our part. This Saturday, York will gather as we host a peace vigil in

York Minster, drawing the whole city together for reflections led by faith, political and civic leaders as people bring their pleas, petitions, protests and prayers. Nothing is more pressing for this Parliament than to focus on this crisis.

At a time when we face an economic crisis, a climate crisis, a cost of living crisis and a housing crisis, and with the NHS in meltdown, the failure to bring forward a serious legislative programme today only highlights how this Government are out of ideas, out of time and soon to be out of office.

I am deeply concerned about the scale and depth of mental health challenges faced by my constituents, and I am disappointed that there will be no legislation, following the work of the Joint Committee on the draft Mental Health Bill, to advance the rights and choices of those in crisis. Our system is out of date, and measures to provide a human rights approach to mental health are long overdue. The Government must account for why this was left out and for how the serious and significant gaps in our framework for detaining and treating patients will be closed. Please reconsider.

Although late to the table, I add my support for the control of tobacco sales. Smoking kills. Cancer, respiratory disease, cardiovascular disease, vascular dementia and many others are the result of decades of failing to address this public health crisis. The last Labour Government did more than any previous Government to stop smoking, so this Bill is welcome.

I further welcome the regulation of the vaping industry. Vaping is a useful transition tool for smokers to quit, but the scale of new vapers, especially among the young, is deeply alarming, carrying significant risks of addiction and lung conditions. The vaping industry needs to be taken to task for the way it is behaving, as if we have not seen it all before with smoking.

Housing policy has been an utter disaster under this Government. Luxury apartments have been built that my constituents cannot afford, using vital brownfield sites for second homes and Airbnbs, while the building rate for council homes and affordable homes has been abysmal. My constituents are paying a very heavy price in rents and mortgages, as demand far outweighs supply in York, which has one of the worst housing supplies in the country. People are forced to leave their city, and the economy is out of balance. And this Government have sat idly by, year after year, serving their paymasters not their people. We need change.

Too many people are trapped in damp, mouldy homes, while others are enslaved by the private rented sector, which takes all it can, yet we still wait to see the legislation. It is frankly shameful how this Tory Government have left housing to the market, not seeing it as a human right or a public service. The next Labour Government will radically change this.

There were 460 leasehold transactions in York last year, 27.9% of the total. As a Co-operative MP, I strongly argue for a focus on community-led housing, commonhold, including a legal definition and a legal framework. Leasehold is a feudal and exploitative system of home ownership in which the freeholder profits at significant cost to leaseholders while hiding behind comparative anonymity. People are trapped with spiralling management costs as they cannot sell their asset. Unaccountable as they hike ground rents and service

charges, determine excessive amounts of work, whether needed or not, and dodge their legal responsibilities for transparency and accountability, the management companies try to broker between leaseholders and freeholders but are often not much better—all profiteering from residents.

Although we welcome the scrapping of ground rent for new properties, it must be scrapped for all properties. Ground rent is simply an interest bonus scheme for greedy developers and landowners. It must be scrapped for all. I trust that the leasehold and freehold Bill will address the injustice and pave the way not only for commonhold but for residents to purchase their freehold without the present barriers and for “right to manage” provisions.

As we build, we need radical reforms so that a home is not a means for extracting everything out of the owner. Letting and managing agents need tight regulation and better accountability through a legally enforceable code of practice, alongside a redress scheme akin to an ombudsman process, so that those living in leasehold properties have their rights restored.

There was flooding in York last week. I am all too aware that the Flood Re scheme should also be extended to leaseholders, as they ultimately pick up the cost of high insurance premiums. I trust that the proposed Bill will make provision for this, on which I would welcome an early meeting with the Minister.

Yet again, the Tory party has claimed to be the party of the workers, but there is no employment Bill, which we have been promised for six years. Although we also need to overturn the anti-trade union laws and strengthen employment rights, as the next Labour Government will do, I will use the private Member’s Bill process to bring back my legislation on bullying and respect at work. This would create a legal definition of bullying at work and a route to an employment tribunal, with a six-month limit, and it would provide for the Equality and Human Rights Commission to inspect and bring enforcement action against employers that fail to address a bullying culture at work. It would also advance the need for a positive behaviour code.

Bullying at work is the second largest industrial issue. One in 10 workers has been bullied in the last six months, with the cost of workforce conflict running into billions and with 7 million working days being lost to stress, anxiety and depression stemming from such negative behaviour. Outside this place, the importance of legislating is recognised. We need to heed that and pass laws in Parliament.

This must be the last Humble Address under this Government. The King’s Speech was humble in content and failed to address the crisis of our age. The next time we have such an opportunity to lay a legislative programme before our country, I trust it will be that of a radical and reforming Labour Government who seek to rid our country of the obscene levels of inequality, and who seek to transform the lives of people in my city of York, the country and beyond.

7.46 pm

Kevin Foster (Torbay) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for York Central (Rachael Maskell). She will probably not be surprised to hear that I do not

agree with many of her remarks, but she always speaks with a focus on people and on the constituents she serves and represents.

In preparing for today’s debate, I, like many other Members, reflected on this historic moment. This is the first King’s Speech in my lifetime and in the lifetime of probably everyone in the Chamber. When Her late Majesty took the throne in the early 1950s, Britain was a very different place. We were still emerging from world war two and, had I talked about the web, people would have assumed that I was talking about a problem with spiders.

Most adults smoked in the 1950s. Walking around this building, we can still see ashtrays all over the place. It was very much the done thing, with tobacco advertising common. In this Session, we will discuss a Bill that means future generations may never lawfully buy a cigarette. This could be a major step forward. There are details to be heard on exactly how it will work—the right hon. Member for East Antrim (Sammy Wilson) spoke about shopkeepers in 20 or 30 years’ time having to work out whether someone is 47 or 48—but the aspiration of having a smoke-free Britain is certainly worth while.

We have already heard some allusions to the changes on vaping, which are similarly welcome. There are businesses in Torbay selling e-cigarettes that are clearly targeted at adults. Their building looks more like a bar, and the packaging is reflective of the types of products that we would generally expect to be aimed at the over-18s.

My granddaughter Emily summed up brilliantly the problem with how the law currently regulates vaping. She made the point that, if this product is about stopping adults smoking—about transitioning from smoking cigarettes to being a non-smoker—what adult looking to give up smoking would walk into a corner shop and look for a product with a gummy bear flavour, in a bright green packet and with a cartoon character on the front? What adult is going to do that? The target of that product is obvious, and it is not the over-18s.

Some of the current issues with vaping exactly match some of the issues we saw with how tobacco was marketed to reach new smokers. For example, cheap disposable vapes replicate the ability to buy smaller packs of cigarettes, or even individual cigarettes, in the distant past. It is absolutely right that we are looking to crack down on this, while keeping a genuine choice for those who are looking to give up smoking, and who need assistance to do so.

A number of Bills are welcome. Many Members have reflected on the potential for a Bill on leasehold to tackle many of the problems in that area. There are a number of properties in Torbay where people are looking to retire but still want to own their own property and so will look to buy an apartment or a flat on leasehold. Many are well managed and have fair charges, but there are instances where that is not the case.

When I was in the Department for Communities and Local Government, as it was called then, we had a call for evidence a few years back and all sorts of issues emerged—we heard about everything. We heard about windows work that an independent contractor would have charged about £3,000 for, but the freeholder had selected a relative to deliver it at a charge of £20,000 or £30,000. My right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom

[Kevin Foster]

and Ewell (Chris Grayling) spoke about houses that should have been sold as freehold being instead sold as leasehold. My hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes South (Iain Stewart) referred to communal areas that have a surprisingly high specification and cost to maintain them, with it all being charged to the leaseholders. That is not a genuine way of maintaining an estate, but a way of ripping people off.

I also welcome the media Bill. The section 40 provisions it proposes to repeal from the Crime and Courts Act 2013 were created in another era. The Leveson inquiry looked at the problems of the press of the past; the print media does not occupy the position today that it did even five or eight years ago. Sales of papers are declining and very few of us go to our letterbox in the morning to read the latest headlines rather than open up our phone, pad or laptop. Therefore, targeting the print media specifically in the way that was suggested some years ago is no longer fair or relevant, so that repeal proposal is welcome.

Tomorrow night, I shall be with members of the Torquay United supporters trust, who lobbied heavily for the implementation of the recommendations of the fan-led review. It is good to hear that the Bill on football governance will be coming through. We can all think of the various examples of badly managed clubs and problems leading to grounds, sometimes historic ones, potentially being sold. In some cases, clubs have ended up playing somewhere completely different. In the disastrous period when Sisu owned Coventry City football club, it ended up playing up in Birmingham and, at another time, it played in Northampton. That all exposes the utterly useless system of football regulation that currently exists and how a change is long overdue.

In the past couple of months, I have not just been reading the many campaign emails we get in the run-up to a King's Speech, but directly asking residents across Torquay and Paignton, especially new voters turning 18, what issues they wanted to see addressed in the King's Speech. Hundreds replied and I am grateful to them for doing so. The top six issues were crime, immigration, the environment, housing, planning and animal welfare—crime, immigration and housing were clearly ahead of the pack.

On crime, it is vital to see justice being done and it is completely wrong that a person convicted of a heinous crime can hide away in a prison cell when their sentence is being handed down in court. I therefore welcome the move to legislate to give judges the power to bring those convicted of the worst crimes up to the courtroom to face their judgment. It is absolutely right that that is taken forward. I also welcome the moves on whole-life sentences for the most heinous of offenders. Again, this will build the public's confidence that those who commit appalling crimes will not only receive the punishment they deserve, but will have to face judgment when it is given.

Looking at this area more widely, I hope that this Session also gives us more opportunities to consider how we ensure that people feel safe in their communities, especially in our town centres. We all know the challenges that they are facing following economic changes and the way in which online shopping during the pandemic accelerated the shift away from physical retail. I urge the

Government to think about how we can go further in working with local councils and community groups on this. It will require enforcement work, such as dealing with antisocial behaviour connected with drinking and drug taking on the streets. However, we must also consider how to join that up with support in terms of housing, mental health and breaking cycles of addiction—problems that often drive the antisocial behaviour we see.

This time last week, I was with Father Neil Knox of Paignton parish church to see how it has become a hub to ensure that people going through the dark tunnel of addiction or exploitation can see a light at the end of it. Sadly, that work has seen the church and its clergy being targeted by some of the darker forces in our community, who see it as a threat to their trade and position. I know that the local police are responding and I hope that the Home Office will assist with additional funding in response to a bid that has been made.

Immigration was referred to in the King's Speech, and there are two clear parts to that debate. First, on illegal migration, a lot will depend on the Supreme Court ruling on the Rwanda plan, which will break the business model of the people smugglers if it can be taken forward. It is encouraging to see that many of the plans that my right hon. Friend the Member for Witham (Priti Patel), my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Tom Pursglove) and I drew up while in the Home Office are being implemented, including Greek-style accommodation centres and key parts of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022, such as the reform of age assessment.

We need to remember that there is a second part to the debate on migration: legal migration. I am talking about those who come here on a visa, when we have chosen to give them the chance to come to our country. I hope that this Session will provide opportunities to reflect on how we use our legal migration system and the rules it operates under. We should welcome those who come to fill vital roles and bring valuable skills, but we must balance that with the impact on our domestic labour market and the importance of ensuring that employers invest in UK training and offer the rewarding packages workers deserve to attract them into an industry, rather than see immigration, or lobbying for changes on immigration, as a handy opportunity to avoid doing that.

In particular, I want the Government to reflect on the recommendations of the Migration Advisory Committee review of the shortage occupation list. One of the last things I did as Immigration Minister was to commission that review to look at how the list works. We should abolish the 20% salary discount for jobs on the list and update the salary thresholds, which are becoming increasingly out of date, given the changes in the labour market since they were set at the advent of the points-based system. I suspect that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Immigration would be very keen to announce some of those items from the Dispatch Box, so I urge other colleagues in government to think carefully about why that might be.

Turning to the environment, as a coastal MP I want a move to bring in primary legislation to ratify the global ocean treaty. As those on the Treasury Bench will be aware, once 60 countries ratify it, the treaty will come into force. It will then be possible to create a network of global ocean sanctuaries that are off limits to harmful industrial activity such as oil drilling, industrial fishing

and deep sea mining. I hope that we will get the chance to discuss primary legislation on this subject, and I cannot imagine that it will be particularly controversial when we do.

Another area that needs careful consideration is housing and its intrinsic link to planning. The way our current system works is ripe for reform. The most dramatic example of the need for change is that we have long housing need waiting lists while empty and derelict buildings sit in our town centres. This is not about pitching the old classic of “developers versus communities” and “greenfield versus homes”; there is a real need to look at how our system works. Hospitality businesses that are seeking to modify their premises to incorporate items such as a slightly expanded spa encounter either a “no” or a requirement to go through a lengthy planning process. Worse, a potential brand-new language school for Paignton was lost in a row over a bike rack and bin storage. The existing permission for an office, if used, would have far more impact on the surrounding properties.

I am not advocating a return to the type of sweeping planning powers we gave councils in the 1940s to enable post-war rebuilding, but I urge the Government to have another look at the indication councils gave only last year that they were keen to have more flexibility on planning in key regeneration areas. Although there were some scare stories, these areas were far more likely to be a derelict 1960s concrete jungle than a precious nature spot.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I know you have to be completely neutral when you are in the Chair, but some of my next remarks about animal welfare are inspired by a Member for a Kent constituency who I regularly meet when I am in the Tea Room. Animal welfare is close to the hearts of many constituents and I welcome the Government’s dramatic change in approach to animal welfare issues since May 2015, particularly under the leadership of Boris Johnson, who was keen to push forward on those issues.

I am disappointed we did not take the opportunity to pass the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill in the last Session, but we have seen good achievements during the last Parliament, such as the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act 2022 and the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Act 2021, which saw the maximum penalty increase from six months to five years, along with the extension and updating of the Ivory Act 2018, which now covers five additional species. There was also some excellent cross-party work on private Members’ Bills, such as the Shark Fins Act 2023.

It is welcome that the Government will introduce a Bill about animal welfare and live exports. With the freedoms produced by Brexit, it is time to outlaw long and unnecessary journeys simply for fattening and slaughter. However, time must also be found for key changes in areas such as pet theft and zoo regulation, which were in the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill, along with the promised ban on hunting trophies, which was frustrated by a small number in the Lords, despite the strong support it received in this Chamber. Clearly, those issues could be overcome by a Government Bill.

In conclusion, the King’s Speech included several welcome items, which I look forward to us debating in due course. Today is a day when we look to the future, but also a day when we reflect on a 70-year period of distinguished public service, which meant many of us today have still described it as the Queen’s Speech.

8.1 pm

Gareth Thomas (Harrow West) (Lab/Co-op): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Torbay (Kevin Foster). I join him in welcoming the proposed legislation for further curbs on smoking and for progress on animal welfare issues. I am sure he will not be offended if I part company with him there, as there is a lack of general welcome by the Opposition for the rather thin King’s Speech that we heard today.

I wish to concentrate on two issues. First, 13 years into the Conservative Government, the empty Government promises in the King’s Speech will not address the crisis in the NHS that now sees record waiting lists, lengthy waits in accident and emergency departments and longer waiting times for cancer patients. The Prime Minister promised today to cut waiting lists. We have heard similar promises before, but last month waiting lists rose to a record high, with almost one in seven people now waiting for NHS treatment.

The independent Health Foundation underlined the scale of the crisis by predicting that 8 million people could be waiting for treatment by next summer—that is our constituents, who are

“anxious for a diagnosis, in avoidable pain and with their lives put on hold”.

This represents a failure by the Government to provide the quality of leadership, and the imagination and resources, to modernise the NHS. Nothing in the King’s Speech suggests that change of the magnitude needed is coming soon.

In Harrow, over the past 10 years we have seen the pressures in the NHS building, as three walk-in centres—the Alexandra Avenue clinic in Rayners Lane, Belmont Health Centre and the Pinn Medical Centre—have closed due to lack of funding. They allowed my constituents to walk in off the street and see a doctor or nurse within minutes. That reduced the pressure on local doctors and, crucially, on the A&E department at Northwick Park Hospital.

Not surprisingly, waiting times in that A&E department have rocketed. Northwick Park’s A&E has not met the target of seeing 95% of patients within four hours of arrival since before 2016. Indeed, almost 92,000 patients waited more than four hours across the trust’s A&E departments in the year to September. That is not a criticism of the staff, who are doing a remarkable job in difficult circumstances. What is self-evident from the figures I have described, which are not the worst in London by a long way, is that additional funding is essential.

Given that Northwick Park has the busiest A&E department in London, and that all complex surgery cases across a trust that serves most of north-west London are undertaken there, clinicians have identified that a 50% expansion in intensive care beds—from 24 to 36—is essential. The existing beds are housed in converted wards that are not fit for purpose, so investing in a modern intensive care unit will save lives, improve the care of very ill patients, free up space for more beds to manage winter pressures and improve the working conditions of hard-pressed NHS staff.

Cancer services are also under intense pressure nationally and in my area. The failure of leadership on cancer by the party in government is best epitomised by the continuing uncertainty around the future of one of Britain’s world

[Gareth Thomas]

famous cancer units, which sits just outside my constituency at Mount Vernon Hospital. John Major's Conservative Government closed the supporting accident and emergency unit, and, one by one, other linked services that supported the cancer unit have also disappeared from the hospital site. Since 2019, its future has been in doubt, with an independent review commissioned by the NHS describing the estate as "crumbling" and urgent resolution needed on the future location of the service.

We are five years on from that independent review. Despite excellent clinical care, the estate remains dilapidated. No significant funding from the new hospitals programme has been forthcoming. Staff and patients desperately need clarity on the future of the centre. The party in Government has given up on Mount Vernon, its cancer centre and its patients. The A&E department on the site has been shut, the minor injuries unit has been downgraded to an appointment-only service, and the Government will not sort out the future of the cancer centre.

The second issue I wish to focus on is the events in the middle east. Like so many of my constituents over the past month, and so many others in this House, I have watched the unfolding crisis with increasing horror. I utterly condemn Hamas's appalling and ongoing terror attacks on Israel. There can never be any justification for the shocking attacks a month ago or the continued holding of hostages. When an innocent is killed, it is equally tragic, whether they are Palestinian or Israeli. We must uphold the basic fundamental human rights of innocent Palestinians too, caught in the crossfire between Hamas and Israel. International law must be upheld.

With this the fourth and most horrific clash between Hamas and Israel since the terrorist group took over Gaza, with more than 1,400 Israelis and 10,000 Palestinians reported dead, so many of them children, and with neither Hamas nor the Government of Israel yet to allow a humanitarian pause or a ceasefire, we must not give up looking for ways to save lives, and to end this cycle of misery, violence and fear. Military action, rockets, bombs and violence will not deliver long-term justice for the Palestinian people, nor long-term security for the Israeli people. As so many—from the United Nations to Save the Children and the excellent Medical Aid for Palestinians—have already made clear, urgent medical aid, water, food and fuel for hospitals must be delivered into Gaza, hostages must be brought home and siege conditions lifted to alleviate the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Many years ago, I visited Gaza. At that time, despite considerable barriers to peace, there was hope for a negotiated peaceful future and serious attempts were under way to find a way forward. It is even more essential now to find new routes for such a future. As a Minister for International Development in the last Labour Government, I worked closely with UN organisations, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. Funding to UNWRA was significantly increased but, until a few days ago, Ministers had sadly reversed that investment. UNWRA needs new support, long-term commitment and a recognition that it is a fundamental part of the route to helping secure both a safer Israel and a sovereign Palestinian state.

Here in our country, the conflict has already had a significant impact—very directly for the families of British citizens killed, injured, taken hostage on 7 October or killed and injured in Gaza since. For many others, there is a sense of deep distress, renewed anger at the injustice faced down the years by the Palestinian people, and fear and anger among the Jewish community about their safety and security. The rise in antisemitic and Islamophobic attacks in our communities should be a wake-up call to us all to look for ways to bring people together rather than to push each other away.

Now, more than ever, we need to reach for understanding in our own communities to find where we can agree—or, at least, where we do not disagree. I say gently to the Home Secretary that perhaps she could lead the way and find the courage to recognise that not everyone who disagrees with her is full of hate. We must not allow these tragic events to divide us, and I join all those who call on the Government to step up efforts to achieve international co-operation and a sustained political road map to peace.

8.10 pm

Vicky Ford (Chelmsford) (Con): On behalf of the people of Chelmsford, I wish to express my gratitude and respect to His Majesty. History and lessons from across the world tell us that transferring the Crown from one monarch to the next can be deeply unsettling for a nation and can lead to uncertainty. Many were concerned about the mood of our country and the uncertainty that we would face when our much-beloved Queen passed away, but His Majesty has been remarkable. With dignity, gravitas and compassion, both here and overseas, he has ensured that the transfer of the Crown has happened with certainty and delivered stability, despite the fact that people across the world face great insecurity.

I grew up in Northern Ireland during the troubles, so security was an important part of my childhood and teenage years. After the birth of my third child and just as I was about to return to work, 9/11 happened. My workplace was on the 52nd floor of Canary Wharf tower, so security—or lack of security—was also very much part of my children's early years; and I had always hoped that they would see a world that was more peaceful and secure than the one in which I had grown up.

I do not think that I have seen global security in such a precarious state as it is today for many decades. Today marks one month since 7 October, when Hamas rewrote the definition of evil. Since that day, when so many Israelis lost their lives, we have seen the desperate loss of Palestinian civilian lives as well, and the dire humanitarian situation. The Prime Minister was right in everything he said today about the need of Israel to defend its citizens, the need for a pause in fighting—that is not in our hands to deliver, but in the hands of those who are fighting—the need for aid to flow, and the need to minimise civilian casualties.

The middle east situation is doubly precarious and the risk of contagion continues. Because of all the horror we are seeing in that region, our eye has gone completely off what is happening in Ukraine; we have forgotten about the dreadful situation that the women of Afghanistan still face; just a few days ago, a young woman in Iran lost her life because she would not wear

a headscarf; and no one is talking about the slaughter that continues in the civil war in Sudan. Therefore, it was absolutely right that security was a common theme in this King's Speech. I have counted that it was mentioned nine times, included with respect to: health and security; financial security; energy security; security for leaseholders; national security; and security across the world.

Global insecurity brings insecurity at home. We have felt that most acutely in our energy prices. On energy security, I agree with the Government that, for so long as this country needs to use oil and gas, we should endeavour to produce that domestically, where the production can be done to a higher environmental standard, where the carbon cost is lower and, most importantly, where we can have more security about the supply. That does not mean that we should take our eye off the ball when it comes to climate change. Climate change not only causes fires, floods and food shortages, but fuels conflict. Addressing climate change remains one of our biggest challenges. We know that it is not easy, and the Government are right that we must bring people with us, but we must not suggest to people that this issue does not matter and we should not lower our leadership on it. As a member of the Energy Security and Net Zero Committee, I look forward to hearing from the Secretary of State tomorrow.

I come from an NHS family. I think that I have told Members previously that my parents were NHS doctors, my husband is an NHS doctor, and my sister is an NHS doctor. I do not think that I have updated you, Mr Deputy Speaker, but my son has recently got engaged to a medical student, and my niece has just started her first year at medical school. The doctors are carrying on through the generations. I am very pleased that delivering the NHS long-term workforce plan was part of the King's Speech. I think the Prime Minister said that this would help us to recruit more doctors, nurses and dentists. Incidentally, I am very glad that the Minister for Health and Secondary Care, my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester (Will Quince), who does so much on NHS workforce planning, is here in the Chamber today.

It is right that we recruit more doctors and nurses—indeed, there are more doctors and nurses now than there were at the start of this Government's tenure—because we are a growing population and we always need more. We need not only to recruit, but to train and retain our doctors and nurses. Over the past 13 years, I have been really pleased to see how apprenticeships, especially nursing apprenticeships, have helped to train more people into that profession. These apprenticeships have been championed by Anglia Ruskin University in Chelmsford. I hope that one of the things that the Minister for Health and Secondary Care will do is to look at introducing a doctor apprenticeship. That would mean, for example, that someone who has been a paediatric nurse could retrain and upskill to become a paediatrician. That is the sort of way that we will get very clever training. I hope that he will listen again to my pleas to double the size of the medical school in my constituency, which is doing such good work. It is one of the great medical schools that was started by this Government—a great development of the past 13 years. On the issue of retention, I am pleased to hear that there may be a bit more warmth in some of the consultation with senior doctors. That is what I am reading in the press, and I hope that it is true.

There were important elements of opportunity and hope in this Gracious Speech—and not just about football fans or pedicabs. We do not have any pedicabs in Chelmsford, but we have scooters, which can be challenging sometimes. I warmly welcome the positive news about opening up fast-growing new markets for trade and continuing to work on developing skills. I also welcome a lot of what was in the speech on innovation.

Chelmsford has a long history of innovation. It was in Chelmsford more than 100 years ago that Marconi invented radar and the radio, starting the modern form of communications that we all enjoy today. The digital revolution is accelerating faster and faster because of AI, so it is absolutely right that the speech talked about harnessing the positive benefits from AI, such as driverless vehicles, and increasing benefits for consumers, such as more choices and lower prices through the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Bill. I look forward to those.

I also have a bit of personal history on some of this innovation stuff. Before going into politics, my job was raising money for infrastructure. I have to admit that I helped to raise the money to build the UK's first mobile phone networks. If hon. Members ever get totally frustrated with what they see on their phones and say, "Why did we ever invent these things?", I am really sorry; it is partly my fault.

I am also very aware that the internet revolution has its dark side. The Internet Watch Foundation has removed 200,000 webpages containing self-generated indecent images of children so far this year, representing 95% of the webpages it has taken down in that time. These are images where children are likely to have been groomed, coerced or manipulated into performing sexual acts via a webcam. One in five of those pages contained category A material, the most severe form of child sexual abuse, which would involve penetrative activity, sexual activity with an animal or sadism.

On the dark web there was also a significant rise in deepfakes driven by artificial intelligence. Nearly 3,000 images collected in a one-month period on one dark web forum were confirmed to be either criminally pseudo-photographs or prohibited images in the UK. Many of those images are manipulated to depict well-known celebrities as child abusers. There are also images that de-age celebrities to make them look younger than they are.

An area of particular concern is that exchanging hints and tips through paedophile manuals on how to create generative AI or manipulate the technology to that end is not currently illegal, whereas such a manual would be illegal if the image were an actual photograph and not a manipulated one. I welcome the Government's initiative on that and the fact that there will be new legislation to tackle digital-enabled crime and sexual abuse, including grooming. I also welcome the measures that the Government are going to take on tougher sentences for the most serious offenders, including for rape.

I agree with much of what the Government are saying, but I want to make clear that I do not agree with every single word that every Minister on our Front Bench uses. For example, I do not believe that every person sleeping rough is there because of choice. However, I welcome what the Prime Minister said: that the

[Vicky Ford]

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 has helped to prevent 640,000 people from becoming homeless, and that veteran homelessness is at a record low.

The advantage of speaking late on in this debate is getting to listen to what others have said. Listening to Opposition Members again and again, one would think that nothing good ever happens in this country, but last week was an exceptionally good week for Chelmsford. On Monday morning, at the break of dawn, the new bridge opened—not just any bridge, but the largest piece of curved steel infrastructure anywhere in England. It connects the old city of Chelmsford to the new garden community. As people drive over the bridge, if they look down to their left they will see the new railway station being built. It is the first time we have built a new railway station on the great eastern main line in over 100 years.

That was Monday. On Tuesday we heard that the outline business case for our new junction, park and ride, cycle routes, bus routes and pedestrian routes had been approved by the Government. That is £68 million-worth of investment that will dramatically change transport through the city of Chelmsford. On Wednesday, 9,300 households started to get cost of living payments—from the Government? No; this is taxpayers' money, coming from some taxpayers to help others. That was good news. On Thursday we heard that many millions of pounds-worth of investment is coming to our hospitals, which will help to expand our A&E and our wards to serve our growing population. Those are all excellent bits of news for our long-term future, and all secured by the Conservative Government.

On Friday, I went to a meeting where the local Lib Dems basically told me, "Nothing good is happening in Chelmsford." I repeat, good news on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. I say to Opposition Members: this is a difficult time for many people across this country and across this world. It is a difficult time for diplomacy, a difficult time for democracy and a difficult time for political discourse—but do not talk down our country.

8.24 pm

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): Well—God save the King! Those are not words that might be expected from someone brought up to have a healthy scepticism of the role of the hereditary principle in a modern democracy, but if the kind of woeful, unambitious and retrograde legislation that has been announced today is what the new monarch will have to put up with for the rest of his reign, he will need all the divine salvation he can get.

One person who can be more confident in their ambition is my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow Central (Alison Thewliss); I am delighted that she has been selected as the candidate for the redrawn constituency of Glasgow North at the next general election. She has been an outstanding Member of this House, and I have every confidence that she will be returned at the next election to continue working with the same passion as she does now for her constituents, making the case for a fairer, greener, healthier, wealthier and independent Scotland. Only independence can truly deliver the change Scotland needs to tackle the cost of living crisis and the challenges that face the world today.

The cost of living—and the cost of energy in particular—is the single biggest issue affecting people in Glasgow North today. Although inflation rates are going down, that does not mean that prices are going down. Prices are still going up: mortgages and rents, food and grocery bills, car and home insurance and phone and internet costs are all higher today than they were under the previous Prime Minister last year, or indeed the Prime Minister before her. While every country in the world has had to deal with the consequences of the pandemic and with the conflict in Ukraine and elsewhere, only the UK has had to deal with the impact of Brexit—a Brexit that 78% of people in Glasgow North voted against, and that none of the Westminster parties is prepared to admit has been nothing short of disastrous.

There is nothing in today's announcements that deals with any of that. The Government could have announced more energy fuel rebates, mortgage interest rates relief or the kind of action on food prices that has been taken in Ireland. They could have put in place an essentials guarantee so that people definitely have enough to live on, or simply uprated universal credit in line with the recommendations of the United Nations' special rapporteur on extreme poverty. Instead, there is silence. That silence is echoed on the Front Bench of the official Opposition, who are so terrified of doing or saying anything that might frighten people who voted Conservative last time round that their position becomes almost indistinguishable from that of the Conservatives.

The Labour party used to pride itself on delivering devolution to Scotland—on the second attempt and 18 years late, mind you—but now, like the Conservative party, it seems to think that a kind of constitutional perfection has been reached and that Scotland's Parliament now has all the powers it will ever need to continue to be the best wee devolved Parliament in the entire universe. Even though the leader of the Labour party in Holyrood says that he would "love" for employment law to be devolved to Scotland—a power that was promised as part of the vows made to voters in 2014, and that would allow the Scottish Government to drive forward workers' rights and protections in Scotland—the position of the leader of the Labour party in Westminster is: "You'll have had your devolution, so that's the end of the matter." Neither side will devolve employment law, but yet again the King's Speech lacks an employment Bill, which could protect and enhance the rights of workers to fair hours, fair pay and fair treatment in the workplace. So, it will probably fall again to the arcane private Member's Bill system to try to take forward any improvements.

The same appears to be true for large areas of animal welfare. Scotland is a nation of animal lovers, and although the live animal exports Bill announced today is welcome, I hear regularly from constituents who want more action from the Government on puppy smuggling, trophy hunting and animal testing, all of which could be dealt with in a wider animal welfare Bill with the Government's backing. Yet once again, we are faced with a year of bits and pieces of ad hoc legislation, subject to the whim of Members in turning up on Fridays for private Members' Bills.

Not content with ignoring the welfare of animals, the Government seem determined to ignore the basic rights and dignity of some of the poorest and most vulnerable members of our society. Asylum seekers and refugees I

meet in Glasgow North have come here because they have fled conflict, persecution or natural disasters. They have not come just to seek work, but of course they want to be able to work. They do not want to be told that they have no recourse to public funds and to become destitute. They have valuable skills and experience, and they want to put them to use to earn money, pay for their own accommodation and pay taxes into the system rather than take resources out. However, the Tory Government want to do the opposite of that: they actively want to spend taxpayers' money to make it more difficult for asylum seekers to make a positive contribution to society and the economy.

Like other Members, the issue I have most heard about from my Glasgow North constituents in recent weeks is the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, and the need for an immediate ceasefire. I have received more than 700 such emails at the last count; many—if not most—are from constituents reaching out for the first time, appalled, horrified and sometimes even traumatised by what they are seeing on the news, especially those who have friends and family in the region. Thousands of completely innocent children have been killed—by some counts, one child for every 10 minutes of the conflict so far—and acts of what can only be described as collective punishment are being inflicted on people in Gaza by the Government of Israel. Likewise, there is no justification for the atrocities perpetrated by Hamas. Nor is there any excuse for antisemitism in any form. At the end of the day, a lasting settlement can only come about through negotiation and a willingness to come to agreement.

That is why a ceasefire, which means that everybody involved ceases firing, must be the start. That is not the position of the Prime Minister or the Leader of the Opposition, but it is the position of the UN Secretary-General, the UN General Assembly, the World Health Organisation, Oxfam, Amnesty International, Scotland's First Minister, His Holiness Pope Francis and the many, many Glasgow North constituents who have reached out. They also want aid convoys to be allowed in, people who want to leave to be able to do so, and then legitimate representatives to get round a table and work out a route to peace.

As Pope Paul VI said:

“peace is not simply the absence of warfare, based on a precarious balance of power; it is fashioned by efforts directed day after day toward the establishment of the ordered universe willed by God, with a more perfect form of justice among men”—

more succinctly: “if you want peace, you must work for justice.” The God that he spoke of is the God held to be true by Jews, Muslims and Christians alike—the God who teaches in their holy books that we should treat others as we ourselves wish to be treated. In that golden rule of reciprocity lies the route to peace in the middle east, and indeed to peace and justice around the world—in Afghanistan, in Ukraine, in Sudan and in so many other places.

We live in a world that is more turbulent and unstable than it seemed just eight years ago when many of my colleagues and I were elected to this place. Not all the challenges can be dealt with by a legislative programme announced from a throne in the House of Lords, but we have to consider how best to play our part. The Government's shameful cut to the aid budget diminished the UK's standing in the world and has done lasting

damage to countries and communities where programmes have been stopped or scaled back. The forthcoming White Paper might stabilise things, but it may not be enough, especially if other policies continue to go in the opposite direction.

The way to respond to the climate crisis and the challenge of the energy crisis is not to simply carry on as if nothing is happening. We have to wean ourselves off the oil and fossil fuels that are changing the planet's climate, and invest in clean, green, renewable energy from sources that Scotland has in abundance: wave, wind, and—though it may be hard to believe—solar. Investments that can use and develop the skills of our workforce and provide new, well-paying jobs for this and future generations. The petroleum licensing Bill announced today appears to do just the opposite.

At a time when we need to be looking outward, showing leadership on the world stage, the UK Tory Government—and, sadly, their wannabes in the official Opposition—are increasingly looking inward. The King's Speech is largely legislative navel-gazing, trying to cobble together interest and support from wherever it can be found in a desperate attempt to stay in power. If that speech, and the official Opposition's reaction to it, is literally the best that the UK can do, then the UK is frankly no longer fit for purpose.

Scotland can and must, and in the end will, do much better than this. Independence would give us the powers and opportunity to tackle the cost of living crisis at home and the climate crisis across the globe. It is time, as the late, great Winnie Ewing said, to stop the world, because Scotland wants to get on.

8.34 pm

Apsana Begum (Poplar and Limehouse) (Lab): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in this debate on the Humble Address. People in my constituency are alarmed and appalled at the disregard for Palestinian life that has been demonstrated widely in the recent period. It is therefore very concerning that the King's Speech did not include a commitment to securing a ceasefire on both sides in Gaza and the release of all hostages, along with a condemnation of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

This is not an abstract point; this is a live issue. The situation is urgent. Figures from Gaza indicate that over 10,000 Palestinian civilians have now died—over 10,000 in just 30 days—almost half of whom are children. According to Save the Children, the number of Palestinian children killed in Gaza by last week's figures has already surpassed the annual number of children killed across the world's conflict zones since 2019. Gaza, in the words of UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, is becoming a “graveyard for children”. It is beyond unacceptable that children are paying the ultimate price amidst the failure of political leaders in the US, the UK and Europe to call for an immediate ceasefire and oppose violations of international law.

Every hour, every day, the number of deaths gets higher and higher, and the reports and images of the impact of the military bombardment on refugee camps, hospitals and schools are simply horrifying. Nothing—nothing—can justify these crimes against humanity that we are witnessing in real time. Can the Government confirm why they seem to understand that killing thousands of children in response to the horrific killings and

[Apsana Begum]

hostage taking that included children on 7 October is either moral or in keeping with international law? Can the Government clarify why they support the collective punishment and killing of innocent civilians as a legitimate response to the killing of innocent civilians? Can the Government confirm whether any weapons traded from the UK have been used to kill any children or civilians? All lives should be valued and cherished—Israeli and Palestinian—yet the ongoing dehumanisation and collective punishment of Palestinian civilians will be marked as a terrible crime against humanity for years to come.

My constituents—multicultural, multiracial, from all faiths and none—would have liked the King's Speech to address the long-term situation for Palestine. I am receiving daily communications arguing that the UK Government must do far more to address human rights violations and illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the ongoing oppression of the Palestinian people and the forced evictions and dispossession. The King's Speech should have reflected a responsibility to follow through on an international commitment to uphold international law and do all we can to ensure a just and lasting peace based on justice and human rights.

I was also disappointed to see that the King's Speech did not indicate that the Government will finally recognise Islamophobia or take measures to address the soaring level of hate crimes against Muslims. Indeed, the King's Speech did not even mention that it is Islamophobia Awareness Month, and nor did the Prime Minister in his speech today.

I am currently facing death threats and a torrent of Islamophobic and misogynistic abuse. In fact, I have received such abuse since being elected and putting myself forward as a candidate for election. I have received comments including:

"vile and filthy religion... importing vile and filthy creatures like Apsana Begum".

The situation is escalating, not least exacerbated by those trying to capitalise on current events by spreading hate and division. I am now facing a heightened risk to my safety, with serious death threats, threats to kidnap me, threats of sexual violence and threats about ripping off my hijab in public; it goes on and on.

Following the murder of Jo Cox MP and of Sir David Amess MP, the Jo Cox Foundation has said:

"Abuse and intimidation of elected representatives, including violence towards them, is a growing threat to democracy."

It highlights that

"Abuse can make elected representatives feel they need to step down and put potential future candidates off standing altogether—with women, people from a minority ethnic background, and those with disabilities suffering a disproportionate level of this behaviour."

As we know, the problem is widespread and endemic. Every single day, people of Muslim backgrounds like me face discrimination and prejudice. The prevalence of negative stereotypes, harassment and hate crimes are only part of a whole structure of discrimination. Muslims are the most economically disadvantaged faith group in the UK, with some reports showing that half of British Muslims face poverty and deprivation. At the same time, we face institutionalised Islamophobia. Not only does the King's Speech fail to address the fact that Muslims live with a constant and persistent fear overshadowing

our lives, but it fails to address the role of Governments and politicians, even though the UN special rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief has reported that institutional suspicion and fear of Muslims has escalated to "epidemic proportions" and that "numerous" states, regional and international bodies are to blame. How does that relate to leaked Government documents about plans to clamp down on freedom of expression that could unjustly label organisations such as the Muslim Council of Britain as extremist?

In conclusion, I believe in human rights, equality and dignity for all. My constituents deserve more than a Government who think and act otherwise.

8.41 pm

Catherine West (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab): May I extend my thoughts to my hon. Friend the Member for Poplar and Limehouse (Apsana Begum), who has been targeted, particularly in the last, very difficult, month? It reminds me very much of what my right hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Dame Margaret Hodge) talked about as a Jewish MP when she was targeted. It seems to be even more intense for women MPs. I am grateful to the Speaker's Office and the Speaker's team, which have reached out more than once to MPs to re-engage with us over safety concerns. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Poplar and Limehouse has taken the practical measures that the House has put in place. The Speaker has been exceptional in introducing many new measures to help MPs at this critical time, when foreign policy is sensitive. Organisations such as Tell MAMA UK, which looks at the number of attacks on Muslims, and the Community Security Trust, which records the alarming rise and increase in attacks on the Jewish community, underline the importance of security, taking a record and making sure that we are as safe as we can possibly be.

The theme of security came up in the King's Speech, and I was pleased that the King mentioned the sensitive time that we are going through, as he has a record of interfaith work. One of the most helpful things I did during Prorogation was attend two synagogues in my constituency, where I took part in prayers for Israel. I also attended the London Islamic Cultural Society mosque in my constituency, as well as the interfaith group that meets every couple of months in the constituency, usually to discuss interfaith work, but in the context of the unfolding tragedy in Israel and Gaza, to talk about how we as a community can respond to the horror of the attacks that Hamas perpetrated in the south of Israel on 7 October, a month ago today, and the feelings of despair and sadness experienced by families whose loved ones are still in tunnels somewhere in Gaza, as well as the terrible television coverage and newspaper reports of the situation in Gaza. I think the *Financial Times* reported a week ago that people in Gaza were running out of shrouds in which to wrap the fatalities, and were having to build mass graves, which is a terrible moment for any humanitarian organisation.

I am pleased that tomorrow we will hear from the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell), who will update the House on the UK's role. It is good to see cross-party support for the UK's role in humanitarian action that can be taken to try to save lives, even at this most intense and difficult time.

I now turn to a domestic concern that I have arising from the King's Speech, and that is the housing question. Many Members have said in the debate this afternoon that the leasehold provisions do not go far enough, and I share those concerns. Since I was elected in 2015, I have had hundreds of emails from leaseholders about the lack of protection they feel with their housing tenure. I look forward to the Renters (Reform) Bill being amended in Committee to strengthen its provisions, so that leaseholders are not negatively affected financially in the coming years.

I want briefly to put on the record my concern about rough sleeping. In the last 24 hours, I have been approached by three beggars. One was on the Thameslink service, who has clearly had addiction issues; another was a 19-year-old girl who approached me at King's Cross St Pancras, who had obviously been assaulted and was sleeping rough, and she was begging for help, and money of course; and the third was an autistic man, who approached me once again asking for money. I do feel that begging and rough sleeping have got quite extreme in the last couple of months. Many people will have read the newspaper coverage about how the United Nations has underlined the growing inequality we have in the UK and the need for us to act with much more energy in addressing it.

The food bank in my constituency has just written to give me the update that, in the three hours it was open last week—it is open just once a week—there were 369 requests for food parcels. That figure has gone up enormously. We all hoped back in 2010 that food banks would be needed just for a brief moment while the economy righted itself following the global financial crash. Sadly, it has become business as usual to have all these food banks, and we all live to see a world without food banks.

I want briefly to mention other housing tenures. On the rented sector, a constituent wrote to me to say that their landlord had decided to increase the monthly rent from £1,470 to £1,720 overnight. In a further email, they told me:

"We originally thought we'd be able to buy our own property around this time but with current interest rates...we definitely can't afford it."

A year ago, we had the right hon. Member for South West Norfolk (Elizabeth Truss) as our Prime Minister, and unfortunately we still have not recovered financially from that period. A constituent in another rental property told me:

"My partner and I are looking to stay in our one-bedroom flat",

but the letting agent wants to put up the rent by £500 a month. They already pay £1,900, and this

"is absolutely crazy. We are very good tenants; we fix things ourselves and keep the property in an excellent condition".

Another constituent told me:

"I just wanted to say that today our rent was increased by 24%. The landlord's agent would not accept any negotiation. Our phone, utility, etc bills go up annually by the rate of inflation +4%. I've been a tenant here for 20 years."

That is obviously getting extremely serious.

Sadly, I have also noticed the impact on the high street in areas such as mine. Normally, a place such as Crouch End would be very vibrant, but I have noticed a number of high street shops closing just in the last two

months. What was once an area with a very vibrant village feel has one shop closing almost every two or three weeks, because people are so exposed to high mortgage payments and high rent payments that they are not able to keep the high street going. To give just one example, a constituent told me:

"Our mortgage has increased from £1,950 to £3,000 a month and this has clearly had a significant impact on our household income. I have had to reduce my monthly pension contributions and we have both changed our working hours to reduce our childcare costs. Such was the pressure on lenders that the deal took months to go through, which in itself was agonisingly stressful. We waited and watched on as mortgage deals were pulled left, right and centre, aware that if our deal had fallen through then we would have had to reapply at higher and higher rates. I note that if we were to switch at today's rates, our payments would be at least £3500 with further increases likely through to 2024. It's an absolute mess."

The final element I will talk about is the social housing sector—the other tenure we have in the borough. I want to put on the record what so many others have said: we are simply not building enough homes, and the supply of new homes needs to be addressed with urgency. Completions of new homes have dropped again this month, and we desperately need more supply so that we have somewhere to house the future generation. Constituents are writing to me saying that they have several children in a one-bedroom flat, and nowhere for their children to study. The impact on the education and mental health of my constituents is extreme.

Building new homes would provide opportunities. As a local authority leader in a previous life, we found that by building new homes we were able to have an excellent apprenticeship scheme. This seems to me a great opportunity for green jobs, for more training and skills development for engineers, for the construction industry to introduce insulation, and to introduce new homes that are more effective in terms of the environment. I hope that the Government will listen and get on with building those new homes, not just to alleviate the terrible overcrowding that we see, but to give people hope, a future and a sense of security.

8.51 pm

Anna McMorris (Cardiff North) (Lab): It is an honour to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Catherine West) and before that my hon. Friend the Member for Poplar and Limehouse (Apsana Begum), who spoke so vividly and importantly about the death threats and abuse that she faces, which no Member of Parliament should ever have to face.

We face difficult times with challenges at home and abroad. We need strong leadership and a clear plan to bring growth, stability and renewal back to our communities across the country. All the King's Speech shows us is gimmicks and division, with no plan for the future, letting families and hard-working people down. It is more of the same tired politics.

Day after day, my office and I get calls from increasingly desperate people. We have become overwhelmed with cries for help—a single mother who has been cut off from her child maintenance; a father who works full time but has been evicted, along with his family, because of rent hikes; a disabled pensioner suddenly finding that her support has been drastically cut. Just last week a constituent called, ready to take her own life. The Department for Work and Pensions was not responding

[Anna McMorris]

to her, and she had been passed from pillar to post. Things became too much to bear. It pains me to say this, but that was not a unique incident. Such calls to me or to my office are now commonplace and are the result of 13 years of Tory neglect. The Tories think that this King's Speech will put that right; it won't.

We need a Government who will restore economic stability and lift living standards. We need a Government who will make work pay, rebuild our public services, and invest in homegrown businesses and industries. We need to restore hope in our politics, and that is what Labour will do.

With the backdrop of the worst energy bill crisis in a generation, one of the wettest summers on record, and storms and floods ravaging our communities, the world is facing a climate crisis. This Government have used the King's Speech to announce legislation to award new oil and gas licences annually, claiming that it will ensure energy security when, in reality, it just increases our reliance on fossil fuels, pushing us further into dependency. That is the same dependency that caused the worst cost of living crisis in almost a hundred years. The worst bit is that this Government openly admitted just yesterday that these measures will not cut energy bills by a single penny. If this Government have ever tried to bring down energy bills for British families, it is safe to say that they have now given up.

Instead, the Government choose to hand billions of taxpayer subsidies to the oil and gas companies that are already making eye-watering profits, continuing to undermine our energy security and to contribute to the climate catastrophe—a catastrophe made significant worse by the Government refusing to reappoint a Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office special representative for climate change after they scrapped the role. Labour will put that right, and we will put investment in renewables at the heart of our growth plan, creating jobs for the future and ensuring that profits from oil and gas giants go straight into the pockets of those who need them.

I am proud of my Cardiff North constituency for its commitment to the fight climate change. Just this week, I supported the Coed Caerdydd project and planted trees in a bid to make Cardiff a carbon-neutral city by 2030. In the summer, as part of the Keep Wales Tidy campaign, our local community launched the Llanishen litter-pickers group. They meet every Saturday of the month, and we can see the difference that their dedication makes. Incredible local, family-run businesses Iechyd Da and Siop Sero are committed to reducing waste, setting an example of local, climate and environmental leadership. Let us be clear, however, that the climate crisis and cost of living crisis go hand in hand, and we cannot consider one without the other. It is a very real crisis as we enter these cold winter months.

My constituent Emily lives alone and was forced to leave work due to mental health difficulties. In her own words, she said:

"I am unable to put the heating on due to being in debt. I can't do a food shop anymore. I buy food when I can. Which is hardly ever. I'm in debt with pretty much every bill I have coming out."

She is in debt because of household bills for the essentials of daily life. I am proud that Cardiff Council and the Welsh Labour Government stepped up when the Tory Government did not and created Cardiff Money Advice, offering free advice in hubs across the city. It offers a warm, comfortable place to go for support and to have a hot drink.

Where in this King's Speech is the support for victims? Yes, we have the Victims and Prisoners Bill coming, but in terms of violence against women and girls, just two in 100 rapes last year resulted in someone being charged, let alone convicted. How is any rape survivor in this country supposed to feel anything but neglected? The very system set up to protect them is letting perpetrators off scot-free, while they are denied the support and protection they desperately need. They are simply an afterthought, alone and unsupported, like many across the country right now faced with a Government who have frankly given up on governing—a Government who have used this King's Speech to pull political stunts instead of bringing the meaningful change that only Labour can deliver.

Before I finish, I will touch on the international events we are seeing unfold. I normally speak from the Front Bench on these matters, but I feel it is important to say a few words as a constituency MP representing my constituents of Cardiff North.

In the conflict in Ukraine, we stand wholeheartedly with Ukraine against Putin's illegal invasion. Also, just one month ago, Hamas's horrific, brutal terror attacks on innocent Israelis and Jews shocked me and all of us to our core. Like many, I am horrified by the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe, violence and devastation that is impacting many thousands of innocent people—including women and children—in Gaza. Our priority must be to protect innocent civilians, to ensure that food, water and support reaches them, and to ensure that international law is upheld.

I have reached out to the Jewish and Muslim communities in my constituency to ensure that we do not allow these events to divide us, and that any hate—Islamophobia or antisemitism—is called out. I am proud that Wales is a country that welcomes those of all faiths, all cultures and all backgrounds. We must ensure that it stays like that. The only solution to the crisis is a peaceful and political one: a two-state solution that recognises both a secure Israel and a Palestine where Palestinians live freely. That leadership must come from all of us. At a time of great vulnerability in the world, it is important that we all show that leadership. I know that Cardiff North stands with those seeking that peaceful, diplomatic solution. We must work together to achieve that long-term solution; we must not allow these tragic events to divide us.

Ordered, That the debate be now adjourned.—
(Fay Jones.)

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

Dangerous Driving: Unduly Lenient Sentence Scheme

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(Fay Jones.)

9.2 pm

James Wild (North West Norfolk) (Con): On the evening of 15 January this year, Paul Carter, his wife Lisa, and Jade Mace—Lisa's daughter from her first marriage—were killed when Aurelijus Cielevicius crashed his car into theirs. Three innocent lives were ended. I stand here this evening to speak on behalf of my constituent Summer Mace, who lost her mum, sister and stepfather on that awful evening, and her family and friends who provided 28 victim personal statements to the court.

I have met Summer and her father, and heard just a little bit about the terrible impact that this crime has had on them and their wider family and friends. The facts of the case are shocking. The offender's speed was so excessive that when he passed a police officer in a marked police vehicle in a layby, the officer was unable to note the registration number. Prior to the crash, he went through two red lights, almost causing another collision, and crossed solid white no-overtaking lines on multiple occasions. Other motorists on the road that night said that he was travelling at speeds of 100 mph and struggling to stay in control of the vehicle, including when the crash happened, where he was on the wrong side of the road and unable to get back to the left-hand lane. All of that was while he was on a cocktail of drugs, including being 15 times over the limit after taking crystal meth, and with high levels of cannabis in his system.

The family told me that CCTV shows Cielevicius driving through red lights with blue lights visible in the background, although the judge did not accept that he knew he was being followed by the police at the time of the crash. The collision investigator estimates that when the driver crashed into the other vehicle head-on, killing Paul, Lisa, and Jade, he was travelling at 91 mph. He was only slightly injured. On 20 June, Cielevicius was convicted of three counts of causing death by dangerous driving. It is unacceptable that, after a guilty plea was taken into account, this offender was sentenced to only 10 and a half years for killing three people.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I commend the hon. Gentleman for securing this debate. The hon. Gentleman mentioned that this person was under the influence of drugs. My question is probably one for the Minister, through the hon. Gentleman. Although the Government place great emphasis on tackling those who are over the limit for alcohol, perhaps they do not place the same emphasis on drugs. In my constituency, the availability of drugs seems to be growing by the day. With that in mind, does the hon. Gentleman believe that the Government and the police need to place greater emphasis on testing and catching drivers who are under the influence of drugs, thereby reducing accidents?

James Wild: I completely agree with the hon. Gentleman. We are all familiar with the annual Christmas drink-driving campaigns and other campaigns throughout the year, and I think Norfolk Constabulary has also done some

drug-testing campaigns. I encourage other police forces to do the same, because it is not just about alcohol; it is also about drugs, as in this case.

The primary purpose of tonight's debate is to highlight the serious issues raised by this case with sentencing and the unduly lenient sentence scheme, as well as to propose some changes to the criminal justice system. In the Government's Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, Parliament legislated to increase the maximum sentence for this offence from 14 years to life imprisonment. We did that to reflect the devastation that such crimes inflict. As Summer wrote in a petition calling for change in our criminal justice system:

"My family were given a life sentence the day that man killed my loved ones. A life sentence that I will never be released from. On 15th January, he killed our future lives, thoughts and hopes—as we have none without them."

Summer and her family cannot understand why the life sentence they have been dealt has not been imposed on this offender. The petition that Summer organised has been signed by over 13,000 people, and the family are working alongside other families and charities such as RoadPeace, with its "Fix our Broken Justice System" campaign, to try to make a difference.

Sarah Dyke (Somerton and Frome) (LD): I thank the hon. Member for securing this important debate. In my constituency of Somerton and Frome, we were recently shocked by the tragic deaths of two young sisters, Liberty and Madison, who were killed as they drove on the A361 bypass near Frome. They were killed because speed limits were ignored, on a road that has seen many traffic accidents in recent years. Does he agree that our road traffic laws are failing, and that the victims of criminal driving and their families need confidence that our legal system will deliver justice?

James Wild: We increased the maximum sentence for this crime to life imprisonment precisely to try to address those concerns. I now want to come to whether the system is actually working, in the sense that courts are imposing the sentences that this Parliament has legislated for.

The judge classed this as a level 1 case—the most serious—owing to a prolonged, persistent and deliberate course of very bad driving. In her sentencing remarks, she highlighted the following aggravating factors: three people were killed; there was greatly excessive speed; the driver knew he was deprived of sufficient sleep; he had consumed drugs above the legal limit—there was a cocktail of drugs in his system; he had previous convictions for motoring offences—driving while disqualified, driving with excess alcohol and two counts of driving with no insurance; and he was on police bail for a driving offence at the time and in breach of curfew conditions. There were six aggravating factors, yet the judge went on to state that a sentence after a trial would have been 14 years, when the maximum sentence legislated for by this Parliament is life imprisonment.

The simple question that many people have is: why? A particular concern in this case is the timeliness of sentencing guidelines. From June 2022, the maximum penalty for causing death by dangerous driving was increased to life imprisonment, as I have mentioned, yet it was not until 1 July 2023 that new sentencing guidelines took effect. How and why can there be such a gap? As it

[James Wild]

happens, new guidelines were published on 15 June 2023, before the judge passed her sentence, but they were not in effect. They increased the starting point for a level 1 offence from eight years in custody to 12 years, with a range of eight to 18 years.

Furthermore, the Solicitor General, my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid Dorset and North Poole (Michael Tomlinson) personally argued, in the Luis Balcazar Soto case in the Court of Appeal in 2022, that pending the new sentencing guidelines, judges should increase sentences imposed for the most serious such offences to reflect the increase in the maximum sentence legislated for by this House. Having read the judgment carefully and the starting point selected, I do not consider that that is what happened in this case, when three people were killed.

My constituents also questioned the approach to concurrent sentences. The totality guidelines state that where more than one death is caused and they are charged in separate counts, as happened in this case, sentences reflecting the overall criminality would be appropriate, and to ensure that sentences are “just and proportionate”. Again, it is difficult to accept that that happened in this case, where a single concurrent sentence was given.

The sentence was referred to the Attorney General on behalf of the family. However, my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor General, acting on her behalf, declined to refer the matter to the Court of Appeal under the unduly lenient sentence scheme. In the response to the family, he stated that the judge characterised the offence accurately and identified the correct starting point. The question the family have is this: what further aggravating factors would justify a higher sentence and a referral?

A particular source of anger, and the reason the family lack confidence in the review, is that the letter explaining why the sentence would not be referred talks about the judge as a he, when in fact the judge was a she. It is perhaps not surprising that, as a result, my constituents, who suffered this very traumatic experience, are concerned that their case was not looked at properly. Can my hon. and learned Friend assure my constituents that it was carefully considered, and tell them whether experienced King’s Counsel provided advice on the case, having reviewed the judgment? My constituents have a specific request for my hon. and learned Friend. Will he agree to meet me and the family to explain those reasons directly to them in more detail?

Sadly, this case is not unique and RoadPeace has highlighted the cases of four families, including Summer’s, and the fact that no one has yet received a life sentence for this crime. As well as the contributions this evening, a number of other hon. and right hon. Members approached me in the House today, once it was known that this debate was taking place, to highlight similar cases in their constituencies where inadequate sentences were imposed.

Nothing will bring back Lisa Carter, Paul Carter or Jade Mace, but their families are committed to helping make changes to prevent other families from experiencing the nightmare that they have. They have identified four principal areas where action is needed to put the rights of victims and their bereaved families ahead of offenders.

First, the family want a thorough review of all the evidence related to this case, as, as I have explained, they do not consider it was properly reviewed. To that end, I hope my hon. and learned Friend will agree to meet the family to explain in greater detail how the case was considered and how the unduly lenient sentence test is applied.

Secondly, the family call for longer sentences. Parliament legislated for a maximum sentence of life imprisonment for the most serious cases. Given that, it is essential that the appropriateness of the sentencing guidelines for this offence are reviewed. How can it be right that someone who kills three people in such terrible circumstances could be out of prison in just seven and a half years? That is two and a half years each for the lives of Lisa, Paul and Jade. The guidelines need to be revised in line with Parliament’s intent to ensure that longer sentences are imposed. If the unduly lenient scheme threshold is set too cautiously, it should also be looked at to help inspire public confidence.

Thirdly, the bail system should be improved. As I mentioned, at the time of the crash, the offender was on bail for a driving offence and subject to a curfew, but tagging is not available for police bail, so when he broke the curfew, no one knew. If he had been tagged, it is possible that this appalling crime may have been prevented. One of the changes my constituents and all those who signed the petition want to see is curfews controlled—for example, with a tag—and stricter sanctions for failure to comply with bail conditions. This is a simple, common-sense reform to make our bail system more robust, and I hope the Government will take it forward.

Fourthly, to ordinary people it is offensive that multiple lives can be taken but concurrent rather than consecutive sentences imposed. Again, consideration should be given for the totality sentencing guidelines to be reviewed for offenders convicted of multiple deaths simultaneously, so that there is a shift towards imposing consecutive sentences.

Finally, thousands of people have signed another petition supporting a lifetime driving ban for people who are convicted of causing death by dangerous driving. In this case, a ban for a period of eight years was considered appropriate, extended to 15 years to take account of the time that the offender will be in prison. The courts have the powers to impose lifetime bans, and RoadPeace is campaigning for them to be applied. The Government should consider whether it should become a mandatory element in some cases, because driving is a privilege and not a right.

I recognise that a number of the issues I have raised fall to other Ministers and other Departments, and I seek the assistance of my hon. and learned Friend in ensuring that the points I have made are followed up after the debate, in writing and also through meetings. There is an opportunity—through the criminal justice and sentencing Bills announced in the King’s Speech, and through the power of the Lord Chancellor to request reviews of sentencing guidelines—to ensure that tougher sentences are imposed and served. That is what our constituents want, and what they expect.

For this family the nightmare will not end, but by making changes we can try to prevent others from suffering it. This debate is part of the process of putting forward those changes.

9.15 pm

The Solicitor General (Michael Tomlinson): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for North West Norfolk (James Wild) for securing this important debate. Dangerous driving, especially when it results in death or injury, is a most serious offence, which is rightly condemned by all in this House. I know how seriously my hon. Friend takes the issue, and I am grateful to him for his engagement in this matter. I thank him particularly for raising the case of his constituents Paul and Lisa Carter and Lisa's daughter, Jade Mace. He set out his case very clearly, with passion and with compassion. I offer my sincere condolences and pay tribute to what is clearly a close-knit and loving family, and particularly to Summer, who lost her mother, sister and stepfather in this incident. Their pain and suffering are unimaginable. As the learned judge rightly said at the sentencing hearing:

"nothing I say [nor] any sentence I pass can make up for the loss of three lives or assuage the grief of their loved ones."

I will turn to my hon. Friend's specific points in a moment, but let me start by setting out some general principles of the scheme to which he rightly referred, the unduly lenient sentence scheme. In exercising my function of reviewing sentences under the ULS scheme, I act quasi-judicially. My role, and that of the Attorney General, is to act as a guardian of the public interest. I share my hon. Friend's desire to ensure that those responsible for terrible crimes are properly punished, and it must be said that in the vast majority of cases, sentencing judges get it right. They deal with a range of cases that vary in complexity and severity, and I take this opportunity to commend them for their work.

Let me put that into context. Of more than 91,000 cases dealt with in the Crown court in 2022, more than 1,100 were referred to the Attorney General's Office, of which 819 were eligible for the ULS scheme. Of those, 139 were referred to the Court of Appeal, which granted leave to refer in 77% of them. Those statistics have been published on the Attorney General's website.

The ULS scheme promotes justice, fairness and consistency. It allows sentences which are unduly lenient to be increased, and it is there to correct an error when the judge gets it wrong. It is important to note, however, that it does not apply to sentences that are simply lenient. As the Court of Appeal has said repeatedly,

"sentencing is an art rather than a science...leniency is not in itself a vice. That mercy should season justice is a proposition as soundly based in law as it is in literature."

The test of undue leniency is a high one. Parliament rightly intended that the Court of Appeal would grant permission to refer a sentence only in exceptional circumstances: for example, if the judge has passed a sentence that falls outside the range of sentences which a judge could properly consider appropriate, or if there has been some gross error in law or principle.

I turn now to the specific offence of causing death by dangerous driving. As my hon. Friend said, the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 came into force on 28 June that year, and I know he welcomed it. When it did, there were two significant changes to the law. The first was the increase in the maximum penalty from 14 years to life imprisonment and, as the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) noted, this is not just for those under the influence of drink; it also for those under the influence of drugs. I am grateful to him for

making that point. The second change relates to the minimum disqualification periods. The Government changed the law to increase both the maximum period of imprisonment and the minimum driver disqualification period for those who commit the most serious road traffic offences, ensuring that they are kept off our roads for a longer period.

My hon. Friend the Member for North West Norfolk mentioned the sentencing guidelines, and I shall turn specifically to that now. He is right to say that the revised sentencing guidelines came into force on 1 July 2023. Between 28 June 2022 and 1 July 2023, the courts were obliged to look to the old guidelines, but as a result of the Court of Appeal case in which I appeared in the Court of Appeal, the court provided judges with guidance on how to sentence those cases in the in-between period. Judges were encouraged to apply an uplift to the provisional sentence identified, to reflect the increase in the maximum penalty. I emphasise that that happened in this case and that the learned judge specifically referred to the Court of Appeal case of Waite and Balcasar Soto. I pay tribute to the work of the independent Sentencing Council for its development of the guidelines. I understand my hon. Friend's point about timing. He is right that this has taken a long time, but it is inevitable that it will take time for guidelines to be produced following an appropriate consultation, as happened here. In the meantime, the Court of Appeal can give guidance, as also happened here.

On totality, my hon. Friend mentioned concurrent sentences. Judges must consider the totality of offending when sentencing for more than one offence. The totality guidelines have also been revised, and the revised guidelines came into force on 1 July 2023. The overriding principle of totality is that the overall sentence should reflect all the offending behaviour and that it should be just and proportionate. In relation to the sentence for the offence of causing death by dangerous driving, the starting points and category ranges relate to a single offence resulting in a single death. Where more than one person is killed, that will of course aggravate the seriousness of the offence because of the increase in harm. However, where more than one death is caused and they are charged on separate counts, concurrent sentences reflecting the overall criminality are appropriate where the offending or the harm arises out of a single incident, but there will be an increase in the sentence to reflect the increased harm. I note the points that my hon. Friend has made.

Let me turn to my hon. Friend's other points on life sentences. Causing death by dangerous driving is a specified offence for the purposes of sentencing. This means that a judge can impose a discretionary life sentence, or an extended sentence if they determine that the offender is what is known as a dangerous offender. A dangerous offender is someone who poses a significant risk of causing serious harm to members of the public. An extended sentence consists of a custodial term that reflects the seriousness of the offending, followed by an extended licence period, which is determined on the basis of what the court considers necessary for the purpose of protecting members of the public. This means that, unlike under a determinate sentence, the offender is not automatically released at the halfway or two-thirds point of the sentence. It means that they can apply for parole after they have served two thirds of their sentence, and will be released only if the Parole Board determines that they are no longer a danger to the public. They must of

[The Solicitor General]

course be released at the end of the custodial period, but they will remain on licence until the expiry of the extended period. The learned judge in this case explained that very process in her sentencing remarks.

I offer my sincere apologies to the family for the fact that my letter to them referred to the judge incorrectly. My hon. Friend is absolutely right to raise that point. It was an error, it was my error, and I apologise. However, the case was carefully considered. They all are, but perhaps especially those involving such tragic consequences, and especially so given that my hon. Friend specifically brought this case to my attention.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for securing this debate. The ULS scheme is not a mystery, and neither should it be, but it is not often that we have the opportunity to debate the scheme in detail, as we have this evening. I am grateful to him for providing that opportunity. He specifically requested that I meet him and the family and, yes, of course I will.

I close by commending the family once more for their bravery in raising this case and for their determination to ensure that other families do not suffer as they have.

Question put and agreed to.

9.25 pm

House adjourned.

Petitions

Tuesday 7 November 2023

OBSERVATIONS

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Travel costs support for young cancer patients

The petition of residents of the United Kingdom,

Declares that more needs to be done to support young cancer patients and their families with the cost of travel to receive treatment; that it is unacceptable that they are going into debt, struggling to pay their bills, and missing or delaying treatment as a result; and that the current support available is proving inadequate in covering these travel costs.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urge the Government to take immediate action to ensure all young cancer patients are provided with a Young Cancer Patient Travel Fund, which is easily and universally accessible from the point of diagnosis and throughout the duration of their cancer treatment.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Amy Callaghan, *Official Report*, 19 September 2023; Vol. 737, c. 1330.]

[P002852]

Observations from the Minister for Health and Secondary Care (Will Quince):

The Government recognise that the cost of travel should not be a barrier to treatment. NHS England and integrated care boards are responsible for commissioning and ensuring that the healthcare needs of local communities are met. The NHS runs schemes to provide financial assistance for travel to a hospital or other NHS premises for specialist NHS treatment or diagnostics tests when referred by a doctor or other primary healthcare professional.

The Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme (HTCS) provides financial assistance to patients who do not have a medical need for transport but who require assistance with the costs of travelling to receive certain NHS services.

Patients can claim help with travel costs if they or their partner—including civil partner—receive any of the following benefits:

- Income support
- Income-based jobseeker's allowance
- Income-related employment and support allowance
- Pension credit guarantee credit
- You receive universal credit and meet the criteria

Patients can also claim for help with travel costs if:

They are named on, or entitled to, an NHS tax credit exemption certificate—if you do not have a certificate, you can show your award notice—you qualify if you get child tax credits, working tax credits with a disability element—or both, and have income for tax credit purposes of £15,276 or less;

They have a low income and are named on certificate HC2 full help, or HC3 limited help—you can apply for these certificates through the NHS low income scheme, which

provides help with NHS costs. You can apply for this scheme if your savings, investments or property—not including where you live—does not exceed the capital limit of £16,000.

Help for children and dependants is also available through this scheme and, if they are eligible, can be reimbursed in part or in full for costs incurred in travelling to receive certain NHS services.

Children and dependants are eligible if they receive a qualifying benefit, or if they are included in an award of a parent or guardian receiving one of the qualifying benefits. They can also be reimbursed if their parent or guardian qualifies for the NHS low income scheme. Young people aged 16 or over can make their own claim under the low income scheme.

Patients who do not qualify for the HTCS and are on low incomes may be able to claim the costs from the Department for Work and Pensions through universal credit or personal independence payment.

Patients should discuss with their local NHS provider if they are unsure how to claim costs, or contact the NHS Business Services Authority online or by calling 0300 330 1343.

TRANSPORT

Bescot Stadium station disabled access

The petition of the residents of the United Kingdom,

Declares that Bescot Stadium Station is used by travellers with disabilities and travellers with prams; notes that the Bescot Stadium Station served over 90,000 passengers between 2021 and 2022; further declares that passengers can only access the platforms via stairs to a footbridge without any accessible route from the platforms to the station car park other than the stairs; declares that Perry Barr and Witton Station, on the same line, have been upgraded for the Commonwealth Games making them accessible.

The petitioners therefore request the House of Commons to urge the Government to recognise the need for lifts at Bescot Stadium Station to make it accessible and to work with the appropriate body such as Network Rail.—[Presented by Valerie Vaz, *Official Report*, 24 October 2023; Vol. 738, c. 803.]

[P002863]

Observations from the Minister of State, Department for Transport (Huw Merriman):

The Government are actively improving accessibility at stations through the Access for All programme. By the end of 2024, the programme is forecast to have delivered step-free accessible routes at over 300 stations across Britain. We recently closed the nomination period for the next round of stations to receive Access for All funding from April 2024, and I expect to announce successful projects next year.

On this occasion local authorities and West Midlands Railway did not submit a nomination for Bescot Stadium station. I would encourage residents to engage with the local authority and West Midlands Railway to ensure the station is nominated for any future rounds of Access for All.

Over £60 million has been invested in the west midlands to enhance the legacy of the brilliant Commonwealth games hosted last year. The fund aims to increase access to sport and culture, boost the west midlands' reputation as a world-class host for major events and drive inwards

investment and tourism. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport is working with West Midlands Combined Authority and Birmingham City Council to capitalise on the success of the games and help more people engage with sport and culture in the region. More information on the details of this funding will be available in due course.

Beyond existing centrally funded schemes, the Government believe that local authorities are best placed to decide on, and take forward, local transport schemes in their areas. I would therefore recommend engaging with both the local authority and the rail industry to share the proposals with them, and to learn if there are other plans to improve accessibility at Bescot Stadium station.

I am grateful to the right hon. Member for Walsall South (Valerie Vaz) for meeting with me in July to discuss this matter. As promised, I have contacted Ian McConnell, managing director of West Midlands Trains, and asked him to contact her office to discuss the matters raised with me.

In the meantime, the Department will continue to seek further opportunities to improve rail accessibility.

Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange

The petition of residents of the constituency of South Leicestershire,

Declares that the construction of the Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange goes against wishes of some constituents in South Leicestershire, further notes the potential detrimental impact it may have on the local environment, infrastructure, and surrounding communities.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urge the Government to take into account the concerns of the petitioners and take immediate action to ensure that the Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange is not built.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Alberto Costa, *Official Report*, 17 October 2023; Vol. 738, c. 294.]

[P002843]

Observations from the Minister of State, Department for Transport (Huw Merriman):

This scheme is subject to an application for a development consent order that was submitted on 17 March 2023 by Tritax Symmetry (Hinckley) Ltd to the Planning Inspectorate, and was accepted for examination on 13 April 2023. The examination opened on 12 September 2023 and is currently due to close on 12 March 2024.

We would encourage you and your constituents to participate in the examination and raise all concerns with the Planning Inspectorate directly to ensure that they are fully accounted for.

Once the examination closes, there is a period of three months for a report and recommendation to be prepared and submitted to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State will then have a period of three months in which to make a decision on whether to grant or refuse development consent.

As my Department will be deciding this application, it would not be appropriate for me to comment on the merits of the project at this stage.

Parked vehicles and emergencies

The petition of residents of Galgate,

Declares that recently a fire alarm went off at Ellel St John's Primary school; further declares that during the fire alarm, fire services were unable to access Chapel Lane as vehicles were parked in a way which did not allow access; notes that on this occasion it was a false alarm but in a real emergency this blockage could have prevented fire services from reaching the school in time.

The petitioners therefore urge the House of Commons to urge the Department to raise this issue with Lancashire County Council in order to prevent this incident from happening again.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Cat Smith, *Official Report*, 17 October 2023; Vol. 738, c. 295.]

[P002861]

Observations from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr Richard Holden):

Local authorities have a duty, under section 122 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, to exercise their functions under the Act to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of traffic—including pedestrians.

Responsibility for traffic management on local roads within Lancashire rests with Lancashire County Council, which is best placed to consider how local needs can be effectively met. It is entirely a matter for Lancashire County Council to decide on the nature and scope of parking policies, and to balance the needs of residents, emergency services, local businesses and those who work in and visit the areas.

Where problems occur, the Department for Transport looks to local authorities to use their traffic management powers under the 1984 Act to make traffic regulation orders to implement appropriate traffic management measures, such as the provision of parking spaces, residential parking schemes or other parking controls to balance the supply and demand for road space in the light of local needs.

Lancashire County Council has taken civil parking enforcement powers and is able to enforce parking restrictions in Galgate.

Ministerial Corrections

Tuesday 7 November 2023

TRANSPORT

Topical Questions

The following is an extract from Transport questions on 26 October 2023.

Liz Twist (Blaydon) (Lab): The huge importance of local bus services to communities such as mine in Blaydon has been emphasised by a dispute between Go North East and its employees. I very much hope that a negotiated settlement can be reached quickly. Is not the reality that we need better, more streamlined franchising models to give communities a greater say on their transport offer?

Mr Holden: I am sure the hon. Lady, my neighbour, welcomed the news yesterday evening that Go North East and Unite the union have managed to reach a settlement in the north-east. That is quite good news. I am sure she will also welcome the £163.5 million that we have put into bus service improvement plans, which include the option to do bus franchising. This Government have been happy to make that available to all local authorities.

[Official Report, 26 October 2023, Vol. 738, c. 968.]

Letter of correction from the Under-Secretary of State for Transport, the hon. Member for North West Durham (Mr Holden):

An error has been identified in my response to the hon. Member for Blaydon (Liz Twist) in Transport questions. The correct response should have been:

Mr Holden: I am sure the hon. Lady, my neighbour, **will, like me, welcome the details of the new offer from Go North East to Unite. It is good news and I hope that it will lead to a settlement.** I am sure she will also welcome the £163.5 million that we have put into bus service improvement plans, which include the option to do bus franchising. This Government have been happy to make that available to all local authorities.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Baby Loss Awareness Week

The following is an extract from the Backbench Business debate on Baby Loss Awareness Week on 19 October 2023.

Maria Caulfield: We announced in July that we would be rolling out baby loss certificates. They will be retrospective. There is no time limit on applying for them.

[Official Report, 19 October 2023, Vol. 738, c. 472.]

Letter of correction from the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, the hon. Member for Lewes (Maria Caulfield):

An error has been identified in my response to the debate on Baby Loss Awareness Week. The correct information is as follows:

Maria Caulfield: We announced in July that we would be rolling out baby loss certificates. They will be retrospective. **Initially, only those who have experienced a loss since 1 September 2018 and are currently living in England will be eligible to apply for them.**

Training of NHS Staff

The following is an extract from Health and Social Care questions on 17 October 2023.

Theo Clarke: What steps are the Government taking to increase the recruitment of midwives, given the closure of Stafford County Hospital's freestanding midwifery birthing unit due to shortages, and how is the Secretary of State going to ensure that all midwives are trained to deal with birth injuries to reduce risk?

Steve Barclay: My hon. Friend raises an important point, and I know she has secured a debate in the House this week to further explore these issues. She will be aware that there has been a 13% increase in the number of midwifery programme place starters since two years ago. That is alongside the £165 million added to the maternity budget since 2021 and the key increase in midwifery places in the long-term workforce plan.

[Official Report, 17 October 2023, Vol. 738, c. 145.]

Letter of correction from the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, the right hon. Member for North East Cambridgeshire (Steve Barclay):

An error has been identified in my response to my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Theo Clarke). The correct response should have been:

Steve Barclay: My hon. Friend raises an important point, and I know she has secured a debate in the House this week to further explore these issues. She will be aware that **the long-term workforce plan anticipates** a 13% increase in the number of midwifery programme place starters since two years ago. That is alongside the £165 million added to the maternity budget since 2021 and the key increase in midwifery places in the long-term workforce plan.

CABINET OFFICE

Environmentally Sustainable Transport

The following is an extract from Cabinet Office questions on 7 September 2023.

Mr Sheerman: Will this team wake up? They have huge potential in the Cabinet Office to influence every Department of State. From my perspective, as a passionate supporter of sustainable transport and particularly the revolution that is coming in hydrogen power, I see an inert Department not pushing other Departments to do better. Could they wake up and do something about this?

Alex Burghart: I can think of nothing nicer than being woken up by the hon. Gentleman. I can reassure him that we do encourage our colleagues in other Departments to go further on this. We have a range of carbon offsetting programmes in place and, as I say, our location strategy means that we try to locate people near public transport hubs. This is the very essence of a green transport strategy.

[Official Report, 7 September 2023, Vol. 737, c. 532.]

Letter of correction from the Parliamentary Secretary in the Cabinet Office, the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Alex Burghart):

An error has been identified in my response to the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr Sheerman) during Cabinet Office questions. The correct response should have been:

Alex Burghart: I can think of nothing nicer than being woken up by the hon. Gentleman. I can reassure him that we do encourage our colleagues in other Departments to go further on this. We have **one carbon offsetting programme** in place and, as I say, our location strategy means that we try to locate people near public transport hubs. This is the very essence of a green transport strategy.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

LGBT People

The following is an extract from Women and Equalities questions on 25 October 2023.

Anneliese Dodds: I would therefore counsel the Minister to advise his colleagues to stop briefing the press on these issues and get on with delivering, because there are failures when it comes to delivery for LGBT+ people. Yesterday I met Michael Smith, who was viciously attacked at a bus stop simply for being with his partner. Police-recorded sexual orientation hate crime has increased by more than 70% in the last five years, and more than a third of all hate crimes are now “violence against the person” offences. I know that the Minister cares deeply about this subject, so can he please explain why his Government do not agree with Labour or with the Law Commission that every violent act of hatred should be punished in the same way—as an aggravated offence?

Stuart Andrew: Let me say to the hon. Lady that as someone who was hospitalised after being attacked because of my sexuality, I know how difficult that is. It is not just the attack that is painful but what is left afterwards.

I will continue to raise each of these issues, but I want to make this point. I keep hearing that we do not care about LGBT issues. It was this Government who introduced same-sex marriage, and it was this Government who introduced it in Northern Ireland. It was this Government who introduced Turing’s law in 2017. We have modernised gender recognition certificates and made them affordable. We have removed self-funding for fertility treatment for same sex-couples, lifted the ban on blood donation, and tackled LGBT-related bullying in schools. We have apologised for the way in which LGBT people were treated in the armed forces, and we have provided funding to ensure that LGBT rights across the Commonwealth are protected.

[Official Report, 25 October 2023, Vol. 738, c. 818.]

Letter of correction from the Minister for Equalities, the right hon. Member for Pudsey (Stuart Andrew):

An error has been identified in my response to the hon. Member for Oxford East (Anneliese Dodds) in Women and Equalities questions. The response should have been:

Stuart Andrew: Let me say to the hon. Lady that as someone who was hospitalised after being attacked because of my sexuality, I know how difficult that is. It is not just the attack that is painful but what is left afterwards.

I will continue to raise each of these issues, but I want to make this point. I keep hearing that we do not care about LGBT issues. It was this Government who introduced same-sex marriage, and it was this Government who introduced it in Northern Ireland. It was this Government who introduced Turing’s law in 2017. We have modernised gender recognition certificates and made them affordable. We have removed self-funding for fertility treatment for same sex-couples, **approved a change in blood donation criteria that allowed more men who have sex with men to donate**, and tackled LGBT-related bullying in schools. We have apologised for the way in which LGBT people were treated in the armed forces, and we have provided funding to ensure that LGBT rights across the Commonwealth are protected.

PETITIONS

Tuesday 7 November 2023

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	1P	TRANSPORT — <i>continued</i>	
Travel costs support for young cancer patients	1P	Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange	3P
TRANSPORT	2P	Parked vehicles and emergencies	4P
Bescot Stadium station disabled access	2P		

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

Tuesday 7 November 2023

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
CABINET OFFICE	2MC	TRANSPORT	1MC
Environmentally Sustainable Transport	2MC	Topical Questions	1MC
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	1MC	WOMEN AND EQUALITIES	3MC
Baby Loss Awareness Week	1MC	LGBT People	3MC
Training of NHS Staff	2MC		

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**not later than
Tuesday 14 November 2023**

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