

**Friday
22 March 2024**

**Volume 747
No. 72**



**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

Friday 22 March 2024

House of Commons

Friday 22 March 2024

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

The Chairman of Ways and Means took the Chair as Deputy Speaker (Standing Order No. 3).

Jonathan Gullis (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Con): I beg to move, That the House sit in private.

Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 163) and negatived.

Hunting Trophies (Import Prohibition) Bill

Second Reading

[Relevant document: e-petition 650300, Ban imports of hunting trophies of endangered animals.]

9.35 am

John Spellar (Warley) (Lab): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Often in debates that have had a long genesis and been considered many times in the House, there is that hackneyed phrase: everything that needs to be said has been said, but not everyone has said it. One cannot even use that phrase now, because everyone has said what they need to say many times over. Of course, that is not true in this case, not least because of the Bill tabled and pioneered very ably by the hon. Member for Crawley (Henry Smith) in the last Session of Parliament. The clear and overwhelming view of this House was that the legislation should go forward. We all know that that Bill was subject to extended delays in the other House—without wishing to cast aspersions, one could almost suggest delaying tactics—and eventually time ran out. I have to say that in this regard, even if in no other, I welcome the postponement of the general election until the autumn, as I hope that will give us more than adequate time, not only for the Bill to go through its stages in this House, but to ensure that the majority in the other place are not frustrated by the few who take a different view of it.

In some ways, what is happening down there is slightly reminiscent of the debate on the House of Lords in the early part of the last century, when the Lords were very much divided between the hedgers and the ditchers—between those who accepted that some reform was necessary and were therefore going to hedge their bets and allow reform to take place, and those who were going to die in the ditch. I hope very much that the hedgers in this case triumph in the other House, so that this matter, which is very important not just to us but to the public, makes progress.

Dr Thérèse Coffey (Suffolk Coastal) (Con): About this time last year, on Report, we reached somewhat of a compromise consensus on the Bill that left this place and went to the Lords. Am I right in thinking that the right hon. Gentleman has reintroduced the exact same Bill on which this House reached consensus last year? The Bill technically does not stop hunting; it simply stops the import into this country of any animal protected by the convention on international trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora.

John Spellar: I thank the right hon. Lady for those comments, and for the work that she undertook as the Secretary of State to support this legislation. Given that we wish to speed the progress of this legislation, I hope that colleagues will not be prone to making long speeches on this issue—indeed, possibly not even medium or short speeches. Subject to Madam Deputy Speaker, I intend to be very generous with my taking of interventions, because right hon. and hon. Members want to ensure that the strong feelings of their constituents—which are made very clear every time this issue comes up—are expressed in this House, so that those constituents know that Parliament is listening and undertaking a course of action.

Justin Madders (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

John Spellar: I will just finish my comments to the right hon. Member for Suffolk Coastal (Dr Coffey) before I take an intervention from my hon. Friend from Bebington.

The right hon. Member for Suffolk Coastal is absolutely right; in the last Parliament, there were concessions and discussions in Committee and a consensus was brought about, which was expressed very solidly. That is why I stressed that this was the overwhelming view and message from this House to the other House, and it is regrettable that the Lords chose to ignore that. I understand that the other House has a role in revising legislation, particularly when there are deep divisions in this House, but that is not the case with this provision. It is absolutely clear that the overwhelming majority, including the overwhelming majority of our constituents—the figure is 86% or so, but I will come back to that—are in support of the Bill. The hon. Member for Crawley skilfully put it together, which shows the bipartisan nature of the legislation. That is why it should go through today, and why it should be speeded through its passage in both Houses of Parliament.

Justin Madders: The Bebington element of the Ellesmere Port constituency left about 40 years ago, but I know my right hon. Friend has been here a long time, so it probably was correct when he first entered this place.

I wanted to make the point that he has just made—namely, that there is overwhelming public support for this measure. A number of constituents have contacted me to express their support; as he said, time and again surveys show huge public demand for this. Does he agree that it is important that we get the Bill through as swiftly as possible, so that those in the other place are able to do as much as they can as quickly as they can?

John Spellar: I make no apologies for being regularly re-elected to this place over a number of decades. I am sure that my hon. Friend speaks effectively for his constituents in Ellesmere Port, and I suspect residents in Bebington probably hold similar views. That is important. Sometimes issues come before the House that reflect views from certain parts of the country—there are often arguments that reflect the views of those in the metropolis, or the inner metropolis and the metropolitan elite—but this issue runs across parties, across classes and across regions. This is a universal view across the country. People want this country to have no part in this vile trade.

Kim Leadbeater (Batley and Spen) (Lab): My right hon. Friend makes an important point. Like many hon. Members, I have received hundreds of emails from my constituents in Batley and Spen, who are appalled at the vile trade of trophy hunting. Does he agree that the Bill will not only prevent the importation of hunting trophies to the UK, but it will also send a powerful message to countries around the world that hunting and killing endangered animals for trophies is always unacceptable, and that much more must be done to prevent that atrocious act wherever it occurs?

John Spellar: I thank my hon. Friend for that contribution, and for the work she has been undertaking on this issue, quite apart from the Bill. She is absolutely right. Other countries, including Australia, France and Belgium—I think there are a couple of others—have already shown the way by banning the trade in hunting trophies, and I hope that what we decide here will start to send a message to other countries that this is an international movement. As we always realise, society and opinions evolve. This country has the Bullring in Birmingham, but we no longer torment bulls with dogs in a public arena, or engage in bear baiting or cock fighting. We have moved on from that and we need to move on from trophy hunting, not least because of the decline in species.

Some of the arguments relate very much to Africa, but I remind colleagues—I pay tribute to the campaign by the *Daily Express* on this—that other regions of the world are also involved, such as polar bears in Canada. The Bill demonstrates that the public do not want those magnificent creatures to be slaughtered not only for a bizarre form of pleasure, but to decorate people's houses. They do not understand it.

Lilian Greenwood (Nottingham South) (Lab): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on bringing this Bill forward. Is it not the case that this legislation is supported by campaigners in many countries, including in Africa? They love their animals and recognise that there is much more to be gained and it is much more profitable to keep these animals alive, rather than to allow this barbaric practice.

John Spellar: My hon. Friend is clearly speaking on behalf of her constituents in Nottingham in expressing those strong views. In a number of programmes yesterday, I pointed out that for the long-term sustainable future of tourism in these countries, it is much better to have tourists shooting animals with cameras rather than with rifles and crossbows. We need to look towards a future of sustainable species and people being able to enjoy these animals not just through historical videos from David Attenborough, but by visiting themselves. That gives rise to a great and long-term industry.

Tim Loughton (East Worthing and Shoreham) (Con): I agree with everything that the right hon. Gentleman has said, as well as paying tribute to my Sussex colleague, my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Henry Smith), for having persevered with this issue for so long. We should not be here; this legislation should have gone through already. I have been struck by the number of emails I have had from my constituents about how important this matter is, so may I make a practical offer to Members of the House of Lords who are minded to

try to sabotage the Bill again? I speak as the chairman of the all-party parliamentary group for photography, and we will have a special category in the exhibition this year for wildlife photos, so that those Members can show how brave and manly they are by getting up close with cameras rather than guns. Is that a deal?

John Spellar: I am not sure their knees could take it, but that is a further matter. I absolutely take the point that the hon. Gentleman makes, and he is right about expanding the scope so that people can show their skill in photography and show these magnificent creatures in their natural environment. That is the record they should have—not some grisly trophy on the wall. I fully understand his point.

I am also pleased that the hon. Gentleman raised the question about colleagues being here today. I realise where we are in the electoral cycle, and that we have elections everywhere across England and Wales in May. Many colleagues will therefore want to be out campaigning, so I thank colleagues who are here today and hope they will be able to participate to put across their constituents' views. I hope that constituents understand the effort that sometimes has to be made to be here on a Friday, given constituency pressures.

Theresa Villiers (Chipping Barnet) (Con): I think it was the distressing case of the killing of Cecil the lion that alerted many people to what is happening. I, too, have many constituents in Chipping Barnet who want this Bill to go through. That is why I am here today to support it.

John Spellar: I thank the right hon. Lady for coming in today, particularly because there are even more important elections taking place in her part of the country. She and I might take a slightly different view on them, but we are united on this issue today. It is important that we stress once again the cross-party support for this important measure.

I earlier highlighted the role of the hon. Member for Crawley, but I also pay tribute to many of those who played a part in keeping this campaign going over many years. I think of my old friend, Bob Blizzard, the previous Member for Waveney. He was a comrade in the Labour Government Whips Office, back in the days before the 2010 election. He was a great friend and also a great enthusiast—both for jazz, but also very much for this cause. After he had left Parliament, he encouraged me to take up this issue, and his involvement in the campaign to ban trophy hunting was enormously important, along with the campaign's current director, Eduardo Gonçalves, who is sadly not well; I hope he will be cheered by the progress of the Bill later today. That is along with a number of celebrities. Sir Ranulph Fiennes has most notably been a stalwart in the campaign, as has Dr Jane Washington-Evans and Peter Egan, who initiated the e-petition.

Peter Dowd (Bootle) (Lab): Lord Mancroft in the other place said,

"What the Government are doing today is passing socialist legislation, which is an odd thing for a Conservative Government to be doing."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 12 September 2023; Vol. 832, c. 957.]

Does my right hon. Friend agree that this is not socialist legislation or Conservative, Liberal Democrat, Scottish National party or Plaid Cymru legislation? This is humane and compassionate legislation.

John Spellar: Well, we are a broad church—if Members on the Government Benches wish to join the cause of socialism, I welcome them. My hon. Friend is absolutely right; some issues divide us on non-political grounds and Members from different parties end up in the same camps, and many of those issues are subject to free votes. This issue unites us, and it unites us with the British people. It should have been sorted out ages ago. It is really a shame that we have to be here today. I do not in any way resent it, because this is the right thing to do, but this legislation should already be on the statute book.

Dean Russell (Watford) (Con): I thank the right hon. Gentleman for giving way, and I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Henry Smith). Today feels a bit like *déjà vu*. We are back here again, but that sends a message to our friends in the Lords that we will not give up. This legislation is the right thing to do. It is an abhorrent act to go to another country and kill an endangered animal in order to stick its head on a wall. It seems like something from a totally different century. The fact that we are back again, fighting for the right cause and standing on the shoulders of the giants who have gone before us sends an important message to both the House of Lords and the country.

John Spellar: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that; he expresses particularly well his point that trophy hunting is like something from a previous century. Its time has passed. Life moves on and society moves on.

As I was describing, it was interesting in the interviews I did that none of the commentators could respond when I asked, “How can you defend someone who wants to travel a distance to shoot a giraffe, stand on its corpse and bring parts of it back to this country?” Nobody seems to be able to answer that question. I am not saying it was ever right to do that, but what is absolutely clear now is that the British public are certain that they do not want any part of it.

Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab): My right hon. Friend makes a very valid point. Some in favour of trophy hunting argue that it lends itself to supporting conservation in the country, which seems to me an entirely spurious argument. We have just seen really promising figures on tigers; there are 5,574 in the wild now. That is actually a tiny number; there should be many thousands more, but it shows that conservation efforts can pay off if we focus on certain species. Trophy hunting is not about conservation. As my right hon. Friend said, it is about people shooting animals, taking pictures of themselves parading around the corpses and cutting the animals’ heads off to take home. It is an abhorrent act.

John Spellar: I absolutely agree. My hon. Friend has been campaigning on this in Bristol and here in Parliament for many years, from the days when we worked in the Whips Office. She makes a very strong point.

The argument that says, “We are killing these animals in order to save them” is a bit like saying, “We created a desert and called it peace.” I really do not buy into that and, importantly, neither do the British public.

John McDonnell (Hayes and Harlington) (Lab): There has in the past been the argument that trophy hunting performs the role of culling for protected species. We have always been able to negate that argument. There are times when there is a strategy for culling certain species, but that is done on the basis of scientific fact rather than inhumane delight at the killing of animals.

John Spellar: My right hon. Friend makes an important point. Vastly excessive numbers, such as in certain parts of this country where there are problems with deer, have an impact on woodland and the very proper campaigns by the Government to reforest the country. In many cases professional hunters do the cull, rather than having people firing crossbows at animals, which can then linger for several days. Cecil the lion was mentioned. That case caught the attention and imagination of the British public, and it focused them on this issue and they made it clear that they do not want this practice to continue.

My right hon. Friend is absolutely right, but there is another factor to consider. The elephants taken out are the big leaders of the tribe. That has a significant effect on the gene pool. There is already some evidence that elephants with smaller tusks are surviving and therefore, contrary to natural selection, changes are taking place to their appearance. Also, some hunters do not seem to accept that, although some are solitary, many animals live in social structures. We saw that with the death of Cecil the lion and we see with elephants that the social structure and cohesion of elephant herds are completely disrupted. That applies to other creatures as well. Hunting is to the detriment of gene selection and the development and maintenance of groups of species.

Clive Efford (Eltham) (Lab): I wholeheartedly support my right hon. Friend’s Bill. As in the title of the Bill, these people are after trophies. They will not select the weakest in the herd or the pride. They will go for the one that looks the most magnificent on their wall or wherever they want to display it. Therefore, they are taking out the strongest, weakening the gene pool and having exactly the opposite effect on conservation. That is another reason why we need to send a strong message and support my right hon. Friend’s Bill.

John Spellar: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The negative impact on the species as a whole has to be considered, especially, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) said, because we are seeing real reduction in some species. We are getting below the critical mass necessary to sustain the genetic variation of a healthy species.

John Mc Nally (Falkirk) (SNP): Will the right hon. Member give way?

John Spellar: I will just make a little progress, because I mentioned one of the campaigning organisations and if I take interventions before I mention the others, they might think I am leaving them out.

[John Spellar]

I pay tribute to the many campaigns that have maintained interest in this issue over the years, bringing us—I hope—to the culmination today. Humane Society International, LionAid, FOUR PAWS and Born Free have all played a prominent role in contacting Members and campaigning. There is also the coalition against trophy and canned hunting, which includes Action for Primates, A-LAW, Animal Defenders International, Animal Aid, Animal Interfaith Alliance, Catholic Concern for Animals, the Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation—again, showing the bipartisan nature of the support—International Wildlife Bond, Labour Animal Welfare Society, OneKind, People for Nature and Peace, Protecting African Lions, Quaker Concern for Animals, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Voice4Lions, World Animal Protection, Wildlife Conservation Foundation and Zimbabwe Elephant Foundation. If I have missed anyone out, they can text me and I might include them in the wind-up. Those organisations have worked together successfully to highlight the issue, and we pay tribute to them.

John Mc Nally: I totally agree with the right hon. Member on that point. I support the Bill because I stand with many of my Falkirk constituents who have written to me on the issue. He mentioned many of the non-governmental organisations. I have been heavily involved with FOUR PAWS in the UK, which has provided so much useful information to me on the subject over a long while. As we all know, this is a non-partisan issue. MPs from all corners of the House have spoken at great length and passionately on the totally incomprehensible nature of this brutal sport. Enough talking—the time is to make this actually happen. Does he agree that killing animals for sport is just not an acceptable practice?

John Spellar: The hon. Gentleman makes that point strongly and stresses once again the all-party support for the measure.

Jeff Smith (Manchester, Withington) (Lab): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on bringing the Bill forward. I fully support it and will be voting for it today. He outlined an impressive list of organisations. I do not think anybody has mentioned that apparently nine out of 10 of the British public support the ban, and that is something the House of Lords needs to take note of. I have just been looking through the list of emails I have had on the subject from right across my constituency from Chorlton, Didsbury, Burnage and Withington. From all kinds of different demographic groups and areas around the country, the British public are absolutely united in wanting this trade banned.

John Spellar: I thank my hon. Friend for that point and for highlighting the level of support. Of course, that was reinforced by the Government themselves in January in their response to the petition instigated by Mr Peter Egan, which said:

“We will continue working to deliver our manifesto commitment to ban the import of hunting trophies from endangered animals, which has overwhelming support from MPs and the public... We recognise that this is an issue that the public feel very strongly about, and over 85% of responses to our consultation supported

further action. In the previous Parliamentary session, the Government fully supported the Hunting Trophies Bill during its passage through Parliament. The Bill passed the House of Commons in March 2023, with strong support from MPs, but did not progress through Committee stage in the House of Lords. We will continue working to deliver this important manifesto commitment.”

I hope the Minister will be able to back that up further in her contribution later on. That was reinforced in a reply at the end of January to a letter from a number of Members across the House that the hon. Member for Crawley organised, in which the Minister once again said that there is considerable debate, and that the Government support the Bill and shared the hon. Member's disappointment that it did not pass through the Commons. It is absolutely clear that whatever our other divisions, we are united in support of a ban.

There is one particular aspect that I want to highlight. We have talked a lot about hunting in the wild, but there is the even more deplorable business of so-called canned hunting, where animals, especially lions, are bred in an enclosure to be shot by depraved individuals who want a trophy. I pay tribute to Lord Ashcroft—again, someone with whom I might disagree on other issues—who has spent a considerable amount of time campaigning on and instigating research into that appalling trade. I hope the Bill will help reduce the attraction to such trade. One firm involved in that dreadful trade advertised that

“Your hunt is never complete, until you receive your animals at home for you to reminisce and re-call your experiences for the rest of your life.”

Do we really want to be associated with people who take that sort of attitude?

I have taken a fair amount of time and a number of interventions. We could go on a lot longer and in a lot more detail, but I recognise that the House will want to make progress, and that colleagues will want to make what I hope will be brief contributions.

Sir Christopher Chope (Christchurch) (Con): Will the right hon. Gentleman take us through the clauses of the Bill? Clause 4 was incorporated as a result of the acceptance of one of my amendments when this Bill was last debated. Clause 4 has not yet been explained, and I would be interested to know whether the right hon. Gentleman supports it, and how he thinks it will work in practice.

John Spellar: I thank the hon. Gentleman, who sits with me on the British-American Parliamentary Group; we are joint officers. I consider him a parliamentary friend. I thank him for highlighting the fact that the Bill was amended to take account of various views. It was carried forward without dissent in this House, and was forwarded to the Lords. That is precisely why the Bill should be voted on again, sent back to the other House, and incorporated into the laws of this land.

10.6 am

Henry Smith (Crawley) (Con): It is a great privilege to follow the right hon. Member for Warley (John Spellar). I pay tribute to him, and to many other Members from across this House who have worked so hard, not only in supporting my Bill when it was before the House last year, but in campaigning to end the importation of hunting trophies—the body parts of endangered species—to this country. It has been a fantastic effort. As we have heard, the Bill enjoys the support of well over four

fifths of the British public. Indeed, there was a commitment to do what the Bill proposes in a manifesto on which I stood for election four and a half years ago, and I understand that that commitment has been reflected in the manifestos of many other parties represented in this House.

Last March, the Hunting Trophies (Import Prohibition) Bill that I introduced passed through this elected Chamber unanimously. As we have heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Sir Christopher Chope), we accepted compromise amendments to make sure that it reflected as many views as possible. When it went to the other place, a very small minority of peers acted discourteously in the way that they sought to block the legislation. That is why we have had to bring it back, and I am grateful to the right hon. Member for Warley for doing so.

I mentioned the widespread support for this legislation in this country, but it is also extremely popular in other parts of the world. Southern Africa has been mentioned. Last year, I was in a number of southern African countries where there is a clear desire among the majority of people to make sure that such legislation is enacted in this country—and, as the right hon. Gentleman said, in other countries as well. Hunting for trophies is not a natural practice for people in southern Africa; it is a colonial import to the continent from the time of colonisation. It is not native. The ending of this practice enjoys widespread support across the world.

As the right hon. Member for Warley said, the practice that we are discussing is not unique to Africa. Claims have been made that somehow this is racist legislation that tells countries around the world how to act and conduct their hunting policy. Let us just remind ourselves that this Bill is import legislation; it says that we in this country, by a clear majority, choose not to allow the importation of body parts of endangered species slaughtered by hunters to Great Britain; that is the territorial extent of this Bill and what it is designed to do. Nevertheless, it would send a strong signal that these practices are deeply damaging to conservation, as he eloquently said. Damage is done to the gene pool by taking out the top animals in a pride of lions, or the big tuskers from a herd of elephants. That is beginning to damage the ability of those animals to survive. Let us remind ourselves of what this Bill is about. It is not about banning hunting, although I might have a view on that; it is about protecting endangered species before it is too late.

Sir Christopher Chope: In my hon. Friend's tour of Africa, did he have the opportunity to meet President Masisi of Botswana, who has described western interventions as "a racist onslaught"? He has said:

"It's racism. They talk as if we are the grass the elephants eat. It startles me when people sit in the comfort of where they are and lecture us about the management of species they don't have."

Henry Smith: I have not met the current President of Botswana, but I have met the previous one, President Khama, on a number of occasions. He is passionate about ending trophy hunting, because it is not typical African communities who benefit from it, but the big industry that supports it. Botswana is a good example, because in such countries there is a huge difference of opinion over whether trophy hunting should go ahead.

Clive Efford: I pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman for the work he has done on this issue. Is not the answer to the point made by the hon. Member for Christchurch (Sir Christopher Chope) that the Bill deals with the import of trophies to the UK, and says nothing about Botswana?

Henry Smith: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely correct. As I said, this is import legislation; its territorial extent is Great Britain. It is about what we choose to import to this country, and a clear majority of the British people do not want the body parts of endangered species imported here, because they care about these majestic species and want them to continue to exist, for the sake of their children, grandchildren and many generations to come. The idea that killing an endangered species saves an endangered species is absurd and should be called out for what it is.

Dean Russell: I, too, pay tribute to my hon. Friend for the work that he has done on this issue. I reiterate that it is absurd that we are back here, because this House agreed unanimously to take this Bill through. My constituents, who are very far away from many of the countries in which this practice happens, are absolutely passionate about ending it. However, as has been stated, this Bill is not about the practices in those countries; it is about what we import to our country. If we do anything, we should make sure that we end this abhorrent act of importing the carcasses of endangered animals for people to stick on their wall.

Henry Smith: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who has been stalwart in supporting me in this campaign. He is absolutely right to remind us again about what the legislation does; it is about what we choose to import or not to this country.

The Bill applies to the importation of endangered species' body parts, no matter where in the world the animals were hunted, so it would also prohibit the importation of trophies hunted from polar bears in Canada, as the right hon. Member for Warley said. We do not hear people claiming that we are being racist against the Canadians because we choose not to import endangered polar bears. We need to remind ourselves what the legislation does.

I could speak with passion on this principle for hours, but I am conscious of parliamentary procedure, and I do not want to detain the Bill's passage any further. I once again call on hon. and right hon. Members from across this elected House to send a clear message: we in this country choose not to import the body parts of trophy-hunted endangered species to Great Britain.

10.15 am

Rosie Duffield (Canterbury) (Lab): All of us here are familiar with the term "trophy hunting". We have come to recognise the evil acts that those two harmless-sounding words represent, but for those watching who may be less familiar with the term, animal welfare organisations such as SPCA International define it as

"the hunting of...animals for sport, not for food. Usually, the animal is stuffed or a body part is kept for display."

They go on:

"Many hunters claim that trophy hunting isn't bad for animals. They say they are supporting animal conservation. The opposite is true, live animals support the population of their species."

[Rosie Duffield]

The League against Cruel Sports says:

“We believe this multi-million pound industry is unjustifiable from an animal welfare point of view, but also for conservation, as it is responsible for endangering several species around the world.”

As for “sport”, that word is usually reserved for activities that revolve around the more positive aspects of life: fitness, healthy competition, teamwork, friendship, personal achievement, endeavour and endurance. Not a single one of those could be attributed to an activity that involves an individual choosing to photograph themselves grinning triumphantly as they celebrate killing a once gentle and graceful giraffe, whose lifeless body now lies slumped and twisted at their feet, pumped full of deadly bullets. My good friend the vet and animal welfare campaigner Dr Marc Abraham OBE agrees. He says:

“Anyone with an ounce of compassion and kindness despairs at seeing these images of cowardly, pathetic trophy hunters grinning over their still-warm kill. Exploited animals used as pathetic props to maintain, even elevate, an online self-image of superiority, without any shred of guilt or conscience.”

He describes those taking part in these killings as having “a tragic lack of empathy and the highest form of narcissism”, and says that

“to be complicit in this most extreme, callous form of animal cruelty, plus then to harvest the body parts and ship them back home to the UK, couldn’t be a clearer indicator of violent antisocial behaviour.”

Every Member of this House will have had emails and letters from, and meetings with, constituents who love and value animals, and loathe those who exploit, harm or kill them. There are so many British people who show such kindness—who campaign on behalf of animal charities, who volunteer, who make donations or fundraise, and who share a love for our planet and the incredible, breathtaking wildlife that we are so fortunate to benefit from. How dare a few wealthy individuals decide that they have the right to buy and cause the death of a lion, polar bear or elephant.

Alongside our constituents, there are those who use their fame and public platforms to fight for the protection of animals. Those campaigners include frequent visitors to Parliament whose passion is infectious—people such as the wonderful Peter Egan, friend to many in this place, who for years has fought hard to raise awareness and keep a ban on trophy hunting imports at the top of MPs’ agendas. Peter works with the fantastic campaigner Eduardo Goncalves, who we talked about earlier, and who is supported by many across this House, including my right hon. Friend the Member for Warley (John Spellar), who has never given up fighting to protect animals during his time here. He steps down at the next general election, but it is vital that we carry on his compassionate work. I absolutely pledge to do that to the best of my ability.

No speech about animal welfare should leave out top animal champion Ricky Gervais. He could spend his days polishing his many awards, but instead he chooses to condemn trophy hunting and shame those who consider the murder of animals to be a hobby. He supports the ban and has called trophy hunting

“humanity at its very worst”.

The murder of animals for fun is also condemned by Chris Packham, Bill Bailey, Joanna Lumley and Sir Ranulph Fiennes, as well as MPs and activists across the political divide and those with no political affiliation whatsoever. The legendary Jane Goodall said:

“Trophy hunting is utterly cruel, utterly unnecessary and utterly disastrous from a conservation perspective. It inflicts pain and suffering on animals for no other reason than to boast of some ephemeral ‘prowess’. There is no material human need met by it; it is a hobby, pure and simple, and a deeply wrong one at that.”

I urge colleagues to support the Bill. I sincerely thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Warley for bringing it forward. I echo the words of the Humane Society and say that there is “no excuse” for trophy hunting, so let us get the ban done.

10.20 am

Sir Bill Wiggin (North Herefordshire) (Con): The one thing that unites the House is that we all want to see successful conservation, but this Bill has always been about racism and neocolonialism. This Bill is questioned by science and by African countries. If anybody, no matter how much they think they love animals, is thinking about writing to me or contacting me about trophy hunting, I insist that they seriously consider what African representatives have said about both the Bill and the people who support it.

Over the last 22 years, 73 CITES-listed species of animal have been imported as hunting trophies. In the same period, the pet industry has traded in over 560 listed species. If hon. Members care about CITES, then perhaps the Bill should include pets as well.

I do not believe anybody in the House intends to be racist, but this Bill crosses the line. The Namibian Environment Minister, Pohamba Shifeta, has written to our Environment Secretary denouncing the Bill as

“regressive step towards neo-colonialism... Your bill implies that your judgments supersede our insights and expertise... Such unilateral actions, made without consultation and collaboration with us... challenges the sovereignty of nations like Namibia.”

We have talked about Botswana and I will quote what President Masisi says. It is worth remembering that Botswana had 50,000 elephants; it now has 130,000 elephants. The population increases year on year by about 5,000 elephants. Some 400 trophy hunting licences are issued, but those licences have never all been taken up. When President Masisi describes intervention in Africa’s wildlife as “a racist onslaught”—

Peter Dowd: On that point, will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Bill Wiggin: I am in the middle of a quote, but I think the President will forgive me for allowing the hon. Gentleman to intervene.

Peter Dowd: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the House is perfectly entitled to make decisions having considered all the facts, not just selective facts? It can then decide that it does not want hunting trophies to be brought into this country, and it is perfectly entitled to make that decision.

Sir Bill Wiggin: If I did not respect the House, I would not have bothered to turn up today, so I do not think that is a valid point. We must consider how we would feel if Botswana, Namibia, Tanzania, Zambia, South Africa or Zimbabwe were legislating on what we do here. Awkwardly for the hon. Gentleman, we

are not banning trophy hunting in the UK. We are targeting CITES-listed species, but we do not seem to care that there are 5,000 such species, of which only a handful are actually relevant.

To continue, the Namibian Environment Minister, Pohamba Shifeta, says this is

“regressive step towards neo-colonialism”—

whether it is meant that way or not. He goes on to say,

“Your bill implies that your judgments supersede our insights”—those of the people who actually look after these animals. He says:

“Such unilateral actions, made without consultation...challenges the sovereignty”.

President Masisi said that this is “a racist onslaught” from people who

“sit in the comfort of where they are and lecture us about the management of species they don’t have.”

He was not just speaking for himself. Last November, *The Times*, *The Telegraph* and the *Daily Mail* reported that ordinary Africans share the President’s view. The paper quoted from a survey of 4,000 people in Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe who said that the UK legislation was “racist” and “neocolonial”. That is what they are saying about us. Although I respect the sovereignty of this House, I would not like it if they said things like that about us, and I am astonished that the hon. Gentleman does.

Peter Dowd: I do not read *The Times* very often, but the hon. Member said that the African community leaders and conservationists he referred to rightly argue that it is not for us in the west to decide how they should manage their wildlife, and that that is why he cannot endorse the Bill. I am not telling them how to manage their wildlife, or demanding that they do it in a certain way. What I and many Members in this House are saying is that we do not want those disgusting trophies in this country. It is simple.

Sir Bill Wiggin: The African countries find it appalling that British politicians show no concern for the African lives threatened by these animals. They are furious with the virtue-signalling proposals, which lack scientific credibility. Time and again, they return with the facts and they are completely ignored by hon. Members in this debate.

I will come on to what Oxford University said about the facts and figures given by the right hon. Member for Warley (John Spellar). This week, Botswana’s Minister for Environment and Tourism, along with the high commissioners of Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Botswana, came to this House to express their dissatisfaction with the Bill. This is significantly different from when my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Henry Smith) brought forward his Bill. There was no pushback from African countries then. Now we are seeing significant unhappiness from those countries about the Bill. DEFRA Ministers and their Labour shadows know that the high commissioners of the six African nations have jointly condemned the Bill as inexcusable meddling in Africa’s democratic affairs.

There are in the UK tens of thousands of trophy hunting animals that the Bill does not cover. If the UK hates trophy hunting, it should ban it here first. I do not particularly want to see that, but that is what people in Africa feel.

On Second Reading of last year’s Bill that proposed such a ban, the Minister told the Commons that its purpose was to reduce the “impossible pressures” on Africa’s wildlife. Other MPs argued that the measure would save thousands of animals from the barbaric and savage African practice of legal hunting. Indeed, the hon. Member for Canterbury (Rosie Duffield) used other such adjectives, but this is misleading. In fact, MPs’ statements on Second Reading were analysed in an Oxford University study, and 70% were deemed to be factually incorrect.

The Bill covers 6,000 species and most of those are not threatened by trophy hunting. Since 2000, the UK has imported about 1% of the species in the Bill—that is in 24 years. At least 20 species that the UK imports may be or are benefiting from trophy hunting. Rural Africa welcomes controlled legal hunting, as it helps to manage excessive herds and rogue animals. Furthermore, the fees that hunters pay bring significant amounts of cash into remote areas, where tourists and photo safaris cannot get to. This creates incentives for villagers to refrain from poisoning, snaring or shooting the animals.

Between 20% and 100% of concession fees usually go towards community land. Africans know that legal hunting reduces illegal hunting. It is the poaching, often funded by Chinese criminal gangs, that puts at critical risk the survival of the species that we all treasure. Those brutal gangs are indiscriminate in how many animals they kill. By contrast, legal hunting estates need and want to grow their herds to ensure the future of their businesses, and that is why they invest heavily in anti-poaching patrols. They provide the armed guards that are vital to protect these animals from gruesome deaths. This legal hunting operates under strict quotas, agreed by national Governments and the international regulator. As a result, the herds have flourished. One paper found that in Kenya, where hunting has long been banned, there has been a dramatic fall in wildlife numbers. Another study found that Botswana, which did ban hunting, saw a horrific surge in human-wildlife conflict, with a 593% increase in the discovery of elephant carcasses. That disaster led to a quick reversal of the ban.

In 2016, briefings from the International Union for Conservation of Nature stated that

“legal, well regulated trophy hunting programs can, and do, play an important role in delivering benefits for both wildlife conservation and for the livelihoods and wellbeing of indigenous and local communities”.

In a letter to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Namibia’s Minister for Environment and Tourism said:

“We are most concerned about how this proposed law would undermine the finances of our Protected Areas and Conservancies... The lack of dedicated land and the protection which protected hunting pays for would critically undermine the survival of species which we all love.”

He went on to say:

“The implications of this legislation, therefore, extend far beyond what has become known as ‘trophy’ hunting, potentially impacting the livelihoods of rural communities that rely on the revenue it generates.”

A joint statement from southern African Government representatives in the UK opposed the Bill.

Peter Dowd: I think the hon. Gentleman indicated that only 1% of trophies have come to this country. If it is only 1%, enacting this piece of legislation will not make that much difference to those countries, will it?

Sir Bill Wiggin: It would make enough difference for the hon. Gentleman to turn up for the debate, and for me to do so. It would also make enough difference for all the representatives of those southern African countries who care about the creatures that we all purport to care about to say that the Bill is wrong. In fact, they said:

“If income streams from trophy hunting were substantially reduced—as would be the outcome of this Bill—land would be abandoned and subject to poaching, or converted to less biodiversity-friendly uses, such as agriculture and livestock production. Local communities who live near and with wildlife would suffer.”

I think it is pretty clear that they do not think that the hon. Gentleman is right. The statement ends:

“Southern Africa’s track record on conservation is world-leading, and we use trophy hunting to do it. Let us continue to do so.”

I recognise that that is awkward for Opposition Members who care about animals, but the people who are responsible for those animals are telling us that we are wrong.

Botswana is the top country in the world for large animals, with Namibia second and Tanzania third. All three countries have paid hunting, which finances protected space and armed guards for those animals. The country that is 123rd in the world—that is us—is, in the words of David Attenborough, one of

“the most nature depleted countries in the world”.

We got rid of the last brown bear 1,000 years ago and our last wolves 264 years ago.

Africa’s human population has risen eightfold during our lifetimes, causing immense pressure on the land available for wildlife. That means that Africans increasingly come into conflict with big animals, which may eat their goats, threaten their children or trample their villages. Last year, Botswana’s Minister for Environment and Tourism started an article published in the *Daily Mail* by saying:

“Last month, I attended the funeral of two villagers in my homeland, Botswana. Both were in their teens, tragically killed by charging wild buffalo as they travelled to school and work. Sadly, this was not an isolated incident.”

She went on to say:

“believe me, I do understand the horror people feel when they see a photograph of a trophy hunting person posing beside a recent kill. Lion killings in particular seem to cause outrage among Britons, especially after the notorious shooting of Cecil the lion by a US trophy hunter in Zimbabwe in 2015. The widely circulated picture of Walter Palmer standing over Cecil’s body became emblematic of man’s destructive relationship with nature. Reasonable though this reaction is, it is a knee-jerk one. It fails to acknowledge that for many Africans, trophy hunting is vital for the local population. It is a wildlife conservation measure that generates income used to combat illegal poaching, support community development and enhance habitat protection. Sadly,”

she says, we

“all too often...focus solely on animal welfare at the expense of human life in Africa.”

I have thought carefully about the amendment that I intend to table. The Bill does not need to keep coming back in the way in which the right hon. Member for Warley has brought it back. My amendment will ensure that the Bill protects certain species, while recognising that other countries may be even better at managing conservation than we are. It will allow the Secretary of State to add or withdraw countries from a list of those that issue hunting licences and show sufficient levels of concern for conservation. Any hunting trophy obtained

under licence in a country that was on the list would be exempt from the ban. Kenya would not be on the list, as it does not allow hunting and its wildlife numbers, sadly, have declined; but countries that do allow it and are doing a good job should be allowed to continue.

This Bill is being questioned by science and by African countries, and there is no excuse for blundering into inadvertent racism. If we want Africa’s big animals to survive into the future, I ask the House not to ignore the science and the misinformation that endangers the animals that we care the most about.

10.36 am

Clive Efford (Eltham) (Lab): It is an honour to follow the hon. Member for North Herefordshire (Sir Bill Wiggin), but I cannot say that I agreed with a single word of his speech. He quoted David Attenborough, but David Attenborough has described trophy hunting as “incomprehensible” and certainly does not support it. I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Warley (John Spellar) for presenting the Bill, to the hon. Member for Crawley (Henry Smith) for his earlier work, and to our departed friend Bob Blizzard, who did an enormous amount of work on this issue when he was a Member.

I wanted to make this short contribution because I had the privilege of going on safari when my wife and I visited Africa. It was the trip of a lifetime. If I ever have the chance to go back and do it again I do not think it will be the same trip, because the first experience of seeing these magnificent beasts in their own habitat is something you never forget. I want to impress that on the people who seek what I suppose is the “thrill” of murdering these beasts.

Within two hours of arriving at our camp, we were in a truck being taken to look at the wildlife. As we sat in that open-sided truck, a lion walked past the bottom of it; I could look down and see its back as it walked past me. I sat there and thought, “What the hell am I doing here?” There is no cage around the truck, but you trust entirely the stranger you have just met—the guide who takes you around—while a wild beast only a couple of metres away walks calmly past the truck.

The experience of getting close to those animals is something never to be forgotten, but the most memorable experience was seeing, beside the Chobe river in Botswana, a herd of elephants feeding at dusk, talking and grumbling to one another as they ate the reeds on the river bank. We got quite close to these huge beasts, and felt entirely safe. Indeed, we felt that we were privileged to be so close to them in their natural habitat.

The idea that anyone would go into that environment with a gun and slaughter those animals is beyond me. If you want to experience wildlife, don’t go murdering it; get up close to it and experience it in that way. I ask Members to imagine this for a minute. There were probably about a dozen people in our truck. If every one of us had a gun and went out slaughtering these animals, the effect across the species would be enormous, but when large numbers of us go to these countries armed with cameras rather than guns, the effect on their economies is enormous.

We have heard arguments today about being racist towards African countries, but it is not just about African countries. I have not heard anyone say we are

being racist to Canadians by not wanting polar bears to be imported. In the words of David Attenborough, this is incomprehensible.

Sir Bill Wiggin: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Clive Efford: I am going to give way once, but I do not want to take up too much time.

Sir Bill Wiggin: The Canadian Government have not written to object—it is the African countries that object to this. I hope that was clear from what I said earlier.

Clive Efford: I am sure it was, but the hunting fraternity only contributes to a very tiny bit of those countries' economies. What we seem to have heard today is an argument that without the enormous wealth of the people who go trophy hunting, conservation cannot be afforded. I just do not accept that that is a reasonable argument. Of course, people can pay; I would pay an enormous fee for the privilege of going to see these animals in their own habitats—and leave behind that fee in order to pay for conservation. There are ways that we can contribute to conservation that way outstrip the money that Members on the Conservative Benches have been talking about.

Let us be honest: the majority of the people who talked the Bill out in the other place were hereditary peers. That is the truth of it. The enormously privileged wealthy, calling this idea, which has enormous support from all the people, socialist—well, because it has the support of the people, it has to be socialist, doesn't it? It has to be socialist, because commoners want it! How could the Conservative party possibly support a measure that is so socialist in its fundamental objectives? It is complete nonsense, but there is a species that perhaps we should be metaphorically hunting to extinction: the position of the hereditary peers and their ability to vote on laws in our country. That is an outdated anachronism that has to come to an end, and the person who starts that hunt will have my full backing.

10.42 am

Sir Christopher Chope (Christchurch) (Con): It is a pity that in a debate that should be about facts, the hon. Member for Eltham (Clive Efford) has allowed his prejudices to come to the fore. I do not think that helps his cause—indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for North Herefordshire (Sir Bill Wiggin) and I agreed that it shows that we are winning the argument, because the hon. Gentleman and some of his colleagues are having to resort to smearing Members of the other place. Those Members tabled perfectly reasonable amendments; the problem was that they ran out of time for discussion.

The previous Bill was amended in this place. That was only because my hon. Friend the Member for North Herefordshire and I tabled a large number of amendments, which put pressure on the promoter of the Bill, my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Henry Smith), and the Government to accept some of those amendments. One of the amendments was to add what is now clause 4 of the Bill, and another was to remove from the Bill a Henry VIII clause allowing the subject matter to which the Bill would apply to be extended by statutory instrument without any proper consultation. This Bill is a better Bill than the one that was first introduced into this place by my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley, but it

is still very defective. Certainly, I think it would be a much better Bill if the amendments suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for North Herefordshire in his excellent speech were to be incorporated into its text.

Sir Bill Wiggin *rose*—

Sir Christopher Chope: I will happily give way, if need be.

Sir Bill Wiggin: I am most grateful—sorry, I was a little slow to intervene. As always, my hon. Friend is making an excellent speech. The purpose of the amendments is to ensure that we take any risk of racism away from this legislation, because at the end of the day, we are united in wanting better conservation.

Sir Christopher Chope: That is what unites us. The disagreements across the House are on the means to the end. Everybody wants to have better conservation of endangered species and wildlife in Africa. Like the hon. Member for Eltham, I have had the privilege of going on safari in Africa—indeed, in South Africa—on two separate occasions. One was in about 1984, when it was pretty hard to find the wild animals we were looking for in the game reserves. When I went again, about 18 months ago, there was an abundance of rhinos, giraffes, elephants, lions, leopards and so on. We had the most amazing experience. People used their cameras, and they relied on the protection provided by the excellent team that looks after and conserves that safari park or game reserve.

We could see with our own eyes that people were trying to poach the animals that were being looked after, and the cost of anti-poaching measures is incredibly high. How will that cost be funded unless it is paid for by the people who are engaged in the conservation? One small means by which they raise funds is by allowing the collection of trophies, and almost all the trophies that are not kept in Africa are imported into the United States, Spain or Germany. Very few are brought into this country.

Whatever happens to this Bill, trophy hunting will continue—but it may not include the import of a small number of trophies into this country under a licensing and regulatory regime that has stood the test of time. Instead of regulation, we will have an outright ban. Why are we doing that? The 2021 impact assessment in respect of an earlier Bill said:

“Why is government intervention necessary? Government intervention will address public concerns about imports of hunting trophies from endangered animals.”

Essentially, the Government's impact assessment admits that this is about presentation, virtue signalling and pandering to public opinion, whether or not that public opinion is sound.

Let us take ourselves back to when the Government and Parliament took the view that we should abolish capital punishment. At that time, a vast majority of the population took the view that we should keep capital punishment. If we had applied the principle that is being applied to this Bill, we would still have capital punishment because it would “address public concerns” about people being murdered. We, in this House, need to rely on science and fact, rather than allowing prejudice and ignorance to prevail, which is one of the reasons why I hope the Bill will be improved, if it receives Second Reading today.

[*Sir Christopher Chope*]

Section 4 of the impact assessment, from paragraph 98 onwards, refers to the costs of this proposed legislation, which is the point that my hon. Friend the Member for North Herefordshire and I are seeking to get across to the Government.

The impact assessment says:

“A 2019 letter from 130 researchers described how in African countries that practice trophy hunting, more land has been conserved under trophy hunting than under National Parks, with hunting areas contributing to landscape connectivity. Some argue that restricting the import/export of trophies from hunting risks land conversion and biodiversity loss, and other alternative area management strategies must be in place to promote conservation, protect endangered species, and support livelihoods. Furthermore, many questions remain on whether alternatives such as wildlife tourism can effectively replace trophy hunting, especially in areas with poor political and economic stability, and areas with less aesthetic appeal.”

That is not what I am saying; it is what the Government said about the costs of this legislation when they did their impact assessment, which goes on to say:

“Wildlife conflict with local people can impose serious costs including causing physical harm and death, damaging crops, predating livestock and competing with livestock for food. Where wildlife provides few benefits to local people and/or imposes substantial costs, animals are often killed for food, trade, or to remove problem animals.”

That is a welcome recognition by the Government of some of the realities surrounding this subject, rather than the prejudices of people who have been ill informed by certain organisations.

In paragraph 100 of the impact assessment, the Government also concede that:

“Evidence suggests that trophy hunting can provide a value for animals which incentivises their protection for the purposes of hunting rather than indiscriminate removal, e.g. land use change to agriculture. Without trophy hunting, an income stream linked to positive conservation outcomes could be lost and other options need to be in place to address this conflict.”

That is what the Government said in their impact assessment, so I hope we are going to hear from the Minister how they will address the concerns that they recognised, if indeed they are still hell-bent on pushing this legislation through to try to get it on to the statute book.

The Government also conceded in their impact assessment—perhaps this is a point that my hon. Friend the Minister could refer to—that:

“A ban in the legal movement of animal trophies could have the unintended consequences, including increasing the illegal trade in wildlife parts which is unregulated. It could also reduce the amount of protein available to local communities as meat is often a by-product of trophy hunts. After a hunting ban in 2014 in Botswana one village lost the provision of 154 tonnes of meat, so less protein was available to the community. This resulted in an increase in illegal poaching and documented declines in wildlife.”

Those are facts. What is the Government’s response to the facts to which they referred in their own impact assessment in 2021?

The issue of costs is discussed in paragraph 102:

“One of the major arguments for hunting for trophies is that it provides financial benefits to local communities, and without trophy hunting these benefits could be lost. However, the extent to which local communities truly benefit is widely debated.”

Of course, that is the debate we are having today. Let us not take a view that all the people who support this Bill are lovers of animals and all the people who are against

it despise animals. Nobody could be a stronger supporter of animals than I am. Indeed, my wife and I are proud that we have produced a daughter who is now a veterinary surgeon. Can one adduce any more evidence of the importance of inculcating into one’s children a love of animals that their parents share? Let us have none of this nonsense suggesting that this is not a vile activity and that those who are against this Bill should be subject to some sort of vilification. That is completely ridiculous.

Let me also refer to the letter to which my hon. Friend the Member for North Herefordshire referred from the Namibian Association of Community Based Natural Resource Management Support Organisations. The letter was sent to all British MPs, and I am disappointed that more of my parliamentary colleagues who will have seen that letter are not present. One asks rhetorically, what have they done as a result of the points made in it? Mr Louis says:

“Please do not regard Africans as being incapable of deciding our domestic policies. The reason we have legal hunting is that it pays for protected land for our big animals. As our human population grows, it is crucial for our lions and elephants to have such space.

Our rhinos also require armed guards to safeguard them from ruthless poaching gangs financed by Chinese criminals. When there are no guards, massive numbers of the animals get killed by these brutal gangs. Legal hunting pays for the guards and kills far fewer.”

When we as a family were in South Africa, we saw the consequences of what happens with rhinos. To try to disincentivise the illegal poaching of rhinos, the rhinos are de-horned, but such is the value of rhino horn now, even from dead animals, because of ill-conceived bans on its use, rhinos are now being poached just for that part of the horn that is no longer visible, which is part of an extension of the head. That is a consequence—an unintended consequence, obviously—of the restrictions on countries exporting the rhino horn from dead animals. That is why this is a very nuanced debate, and I am not sure we are getting as close to that today as their lordships were when they were debating the legislation on Report in their House.

This very important letter from Maxi Louis goes on to say:

“The evidence for this is in the peer-reviewed science which shows how successful Africa’s system is at defending our precious animals. People who have read this science—and back legal hunting—include the EU Commission”—

I am not sure that is his strongest argument—

“and George Monbiot”,

which is a stronger argument. He continues:

“So does the global regulator, the International Union for Conservation of Nature. We use legal hunting to manage our big animals because they are a mortal risk to us and our children. African lives are at stake.

You do not have any dangerous wild animals. Britain got rid of its last brown bears 1,000 years ago and its last wolves 264 years ago.”

In his conclusion, he says that

“wildlife in Africa is flourishing. Because of our management. We ask for no more virtue signalling. It is arrogant, ignorant and racist.”

I could not have put it better myself. That is why I am disappointed that the Government continue to pander to those who would fit into the description given by Maxi Louis.

I turn now to the amendment that was made to the Bill introduced in the last Session by my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley. In introducing this Bill today, the right hon. Member for Warley (John Spellar) did not refer to that, except to say that that amendment was in the proposed legislation, and that it showed how we had passed a Bill to the other place as a result of a consensus. That is one interpretation of what happened on that Friday when we were debating amendments on Report. Essentially what happened, as you may recall, Madam Deputy Speaker, was that there were a large number of amendments, and a deal was done whereby two of those amendments were accepted, and all the others were rejected. One new clause about setting up an advisory board on hunting trophies is now in the Bill, and I wish to speak briefly about the importance of that and the background to it.

Who will decide on issues relating to hunting trophies? I think we should have expertise, rather than people who are prejudiced. Clause 4 states:

“(1) The Secretary of State must appoint an Advisory Board on Hunting Trophies
 (“the Advisory Board”).

(2) The Advisory Board appointed under subsection (1) may have up to three members.

(3) The role of the Advisory Board is to advise the Secretary of State—

(a) on any question relating to this Act which the Secretary of State may refer to the Committee;

(b) on any matter relating to the import to Great Britain of hunting trophies derived from species of animal which appear to the Secretary of State to be, or to be likely to become, endangered.”

That is an improvement on the original Bill, because it would require the Secretary of State to take advice, instead of just listening to the mob, so to speak, and I am pleased that that measure is in the Bill. Clause 4(4) states:

“In appointing members of the Advisory Board, the Secretary of State must have regard to their expertise in matters relating to the import of hunting trophies.”

One thing we discussed previously, which I do not think we have discussed today, is the extent of the Bill. The Bill extends to England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, but the prohibition on imports applies only to imports into Great Britain. Why is that, and why does the right hon. Gentleman, in limiting the Bill to imports into Great Britain, think that that will help meet his objective? Does it not show that we are no longer one nation of the United Kingdom, but that there will be a different regime in Northern Ireland, compared with the one that prevails in the rest of our country? I hope the Minister will be able to explain why, if the Government are in favour of the Bill, and if they purport to be a Government for the whole United Kingdom, rather than just Great Britain, they are proposing to restrict the import of hunting trophies into Great Britain and not into Northern Ireland. Perhaps it has something to do with the fact that there is an open border between Northern Ireland and Ireland, and that Ireland is in the European Union, which has a much more benevolent approach to the import of hunting trophies than this Government seem to have. That important issue needs to be addressed in the Bill, and I hope that if it goes into Committee, we can ensure that its provisions apply equally to all parts of the United Kingdom.

There is no need to speak at great length on something like this when the arguments against the Bill are so strong, but we should not vilify those people who engage in conservation measures in the way that some have been seeking to do. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. If we compare Kenya with other countries in southern Africa, we see that Kenya's well-intended ban has been totally counterproductive, whereas in southern Africa there has been tremendous progress on the conservation of endangered species.

On a lateral point, is the collection of rare and endangered butterfly species illegal in this country? No, with very few exceptions. If we are free to pin butterflies to the wall or put them in display cabinets, does it suit us to preach to people in Africa about their conservation measures? I think not. We talk about the importance of culling, which is essential to control the numbers of a species in the restricted area of a wildlife park. We cull in this country, particularly deer. That culling can include the use of rifles to shoot the deer that people think have the finest antlers. Those antlers are kept as trophies. That is not my line of business at all, but I respect that other people might like to do that. It is all part of culling to ensure that we do not have too many deer to manage.

This complex Bill is worthy of further detailed consideration, but I am worried that the Government may have a secret agenda: they may try to use the Parliament Acts on this legislation. I would be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister could assure me that under no circumstances will the Government seek to override the Parliament of this United Kingdom by seeking to use the Parliament Acts on a Bill that was rejected in the other House—not because it was voted down, but because not enough time was given for it. I am not sure that there is any precedent for the Parliament Acts being used when debate in the other place has been curtailed through lack of time, the Bill has been brought back in the next Session, and the Government's failure to provide time is used as a justification for using the Parliament Acts. I would be grateful if the Minister could respond to that point when she winds up the debate.

Finally, let me put on record that I am against this Bill having a Second Reading in its present form. Hopefully, I will have the opportunity to vote that way later.

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

11.8 am

Ruth Jones (Newport West) (Lab): I am pleased to speak on this important Bill. The importation to the UK of trophies produced during the barbaric sport of trophy hunting should have ended a long time ago. I thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Warley (John Spellar) for introducing the Bill, following the earlier Bill from the hon. Member for Crawley (Henry Smith). We need to get this sorted today, because we have had Warley and Crawley, and I am not sure there is another constituency that rhymes.

I thank animal welfare charities nationwide, including FOUR PAWS, Humane Society International, World Animal Protection and Ban Trophy Hunting. They have worked tirelessly for years to ensure that this legislation is passed, and have produced the most helpful briefing

[*Ruth Jones*]

note for this debate. I also pay tribute to the former President of Botswana, Ian Khama, who has been a tireless and passionate campaigner on these issues.

However, for all the praise that our campaigners are due, we should not have needed to be here debating this Bill today. The legislation should have been passed by this Government long ago. We all know that members of the public, including in my constituency, overwhelmingly support the Bill. The wider public support for it is reflected in the fact that banning hunting trophies was both a 2019 Conservative manifesto promise, as the hon. Member for Crawley said, and a Labour manifesto promise. Why is this measure, promised by the Government, not already in law? Why did they fail to bring forward their own Bill banning trophy hunting, as they pledged to voters that they would? Given that an earlier private Member's Bill seeking to implement a ban progressed through the House last year, why are we here again debating an equivalent Bill? It is because the Bill we debated last year was deliberately and wholly undemocratically derailed by a small number of mostly hereditary Conservative peers. As my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Clive Efford) pointed out, those peers ignored the will of the public, the welfare of animals and their own party's manifesto commitment, and used the amendment process as a blocking device. Labour Members think that that is unacceptable, and our party wants this long promised and long overdue legislation progressed as soon as possible.

Sir Bill Wiggin: When that Bill reached the House of Lords, no peer stepped forward to sponsor it. Why did no Labour peer do so?

Ruth Jones: I thank the hon. Gentleman for pointing that out. Obviously, there were issues going on in the other place that I was not party to at the time, so I am sorry, but I cannot comment on his point.

Sir Christopher Chope: The hon. Lady keeps referring disparagingly to hereditary peers, but is it not correct to say that a significant proportion of hereditary peers were elected to that House, unlike most of the other peers, who are appointees?

Ruth Jones: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that. He says that I keep referring to hereditary peers, but I have referred to them once, in response to one of my colleagues.

John Spellar: It is fascinating that some Conservative Members want to defend not only this completely outdated and barbaric practice of trophy hunting, but the procedure by which a few hereditary peers are elected among themselves, no member of the public having any say in the matter. May I help my hon. Friend by saying that in the previous Session, the Bill was introduced by a Conservative Member? Indeed, a Conservative Member of the House of Lords was going to take up that Bill, but someone else shot in and grabbed it beforehand, with a bit of sleight of hand. If the hon. Member for Christchurch (Sir Christopher Chope) wants to defend that sort of jiggery pokery, he is welcome to.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): Order. I am anxious for us to come back to the Bill before us, as opposed to discussing a Bill that we might deal with later today about hereditary peers.

Ruth Jones: Thank you for clarifying that, Madam Deputy Speaker. I thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Warley for setting out what happened in the Lords, but I will move on.

The Bill will prevent people from bringing into Great Britain hunting trophies from the species listed in annex A, which are the most endangered species, or annex B, which are species threatened by commercial trade, of the principal wildlife trade regulation. Those lists largely correspond to equivalents in CITES, which is an important international agreement protecting endangered plants and animals, and the UK is a party to it. The Bill also creates an advisory board on hunting trophies, as some Conservative Members highlighted, which will advise the Secretary of State on any issues relating to the legislation, or any matter relating to the import to Great Britain of hunting trophies derived from species that are, or are likely to become, endangered.

I cannot emphasise enough how crucial this legislation is. Trophy hunting is not only barbaric, but wholly unnecessary. In this country, as in most others, we have long recognised that animals should not be subjected to unnecessary suffering. That principle is reflected domestically in our Animal Welfare Act 2006, and aligns with our understanding, supported by animal welfare science and enshrined in legislation, that animals are sentient beings. As such, they deserve to be treated with dignity and humanity.

There is nothing dignified or humane about the sport of trophy hunting. It involves killing innocent animals for the sole purpose of turning their bodies into trophies. The animals often experience immense pain, fear and distress in the moments before they die. Some may be shot by inexperienced hunters using less efficient weapons, such as crossbows or spears, which do not deliver a rapid death. We saw this with Cecil the lion in 2015, who suffered for several hours following his wounding by crossbow in a beautiful part of southern Africa before he was finally put out of his misery. His death quite rightly caused outrage around the world, including here in Britain.

Other practices that trophy hunting can involve raise further welfare concerns. I was horrified to learn of the practice of canned hunting—the captive wildlife farming of animals for hunting. It often involves inflicting extremely poor welfare conditions on the captive wild animals, mostly lions, who may have to suffer from unsatisfactory enclosures, a lack of enrichment, and insufficient provision of shelter and vet treatment, all so that part of their body may eventually become somebody's trophy. Let us not forget the negative impact that trophy hunting can have on other animals, such as the harm to offspring, who may be unable to survive on their own after their parent is left for dead. That was highlighted earlier, as was the weakening of the gene pool. These are important factors to consider.

Trophy hunting can have a negative impact on wildlife. Trophy hunters tend to target the world's most iconic animals, including endangered wild animal species such as lions, polar bears, giraffes and rhinos. Hunters selfishly kill these vulnerable animals so that they can display their body parts as some sort of perverse prize. World Animal Protection notes that British hunters have brought home approximately 25,000 hunting trophies since the 1980s, and approximately 5,000 of these came from species at risk of extinction. The public are right to find

this absolutely abhorrent, and to want to increase the protection afforded to these species, which are already under pressure from habitat loss, climate change, poaching and the illegal wildlife trade, by passing this important legislation. My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Rosie Duffield) eloquently outlined those issues earlier.

Let us not forget how unnecessary these horrors are. Compared with the overall revenue that local economies gain from tourism, income from trophy hunting is insignificant. A 2017 report by Economists at Large that analysed eight African countries found that while overall tourism was between 2.8% and 5.1% of GDP in the eight countries, the total economic contribution of trophy hunters was, at most, about 0.03% of GDP, in stark contrast to the claims made by some Conservative Members.

There are more ethical and sustainable alternatives to trophy hunting for conservation. A recent study showed that 84% of previous or potential tourists to South Africa, including those visiting from within Africa, would be willing to pay a daily “lion protection fee” for wildlife conservation. Photographic safaris, which, as the Born Free Foundation puts it, involves shooting an animal

“with a camera, not a gun”,

is another welfare-friendly alternative to hunting trophies. These alternative activities have the potential to generate income equalling or even exceeding the income generated from trophy hunting without causing pain and suffering to wild animals. My hon. Friend the Member for Eltham highlighted that when he mentioned the amazing experience he had on his photographic safari.

Supporting global efforts to promote humane tourism is consistent with recent legislation passed in this House, namely the Animals (Low-Welfare Activities Abroad) Act 2023. However, I note that the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is yet to even consult on the activating regulations that are necessary for the 2023 Act to have any impact, or to give any indication of when such consultation will begin. I encourage him to do so as a matter of urgency, because wild animals deserve protection, and that requires regulatory action.

On this and so many animal welfare issues, the Government are letting animals and the public down by failing to act. As the shadow Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon North (Steve Reed), pointed out last Friday when another private Member's Bill containing a broken Conservative party promise was before the House, the Government have completely abandoned an extraordinary number of the animal welfare pledges they had made. The Government like to tell the public that they have progressed world-leading animal welfare commitments, but Compassion in World Farming ranked the UK only ninth among European countries by percentage of cage-free farm animals, trailing Luxembourg, Austria, Sweden, the Netherlands, Germany, Slovenia, Denmark and Belgium.

Although the Government have announced their support for private Members' Bills on animal welfare issues put forward by their Back-Bench MPs since they abandoned the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill, that is not leadership. I gently say to the Minister that if the Government really cared about animals and wished to honour the enormous public interest in passing strong laws for animals, they would put forward their own

promised measures. Until they do so, Labour will keep reminding the Government of their broken promises and putting forward private Members' Bills like this one, which we hope will become law as soon as possible. We have seen in the House today a near unanimous show of support. This is not racist, colonial legislation; it is UK law governing what comes into the UK. That is our right, and the Bill seeks to exercise that, so let's get on with it and get it done.

11.20 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Rebecca Pow): Many Members on both sides of the House have been eagerly awaiting the passing of this piece of legislation, as have many outside campaigners who have worked tirelessly on the issue and many of our constituents. I have had many emails on the issue in Taunton Deane. I thank the right hon. Member for Warley (John Spellar) for introducing the Bill and all those who have taken part in the debate, not least my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Henry Smith), who did such a sterling job just one year ago. I think he will agree that we had a lively debate then, and we have had a similarly lively debate today.

I want to list some of the colleagues from both sides of the House who have spoken eloquently. My hon. Friend the Member for East Worthing and Shoreham (Tim Loughton) made the point well about taking photographs of these wonderful creatures. There were interventions by my right hon. Friends the Members for Chipping Barnet (Theresa Villiers) and for Suffolk Coastal (Dr Coffey) and my hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Dean Russell), but there have also been moving speeches, in particular from my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley. Of course, many Opposition speakers have joined in as well.

It is clear that the issue of hunting trophies continues to divide opinion. We have witnessed some of that today from my hon. Friends the Members for Christchurch (Sir Christopher Chope) and for North Herefordshire (Sir Bill Wiggins). There is disagreement over the scientific, social, economic, moral and ethical rationales for trophy hunting, and that will no doubt continue for some time. There are those who point to evidence of the potential benefits of well-managed hunting—we heard a great deal about that from my hon. Friend the Member for North Herefordshire. We also heard the other side of the argument, with evidence of the harm caused by poor practice.

I want to stress something critical: we face the triple planetary crisis of biodiversity loss, climate change and pollution. Those are the greatest threats we face globally and, as the nature Minister, they are in my inbox every day. I am only too aware of all those threats and of how we need to tackle them. About 1 million animal and plant species face extinction. Much of that has occurred very recently—in our lifetime. The abundance, diversity and connectivity of species is declining faster than at any time in human history, and that includes the species targeted for trophy hunting. We all know and love them: elephants, rhinos, lions, leopards and polar bears, to name just a handful.

There are those who argue that banning the import of trophies from those animals will do nothing to improve their conservation status, and I am certainly listening to

[Rebecca Pow]

my hon. Friends on that, but we have to ask ourselves whether importing into Great Britain trophies from endangered animals helps to tackle biodiversity loss. Does this trade really help to secure a sustainable future for species on the brink of extinction? Many animals are under terrible threat anyway because their habitats are shrinking. That is happening for a range of social and economic reasons, but climate change is certainly part of it. Ultimately, the aim of the Bill is to ensure that imports of hunting trophies to Great Britain do not put additional pressure on already threatened species. That is what should concentrate our minds, and that is why I am pleased to confirm that the Government will support the Bill. In doing so, we signal our continued determination to fulfil our manifesto commitment in this regard.

I have heard the argument that a ban will have implications for local communities and conservation efforts globally, which is definitely something we must consider carefully. We must be alive to the unintended consequences. However, the Bill is about imports into Great Britain, as many have said in the debate—my right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk Coastal reminded us of that. This is about listening to the British public. There is a clear, strong and consistent message that we need to bring to an end the imports of endangered animals taken as hunting trophies. The winds of change are blowing us in that direction, and a number of countries have already put restrictions in place.

Sir Christopher Chope: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Rebecca Pow: I am not going to take any interventions, because Members have made so many already and we do not want to restrict the debate on the ultra low emission zone, but I will refer to some of the points that my hon. Friend rightly raised in a moment.

It is important to recognise that the import ban will not prevent a UK resident or citizen from participating in hunting while they are overseas. Trophy hunting can and will continue around the world. It is right that each country should be able to decide how best to manage its own wildlife, and the Bill does not change that. That point was highlighted vociferously by my hon. Friends the Members for Christchurch and for North Herefordshire, but it has to be remembered that we are not preventing that. Countries around the world on both sides of the debate have had regular opportunities to discuss this issue and raise their points. Indeed, we have had letters from the Presidents of Botswana and Namibia—the high commissioner was written to just yesterday.

It is important to keep in mind the contribution that the UK trade in hunting trophies makes. Annual imports of hunting trophies to the UK are very few in number—on average, there have been 73 a year over the last 10 years. Even so, it is essential that we play our part to ensure that communities around the world benefit from conserving the wildlife that they live alongside. That was reflected in the agreement of the hugely important global biodiversity framework. There is now a strong and essential focus on how, as a global community, we finance biodiversity, conservation and restoration work. Members will be aware of just how much the Government are doing on that front, with our huge £93 million Darwin initiative

and our £30 million Darwin Plus initiative. All of that focuses on biodiversity and conservation, working with locals and indigenous peoples.

Penultimately, let me run through some of the provisions in the Bill. The Bill will ban the import of hunting trophies from specific species, with the explicit aim of ensuring that imports into Great Britain do not place unnecessary pressure on species that are at risk. For those species, an import ban without exemptions will be the most effective protection, as it will provide clarity and address the conservation concerns arising from trophy hunting.

Clauses 1 and 2 make provision for the import ban, which will cover trophies brought into Great Britain from animals hunted after the legislation comes into force—there are strict, clear lines about anything that happens before that. The definition of a hunting trophy in clause 1 is:

“the body of an animal, or a readily recognisable part or derivative of an animal, that...is obtained...through hunting...for the hunter’s personal use”.

That is how hunting trophies are defined in our current controls under CITES.

Clause 2 applies the import ban to all species listed in annexes A and B of the wildlife trade regulation. The wildlife trade regulation implements the convention on international trade in endangered species—CITES—in Great Britain. Annexes A and B are broadly equivalent to appendices I and II of the convention, and include species that the global community has agreed to protect through trade restrictions due to their conservation status. They cover a great number of species threatened by international trade, such as big cats, all bears, all primates, hippos, rhinos and elephants. As a result, the Bill will end the permit system for imports of hunting trophies derived from those species. There will be no provision for exemptions to the import ban.

Clause 3 is about movements from Northern Ireland. The clause states clearly that the import ban will

“not apply in relation to the removal of qualifying Northern Ireland goods from Northern Ireland to Great Britain.”

Clause 4, which was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch, establishes an advisory board on hunting trophies. The clause states:

“The role of the Advisory Board is to advise the Secretary of State on any question relating to this Act”.

Clause 5 simply covers the Bill’s extent, application, commencement and short title.

Let me quickly discuss the impact assessment, as I did not allow any interventions. We heard some views about the impact assessment and what the Government will do about it, but there are two sides to that. The impact assessment presented both sides of the debate, but it also highlighted that trophy hunting can lead to population declines and that over-hunting threatens more than 30% of endangered mammal species, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature. The impact assessment also noted that trophy hunting quotas are inappropriate, unscientific, excessive and over-reliant on opinions, and that the management of such quotas is based on poor-quality data. Similarly, a report by the University of Oxford found that the damaging effects of the unsustainable trade in hunting can extend beyond hunting areas.

I hope that I have answered some of the questions. This has been a very positive and lively debate on both sides of the House. I thank the right hon. Member for Warley for bringing the Bill back to the House, and reconfirm that the Government are fully committed to supporting it.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): With the leave of the House, I call John Spellar to wind up.

Sir Bill Wiggin: Object!

Madam Deputy Speaker: In that case, I will put the Question.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The House proceeded to a Division.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Will the Serjeant at Arms investigate the delay in the Lobby?

The House having divided: Ayes 49, Noes 0.

Division No. 112] [11.32 am

AYES

Anderson, Fleur	Hollobone, Mr Philip
Andrew, rh Stuart	Johnson, Gareth
Ashworth, rh Jonathan	Jones, Ruth
Bhatti, Saqib	Kane, Mike
Brown, Ms Lyn	Leadbeater, Kim
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas	Madders, Justin
Buchan, Felicity	Mayhew, Jerome
Cadbury, Ruth	Mc Nally, John
Campbell, rh Sir Alan	McCarthy, Kerry
Cartledge, James	McDonnell, rh John
Caulfield, Maria	Mercer, rh Johnny
Corbyn, rh Jeremy	Milling, rh Dame Amanda
Davies, Mims	Onwurah, Chi
Davies-Jones, Alex	Opperman, Guy
Dowd, Peter	Pow, Rebecca
Duffield, Rosie	Russell, Dean
Eastwood, Mark	Smith, Henry
Efford, Clive	Smith, Jeff
Elphicke, Mrs Natalie	Spellar, rh John
Evennett, rh Sir David	Tomlinson, rh Michael
Foxcroft, Vicky	Tuckwell, Steve
Freer, Mike	Villiers, rh Theresa
French, Mr Louie	
Greenwood, Lilian	
Halfon, rh Robert	
Hands, rh Greg	
Harris, Rebecca	

Tellers for the Ayes:

Mark Fletcher and
Mike Wood

NOES

Tellers for the Noes: Sir Christopher Chope
Sir Bill Wiggin and

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time; to stand committed to a Public Bill Committee (Standing Order No. 63).

Greater London Low Emission Zone Charging (Amendment) Bill

Second Reading

11.49 am

Gareth Johnson (Dartford) (Con): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill would overturn the expansion of the ULEZ scheme, simply because it is a cruel, cruel form of taxation. It is particularly cruel to the poorest in society, hitting heavily those people who have old motor vehicles that they cannot afford to upgrade, with or without a scrappage scheme. It is also very unfair on business owners—especially those in outer London, who lose out on business that they would otherwise have secured from people travelling in from neighbouring counties to purchase their goods—and on people who live outside London, who have no say in who the London Mayor is.

The border between London and the home counties is not neat. People in my constituency live in Kent, but some of them have to go into London just to exit their road. The border straddles some roads. It is a border that cannot be avoided, and the Mayor of London knows that.

Sir David Evennett (Bexleyheath and Crayford) (Con): My hon. Friend and parliamentary neighbour is making an impressive start. He and I share roads in Crayford and Dartford where people living on different sides of the road pay different taxes. Some people, such as gardeners and plumbers, travel regularly from Dartford to Bexleyheath and Crayford for work, and they cannot afford this. It is so unfair, especially as it was not in the Mayor's manifesto when he was last elected.

Gareth Johnson: That is an absolutely valid point, but I would go further. About 50% of police officers in the Metropolitan police area live outside London and commute in, and the percentage for all emergency workers is probably about the same. These are the people who Londoners rely on the most—they are vital to Londoners—but if their vehicles are not ULEZ-compliant, they are hit with £12.50 every single time they go to work. Even worse, those doing night shifts have to pay on the way in and on the way out again, because at 3 am there might be no public transport. For emergency workers to be hit with £25 just for doing a night shift is totally and utterly wrong.

Mr Louie French (Old Bexley and Sidcup) (Con): My hon. Friend is making a great speech. As he knows, he has my full support. Does he agree that today we will see whose side Labour Members are on? Are they going to talk the Bill out, or are they going to back those emergency service workers and others in Bexley who want to be rid of ULEZ?

Dr Johnson: I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for the work that he has done in this respect. He is entirely right: we will see today whether Labour Members are in favour of the workers or in favour of Sadiq Khan.

Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab): I am following the hon. Gentleman's arguments with interest. In Bristol we have experienced the first year of a clean air zone, which was actually imposed on us as a requirement by the then Secretary of State for Environment, Food and

[Kerry McCarthy]

Rural Affairs, the right hon. Member for Suffolk Coastal (Dr Coffey), because the Government had been taken to court by ClientEarth for being in breach of air pollution limits and therefore insisted that we should adopt the scheme in Bristol. If I have a chance to speak later, I will comment on how successful it was, but in any case that seems slightly at odds with the hon. Gentleman's argument about local autonomy.

Gareth Johnson: I am grateful for that intervention, because it gives me an opportunity to smash the myth that the expansion of the ULEZ scheme has anything whatsoever to do with air pollution. If it was about air pollution, the Mayor of London would ban motor vehicles from going into London, but he does not want to ban them; he wants to make money out of them. If those motorists give the Mayor £12.50, they can drive all day long in London. He does not give a damn. Take my constituency in Dartford, for example: many people who previously used the Blackwall tunnel with ULEZ non-compliant vehicles are now having to use the Dartford crossing to get across the Thames. It is adding to pollution in areas such as Dartford, not removing it.

Dean Russell (Watford) (Con): Does my hon. Friend remember the letter I wrote in 2021, which was signed by many Members present today, including himself? Sadiq Khan, the Mayor of London, wanted to put a charge—a border tax, as I called it—on people driving into London, which had nothing to do with the environment at that time. He failed to do so after pressure was put on; a little bit later—shock horror—he puts the same thing out but with an environmental tinge to it. It is greenwashing, and it is making people in places such as Watford who work so hard pay extra just to go to work.

Gareth Johnson: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, and I pay tribute to the work he has done on this issue for some time. The approach to the border tax, as he called it, highlights the fact that the Mayor of London was hellbent on bringing in a system whereby he could make money out of cars. Originally, he wanted to make money out of every car; when he was stopped from doing that, he decided to make money out of certain cars only. That was his plan B.

Sir Christopher Chope (Christchurch) (Con): My constituents are equally adversely affected, and would benefit from my hon. Friend's Bill. Can he answer the question of why the Government themselves did not use the powers available to them to ban this extension of ULEZ?

Gareth Johnson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for intervening. As the law stands at the moment, the Government do not have the power to overturn the ULEZ expansion. As a consequence, I have introduced this Bill, which would give the Government the power to overturn the expansion.

I am really grateful to the Minister for his work and efforts on this issue, and for the fact that the Government now support the Bill. I therefore hope that it will be successful. We have heard about the scrappage scheme, but if we actually look into it, we see that it is up to £2,000 per vehicle—good luck getting a vehicle that is

ULEZ compliant for up to £2,000. We are also hearing that people are finding it very difficult to actually get their £2,000, or up to £2,000, from Transport for London; there have been a lot of delays. People have said, “Why don't we expand the scrappage scheme right down to Dartford and beyond?” Well, where do we draw the line if we are going to increase the scrappage area? Should it go up to the midlands or down to the west country? It could cost the taxpayers of this country billions of pounds, simply because the Mayor of London is unable to organise his finances.

Theresa Villiers (Chipping Barnet) (Con): I strongly support my hon. Friend's Bill, because this is an unjust charge. Does he agree that some of the victims of the charge are local high street businesses in outer London, whose customers from beyond the London border are reluctant to come in because they may have to pay the charge?

Gareth Johnson: I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend, who has been a real champion of this issue for her constituents in Barnet. She is absolutely right: people outside of London like to travel into London to use the dry cleaners, fish and chip shops, sweet shops and so on, but that no longer happens if their vehicle is not ULEZ compliant.

Clive Efford (Eltham) (Lab): I have been listening to the hon. Gentleman very carefully. He keeps talking about money-making as if someone is making a profit, but that money goes to London's services. He is a Dartford MP, from outside of London; how does he suggest that my constituents in London, who are writing to me in large numbers about the state of the potholes on our roads, can afford to pay for his constituents to drive through places such as my constituency on their way to the Blackwall tunnel? He is trying to deny Londoners the right to have decent roads.

Gareth Johnson: I am rather surprised that the hon. Member is standing up in support of what the Mayor of London has done with the ULEZ scheme. I think that if he looked at his inbox carefully, he would see that most of his constituents—particularly the poorest in his constituency—do not like the fact that they are having to pay £12.50 just to use their motor vehicles. I do not feel that this is something on which his constituents support him.

Clive Efford: I am a bit concerned that the hon. Gentleman has been looking into my emails—I think I will have a word with the parliamentary estate managers about that. Perhaps the reason I am standing up today is that not too many people have contacted me about ULEZ since it has been introduced; what they are contacting me about is the state of our roads. The potholes on our roads are symbolic of the Conservatives' disastrous management of our public services over the past 14 years, and everyone is complaining about them.

Gareth Johnson: Maybe the hon. Member has an oasis in south London, where everyone around the outside hates the ULEZ scheme but in Eltham they love it, but I would be very surprised. I gently remind him that most of the roads in Eltham are maintained by Greenwich's Labour council, which should take its share of responsibility for the state of the roads.

My hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Dean Russell) mentioned the “border charge”. The Mayor launched a consultation that showed that people rejected the expansion—it was absolutely clear they did not want it. There was a question mark over how that consultation was handled, but it was clear that the majority of people did not want the expansion, yet the Mayor still went ahead with it. When he stood to be Mayor, his manifesto did not mention the fact that he wanted to expand the ULEZ scheme right to the border, so he has no mandate from his manifesto. His transport plan had no mention of the expansion either, so the Mayor of London does not have a mandate for expanding the ULEZ scheme.

I have heard people say, “Well, this is interfering with devolution. It is undermining devolution.”—[*Interruption.*] I would say the opposite. It is the actions of the London Mayor that are undermining devolution. The whole point of devolution is to bequeath the power to make laws to Mayors, in this example, and for those elected Mayors to use the powers for the people they represent. It is not devolution when those powers have a profound impact on people who do not come from the area that Mayor represents. The Mayor of London’s actions have had a huge impact on the lives of people living in Dartford, who do not have the power to vote him in or out. It is taxation without representation, or any kind of accountability whatsoever. Frankly, it is devolution at its worst, which is why it is right that central Government intervene over this matter. Devolved powers are being taken way beyond intended and they are impacting people who are not able to vote in that area.

I predict that this is the beginning, not the end. If Sadiq Khan wins the election for London Mayor in May, as sure as night follows day he will change the criteria for vehicles to be ULEZ compliant until we get to the stage where every single petrol or diesel car is impacted by the expansion. People watching this debate at home—if they have nothing better to do on a Friday afternoon—may be sitting pretty, thinking, “This does not affect me because my car is ULEZ compliant; it has nothing to do with me.” I say they should be very aware of what happens at the mayoral elections. As sure as night follows day, the Mayor of London will change the goal posts and ensure that all motor vehicles will be hit by the ULEZ expansion.

Mr French: On that point, does my hon. Friend agree that it is clear that what the Mayor of London says and what he does are very different? He previously ruled out expanding ULEZ, and then he did it.

Gareth Johnson: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. That is typical of what has happened throughout the debate about ULEZ. In July last year, the leader of the Labour party said that ULEZ expansion was a wonderful thing. Come the by-election in Uxbridge and South Ruislip, he said, “Oh no, we have got to think again over this one. I’m not quite sure if we got this one right.” Just this week, he said the ULEZ expansion was a great thing. We have had enormous dithering from the leader of the Labour party over this issue, and the Mayor of London is taking full advantage of that fact.

Clive Efford: On that point, will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Gareth Johnson: I will not. We had a Westminster Hall debate, at which many colleagues were present. Unfortunately, not a single Labour Back Bencher turned up. It was pitiful and it highlights the Labour party’s mismanagement of the issue. We have the mayoral election coming up in May, and the Conservative candidate, Susan Hall, has pledged to overturn the ULEZ expansion on day one. The quickest and most effective way to overturn the ULEZ expansion is therefore to vote for Susan Hall. If we do that, or if my Bill is successful, we will end a cruel tax on many people who have no say on London’s Mayor. It is an attack on the poorest in society, and those who can least afford to pay are being hit the hardest. I cannot wait to see the back of it.

12.5 pm

Lilian Greenwood (Nottingham South) (Lab): I rise to speak in opposition to the Bill for three key reasons. First, it represents an attack on devolution. Secondly, it ignores the urgent and important need to tackle poor air quality, not just here in London but in towns and cities across our country. We would be forgiven for forgetting about this urgent public health issue, because the hon. Member for Dartford (Gareth Johnson) barely mentioned it in his introduction, yet it goes to the very heart of having the ultra low emission zone. It is about trying to tackle something that is a significant problem here in London and in towns and cities across the country, and it is not just a problem in city centres. The heat map for my city shows that poor air quality is not restricted to the city centre, and that the ring road has particular issues. Poor air quality is an issue in outer London just as it is in inner London. Thirdly, the Bill uses a serious public health issue for purely party political point scoring.

I begin with devolution. [*Interruption.*] It would be nice if I could hear myself speak. It is worth remembering that the ultra low emission zone and, indeed, emission charging zones are Tory policy that was pushed on to local government by a Tory Government and first championed here in London by a Tory Mayor. We would not know that from listening to the interventions of Conservative Members.

The Mayor of London has statutory obligations in relation to air quality across the Greater London area. He has a right, indeed a duty, to introduce measures to meet the national air quality targets set by central Government. The whole purpose of devolution is for local people to determine the policies that are needed for their area. The Government have set the targets for air quality, and it is for democratically elected Mayors and local authorities to run their cities or counties in a way that works best for their area, which I know can be controversial.

My city is unique in this country in having a workplace parking levy. I would not say for one moment that it has not been controversial. It was incredibly controversial when it was first introduced more than 10 years ago when, under a previous Conservative-led Government, there was a huge problem with austerity. People were feeling the impact of that austerity, so the levy’s introduction was delayed by a year, but it was about both discouraging people from driving into the city and providing an income stream that could be used to improve alternatives to driving by investing in public transport. It has been incredibly successful. Nottingham is one of the cities

[Lilian Greenwood]

that have not been forced to introduce a clean air zone, because its work to improve public transport, in part funded by the workplace parking levy, has led to that situation.

The Mayor of London expanded the ULEZ in August 2023 because toxic air pollution is a public health crisis. He is acting to tackle the crisis of poor air quality. I remind hon. Members that poor air quality is linked to around 4,000 premature deaths per year in London. It leads to children growing up with stunted lungs, and contributes to people developing serious health problems, including asthma, heart disease and dementia. I understand that the hon. Member for Dartford might not agree with the Mayor about the best way to tackle air pollution, but that is democracy.

Clive Efford: My hon. Friend is developing a powerful argument, and this is what the Conservatives have no answer to. What would they put in place to deal with the health aspects of poor air quality, such as damage to children's development, and people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and other respiratory and coronary illnesses who are adversely affected by this issue? The Conservatives are desperate because they have nothing to offer the people of London they seek to scaremonger about this charge. There is no concern whatsoever for the health of Londoners, or those people in outer London who are suffering most from air pollution.

Lilian Greenwood: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It was really telling when the hon. Member for Dartford began to talk about his mayoral candidate that he said nothing about her plans to tackle the serious issue of air pollution.

Stella Creasy (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op): My hon. Friend hits on a blunter truth about the Bill. In six weeks' time, our constituents, whether they agree or not with the argument made by the hon. Member for Dartford or with arguments on the importance of tackling air pollution, will have the opportunity to express an opinion at the ballot box when choosing who the London Mayor overseeing this policy should be. Is the message of the Bill that Conservative MPs have no confidence in their mayoral candidate winning that argument, or indeed doing anything in support of their policies? They clearly feel the need to intervene and usurp devolution, so should nobody in London even bother with the Conservative campaign, because their candidate's own colleagues think she is incompetent?

Lilian Greenwood: My hon. Friend has hit the nail on the head.

Progress is being achieved. The vast majority of cars—19 out of 20 in Greater London—are compliant with ULEZ. Labour Members are pleased that Transport for London and the Mayor of London have decided to expand the scrappage scheme to support those who are struggling as a result of the Tory cost of living crisis.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Guy Opperman): I am listening with interest to the hon. Lady's speech. The Government obviously support the Bill in the circumstances applied. Will she address

the point that is fairly made about people outside a mayoral zone being affected and penalised by entering a mayoral zone, when they did not vote for that?

Lilian Greenwood: Unusual as it is for the Minister to intervene, I think the point was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Clive Efford). When people from outside London drive into London, the costs of that in terms of health, and wear and tear on the roads, is borne by constituents here in London. It is not unreasonable for them to expect that those who benefit from everything that London has to offer, who travel into the centre causing congestion and poor air quality, should abide by the well-established principle that the polluter pays.

Kerry McCarthy: This goes back to what I was saying about the fact that the Government insisted that Bristol had a clean air zone. Obviously that will have a significant impact on people from Bath, for example, who drive down the A4 into my constituency, causing a huge amount of congestion and air pollution, but that is basically how politics works. I entirely agree with what my hon. Friend just said: the duty of politicians is to look after people in the patch they represent.

Lilian Greenwood: My hon. Friend is exactly right. I will come on to address how we best tackle the issue of air pollution and, at the same time, protect those who are impacted by this charge.

From 21 August last year, every Londoner with a non-compliant vehicle became eligible for a £2,000 grant to assist them in replacing their vehicle. I understand why people have said that £2,000 is not enough, but that has been provided despite central Government giving no financial support to the Mayor of London for it. Of course, if the Government are concerned about the impact—[*Interruption.*] If they are concerned about the impact of their clean air charging zones, they could have provided additional assistance—

Sir David Evennett: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Lilian Greenwood: No, I am not giving way at the moment.

As I was saying, the Government could have provided additional financial support to the Mayor of London so that that grant could have been increased, but they chose not to so.

I am proud that Labour is the party of devolution. [*Interruption.*] It was Labour that created the mayoral model in London, and created the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Assembly and the Northern Ireland Assembly, as well as always having—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): Order. The hon. Lady is trying to make a speech. We have a conversation going on between the two Front-Bench teams and rather a lot of shouting at the hon. Lady herself. We need to listen to her speech with respect.

Lilian Greenwood: As I was saying, that devolution is as well as always having regional and local decision making and funding across England. I am pleased that the next Labour Government will build on that record. Indeed, Labour Mayors across England are already showing how it is done—whether that is in Manchester,

Liverpool, South Yorkshire or West Yorkshire—taking back control of buses, supporting new homes, and reforming employment and skills. I am very much looking forward to seeing Claire Ward elected as the first Mayor of the East Midlands on 2 May. Sadly, while Labour is committed to more devolution, this Bill shows that the Tories are simply trying to roll it back.

I wish to say a little more about air pollution, which is at the heart of this Bill, and the strategies to tackle it. As I have already said, we know the problems that poor air causes. It affects our health and our environment; as many as 40,000 people die prematurely each year as a result of poor air quality. The elderly, the unwell and the economically deprived are those most likely to be affected. The Government's own estimates say that poor air quality costs the UK economy billions of pounds each year. I think about my own constituency and the arguments that we had about the workplace parking levy. Lots of people in the city do not pay the levy, because they simply cannot afford to run a car at all; they are reliant on public transport.

We also know where the problem occurs. Key pollutants, including nitrogen dioxide and fine particulate matter—known as PM_{2.5}—are found in many places, and too many air quality zones in the UK exceed legal limits. The World Health Organisation tells us that there is no safe level of exposure to fine particulate matter. We know what causes poor air quality. It comes from several sources—industry, agriculture, homes, businesses, and, yes, transport. Road transport is responsible for the vast majority of nitrogen oxide concentrations at places in the UK that exceed the legal limits, with diesel engines a significant contributor.

The number of cars and vans on our roads continues to rise and congestion has worsened, which increases pollution in itself. Transport also generates a significant proportion of particulate matter, which can come from both combustion and wear of tyres and brake pads. Cleaner vehicles help to solve the problem, and we have made some progress on that, but not enough.

There are examples from across the country of the action that can be taken to tackle emissions. Low emission zones are only one tool in the toolbox, and it could be said that they should be a last resort. As I have said, in my city, there has been considerable investment in public transport, paid for in part by proceeds from the workplace parking levy. We have had major extensions to our tram network. Nottingham's municipal bus company introduced new biogas buses years ago, and I am really pleased to see that it has just started to roll out new electric vehicles. I do not deny that there has been support from central Government for some of that investment. For some years, the city council has had an anti-idling campaign. That multi-pronged approach mirrors similar action in towns and cities across the UK, with not one but multiple tools being used to tackle this serious public health issue.

The Department for Transport has supported the development of low emission buses and taxis. That is a good thing, because tackling poor air quality should be about central Government working with local councils and Mayors, rather than dictating to them, as the Bill does. Central Government should support and collaborate with them. In preparing for the debate, I went back to a 2018 report, produced by four cross-party Select

Committees, that looked at improving air quality. One thing that the Committees came together to recommend was collaboration and partnership between central Government, local authorities and Mayors, because air pollution is a problem that cannot be fixed by central or local government alone; they need to work together.

Like the Mayor of London, local authorities are already responsible for meeting air quality targets, but they find it difficult to make changes, partly due to a lack of resources and partly because the changes needed are politically unpalatable; I guess that in part is what has caused the debate. It was a while ago, but that joint report from 2018 called for ambitious, co-ordinated cross-departmental action. I am sorry that in some respects the Government have failed on that, as they have prevaricated on removing the most polluting vehicles from our roads. At the time of the report, we called on them to have a more ambitious target for the removal of petrol and diesel cars; I think they were only committed to removing them by 2040. They did at first commit to a more ambitious target of ending the sale of petrol and diesel cars, but more recently, they have rowed back from that, which makes it more difficult for us to achieve the improvements that we know are needed.

There was also a decision to row back on the electrification of our railways, in favour of bi-mode trains, which have worrying implications for air quality, carbon emissions and noise. Every time I go to St Pancras station to catch my train home to Nottingham, I stand on the platform among diesel trains because the railway is not electrified all the way to Nottingham. Frankly, I am looking forward to seeing new trains on the midland main line next year, but they will be bi-mode trains, and while they will leave St Pancras under electric power, which will improve air quality in central London, by the time they get to Nottingham, they will be operating under diesel power, doing far less to improve air quality in our city. That is the result of a decade of broken promises from successive Tory Prime Ministers, who have paused and cancelled the electrification of the midland mainline. We now know that electric trains will not reach Nottingham until at least the early 2030s. I have sometimes joked that I will be retired by the time we get there, and I am afraid that might be the case.

There is a danger of the Government relying too heavily on new technologies to solve our air quality challenges, and placing too much emphasis on cleaning up road vehicles and not enough on reducing the number of vehicles on our roads. Improving public transport and encouraging active travel should lie at the heart of any clean air strategy. Getting freight off our roads and on to our railways would be welcome, taking many heavy goods vehicles, which are often the most polluting, off our roads.

Back in 2018, the four Select Committees concluded that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Department for Transport should work closely with local authorities to ensure that councils introducing clean air zones received the support that they needed to implement complementary measures that encourage car drivers to switch to public transport and active travel, and increase the take-up of electric vehicles. I understand that not every journey can be made by public transport or bicycle, or on foot, but if we can change a proportion of those journeys, we can make a real difference. For a while, the Conservative

[Lilian Greenwood]

party seemed really interested in walking and cycling—I see the Minister with responsibility for walking and cycling, the hon. Member for Hexham (Guy Opperman), sitting on the Front Bench, but he has not been terribly busy. Yesterday at transport questions, not a single Conservative MP asked a question about active travel. It is disappointing that they have scaled back their investment in that.

Investment in low-emission buses is great, but the value of that investment is magnified if local authorities also take steps to encourage motorists to opt for buses, rather than make journeys by car. I understand the argument made by the hon. Member for Dartford that people can continue to drive, but of course a charge is a disincentive; that is partly how the scheme operates. The pandemic had a huge impact on public transport usage, both in London and across the country. I pay tribute to the Government for their £2 bus fare, which has been a welcome initiative. In London, the Labour Mayor Sadiq Khan has also taken action, both to protect Londoners from the Tory cost of living crisis and to encourage more people to travel by public transport; he has introduced the hopper fare on buses, and has frozen fares in five out of eight years.

Without action or a modal shift, efforts to tackle congestion or improve air quality are less likely to succeed. Many of the policies needed to tackle urban congestion could also help to improve air quality. Tackling both issues could have a positive effect on both the local and the national economy. A significant increase in active travel could make a difference not just to air quality policies but to tackling obesity, improving mental health and building better communities.

Stella Creasy: My hon. Friend is making an incredibly powerful case for why air quality should be a priority for us all. Ultimately, it is a social justice issue. However rich or poor we are, we all breathe the same air. I suggest to anyone who lives in London that they will see the need to tackle low air quality if they leave London for a couple of days and then blow their nose. They will realise what they have been breathing in. This issue affects everyone. She is right that we must tackle it nationally as well as locally. Does she agree that unless the Conservatives comes up with an alternative plan, they are condemning the poorest in our communities to the worst health outcomes?

Lilian Greenwood: My hon. Friend makes an important point. I would be surprised if many people decided that they wanted to go in the direction of having a Conservative Mayor in the absence of proper information about how a Conservative Mayor would tackle air pollution.

Finally, this Bill is about party political point scoring. The Government support clean air zones. Indeed, they provided cash for scrappage schemes in Bristol, Bath, Sheffield, Birmingham, Portsmouth and other areas of the country, but not London. I wonder why. In towns and cities across England—not just in London—our constituents have faced 14 years of Tory economic failure. They cannot afford another week, let alone more months or, heaven forbid, years of Tory Government. Families are sick with anxiety as they endure this cost of living crisis, while their local services are under immense pressure.

When times are tough due to the Conservatives' economic failure, it is essential that we look at options for achieving clean air without disproportionately impacting people. We must secure our economy and make it stronger by getting growth back on course, as the last Labour Government did, whereas we have had an anaemic situation under 14 years of the Tories. [Interruption.] They do not want to hear it, do they? They do not want to hear that growth was faster under a Labour Government than under 14 years of the Tories. Fourteen years of Tory economic failure have left us in this position, where everything is worse and everything is broken. It is by growing our economy that we will provide sustainable, long-term funding for councils, and give local areas the tools and stability that they need for growth, as we push power, wealth and opportunity out from Westminster.

Gareth Johnson: The hon. Lady has been speaking for nearly half an hour, and it is obvious that she and the Labour party wish to talk out my Bill to overturn the expansion of the ULEZ scheme. Can I ask what her message is to a lady I spoke to recently in my constituency? She said that she could not visit her sister in Bexley, just a few miles away. As she was a disabled person, she could not use public transport, could not afford to upgrade her car, and could not afford a taxi. That may not affect people in Nottingham South, but it does affect people in Dartford.

Lilian Greenwood: I understand that people face a cost of living crisis. What the hon. Member should have explained to that lady is why she feels so much worse off after 14 years of Conservative Government. He should not try to pin it on a single issue; it is down to his Government's failure, and he should take some responsibility for that.

Fleur Anderson (Putney) (Lab): I thank my hon. Friend for her excellent speech in support of clean air, which is what this debate is all about. What would she say to the many parents I meet in my constituency who introduce me to children who have asthma on a scale never seen before? Through ULEZ and other measures, they will see their children's health improve.

Lilian Greenwood: My hon. Friend makes an important point that could be lost in this debate, which is that the issue is about health—the health of children and older people. It is, as my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy) said, about the health of some of the poorest in society; they are most impacted by poor air quality. That is what we should be talking about.

Clive Efford: If, as the promoter of the Bill, the hon. Member for Dartford (Gareth Johnson), claims, the issue is not health, why are the Government supporting charge zones in other cities?

Lilian Greenwood: We will have to listen to the Minister's answer on that. However, it was clear that the Government wanted clean air charging zones—in fact, they were a requirement on cities that had not succeeded in meeting air quality targets through other measures. I am not going to apologise for speaking in this debate because, as I say, I have long had an interest in air quality. The experience in my city means we have something to offer and share.

Finally, let me turn to the alternative, because the hon. Member for Dartford did not say much about alternatives. I want to talk about that because Labour does have a plan to support drivers. We will support them by focusing on the cost of living and on the infrastructure challenges, which are real priorities for households that have and use a car—that probably includes most of us some of the time, even if we walk, cycle or use a bus most of the time. Our plan includes working with the Competition and Markets Authority, the Financial Conduct Authority and industry on addressing the soaring costs of car insurance. We plan to bring railways back into public hands and to allow all local authorities to take back control of their bus services. London never had to put up with the deregulation of its bus services as the rest of the country did. Those things have the capability to relieve congestion by improving the state of our public transport network, and I imagine other local authorities might like to follow Nottingham's lead by having a municipal bus company, which, once again, has been shown to provide one of the best bus services in the entire country. I would say that we have the best bus service, thanks to Nottingham City Transport.

A Labour Government would be committed to protecting our environment, helping to decarbonise the economy, and ensuring that we all have safe air to breathe. Labour would work with local authorities and mayoral combined authorities to support them to meet air quality targets in the ways that work best for their areas. We appreciate that emissions levels in different areas vary as a result of the kind of industry and economic activity in those areas, and we will work in partnership with local and regional governments, empowering them to protect and improve air quality, while fostering economic innovation and productivity.

Labour would make it clear that the Government have a direct responsibility to work with our local authorities to avoid the need for charging clean air zones through the adoption of alternative air quality improvement methods, such as those I have talked about: re-routing traffic, land management, speed limits, better public transport, and better options to get freight off our roads and on to our railways. That responsibility should also extend to helping to mitigate the impact of any proposals that clear the strong thresholds set by the Government for a clean air zone.

I thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak in this debate, and I hope that hon. Members will focus on the issue of air pollution and the need to take action in a variety of ways to tackle it.

12.38 pm

Sir David Evennett (Bexleyheath and Crayford) (Con): Let me begin by congratulating my neighbour, my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Gareth Johnson), on his Bill, which I was delighted to sponsor. I am delighted to participate in this debate and to congratulate him also on his excellent, informative and constructive speech.

I was rather disappointed in the hon. Member for Nottingham South (Lilian Greenwood), for whom I have a lot of respect, because she did not say much about ULEZ. She took us on a tour of Nottingham and told us about other parts of Labour party policy, but she showed a total misunderstanding of—or no understanding of—outer London. *[Interruption.]* She can barrack me

all she likes, but she never had a view on outer London. She also made a statement that was fundamentally untrue, in saying that this Government had not bailed out the Mayor of London. Transport for London has been bailed out so many times in the past few years, but she did not say that. She glossed over the management of TfL. She also did not come up with any facts or figures to show that ULEZ has reduced the level of pollution in inner London. We are still seeing huge levels of pollution in inner London, even on the underground, which came to our attention last year—

Lilian Greenwood *rose*—

Sir David Evennett: The hon. Lady would not give way to me, so I am certainly not going to give way to her. I have also not had the opportunity to start my speech. I know that Opposition Members just want to delay everybody and everything, but I want to speak for my borough of Bexley. We had a long tour about Nottingham, but ULEZ affects my borough and my constituency, not hers in Nottingham, so I think I should have a few minutes to speak. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy) did not get up and ask to intervene, but the others did.

The expansion of ULEZ affects my area and the surrounding areas very badly. It blindly copies the approach taken in central and inner London without properly assessing the implications for outer London or the neighbouring areas. The expansion has caused a range of negative social, financial and economic impacts for those who can least afford it. Perhaps this is not the case for the hon. Member for Eltham (Clive Efford), for whom I have a lot of respect, but we are inundated with people in my borough, some of whom support his party, who think it is unfair for ULEZ to come to Bexley when Bexley has good air quality, as does Bromley. I am surprised at what he says; I have no doubt that it is correct, as he as a good friend of mine and an honourable man, but I do not believe that there have not been people in Eltham who have said that this is unfair to those who are less well off.

Clive Efford: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way. I want to clarify that I did not say that I have not had any people say that. What I said was that far more people write to me about the state of our roads, which the Government have caused by starving local authorities of investment.

Sir David Evennett: Of course, recently local authorities have been given more money by the Government. I would say to the hon. Member that that is the fault of Greenwich council, not the Government.

Mr French: My right hon. Friend rightly points out that the local council is responsible for the roads. What the hon. Member for Eltham (Clive Efford) failed to point out is that the Royal Borough of Greenwich has been given over £7.8 million by the Government through the recent announcement of the potholes fund.

Sir David Evennett: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and constituency neighbour.

The ULEZ extension is a disastrous policy and another example of the London Labour Mayor filling the black hole in his finances. This Mayor is no friend of motorists.

[Sir David Evennett]

We have already had 20 mph speed limits, 24/7 bus lanes and the congestion charge on people who need to use their car. My constituents are very angry about this.

My borough is one of the two in London without the tube, the docklands light railway or trams. The Mayor of London has never even looked at extending any of those. We only have Southeastern rail and buses as our public transport. It is all very well to say that we should go on the tube, but we do not have it. Like many people, we have to use a car to get about in our area. The lack of public transport—and the fact that a lot of what we have is unreliable—has major implications for my constituents and residents of the borough of Bexley.

We are heavily reliant on our cars for various purposes. We have one of the highest car ownership rates and the lowest sustainable modal share rate in London. Over the last decade, car and van registrations have outstripped population growth. These are not figures we want to have. We hear all these wonderful things that the Mayor of London is doing, but in our area he has done very little. I made the point in an intervention on my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford that the Mayor had no mandate for this extension. It is all very well the hon. Member for Nottingham South talking about a mandate, but from his last manifesto he had no mandate for this policy. We could have debated it then. The hon. Lady was high on the mandates, but the manifesto did not mention it at all.

I believe that the consultation was rather a sham. Two thirds of people objected to the ULEZ, and they did so for many and various reasons. We have heard from businesses, and we have heard my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford talk about his constituent who has to go and visit a relative in Bexley on a regular basis, and who now has to pay an extra £12.50 every time. The Labour party says that it cares about the less well-off and those who are disadvantaged, as I do passionately. I believe in social mobility and in giving people the chance to maximise their opportunities in life, and I have to say that the ULEZ is a tax on those who cannot afford to get around. In Bexley, we do not have the public transport services that other London boroughs have.

The congestion charge has tripled in the last few years, and the fine for non-payment has increased from £160 to £180—more than two days' pay for minimum wage earners. It is reduced to £90 if paid within two weeks, but that is still more than a day's pay. This is very unsatisfactory for the less well-off in the outer boroughs of London, as well as for businesses, key workers, pensioners and families. It is no good the Labour party always blaming somebody else, because the ULEZ was introduced by the Mayor of London. The poorest in my borough are the ones who do not have the ability to change their cars, and giving them £2,000 to do so is a bit of an insult. I am really disappointed.

Stella Creasy: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for giving way. If he were to persuade the Government to provide additional support for scrappage, as they have done for other clean air zones in the country, to people in the outer boroughs of London, whom he and I represent, he would have my support, but does he understand my concern? Our constituents can have their say on this matter at the London mayoral elections

in just six weeks' time. Why is he seeking to usurp his own candidate and her ability to address this issue? Does he have such little confidence that he feels that national legislation is needed to undermine his own candidate, or is it really a sign that he thinks London recognises that the best option is Sadiq Khan?

Sir David Evennett: I have a lot of respect for the hon. Lady, and I know her constituency very well. I grew up in Woodford, so I know the area. *[Interruption.]* I know that is not in her constituency, but my wife and son were born in Walthamstow. The hon. Lady should let me finish before she interjects. I know that part of the world well, and I respect her tremendously for the work that she does locally. What I would say to her is that this is a conversation that should have been had before the Mayor implemented the policy. We could have then had meetings with the Government and Members representing outer London constituencies, and had a discussion about how we could go forward constructively.

The Mayor did not allow for that. He just had an artificial consultation and did not take any notice of what people thought, and we did not have a discussion. We should have had it beforehand. The hon. Lady says that these matters should be discussed with the Government and others, but we did not have that discussion. This Government have bailed out the Mayor of London so much, which the Opposition do not like to admit. I am a big supporter of Susan Hall, and I very much hope that she will win on 2 May.

It is important to note that a lot of care workers have been in touch with me. Some of them work in the constituency of the hon. Member for Eltham, and they are very cross that they have to pay £12.50. It is more difficult to get night staff, who have to pay £25. Surely that cannot be right. Surely it must be looked at again by the Mayor of London, because these are key workers in our area. They do a magnificent job, and I am always supportive of them.

I will come to a conclusion, because I do not want to take half an hour and not let other people participate in the debate. I am really disappointed that the Opposition Members who have spoken so far have tried to make this a general discussion about clean air zones across the country. We are looking at London. Unfortunately, we no longer have the debates we always used to—a debate on London issues on a Thursday. That is when we could discuss London issues, not Nottingham or national issues, however important they might be, and air quality is very important. If we are going to do that, as I said to the hon. Member for Nottingham South, let us have the figures for the improvements in inner London and the pollution that is still on the tube after years of the charge being in place in the centre of London.

Stella Creasy: Will the right hon. Member give way?

Sir David Evennett: No, I am going to conclude because I want other people to have a chance. If people take half an hour, it is not fair on others who want to speak, whatever they want to say. I thank my hon. Friend the Minister who will respond to the debate, and I am particularly supportive of the Secretary of State for Transport, who is doing a brilliant job in the Department. He announced today that the Government will certainly be supporting this Bill.

In conclusion—because I want other people to have the chance to speak—the ULEZ extension was hurried in without proper discussion and consultation, and without thought of the consequences, and my constituents are suffering because of it.

12.50 pm

Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab): As a Bristol MP, I suppose I have to apologise for daring to take part in a debate that is primarily about our capital city, but millions of our constituents visit as tourists and come here to work, and as a nation we all want to see it as a healthy, safe and pleasant place for people to visit, and to live and work in, regardless of which constituency we represent.

I want to challenge the hon. Member for Dartford (Gareth Johnson), who brought in the Bill, for saying that this is not an air pollution issue. It is clearly not an air pollution issue from his point of view. We know why he has brought the Bill forward: because of the elections coming up on 2 May. It is a desperate last-ditch attempt to try to boost the Conservative vote—and I think we know how that will turn out. Perhaps some Conservative Members ought to be out and about, talking to voters on the doorstep, rather than taking up our time here today, if they really want to influence the result of that election.

The hon. Member, who has left the Chamber now, may not feel that ULEZ is an air pollution issue, but I very much feel that it is because low emissions are a public health issue. In my role as shadow Climate Change Minister, people often come and talk to me about air pollution as though it is primarily a net zero issue, and we have seen some depressing attempts to make net zero part of the anti-woke culture wars by saying that net zero comes at a cost. We saw the Secretary of State for Transport buy into the whole conspiracy theory about 15-minute cities at party conference, which is incredibly depressing. Reducing emissions from transport is obviously very much part of our ambition to meet net zero, but the immediate driver is the need to clean up our air.

We have heard mention of the switch to electric vehicles. It is obviously the long-term objective that we want to ensure that all the vehicles on our roads reach safe emission standards. It was therefore disappointing that the Government rowed back the 2030 ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel vehicles. The signal that that sent to the market and consumers was entirely counterproductive. Although initially there was some resistance to a 2030 target—rather than a 2035 target—within the car manufacturing trade, the trade then got with the programme and was critical of the Government for that row-back, because it affected sales. It had made the switch and was producing EVs; it is still bound by zero emission vehicle mandate, so it is making the new electric vehicles.

The most important thing we can do—this goes to the points about people not being able to afford cleaner vehicles that are compliant with the ULEZ—is to develop a second-hand electric vehicle market as quickly as possible. We do that by increasing new EV sales. The figure has gone down a bit, but it was the case that of new EV sales, 80-something per cent were fleet vehicles. We know that they then come on to the second-hand

market pretty quickly. We have to bring down the cost of buying EVs—I can see the right hon. Member for Bexleyheath and Crayford (Sir David Evennett) nodding—and we do not do that by pushing the ban back to 2035; we need to bring it in now.

We also need action on EV charging infrastructure. I will say thank you to the Government for providing some new money for charging infrastructure in the west of England—I think that Bristol is the best place outside London in this regard—but what is lacking is a national strategy to put the infrastructure into places where the market will not meet the need because there is not the necessary footfall, or whatever the driving equivalent is, particularly in our rural areas that depend on tourism. Those travelling down to Devon and Cornwall can use Exeter services, but after that it is pretty difficult to find somewhere to charge a car.

As I have an EV and cannot charge it at home because I live in a block of flats, I welcome the public charging points in Bristol. I spend far too much time sitting in car parks doing Duolingo and practising my very bad Russian while charging my car. It is quite sad when constituents spot me doing that. Although we need more charging points in our cities, including London, this is national infrastructure and we must roll it out to other parts of the country.

As I have said, I believe that the immediate imperative is not reducing transport emissions with the aim of reaching net zero but dealing with air pollution, which we know has a significant impact on people's health and on children's health in particular. When I was at school there was just one girl in my class with asthma, but nowadays the majority of kids in any inner-city primary school probably have it. Children are more vulnerable in this regard because their airways are smaller and still developing, because they are closer to traffic fumes because they are small, and because they breathe more rapidly. They are also more likely to develop more serious lung conditions in later life—although of course asthma can be very serious.

Moreover, air pollution affects the lung development of fetuses in utero, and increases the chance of miscarriage. If a mother is exposed to a large volume of air pollution during pregnancy the baby is more likely to be born prematurely and with a lower birth weight, which is correlated with the development of certain health problems as a child grows up. I pay tribute to groups such as Asthma + Lung UK and Mums for Lungs, which has been doing some very good campaigning in my constituency, while St George Breathing Better has been pushing for school street schemes to restrict the entry of high-emitting vehicles, especially when children are going in and out of schools.

John McDonnell (Hayes and Harlington) (Lab): I do not know whether my hon. Friend has found this in her constituency, but in mine there has certainly been a significant rise in the incidence of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. The response has not been particularly helpful in recent years, in terms of acknowledgment, proper diagnosis and speed of reaction to the problem; but that, too, relates to the air pollution issue.

Kerry McCarthy: I think that is true, and it is also connected with poor housing conditions. We have talked in this place before about the need to ensure that homes

[Kerry McCarthy]

are fit for human habitation. A young boy tragically died recently because of the mould in his home. All these things are connected.

Alex Davies-Jones (Pontypridd) (Lab): In the last few weeks I have been diagnosed with adult-onset asthma, which is on the rise. We know that 30% of cases are triggered by allergies, and that much of this is linked with mould in people's homes. What my hon. Friend is saying—and she is making a powerful speech—goes to the heart of why we need to tackle this issue for all our constituents, whether young or old.

Kerry McCarthy: I suffer from hay fever virtually all the year round. I would have thought it would be worse in the countryside, but it is terrible when I am in London. I was in Paris in January and the hay fever took off suddenly because of the air pollution levels. Hay fever is not lethal in the way that asthma attacks can be, but it is a pretty grim condition to have to live with. It affects people's ability to do their work and to study, for instance.

As I said earlier, the Government were forced to act on air pollution after being taken to court by ClientEarth, to which I pay tribute for its continuing efforts through the legal system to hold the Government to account in respect of their environmental targets. As a result of that court case, Bristol was asked to act. I have already made the point about the irony, perhaps, of demanding local autonomy in some cases and demanding not to be told what to do by the Mayor of London, but in Bristol the Secretary of State told us we had to do that.

Guy Opperman: The hon. Lady is making a fair point, but we have to recognise the issue of scale. In Bristol, the clean air zone is barely 2 square miles—it is about 1 mile by 2 miles—and specifically took into account individuals and businesses. The Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford does not seek to get rid of the congestion zone or the first ULEZ expansion, yet the second expansion of ULEZ, in contrast to Bristol's 2 square miles, is approximately 600 square miles, at 50 miles by 50 miles. That is so monumentally bigger than anything contemplated in Bristol or other cities.

Kerry McCarthy: London has the Greater London Assembly, a Mayor with devolved powers and Transport for London, so this issue is looked at on a London-wide basis. There is an issue in Bristol with people coming into the city centre from places like Bath, but the boroughs are not so interwoven that we cannot see the borders between them, and we do not have the interconnectivity that London has. In Bristol, we were told that we had to bring air pollution levels within legal limits as quickly as possible. We went to great lengths with the modelling to deal with concerns about the economic and social impact. As the Minister said, making the zone as small as possible was one of the factors in that.

It is relevant to talk about the Bristol scheme because it shows what can be achieved by similar measures in London. The scheme came into effect in November 2022, and in January this year we had the first annual report on its effectiveness. It was judged to have been highly successful. The headline figure was that air pollution

across all measured sites had declined by 9.7%. The success of the CAZ is measured by whether it lowers nitrogen dioxide levels below the legal limit of 40 micrograms per cubic metre. In November 2022, when the scheme was introduced, there were 18 sites across Bristol above the legal limit. Just 12 months later, that was down to just six zones. The scheme was particularly effective outside the Bristol Royal Infirmary and the Bristol Children's Hospital, which are bang in the middle of the city centre. Air pollution was down by an incredible 26.9%. I defy anyone to tell me that such big improvements in air quality in areas where there are very sick and vulnerable people, including sick children, is a bad thing. It has been really successful.

Lilian Greenwood: Does my hon. Friend share my concern that this is sometimes presented as a binary choice between motorists and everybody else, such as the children in the hospital, when these improvements are actually beneficial for everyone? One thing that came out of the 2018 report is that some of the worst air quality is inside vehicles, so motorists directly benefit from improvements in air quality.

Kerry McCarthy: I was on the Environmental Audit Committee and the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee at the time, both of which took part in that inquiry. It was difficult to bring those Committees together, but the inquiry produced a really good, significant report, which we should still pay heed to when we as House think about what to do on this issue going forward.

John McDonnell: There seems to be a focus on motorists, but there is now a multiplicity of electric vehicles. I have got one of them. I used to have an electric bike, but I now have an electric scooter—not a sit-down scooter. I find it particularly effective in my constituency, although to be frank my constituents do frown when I turn up as the MP because they think I should be delivering a pizza. There is a multiplicity of vehicle options that we can deploy to tackle some of these air pollution problems, but we need more incentives from central Government to develop that multiplicity.

Kerry McCarthy: My right hon. Friend is absolutely correct. I did have an e-bike; it was stolen from inside the Houses of Parliament. One would think that there would be nowhere more secure, but when the Queen was lying in state, whoever was acting as her security removed all the bikes and took off a £130 lock—presumably with an angle grinder or something—and my bike was not seen again. Try explaining to the insurance company that it was people from Buckingham Palace or from the Queen's lying in state who took the lock off! That is another story, though.

My right hon. Friend is entirely right. I used to hold the shadow green transport brief, and e-bikes are hugely important in allowing people to do those longer journeys. I could not make it up the hills in Bristol without a bit of extra help from an e-bike, but when it comes to delivery vehicles, one of the issues is deliveries inside the areas covered by zones. If we can have hubs outside the city centres and electric vans or e-cargo bikes making those deliveries, that could have a huge impact. Obviously, everybody making food deliveries and similar things really ought to be using clean modes of transport.

I am conscious of time, so I will finish my point about the Bristol scheme. There were concerns that it would lead people to take diversions and increase pollution outside the clean air zone, but air pollution outside the zone has also been measured as down: it has reduced by 7.8%, because the CAZ has encouraged a modal shift among people. I appreciate that people cannot always afford to make that shift in vehicles, but it has happened.

Another concern raised by opponents was that the CAZ would harm the local economy and communities by discouraging people from coming into the city centre. In fact, the opposite happened: retail footfall across four major retail hotspots in central Bristol actually rose from the previous year. There was also an argument that people would become isolated and stuck at home because they could not afford to pay the £9 charge, but again, that was not the case: the number of journeys into or through the CAZ per month was higher at the end of the year than at the start of the scheme, and the percentage of compliant journeys rose every single month. That is what we want to achieve.

It is the same with the landfill tax, for example. That tax is not about raising money because lots of people are sending stuff to landfill. If a landfill tax is effective, the revenues go down and down, year on year. There is actually an issue with the fact that the tax is not keeping pace with inflation at the moment, but assuming it is effective, the revenues will dwindle—it is the behaviour change that we want to make happen. As I said, ideally we would not have introduced a clean air zone, but we have made it work. It is also worth noting that the Government take £2 from every £9 CAZ charge, which we would very much like to be able to spend in Bristol instead.

Lilian Greenwood: It is quite difficult to assess the effectiveness of a clean air zone, because it is not about whether vehicle numbers go down, but about whether those numbers are higher or lower than they would have been if we had done nothing. When thinking about the effectiveness of ULEZ in central London, for example, we need to model what would have happened if we had not had ULEZ, rather than just look at whether the numbers have gone up or down.

Kerry McCarthy: Exactly—there is very complicated modelling involved. Also, if we can use measures such as these to take some cars off the road, that increases the attractiveness of public transport, because the buses can get to where they are meant to be without being stuck in traffic.

Guy Opperman: Surely the hon. Lady is making an argument in support of the Bill—for having small congestion zones in the centre of cities, allowing the public transport to get to where it is meant to be, but not massive 600 square mile congestion zones such as the present expanded ULEZ?

Kerry McCarthy: I was thinking in the context of the right hon. Member for Bexleyheath and Crayford (Sir David Evennett) saying that he does not have a tube station in his part of Greater London, as though the only alternative to the tube is driving. London has a pretty decent bus system, but we need to make sure that people have that alternative.

Again, I am going to say something nice: we have had confirmation today that First Bus has received funding under the next wave of the zero-emission bus regional areas scheme to turn all of our buses into electric vehicles. We have been experimenting with biogas, but that funding will do an awful lot. We do have some clean biogas buses, and my right hon. and learned Friend the leader of the Labour party got to drive one on one of his previous visits to the city. He was like a little boy with a new toy, it has to be said—I think he greatly enjoyed it.

Stella Creasy: Given that the evidence shows that ULEZ has cut pollution in central London by almost half, the challenge that the Minister is presenting slightly misreads how people travel around London. As an outer-London MP, I am acutely conscious that people also drive within the borough to work, as well as between outer London boroughs. The idea that we would have the same impact on reducing pollution just by focusing on the centre misses the challenge that we are all trying to address. Nobody is saying that this is easy or that it is not controversial. I have the north circular running through my constituency, and I see the pollution. I see children and adults struggling with the consequences, and I am sure the same is true in south London. We have to consider how people travel around London to understand the best way of tackling these issues. It cannot just be theoretical. It has to be a practical model, does it not?

Kerry McCarthy: My hon. Friend is right, and she brings me on to my final point. Her borough of Waltham Forest hosts the mini-Holland scheme, which I have cycled around on an e-bike. Each week, the council's transport lead takes people on a tour so that they can learn from the scheme. These local schemes can transform neighbourhoods by designing out some of the traffic and making them pleasant places to live, by building things like sustainable urban drainage schemes and areas where people can sit and talk.

A liveable neighbourhood pilot is just about to start in my constituency. It is important to engage the local community, to explain how it will work for them and to listen when they say how it might cause problems in certain areas. Although there has been some opposition, groups such as St George Breathing Better—which was founded by a group of parents whose children are suffering because of the city's air pollution—are very much behind the pilot.

I return to the Secretary of State's disappointing remarks about 15-minute cities. As well as bigger measures, such as ULEZ to address Greater London's transport problems, we need to consider local solutions such as liveable neighbourhoods and school street schemes to encourage people to walk to school and work, and to make it as easy as possible for people to get around without resorting to their car. This should be about giving elected politicians the right to implement such solutions in consultation with the people they represent.

1.12 pm

Steve Tuckwell (Uxbridge and South Ruislip) (Con): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Gareth Johnson) for introducing this Bill, which it is my great pleasure to support.

[Steve Tuckwell]

Members across the House will agree that we want clean air for our residents today and for generations to come. Across London and in my constituency, in the outer suburbs of Uxbridge and South Ruislip, we all agree that nobody wants dirty or poor-quality air. However, the Labour Mayor of London's expansion of ULEZ to outer London has nothing to do with air quality and everything to do with punishing hard-working families and businesses of all sizes. Several months after he totally ignored Londoners and pressed ahead with expanding the ULEZ tax across outer London, like fellow Conservative Members I continue to be contacted by people sharing examples of financial hardship, collapsed businesses and negative social consequences.

As it stands, I believe the Bill would go some way towards rectifying a blatant money grab, by calling for the Transport Secretary to consent to any expansion of ULEZ and the ULEZ boundaries, once they have been amended as per the Bill, which spells out a number of important qualifications. Among them is whether any proposed changes are in accordance with a Mayor's manifesto commitments at the most recent mayoral election.

The Mayor of London made no mention of ULEZ expansion in his manifesto, and he certainly made no mention of it to the people of Uxbridge and South Ruislip, but that is not all. The ULEZ expansion's democratic deficit does not stop there. Along with the lack of any mention of ULEZ in his manifesto, the Mayor of London embarked on a consultation that, due to a raft of allegations, including on the weighting given to particular consultation responses among other issues, has left multiple questions about its validity. I am glad to see that confronted in the Bill, which would require the Secretary of State to consider responses to any consultation conducted on proposed changes.

If the Mayor had put more time and effort into speaking to residents across outer London—and, indeed, in Uxbridge and South Ruislip—he would have understood that they were not far-right conspiracy theorists. These hard-working families and business owners were ignored, and continue to be ignored. Why did the Mayor of London not consider using funds to bring about a new fleet of green buses, electrify the taxi network, plant more trees or ensure that the tube runs on much cleaner energy? Let us not forget a properly funded scrappage scheme. Those alternatives would have produced real, binding changes in people's lives: not just in how they travel around outer London, but in how they interact with their communities and their surroundings.

Rather than exploring sensible, common-sense alternatives, the Mayor of London chose to spend hundreds of millions of pounds on ULEZ enforcement cameras. Uxbridge and South Ruislip is heavily reliant on car usage due to the nature of its outer-London geography. The people I have the privilege of representing could opt to use public transport, but we see how the Mayor of London is decimating local bus services and continues to preside over the ongoing catastrophic failure of the Central line. Emails and social media comments flood in from constituents who are rightly angry about an unacceptable and unreliable public transport service. Why force ULEZ expansion on areas with minimal and long-term unreliable public transport without first rectifying

those issues? Why not invest more in the public transport network so that people can rely on it and then decide to make the switch? Why did he push ahead with ULEZ expansion first? The answer is clear: to continue ignoring hard-working Londoners and punish them with a destructive money grab, thinly disguised as an environmental strategy, with little or no substance.

I know all too well about the anger and frustration felt by ordinary, hard-working people in Uxbridge and South Ruislip—and indeed those across outer London—about the Mayor's cynical money grab. In my maiden speech, I stated:

"I stand here—no longer the local candidate, but the Member of Parliament—still determined to fight the Mayor of London's money grab and reduce the burden placed on my residents and local businesses."—[*Official Report*, 13 November 2023; Vol. 740, c. 389.]

Those words still ring true.

Only this week, the Mayor of London made comments citing that

"the sky didn't fall in"

following the expansion of ULEZ. Well, it did for businesses who can no longer afford to trade and for households who have incurred financial hardships. Those flippant and arrogant comments cement the view that the Mayor of London is out of touch with hard-working Londoners.

The Bill has my full support as it looks to vary ULEZ boundaries and ensure that safeguards are in place for oversight and consultation. In addition to supporting the Bill, I want to place on record in the House my wholehearted support for the Conservative candidate for Mayor of London, Susan Hall.

1.18 pm

Ruth Cadbury (Brentford and Isleworth) (Lab): I rise to speak in opposition to the Bill. It is interesting to follow the hon. Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Steve Tuckwell). On the day that he was elected to this place, I remember campaigning and talking to residents, who said, "We are not going to vote Labour, as we have always done before, because we'll have to pay £12.50 every day to drive on our local roads." My colleague said, "How will it affect you? What car do you drive?" and the guy at this one house said, "Well, there it is—it's a Toyota Prius." On the day of that election, thousands of people were told, and some still believe, that every single person driving a vehicle in Greater London has to pay £12.50 a day. That is not true, and that myth is still going around.

I do not want to undermine the fact that about 5% of vehicles in London are non-compliant. I accept that the expansion forced people who drive non-compliant vehicles, for work or for personal use, to make decisions, as others had to when the original ULEZ boundary was introduced. I will come on to that aspect of the scrappage scheme later.

Guy Opperman: The hon. Lady will be aware that Transport for London's impact assessment states that there is likely to be a disproportionate negative impact "for people on low incomes who travel by a non-compliant private vehicle in outer London to access employment...or opportunities".

It is those organisations and individuals who are being affected by the policy.

Ruth Cadbury: As I have said, I will come on to the detail of the scrappage scheme later. I can address that point, because my constituency is crossed by the north and south circulars, so we have already been there.

As we know, the Bill proposes to amend “the boundaries of the Greater London Low Emission Zone and Ultra Low Emission Zone”,

and provides that Transport for London—in other words, the London Mayor—

“may not make an order amending those boundaries without the consent of the Secretary of State”.

Under the Greater London Authority Act 1999, transport in London is a devolved matter and the responsibility of the Mayor and TfL. As such, Parliament granted the power to make decisions on London-wide road-charging schemes to the Mayor. The proposed changes pose a threat to the powers of the Mayor of London, the Greater London Authority, and devolved places around the country. I am disappointed that the Minister has announced that the Government will support this Bill, given their long-standing position that local road-charging powers are the responsibility of the Mayor and TfL. Any support for such a Bill is regressive and anti-devolution.

The previous Mayor of London, before becoming Conservative Prime Minister, introduced the ULEZ, which came into operation in April 2019. In October 2021, he ensured its extension to the north and south circular roads. The current Mayor of London, as we know, then extended it to all of Greater London in August 2023. The Bill seeks to revert us to having the boundary at the north and south circular roads. I cannot see the logic in that.

Devolution is one of the key issues here, along with tackling air pollution. The ULEZ stems from Government legislation, which local government is required to abide by, and which was first championed in London by a Conservative Mayor of London. Under the Greater London Authority Act 1999—

John McDonnell: I served on the Bill Committee for that Act. At first, the Conservative party opposed the restoration of a Mayor for London and a Greater London Authority, but as we went through the legislation, an element of consensus built up, particularly in the local government community and among London MPs, about the sort of powers that the Mayor and the GLA should have, including around these sorts of issues. There was consensus that if we established these structures, they would need to be properly empowered, and then there was a debate about resourcing. The Bill before us flies in the face of the debate on that Act. As I say, I was on that Committee, and if I remember rightly, Glenda Jackson was the Minister.

Ruth Cadbury: I thank my right hon. Friend, who was a member of the Greater London Council, which was abolished by a Conservative Government who did not like what the Labour London government was doing—so much for respect for local politicians.

Under the Greater London Authority Act 1999, transport and air quality in London are devolved matters that are the responsibility of the Mayor and Transport for London. The Bill is an affront to the principle of devolution, and the principle of allowing local leaders to make the decisions needed to deliver local priorities and meet objectives set by national Government. Air pollution is

a health crisis. There is a national air crisis. Targets to tackle that are rightly set by central Government. Across the country, the Government have required and encouraged the introduction of clean air zones. The Bill is plainly party political point scoring, given that the Government have required and encouraged many other clean air zones across the country.

The Bill seeks to:

“Amend the boundaries of the Greater London Low Emission Zone and Ultra Low Emission Zone; to provide that Transport for London may not make an order amending those boundaries without the consent of the Secretary of State”.

The boundaries of the zone would be amended, so that the new boundary would be the edge of the inner zone—that is, the new boundary would be the boundary that was put in place in October 2021, before the zone was expanded up to, but not including, the north and south circulars. Given the concerns of drivers coming from Dartford and other places into London, what is the logic of removing ULEZ from outer London but not inner London? Surely the hon. Member for Dartford (Gareth Johnson) represents residents and businesses who drive into central London. Either oppose ULEZ or support ULEZ; this Bill is neither one thing nor the other.

The Bill will prevent TfL from amending the boundaries without the express consent of the Secretary of State. It would restrict the ability of the Mayor of London and TfL to make amendments to the charging area by forcing the Greater London Authority to request permission from the Secretary of State first, and would place a duty on the Secretary of State to consider London election manifesto commitments. It is very bizarre. The Bill means that there will be contradictory decisions made in different parts of the country. The Bill strikes me as being part of a historical antipathy on the part of Conservative Governments to Labour leaders in Greater London.

As others have said eloquently, this Government could do so much more to address air pollution. They could support the Mayor of London’s making the scrappage scheme more generous, so that nobody has any reason not to get rid of their non-compliant vehicle. If the costs for non-polluting vehicles came down, there would be no non-compliant vehicles polluting London. That is important because of the impact that pollution has on our communities and the people of this country.

Air pollution is the No. 1 environmental threat to public health in the UK. It contributes to up to 43,000 premature deaths every year in England. In his 2022 annual report, chief medical officer Professor Sir Chris Whitty outlined that outdoor air pollution in England

“still poses significant health threats”

to adults and children. An increasing body of evidence links air pollution to various cancers, lung and heart disease, dementia and stroke. It puts us all at greater risk of disease and shortens lives.

Furthermore, toxic air is holding back our public services and making it harder to treat other conditions. Public Health England estimates that air pollution will cost the NHS and the social care system £1.6 billion between 2017 and 2025. That rises to £5.56 billion when we include the impact of diseases for which the evidence of an association is less developed and still emerging. By 2035, that figure will reach almost £19 billion unless stronger action is taken. In addition, a report commissioned

[Ruth Cadbury]

by the Clean Air Fund concluded that improving air quality could boost the UK economy by £1.6 billion each year, as a result of 3 million additional working days being worked, and a reduction in the rate of early retirement.

In 2019 in London, toxic air contributed to around 4,000 premature deaths. The greatest number of deaths attributable to air pollution were in outer London boroughs, mainly due to the higher proportion in those areas of elderly people, who are more vulnerable to the impact of air pollution. I hardly see her now, but I worked with a wonderful tenant activist in Brentford when I was a councillor. She has chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and was confined to bed about 15 years ago; she has not been able to leave her bedroom because of COPD. She has lived all her life in Brentford, which has always had very high air pollution from the coke works and the proximity to the A4 and the M4. She is just one example, but we all know people who suffer from COPD, emphysema and a whole range of other life-limiting and life-damaging conditions.

If no further action is taken to reduce air pollution, around 550,000 Londoners will develop diseases relating to poor air quality in the next 30 years. The cost of that for the NHS and social care system in London alone is estimated to be £10.4 billion by 2050. More than half a million Londoners suffer from asthma and are more vulnerable to the effects of toxic air, and more than half of those people live in outer London. Toxic air is a social justice issue. The poorest Londoners, and Londoners from ethnic minority backgrounds, who are least likely to own a car, are worst affected by toxic air. Only 5% of the lowest-income Londoners own a car, yet they are more likely to suffer from toxic air.

Half of all the children admitted to hospital due to asthma in London are from minority ethnic backgrounds. How can we ever forget the case of Ella Kissi-Debrah, the first person in the world to have air pollution listed as a cause of death on her death certificate? She was a child who grew up in a flat overlooking a busy road in south-east London. I have met Ella's mother. I have also worked with campaign groups such as Mums for Lungs. Parents are campaigning for us to do the right thing. They support the ULEZ and they ask us—I have had two or three emails on this already this week—to oppose this Bill.

I want to say a little about my constituency and why this issue matters there. From one end of my constituency to the other, we are affected by heavy traffic and, therefore, high air pollution. That can be seen from the maps. We have the A4, the M4 above, and the A316, which comes in from the M3. The north and south circular meet at their westerly point in my constituency. All those roads are all hugely congested and have very polluted air. The last ULEZ boundary went through the middle of my constituency, just inside the north and south circular. There, we have St. Mary's Catholic Primary School and William Hogarth School next door to each other, alongside the A4 in Chiswick. The pollution at those schools is incredibly high. Parents there, led by one of the fathers, Andrea Carnevali, have campaigned for years to address the issue. Their campaign has meant that the issue of air pollution has got into the public domain locally.

Through their campaigning, those parents managed to get support from the Mayor of London for a green wall along the playground side of the wall to try to catch some of the pollution. They have also worked with paint manufacturers. Remarkably, air pollution levels inside a classroom can be reduced with a particular paint. The school was donated the paint to do measurements and assessments so that everybody could see its efficacy. Sadly, it is too expensive for schools to buy, because it is so specialist, but that is the sort of thing the Government should be supporting.

Until air pollution levels drop—they are starting to drop, and I will come on to that—children who go to St Mary's, William Hogarth and other schools in my constituency and across London will be going into classrooms, playing in playgrounds, and walking and cycling to and from school in environments that are limiting their life expectancy.

I want to pick up on two letters I received from parents this week. This is from a mother who told me about her son. He used to attend a school situated just one block from the A4 as it goes into London through Chiswick and Hammersmith. She wrote that he

“used to suffer from asthma and he used to tell us how he could breathe so much better when we were away from London.”

He has died from cancer. His mother said:

“Although his primary tumour was in his left humerus, he died from the bone cancer which had spread to his lungs and we now suspect that it had been in his lungs for quite some time.”

That is why she has asked me to oppose the Bill today. She added another thing in her note:

“When I took my son to hospital once for something unrelated, I was on a ward with him with three other children who all had breathing difficulties. When I asked the nurse about this she said they consistently have children admitted for breathing problems.”

That reminded me of my visits to schools over the years, from when I was a councillor and subsequently as an MP. A growing number of schools have to have an asthma strategy and a growing bank of drawers full of asthma inhalers, just in case. Those inhalers are used. More and more children are using asthma inhalers day in, day out so that they are able to make the most of school.

The second email is in a way more general, but it still explains from a constituent's point of view why I will oppose the Bill today. My constituent wrote:

“As the dad of two young boys who has to expose them to pollution every single day on the school run—particularly over Kew bridge—

over the river, but highly polluted—

“I support any and all efforts to clean up London's air.”

The ULEZ is a strategy to protect public health. In lieu of alternative policies that could address this horrific health challenge, the ULEZ is the most effective strategy we have for London, and that is why the Mayor for London is using it. The ULEZ is highly targeted. It helps to take the most polluting vehicles off London's roads. Vehicles that do not meet certain emissions standards and are not otherwise subject to a grace period, discount or exemption must pay the charge to travel within the city. The charge is set to disincentivise frequent trips in non-compliant vehicles that would otherwise contribute more to air pollution. It incentivises people to change their travel behaviour—for example, to use public transport more or to replace their vehicle—while allowing occasional visitors and infrequent drivers an alternative.

The London-wide expansion has already been highly effective in reducing the proportion and number of older, more polluting vehicles on London's roads. Data from the London-wide ULEZ first month report shows a 10 percentage point increase in vehicle compliance in outer London, with 95% of vehicles seen driving in London on an average day now meeting ULEZ standards. That is up from 85% when the consultation was launched in May 2022, and means that compliance rates in outer London have nearly caught up with inner London. As has been said, any net revenue raised from ULEZ will be re-invested back into public transport, including the expansion of bus services in outer London. I am not aware of bus services that have been cut, but there is no doubt that we could always do with more bus services—more frequent services, and more night and weekend services—so that fewer people are forced to get their car out in order to get to work, visit friends and relatives, and so on.

The ULEZ has been hugely successful in central and inner London, and has led to significant benefits. Harmful NO₂ concentrations alongside roads, such as the A4 and the A316 in my constituency, are estimated to be 46% lower in central London and 21% lower in inner London than they would have been without the ULEZ. The number of schools in areas exceeding legal limits for NO₂ fell by an amazing 96%, from 455 in 2016 to just 20 in 2019.

Mums for Lungs is keen to remind us of those figures. It says that on an average day, there are 77,000 fewer unique non-compliant vehicles compared with June 2023, as well as an overall reduction of 48,000 fewer non-compliant vehicles per day within the ULEZ zone. The ULEZ has helped to reduce all harmful NO_x by 46% in central London, and by 21% in inner London. Monitors in the capital showed that London enjoyed the cleanest air on record in 2023 as a result of ULEZ.

There is still a long way to go for London to meet World Health Organisation air quality guidelines, and forecasts show that all of London will continue to exceed those guidelines in 2025 and 2030 without further action. That goes back to what the Government are doing. Beyond London, it is the UK Government's view that clean air and low-emission zones are the preferred option for improving air quality in the shortest possible time, but more must be done to incentivise the use of low and zero-emission vehicles than what the Government are doing.

We are already beginning to see the expected benefits of expanding the ULEZ, and it is estimated that 5 million more people, including the constituents of some Conservative Members, are expected to breathe cleaner air as a result of expanding ULEZ to outer London. Modelling suggests that the current ULEZ is expected to reduce PM_{2.5} exhaust emissions in outer London by nearly 16%, leading to a 1.5% overall reduction in PM_{2.5} emissions—those are the ones that cause severe lung disease. It will lead to a reduction of nearly 10% in nitrogen oxide emissions in outer London, and to 146,000 fewer car trips overall, which is an almost 2% reduction. As one of my colleagues said earlier, the worst place to be in terms of air pollution is inside a car, so if fewer car trips are made that should mean that fewer people are exposed to emissions inside a car as well as externally. The ULEZ is expected to save 27,000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions in outer London, so this is about not just air pollution, but climate change.

John McDonnell: The issue we have focused on today is respiratory conditions, but, like me, my hon. Friend has been working on air pollution issues around our airport. I do not know whether she will remember this, but when we looked at the matter perhaps 15 years ago, the issue we raised was the incidence of cancer—she has mentioned cancer itself. We then discovered the Chicago airport study, which linked cancer to air pollution and highlighted the significance of that for airports and the surrounding areas. We should not underestimate the impact that ULEZ could have, not only on overcoming respiratory problems, but on reducing cancer incidence in areas such as ours. A number of our key campaigners in the area have suffered from cancer and we consider that it is linked to the air pollution around the airport.

Ruth Cadbury: I thank my right hon. Friend for that. I have worked with him for many years on issues relating to Heathrow. We cannot separate the issues of vehicle congestion and air pollution from the issues around Heathrow airport, which does not do enough to incentivise its staff and its passengers to come to the airport by means other than car.

I said that I would cover the issue of scrappage. Having continued to listen to the concerns of Londoners, the Mayor and TfL expanded the scrappage scheme to provide support for more Londoners. The Mayor is providing a £210 million funding pot for the scrappage scheme to support all Londoners with an eligible car or motorcycle, as well as charities, sole traders and small businesses. It is the most generous scrappage scheme ever seen in the UK. As part of the scheme, any London resident with an eligible non-compliant car can apply for a grant of up to £2,000 to scrap it. Neighbours of mine have a nice little runaround car that cost £2,000 and is compliant, so anyone who says that it is not possible to buy a compliant car for that kind of money has not tried to do it.

Other more extended benefits are available. For example, disabled people who need to scrap or retrofit a non-compliant wheelchair-accessible car can apply for grants of up to £10,000 to scrap or £6,000 to retrofit. Charities, sole traders and businesses with fewer than 50 employees that are registered in London can apply for a grant of £7,000 to scrap a van, £9,000 to scrap a minibus, or £6,000 to retrofit certain vans or minibuses. They can also apply to scrap and replace a van or minibus with a fully electric vehicle, for which the grants are £9,500 and £11,500 respectively. Eligible organisations can scrap or retrofit up to three vehicles. As of 15 March 2024, applicants to the ULEZ scrappage scheme can donate their non-ULEZ compliant vehicle to support humanitarian and medical needs in Ukraine, in return for the same level of grant payment that is available to those who choose to scrap their vehicle.

The Government have provided scrappage funding for other cities, including Birmingham, Bristol, Sheffield and Portsmouth, but they have not provided similar arrangements for specific ringfenced funding for London. That is yet another sectarian attack by the Conservative Government on a Labour Mayor.

Air pollution is a health crisis, and targets to tackle it are rightfully set by central Government. Across the country, the Government have required and encouraged the introduction of clean air zones. The Bill is plainly party political point scoring, given that the Government

[Ruth Cadbury]

have required and encouraged many other clean air zones across the country. This Bill is a challenge to the powers of the Mayor of London to make decisions that improve the health of Londoners—all Londoners. If successful, the Bill has the potential to do significant damage, reinforce inequities in public health and undermine the office of the Mayor of London. The Bill is an attack on devolution. The Mayor has a right to introduce measures within his powers to meet statutory targets set by central Government, but they are dictating how a democratically elected Mayor of London should run the city and that is counter to the principles of devolution. Labour is a party of devolution: we created the mayoral model in London, the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly, and promoted local and regional decision making and funding across England. This Bill is an attack not only on devolution, but on measures to improve our environment and the health of our children and our children's children.

We have to have solutions to the air quality crisis and the cost of living crisis, both nationally and locally. Labour is clear that the Government have a direct responsibility to work with local authorities to enable clean air zones and alternatives to them, and there needs to be a range of alternative air quality improvement methods, including re-routing traffic, land management, speed limits, better public transport and making it easier to acquire non-polluting vehicles. That responsibility should extend to helping to mitigate the impacts of any proposal that clears the strong thresholds set by the Government for a clean air zone. I do not hear about any alternatives from those on the Government Benches, so whose side are the supporters of the Bill on—continuing pollution or finding a solution to stop our children dying? I want to read out the end of the email that I received from the father I mentioned earlier:

“Pollution is too high in London, it makes us sick and long-term exposure can reduce cognitive ability.”

I am proud that London has the world's largest clean air zone. The ULEZ is a brave and important policy which will be a historic legacy for the London Mayor.

1.51 pm

Mr Louie French (Old Bexley and Sidcup) (Con): I will not speak for long, because I do not want to delay passage of this important Bill, which I have been happy to support my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Gareth Johnson) in bringing to this place.

Today we will see whose side Labour is really on: the Labour Mayor of London, who has introduced this regressive and greenwashed tax on outer London, or the hard-working people in Greater London who are struggling to pay Labour's tax of £12.50 per day, or £4,500 per year, for going to work, medical appointments or the supermarket. This week, the Leader of the Opposition has finally got off his fence and disgracefully backed the Labour Mayor of London over the interests of hard-working Londoners. Today we have heard that the hon. Members for Eltham (Clive Efford), for Brentford and Isleworth (Ruth Cadbury) and for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy) also back the Labour Mayor of London over their constituents—but the Conservatives will continue to back drivers in Greater London and the home counties, and I am pleased that the Government support the Bill.

Dean Russell: Does my hon. Friend agree that this is less about clean air and more about taking my constituents in Watford and those elsewhere to the cleaners? The scheme taxes hard-working people who just want to get to work. When we say “hard-working people”, that includes those who work in hospitals and who want to work elsewhere in London to contribute to the local economy, including the night-time economy.

Bands that want to go and do gigs in London are now being priced out of being able to do so, and those who want to go and see them are being priced out too. It is absolutely wrong and needs to be stopped. Those who do not want to back the Bill really need to look in the mirror and consider why they are not helping hard-working people.

Mr French: I thank my hon. Friend, who is a real champion of his constituents. As he has just pointed out, people who come into London at night face the double charge of £12.50 to come in and then go out. That equally applies to the night-time industry. We have heard a lot about the scrappage scheme, but according to the ULEZ data from TfL, only one in three van drivers who have applied for support has received any. I completely agree with my hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford that this tax on hard-working people is hurting people in the likes of Bexley, which is inside the zone, and those just outside.

With the Mayor of London taking millions of pounds each month from the pockets of drivers via fines and charges, while at the same time refusing to publish any meaningful evidence that proves that the ULEZ in outer London actually improves air quality, the public out there do not need me to tell them how much of a greenwashed con the ULEZ expansion really is.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle (Brighton, Kemptown) (Lab/Co-op): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr French: No, the hon. Gentleman has only just come in.

The public do not need me to tell them that London devolution is broken, with TfL requiring Government bail-out after Government bail-out, London now being the slowest city in the world to drive in, and the Metropolitan police and London Fire Brigade in special measures.

Guy Opperman: I credit my hon. Friend for the speech he is giving. Is not the key issue here the democratic deficit for those outside the mayoral zone? A decision was made by the Mayor, which we know was not backed by a manifesto, and it is now impacting the wider communities my hon. and right hon. Friends represent, from Harlow to Bexley and Crayford. Surely the issue is how we navigate the desire to comply with the legislation—that is why the Bill from my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Gareth Johnson) does not say that we are scrapping it entirely—and the ability of individuals to have their say on whether this is the appropriate measure.

Mr French: I thank the Roads Minister for his intervention. I agree completely; there is a huge democratic deficit at play here. As he correctly points out, the charge affects people outside the zone who need to come into London, and it is having a significant negative impact on the likes of Crayford and Bexley village in my

constituency, which are hundreds of meters away from the so-called London boundary and whose businesses are losing customers every single day because of the expansion.

The people of Bexley, who quite clearly rejected this policy in the sham of a public consultation we had, have been completely ignored. That is why I have no doubt that in a few weeks' time they will be voting, like I will, to sack Sadiq Khan after eight years of failure. The public out there do not need me to tell them that London and the surrounding counties cannot afford another four years of Sadiq Khan and Labour running London. The plans to toll the Blackwall tunnel and install cameras on small residential closes and roads shows that ULEZ is not the end of the Mayor's desire to hammer motorists in Bexley and outer London—people can look up Project Detroit themselves.

On 2 May, Londoners will be able to vote for Susan Hall and vote for change, to make London better and safer for everybody. People in Greater London do not need me to tell them who is on their side; they will see it with their own eyes as the Labour party desperately tries to block this Bill.

1.57 pm

Fleur Anderson (Putney) (Lab): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak on an issue that is of the utmost importance for my constituents. I draw all Members' attention to Bill No. 12 on the Order Paper, which is my private Member's Bill, the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (Amendment) Bill. It is about clean air, taking action on mould and giving private landlords more powers to take action—and ensuring that they have to take action. My Bill is connected to the Bill we are debating, because my constituents often suffer the double whammy of living in poorer, cheaper housing that is on a main road. They are very unlikely to have a car—the majority of my constituents do not—and are more likely to suffer from the effects of air pollution and to have mould in their homes. Many of my constituents talk to me about this issue, so if we get to my Bill, I hope all Members will support it.

John McDonnell: Does my hon. Friend agree that it would be better for us to spend parliamentary time looking at a comprehensive strategy that tackles air pollution and respiratory conditions, rather than going down this rabbit hole today? The issue she raises with her legislation, which I hope the Government will support, could be a foundation stone for us to tackle the problems of housing and respiratory conditions.

Fleur Anderson: I absolutely agree with my right hon. Friend. There are many better things we could be discussing here than trying to turn back the clock on a progressive and life-changing policy that has been brought in by the Mayor. We could be discussing the Renters (Reform) Bill or action on respiratory health—or a whole number of things that my constituents would like to see us discuss instead of this Bill.

I object to the principle of the Bill, as well as its substance. The Bill proposes to

“amend the boundaries of the Greater London Low Emission Zone and Ultra Low Emission Zone; to provide that Transport for London may not make an order amending those boundaries without the consent of the Secretary of State”;

and legislates for connected purposes. In London, we voted to have a Mayor and voted for who that Mayor would be, and we support our Mayor in London making decisions about our roads. Parliament granted the power to make decisions on London-wide road charging schemes to the Mayor. This Bill is trying to take powers away from the Mayor—it is playing politics with our constitutional arrangements, and it is quite clear why.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Bill is particularly disingenuous, because a number of the air quality mandate changes are the results of European and national decisions? It is not just Sadiq Khan or other people unilaterally doing it; it is being done because the whole of Britain needs to improve its air quality, which is currently producing real and harmful effects for our constituents.

Fleur Anderson: I am glad that my hon. Friend has raised that point. The Government have asked councils in Bristol and Birmingham, for example, to bring in clean air zones, and have asked for one to be brought in in London as well. I hope the Government will not be supporting the Bill today, because it would be against their policy of giving more people clean air across the country.

Any proposed changes to devolved powers would pose a threat to the existing powers of the Mayor and the London Assembly, and to those of devolved institutions across the country. It starts here—where will it go? We cannot just have the Government taking back powers willy-nilly and whenever they like because a mayoral election is due to take place in a few weeks' time. The Mayor of London introduced the world's first 24-hour ULEZ in central London in 2019 to bring in health benefits, and expanded it in 2021. That expansion brought the health benefits that were the result of the first ULEZ to 5 million more people and 87,000 more children. Rolling that back would mean worse air for those 5 million people and 87,000 children. I cannot believe that the Government would support this Bill.

The ULEZ is a highly targeted scheme that is set to disincentivise frequent trips in non-compliant vehicles. It certainly had that effect on me: I had a diesel car, which I bought back in the days when we were told that diesel was a better choice for the environment. I realised that it was not, and the fact that the ULEZ was coming speeded up my decision to not have a car. We do not have a car as a family—we have not had one for three years. I do not think we would have made that jump if it had not been for the ULEZ coming in. We thought we would see how it went, and it is going fine. We do not have a car; we do not need one, and I am not driving around in a car that is polluting the air in Putney.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: Is it not also the case that even if my hon. Friend were to have a car, the vast majority of cars—as she well knows and as has been mentioned in this debate, which I have been listening to—are ULEZ compliant? I have a 10-year-old petrol car. I do not drive it in London, because I am not a maniac, but if I did I would not be ULEZ charged, because it is a small, lightweight petrol car. The vast majority are perfectly fine.

Fleur Anderson: I absolutely agree. A Member asked earlier for data on the ULEZ scheme and the effect it has had. Data from the first month's report shows a

[Fleur Anderson]

10 percentage point increase in vehicle compliance in outer London, with 95% of vehicles seen driving in London on an average day now meeting the ULEZ standards—up from 85% when the consultation was launched in May 2022. That means that vehicle compliance rates in outer London have nearly caught up with inner London, which is having a good effect.

The decision to expand the ULEZ was a difficult one for the Mayor, but it was felt necessary to save lives, protect Londoners' health and tackle the climate crisis. I agree, because in 2019, toxic air contributed to around 4,000 premature deaths in London. Just because we cannot see the smog—as was the case back in the days of the great smog that led to the first clean air Act—does not mean that it is not all around us. We can see the impact in our hospitals. It is mainly parents and doctors who write to me in support of the legislation that the Mayor has introduced to clean up our air, because it is doctors who see the effects of air pollution: rising levels of asthma, cancer, heart disease, stroke and dementia in our hospitals. If no further action is taken to reduce air pollution, over the next 30 years around 550,000 Londoners will develop diseases related to poor air quality. That will cost the NHS and social care system in London £10.4 billion by 2050. Air pollution costs lives, but it also costs our public services. The first, inner-London ULEZ contributed to a 30% reduction in children being admitted to hospital with asthma. I think those results speak for themselves. How can we argue against that?

Taking action on the climate emergency and clean air was one of the reasons I became an MP. One of the first things I did when I became an MP was set up the Putney Environment Commission, a rather grand-sounding group of local people who want to take action locally, nationally and internationally. We had several open meetings to decide what we would do. One of the first things we did was run Putney's first ever clean air fair. It was clean air that everyone wanted to take action on. Hundreds of people attended the fair. There were stalls from brilliant local organisations, including Friends of Wandsworth Park, Friends of Wimbledon Park, Little Ninja UK, Wandsworth Living Streets, the Roehampton Garden Society, Putney Community Gardens, the Putney Society, Friends of the Earth Wandsworth, the Putney Pollution Busters, Green the Grid and Cycle Buddies. Hon. Members can see how many local organisations we have that really care about clean air.

The number of residents who contributed to the event, and who came to check out the stalls on the day and ask what they could do or how they could push for more action, shows the huge concern in Putney, Roehampton, Southfields and Wandsworth town for cleaner air. We will be holding a second fair this year on 11 May, to which I invite all Members here today. Mr Deputy Speaker, if you would like to come to that event, it is at Wandsworth park. We would love to see you there. We will be talking about action that everyone can take on clean air, about saving our green spaces, about active travel and about green buses—all the ways in which, alongside the ULEZ, action can be taken.

On so many occasions while out canvassing I speak to parents who introduce me to their child who they say has asthma. It happens time after time. So many children in the schools I visit are now affected. I went to a school in Roehampton recently and asked the headteacher

what the main issues were. I was expecting to talk about the curriculum and Ofsted—we did talk about that—or other issues, but she said that the main issues were mould and air quality, which were keeping children off school. She has had to introduce adaption strategies in the school to take action on that. It is horrifying that that is what she is saying in this day and age.

Kim Leadbeater (Batley and Spennings) (Lab): My hon. Friend makes an important point about active travel. I am a massive fan of active travel, as I know colleagues present are too, but if we are to get more people walking, cycling, wheeling and running, we need decent air quality in every town and city across the country. That is why it is so important to have things that bring air quality back to an acceptable standard.

Fleur Anderson: Absolutely. We want more people cycling and walking, to take cars off the roads and make them less congested for those who have to drive. We want to see an impact on active travel, but one that supports the businesses on the roadside in our community. It is unfair on the majority of constituents who do not have a car and those who live on the main roads in less expensive housing to bear the burden of air pollution.

Mr French: The hon. Lady is making a fair point about the impact of air pollution on the main roads. Does she therefore agree that it is somewhat strange that the largest investment that the Labour Mayor of London will have made during his term as Mayor will be the £2.2 billion Silvertown road tunnel, which will encourage heavy goods vehicles to drive along the A2 and into central London? That is why the Green party and the Conservatives are opposed to it.

Fleur Anderson: I would point to others, such as the Superloop—the new buses that will go around London—and the Elizabeth line. The Mayor will be able to invest more in public services because of the revenue from the ULEZ scheme, enabling people to travel on our public transport. That is the action we need to take to really clean up our air.

I have even taken to the streets for Clean Air Day to measure the clean air—or the polluted air—on Putney High Street. I used an ultra-fine particle counter, lent to me by the environmental research group at Imperial College London. It was amazing to take the counter out for the day and see the effects of air pollution. As I went down some of our main roads—Upper Richmond Road, Lower Richmond Road and Putney High Street—I saw a spike when buses and polluting cars came by. I thought there would be a constant level of dirty and polluted air, but it went up and down. I could see the impact of diesel buses and polluting cars. I thought of all the times that I had taken my children to primary school in Wandsworth over 15 years, walking along very polluted roads. All that time, it was damaging their lungs. This was worrying for me to see and for my constituents to know about.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: My hon. Friend is talking about damage to lungs, but will she also mention the damage that air pollution does to the brain? These microscopic particles and nanoparticles, such as PM_{2.5}, can cross the blood-brain barrier and can cause long-term developmental problems for children that mean the brain never functions properly, even if the air is later cleaned up. That is why it is important to get it right now.

Fleur Anderson: Air pollution is like a ticking timebomb for our children. It has been shown that children who live on polluted roads in inner London have smaller lungs, and that their lungs will never fully grow. Pollution also has an impact on the brain, potentially including dementia in later life.

We owe it to our children to have this increased ULEZ zone to clean up our air. We have recently made progress on Putney High Street. Since I did the monitoring, we have a larger proportion of green buses—80%—which has made a significant difference. We need to get to 100%, and the Mayor has a plan. We need this robust action for the sake of our health and children.

Both in this Chamber and on the Environment Bill Committee, I have called many times for a new clean air Act. Mayors, including Sadiq Khan in London, need to introduce measures so that we are able to see an impact across the country. According to Asthma + Lung UK, more than 600,000 people in Greater London have asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and nearly 60% of them live in outer London. Outer-London Members need to be concerned about their constituents and the impact on their health.

I am pleased with the Mayor's action, including the increase to more than 1,400 zero-emission buses on London's roads. He has also rapidly expanded London's fleet of green buses, with the capital now boasting more green buses than any other city in western Europe. He has also delivered a 170% increase in the number of public electric vehicle charging points, with London now boasting more than 11,000—a third of the UK's total.

Helen Hayes (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab): My hon. Friend is making an excellent speech. Does she agree that the Mayor of London has consistently demonstrated that he is doing everything in his power, under London's devolution settlement, to improve air quality for Londoners? Does she share my concern that he is somewhat hamstrung by the policies of a Conservative Government who, for example, take the vehicle excise duty paid by London residents and spend it elsewhere in the country, and by the fact that London is the only city of its size and scale that has a public transport system that relies entirely on fares and charges for its income? The Mayor of London is showing leadership where he can, but he is entirely constrained by a Conservative Government who do not care about the lung health of Londoners.

Fleur Anderson: I absolutely agree. My hon. Friend is right that a fair amount of the vehicle excise duty is not being spent in London. Despite being hamstrung in many ways, the Mayor of London has been world-leading—he is going around the world to talk about the action he is taking on clean air. What we really need is the Mayor of London being able to pull in the same direction as the Government. We need a national strategy that goes as far and as fast on clean air as the Mayor has done in London. That is why it would be good if there was not only a Labour Mayor, but a London Government, because they would be able to work hand in hand to achieve that. That would be good for all of us wherever we go, and not just in London, but across the country.

Guy Opperman: The hon. Lady criticised the funding in answer to her hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich and West Norwood (Helen Hayes), but surely she is

aware that the Department for Transport has given £6.4 billion in funding to the Mayor of London. That is not insignificant by any stretch.

Fleur Anderson: I thank the Minister for raising that, but that is not equivalent to the amount actually raised by Londoners and that goes to the rest of the country, which we understand, but that should be a factor when talking about how the ULEZ money, for example, is paid. Further to the Minister's point, there are the concerns about those areas outside ULEZ that do not receive the same amount of funding. They are represented by their local representatives, who should have a strategy for responding to ULEZ being expanded to those areas of London as well.

The Putney Society in my constituency is a local amenity group of fantastic local people. They have chosen to concentrate on clean air because it is one of the issues of most concern. As a result of concern over the levels of atmospheric pollution in Putney, especially on the high street, the society has carried out a series of citizen science exercises over the past 10 years or so to measure the levels of nitrogen dioxide. Those have been one-off exercises measuring pollution for a month at a time. With the generous help and support of the local environmental health team, they have been able to mount a series of monthly tests, enabling them to see what the levels look like in the longer term. The highest level they found was—not surprisingly—at the northern end of Putney High Street, where it was 62.9 micrograms and 57.6 micrograms per cubic metre of air. In Putney Bridge Road, it was almost as high at 50.7 micrograms. Putney Cross and Upper Richmond Road were both in the mid-40s.

To put those results in context, we need to bear in mind that, although the agreed statutory maximum level is 40 micrograms per cubic metre of air, that is essentially an interim target level, whereas the agreed World Health Organisation safe level is 10 micrograms per cubic metre. Consequently, the levels that Putney Society recorded are still disturbingly high. I went into that detail because I do not think the high levels we have on our London roads are properly acknowledged in the Bill. Reining back the good results of ULEZ to a smaller area would mean leaving those larger areas outside the South Circular, which cuts through my constituency, and people in the whole of that area with those high levels of air pollution. That is simply not acceptable.

I support the implementation of ULEZ because we have a public health emergency. I am concerned about the impact on the health of children and vulnerable adults, so action is needed. I do not want to die earlier, and I do not want any of my constituents to die earlier, but that is what is happening. The existing ULEZ has been proven to change behaviour, and we need that change in behaviour to clean our air so that more Londoners will benefit. I welcome the extension of the scrappage scheme, which happened after consultation, for low-income and disabled Londoners and for charities to have their minibuses exempted. I welcome the additional time given to charities and small businesses to comply with ULEZ. I support and wish to see in the Bill no more bus route reductions, improvements in public transport and 100% green buses. I welcome investment in better public services as a result of the fines charged by ULEZ and the introduction of the Superloop. We

[Fleur Anderson]

also need to invest in more safe cycle routes, safe cycle storage and local cycle delivery bikes. We are proud in Putney to have an e-bike delivery scheme for our local businesses, which picks up waste and gets rid of it. We also have more local bus delivery routes available.

We need to make clear what is being funded by the ULEZ fund so that Londoners see the benefit of investment in local services and cycle provision as well as knowing that the air is healthier and that their lives will be healthier. I have been inspired by parents campaigning for change, including Mums for Lungs, which is based locally, and Rosamund Adoo-Kissi-Debrah, the mother of Ella Kissi-Debrah, who died of asthma 11 years ago. If I had a daughter die in such tragic circumstances, I do not know what I would have done, but she has been so brave, courageous and inspirational in finding out and exposing the reasons for Ella's death—the high levels of pollution—and in taking so much action to counter that issue. I also thank the Putney Society, Putney Pollution Busters, the London Sustainability Exchange, King's College London, Clean Air in London and the Healthy Air Coalition for all the work that they do exposing pollution and taking action together for local people.

This is a huge issue for people across my constituency and across London. We cannot start to meet clean air targets without ULEZ. People in outer London are disproportionately affected, as more older people live in outer London. Recent analysis by Asthma and Lung UK has shown that the UK has the worst death rate for lung conditions in western Europe. Surely that demands urgent action, not reining in our action.

Toxic air is also shortening lives. Every year, 36,000 people in the UK die a premature death as a result of toxic air, and 4,000 of them are in London. We can see that we need action in London, but we also need it across the country. Let us look at outer London. In Dartford, for example, the equivalent of 66 deaths a year are attributable to long-term exposure to particulate air pollution. This is not just an inner-London issue; we need ULEZ expansion to the outer London boroughs.

Air pollution is killing us, and children are particularly vulnerable, but poor communities and black, Asian and minority ethnic communities are the worst affected. Eleven Londoners a day die prematurely because of air pollution. In Wandsworth—my constituents' borough—129 deaths every year are attributable to the effects of toxic air. Before the ULEZ expansion, which the Bill would undo, only a small part of my constituency was covered by the ultra low emission zone, because the south circular cuts through my constituency. My constituents faced a postcode lottery, with only those on one side of the road covered by the clean air zone. Why should only some of my constituents, who live on the right side of an arbitrary boundary, be able to breathe cleaner air? It is far better to have a larger area covered that is much more consistent with where the polluted air is. If we sit back and do nothing to reduce air pollution, about 550,000 Londoners will develop diseases.

I have talked about the impact on small businesses. It is an issue that I have raised with small businesses on Putney High Street, who have said that the dirty air is holding back their businesses. We want Hammersmith

bridge reopened—I cannot resist saying that and will do so whenever I can—but we also need the continuation of the ULEZ.

A report commissioned by the Clean Air Fund concluded that improving air quality could bring an annual boost of £1.6 billion to the UK economy through 3 million additional working days and a reduction in early retirement. The evidence shows us that ULEZ works, and that it has been hugely successful, with 5 million more people expected to breathe clean air.

I end with the words of a constituent—a doctor—who wrote to me and said:

“This Bill will send the capital backwards and is counter to the devolutionary system of our politics. Just as we are beginning to see the benefits of ULEZ, I am dismayed...that this Private Member's Bill will make already poor air quality worse, harming Londoners' health—particularly that of children. To make matters worse, the Bill takes the important decision about the air we breathe away from us as Londoners, and undermines our democratically elected mayor—who is accountable to us and will shortly be tested in the May elections.”

That is where such a decision should be made. I urge all hon. Members to put our health first, to support Mayor Sadiq Khan's action to clean up our air, and to oppose the Bill.

2.24 pm

Dean Russell (Watford) (Con): I am disappointed that the Opposition are using all the available time, to try to talk the Bill out, but I am not going to play that game. I will keep my speech short. I back the Bill on behalf of all the hard-working people of Watford who have to go into London to do their jobs: those who work at the hospital, and all the entertainers and musicians.

2.25 pm

Alex Davies-Jones (Pontypridd) (Lab): It has been good to be in the Chamber to discuss the Bill. I have listened intently to Members on both sides of the debate. I must begin by emphasising that Labour Front Benchers do not support the Bill—as must be obvious—and reject it in its entirety. There are a number of reasons for that, but I shall focus on the two main reasons.

First, the Bill represents nothing other than a poor attempt at political point-scoring from a Government who are running out of ideas and, ironically, running out of road. As for the second reason, you may be wondering, Mr Deputy Speaker, why a Welsh Member is speaking out on a Bill relating to Greater London. I am a proud Unionist—I believe in our Union—but I am also proud to represent a devolved nation. I believe wholeheartedly in devolution and the benefit that it brings to the United Kingdom, and that is why I have felt so compelled to speak out today. In my view, the most worrying aspect of the Bill is the fact that it represents yet another—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): Order. I just want to clarify that the hon. Lady is speaking not in an official capacity, but on behalf of her constituents.

Alex Davies-Jones: Yes, absolutely. I am speaking on behalf of all the people in Pontypridd.

As I was saying, the Bill represents yet another devastating attack on devolution. This Government repeatedly attack devolution. The United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020

rode roughshod over the devolved Governments, and the Bill seems to do the same. It also attacks the ability of the democratically elected Mayor of London to meet legally binding air pollution targets.

Let me explain my first point in more detail. The UK Government's approach to clean air zones has been completely inconsistent. They clearly do not feel strongly about this issue. They view this as an opportunity to politicise a deeply important issue with life-threatening implications—an issue that should have cross-party support, and one about which the vast majority of the United Kingdom feels strongly. I am referring, of course, to our environment, our environmental commitments, and the health and safety of all our citizens. This is either an instance of the Government turning their back on those vital matters, or pure political point-scoring. Which is it? Perhaps it is both.

Let me highlight the hypocrisy of this Government, in case I have not been clear enough so far. They have required and indeed encouraged the introduction of many other clean air zones across the country. They have supported and continue to support those zones, and provided cash for scrappage in Bristol, Bath, Sheffield, Birmingham, Portsmouth and other areas. Given that they have encouraged and required the introduction of clean air zones across the country, why not in London? Why is London the outlier? Of course, Labour Members know exactly why. They also understand that improving and investing in other areas of transport might remove the need for clean air zones. For example, investing in our public transport and ensuring a better, more reliable and more affordable service would reduce the number of people on the roads.

There are other ways to help us reach our environmental goals, and Labour knows that the Bill is not the answer. Labour is completely committed to protecting our environment and tackling the climate crisis to give our children the future and opportunities that they deserve. A Labour Government would decarbonise the economy and ensure that we all had safe air to breathe. If the Government will not listen to the overwhelming evidence, and the environmental facts—if that is not enough for them to understand all this—they must at least attempt to empathise with the health case, because let us be clear: toxic air pollution is a public health crisis. Air pollution is linked to about 4,000 premature deaths a year in London, as we have heard repeatedly this afternoon. It leads to children growing up with stunted lungs, and is linked to the development of diseases, ranging from asthma to heart disease and dementia. Surely that alone is enough reason to support clean air zones. As for the practicalities, the vast majority of London cars—19 in every 20 cars seen driving in Greater London—are now ULEZ compliant.

If the public understand the importance of our environmental commitments and are willing to comply with the scheme, why are the Government trying to change it now? What possible motive could they have for doing so? Labour welcomes the decision of Transport for London and the Mayor of London to expand the scrappage scheme. Since 21 August 2023, every Londoner with a non-compliant vehicle has been eligible for a £2,000 grant to replace their vehicle, although central Government provide no financial support to the Mayor of London.

It is important that tackling air pollution does not place an undue burden on those already struggling with the Tory cost of living crisis. Families enduring that crisis are sick with anxiety, and their local services are under immense pressure. I see that in my community, and I hear directly from my constituents about the devastating hardships that the Tory cost of living crisis continues to place on them and their family, whether it is because of mortgage payments going up, the cost of food, fuel and energy prices continuing to rise, or being unable to afford that much-longed-for family holiday. All those things are pushing families to the brink. Let us be frank: we know where the blame firmly lies—

2.30 pm

The debate stood adjourned (Standing Order No. 11(2)).

Ordered, That the debate be resumed on Friday 19 April.

Business without Debate

PUPPY IMPORT (PROHIBITION) BILL

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 14 June.

CONSUMER PRICING BILL

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 14 June.

BROADCASTING (LISTED SPORTING EVENTS) BILL

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 14 June.

EMPLOYMENT (APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS) BILL

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 14 June.

PUBLIC SECTOR WEBSITE IMPERSONATION BILL

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 14 June.

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE (RECOGNITION) BILL

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 14 June.

**HOUSE OF LORDS (HEREDITARY PEERS
(ABOLITION OF BY-ELECTIONS)) (NO. 2) BILL**

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 14 June.

WHISTLEBLOWING BILL

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 19 April.

**LANDLORD AND TENANT ACT 1985
(AMENDMENT) BILL**

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 26 April.

**PUBLIC PROCUREMENT (BRITISH
GOODS AND SERVICES) BILL**

*Resumption of adjourned debate on Question (15 March),
That the Bill be now read a Second time.*

Hon. Members: Object.

Debate to be resumed on Friday 26 April.

LICENSING HOURS EXTENSIONS BILL

*Consideration of Bill, not amended in the Public Bill
Committee*

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be considered on Friday 26 April.

HIGHWAYS ACT 1980 (AMENDMENT) BILL

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 19 April.

COVID-19 VACCINE DAMAGE PAYMENTS BILL

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 19 April.

**STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS ACT 1946
(AMENDMENT) BILL**

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 19 April.

**DANGEROUS DOGS ACT 1991
(AMENDMENT) BILL**

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 19 April.

**EXEMPTION FROM VALUE ADDED TAX
(MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL**

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 19 April.

**COVID-19 VACCINE DIAGNOSIS
AND TREATMENT BILL**

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 19 April.

**CARAVAN SITE LICENSING (EXEMPTION
OF MOTOR HOMES) BILL**

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 19 April.

**NHS ENGLAND (ALTERNATIVE
TREATMENT) BILL**

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 19 April.

**BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION
(PRIVATISATION) BILL**

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 19 April.

**CHILDREN'S CLOTHING
(VALUE ADDED TAX) BILL**

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 19 April.

REGULATORY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS BILL

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 19 April.

BARNETT FORMULA (REPLACEMENT) BILL

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 19 April.

RULE OF LAW (ENFORCEMENT BY PUBLIC AUTHORITIES) BILL

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 19 April.

ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION (OFFENCES) BILL

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 19 April.

NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE CO-FUNDING AND CO-PAYMENT BILL

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 19 April.

CARAVAN SITES BILL

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 19 April.

DOMESTIC ENERGY (VALUE ADDED TAX) BILL

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 19 April.

CONVERSION PRACTICES (PROHIBITION) BILL

*Resumption of adjourned debate on Question (1 March),
That the Bill be now read a Second time.*

Hon. Members: Object.

Debate to be resumed on Friday 17 May.

CHILD CRIMINAL EXPLOITATION BILL

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 19 April.

PETITION

Recommendations of the Infected Blood Inquiry

2.36 pm

Kim Leadbeater (Batley and Spen) (Lab): I rise to present this petition on behalf of a number of constituents in Batley and Spen who have contacted me about the contaminated blood scandal, including Caroline Elliott from Liversedge and Jonathan Harvey from Birkenshaw. It states:

“The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to implement the recommendations in the Second Interim Report of the Infected Blood Inquiry without delay.

And the petitioners remain, etc.”

The Chancellor stated in Treasury questions just this week:

“The Government have an absolute moral responsibility, not just to pay the compensation owed, but to pay it as speedily as possible.”—[*Official Report*, 19 March 2024; Vol. 747, c. 804.]

With two victims of the scandal dying on average every week, the Government must get on and finally deliver the long overdue justice that my constituents and families across the country deserve. It is on their behalf that I present this petition.

Following is the full text of the petition:

[The petition of residents of the United Kingdom

Declares that people who received infected blood and who have suffered as a consequence have, along with their families, waited far too long for redress.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to implement the recommendations in the Second Interim Report of the Infected Blood Inquiry without delay.

And the petitioners remain, etc.]

[P002943]

Lloyd Russell-Moyle (Brighton, Kemptown) (Lab/Co-op): On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. Today the British Youth Council has declared insolvency. As you may know, the British Youth Council runs the UK Youth Parliament, which sits here in this Chamber and holds the Youth Select Committee in this House. The organisation has been around for more than 50 years. It was set up by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to represent young people around the world, and has been supported by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. Since it runs programmes in partnership with the House, will you and Mr Speaker inquire how these programmes can continue, so that young people can continue to be given a voice in Britain, and so that if we cannot save the British Youth Council from insolvency, we can at least save these programmes?

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): I thank the hon. Member for his point of order. I think we all value the work of that organisation, particularly when the Youth Parliament sits here in the Chamber. They are the parliamentarians of tomorrow, after all. I will make certain that this is brought to the attention of Mr Speaker, and I will inform the hon. Member of his response.

Kettering General Hospital: Redevelopment

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(*Rebecca Harris.*)

2.39 pm

Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con): It is a pleasure to see you in the Chair, Mr Deputy Speaker. I thank the Minister for her attendance and I thank Mr Speaker for granting me permission to hold this special debate. This is my 12th special parliamentary debate on Kettering General Hospital since May 2007; seven of those debates have been since September 2019, so the House is familiar with the subject. The reason I keep applying for debates on Kettering General Hospital is that the redevelopment of the hospital is the No. 1 local priority for all residents in Kettering, and for me as the local Member of Parliament.

Our hospital is a much-loved local institution. It has been in the town of Kettering since the year of Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee in 1897. That was a great year for Kettering as not only was the hospital established, but so was the much-loved newspaper, *The Northamptonshire Evening Telegraph*. And here we are, 127 years on, with an extremely exciting programme of massive investment going into the hospital. It is a really important issue for Kettering, which is why I keep up the pressure on the Government to ensure that the redevelopment programme is delivered and succeeds.

As the local Member of Parliament, I am pleased that Kettering General Hospital's place in the national new hospital programme has been secured. That programme will see more than 40 hospitals redeveloped across the country. For KGH, it means £500 million of capital investment, with a fully funded, improved and expanded hospital on the same site. This is the biggest ever capital investment in KGH in its 127-year history. Initial enabling works have already started and the project is due for completion in just six years, by 2030.

All of us who live locally know how important KGH is to everyone who lives in the area. As the local MP, I have made it my main priority to make the case for this £500 million of extra investment. By 2030, we should have an improved and expanded hospital on the same site, the biggest ever new investment in our local hospital, and probably the biggest ever capital investment in Kettering itself. It will be of huge benefit to local people for many years to come.

May I start by acknowledging the Government's commitment to the hospital? This pledge represents a massive amount of money. On top of the £500 million, the Government also effectively injected £167 million into the hospital by writing off its entire debt in 2020. The path to the £500 million project has been complicated and tortuous. It started with a pledge of £46 million made in 2019 to redevelop the A&E into an urgent care hub on the site. In the same year, £350 million was pledged for the hospital rebuild. The combined total was £396 million, but we have now secured £500 million and climbing, so the investment is getting bigger and the ambitions are getting greater. The pledge is no longer to replace the A&E with an urgent care hub, but to redevelop the entire hospital. That is hugely welcome and very significant for the local area.

We need this investment because Kettering and north Northamptonshire are among the fastest growing places in the whole country. The hospital serves the population

of north Northamptonshire and south Leicestershire, where the growth in the local population has been almost double the national average over recent years. The latest Office for National Statistics data estimate above average percentage population growth of up to 40% over the next 30 years. Corby, which is next door to Kettering, has the country's highest birth rate. The hospital expects a 21% increase in the number of over-80s in the local area in the next five to 10 years. The area as a whole is committed to at least 35,000 new houses over the next decade, and the local population in north Northamptonshire is set to rise by some 84,000 to over 400,000 people.

The accident and emergency unit already sees more than 300 patients every single day in a department that is sized to safely see only 110, so the pressures on it are acute. Basically, the A&E is full. It was first constructed in 1994, 30 years ago, to cope with just 45,000 attendances each year, but 170,000 attendances are expected by 2045. Seventy per cent of the buildings on the main site are more than 30 years old, and there is a maintenance backlog of more than £40 million. Sixty per cent of the hospital estate is rated either poor or bad, and local people all know that investment in our local hospital is badly needed. With credit to the Government, they have rightly accepted that, which is why KGH is part of the new hospital programme.

The plans to rebuild Kettering General Hospital are on track and are progressing faster than many similar schemes across the country. The plan is to rebuild KGH on the same site, moving the main services into two new six-storey buildings located next door to each other. The Government have allocated over £500 million to fund these works, including up to £50 million for the new urgent care hub to replace the A&E and just under £50 million for the new power plant to power the new hospital.

The inspirational director of strategy at Kettering General Hospital, Polly Grimmett, recently told North Northamptonshire Council's health and scrutiny committee in January that the proposals for the new hospital to remain on the same site made progress

"a lot simpler and a lot easier"

than other schemes. She said:

"When you look at some of the other 40 schemes across the UK that were actually ahead of us initially, they slowed down and we sped up, because they have been stuck in public consultation for quite some time."

The difference with Kettering is that it has a local development consent order to do the works; it owns the land. There are not the same problems that other sites are experiencing. Polly went on to say that

"it's a scheme that's fairly simple, won't get stuck in the mire and can progress well."

She said that KGH has moved to be "near the front" of other hospital builds in the running.

The first step in the redevelopment will see the new power plant being built on the site. This will replace the temporary steam boilers, put in as a temporary solution 12 years ago, which currently sit on flatbed lorry platforms in the hospital car park and can regularly be seen sneezing and spluttering as they power the hospital. They are in urgent need of replacement, which is what the new energy centre will do.

The first of the six-storey hospital buildings in the main scheme will be built in car park A, in the centre of the site, with some staff parking sadly being lost temporarily during that time, and nearby NHS office space will be demolished. Once building 1 is operational, the second phase can begin, which will include the new main entrance facing Rothwell Road.

The main works on the main building can be expected to start in 2026. An important part of the scheme is to keep the hospital running during the construction period. The first part of the scheme will be the energy plant to power the expanded hospital. That really is the main focus of my remarks in the debate today. The preparatory works on the hospital are under way, but I seek confirmation that we can expect spades in the ground to start the building of the energy plant sometime this summer. I hope the Minister can give that reassurance to me and local residents, who are keen to see work actually starting on the site.

The redevelopment of the hospital has been made more urgent by the discovery in February of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete in the maternity wing. I know that where some of the other hospitals of the 40 in the new hospital programme have discovered RAAC, their investment profiles have been speeded up. Very sadly, Kettering now also has RAAC—not to anything like the same extent as some other hospitals, but it is badly affecting the maternity and gynaecology wing. RAAC has been found in the roof where the maternity block is currently housed. It has been deemed unsafe, and the entire top floor has therefore been lost. It is also known from a previous building assessment that the building contains asbestos and is deemed unsuitable for long-term repair. As such, could the Minister provide me with some reassurance that the investment profile for the rebuild can be speeded up due to the discovery of RAAC? That is an additional factor that was not realised when the original approval was given.

My understanding, which I would like the Minister to kindly confirm, is that ground investigation works are currently under way and are likely to be completed by the end of this month. I think we can expect site hoardings and site offices to be erected next month, which will have some impact on parking on site; that some temporary generators are likely to be installed in May; and that drainage diversions will also be starting. If the Minister could give me some assurance that in the summer we can expect a start to the construction of the energy power plant itself, that would be appreciated. I also understand that there are to be high-voltage infrastructure works—basically, a cable being laid from the Field Street substation under the railway bridge to the hospital—because of the extra power requirements that the hospital will have.

The business case approval process for all the hospitals in these schemes is tortuous. There are three stages that have to be gone through, and each stage takes at least three months for approval by the new hospital programme team and NHS England. Can I have some reassurance from the Minister that if the hospital gets its final business case in—which is due in June—it could be turned around in a fortnight rather than three months, so that we can get the funds in place and the building under way? Can I also have some reassurance that not only the approval process from the new hospital programme team, but the approval process from NHS England, will

be expedited? Lots of boxes have to be ticked for the funds to flow, and residents are really keen to see the work under way.

I am grateful to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for being in the Chair, and to Mr Speaker for allowing me to hold this debate. In closing, I simply ask the Minister whether she would be kind enough to facilitate a meeting for me with the Hospitals Minister, the noble Lord Markham—who has previously been kind enough to visit the hospital—so that I can discuss with him the details of the works that will be taking place over the next few weeks and months.

2.53 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Maria Caulfield): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr Hollobone) on securing this important debate. He tirelessly campaigns for Kettering, particularly for the new hospital there, and firmly holds Ministers' feet to the fire on this issue.

I reassure my hon. Friend that the Government remain absolutely committed to a new hospital for Kettering, and that a number of milestones are being met. As he pointed out, the trust is currently developing its refreshed strategic outline business case, supported by the new hospital programme team, to make sure that it aligns with our national approach of standardising all our new hospitals to the Hospital 2.0 model. We expect a submission to the Department for the wider hospital work later this year.

Mr Hollobone: I thank the Minister for the start of her response, which has been very constructive. I support the Hospital 2.0 programme and its standardised design of the 40 new hospitals—that is great. Kettering General Hospital has already submitted its first two business cases for the main scheme. Instead of having to resubmit them all over again, please could it simply submit an addendum, so that it does not have to reinvent the wheel?

Maria Caulfield: I absolutely take my hon. Friend's point, particularly given the issue he raised about RAAC being discovered on the maternity and gynae floors. I will take that point to the Hospitals Minister in the other place and the team, and I will put in his request to meet the Minister to discuss this. I understand the frustration that comes when some work has been done already, and that it takes time for the trust, which urgently wants to get on and construct the new hospital. I will certainly take that away after the debate.

I reassure my hon. Friend, his constituents, the patients who use Kettering General Hospital and the staff who work there that the new hospital will be in place as soon as possible and will meet the 2030 deadline. I recognise the urgency. As part of the works, the energy centre is crucial to the development of the wider hospital scheme. We heard very eloquently from my hon. Friend this afternoon—he has also explained this to me and other Ministers—that this is not just a crucial part of the new hospital plans, but that the current system was only ever meant to be a temporary measure; he described how fragile it is, so I recognise the urgency of starting work on the new energy centre.

My hon. Friend will know that early works have commenced on site. Ground clearance and site surveys are under way to prepare for the cabling that is needed

to provide the energy centre's power once it is completed. Hoardings will shortly go up to allow more extensive works to start on site. I can reassure my hon. Friend that his constituents will start to see progress on that very shortly. The trust has made progress, recently reaching a new connection agreement with National Grid and agreeing the reserve capacity needed for the energy centre. That is a vital step in securing the new hospital's energy requirements for the future and in dealing with the imminent problem of the temporary energy facility that is keeping the hospital going.

The final piece of the jigsaw to get the construction of the energy centre under way is the full business case that the trust needs to submit. I can reassure my hon. Friend that that we are working with the new hospital programme team on this. We expect the case to be submitted in June. The Hospitals Minister has committed that, subject to it meeting the cost threshold and certain criteria, we can estimate a turnaround time for approval of two weeks, so hopefully we will start to see the construction of the energy centre this summer. I hope that gives my hon. Friend and his constituents reassurance.

Mr Hollobone: I thank the Minister for her reassurance. The purpose of these debates is to put pressure on the Government—that is the way Parliament works—but would she join me in applying gentle pressure on the trust? The sooner it can get the full business case in, the sooner the thing can be approved and the funds can start to flow.

Maria Caulfield: Absolutely. I have spoken to the Hospitals Minister on the specific issue of Kettering, and he is in agreement; if the trust can keep us updated with the timeline and let Ministers know as soon as it submits the business case, he has given the commitment to try to turn it around within a couple of weeks. I would gently say to the trust that it is in its interest to get the case to us as soon as possible.

Mr Hollobone: I thank both my hon. Friend and the Hospitals Minister for their involvement. It is right, is it not, that this two-week turnaround is a novel feature of the new hospital programme? It is a groundbreaking approval process that will turn the application round that quickly. Where Kettering leads, others surely will follow.

Maria Caulfield: Absolutely. I take hon. and right hon. Members' feedback about their frustration at how clearing the red tape in this process sometimes takes longer than the construction. My hon. Friend is right: this will be a novel way forward and could open the door for other trusts that are proactive in securing approval for their business cases in a more timely manner.

In addition to the energy centre, the Government are releasing funds to support the trust overall for the new hospital that we wish to build at Kettering, both for the development of the business case more widely and for some early critical works to prepare the site for main

construction. By the end of this financial year—which is early next week—the scheme will have received over £5 million in development funding. That includes the release of over £1.9 million in fees to support with the design, planning permission and a business case for a new multi-storey car park. Further funding has also been released to support the development of business cases for the reprovision of accommodation, which will be needed during construction, the data centre and construction area and access roads, which will also be required.

I hope I have reassured my hon. Friend that we are doing extra work, in addition to the energy centre. We expect to receive the full business case and submissions over the course of this year. Again, we urge the trust to be as swift as it can with that, so that we can make some assessments and decisions as quickly as possible. Of course we will keep my hon. Friend updated as the scheme progresses and as further funding is released to the project, because we want to stay on track to complete the main construction of the new hospital by 2030.

In the short time I have, I want to update the House on the wider hospitals programme, because I know that hon. Members are often interested in the progress we are making. I am pleased to say that four of our new hospitals are now open to patients: the Northern Centre for Cancer Care in Newcastle, the Royal Liverpool Hospital, the Louisa Martindale, also known as the 3Ts hospital, in Brighton, and the Northgate and Ferndene Hospitals in Northumberland. A further four hospitals are expected to be open by the end of the next financial year: Salford Royal major trauma centre, the Dyson cancer centre in Bath, the national rehabilitation centre in Loughborough, and the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital. A further 18 hospitals are in construction or well under way towards completion. We also have other capital programmes, including over 100 rapid diagnostic centres that are open, 100 new surgical hubs that are either open or in construction, and 160 mental health crisis centres—all capital projects that will transform healthcare up and down England.

In conclusion, I again thank my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering. He has raised this issue, quite rightly, to hold our feet to the fire. He is fighting tooth and nail for his constituents to get the new hospital up and running by 2030. The energy centre will be the first major part of that construction. If the trust can get us the business case by June, the Hospitals Minister has committed to try to turn that round within a couple of weeks. That will be the start of the wider programme for the new hospital at Kettering. We will absolutely keep my hon. Friend updated, and the new hospital programme team will continue to do all it can to meet the challenges of delivering such a large infrastructure project, to ensure that staff and patients have world-class facilities in Kettering.

Question put and agreed to.

3.3 pm

House adjourned.

Written Statement

Friday 22 March 2024

TREASURY

Scottish Government and Welsh Government Funding

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Laura Trott): In addition to changes in funding at supplementary estimates 2023-24, and in line with the statement of funding policy, the Welsh Government have chosen to draw down £265.056 million in resource departmental expenditure limit excluding depreciation, £47.230 million in capital DEL (general) and £37.420 million in capital DEL (financial transactions) from the Wales reserve in 2023-24.

The Scottish Government have confirmed that they wish to carry forward £14.758 million in capital DEL (general) outside of the Scotland reserve and defer a reduction of £52.838 million in capital DEL (financial transactions) from 2023-24 to 2024-25.

The flexibility to carry forward funding outside the reserve and to defer the reduction in capital DEL (financial transactions) was exceptionally agreed to help the Scottish Government and Welsh Government to manage late changes to their budgets.

Revised 2023-24 funding is as follows:

£million	Scottish Government	Welsh Government
Resource DEL excluding depreciation ¹	37,608.692	16,718.329
Capital DEL (general)	6,073.634	3,079.192
Capital DEL (financial transactions)	349.926	124.682
Total DEL	44,032.252	19,922.203

¹Due to the scale of tax devolution in Scotland, Scottish Government DEL funding is shown excluding tax and welfare block grant adjustments. Welsh Government DEL funding is shown including tax block grant adjustments.

[HCWS373]

WRITTEN STATEMENT

Friday 22 March 2024

TREASURY	<i>Col. No.</i> 65WS
Scottish Government and Welsh Government	
Funding.....	65WS

No proofs can be supplied. Corrections that Members suggest for the Bound Volume should be clearly marked on a copy of the daily Hansard - not telephoned - and *must be received in the Editor's Room, House of Commons*,

**not later than
Friday 29 March 2024**

STRICT ADHERENCE TO THIS ARRANGEMENT GREATLY FACILITATES THE
PROMPT PUBLICATION OF BOUND VOLUMES

Members may obtain excerpts of their speeches from the Official Report (within one month from the date of publication), by applying to the Editor of the Official Report, House of Commons.

CONTENTS

Friday 22 March 2024

Hunting Trophies (Import Prohibition) Bill [Col. 1159]

Motion for Second Reading—(John Spellar)—on a Division, agreed to

Greater London Low Emission Zone Charging (Amendment) Bill [Col. 1188]

Motion for Second Reading—(Gareth Johnson)—debate adjourned

Petition [Col. 1232]

Kettering General Hospital: Redevelopment [Col. 1233]

Debate on motion for Adjournment

Written Statement [Col. 65WS]
