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**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**
(HANSARD)

Tuesday 23 July 2024

House of Commons

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The House met at half-past Eleven o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Speaker's Statement

Mr Speaker: I can inform the House that the ballot for the election of Deputy Speakers is currently taking place in Committee Room 8. The ballot will close at 1.30 pm. I hope to be able to announce the results of the election later today.

Oral Answers to Questions

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

*The Secretary of State was asked—
NHS Dental Contracting Framework*

1. **Alice Macdonald** (Norwich North) (Lab/Co-op): What assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the NHS dental contracting framework. [900015]

17. **Lewis Atkinson** (Sunderland Central) (Lab): What assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the NHS dental contracting framework. [900031]

23. **Jon Pearce** (High Peak) (Lab): What assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the NHS dental contracting framework. [900038]

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Wes Streeting): First, may I welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich North (Alice Macdonald) to the House, and say what an absolute privilege it is to have been appointed Secretary of State for Health and Social Care? We have our work cut out for us, with not only the worst economic inheritance since 1945, for which the Conservatives should show more humility, but the worst crisis in the history of our national health service, which we see reflected particularly in NHS dentistry. Some 13 million people in England have unmet need for NHS dentistry, or 28% of the country, and it is disgraceful that rotting teeth are the most common reason for children aged between five and nine being admitted to hospital. During the general election campaign, I pledged to meet the British Dental Association immediately to start conversations on contract reform, and I did exactly that. I look forward to working with dentists and others from across the sector to reform the dental contract and rebuild NHS dentistry.

Alice Macdonald: I welcome my right hon. Friend to his place. Norfolk is a dental desert and my constituents are suffering. As well as reforming the contract, we need to train more dentists. In the east of England we do not have a dental school, but the University of East Anglia has put forward proposals for one. Will he meet me, other hon. Members from Norfolk and representatives from the University of East Anglia to discuss this important proposal?

Wes Streeting: It is appalling that Norfolk and Waveney are so poorly served in terms of dentistry. There are only 36 dentists per 100,000 people, compared with the national average of 53, so when my hon. Friend says that her community is a dental desert, Members should know that it is the Sahara of dental deserts. We will work with partners to ensure that patients across the country can access a dentist when they need one. I am aware, not least thanks to her advocacy and the advocacy of other Labour MPs across Norfolk, of the University of East Anglia's proposal, and I would be delighted to meet her and my colleagues.

Lewis Atkinson: My constituents in Sunderland Central tell me that NHS dentistry is broken. It is not just that they cannot access routine care, but that if they are struck with, for example, excruciating toothache, they cannot access urgent appointments either. I therefore ask my right hon. Friend what steps he is taking, alongside the welcome reform of the dental contract, to ensure that urgent dental services are available locally in places such as Sunderland.

Wes Streeting: I welcome my hon. Friend; he certainly has big shoes to fill in Sunderland Central and is a worthy successor to his predecessor. He is absolutely right that alongside contract reform we need urgent action. That is why we committed to providing 700,000 additional urgent appointments and recruiting dentists to where they are most needed, and I am delighted to report that dentists stand ready to assist. We are working with the BDA urgently to get those appointments up and running as soon as possible, and we will keep the House informed on progress as we do.

Jon Pearce: High Peak is also a dental desert. We spoke to one practice that said it got as many calls for registrations as it did for appointments. Often those calls are deeply distressing, with elderly people unable to eat because they need their dentures sorted. What first steps is the Secretary of State able to take to cure 14 years of Conservative failure in NHS dentistry?

Wes Streeting: I welcome my hon. Friend to the House. He is absolutely right to point out that these challenges have been 14 years in the making, and it will take time to fix the damage that the Conservatives have done to our national health service. We will start with 700,000 urgent appointments, as we promised, and we will continue with contract reform, which is essential. I reassure him that as we do, we will have the needs of all communities in our country at heart, especially rural communities such as his that have particular challenges. I look forward to involving him and keeping him up to date on progress as we make it.

Dame Harriett Baldwin (West Worcestershire) (Con): The NHS dental recovery plan was launched earlier this year, and the Secretary of State has on his desk news about the impact that it is having. Could he share with the House how much the plan has increased appointments in the Worcestershire and Herefordshire integrated care board area?

Wes Streeting: The Conservative party lauded that plan during the general election, when I think the public delivered their verdict on the progress that it had made. NHS dentistry is non-existent in huge parts of the country. We will stick with some aspects of the previous Government's dental recovery plan because they are the right solutions, but there are gimmicks that we will not proceed with. We will come forward with a serious plan to reform the dental contract, which the Conservatives committed to in 2010 but failed to do in every single year of their 14 years.

Layla Moran (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD): I have a constituent who has been trying to get a dentist appointment for a year. They have painful abscesses, cannot sleep and cannot eat using the right side of their mouth. We need to get on with this. I note that a review of the NHS has been launched, but the British Dental Association is concerned that that review will delay the changes to NHS dentistry that are so desperately needed. Will the Secretary of State give us a timeline for when we will see change?

Wes Streeting: I am grateful to the hon. Member for her question and congratulate her on her re-election to the House. She is right to point to the detrimental impact that the Conservatives' failure is having on people's lives. In fact, in 1948, when the national health service was founded, Nye Bevan received a letter from a woman who had worked her entire life in the Lancashire cotton mills about how the dentistry she was given by the national health service had given her dignity and the freedom to associate in any company. What a tragedy that 76 years later, the Conservative party has squandered and destroyed that legacy to the point where people are suffering not just pain and agony, but the indignity of being unable to find a job and unable to socialise in polite company because they are ashamed of the state of their rotting teeth.

The hon. Member is absolutely right: Lord Darzi is conducting a review on the state of the NHS, and it will report in September. That is not preventing us from making progress, talking to the BDA and working within the Department and across the sector to get those 700,000 appointments up and running as a matter of urgency. I look forward to reporting the progress to her and other right hon. and hon. Members.

Joe Robertson (Isle of Wight East) (Con): As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, there is a particular shortage of NHS dentists in coastal and rural communities such as mine on the Isle of Wight. Will he therefore commit to the previous Government's plan for 240 golden hellos for newly qualified dentists by the end of the year to address that issue?

Wes Streeting: I welcome the hon. Member to the House—it is a rare thing to welcome new Conservative Members, and he is welcome. He is absolutely right to

touch on the workforce issues in NHS dentistry, and to say that we need to incentivise dentists, on two fronts: we need them to commit to and do more work in the NHS—we are looking at a range of things in that regard—and we need to ensure that we get more dentists to the areas in which they are most needed. We will certainly support incentives to that effect.

Mr Speaker: I call the shadow Minister.

Saqib Bhatti (Meriden and Solihull East) (Con): I welcome the right hon. Member and his new team to their places in the Department. The shadow Secretary of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for Louth and Horncastle (Victoria Atkins), prioritised access to care, including NHS dentistry, when she was Secretary of State. The dental recovery plan that she launched announced new dental vans to provide access to care to our most rural communities and coastal communities in England. We had agreed with NHS England that the first vans would be on the road by this autumn, and I know that that timescale was welcomed by colleagues across the House. Will he confirm that dental vans will be on the road by this autumn?

Wes Streeting: I could not have picked a better example of the previous Government's desperately low ceiling of ambition than the fact that, after 14 years, they laud their triumph of dental vans roaming the country in the absence of actual dentists and dental surgeries. What an absolute disgrace. I accept that the shadow Secretary of State for Health and Social Care was just the last in a very long list of Health and Social Care Secretaries who had the chance to fix the problems. It was not all on her, and it is important that I say that—not least because of the Conservative leadership election that will be taking place soon.

I congratulate the shadow Minister, the hon. Member for Meriden and Solihull East (Saqib Bhatti), on his appointment, but he sat behind Secretaries of State as their Parliamentary Private Secretary year after year, week after week, looking at the utterly abysmal failure of their record. When it comes to criticising this Government on the actions that we will take, the Conservatives do not have a leg to stand on.

Access to NHS Dentists

2. **Steff Aquarone** (North Norfolk) (LD): What steps his Department plans to take to improve access to NHS dentists. [900016]

The Minister for Care (Stephen Kinnock): I thank the hon. Gentleman for his question and welcome him to his place. Thanks to what the Conservative party has done to NHS dentistry over the past 14 years, a staggering 13 million people are unable to see a dentist. I know that the hon. Gentleman represents the constituency that has the lowest number of dentists per head in the entire country. Our rescue plan will provide 700,000 more urgent dental appointments and recruit dentists to areas that need them. We will rebuild the service for the longer term by reforming the dental contract.

Steff Aquarone: As the Minister has alluded to, we in North Norfolk have suffered in particular from unallocated units of dental treatment being moved to other parts of

the country. The integrated care board has been told that it will have to return this year's unused money to the Treasury. Will the Minister commit to protecting unallocated dental funds in my constituency?

Stephen Kinnock: As my right hon. Friend the Health Secretary stated, on the Monday after the general election, he met the British Dental Association to look at a range of issues around the long-term NHS contract. That is an ongoing dialogue—it includes units of dental activity, of course—and we need to ensure that we have the negotiations rapidly. We will work at pace to address some of those long-term issues, but let us not forget that the Conservative party allowed the NHS contract to atrophy and took NHS dentistry to the brink of collapse in our country.

Claire Hazelgrove (Filton and Bradley Stoke) (Lab): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and his fantastic team on taking their new place on the Government Front Bench. I also thank my right hon. Friend for his advocacy in the last Parliament for people across my constituency who lack dental access.

What assurances can the Minister provide that the important issues of infrastructure and housing will be linked together? As we look to build those much-needed 1.5 million homes across the country, it is vital to make sure that we do not have more dental deserts and that we have the infrastructure we need. How will he work in a cross-departmental way to ensure we achieve that?

Stephen Kinnock: I thank my hon. Friend for her question, and warmly welcome her to her place and congratulate her on her election. The key aspects of our dental rescue plan include 700,000 more appointments through extra funding that we will generate by cracking down on tax dodgers and closing other loopholes. We will incentivise new graduate dentists to come to areas that are underserved to ensure that we plug the gaps—there will be golden hellos to make that happen. We are also working hard on things like supervised toothbrushing for three to five-year-olds, because prevention is always better than cure.

New Health Centre: Maghull

3. **Bill Esterson** (Sefton Central) (Lab): Whether his Department plans to provide capital funding for a new health centre at Maghull in Sefton Central constituency. [900017]

The Minister for Secondary Care (Karin Smyth): I congratulate my hon. Friend on his re-election. He will know that capital allocations are a matter for the integrated care boards. We are committed to introducing neighbourhood care centres to bring together vital care services, and I look forward to working with him on Labour's mission to improve the front door to the local NHS.

Bill Esterson: I congratulate my right hon. and hon. Friends on their appointments. The predecessors of my right hon. Friend the Health Secretary—there have been quite a few over the past few years—all agreed with me that a health centre in Maghull in my constituency was a priority for the health service, but as my hon.

Friend has just said, the allocation of capital by integrated care boards has meant that the priority has been acute hospitals, sometimes at the expense of community facilities. Will my hon. Friend meet me to discuss the importance of investment in health centres such as the one in Maghull, which make such a difference to reducing waiting times in the NHS and improving patient outcomes?

Karin Smyth: My hon. Friend is first out of the blocks on this issue, and has shown his commitment to improving primary care for his constituents. I am sure the local ICB has listened very carefully to his question, because we know that the existing primary care estate is under a great deal of pressure. That is why building a neighbourhood health service remains at the forefront of our mission to rebuild the NHS, and I would be pleased to meet him to discuss that topic.

Newcastle-under-Lyme Landfill Sites: Health Effects

4. **Adam Jogee** (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Lab): If he will hold discussions with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on the potential effects of toxic air from landfill sites on people's health in Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency. [900018]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Andrew Gwynne): I warmly welcome my hon. Friend, the new Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme, and thank him for raising this important issue. The UK Health Security Agency works with the regulator, the Environment Agency, to advise on health risks from landfill sites. In relation to the site in his constituency, the UKHSA undertakes monthly risk assessments using air quality data. A multi-agency group, including Government agencies and local authorities, meets regularly to review the situation and any interventions needed. I will, of course, raise his concerns with my counterparts in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Adam Jogee: I thank the Minister for his answer, and welcome him to his place. Walleys Quarry landfill in Newcastle-under-Lyme is an environmental crisis and a health one too, and my constituents Sheelagh Casey-Hulme, Jan Middleton, Lee Walford and many others are rightly scared and angry about the impact of toxic levels of hydrogen sulphide on the health and wellbeing of local people. Will the Minister come to Newcastle-under-Lyme to listen, to learn and to smell, and to help us finally stop the stink?

Andrew Gwynne: Public health and prevention are priorities for me and this Labour Government. Obviously, the Environment Agency takes the lead in this specific instance, but I am more than happy to jump off the train at Stoke—if my hon. Friend will pick me up—and visit his constituents to listen to their concerns, and to ensure that the public health considerations are amplified to Environment Agency colleagues.

Fracture Liaison Services

5. **Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst** (Solihull West and Shirley) (Con): Whether he is taking steps to ensure the provision of fracture liaison services in all hospitals. [900019]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Andrew Gwynne): I thank the learned and gallant hon. Member for his question. More than 500,000 fragility fractures occur every year, and up to 40% of fracture patients will suffer another fracture. I praise the campaigns by the *Sunday Express*, *The Mail on Sunday* and the Royal Osteoporosis Society for their campaigns on this. I am pleased to reiterate the Government's commitment to expanding access to fracture liaison services. The Department is working closely with NHS England to develop plans to ensure better quality and access to these important preventive services.

Dr Shastri-Hurst: First, I congratulate the Minister and the rest of the Front-Bench team on their appointments. As a former orthopaedic surgeon, I am mindful of the impact of osteoporosis on many of our constituents, including my own in Solihull West and Shirley. In England, more than 67,000 people suffer a fracture every year, and a disproportionate number of those are women. What we do know, however, is that fracture liaison services, where they are delivered well, can prevent many of those fractures. Currently, half of the country has access to such services. The last Conservative Government made a commitment to roll them out to the whole country by 2030. Will the Minister honour that commitment?

Andrew Gwynne: The hon. Gentleman makes a really important point, and we are absolutely committed to ensuring that these services across England are better than those we have inherited. Of course, I completely agree with him about the need to improve these services in specific parts of the country, which is something we will be looking at in detail. However, I have to say to the hon. Gentleman that the one thing those of us on this side of the House will not be doing is what he has written about in "ConservativeHome", which is health rationing and cutting back on treatment.

Urgent and Emergency Care

7. **Uma Kumaran** (Stratford and Bow) (Lab): What assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of NHS urgent and emergency care services. [900021]

The Minister for Secondary Care (Karin Smyth): I congratulate my hon. Friend on her election, and I also pass on my best wishes to her and her husband, who I know recently suffered a stroke. We hope he makes a speedy recovery. We recognise the great work of NHS staff for them, and indeed for all our constituents every day, but we do know that the NHS is broken. The latest data confirms the terrible state in which the Conservatives left urgent and emergency care services, with one in four patients waiting longer than four hours in A&E. That is why Professor Lord Darzi will lead an investigation into NHS performance, and the findings will inform our 10-year reform of the NHS.

Uma Kumaran: I thank the Minister for her kind words today, and I also thank my right hon. Friend the Health Secretary for his wishes on the day. Mr Speaker, may I also take this opportunity to thank you and your staff for the care and kindness you showed me?

Residents in my constituency of Stratford and Bow are served by Barts health NHS trust, which includes Newham University, Royal London and Whipps Cross hospitals. In May, their A&E departments had the second highest volume of any trust in England and the highest in London. Overcrowding and capacity constraints mean that the staff at those hospitals are having to treat some patients in corridors rather than on wards. This is the broken NHS that we have inherited from the Conservatives. Will the Minister ask her Department to look at capacity issues at those hospitals and at how community pharmacy prescribing services may be used to alleviate some of the pressures?

Karin Smyth: My hon. Friend makes an excellent point highlighting the challenges particularly around hospital capacity, something well-known on the Front Bench with my right hon. Friend the Health Secretary representing a nearby area. This type of patient experience is unacceptable, but it sadly became normal under the last Government of 14 years. My hon. Friend makes an excellent point about pharmacies: they will have a central role in our future system, and I would of course be happy to undertake a visit with her.

Priti Patel (Witham) (Con): I welcome the new Front-Bench Members to their new portfolios and responsibilities. Essex has actually seen some improvements in emergency care services over the past 14 years, particularly in our ambulance trust, and that should be commended. One way in which pressure on emergency services can be reduced is by having community facilities in our towns and across our districts. Will the Minister commit to meeting me and working with my right hon. Friend the Member for Maldon (Sir John Whittingdale) on looking at ways in which we can safeguard community services at St Peter's hospital in Maldon, which our communities absolutely need?

Karin Smyth: I thank the right hon. Lady because she again makes for us the excellent point about what has happened in the last 14 years under her Government: these situations have been allowed to get so much worse both in Essex and across the country. She should also welcome our mission to rebuild the broken front door to the NHS and have more neighbourhood services based in communities, bringing those services together where patients are; that is absolutely what we all want and I am very happy to discuss this with her.

Shaun Davies (Telford) (Lab): For 14 years the community in Telford and I have worked hard to safeguard our A&E, but the last Conservative Government made Telford the largest town without a fully functioning A&E. Will the Health team meet me and other Shropshire MPs to discuss this discredited and disgraceful decision?

Karin Smyth: I welcome my hon. Friend to his place. He knows what we all know, and what we know the entire country knows because we spent the past six weeks campaigning: it is the same story across the country. That is why we are committed to restoring standards and why we will fix this broken NHS, and of course I am happy to meet with him.

Andrew George (St Ives) (LD): A decision by the Conservatives two years ago means that the urgent treatment centre at the West Cornwall hospital in Penzance

is now closed at night, and that has put pressure on the only emergency department in Cornwall—a long peninsula—at Treliske, where routinely 20 ambulances are parked outside creating a new metallic ward at the front of the hospital. That situation has had a detrimental impact, of course including avoidable deaths. Will the Minister meet me and colleagues and the local NHS to discuss this issue, to see how we can restore our emergency services?

Karin Smyth: Again, across the country we see the damage done over the last 14 years, and the hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to highlight that the situation in one part of the system knocks on to other parts. That is why we want a 10-year plan to look at this, an immediate look with Lord Darzi, and, critically, to understand which community and primary care services can be supported to support the rest of the system. I am very happy to meet with colleagues across Cornwall, where we now have many Labour MPs.

NHS Dentistry: Work Requirement

8. **George Freeman** (Mid Norfolk) (Con): If he will make an assessment of the potential merits of requiring newly-qualified dentists to work for the NHS for a set period of time. [900022]

The Minister for Care (Stephen Kinnock): I thank the hon. Gentleman and congratulate him on his survival instincts in getting re-elected to this place.

NHS dentistry needs urgent action thanks to 14 years of chaos, failure and neglect. Our rescue plan will get NHS dentistry back on its feet, followed by contract reform to make NHS dentistry more attractive. A consultation for a tie-in to NHS dentistry for graduate dentists closed on 18 July and we are now considering the responses. The Government position on this proposal will be set out in due course and I will keep the House updated on this matter.

George Freeman: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that answer and congratulate him and his colleague the Secretary of State on their appointments. All of us who are serious about the health service and the need for reform, about which the Secretary of State has spoken, have their back in pushing for reform. The hon. Gentleman has his moment of triumph, but may I gently encourage him to reach out and build a cross-party coalition of support for serious reform? The NHS is broken not by Tory cuts but by years—[*Interruption.*] For years we have been pouring money in; it needs to modernise for the 21st-century.

In the spirit of which, on dentistry, may I encourage the Front-Bench team to reach out and have a meeting—a rainbow coalition meeting including the new hon. Members for Norwich North (Alice Macdonald) and for North Norfolk (Steff Aquarone)—of all MPs in Norfolk, which has suffered more than most counties? We desperately need that University of East Anglia dental school.

Stephen Kinnock: The hon. Gentleman was doing so well at the start, and then he kind of blew it a bit towards the end. It is absolutely right that we put country before party, and we will work with whoever has the best interests of rebuilding our public services at heart. The issue that he raises specifically sounds interesting.

What I would say is that unless we get the bigger picture sorted, and unless we make NHS work pay for dentists, we will not be able to rebuild the NHS dentistry system that we should be cherishing and seeking to reform. I am of course always open to conversations with him.

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): Just 39.2% of my constituents were able to access an NHS dentist over the past two years. That is an absolute disgrace, but the Health and Social Care Committee put together a report into NHS dentistry, setting out a blueprint for how to resolve the challenges, including access, looking at tie-ins and ensuring that we get more dentists registered. Will the Minister look at that report and follow its recommendations?

Stephen Kinnock: I congratulate my hon. Friend on her re-election; it is wonderful to see her back in her place. She is absolutely right that the tie-in consultation deadline was 18 July. We are considering those responses with an open mind. On the broader issues that she mentions, our rescue plan is 700,000 more appointments, incentives for new graduates to go to under-served areas, reform of the dental contract and making work pay for dentists. That plan is at the heart of the reforms that she mentioned and that is what we will be doing.

NHS Mental Health Services

9. **Mohammad Yasin** (Bedford) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the adequacy of access to NHS mental health services. [900023]

20. **Tim Roca** (Macclesfield) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the adequacy of access to NHS mental health services. [900035]

The Minister for Care (Stephen Kinnock): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bedford (Mohammad Yasin) on his re-election and my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Tim Roca) on his election. More than a million people with mental health issues are not getting the support they need. This Government will fix our broken NHS. That will include recruiting 8,500 mental health workers, including specialist mental health professionals in every school and rolling out young futures hubs in every community. As announced in the Gracious Speech, we are bringing forward legislation to modernise the Mental Health Act 1983, which is a hugely significant step that has been warmly welcomed by service users, campaigners and, indeed, the former Conservative Prime Minister Theresa May.

Mohammad Yasin: I welcome the Minister to his place. Funding to bring desperately needed in-patient mental health services back to Bedford has been sitting in the accounts of our local mental health trust for years, but it cannot be used because of the previous Government's capital expenditure limits. Will the Minister therefore meet me to discuss a way forward to get this urgently needed mental health facility back in Bedford, so that my constituents do not have to travel miles to access this vital service?

Stephen Kinnock: I know that my hon. Friend has been campaigning with great passion and conviction on this issue for some time, and I am in no doubt that his

integrated care board will have listened carefully to every word that he has said today. I would be pleased to meet him so that we can discuss this matter in greater detail.

Tim Roca: The Prime Minister has been clear that the Government will make, unlike their predecessor, evidence-based policy. While the NHS has made some high-level progress, the figures for those waiting for mental health elective care remains unacceptably high, but the data is incomplete. Does the Minister agree that comprehensive data is crucial if we are to serve the patients we care about?

Stephen Kinnock: I welcome my hon. Friend warmly to his place. I hope he will not mind if I use this analogy, which is that you cannot make a prescription unless you have the diagnosis, and you cannot make policy on the hoof. We cannot have the chaos, neglect and failure that we have seen from the Conservatives for the past 14 years because they have not made policy based on evidence and data. I am absolutely on board with what my hon. Friend says, and I would be more than happy to discuss it with him further at his convenience.

Mr Richard Holden (Basildon and Billericay) (Con): I welcome those on the Opposition Front Bench to their roles and those on the Government Front Bench to their new roles. One of the things that we did very well over the past few years on a cross-party basis was tackling the disparity between mental and physical health. Since 2018, £4.7 billion extra has gone into NHS mental health services. Will the Government commit to that going forward and ensure that the proportion of funding towards mental health services will increase in the coming years?

Stephen Kinnock: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his question, but he appears to be living in a parallel universe. We are in the midst of a mental health crisis as a result of 14 years of Tory chaos, neglect and failure. We have a plan, with 8,500 more mental health workers, young futures walk-in hubs, specialist mental health support for young people and mental health specialists dealing with talking therapies. Of course, we will also introduce legislation following the Gracious Speech to deal with helping people who have more severe conditions. That is a plan of action with which I hope we can once again make our country proud of how we deal with this extremely serious issue.

Sarah Dyke (Glastonbury and Somerton) (LD): Mental health pressures in the farming community are rising, with the Farm Safety Foundation survey finding that 95% of farmers under 40 agree that poor mental health is the biggest hidden problem facing the industry. Will the Minister work with colleagues in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to improve access to NHS mental health services in rural areas and support the continued roll-out of rural health hubs?

Stephen Kinnock: I thank the hon. Lady for raising that extremely important question. We are indeed looking at that issue through our 10-year plan for the future vision of our health service. Issues around isolation and the huge pressure on what are often family businesses are creating tremendous strains for that community. We take that seriously and will of course work with our colleagues in DEFRA to address it.

Mr Speaker: I call the shadow Minister.

Dr Ben Spencer (Runnymede and Weybridge) (Con): May I congratulate those on the Government Front Bench on their appointments? I should declare that I am a former NHS consultant psychiatrist, my wife is an NHS doctor and I participated in the Wessely Mental Health Act review. While I no longer have a licence to practise, I may gently correct the Minister in that it is possible to provide a prescription without a diagnosis. *[Laughter.]*

The Opposition are pleased that the Government intend to build on the work of Conservative Governments, kick-started by the former Member for Maidenhead, to reform the Mental Health Act 1983. We will work constructively with them to make such legislation as effective, fair and compassionate as possible. With that in mind, does the Minister intend to make changes to the code of practice to the Mental Health Act now so that non-statutory changes and protections can be enacted while the Bill works its way through Parliament?

Stephen Kinnock: I welcome the shadow Minister to his place and congratulate him on his appointment. It is a little bit rich to receive a question like that, given that the Conservatives had 14 years to address the issue; I have been in this position for 16 days. If he looks at the plan that we are bringing forward, he will see that we have more ambition and more boldness in our plans than what we have seen in the last 14 years. We will introduce legislation that will address those extremely important issues for people who have some of the more severe conditions.

To the shadow Minister's specific point on a code of practice, the first step will be to see the legislative process moving forward. But, of course, we remain open to looking at any solution or reform that will help to address this extremely important issue.

New Hospital Programme

10. **Cat Smith** (Lancaster and Wyre) (Lab): What recent progress his Department has made on the new hospital programme. [900024]

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (**Wes Streeting**): It is painfully clear that the previous Government's new hospital programme—they said that they would deliver 40 new hospitals by 2030—is not deliverable in that timeframe. I want to see the new hospital programme completed, but I am not prepared to offer people false hope about how soon they will benefit from the facilities they deserve. That is why I have asked officials as a matter of urgency to report to me on the degree to which the programme is funded along with a realistic timetable for delivery. We will not play fast and loose with the public finances, nor will we play fast and loose with people's trust as the previous Government did.

Cat Smith: Lancaster's royal infirmary is at capacity. It is a Victorian hospital, and I am sure it was cutting-edge back then, but it is now not fit for purpose. Yesterday, the joint investment strategic committee expressed its support for the new build scheme in Lancaster, so it will soon be on the Secretary of State's desk. Will my right hon. Friend commit to meeting me and other interested

local MPs in north Lancashire to ensure that, after 14 years of chaos under the Conservatives, the Labour Government will deliver a new hospital for Lancaster?

Mr Speaker: And a hospital for Chorley.

Wes Streeting: I was about to say, Mr Speaker, that the good people of Lancaster and Wyre will be delighted to have sent my hon. Friend to Parliament, because she is second only to you in collaring me about a local hospital project—you are the holder of that record. There is a serious point: thanks to her determined efforts to collar me around the parliamentary estate, I know the particular urgency around land. A scheme will be put to me shortly, which I will consider carefully, and I will look at the programme in the round and ensure that I am able to come back to this House and to the country with promises that we can keep and that the country can afford.

James Wild (North West Norfolk) (Con): During the general election campaign, Labour said it was

“committed to delivering the new hospitals programme, including modernising the QEH at Kings Lynn to address its potentially dangerous RAAC”.

Will the Secretary of State honour that pledge, which was made to my constituents and to the staff at QEH, and approve the business case submitted by the trust for the new multi-storey car park, which is a key enabling project for the new hospital that we need by 2030?

Wes Streeting: Hospitals with reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete are at the top of my list of priorities. I am extremely concerned about the dire state of the NHS estate. Once again, I think that is a bit rich from Opposition Members, whose party was in government only weeks ago. They had a Prime Minister local to that hospital, and they did not do anything when they had the chance, but they should not worry—we will clean up their mess.

Mr Speaker: I call the shadow Minister.

Dr Caroline Johnson (Sleaford and North Hykeham) (Con): I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on his position. I should declare that I have been working in the NHS for 23 years, currently as an NHS consultant paediatrician. I look forward to using that experience in my new role as shadow Minister of State to scrutinise the Government constructively.

Under the new hospital programme, the previous Government had already opened six hospitals to patients, with two more due to open this financial year and 18 under construction. The Government are now putting that at risk by launching a review of that work, delaying those projects, which are vital to patients across the country. Could the right hon. Member please confirm when the review will be completed?

Wes Streeting: First, I welcome the hon. Lady to her new post. I must say I preferred her much more as a Back-Bench rebel than a Front-Bench spokesperson, but I have enormous respect for her years of contribution to the NHS and the experience that she brings to this House. I always take her seriously.

However, on this one, once again I say to the Opposition that they handed over an entirely fictional timetable and an unfunded programme. The hon. Lady might not know because she was not there immediately prior to the election, but the shadow Secretary of State, who is sitting right next to her, knows exactly where the bodies are buried in the Department, where the unexploded bombs are, and exactly the degree to which this timetable and the funding were not as set out by the previous Government.

Mr Speaker: I call the Liberal Democrat spokesperson.

Daisy Cooper (St Albans) (LD): I welcome the Secretary of State and his Ministers to their roles, but let me gently warn him that if he intends to run a contest on which Member can harangue him the most on crumbling hospitals, our 72 Liberal Democrat MPs say, “Challenge accepted.”

Under the Conservatives, the new hospital programme ground to a halt. We know the terrible stories of nurses running bucket rotas and all the rest. We have the worst of all worlds at the moment: trusts such as mine in west Hertfordshire are champing at the bit to get going but cannot, and are being held back. Other trusts have capital funds that they want to spend but are not allowed to because of outdated rules, and there are industry concerns that the one, top-down, centralised approach of the Conservatives could decimate competition in that industry, when we need a thriving industry to rebuild our hospitals and primary care. What is the Secretary of State’s response to that approach?

Wes Streeting: I welcome the hon. Lady back to her place. We worked constructively on the Opposition Benches together and, regardless of the size of the Government’s majority, we intend to work constructively with her on this side of the election, too. By extension, I congratulate her colleagues on their election. I have discovered that I have 72 new pen pals, all sitting there on the Liberal Democrat Benches, and they have been writing to me about a whole manner of projects. My colleagues and I will get back to them.

The hon. Lady is right that this is not just about the new hospitals programme, important though that is; the condition of the whole NHS estate is poor. In fact, backlog maintenance, the direct cost of bringing the estate into compliance with mandatory fire safety requirements and statutory safety legislation, currently stands at £11.6 billion. That is the legacy of the last Conservative Government.

Neonatal Care: Parental Accommodation

11. **Bell Ribeiro-Addy** (Clapham and Brixton Hill) (Lab): If he will take steps to help increase the number of accommodation units available for parents whose babies have been admitted to neonatal care units. [900025]

The Minister for Secondary Care (Karin Smyth): I congratulate my hon. Friend on her re-election and thank her for raising this important issue. It is not right that three out of four parents are not able to stay with their critically ill baby overnight at such an important point in that new relationship. NHS England recently concluded a review of neonatal estates. It is in the early

stages of analysing the findings, which will be used to inform the next steps. We are all determined to support parents to be involved in every aspect of their baby's care.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: I congratulate my right hon. and hon. Friends on their re-elections and on taking their places. Recent research from the charity Bliss showed that when a baby receives neonatal care, their parents are routinely expected to leave them in hospital overnight for weeks or even months at a time. Its research found that for every 10 babies who need to stay overnight in neonatal care, there is only one room available for a parent to stay with them. How will the Minister ensure that the existing guidance about facilities for families is followed, and how will she ensure that trusts can access the resources they need to stop the separation of babies and their parents?

Karin Smyth: My hon. Friend is absolutely right that the separation of babies and their parents at that time is not acceptable, and about the shocking state of the estate, as we have just heard. We will look at the findings of the NHS review very quickly, and I will be happy to get back to her on those specific points.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the Minister for her answer. This issue is clearly not just about accommodation; it is also about providing physical and emotional help for mothers who have been through traumatic circumstances, emotionally and physically. What will be done along those lines to ensure that mothers and babies have all the help they need?

Karin Smyth: The hon. Gentleman makes a really important point about mental health support in that critical period. We will absolutely make sure that is looked at.

Health and Social Care Reform

12. **Sean Woodcock** (Banbury) (Lab): Whether he plans to hold discussions with NHS staff and patients on his plans for reforming NHS health and social care services. [900026]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (**Andrew Gwynne**): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury—words I did not think I would ever say—and welcome him to his place. The answer to his question is yes. We do not just want to discuss with patients and staff; we want them to help shape the 10-year plan for the next decade of reform, which will take our NHS from the worst crisis in its history and make it fit for the future. Social care also needs to change. We will work with care workers and care users to build consensus for and shape a new national care service.

Sean Woodcock: Does the Minister agree that the voices of frontline staff, whether in hospitals such as the Horton general hospital in Banbury or carers like my mum, are still often ignored when it comes to whistleblowing? More worryingly, those voices are silenced by threats to report them to regulatory bodies. Does he agree that we need to level the field of accountability for

managers who ignore whistleblowers, and that there should be a regulatory body with oversight of medical managers?

Andrew Gwynne: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We have previously said that bank managers are more regulated than NHS managers. This Labour Government will pursue an agenda of greater accountability, transparency and candour when it comes to those making managerial and executive decisions in our national health service.

Dave Doogan (Angus and Perthshire Glens) (SNP): In integrating health and social care it is vital to take the staff component along with you. It is also vital to have sufficient funding. We integrated health and social care in Scotland in 2012 and it has been a difficult road, but health in Scotland is funded £323 per head more than it is in England. Will the Minister commit to put his hand in his pocket and make sure English people enjoy the same health funding as people in Scotland?

Andrew Gwynne: I welcome the hon. Gentleman back to the House, but I politely say to him that he needs to be a little bit patient. There will be some announcements in the near future on this Government's plans for social care. He should rest assured that we on the Labour Benches understand the integration agenda. We understand the need to fix both the NHS and social care, and this Labour Government will do that.

Mr Speaker: I call the shadow Minister.

Sir John Whittingdale (Maldon) (Con): I congratulate the Minister and his Front-Bench colleagues on their appointments. I welcome the suggestion that the Government are considering the possibility of a royal commission on social care and intend to address the issue on a cross-party basis, but that will take time. Can the Minister therefore confirm that, as was suggested during the election campaign, the Government will take forward the Dilnot reforms, and in particular that they will introduce a cap on social care costs, as was planned by the previous Government?

Andrew Gwynne: It was, of course, the right hon. Gentleman's Government who kicked the can down the road on these issues. They allowed the system to spend the transformation money that had been provided precisely for the purpose of the Dilnot reforms on fixing their broken national health service. He should just be a little bit patient, as we will announce our proposals for social care shortly. He should rest assured that, as I have said to him before, this Labour Government are determined to fix both the broken NHS and the broken social care system that we inherited from 14 years of Tory failure.

Mr Speaker: I call the Liberal Democrat spokesperson.

Daisy Cooper (St Albans) (LD): The Liberal Democrats spoke about care a great deal during the general election campaign. At the heart of our plans was our pledge to introduce free personal care. Will Ministers please confirm whether they intend to open cross-party talks and, if so, whether free personal care will be on the table as one potential option?

Andrew Gwynne: I thank the hon. Lady for the way in which the Liberal Democrats approached the issue of health and social care during the election campaign. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has already said, we will work with all in the House who want to fix our broken health and social care system. Of course we will work collegiately across parties, and of course all issues relating to how we fix our broken social care system will be discussed during those cross-party deliberations.

Topical Questions

T1. [900040] **Carolyn Harris** (Neath and Swansea East) (Lab): If he will make a statement on his departmental responsibilities.

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Wes Streeting): Our NHS is broken. This Government have been honest about the problems we face because we are serious about fixing them, and we have not wasted a moment. We have appointed Lord Darzi to carry out an independent investigation of the state of our NHS, we are resetting the relationship with junior doctors with negotiations starting today, and we are laying the foundations for the delivery of 40,000 more appointments a week to cut waiting lists. The Gracious Speech kick-started a decade of national renewal, with modernisation of the Mental Health Act as well as the smoking reform, which will ensure that this generation of young people is the first smoke-free generation, and will be the first step towards ensuring that that generation is the healthiest in history.

Carolyn Harris: During their free NHS 40-plus health checks, women are assessed for conditions that may affect them as they grow older, but menopause is not included. To include it would be cost-neutral and would not only help millions of women to recognise the symptoms, but prevent needless GP appointments when those symptoms start to develop. Along with Menopause Mandate, I have been campaigning tirelessly on this issue. Will the Secretary of State please look into it as a matter of urgency?

Wes Streeting: I am delighted to see my hon. Friend back in the House. She campaigns relentlessly on this vital issue, and it would be very risky for me to do anything other than agree to meet her, because I share her view that progress needs to be made on it.

Mr Speaker: I call the shadow Secretary of State.

Victoria Atkins (Louth and Horncastle) (Con): May I welcome the Secretary of State and his ministerial team to their places, and wish them well in their endeavours? With your indulgence, Mr Speaker, I should also place on the record my thanks to my superb team of former Ministers, to those in the private office and to officials in the Department for their hard work and support, as well as thanking the doctors, nurses and social care and health professionals with whom I have had the pleasure of working.

Now, to business. In opposition, the Secretary of State described the 35% pay rise demand by the junior doctors committee as “reasonable”. What he did not tell the public was that this single trade union demand would cost an additional £3 billion, let alone the impact

on other public sector workers. Will he ask the Chancellor to raise taxes, or will she ask him to cut patient services to pay for it?

Wes Streeting: May I welcome the shadow Secretary of State to her new position? She has behaved in her typically graceful and decent way. I enjoyed working with her on that basis, and will continue to do so. Although, I must confess that when I heard about the “abominable” behaviour of the shadow Health Secretary, I thought, “What on earth have I done now?” Then I remembered that our roles have swapped, and that it was not me they were referring to.

What I said was that the doctors were making a reasonable case that their pay had not kept in line with inflation, but we were clear before the election that 35% was not a figure we could afford. We are negotiating with junior doctors in good faith to agree on a settlement that we can deliver and that the country can afford.

Victoria Atkins: I am afraid I do not like it when Secretaries of State do not answer questions, and I am sorry to say that the right hon. Gentleman gave another non-answer, as has been the case for those on the Government Front Bench. I have a question that I hope he will be able to answer. The final act of the Conservative Government was to protect children and young people by banning private clinics from selling puberty blockers to young people questioning their gender. Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that he will resist the voices of opposition on the Benches behind him and implement in full all of Dr Cass’s recommendations, including exercising “extreme caution”, as she said, in the use of cross-sex hormones in young people? They and their parents deserve certainty from this Government.

Wes Streeting: Obviously, there is a judicial review of the former Secretary of State’s decision, which I am defending. The matter is sub judice, so I will steer clear of it.

To go back to first principles, we are wholeheartedly committed to the full implementation of the Cass review, which will deliver material improvements in the wellbeing, safety and dignity of trans people of all ages. I think that is important. I want to reassure LGBT+ communities across the country, particularly the trans community, that this Government seek a very different relationship with them. I look at the rising hate crime statistics and trans people’s struggles to access healthcare, and I look at their desire to live freely, equally and with dignity. That is what we will work with them to deliver.

Mr Speaker: Order. I understand that today is a new start with Question Time, but we have to be short and speedy. That is the whole idea of oral questions, because otherwise Members are not going to get in.

T2. [900041] **Satvir Kaur** (Southampton Test) (Lab): After 14 years of Conservative mismanagement of our NHS, the waiting list at Southampton general hospital is close to 60,000. I welcome my hon. Friend’s commitment and plan to bring down waiting lists, but can she also outline what support will be offered to those waiting for treatment, many of whom are in pain, as we tackle the shameful backlog we inherited?

The Minister for Secondary Care (Karin Smyth): My hon. Friend makes an excellent point about the stress that people face when waiting, and we have talked about the disaster of the past 14 years. People with potentially deteriorating conditions are waiting, and we absolutely need to address this issue as part of our work to reduce waiting lists.

T6. [900045] **Blake Stephenson** (Mid Bedfordshire) (Con): The Government have announced ambitious house building targets but, as far as I could tell, the Labour party manifesto was silent on the GP estate upgrades. Does the Secretary of State agree that the Conservative policy of rebuilding or refurbishing 250 GP surgeries in England is a sensible policy to implement?

Wes Streeting: I am proud that the Deputy Prime Minister will be delivering the commitment to build 1.5 million new homes. It is absolutely vital that the infrastructure needed is delivered alongside those new homes, and we and other colleagues across Government will be working very closely with the Deputy Prime Minister to make sure that the social infrastructure is also provided.

T3. [900042] **Tom Rutland** (East Worthing and Shoreham) (Lab): Last week, Worthing hospital came close to having to consider downgrading its maternity services due to a shortage of specialist neonatal nurses and midwives. Will the Minister please update the House on the Government's plans to build an NHS that is fit for the future, including by addressing staffing shortages?

Karin Smyth: I welcome my hon. Friend to the House. He makes an incredibly important point about this very stressful time, particularly for women, in his area. We will listen to women and deliver evidence-based improvements to make maternity and neonatal services safer and more equitable for women and their babies, and we have committed to delivering the long-term workforce plan.

T7. [900046] **Victoria Collins** (Harpenden and Berkhamsted) (LD): In one month alone at the West Hertfordshire teaching hospitals trust, we lost 843 days because of the social care backlog. The burden of that cost is often taken up by families and individuals, which impacts not only on them, but on the rest of our NHS healthcare. I welcome the talk about working together across parties, but would the Secretary of State also consider introducing greater support for unpaid carers, including paid carers leave and a statutory guarantee of regular respite breaks?

Wes Streeting: I warmly welcome the hon. Member to her place. She is absolutely right to raise the plight of unpaid family carers. They are part of the team, as far as this Government are concerned, so as we set out our 10-year plan for social care as part of our ambition to build the national care service, we will make sure that unpaid family carers are very much at the centre of our thinking, in no small part thanks to her representations.

T4. [900043] **Sean Woodcock** (Banbury) (Lab): The Keep the Horton General campaign in my constituency has recently catalogued the poor experiences of tens of Banbury-based mothers who gave birth at the John

Radcliffe hospital in Oxford. Will the Secretary of State or a member of his team meet me to discuss these concerning reports of poor maternity care?

Wes Streeting: Of all the issues that keep me awake at night, maternity safety is top of the list. We have already heard about the staffing shortages and the actions we will take to address that, but I also want to reassure people that, as we build our 10-year plan for the NHS, patient voices, including those of recent and expectant mothers, will be part of that process.

Kit Malthouse (North West Hampshire) (Con): During the election campaign the Prime Minister came to Basingstoke on a visit and specifically promised to replace Basingstoke hospital by 2030. Can we rely on that promise?

Wes Streeting: I would not rely on anything the former Prime Minister said—[*Interruption.*] Oh, our Prime Minister? I thought the right hon. Gentleman was talking about the former Prime Minister. In that case, I can reassure him that we are absolutely committed to the new hospitals programme. On the budgets and the timescales, as I have said, we will come forward with an honest appraisal of what we have inherited from the last Government and what we will be able to deliver within reasonable timescales.

T5. [900044] **Matt Western** (Warwick and Leamington) (Lab): I congratulate the Secretary of State on his position. Yesterday's NHS data showed that we have among the highest incidences of dementia in the world, with something like 500,000 cases just in England. I appreciate that this is early days, 16 days in, but does the Minister have any idea why that may be, and what can be done about it?

The Minister for Care (Stephen Kinnock): I thank my hon. Friend for that question and welcome him to his place. This issue is personal for me, and I am sure it is for many others across this House. A number of potential new disease-modifying drugs for Alzheimer's are in the pipeline, including lecanemab and donanemab. We are committed to ensuring that clinically effective and cost-effective medicines reach patients in a timely and safe way. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence is appraising lecanemab and donanemab to determine whether they will be made available in the NHS.

Simon Hoare (North Dorset) (Con): Nearly 10 children a month die from brain tumours, and I know that the public health Minister takes this issue seriously. He was familiar with the work of the Brain Tumour Charity's HeadSmart campaign. Will he agree to meet me and my fierce campaigner constituent Sacha Langton-Gilks, who lost her son to a brain tumour, to discuss how NHS England could be persuaded to do more to inform and educate parents to identify the symptoms, so that collectively we can reduce the number of deaths?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Andrew Gwynne): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that question. He knows that I met his constituents when I was a shadow public health

Minister, and I can confirm that I am more than happy to meet him and his constituents now that I have dropped the “shadow”.

T8. [900047] **Dan Tomlinson** (Chipping Barnet) (Lab): I am sure the whole House will want to celebrate the fact that the NHS is safe in Labour hands once again. Specifically in the Royal Free trust area, which covers the community that I now have the honour of being the MP for—Chipping Barnet in North London—there are 100,000 people on the NHS waiting list, so what steps will the Minister take to reduce the waiting list in places such as mine so that we can see more people getting the treatment and support that they need from the NHS?

Wes Streeting: I am delighted to welcome my hon. Friend to his place. I am personally grateful to the Royal Free hospital for saving my life when I went through kidney cancer. NHS waiting lists stand at 7.6 million, which was still rising as this Government took office. Our 40,000 extra appointments, scans and procedures and our doubling of the number of diagnostic scanners will make a real difference to getting that backlog down to where it should be.

Lee Anderson (Ashfield) (Reform): During the general election campaign, the Health Secretary visited King’s Mill hospital in Ashfield, and I am sure that helped me to get re-elected. King’s Mill was built on a private finance initiative deal by the last Labour Government and is going to cost £3 billion for a £300 million hospital. Will the Secretary of State please now assure me and the people of Ashfield that this will never happen again?

Wes Streeting: Despite my best efforts, the hon. Gentleman is back. I congratulate him through gritted teeth.

I was very impressed by what I saw at King’s Mill hospital, and I am proud of the last Labour Government’s record of delivering the shortest waiting times and the highest patient satisfaction in history. As I said during the election campaign, we will build on that success and learn from some of our shortcomings, too.

T9. [900048] **Danny Beales** (Uxbridge and South Ruislip) (Lab): I welcome the honesty and urgency of reviewing the new-build hospitals programme. Residents in Uxbridge and South Ruislip are sick and tired after 14 years of broken promises on a new hospital. Board minutes have revealed that no business case was agreed under the last Government. No funding was released for a new hospital, and not a brick has been laid. Does my right hon. Friend agree that urgent investment is needed at Hillingdon hospital? Will he come back to the hospital, a year later, to visit staff and discuss their plans?

Wes Streeting: I welcome my hon. Friend to his place. Better late than never, as they say.

I have been to Hillingdon hospital, which has amazing staff and appalling buildings. That is why the people of Hillingdon, and people right across the country, deserve honesty, clarity and certainty about the new hospitals programme. This Government will provide it and stick to it.

Esther McVey (Tatton) (Con): Does the Secretary of State agree that handing over powers to the World Health Organisation, undermining the UK’s ability to make its own sovereign decisions, would be unacceptable?

Wes Streeting: The World Health Organisation is an intergovernmental arrangement. It is of vital importance that, first and foremost, we agree only to things that are in our national interest, but we should not lose sight of the fact that there are lots of things that we need to do together in pursuit of our national interest, from tackling antimicrobial resistance to preventing future pandemic threats. That is exactly what we will do.

T10. [900049] **Marsha De Cordova** (Battersea) (Lab): I congratulate the Secretary of State and welcome him to his post. Eye healthcare services are in crisis due to the Tories breaking our NHS. Ophthalmology is the busiest out-patient service, making up nearly 10% of the entire waiting list. My national eye health strategy will seek to tackle some of these issues, so will the Secretary of State meet me to discuss how we can tackle the eye healthcare emergency?

Wes Streeting: I would be delighted to do that. As my hon. Friend knows, we visited Specsavers during the election campaign. There are lots of high street opticians, and they can make a real difference to cutting the backlog. The Conservatives should have gone to Specsavers, and this Government will.

Wendy Chamberlain (North East Fife) (LD): My constituents have struggled to get pre-diagnosis ADHD and autism support for their young daughters. We cannot diagnose children at a very young age, but that does not mean that families do not need help. Can the Minister confirm what engagement he will have with support organisations such as the National Autistic Society to ensure that best practice means that families are not struggling for support?

Stephen Kinnock: I welcome the hon. Lady to her place. She raises a vital issue. We have a plan for improving mental health services, including 8,500 more mental health workers. Autism is, of course, a vital part of that, and I will be more than happy to meet her to discuss further how we might be able to take it forward.

Debate on the Address

[5TH DAY]

Debate resumed (Order, 22 July)

Question again proposed,

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

Most Gracious Sovereign,

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

Immigration and Home Affairs

Mr Speaker: I inform the House that I have selected amendment (l) in the name of the Leader of the Opposition, which will be moved at the start of the debate, and amendments (d), in the name of Stephen Flynn, and (k), in the name of Ed Davey, which will be moved at the end of the debate.

I call the shadow Home Secretary.

12.38 pm

Mr James Cleverly (Braintree) (Con): I beg to move amendment 1, at the end of the Question to add:

“but respectfully regret that the Gracious Speech does not commit to boosting defence spending to 2.5% of GDP by 2030 with a fully funded plan, fails to include measures that provide an adequate deterrent to migrants crossing the channel illegally, fails to mention rural communities, farming and fishing, does not include a legally binding target to enhance the UK's food security or a commitment to increase the UK-wide agriculture budget by £1 billion over the course of the Parliament, introduces new burdens on businesses without sufficient measures to support them, fails to set out a concrete plan to tackle the unsustainable post-covid rise in the welfare bill, does not adequately protect family finances and the UK's energy security in the move to net zero, and fails to provide adequate protections for pensioners and working people to keep more of the money they have worked hard for.”

Yesterday, at the Dispatch Box, I welcomed the Home Secretary to her role, and I now take the opportunity to congratulate the wider ministerial team who work with her. They will have inherited a hard-working team of civil servants dedicated to the protection of this country and the people within it. However, I am sad that the hon. Member for Aberafan Maesteg (Stephen Kinnock) has not made the transition from shadow immigration Minister to immigration Minister. His contributions are a great loss to the Conservative party.

With the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North and Cottingham (Dame Diana Johnson) in her new ministerial role, I am sure the Clerks of the Home Affairs Committee will be looking forward to arranging her first session promptly and will, like me, be closely monitoring how quickly her new boss fully implements all the recommendations of the Committee she formerly chaired.

While I do not have time to mention each of the new ministerial team individually, I want to pay tribute to the hon. Member for Birmingham Yardley (Jess Phillips). She knows I planned to single her out and I do not apologise for doing so; I think that it is a very good appointment and she is well suited to her role as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State with responsibility

for victims and safeguarding. She knows that tackling violence against women and girls was a priority for me. We have previously shared the stage at events in the House discussing that subject. I genuinely look forward to working with her and contributing in any way I can to her success in this incredibly important area of public policy. She has highlighted some of the crucial work that this place can do in bringing to the attention of the country and the wider world the continued plight of too many women.

The election highlighted the important work of the Home Office in defending democracy. I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge (Tom Tugendhat), the former security Minister, for his work with the defending democracy taskforce. Again, that is an area where we will seek to be a constructive Opposition. I was disgusted to see how the hon. Member for Birmingham Yardley and many other, mostly female, colleagues and candidates were treated during the general election campaign. No one who cares for democracy, irrespective of their party affiliation, should be willing to tolerate that. The defending democracy taskforce continues to have incredibly important and urgent work to do. We should continue to work together, as we did when our roles were reversed, to root out violence and intimidation, and to ensure that candidates and Members can vote with their conscience and campaign with their hearts, free from intimidation or threats.

While the Prime Minister has been enjoying his honeymoon period at NATO and welcoming visitors to the European Political Community event at Blenheim Palace, which was very well organised by this Government's predecessors in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, the same honeymoon period has sadly not been afforded to the Home Secretary. Members will all be familiar with the seven days of creation; the new Home Secretary has managed seven days of destruction. On day one, she cancelled the partnership with Rwanda, taking away the deterrent that the National Crime Agency said we needed in order to break the business model of people smuggling gangs. In doing so, on day two, she created a diplomatic row with Rwanda, whose Ministers sadly had to read about the Government's decision in the British media, rather than receiving direct communication from the Government. That was a level of diplomatic indecency that will cast a shadow over the relationship not just with that country, but with many others.

On day three, the Home Secretary announced an effective amnesty for tens of thousands of people who arrived here illegally. We said that the incoming Labour Government would do that. They promised that they would not, yet that is exactly what they did. On day four, she started work on getting back into the EU through the back door by negotiating to take more migrants from the continent. On day five, a Labour Government Minister went on national radio to advocate the relaxing of visa rules from the EU, before being slapped down for saying the quiet bit out loud.

On day six, Home Office figures released by the Government showed that the visa curbs that I put in place when I became Home Secretary have cut migration by 48% since last June—she can thank me for that later. On the seventh day, the Home Secretary probably tried to get some rest, but she will now know what I have long known, which is that, as Home Secretary, there is not the luxury of that day of rest.

Therefore, despite a terrible first week of weather to bring in the new Labour Government, we saw almost 500 asylum seekers arrive on small boats. As of today—

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Yvette Cooper): Will the right hon. Member give way?

Mr Cleverly: The Home Secretary will be making a speech in due course.

As I say, almost 500 asylum seekers arrived in the first week, and, as of today, more than 2,000 asylum seekers have arrived in small boats since Labour took office. The second week at work was not much better.

Yvette Cooper: Will the shadow Secretary of State give way?

Mr Cleverly: The right hon. Member has the opportunity to speak in a moment. We have seen riots in her back garden, on the streets of Leeds, and police officers, clearly not confident that they will enjoy her support, having to take a backseat. Like so much of what was said ahead of this general election, “Take back our streets” was clearly just a Labour slogan.

We then saw Neil Basu, a very highly respected former police officer, with whom I worked when I was on the Metropolitan Police Authority, and General Stuart Skeates, a senior official at the Home Office, with whom I worked in a former life as well as when I was Home Secretary, ruling themselves out of leadership of the new so-called border security command. They did so, I am sure, because they know what we know, which is that that is little more than a fig leaf to hide the fact that the Labour Government are doing less on migration and hoping to achieve more. The reality, as everybody including the people smugglers know, is that the small boats problem is only going to get worse under Labour.

Yvette Cooper: I thank the shadow Home Secretary for giving way. It is a shame to puncture his fantasy and bring him down to the real world in which he and his party trebled net migration and left us with the highest level of spring boat crossings on record. Perhaps he can answer just one factual question. He has spent £700 million over two and a half years running the Rwanda scheme; can he tell us how many asylum seekers he has sent?

Mr Cleverly: As I said on the radio this morning, if the right hon. Lady is going to pluck figures out of the air, she should avoid nice round numbers, because it is a bit of a giveaway. She will know that we brought people into detention and that we had chartered flights. The fact that the new Government scrapped the scheme and, with a degree of diplomatic discourtesy, did not even—[*Interruption.*] Labour Members can groan from their Benches, but they will get used to the fact that we cannot treat international partners in this way.

Our relationship with Rwanda was entered into in good faith by both parties. The Rwandans discovered that the incoming Government were tearing up that bilateral relationship in the pages of the British media. The Home Secretary should learn that her new Foreign Secretary should have had the diplomatic courtesy at least to pick up the phone to his opposite number in Rwanda to explain what was going to happen before they read about it in the British press. She and I both

know that her Government would not have acted with that level of vile discourtesy had that partner been a European country. [*Interruption.*] Labour Members can groan all they like, but we all know that is true.

The simple fact of the matter is that the new border security command replicates in all respects the work of the small boats operational command. It took almost the whole general election campaign before the right hon. Lady attempted to clarify the roles. We still have very little clarity on the division of labour between the so-called new border security command and the small boats operational command. Yesterday, at the Dispatch Box, she tried to imply that there had been no returns under the Conservative Government, but let me put some facts and figures on the record. Last year, we returned more than 25,000 people to their home countries, including almost 4,000 foreign national offenders, in order to keep ourselves safe—foreign national offenders for whom, I would remind the House, her Prime Minister in his former guise fought tooth and nail to prevent being deported. Voluntary and enforced returns were both up by more than two thirds, at their highest level for five years—operations done by our immigration enforcement officials, which sounds a lot like a returns unit to me.

I am not sure what the right hon. Lady was doing while in opposition, but she might be surprised to learn that we were indeed smashing the gangs, and we were making sure that people were arrested and incarcerated. Last year, we smashed almost 100 criminal gangs through our law enforcement agencies. I remind the House that Labour Members voted against the Nationality and Borders Act 2022, which is the legislation that we have been using to incarcerate those people smugglers. They voted against that legislation. Labour, in government, are now so worried about their continuing reputation for being and for looking weak on immigration that they felt the need to announce a raft of things to sound tough which basically already existed. They announced the border security command, even though there is already a small boats operational command. They announced a returns unit, even though immigration enforcement already does that. What will they announce next? What will they invent—the RAF? I look forward to seeing what functions are to be replicated.

We will look at legislation when it comes forward but, as I have discussed, the Government already have the tools they need, and as long as they do not undermine their own efforts by scrapping more things, we might see an opportunity for them to reduce numbers, in large part because we passed the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Act 2024. The right hon. Lady has tools at her disposal.

On legal migration, I remember coming to the Government Dispatch Box in December last year and presenting to the House a series of visa curbs to cut net migration. With our measures, 300,000 people who came here last year would no longer have the right to come, reducing migration by a record amount. Already the data is showing that, because of the actions I took as Home Secretary, visa applications are down by 48% compared with June last. On the current trajectory, net migration is set to halve in the next 12 months, thanks to the actions that I took—actions opposed by the Labour party at the time.

[Mr Cleverly]

The Labour manifesto said that net migration would come down, but not by how much. As I said, the first 50% of that reduction is because of actions I took. Perhaps, in her speech, the right hon. Lady can confirm how much further than that 50% she envisages bringing net migration down. Labour talked tough ahead of the election about clamping down on employers bringing in foreign workers, but those plans have apparently now been shelved, as we saw nothing of them in the King's Speech and have not heard anything more about them.

On policing and crime, I am delighted to have my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton West (Matt Vickers) as shadow Minister for Policing, Fire and Crime. There are many brilliant things about Stockton, a place I have visited and enjoyed, and he is of course one of those wonderful things. I welcome the plans set out in the King's Speech for a crime and policing Bill to tackle issues such as antisocial behaviour, retail crime and knife crime and to drive up standards in the police force. Of course I welcome them, because those are issues that I put forward when I was Home Secretary. The Government can therefore count on our general support for these measures, if they bring forward detailed proposals that properly address the issues. I really hope that the right hon. Lady has more success than I had getting her colleague, the Mayor of London, to focus on bringing down violent crime in our capital city. We will of course scrutinise the legislation alongside the victims, courts and public protection Bill.

Over the previous Parliament, it was the Conservative party that put 20,000 new police officers on the streets. At the election, we promised to hire an additional 8,000 full-time, fully warranted police officers to protect our neighbourhoods. During the general election campaign, the Labour party made no such commitment, limiting their aspirations to only 3,000 full-time, fully warranted officers. I hope that they will match our commitment to 8,000.

Paul Holmes (Hamble Valley) (Con): The shadow Secretary of State should also remember that the Labour party opposed our measures for bringing in 20,000 extra police, and during the general election campaign it committed to having 13,000 extra neighbourhood officers, which many police and crime commissioners have said cannot be funded, because they are not clear how they are to be funded. Is it not the case that the Conservative party has a track record of delivering on more policing, and the Government have no idea whatsoever?

Mr Cleverly: I am very proud of the fact that in many parts of the country, including my county of Essex, there are now more warranted police officers than at any time in the force's history—in sharp contrast to Labour-run London, where the Conservative Government put money on the table to recruit extra Metropolitan police officers and the Labour Mayor of London has spectacularly failed to recruit those officers, has not backed officers when they said they needed to do more stop and search, and has seen knife crime accelerate, distorting the whole national picture. I really hope that the right hon. Lady takes this seriously. She can chuckle all she likes, but this is about kids getting stabbed on the streets of London, and she should take this more seriously. [Interruption.] She should recognise that we introduced

tougher sentences under the Public Order Act 2023 to clamp down on disruptive protests—the benefit of which we have already seen this week with the jailing of Just Stop Oil protesters—in addition to plans to grant the police further powers to clamp down on protests that go too far and disrupt the lives of people around this country.

Yvette Cooper: The shadow Home Secretary knows he should not make such disgraceful, unfounded allegations about my response to knife crime. He knows that I have met families right across the country who are devastated by knife crime, including in towns and smaller communities and suburbs where this terrible crime is going up. His party, when in government, repeatedly failed to ban serious weapons on our streets. Will he now support this party and this Government when we bring in the bans on ninja swords and dangerous machetes that he should have brought in long ago?

Mr Cleverly: I made the observation that, while I was talking about young people getting stabbed, the right hon. Lady was chatting and chuckling with her colleagues on the Front Bench. That was a statement of fact. The point is that we have got a grip of crime, but in the parts of the country controlled by Labour police and crime commissioners, including London, that is sadly not the case.

Matt Western (Warwick and Leamington) (Lab): I have a lot of respect for the right hon. Gentleman, but he will know from his tenure as Home Secretary that those sorts of crimes—stabblings and shootings—are happening all across the country, and not just in cities; they are happening in towns such as Warwick and Leamington, where we have had someone shot dead through drug dealing, many people stabbed maliciously and some killed. The reality is that under his watch over the last 14 years we have seen a degradation of the numbers of police officers on our streets and rising knife crime. Does he not accept that?

Mr Cleverly: The figures speak for themselves. People will be able to see the levels of crime, including violent crime, in Conservative-run parts of the country, and compare them with those in Labour-run parts of the country. The figures are in the public domain. Anyone can check them.

Unfortunately, it appears that the Government have not seen fit to lay out their plans to address the issue of violent, aggressive, intimidatory or disruptive protest. For the safety of our streets, and for the confidence of the officers who need to police protests, I hope that the Government do the right thing and change that vacuum where policy should be.

Under Conservative leadership, we announced a raft of changes to support victims of domestic abuse, putting more abusers under management of the police and under increasingly strict arrangements by designating violence against women and girls as a national policing priority—a national threat on a par with the threat of terrorism. As I have said, the Home Secretary and her Front-Bench colleagues should know that I will always give my wholehearted support to actions they take to protect women and girls. We have made improvements through Operation Soteria, changing the way the investigatory system operates to ensure that victims of rape and serious sexual assaults can get justice and providing specialist training for officers.

We were committed to ensuring that rape victims felt confident to come forward to report, because we know the sad truth that, even with the good work of Operation Soteria, far too few people come forward. We want to encourage them to do so, and we will support the Government in any action they take in this area.

Florence Eshalomi (Vauxhall and Camberwell Green) (Lab/Co-op): I thank the shadow Home Secretary for giving way on that important point. He will recognise that one issue we have all campaigned on is the fact that many of those women do not come forward because they have no trust in the police. A key issue we have been working on is getting senior officers to suspend those police officers who are found guilty of wrongdoing. Does he agree that we need to make sure that that works now, so that those women can have the confidence to come forward, including where those allegations are against other police officers?

Mr Cleverly: The hon. Lady is absolutely right; although it did not make its way through all its parliamentary stages, the proposals that we put in the Criminal Justice Bill strengthened the accountability framework for officers and strengthened police leadership to take action. Again, I hope that the Government will continue that incredibly important work, and once again I put on record my willingness to support them in ensuring that the disciplinary practices within policing give women the confidence to come forward.

Dawn Butler (Brent East) (Lab): Is it not true that the net number of police is lower after 14 years of Tory Government? There has been a net loss to policing. Does the shadow Home Secretary agree that the reason we have not hit our numbers in London for the Met Police is that we are in special measures, and there needs to be caution over the police who are recruited? We need to ensure there are good police officers, so it is about quality, not just quantity.

Mr Cleverly: I disagree with the hon. Lady's assessment of police numbers. That does not accord with the figures that I have seen. Police numbers are up, and we had plans to recruit even more. I get the party loyalty towards the Mayor of London, but the simple fact of the matter is that all police forces have to ensure that there are vetting procedures in place. The vetting procedures for the Metropolitan Police are no more onerous than for other forces around the country, yet many other police forces, including my own, have record numbers of police officers. The Metropolitan Police is the best-funded police force per capita in the country, and yet, with all the freedoms that the Mayor of London has and with all the money that was put on the table, he has failed to recruit the police officers that the capital city needs. That has an impact not just on people who live and work in London, but on visitors and people who travel through it.

In a constantly evolving criminal landscape, we delivered the online fraud charter. It was a world-first agreement, with 12 of the biggest tech companies as signatories, proactively to block and remove fraudulent content from their platforms. Facebook, Instagram and Amazon were among those key signatories. We introduced the National Security Act 2023 and the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023, and we proscribed

Hizb ut-Tahrir, Terrorgram and the Wagner Group, to make promotion and membership of those organisations illegal.

To conclude, the right hon. Lady has a tough job. Home Secretary will always be a tough job. However, during our time in government we ensured that she has more police officers at her disposal, an effective small boats operational command, an effective immigration enforcement command and a suite of legislation to allow her to match the rhetoric of the campaign to her action in government.

The Home Secretary has inherited falling net migration figures, a growing economy and a large parliamentary majority to ensure she gets her business through the House. While we will be critical when the Government make mistakes and will seek to ensure that they do the right thing, we all have a desire for her Department to succeed and indeed an interest in its doing so. On that point, I wish her the very best of luck.

1.7 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Yvette Cooper): I welcome everybody to the final day of the King's Speech debate. I also welcome the shadow Home Secretary's words about the excellent ministerial team that we now have in the Home Office, and his continued support for the defending democracy taskforce, which I know he and his shadow Security Minister, the right hon. Member for Tonbridge (Tom Tugendhat), took immensely seriously when they were in government. I can tell the House that we will be meeting later this week, our first meeting after the election, to review some of the issues that I know have affected Members right across the country. We are extremely serious about what happened during the election and how we all need to respond and to stand up for our democracy.

To listen to the shadow Home Secretary, no one would think he had just spectacularly lost a general election; apparently under the Conservatives we have just all had it so good for such a long period of time. However, I am glad to see him enjoying opposition so much. Long may it continue!

This may be the final day of the King's Speech debate, but of course it is only the beginning of the Tory leadership hustings. The shadow Home Secretary's name is on the list, and we look forward to his launch, maybe late this week—it is very exciting. As someone who has unsuccessfully stood for their party's leadership in the past, I do have some sympathy with his predicament. It is not just that he is only the bookies' fifth favourite; he is not even the leading candidate from Essex, or even the leading candidate from his shadow Home Office team.

I have some bad news for both the shadow Home Secretary and the shadow Security Minister, the right hon. Member for Tonbridge. Their chances have been dealt a hammer blow by that strategic brain and deputy leader of the Conservative party, the right hon. Member for Hertsmere (Sir Oliver Dowden), who was elected at the same time as them in 2015. When asked who the stars of his generation are, he said:

"There's only two people from my generation that I could see leading the Conservative party: Rishi Sunak or Vicky Atkins."

[Yvette Cooper]

How disappointing is that? Discounted by the great election guru of the Conservative party before they have even started.

Mr Cleverly *rose*—

Yvette Cooper: I will give way on that subject.

Mr Cleverly: Just for expectation management, may I ask when the Home Secretary will start talking about her portfolio?

Yvette Cooper: The shadow Home Secretary spent his entire speech not talking about any of the challenges that the country faces but simply playing to the Conservative Back Benches with a fantasy leadership application speech.

What is it about these former Home Secretaries and Ministers? Apparently, of the last seven Home Office Ministers in Cabinet, six of them are running. We have the previous Home Secretary, the Home Secretary before that and the Home Secretary but one before that—the same person, strangely, because, never forget, it is possible to be sacked from the same job twice—plus the Home Secretary before that, the former Security Minister and the former Immigration Minister.

They have quite a record between them: they have trebled net migration, let boat crossings hit a record high this spring, decimated neighbourhood policing—there are 10,000 fewer neighbourhood police and police community support officers on our streets—let record numbers of crimes go unsolved, bust the Home Office budget by billions, and, yes, spent £700 million sending just four volunteers to Rwanda. If they are now lining up to do to the Tory party what they have already done to the Home Office and the country, well, frankly, they deserve each other. Every one of them championed that policy on Rwanda—although the shadow Home Secretary, to be fair to him, did notoriously describe it as “batshit” crazy. Well, maybe that is what someone needs to be to stand for Tory leader right now. *[Interruption.]*

We have heard that the Conservatives are going to run this contest until November. We have five months—*[Interruption.]* Oh, does the shadow Home Secretary want to deny having ever described the Rwanda programme and development partnership as “batshit”? I will give way to him if he would like to respond.

Mr Cleverly: If the right hon. Lady can say when, where and to whom that was said, carry on.

Yvette Cooper: The right hon. Gentleman was the one who said it, so he is the one who will know. If he wants to deny that he ever said it, I will not say it again—honestly—but I think that he protests a little too much with this sort of wriggling. He would not do very well under interrogation.

We have heard today that the leadership contest will run until November. We have five months of this. There are hardly any Tory MPs here because they are all off doing their little chats and meetings. It is like a cross between “Love Island” and the jungle. Rob and Suella have broken up, and now John has gone off with Kemi. Everyone is looking over their shoulder for snakes and rats. Apparently somebody has had a nervous breakdown, and that is probably all of their Back Benchers, dreading

getting a little text saying that another candidate wants a chat. We can see it. Look at them all. They are all saying, “I am a Tory MP. Get me out of here.” That is exactly what our Labour MPs have just done: they have got a lot of Tory MPs out of here because the country is crying out for change—for what the Prime Minister has described as a decade of national renewal on our economy, our public services and our relationship with the world, and in politics itself, by bringing politics back into public service again.

I say to all hon. Members, on my side and on the Opposition Benches, that I will work with everyone to restore Britain’s sense of security, public safety on our streets, secure borders, and confidence in our police and criminal justice system. Yes, I will repeatedly challenge the Conservatives on the legacy that they have left us, because the damage is serious, and I think that they have been hugely reckless with the safety of our country. Yes, the approach and values of our parties may be different, but I think that there are important areas where we should be able to come together to bring change in the interests of our country, our communities and our security, because that is what public service means. That is what this Labour Government are determined to do. We have set out in the King’s Speech three Home Office Bills on crime and policing, borders and asylum, and security. I will cover each issue in turn, starting with safety on our streets and confidence in the police and the criminal justice system.

Everyone will have, fresh in their minds, the concerns raised by constituents during the election campaign. I fear that, at a time when we have 10,000 fewer neighbourhood police and PCSOs, confidence in policing has dropped. Street crime and knife crime are surging in towns and suburbs—not just in our cities—and shoplifting has become an epidemic. Those are the kinds of crimes that really affect how people live in their own communities, yet too little is being done.

Sir Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con): I congratulate the right hon. Lady on her new position. Before the election was called, we had succeeded in a cross-party campaign to make cuckooing a criminal offence in the Criminal Justice Bill, which then sadly fell. I notice that in the crime and policing Bill, there is no mention at all of cuckooing. Does she support the idea of making cuckooing—using the homes of the most vulnerable in society for criminal behaviour—a criminal offence? If so, will she commit to introducing that process again? She would have my support, and I can guarantee that she would have the support of the previous Government, because I told them so at the time. Over to her.

Yvette Cooper: The right hon. Member raises an immensely important point, which we support. I am happy to talk to him further, or he can talk to the Minister with responsibility for victims and safeguarding, my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham Yardley (Jess Phillips). A series of issues included in the Criminal Justice Bill, which fell when the election was called, had cross-party support and need to be taken forward.

Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con): I congratulate the right hon. Lady on her appointment. One issue that was agreed on a cross-party basis was the campaign

that we led on abolishing the Vagrancy Act 1824. We concluded that that change would be beneficial for homeless people because they would no longer face arrest and would be provided with assistance. Will she commit, on behalf of the Government, to introducing that change as part of the legislation?

Yvette Cooper: The hon. Member makes an important point—there was a lot of cross-party agreement. There were also areas where the last Government's attempt to respond ended up provoking a lot of disagreement and where we had different views. I suggest that he discusses the detail further with the new Home Office Ministers, because we take the matter seriously but want to ensure that we get it right and do not make the errors that the previous Government made in the detail of their response.

As well as the issues around community and town centre crime, we have had an important report from the police today warning that violence against women and girls is “a national emergency” that has not been taken seriously for far too long. We have record levels—90%—of crime going unsolved. The criminal justice system and prisons are being pushed into crisis. Too many people have the feeling that nothing is done and no one will come. We cannot go on like that.

For us in the Labour party, this is rooted in our values. Security is the bedrock of opportunity. Families cannot prosper and get on in life if they do not feel safe. Communities cannot be strong if they do not feel secure. A nation cannot thrive if it is under threat. Respect for each other and the rule of law underpin who we are as a country; they are how we sustain our democracy and our sense of justice and fairness. Too often, those things have felt undermined.

That is why we have made safer streets one of the five central missions of this Labour Government—a mission to restore and rebuild neighbourhood policing, to restore trust and confidence in policing and the criminal justice system, and to deliver our unprecedented ambition of halving serious violence within a decade. That is a hugely ambitious mission: halving serious violence means halving knife crime and violence against women and girls over the next 10 years. I know that will be extremely difficult, but I ask everyone to be part of it, because it is so important and we should all be trying to keep people safe.

Florence Eshalomi: I welcome the Home Secretary to her place, and I know that she has campaigned on this really important area for many years. She talked about all of us being involved in this mission. Does she agree that the people who are working with these communities on the ground—youth workers, independent domestic violence advocates, doctors in A&E units, school employees and teachers—all need to be involved in this conversation? Many of those people see what is happening before the authorities do, and it is vital that they are part of this national conversation.

Yvette Cooper: My hon. Friend is exactly right. This has to be a mission for all of us—it is not just about what the Home Office does, although we want the Home Office to do so much more in this area. It is not just about what the Government do; it has to be about all of us. It has to be about recognising that for generation after generation, people have just shrugged their shoulders

about unacceptable violence against women and girls. It has just been seen as normal—just one of those things that happens—when actually, we should not stand for it. This is an opportunity for change, and to bring everyone together to make that change. My hon. Friend is absolutely right that those who are on the frontline, seeing that violence in practice, are often also those who know what needs to be done.

As part of the new crime and policing Bill, we will bring forward measures to tackle violence against women and girls. That includes making sure that we have specialist rape and sexual assault units in every police force and specialist domestic abuse experts in 999 control rooms, recognising the terrible tragedy of what happened to Raneem Oudeh and how devastating it was: she called 999 four times on the night she was killed, and no one came. For her and her family, we have to make sure that we make changes. We have to get neighbourhood police back on the beat, so we will introduce a new neighbourhood policing guarantee and new arrangements to cut waste, compelling forces to change the way they procure, in order to make the savings we need—savings that we will put back on the frontline.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the Home Secretary for her speech and for all the possibilities she has put forward, which we will hopefully endorse later today when the votes come. As the hon. Member for Vauxhall and Camberwell Green (Florence Eshalomi) mentioned, an attitude change needs to happen in society, and it is important that the media promote it in a positive way.

There have been, I think, 28 murders of women and girls across Northern Ireland over the past few years. That concerns me greatly, so when the Home Secretary brings forward the ideas she is describing in the form of legislation in this House, will she share those policy and legislative changes with the Northern Ireland Assembly? What she has described today can be beneficial for all of us in this United Kingdom, and in particular for Northern Ireland. It is really important that my constituents and ladies and girls across Northern Ireland feel safe, and at the moment, they do not.

Yvette Cooper: The hon. Member makes a really important point: this is about all of us, and Northern Ireland has some of the highest levels of domestic abuse murder. This issue is immensely serious, and the safeguarding Minister is already planning to have those discussions, because we should all be learning from each other about what it takes to save lives and keep people safe.

We will bring in new powers on antisocial behaviour, including new respect orders and new action on off-road bikes, which are dangerous and deafening and are being used to terrorise some communities. We will also take action against the soaring shoplifting that has seen supermarkets chain butter, cheese and fabric conditioner to the shelves, reversing the previous Conservative policy on low-value theft, and we will stand up against the appalling violence against shop workers. For years, the Co-op, the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers, major retailers, small shop owners and shop workers across the country have urged us to strengthen the law against assaults on shop workers, and through this King's Speech, we will do so.

[Yvette Cooper]

We will also increase standards in policing, including through mandatory vetting standards across forces and improvements around misconduct.

Dawn Butler (Brent East) (Lab): On the topic of mandatory vetting, does my right hon. Friend agree that we should also have psychological testing for the police? Some of the incidents that have been brought to light, such as the kidnapping and killing of Sarah Everard and the pictures taken of Bibaa and Nicole in Brent, are appalling and can only be done by people who have lost compassion in their job.

Yvette Cooper: My hon. Friend makes an important point. Some of this is about the vetting standards before people are appointed as police officers, but some of it is about the culture that can operate within forces—or small groups within forces—that always needs to be challenged, including by leadership. We want to see national vetting standards.

Let us be clear: there are police officers who do an incredible job every day of the week to keep us all safe, while also showing immense bravery. For 14 years running, I have been to the police bravery awards to hear incredible stories of heroism, but those brave officers are badly let down—just as communities are badly let down—when other officers fail to meet those standards or when they abuse the power they have. That is why the standards and safeguarding issues are so important.

Turning to knife crime, no parent should have to lie in bed worrying that a son or daughter might not come home. One of the hardest things is to talk to parents who are grieving—who stand with a photo in a frame, because that is all they have. It is important that all our communities take action to prevent our young people from being dragged into crime and violence. The King's Speech means new laws to get dangerous knives off the streets, such as ninja swords of the type that was used to kill 16-year-old Ronan Kanda near his home in Wolverhampton two years ago. I pay tribute to the tireless campaigning of Pooja, Ronan's mother. We will also set up a radical new Young Futures prevention programme to stop our teenagers being drawn into a life of violent crime, bringing services together around young people in the way that the last Labour Government's Sure Start programme did for our youngest children. It will be a programme for teenagers, to help them get back on track.

We will also bring forward new legislation on borders, security and immigration. Legal migration has trebled in the past five years; the biggest driver has been overseas recruitment, with work visas soaring because the last Government ran what was effectively a free-market, laissez-faire approach to both the economy and the immigration system. They completely failed to tackle skills shortages: areas such as engineering have been on the shortage list for decades if not generations, never having a proper programme. We have seen the number of engineering visas go up while the number of engineering apprenticeships has gone down. We have to turn that around, which is why, as well as continuing with visa controls, we will draw up new arrangements to link the points-based system with new skills plans. That is why the Education Secretary has drawn up plans for Skills England.

Jim Shannon: Will the Home Secretary give way?

Yvette Cooper: I will give way one more time to the hon. Member.

Jim Shannon: One of the issues we have been pursuing over the past few years has been the fishing visa scheme to bring crews in. The last Government brought suggestions forward, but they put a very high ceiling on wages, meaning it was impossible for some of the crews in the fishing boats to bring people in under the visa scheme. Will the Home Secretary meet me and other interested parties in this Chamber who represent fishing communities to discuss a way forward? I believe there is a way of doing it, and I very much look forward to working with the Home Secretary to ensure that that is a possibility and that we have a future.

Yvette Cooper: I am sure the hon. Member will continue to raise issues in this Chamber until every Minister has met him on one issue or another, and I am sure all of our Home Office Ministers will be willing to do so.

Let me turn to the issues of asylum policy, many of which we discussed yesterday. I have highlighted them, and I will continue to do so because I am still, frankly, shocked about the amount of money that was spent.

Pete Wishart (Perth and Kinross-shire) (SNP): We have heard lots about tough action on asylum seekers and tough action on immigration. What the Home Secretary has not talked about in her statement yesterday and her speech today is the value of immigration, how it assists our economy and how it enriches some of our communities. Can we hear some more about that from the Home Secretary, because surely we are not going to replace one Tory hostile environment with a new Labour hostile environment?

Yvette Cooper: Let us be clear: immigration is important to our country and has been through the generations, with people coming to this country to start some of our biggest businesses or to work in a public services, but it also needs to be properly controlled and managed, so that the system is fair and so that rules are properly respected and enforced. The issue of illegal migration trebling over the last five years has, I think, reflected some fundamental failures around skills and fundamental failures around the way the economy works. It is important that those are addressed, and that we do not just shrug our shoulders and turn our backs. We believe in having a properly controlled and managed system, and that is the right way to deal with this.

Similarly, turning to asylum, it has always been the case that this country has done its bit to help those fleeing persecution and conflict, and we must continue to do so, but we must also have a properly managed and controlled system. We raised yesterday the shocking scale of the £700 million spent sending four volunteers—just four volunteers—to Rwanda. The decisions on the asylum hotel amnesty that the Conservatives have in effect been operating are actually even worse and have cost even more money. I know that the shadow Home Secretary has said that he does not recognise those figures, but I wonder if he actually ever asked for them. I would say to him that it was one of the first things I asked for, because I am sick and tired of seeing Governments just

waste money with careless policies when they have never actually worked out how much they are going to cost.

The Conservatives' policy under the Illegal Migration Act 2023—with the combination of sections 9 and 30—was to have everybody enter the asylum hotel system or the asylum accommodation system, and never to take any decisions on those cases. There is a shocking cost to the taxpayer of up to £30 billion over the next few years on asylum accommodation and support. It also means that the rules just are not being respected and enforced. It is deeply damaging and undermines the credibility of the asylum system, but it also leaves the taxpayer paying the price.

Yes, the King's Speech does bring forward new legislation on borders, asylum and immigration. That will include bringing forward new counter-terror powers, including enhanced search powers and aggressive financial orders for organised immigration crime, and we are recruiting new cross-border police officers, investigators and prosecutors, as well as a new border commander. This is part of a major upgrade in law enforcement, working with cross-border police stationed across Europe to be able to tackle, disrupt and dismantle the actions of criminal gangs before they reach the French coast.

Finally, let me turn to national security, because when it comes to defending our nation against extremists and terrorists, against state challenges and hostile threats, or against those who try to undermine our democracy and values, I hope this House will always be ready to come together. I pay tribute to the police and the intelligence and security services, which work unseen to keep us safe. In that spirit, I hope the whole House will be ready to support Martyn's law, drawn up by the tireless Figen Murray in memory of her son Martyn Hett, so that we learn the lessons from the terrible Manchester attack, when children and their parents who went out for a special night never came home and lives could have been saved. That, I hope, is the moment to end on, because we will debate, argue and have differences of view, but in this House, at the very heart of our democracy, we can also come together to keep communities safe.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Christopher Chope): I call the Liberal Democrat spokesperson.

1.33 pm

Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD): I welcome the Home Secretary to her place and congratulate her on what I hope will be a new era in home affairs in this country. I thank her for her declared openness to working together across the House in the best interests of everyone.

I have to say that I have had one small disappointment in that I had anticipated we would not argue about the Rwanda scheme today. For too long, it seems, we have had to listen to the empty rhetoric about a failing immigration and asylum system and the botched attempts to fix it. Today we should be looking forward with more of a sense of anticipation. It is like the day someone gets their exam results and chooses their university, with the anticipation of the choices—the positive choices—they will make in the future. Could we be entering a period of more positive attitudes towards immigration, as well as fixing the asylum backlog, having more

community policing and, as the Home Secretary mentioned, having a continued focus on tackling violence against women and girls?

Today's report estimates that one in 12 women in England and Wales will be a victim of male violence every year. That is shocking. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 was important in moving us forwards, but there is more to do, and I welcome the comments of the Home Secretary on working together. While I have confidence in the new Government's determination to tackle violence against women and girls, I urge them to continue with the same cross-party approach that, as mentioned, proved so successful with the Domestic Abuse Act. Working together on that was key, and it can be again on the crime and policing Bill and the victims, courts and public protection Bill. Specifically, the Domestic Abuse Commissioner, Nicole Jacobs, has been clear that we really need to see full ratification of the Istanbul convention and new mandatory training for police on supporting the victims of violence against women and girls.

I am sure everyone here agrees with the sentiment that all of us deserve to feel safe in our own homes and communities. That provides the security and the stability from which people can live their best lives and create the best communities. Yet for too many people in the UK in the past decade, that has simply not been the reality. Unnecessary cuts and the ineffective use of resources have contributed to the rise in unsolved crimes, as police forces have been left overstretched and under-resourced. Serious violence has destroyed too many young lives, our communities are plagued by burglaries, fraud and antisocial behaviour, and far too many criminals are getting away with it. As I say, violence against women and girls remains horrifically high.

On top of that, the huge backlog in the courts is denying victims the justice they deserve. Prisons are in crisis—overcrowded, understaffed and failing to rehabilitate offenders. We need to free up local officers' time to focus on their communities, and we on the Liberal Democrat Benches will continue to call for a return to proper community policing. However, we also need to look at how we are working with our neighbours to tackle international crime. It will come as no surprise that I hope this Government will work to repair some of the damage done to that co-operation by the previous Government's attitude to Europe, as well as to build a better relationship with Europe and improve co-operation with our neighbours on tackling cross-border crime, human trafficking, the illegal drug trade, cyber-crime and terrorism.

We need to recognise the golden thread that runs through Departments, and that success will be much more likely if we do not work in silos. As the Home Secretary said, we need to invest in youth services that are genuinely engaging. What this all comes down to is prevention and early intervention to improve lives and make our communities safer.

If I could beg your indulgence, Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to make something of a personal plea to the Government. In the last Parliament, I introduced a private Member's Bill motivated by my own experience and my family's experience of losing a parent too young. I worked closely with leading charities, such as Winston's Wish, which provide bespoke counselling, group sessions and online services to help young people

[Christine Jardine]

deal with their grief. I was delighted to see the children's wellbeing Bill and its recognition of the need for better bereavement support. I would hope, when we see the detail, that it will provide clear guidance for local councils, schools and other public bodies on how to ensure that every bereaved child knows where to find the right help for them when they need it, so that their lives are not blighted and they do not go into adulthood carrying the burden of that grief.

There is one other issue I would highlight. I live in and represent part of Edinburgh, a diverse city, which at this time of the year is preparing for a massive influx of performers and audiences from across the world. It is fun and it is entertaining, but more than that, it is a vital event that brings more than £400 million into the local economy every year. It is part of our creative industries, which are worth £126 billion to the UK economy every year. They have suffered as much, perhaps more, than many other sectors from the chaotic and ineffective immigration and visa system we have had in this country for the past decade. Make no mistake, we need to improve it, but we need to improve it for our economy and for our NHS. Generations of people from all over the world have greatly enriched our economy, our culture and our communities, and as liberals my party and I would like to see people treated as just that: people who come here and benefit our country.

But our immigration system has been broken by the Conservatives. Damaging rules mean British employers cannot recruit the people they need and families are separated by unfair complex visa requirements. In my constituency of Edinburgh West, I have sat with families torn apart by these rules and done my best to reunite them. The dysfunction in the system has made the asylum backlog soar, and public confidence in the system is shattered.

The Home Office has not been fit for purpose and I hope this Government's policies as set out in the King's Speech will address that. It needs to put people at its heart, with safe and legal routes to sanctuary, and it cannot be stated how pleased I am that the unworkable Rwanda plan has been scrapped. But we must smash the criminal gangs at the root of the people trafficking that is causing so much distress. I welcome what the Government have announced so far but we do need more, and those safe and legal routes I mentioned are surely the best way to take power away from the gangs. Along with that, we need to expand and properly fund the UK resettlement scheme.

Pete Wishart: The hon. Member will know from being a Scottish MP and the work of the Scottish Affairs Committee that we face a pressing demographic issue in Scotland. We are the only part of the UK that will have a falling population in 20 years' time. Will she support the emerging cross-party talk about a specific and distinct Scottish visa so we can finally get on top of our demographic and population issues?

Christine Jardine: The hon. Gentleman knows that I believe we should be looking at the sectors that suffer. The fruit production and picking sector and the food processing sector in Scotland need a workforce and need immigration as much as those sectors in the rest of

the United Kingdom. We should not look at specific geographical areas; we should be looking at sectors. We should be looking at industries and what benefits the whole of the economy of the whole of the United Kingdom.

I have mentioned the UK resettlement scheme, but we also need clarity on whether the Illegal Migration Act 2023 and the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Act 2024 will be repealed and consigned to history as the expensive mistakes we surely recognise them as.

This Government have much to do and, where we can, we will support and work with them. Later today we will be proposing an amendment detailing the areas we would like to see strengthened: upholding public standards; addressing the crisis in our health system; having a cross-party commission on social care; and scrapping the two-child benefit cap. On those areas where we can work with this Government, we will do so. What they have set out is only a beginning, however, and we look forward to seeing the detail of the legislation.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Christopher Chope): Order. Unfortunately, there will have to be an eight-minute limit on Back-Bench speeches, although those making a maiden speech are exempt from that. I call Debbie Abrahams.

1.44 pm

Debbie Abrahams (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab): Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker. It is a surprise to be called so early, but I am absolutely delighted.

I welcome the King's Speech and its focus on fairness and opportunity for all—quite the antidote to the last 14 years when things have been anything but fair. The UK now has the highest level of income inequalities in Europe and the ninth highest of 38 OECD countries. Inequality in wealth is even worse, with the top fifth of the population having over one third of the country's income but two thirds of the country's wealth. These inequalities in income and wealth are particularly concentrated in the north but also among disabled people and ethnic minority communities.

The impact of these inequalities on health has been described by Professor Sir Micheal Marmot in his latest report, "Lives Cut Short." He wrote in *The BMJ*:

"if everyone had the good health of the least deprived 10% of the population, there would have been 1 million fewer deaths in England in the period 2012 to 2019."

Poverty and inequality are not inevitable; they are the result of political choices. The choices of consecutive Conservative Governments over the past 14 years have led to not only our flatlining economy, but our flatlining life expectancy and healthy life expectancy. In deprived areas such as mine, life expectancy and healthy life expectancy are actually declining.

We also have growing levels of economic inactivity due to this ill health, and the International Monetary Fund has revealed that there is a causal impact from these health inequalities on economic growth. For every 1% increase in the income share of the richest 20%, growth is reduced, whereas increasing the income share of the

poorest 20% increases growth. Ensuring a vibrant, stable and fair economy with sustainable growth will enable us to renew and restore our overstretched public services. With fair funding formula and public spending allocations based on need, there is an opportunity to improve health in areas, such as Oldham, that have fallen behind.

There are many Bills and initiatives that will make a positive difference to our lives and living standards, and these include the new deal for working people that will make work pay, ending the outrage of over 8 million working people living in poverty and 3 million children in poverty living in working households, transforming the lives of millions of people up and down the country, including in Oldham East and Saddleworth.

The new GB Energy company will not only support new quality jobs but provide cheaper, cleaner energy, reducing the energy bills of my constituents and millions of others. The children's wellbeing Bill, with free breakfast clubs and 100,000 extra nursery places, will also help to reduce cost pressures for young families while making life a bit easier for families. Our plans to enable 1.5 million new quality homes to be built while at the same time ensuring legislation to end no-fault evictions will be a huge relief to tenants and mortgage holders everywhere.

Collectively, these measures will help improve the living standards of millions of people, but they will not happen overnight or for all people. Some 2.6 million working-age people are out of work because of an illness or disability. While many sick and disabled people want to work and will benefit from the extra NHS appointments and therapies, it will be many months before we see inroads into these waiting lists. Similarly, I would like to think that the attitudes of employers towards hiring disabled workers will shift quickly, but we recognise that is unlikely to be the case. And then there are other disabled people for whom the possibility of working is unrealistic.

Those who are disabled or who live in a household with a disabled adult or child are more likely to live in poverty. Over the past 14 years, disabled people have been absolutely battered by consecutive Conservative Governments. As the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities described, there have been systematic violations of their rights under the UN convention.

Marsha De Cordova (Battersea) (Lab): My hon. Friend is making an excellent speech. Six years on, that Committee did a follow-up report which found that things had in fact got even worse for disabled people, so does she agree that it is now absolutely right that a new Labour Government will change course?

Debbie Abrahams: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, and I am absolutely convinced that under a Labour Government we will see these changes.

I think it is important that we put on the record where we are at the moment. We need to ensure that the right to adequate social protection and social security is in place, and we know that is not the case at the moment. We must do better not just in changing the culture of the Department for Work and Pensions, but in recognising the extra costs, the fear and the poverty disabled people face and feel, because otherwise I fear that we will be seeing more deaths of disabled claimants.

Similarly, while I support the measures in the King's Speech to improve our lives, that cannot happen soon enough for the nearly one in two children living in poverty across Oldham. Children living in poverty now will be affected by the experience for the rest of their lives. There is evidence that living in poverty changes the wiring of their brains. Many will not reach their first birthday. Shamefully, we have the worst infant mortality rate in northern Europe. There is no law of nature that decrees that children from poor families have to die at more than twice the rate of children in rich families. I welcome that the Secretaries of State for Education and for Work and Pensions have established the child poverty taskforce to deliver the cross-Government child poverty strategy, and I look forward to it reporting in the early autumn. We cannot forget the 1.6 million children across the UK with special educational needs. SEND education is in crisis and that cannot continue.

This Labour Government are a Government for everyone, and the King's Speech is a starting point on that. I look forward to working with the Government to deliver the change that all our country needs.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Christopher Chope): I call Andrew Snowden to make his maiden speech.

1.50 pm

Mr Andrew Snowden (Fylde) (Con): It is truly an honour to rise as the new Member for Fylde to give my maiden speech in this historic House, the global seat of democracy for centuries before us. I have chosen to make my maiden speech today because, having served as Lancashire's police and crime commissioner until May this year, it felt incredibly poignant to speak in the home affairs debate. It gives me the opportunity to thank the police officers and staff I worked with for their bravery, their sacrifice and their service.

During my term of office, I was truly inspired by so many people at Lancashire Constabulary. I threw myself into a job I loved, spending as much time on the frontline as I could. I learned the most about policing when there were no cameras around, sat in the back of carriers on the way to drug raids, walking the beat on a cold, wet evening, or taking part in training side by side with officers. They seemed to make the most of the commissioner being there with them, not sparing me the newbie treatment just because of who I was. I have been set on fire twice, had drainpipes Stihl-sawn off my arms and, despite doing all the videos people would expect from a politician, the most-watched video from my whole term of office was the one in which I got bitten by three different police dogs. With hindsight, given that the public appeared to enjoy the video of me getting bitten by dogs more than the ones about my budget, I suppose I should have seen my election defeat coming in that particular election.

In all sincerity, though, I place firmly and proudly on the record my gratitude to everyone I have worked with at Lancashire Constabulary and in the office of commissioner. As this House debates the future policy and funding of policing in the UK, we should never forget those at the heart of it, on the frontline, working and making sacrifices to keep us safe every day.

I am able to give this maiden speech today only because the people of Fylde have given me the honour of serving as their Member of Parliament, and it truly is

[Mr Andrew Snowden]

an honour. Being elected to represent an area where my family connections go back before I was even born, that we as a family love, and where my two-year-old son Walter will grow up and call home, is an incredibly special and humbling moment.

Fylde is a proud and beautiful area, steeped in the history of Lancashire and our country, nestled on stunning coastline with many towns and villages across the countryside, each with their own history. Might I add that it is also an area that we intend to fight to keep green and beautiful for generations to come?

Fylde is far more than coastline, countryside and being part of our county's history. Some of the most advanced technology in the world is being developed and built here. In fact, often when out near Warton and Freckleton we can hear the jet fighters taking off from the site where they are constructed. While I was out on the election battlefield, campaigning every day, it felt strangely reassuring to hear the incredible noise as the fighter jets powered overhead—to be honest, I needed all the back-up I could get in the battle to keep Fylde blue this time.

From the defence sector to farming and agriculture, tourism and hospitality, the care sector and others, there is a strong local economy. However, to build on that, to create more opportunities for young people and to better connect our businesses and those seeking opportunities across Lancashire and beyond, we need to improve infrastructure and public transport. I am grateful to the work that my predecessor as the Member for Fylde did to secure millions in extra funding. Working with the Government, local councils and other partners, he was critical in securing the £27 million that enabled the M55 to Heyhouses link road to be constructed, and it has recently been opened.

A few months earlier, the £150 million Windy Harbour to Skippool bypass opened, an important link road for the people across Poulton-le-Fylde. The boundary review brought this historic market town of Poulton in Wyre to the constituency of Fylde. I therefore also place on the record my thanks to the former Member for Wyre and Preston North, and former Defence Secretary, the right hon. Ben Wallace, and not only for the role he played in securing the funding for that major project, but for his unwavering work as Secretary of State for Defence in such critical, unpredictable and dangerous times. The global leadership he demonstrated in galvanising the international response to Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine is a legacy that he should be incredibly proud of.

Going back to Fylde, we need to focus on continuing to improve the existing road network, as well as expanding it. Equally as importantly, we need to secure investment for the rail network, and I will be campaigning hard for a passing loop on the south Fylde line to improve the regularity and reliability of services.

I would also like to talk about an important personal area of work that I will undertake as a Member of this House. I would not be here today—I would not have survived the journey to this moment—without the support, encouragement and love of my wife, Caroline. We have been each other's strength through good times and difficult ones, and the fact that Caroline has always had the strength to support me in such magnitude when she has had her own battles to fight is testament to the

person she is. Caroline, like thousands across this country, lives with what is often known as an invisible disability. It means that she has often concealed just how sick and in pain she is. She has had to explain why she is in hospital when just weeks earlier she may have been visibly well to everyone, and therefore suffering in silence.

I want to champion the work of Crohn's & Colitis UK, and other charities and organisations that support and advocate for those with disabilities that are not visible, and to help remove the stigma, indifference and even hostility that they receive, for example when needing to use facilities marked as for disabled people. The hurt and humiliation that can cause only adds to the incredible difficulty of living with these conditions, and we must do much more to raise awareness.

To conclude, Fylde is a place where some of the most advanced fighter jets in the world are built, and it is at the cutting edge of artificial intelligence and other technology, but it is also a place where towns from Lytham to Kirkham, and villages from Staining to Singleton, still crown the young rose queens each year and hold galas and parades, and a place where people take pride in looking after the countryside and preserving our heritage. I intend to spend my time in this House fighting for Fylde—yes, for the investment in our future, but also the preservation of our history, our coastline and our countryside.

1.58 pm

Helen Hayes (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab): First, I congratulate the hon. Member for Fylde (Mr Snowden) on his maiden speech. It was a moving speech, and I know that his family and his constituents will be very proud of his commitment to work on the issues around Crohn's and colitis, which is a devastating and difficult disease for those who have to endure it.

It is a privilege for me to represent the communities of Dulwich, West Norwood, Herne Hill, Gipsy Hill, and parts of Brixton, Crystal Palace, Camberwell andulse Hill, and I am grateful to everyone who voted to send me here for a fourth time. I am especially grateful to the residents of Champion Hill ward, who voted for me for the first time in this election due to boundary changes.

I am delighted to be speaking for the first time from the Government side of the House of Commons. Over the past nine years in this place, I have seen the impact of the Conservatives' political decisions on my constituents. I have seen the housing crisis deepen every single year. Our local schools have struggled as the schools funding formula was changed to redirect funding away from constituencies like mine with high levels of deprivation to more affluent areas of the country. Local authority funding has been decimated, affecting the ability of our local councils to keep delivering the services that residents need. Our local health services have been placed under unbearable pressure. Parents are paying more than their rent or mortgage for a childcare place, and our police are unable to fill essential roles in neighbourhood policing. There is not a single part of our public sector that is not at least partially broken after 14 years of cuts and neglect, while every Gracious Speech that I have listened to until now has made something else worse than it was before.

Among the most egregious legacies of the past 14 years of Conservative government has been the impact on the life chances of children and young people. Seven hundred thousand more children are living in poverty than in 2010. There has been a shocking decline in children and young people's mental health. We have seen 1,300 Sure Start centres close, spiralling numbers of teenagers entering the care system and parents across the country battling for special educational needs and disabilities support. So I am deeply heartened to see that this Gracious Speech sets out a legislative programme that begins the process of renewal and restoration that our country needs and that will start to improve the life chances of children and young people.

Legislation will increase the number of teachers in our schools, improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people, ensure that no child in primary school has to start the school day hungry, increase the number of nursery places and deliver better support for young people who are at risk of serious violence. I welcome the establishment of the child poverty taskforce. Child poverty is a scourge on our society. The increase over the past 14 years is shameful, and it must be a core driving mission of the Government to eradicate it.

Child poverty does not happen in isolation. Children live in poverty because their parents are poor. The solutions to poverty are multiple and include making work pay; more genuinely affordable housing; reducing energy bills; and creating a social security system that actually acts as an effective safety net.

I understand the need both for a comprehensive strategy for tackling child poverty and for all public spending decisions to be fully funded and affordable, but two things are important. First, the child poverty taskforce must work with urgency and speed, and it must result in concrete action soon. Childhood is short, and the years that are blighted by poverty cannot be rerun. Secondly, the taskforce and the Government must follow the evidence. That includes evidence from the Institute for Fiscal Studies, the Trussell Trust and a wide range of experts showing a clear correlation between the two-child cap on child benefit and increased child poverty, as well as the alleviation that would come from lifting it. I hope that the Government will consider that evidence as part of a wider, comprehensive strategy.

Several wider challenges affecting children and young people were not included in the King's Speech but will require imminent strategic decision making from our new Government. They include the crisis in SEND support and the safety valve programme, which is forcing many councils to make impossible cuts to services that vulnerable residents rely on while families are left fighting in the tribunal for SEND support.

There is also the financial crisis in our university sector, which should be the pride of our country, helping us to face the future, prepare the next generation and deliver world-class research. Universities are also the fulcrum of the local economy in cities and towns across the country. Their collapse would be catastrophic for jobs and economic growth. The Government must therefore ensure that a plan is in place that offers meaningful interventions to stem the current crisis and allow our universities to stabilise and chart a sustainable course.

When a country invests in its children and young people, it invests in the future. When it delivers a better society for children and young people, it delivers a better society for everyone. When it acts to protect the

most vulnerable. It places all of us on a more solid foundation. I welcome this Gracious Speech from our new Labour Government and look forward to seeing the Government deliver for our children and young people in the coming months.

2.4 pm

Sir Desmond Swayne (New Forest West) (Con): It is a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Dulwich and West Norwood (Helen Hayes). I spent 13 years on these Benches in opposition, and I know how frustrating it can be.

The reality is that when the sheer size of our defeat became apparent, I had some difficulty in coming to terms with it. In order to characterise it, I do not think one can do better than our late colleague Peter Brooke, who, when describing a similar calamity, said, "the battle of Isandlwana is lost, so now begins the defence of the mission station at Rorke's Drift."

I had no doubt that the Government were always going to abandon the Rwanda scheme—they made that absolutely clear, and they have every right to do it—but I do think that the House will ultimately come to regret not having such a deterrent to hand. Had it been allowed to develop, it could have been such a deterrent. It was never a silver bullet but always part of a complex jigsaw of measures, of which, of course, the holy grail would be returns agreements.

The previous Government should be utterly congratulated on the returns agreement they made with Albania, which has been a tremendous success. Such agreements are hard to come by. I remember being sent to negotiate with President Ghani in Afghanistan to try to get him to take a more helpful approach, given the blood and treasure that we were expending on behalf of his regime and the people of Afghanistan. He turned to me and said, "My priority is the young men and women who are taking the battle to the Taliban, and you want me to give time and resource to those people who've chosen to run away?" Well, it was a fair point—of course, ultimately he ran away himself. But I had little more success in negotiations on returns agreements with other Commonwealth members. These agreements are extraordinarily hard to achieve. I think that we would have wanted a third country where we could have settled people, because ultimately our ability to do so will be finite and limited.

I want to draw attention to what the Prime Minister said yesterday in his statement, when he pointed out that he had just authorised a very significant increase in money to regimes in Africa. Ultimately, that has to be the long-term answer—the very long-term answer. We made an agreement back in 1970 with the wealthy countries of the world to spend 0.7% of our national income on international development in the economies of those countries from which so many people are now coming and will continue to come as long as the incentive of life being so much better here exists. It took us until the coalition Government in 2011 to actually honour that commitment to spending 0.7% of our national income, and we subsequently abandoned it—or certainly reduced it. If all the nations that had entered that agreement had honoured it and delivered it when they made it, perhaps the flow of population from the developing world would have abated substantially and we would be dealing with a different situation.

[Sir Desmond Swayne]

Ultimately, it is all about jobs. Take Zaatari, the huge refugee camp on the borders of Jordan and Syria: a great city now, made from scratch. Those who are accommodated in Zaatari will find that the housing provided by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is of a substantially better quality than that available in many cities and shanty towns across the world. They will find that the World Food Programme will feed them, and their children will be educated by the UN children's agencies. Perhaps most importantly, security will be supplied by the Jordanian forces and be of a much greater standard than they might enjoy in many other parts of the world. Despite all those advantages, people from Zaatari will spend every penny they have, and borrow, in order to escape and get the one thing that Zaatari cannot supply them: a livelihood and a future for their family. That is the driver of so much migration.

Ultimately, we must return to that original policy, restore the 0.7%, and start building for the long term a world that is much more secure as a consequence of the economic developments available in those other places.

Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP): The right hon. Gentleman makes a powerful point, but does he accept that much of that aid went to propping up corrupt regimes, which denied people the rights that we have in this country and was one of the things that drove immigration in this country? If aid is misspent or used to prop up regimes, it is detrimental, not helpful.

Sir Desmond Swayne: That is absolutely right, but we did not do that. We did not spend our money in that way. We supported people under desperate regimes, not by giving money to those regimes but by providing sustenance through third parties and NGOs, which delivered that. Some of the greatest damage done by much of our own press was how our international development aid effort was painted as destructive in the way that was just described. It never was.

I return to my original point: we cannot take everybody, and we certainly needed somewhere else where they could have gone. Rwanda struck me as somewhere that that possibility could blossom.

2.11 pm

Zarah Sultana (Coventry South) (Lab): Let me begin by saying how good it is to see the Conservative party on the Opposition Benches and in such diminished numbers. No doubt some will say that I am being unsporting, but since politics is not a sport, I will say it anyway: I will never forgive Conservative MPs for the 14 years of damage that they have inflicted on our communities. Child poverty has never been higher and NHS waiting lists have never been longer. Life expectancy is falling and food bank queues are rising. Our public services are cut to the bone and our infrastructure is broken. Our trains are permanently in crisis and our rivers are pumped full of sewage. Our teachers, doctors and nurses have been forced to strike. According to one academic study, 330,000 excess deaths between 2012 and 2019 can be attributed to Tory austerity.

When I say that politics is not a sport but a matter of life and death, that is what I mean. For some it appears to be a parlour game about the next zone 2 dinner party

invite, but this is about people's lives and their material conditions. While the Conservatives scapegoated minorities and slashed support for the poorest, they helped the rich get richer. Workers' wages are lower than in 2008, but the wealth of UK billionaires is up threefold since the Tories came to power.

The general election results show that people across the country are crying out for change. Our new Labour Government must now deliver it. I am pleased to say for the first time in my parliamentary career that this King's Speech includes Bills that I look forward to voting for, but I will surprise no one by saying that I want our Government to go further, by introducing the new deal for working people and banning all zero-hours contracts. They must totally end fire and rehire, repeal all anti-trade union legislation, roll out sectoral collective bargaining across the economy, and recognise that the argument that we make for public ownership of rail applies to water, mail and energy too.

In the short time I have to speak today, I want to focus on two areas that I believe need urgent action. First, if the Labour party has a moral mission, it must be to eradicate poverty. After 14 years of the Conservatives, a record 4.3 million children are growing up in poverty. They go to bed hungry, they struggle more in school and their physical and mental health takes a hit. Their parents are put through hell to try to make ends meet. I welcome the child poverty taskforce, but everyone in the Chamber has read the briefings, and everyone knows that the evidence is overwhelming. The key driver of rising child poverty is the two-child benefit cap, and the single most effective way of tackling child poverty is immediately to lift 300,000 children out of poverty by scrapping this cruel policy.

Pete Wishart (Perth and Kinross-shire) (SNP): You should vote for it.

Zarah Sultana: I will be voting for it, thank you. It is a move backed by everyone from Gordon Brown to all 11 trade unions affiliated to the Labour party, the TUC, which represents 6 million workers, the Archbishop of Canterbury and Save the Children. With a 1% wealth tax on assets over £10 million, we could raise the funds needed to pay for the policy three times over. Kids should not have to suffer a single day in avoidable poverty. I will vote for the amendment selected by the Speaker to scrap this cruel Tory policy and, at this late stage, I appeal to our new Labour Front-Bench team to deliver the change that the country has called for, and adopt the policy and immediately lift 300,000 children out of poverty.

The second area needing urgent action relates to my amendment (c). As we debate here in Westminster, raining down hell on Gaza is Israel's fleet of F-35 fighter jets—planes described by their manufacturer as the most lethal fighter jet in the world. Israel has armed those jets with 2,000 lb bombs with a lethal radius of 365 m—the equivalent of 58 football pitches. A recent UN report identified the bombs as having been used in emblematic cases of indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks on Gaza—attacks that clearly violate international law. I raise this because every F-35 fighter jet is made in part here in Britain, in a deal estimated to be worth £368 million.

That is just one example of Israel's use of British-made arms in its assault on Gaza, which has killed more than 38,000 people—disproportionately women and children. The legal threshold for these sales to be banned has clearly been met, so they should be banned. There is a clear risk that British-made weapons might be used to commit or facilitate serious violations of international humanitarian law, hence why, in February, UN experts called on these sales to end immediately. Other countries—Spain, Canada and the Netherlands to name just a few—have suspended sales. Previous British Governments suspended sales after far fewer Israeli assaults: Margaret Thatcher in 1982, Tony Blair in 2002, Gordon Brown in 2009 and David Cameron in 2014.

Today, the Palestinian people face death and destruction on a scale unlike anything they have faced before, but British-made arms are still being licensed to Israel and used to kill innocent people. Again, I say to our new Government: it is time for us to uphold international law and end arms sales to Israel.

2.17 pm

Sir John Hayes (South Holland and The Deepings) (Con): It is a great pleasure to serve in the Chamber with you in the Chair, Mr Deputy Speaker. I wish the new Government Front-Bench team well. They know that I have high regard for many of them, including the hon. Member for Wallasey (Dame Angela Eagle) and the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North and Cottingham (Dame Diana Johnson), who are in their places.

As a patriot, I wish the Government well, because they are in a position to run our country and there will be many matters on which we can agree. I have worked with a number of Government Members on the kinds of matters that go well beyond Punch and Judy politics, if I can call it that, particularly on national security. However, those good wishes are not the same as wishful thinking. Too much wishful thinking pervades the Government Benches. Having made change itself the brand, the risk they face is thinking that change alone is enough. CS Lewis said:

“If you look for truth, you may find comfort in the end; if you look for comfort you will not get either comfort or truth only soft soap and wishful thinking to begin, and in the end, despair.”

Nevertheless, I wish the Government well.

We are debating a number of challenges in this aspect of the King's Speech today, but none more challenging than that of lawlessness. Too often when we debate crime, lawlessness and order in this Chamber, we give too little regard to the victims of crime. We simply must end the culture, which has pervaded for most of my lifetime, of believing that crime is an illness; to be treated. It is not an illness; it is a malevolent choice made by those who are careless of the harm they do. When we understand that, we understand why the principal objective of the criminal justice system must be punishment. A justly retributive response to that malevolence is necessary not only because it is the right thing to do, but because it is the component of the criminal justice system which maintains the public's faith that justice will be done and be seen to be done.

Sarah Champion (Rotherham) (Lab): I am listening intently to the right hon. Gentleman's speech. Does he therefore believe that people are born wicked? I believe that, with good education at a very early age and early intervention, crimes can be prevented.

Sir John Hayes: I imagine you will not allow me to talk about the fall from the state of grace and the character of sin, Mr Deputy Speaker, but let me say briefly to the hon. Lady that human beings are capable of the greatest wickedness and the greatest good. When they choose to do good, they can do immensely joyful things. I hope that the people in this Chamber all seek to do good, which is why I began my speech by wishing the Government well. My experience of this place is that people, regardless of party, are here because they want to make their constituents better off and the country they live in a happier and more agreeable place. Of course people have the capacity to do good, but we know too that people can do the most dreadful things, and when they do so it is absolutely right that law-abiding decent patriotic people see that they get their just deserts. That is not a strange or curious idea; it is one that has informed most criminal justice systems in all civilisations for all of time, and the most obvious way of ensuring that people who do harm get their just deserts is to incarcerate them.

That brings me to the second principle of the criminal justice system, which is that we take people out of harm's way. The best way of doing that is to imprison those who seek to do harm. I am shocked, as are my constituents, that the Government now intend to let more of those dangerous people on to our streets. We are now told that people will be released—including people who have done violent things, who have hurt and damaged other people's lives—after they have served 40% of their sentence. When most people I represent hear of a sentence for such crimes, they assume that people will serve 100% of it. Of course, that has not been the case for a long time, but we now know that the Government, on the grounds of prison overcrowding, are to release many more of these dangerous people on to our streets. I am afraid that the wishful thinking I described earlier will soon turn to the wish that the Government would see the sense of why that is an entirely unacceptable course of action. The last Conservative Government added to the number of prison places, but not enough and not fast enough—I think all of us on the Conservative Benches would acknowledge that—but given where we are, we simply cannot subject the British people to the fear, and not only fear but the reality, of letting out of prison others who would do them harm.

Let us deal with the third aspect of criminal justice, which is to try to prevent recidivism by reforming those in prison. As a Minister, I worked on prison education, because it is important that we try to ensure that people who have committed a crime and have been punished for doing so do not commit another, but that cannot be the only or defining characteristic of criminal justice. We have to recognise what Philip Bean, the criminologist in the 1970s said: retribution has to be a core part of what the public see in order to maintain their faith in the system and in what the Government and the authorities are doing. Yes, let us have a debate about rehabilitation; let us try to save souls, not only because it prevents recidivism but because it is the right thing to do for those individuals. But we should understand that punishment is not a dirty word. It is what most of our constituents take for granted, yet I never hear those sentiments expressed with any vehemence or conviction by the liberal establishment in this country, which unfortunately is too well represented in this place.

George Freeman (Mid Norfolk) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that there are different types of crimes and different types of prisoners, and that many people in our prison system at the moment, particularly those responsible for relatively low-level, non-violent antisocial behaviour, could powerfully serve much better and more rehabilitative community sentences? I do not want chain gangs in Norfolk and Lincolnshire, but good community service, where people can see that they are actually putting something back into society, would ease a lot of pressure on the system.

Sir John Hayes: Community sentences can play a part, that is true, but my hon. Friend will recall that the problem I described earlier of misunderstanding crime as an illness to be treated has its roots in thinking that stretches right back to the 1960s. You will perhaps know, Mr Deputy Speaker, that the Children and Young Persons Act 1969 began intermediate treatment orders, which essentially rewarded young people who had committed crimes with the kind of community activities that my hon. Friend describes. People were sent to the Brecon Beacons when their law-abiding neighbours had to make do with a week in Clacton. I mean no disrespect to Clacton or its representative, I hasten to add. [*Laughter.*] That is not the kind of response to crime that the vast majority of my constituents—or, I suspect, those of my hon. Friend—expect. Yes, community sentences can play a part, but they must not in any way distract us from the fundamental truth—I think it was Grotius who said it, Mr Deputy Speaker—that criminal justice has to have at its heart the idea of an ill suffered for an ill inflicted. I hope that the new Government will recognise that to crack down on crime, they really do have to restore public faith in the fact that, as I said, justice will be done.

It is fact that 10% of convicted criminals are responsible for half of all convictions. It is true, too, that those individuals are known and can be identified and must not be released in the way that has been suggested. Yet, disturbingly, the new Prisons Minister is on the record as saying:

“We’re addicted to sentencing, we’re addicted to punishment. So many people who are in prison, in my view, shouldn’t be there.”

That is both the opposite of the truth and anything but what most people think.

I welcome the attention given in the King’s Speech to shoplifting, but again I fear that the Government’s approach amounts to little more than wishful thinking. We have a shoplifting epidemic in Britain. Police forces do not respond to almost nine out of 10 serious incidents and UK retailers already spend around £1 billion each year on trying to deal with a problem with which they struggle to cope. Many offenders persistently commit crimes and get away with it.

So let us, in this debate and in the programme that follows it, not simply rely on wishful thinking but face up to the profound truths which seem to have escaped the notice of Labour Governments forever and, too often, of Conservative Governments too: reflecting the sentiments of the vast majority of law-abiding people means the guilty must be punished and the innocent must be protected.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Christopher Chope): I call Dr Beccy Cooper to make her maiden speech.

2.28 pm

Dr Beccy Cooper (Worthing West) (Lab): It is a privilege to make my maiden speech among such an outstanding group of people. I hope that people who have seen the maiden speeches over the past few days, and will watch them in the days, weeks and months to come, might see some of the warmth, kindness and decency that I have met in my fellow MPs in these first couple of weeks in Parliament.

I am the newly elected Member for the beautiful constituency of Worthing West. Nestled between the south downs and the English channel, we are often described as that area just west of our big sister, Brighton. But, as with all younger sisters, we have many often unsung merits, about which it will be my absolute pleasure to tell the House a little today.

Worthing West is made up of two thirds of Worthing town, the other third now being ably represented by my hon. Friend the Member for East Worthing and Shoreham (Tom Rutland). In this part of my constituency people can find Worthing town centre, our beautiful old lido building, and the recently returned Worthing wheel. Before being elected to Parliament, I had the great privilege of being the leader of Worthing council. Our vision for Worthing is for it to be both the fairest and the greenest coastal town in the UK, an ambition that I am sure my coastal colleagues will try to wrestle from me. Alongside an ambitious decarbonisation plan, work on Worthing’s town centre gardens will begin this autumn in a community and council-led project. We are also privileged to be part of the Sussex Bay project, a movement of radical collaboration initiated by Adur & Worthing Councils with the mission of restoring a healthy blue ecosystem to our seas and waterways in which nature, people and the local economy can thrive.

Worthing West is also home to the beautiful coastal and country villages of Ferring, East Preston, Angmering, Findon, Clapham and Patching. I can tell any keen campers—I have not been in Parliament long enough to know how many MPs actually like being without wi-fi and a good latte, but I am hoping to find a few—that the Fox Wood campsite in Patching is a firm local favourite. There are two very handy pubs near the site, The Fox and The Worlds End, which serve the most excellent food when your fire will not light and even the kids are sick of beans on toast.

I am only the second Member of Parliament to represent Worthing West. It was first formed in 1974, and for the past 30 years has been represented by Sir Peter Bottomley, who I know was very well respected here as the Father of the House. He was known for working cross-party on a variety of important campaigns, including leasehold reform and the infected blood scandal. Sir Peter and I share a great affection for Worthing West, and during the election campaign we often bumped into each other enjoying a quick cuppa with constituents. I should confess at this point that I am a northerner originally, adopted by the south as one of its own, and a good brew is a must-have for a day to start and end well.

We have many excellent cafés in our area. To anyone who is listening to my speech and thinking that this newbie MP is not doing too bad a job of selling the merits of her home town, I can thoroughly recommend the cakes at Sea Lane café on Goring beach, the coffee at both Coast café and Finch in Worthing town centre, and the breakfast at the Bluebird café in Ferring, among many others.

At this point, I should also confess that my extolling of the virtues of cake—and all credit to the House staff for the incredible muffins in the parliamentary café—is tempered by the fact that I am by profession a medical doctor, and, as my children will testify, I am reasonably obsessed with making sure that cake is part of a healthy balance that allows us to enjoy all the different types of food. To be fair, my children would not necessarily recognise that description and might just say that their mum is a bit of a nag with a carrot obsession and an aversion to playing computer games for too long, but such are the joys of parenthood.

When people ask what type of doctor I am—and I definitely do not have the patience for a PhD—the response that I am a public health consultant is often met with slightly puzzled stares, a recalibration of what they have heard, and the decision that I am probably a GP by another name. However, I am delighted to join my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham East and Saddleworth (Debbie Abrahams) to represent public health here in the House. It is the reason I chose to go into politics. It is the art and science of keeping populations well and helping people to live healthy lives. I appreciate that today's debate primarily concerns home affairs and immigration, so I will talk about public health on the basis of the explicit principle that health is essential in all things to ensure safety and security for all people.

As part of my public health training I spent time with the Health Protection Agency, now part of Public Health England. That training stood me in particularly good stead during the pandemic, when I found myself with a daily slot on BBC Radio Sussex talking about covid, debunking myths and providing reassurance that our fantastic scientists and public health specialists were doing everything possible to develop vaccinations and to keep us safe. The results of the covid inquiry, published last week, revealed the clear conclusion that investment in preventive measures is always money well spent, and that was sadly lacking before the pandemic. Public health funding was cut by 25% between 2015 and 2024, so there are some salient lessons to be learned quickly about prevention being better than cure.

My time in local government, as a public health consultant and subsequently as a councillor and council leader, taught me that politics is often the frontline where we grapple with the issues that arise from inequality and inequity—two indicators which tell us that the decisions made by those of us in a position of influence are not yet decisions that are maximising the health and wellbeing of the people we represent. The resources required to meet basic human needs should be available to everyone, regardless of where we live or which family we are born into. For people like me in public health and politics, there is a wealth of data and evidence—as well as, I would contend, basic common sense—showing

that when resources are not allocated fairly to allow everyone's basic human needs to be met, we all suffer for it.

People do not thrive without clean water, clean air, access to green space and good food. Our physical bodies become far less resilient to illness when those are not available to us, and the same is true of poor housing, poor education and poor jobs. The causal link between poor housing conditions and poor health outcomes is long established, with health outcomes associated with poor housing costing the NHS an estimated £1.4 billion every year. We know that exposure to poor housing conditions, including damp, cold, mould and noise, is strongly associated with poor health, both physical and mental. Inequalities in life expectancy are increasing, especially for women. In Worthing West, a woman living in one of our poorest areas will live an average of 8.3 years less than a woman living in one of our wealthiest areas, and for the population as a whole, the time spent in poor health is increasing. As Sir Michael Marmot so saliently put it,

“If health has stopped improving it is a sign that society has stopped improving.”

When people become physically and mentally ill, potential is lost, and before you know it, your country does not have a national health service; it has an overwhelmed national sickness service.

I am so proud and privileged to be part of the Labour intake of 2024. For too long now, our politics has been making people sick. This is the start of a journey that I very much hope will lead to a politics that helps to keep people well for many generations to come. Reducing inequality and inequity will allow everyone to do better. The politics of health is the narrative of our nation. A Government who focus on the health and wellbeing of the people we serve are a Government who enable us to rise together to face the challenges of both today and tomorrow.

2.37 pm

Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con): I congratulate the new hon. Member for Worthing West (Dr Cooper) on an excellent speech. She will clearly be a force to be reckoned with in this Chamber and beyond, and I wish her well in her parliamentary career. She follows the former Father of the House, so she has big shoes to fill.

I thank the good citizens of Harrow East, who have allowed me to return to the House for the fifth time. I am delighted that on what was not a great night for my party, I was able not only to hold my share of the vote but to increase my majority substantially, although sadly I was probably the only Conservative Member to do so. I also thank many colleagues from the opposite side who came to visit my constituency during that time, and enjoyed the hospitality of the residents of Harrow East while at the same time increasing my majority.

Harrow East is, of course, the most multiracial and most multi-religious constituency, and has a greater adherence to religious faith than any other constituency in the country. I am proud to represent people of all faiths and none, and, in particular, the large number who have come from the Commonwealth to live in this country and to live in Harrow East. I am dedicated to serving them to the best of my ability, for as long as they wish me to do so.

[*Bob Blackman*]

Given the debate we are having today on the Gracious Speech, there are some things that I want to raise, particularly on home affairs. We have heard from the Home Secretary about the Government's plans to deal with both legal and illegal migration. One challenge for the new Government will be very clear: how we deal with the 52,000 illegal migrants who have come to this country, and who would have been going to Rwanda or another place for resettlement. Clearly, there is a decision to be made by the Home Office about what happens to those people, because the previous Government could not return them to their previous country. That will have to happen, and the other challenge will be how we stop this country being a magnet for illegal migration in the first place. We all want to see that happen, and it is vital that it is done.

Obviously, we have challenges in other fields, and I welcome the words in the King's Speech, and indeed the new Prime Minister's words, about many of the things to be included in the new Government's programme. I was absolutely delighted to hear that they will continue with the tobacco and vapes Bill, which, as many colleagues will know, I have championed through Parliament on many occasions. We had reached the end of its Committee stage, which you will remember, Mr Deputy Speaker, but we did not progress the Bill afterwards. I hope that it will be introduced rapidly, and that we can get it on to the statute book as fast as possible.

The hon. Member for Wallasey (Dame Angela Eagle), who is on the Front Bench, will welcome my saying that the football governance Bill needs to be progressed quickly as well, so that we encourage the football clubs that we love to be properly organised and helped.

I am also pleased that the Holocaust memorial Bill, which completed its stages in this House, will be enacted as fast as possible. Prior to the election, I was the co-chair of the all-party parliamentary group for the Holocaust memorial and educational centre. The fact is that antisemitism in this country is rife and has grown, and we must combat it at every possible stage. We must also ensure that the memorial and learning centre are placed alongside this building, so that we can demonstrate to the world that we must learn the lessons of what happened during the second world war and the Holocaust, and never allow it to happen again. It is vital that our young people and older people understand the consequences of that, and such work has been done on a cross-party basis. In many ways, it is going to be absolutely vital to work on a cross-party basis.

The hon. Member for Coventry South (Zarah Sultana), who is still in her place, raised the issue of what is going on in Gaza right now. I noticed that she made no mention of the hostages who are still held by the terrorists and the need for them to be returned. Once that happens, the weight of the world can lead to a cessation of hostilities and, indeed, a peaceful resolution in the middle east.

Sammy Wilson: Did the hon. Gentleman also note that there was no mention at all of the cynical way in which Hamas have used civilians as human shields? They have used their schools, hospitals and homes. They are guilty of causing many of the civilian deaths that have occurred, because they have cynically used their own people.

Bob Blackman *rose*—

Zarah Sultana: Will the hon. Member give way?

Bob Blackman: I will answer the hon. Gentleman's point before I give way to those on the other side.

The reality is that on 7 October, the Jewish people suffered the worst atrocity since the Holocaust. We must remember that that is what happened, but we must also recognise the deprivation that the Palestinians in Gaza are suffering at this point in time. I am sure that the new Government will seek to ensure that justice is brought to all, and that the terrorists are not allowed to thrive or gain.

I will move on to one or two other areas.

Zarah Sultana: Will the hon. Member give way?

Bob Blackman: I will not. The hon. Lady has had a chance to speak already.

I will mention some other aspects of Government legislation. Clearly, we have to combat the abuse of women and children, and I will work with colleagues from across the House on that issue. In the last Parliament, I championed women going into refuges so that they can be helped by people outside, rather than having intrusion from public services when they are in desperate circumstances. Of course, we must make sure that the police are properly trained, properly skilled and able to deliver the services provided. Equally, we must get the message to our police and crime commissioners, and particularly to the Labour Mayor of London, that more work must be done to combat crime, but also to recruit police officers and make sure that they are properly trained to do the job that they should be doing.

I have already discussed the abolition of the Vagrancy Act 1824 with the Home Secretary. As many colleagues will know, I have championed the plight of homeless people in this place. The fact that homeless people still face being criminalised on our streets is a disgrace and an affront to our society. We have tried on several occasions to get the Act removed from the statute book. It should be consigned to the history books as fast as possible, and people should be given the right to have a proper home of their own—one that they can be proud of living in. Equally, we have to recognise that having a secure job that brings in an income is the best route out of poverty. Despite the rhetoric we have heard, the reality is that the last Government created an economic miracle, given the number of jobs created. We created more jobs in this country than the whole of the European Union combined, and the reality is that that is the route we should be pursuing.

Finally, when the Prime Minister spoke in the debate on the Gracious Speech, he recognised the late Jo Cox and the late David Amess, both of whom suffered the ultimate problem of being an MP: death in service. We must combat that and make sure that all MPs, regardless of their political position, are safe, secure and able to do their jobs. I say gently to colleagues on the Government Front Bench that we agreed, on a cross-party basis, that the pre-recess Adjournment debate in the summer would be forever known as the Sir David Amess pre-recess Adjournment debate. I am disappointed that the Government have chosen not to have a pre-recess Adjournment debate, but they still have time to adjust the timetable accordingly.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I call Mark Ferguson to make his maiden speech.

2.47 pm

Mark Ferguson (Gateshead Central and Whickham) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to speak in this debate and for affording me the honour of making my first speech in this House on behalf of the people of Gateshead Central and Whickham—in fact, the first speech on behalf of the new constituency of Gateshead Central and Whickham. To represent a community you care about deeply, including friends and family, is of course a source of great pride, but to speak in this place as their voice is a great responsibility.

My friend Ian Mearns, the former Member for Gateshead, served the people of our community for 41 years—27 as a councillor, and 14 in this place. He has always been and will remain someone I seek guidance from, even when we disagree, which we will. I will aim to carry forward his passion for education in this place, as education, alongside my family and the Labour party, has given me every opportunity I have had in my life. Ian served as a member of the Education Committee, and was knowledgeable and rigorous in that role. He also served as Chair of the Backbench Business Committee, and I know that many Members will have been grateful to him for making sure that they had the time to raise their issues in this Chamber and Westminster Hall.

I am fortunate, too, to have another immediate predecessor sitting behind me: my hon. Friend the Member for Blaydon and Consett (Liz Twist). We are both proud trade unionists, and she has done inspirational work on self-harm and suicide prevention, which I know is deeply personal to her. I am indebted to her for her guidance and support, and will be for as long as I am lucky enough to work alongside her.

In Gateshead, we are proud of our manufacturing history. Our own Sir Joseph Swan invented the first incandescent light bulb, and his home in Low Fell was the first in the world to be wired for domestic electric lighting. Manufacturing in Gateshead is part of my history, too—my father worked at the old Clarke Chapman factory—yet we are equally excited about our manufacturing present and future. Situated on both the east coast main line and the A1, we are ideally suited for the jobs of the future, and I say to my hon. Friends on the Front Bench and those in the relevant Departments that I will be collaring them about this if I haven't already. Work is key to the people of Gateshead and Whickham. We are working people, never shy of hard work and proud of what we do for work, but all too often in search of skilled work and better pay and too often forced to live in poverty. That is why, among all the excellent Bills brought forward in this King's Speech, one stands out above all others: the employment rights Bill.

I must now declare an interest, and it is one I am proud to declare. As my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Kate Dearden) stated yesterday, I too am proud of the amount of work that I and others within Labour's affiliated trade unions, working with Labour Members on these Benches, have put into developing a package known as the new deal for working people, now the employment rights Bill. In places like my community where people work hard but all too often their pay is not what it should be, this will change lives.

In every corner of our country, in every constituency represented in this place where there are those working without dignity on exploitative zero-hours contracts, being subjected to the brutality of fire and rehire, being paid wages they cannot live on, or toiling as care workers or school support staff on insufficient wages, this Bill will change lives in their communities too, and I urge Members to give it their full support when the time comes. Right now, for far too many, work does not pay and you only need to visit Gateshead food bank or a food bank in your constituency to see that.

Decent work and better pay are at the heart of why I came into politics, because dignity in work is the key that unlocks everything else, but it is not all that matters. What matters too is what makes the heart sing—what we do with our families and friends that makes memories and elevates us above the everyday. The cultural power of my local area is too often overlooked. We are the home of institutions such as the Baltic centre for contemporary art and the Glasshouse on Gateshead quays, but also of smaller, older and no less important venues such as Shipley art gallery and the Little theatre—the only theatre built in Britain during world war two. This cultural tradition has endured for centuries, with the work of the engraver Thomas Bewick, the writings of Daniel Defoe, who lived on the south bank of the Tyne, the 18th-century comic operas of William Shield of Swalwell, the satirical songs of Low Fell's Alex Glasgow and the rock anthems of AC/DC's Brian Johnson, born in Dunston. But don't worry, I am not going to sing.

Gareth Snell (Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Lab/Co-op): Oh, go on!

Mark Ferguson: You haven't heard my voice.

We are a place of learning, too, with Gateshead college and Cardinal Hume school—recently judged outstanding by Ofsted—two of the fantastic educational establishments I have been proud to visit already. I look forward to working with others, including Whickham school, Gibside and Kingsmeadow. In our thriving Jewish community, who I am proud to represent, stands Gateshead's Talmudical college, the oldest yeshiva in the country, founded in 1929. I am told that it is the foundation upon which Gateshead gained its reputation as the Oxbridge of the Jewish world.

Sport, too, is important to Gateshead. Sir Brendan Foster has a long and proud relationship with our town, and of course the great north run runs through Gateshead. The image of people running into Gateshead over the Tyne bridge is burned on the collective consciousness of our country. The famous oarsman Harry Clasper was raised in Dunston, as was Paul Gascoigne. And we love our football, including Gateshead FC—the 2024 FA Trophy winners, by the way—even though the Boundary Commission has given the honour of being the football club's MP to my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow and Gateshead East (Kate Osborne). The fact that my grandfather played for the club in the 1940s is a source of great pride. While most of my constituents support the black and white of Newcastle, some of us support the red and white of Sunderland and many of us are united in our support for Gateshead too. To those Opposition Members who may be coming to terms with the feeling of being in the minority, let me say what my father said to me as a young man growing up a Sunderland fan in Gateshead, "It will be character building."

[Mark Ferguson]

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to speak in this debate. This is a time of great importance for our country, one where trust in this place has fallen on hard times and where we must, on all sides, work to rebuild it. I will do all that I can to be a voice for the people of Gateshead Central and Whickham. I will work my hardest for them, and I will try to represent them to the best of my ability.

2.54 pm

Pete Wishart (Perth and Kinross-shire) (SNP): I congratulate most warmly the hon. Member for Gateshead Central and Whickham (Mark Ferguson). That was a tour de force around his constituency and I am absolutely certain that he will be a passionate advocate on behalf of his constituents. The only thing we missed was the opportunity for him to sing, but when we get the all-party music group together, we will give him that opportunity and the House will be able to revel in his talents on that front.

I am delighted that the Speaker, in his infinite wisdom, has decided to select our amendment on the two-child benefit cap for a vote this evening. It is absolutely right that this House should make a decision on this pressing issue. This is the early test for Labour Members. It is an early test for their commitment to take on the scourge of child poverty across the United Kingdom. We have just had new figures from the House of Commons Library, and they are absolutely shocking. I am not going to pick on the new Labour Members because they are all new and they are all finding their feet, but what this does to our nation is utterly appalling. We know that 87,100 children in Scotland are impacted by this cap.

I do not know if any of the Labour Members in the Chamber represent Glasgow constituencies, but let's just have a look at Glasgow, where 4,500 households are being impacted by this two-child benefit cap. This is the first big test for Labour Members. We know that Scottish Labour opposes this cap. We have heard its leader talk passionately about making sure it is done away with. Labour Members have got to vote tonight to show that. This is an early challenge for the hon. Gentlemen and hon. Ladies who now represent Scottish constituencies.

This is a very much changed House, and I congratulate the Labour Government on their quite stunning victory. I also want to congratulate my new Labour colleagues on their victories across Scotland. I really hope they enjoy being an MP and the experience that this offers in this House, representing our wonderful nation on these green Benches, but they will know from the bitter experience of 2015 that tides come in and tides go out. The only thing that seems to be constant in Scottish politics is that there will always be a Member of Parliament from the Scottish National party representing Perthshire in Scotland, and I want to thank the people of Perth and Kinross-shire for returning me for a record seventh time in 23 years. I promise that I will serve them as I have served all my constituents in the past 23 years on these Benches.

Immigration is the subject of the day, and this is important. This is big stuff. It is really important that the Government get this right, but I am not encouraged by what I have heard so far. I am not really sure and

certain that Labour really knows what it wants to do when it comes to immigration. I have heard lots of tough talk, with strong language on deportations, enforcement and getting people out of this country. What I want to hear about is the experience of these people who come to our country in appalling destitution and poverty, who have lived through some of the most unimaginable experiences, who are real living beings and who do not want the scapegoating language that has been deployed in the past. Think about them! Explain to us the safe and legal routes by which people can get to this country. Open up a way for citizenship to be acquired. Let's be creative, for goodness' sake. Let's have some of these asylum seekers working. Why is it right that they have been left unattended for so long?

Surely a new Labour Government could start to get into that sort of territory, but I am not encouraged by what I have heard thus far from the Labour party. We do not want a Tory hostile environment to be replaced by a Labour hostile environment. We need to see a better understanding and empathy about the plight of people who are leaving war zones devastated and traumatised by what has happened to them. What we want to hear is a proper, thought-out, pragmatic approach to immigration that finally acknowledges the value of immigration and that has humanity and common decency at its core. That is not too much to ask from a Labour Government.

This is a priority for us in Scotland. We are the only part of the United Kingdom whose population is predicted to fall—by 2033 our population will be starting to decline. We will have a smaller base of working people who are expected to support a non-active, ageing population, which raises a whole series of issues and difficulties for us, particularly economic issues, and this has to be addressed.

We also have to make sure that our public services are staffed. Such is their current situation and condition that, if every school leaver in Scotland went into social care next year, there still would not be enough people to fill the places required. We need to hear a solution, and we are starting to get there. During the general election campaign, I was encouraged that the parties were actually talking about a Scottish visa, which is the Rolls-Royce gold standard we require. It happens in nations across the world without issue and without difficulty, so it could happen here. The nations of the United Kingdom have their own political jurisdictions, and they even have their own tax codes to ensure that it can happen.

We have done it before. I was a Member of this House when the previous Labour Government delivered the Fresh Talent initiative, and it worked. I cheered them on when it was delivered, and it is something this Government could do. If Scottish Labour Members want to go to the Home Office to demand a solution to our very real difficulties and problems, we will hold their jackets and cheer them on, but they must do something, because this is a pressing issue for the Scottish economy.

I gently say to Conservative Members that over the last couple of years we have heard such a degree of rubbish from them. They tried to tell us that people would not come to Scotland from the rest of the United Kingdom, because apparently they are put off by our lower council tax, our lower house prices, our free tuition and our free prescription charges. Most of all,

they said that people would not come to Scotland because we had asked them to pay just a few more pounds of income tax. Well, that fox is well and truly shot, as National Records of Scotland has shown that there is net migration into Scotland, so let us not hear any more about that rubbish.

I end with a plea to our Scottish colleagues. We want to work with them to ensure that we get Scottish solutions to Scottish problems. It is now up to them. They have the power and the responsibility. They can make these changes to sort out our immigration and, for goodness' sake, they should back us in the Lobby tonight so that we can do something about child poverty in Scotland.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Christopher Chope): I call Andy MacNae to make his maiden speech.

3.2 pm

Andy MacNae (Rossendale and Darwen) (Lab): I am grateful for this opportunity to make my maiden speech in this important debate. I am in awe of the maiden speeches and all the other speeches that have been made today and on previous days. The standard and quality of both this intake and longer-serving Members is inspiring. I am filled with excitement, pride and belief in what we can achieve in the years to come. It is a truly exciting time.

I am honoured and privileged to speak as the Member for Rossendale and Darwen, my home. I am very aware that this could happen only because of a huge amount of hard work by friends and Labour colleagues across the constituency, and of course because of the decision made by so many of my fellow residents to put their trust in me and a changed Labour party. I offer my heartfelt thanks to everyone who put me in this place. I will do my very best not to let them down.

My constituency and home is a special place. Indeed, I was tempted to say that it represents the very best of Lancashire but, wary of controversy, I will simply say that it is a wonderful part of a wonderful county. It is a post-industrial place of moors, hills and valleys that frame the communities of Darwen, Whitworth, Bacup, Crawshawbooth, Stacksteads, Weir, Waterfoot, Rawtenstall, Edenfield, Helmshore and the west Pennine villages—I will have missed one out, so I am sure I will be shot as soon as I get home.

In representing my home, I succeed Sir Jake Berry, who served our constituency for 14 years. I pay tribute to him for his service and, in particular, his work campaigning on provision for children with special educational needs.

Rossendale and Darwen is very much a swing seat. Prior to 2010, we had been splendidly represented by Janet Anderson. I was pleased and proud to call Janet a friend. We sadly lost her last year, but I will always remember her as a true role model of a constituency MP. She was always available, always responsive, always engaged and always willing to roll up her sleeves and get stuck in.

What more can I say about Rossendale and Darwen? I will spare Members a full geography lesson and go for some fun-ish facts. First, the constituency is a quirk of boundary commission methodology that will forever remain a mystery to us. There is little historical or

physical connection between Rossendale and Darwen. Indeed, drivers have to leave the constituency to travel between the two halves.

Rossendale was once known as the “golden valley” and lay at the very heart of the industrial revolution. Indeed, a book on that time by local author Chris Aspin is subtitled “When Rossendale led the world.” We are also referred to as the “valley of stone” and the flagstones in Trafalgar Square come from a Rossendale quarry. Crown, in Darwen, is Britain’s oldest paint maker.

In 1931, Mahatma Gandhi came to meet mill workers in Darwen, seeking to understand the hardships they were facing—on reflection, that in itself is quite remarkable. He said, “they treated me as one of their own. I shall never forget that.” This sense of inclusion and understanding remains. We have many wonderful community organisations and, while being reluctant to single anyone out, I must pay tribute to the vital work done in my hometown by the Bacup family centre and Bacup Pride, and across the constituency by our volunteer-led food banks and credit unions, and Keep Darwen Tidy and Civic Pride Rossendale, to which I wish the best of luck in Britain in Bloom judging this week.

Something we are less proud of is that Rossendale is the only local authority area in the north without any sort of commuter railway service, which is a fact that I hope the Secretary of State for Transport, my right hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield Heeley (Louise Haigh), does not become too bored of hearing.

I have a few more. Darwen is home to Darwen Live, the UK’s—and possibly Europe’s—biggest free music festival. Mr Fitzpatrick’s in Rawtenstall is Britain’s last surviving temperance bar. Darwen football club was formed in 1870 and was the first club in the world to have professionally paid players. And Brent Peters, manager of Bacup Borough football club, is said to be the longest-serving manager in world football.

Rossendale and Darwen are distinct places, each with a deep history. At the same time, they have much in common. I was in many ways heartened that, during the campaign, one of my most frequent asks was for a better politics. The people of Rossendale and Darwen are honest and hard-working. They value integrity, co-operation and community service, and they want to see this in their politicians. I believe this reflects a feeling across the country, and hence it is a great opportunity and responsibility for us. With over 300 new MPs, we have a real chance to set a new tone, to work together across the House and to hold to the standards that our residents expect of us.

A less positive thing that Rossendale and Darwen have in common is a concern about the direction in which too many of our schools have been heading. Too many parents agonise over the choice, or lack of choice, available to them. It simply must not be the case that a child’s future is determined by an education lottery. That every school be a good school is an imperative we must hold to, and I am proud to see our new Labour Government committing to removing barriers to opportunity, raising school standards and ensuring that the school system is fair for every child.

Another commonality is our topography—hills, crags, moors and valleys. I am a climber and cyclist, and these are my playgrounds. I am fortunate to have enjoyed an active life, which has turned into a career. It has taken

[*Andy MacNae*]

me to amazing places, and I know that I am healthier, wiser and happier as a result. In many ways, what these sports have taught me is what has brought me here. It is a sad fact that, in the UK today, nearly 40% of the population is not active enough for good health. This contributes to one in six deaths and is estimated to cost the UK economy £7.6 billion annually. Yet physical activity can help to prevent and manage over 20 chronic diseases and conditions, including some cancers, heart disease, type 2 diabetes and depression. Overall, it is recognised that £1 spent on physical activity generates £4 of benefits in return. In short, investing in physical activity is a no-brainer. It has been heartening to see the importance of prevention recognised so clearly in our manifesto, in this debate and, indeed, at Question Time this morning.

Sport and physical activity can change lives, and they can save lives. Active lives start young, yet around 50% of under-18s do not get enough exercise. How often do we hear kids telling us, “There is nothing to do around here”? I believe that every child should feel they have full and inclusive access to the countryside and to recreational facilities that give them the opportunity to live active lives, escape constraints and explore their potential. I believe this mission underpins many others, and I look forward to speaking again on this subject in the years to come.

The hills of Rossendale matter to me in other ways. On the moors close to home we scattered the ashes of our daughter, Mallorie. She had been born in Burnley hospital with Edward’s syndrome, a condition we were told is not compatible with life. Her time with us was short but her impact on our lives was great. The support we had from Burnley hospital and local baby loss charity Friends of Serenity was vital.

While Edward’s syndrome is rare, it is far from being the only cause of baby loss. Every day, an average of 13 families suffer the pain of baby loss—that is around 5,000 families a year. Some reports suggest that up to one in five of those family tragedies are avoidable. There is a growing movement around baby loss awareness. Indeed, in October we have Baby Loss Awareness Week. I hope to use my time in this House to support the ongoing drive for greater care and support for the families affected by baby loss and for continued improvement in its prevention.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Ayoub Khan (Birmingham Perry Barr) (Ind): On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. Yesterday, I tabled an amendment to the Humble Address that read:

“At end add ‘and submits that the Government should immediately recognise the state of Palestine.’”

The wording was confirmed by me to the Table Office at 4.40 pm yesterday. It was co-signed by the hon. Members for Blackburn (Mr Hussain), for Leicester South (Shokat Adam), for Dewsbury and Batley (Iqbal Mohamed) and the right hon. Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn).

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Christopher Chope): Order. Is it the hon. Gentleman’s intention to challenge the ruling of Mr Speaker when he selected the amendments to be voted on tonight? What is his point of order?

Ayoub Khan: Further to that point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. It is the fact that the amendment was not tabled despite being submitted to the Table Office on time.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I note what the hon. Gentleman has said, but I do not think that would have made any difference to Mr Speaker’s decision about which amendments the House will be voting on later. However, his point is noted.

I call Nigel Farage to make his maiden speech.

3.11 pm

Nigel Farage (Clacton) (Reform): I believe it is customary in a maiden speech for the Member to pay tribute to their predecessor, which I am very happy to do. Giles Watling is a very decent, nice, honourable man. He is a former actor who wears his Garrick club tie. There is nothing even vaguely Conservative about him, but he is a jolly nice chap, and it was a clean-fought campaign.

Earlier, the right hon. Member for South Holland and The Deepings (Sir John Hayes) made reference to Clacton as being the place for a traditional English seaside holiday, and indeed it is, with its pier, miles of sandy beaches and arcades. Perhaps it is not as popular a holiday destination as it used to be, now that people go to Spain and elsewhere, but it is still there.

Other parts of the constituency are genteel and quite wealthy, but if we go to Jaywick we find the most deprived community in the whole United Kingdom. Those communities have little faith, trust or belief that Government can make their lives better. Indeed, what I found, when knocking on doors, was that people were saying, “We want to work—we want to get on and make money—but as soon as we work 16 hours a week or more, our benefits get taken away, so we’re better off staying on benefits.” I feel immensely sorry for those people, because the benefits system, which is designed to help them, is actually keeping them trapped in levels of relative poverty. I will do my best as the MP for the area to bring business investment—private money—into the constituency, with jobs, training and skills. I cannot promise that I will do it, but I will do my absolute damndest to make it happen.

It is funny, because I spent nearly 21 years as a Member of the European Parliament, in Brussels and with its monthly journey to Strasbourg. I have to say that this place is very different indeed. It is smaller. There is not a chauffeur-driven Mercedes available for each Member. There are no large lump sums of money that Members do not have to spend on anything or show receipts for. I wonder whether that is why so many in the British political system seem to adore the European Union so much, because it is a rather wonderful place to work.

What I did not expect was to come here and find that I, with my Reform team, am more outnumbered here than we were in the European Parliament, because there are more supporters of Brexit in the European Parliament than I sense there are in this Parliament of 2024. This is very much a remainers’ Parliament. I suspect, in many cases, that it is really a rejoiners’ Parliament.

If we look at the King's Speech, it is interesting that the word "immigration" is mentioned only twice and "asylum" just once. Perhaps that is not a surprise, as when the now Prime Minister laid out the six big priorities for the Labour party before the general election, he did not mention legal or illegal immigration. That is the other area in which the five of us sitting on the Reform Bench will find ourselves massively outnumbered in the House, because we actually want to talk about these issues.

I believe that the population explosion is having a bigger impact on the quality of life of ordinary folk than any other issue. It all started, of course, when the current Home Secretary became a Member of Parliament back in May 1997. It is worth reminding ourselves that net migration was the same during the late 1940s, the whole of the 1950s, the whole of the 1960s, the whole of the 1970s, the whole of the 1980s and in the 1990s, up until Mr Blair. Net migration ran at 30,000 to 50,000 a year for over half a century. Then Mr Blair got in and decided that we were going to open the doors in a way that had never been done before, to the delight and joy of big companies, especially giant multinationals, who have always wanted as much cheap labour as they can get, and to hell with the consequences for working-class families and people.

Perhaps it was even more of a surprise to see that massive acceleration in our population through immigration then further accelerate, because despite promises in four consecutive manifestos, the Conservative party actually accelerated what had happened under the years of Mr Blair, so we have seen a population increase of 10 million people since the time that Labour won its last landslide. Even the net figure is a migrant a minute.

Even during the course of this debate, many hundreds more people will have come to our country. Nobody is making the argument that there are not some exceptionally wonderful people among them—there are, of course—but the sheer level of population means we have to build a new house every two minutes. Even if the Labour Government are able to fulfil the 1.5 million houses that they want to build during the lifetime of this Parliament, that will make no dent at all in the current shortage of housing. Rents have risen by 25% since 2021. Why? Population increase and pressure. The list goes on, from access to health services to congestion and pressure on infrastructure. The population crisis has the biggest impact on people's lives, damaging their quality of life, and virtually nobody in this place even wants to talk about it.

It is on illegal immigration that I really want to make a point. Four years ago, I went out into the English channel repeatedly, filming dinghies coming across the channel, with an average of 16 people per boat. I was described as being a sad, lonely, desperate figure, always seeking attention, and I have no doubt there are some who think that is still the case today.

Pete Wishart: Spot on.

Nigel Farage: Thank you. But I did it because it was obvious to me what was going to happen. It was obvious that there would be a huge influx of people illegally coming to Britain across the English channel, and it would happen because we had stopped deporting people who came to Britain illegally.

Perhaps the Labour party might want to reflect on the last period of Labour government, when we had Home Secretaries such as David Blunkett, who was far,

far to the right of people like the shadow Home Secretary today. If someone came to Britain illegally during the last Labour Government, their feet did not touch the ground—they were gone; they were out. Indeed, in the last year of that Labour Government, from 2009 to 2010, 50,000 people who came here illegally were deported. None of that happens any more. It did not happen under 14 years of the Conservatives and it clearly is not going to happen under this Labour Government, and I wonder why. I think we will find that it is because of the increased role of a court overseas that was set up in the wake of world war two with the very best of intentions, but that has now completely outlived its usefulness. It is, of course, the European Court of Human Rights, and it was a Labour Government who enshrined the convention into British law.

We will not stop the boats, even if we sent a handful to Rwanda. We will not stop the boats by attempting to smash the criminal gangs; we have been doing that to the drugs industry in Britain, year after year, decade after decade, with no success whatsoever. The financial rewards for smuggling people across the English channel can now net a gang €2 million to €3 million a week. Whatever prison sentences or penalties are put upon them, there will always be people volunteering to make millions of euros a week. We will stop this only if we start deporting people who come illegally. Then they will not pay the smugglers. But we will do that only by leaving the ECHR. I have a fun suggestion that would liven up politics, engage the public and see a massively increased turnout. Why do we not have a referendum on whether we continue to be a member of the ECHR?

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Christopher Chope): I call Lola McEvoy to make her maiden speech.

3.21 pm

Lola McEvoy (Darlington) (Lab): It is customary to pay tribute to the speaker before me for his first contribution to this House, but, let us face it, that was quite a polished contribution that he has had 21 years to prepare—so thank you to him.

This is my maiden speech as the first woman to represent Darlington from the Government Benches. I wish to pay tribute to Baroness Chapman, the first female MP for Darlington, for paving the way. She smashed that glass ceiling and now I have the privilege of serving our town in a Labour Government. Representation matters, and I will use my platform to highlight the issues facing women in the town—issues such as low-paid work, additional care responsibilities, the childcare crisis, menopause discrimination, maternity services and poor paternity rights. I will also be a champion for women's health and support services.

I wish to pay tribute to the work of our police and crime commissioner, my friend Joy Allen and her team, on ending violence against women and girls in the town and to Harbour and Family Help, which do exceptional work in very difficult times. I am proud that this Labour Government will bring forward strong legislation to tackle this important issue.

I would like to pay tribute to my predecessor Peter Gibson, first for his respect throughout the general election campaign and secondly for his work ethic. Trust in politicians across both sides of this House is at

[Lola McEvoy]

an all-time low, and Mr Gibson worked tirelessly to communicate positively to everyone in Darlington about the work that he was doing. People thanked him for it, and I will emulate it. I genuinely wish him well.

I am a product of my constituency and proud of it. I am from good stock: west end star Zoe Birkett of “Pop Idol” fame went to my high school; “Big Brother” winner and men’s mental health campaigner Anthony Hutton is a Darlington resident; and we have a proud and active veterans community. In fact, two of the brilliant Doorkeepers in this Chamber told me earlier that they know Darlington well because of their training at Catterick Garrison, just outside my constituency. I thank Dan Smith, an active campaigner for veteran support in Darlington, for his work for our town and for his friendship to me during the campaign.

We have a bustling business and hospitality community across the town. We have Dan the Bakerman, whose sourdough is nationally acclaimed, the Echo 3 and Hatch coffee houses, which keep me caffeinated, and Claire from the Cheese & Wine Shop who herself welcomed our Prime Minister and Chancellor very recently.

We have a brilliant sporting community, from Spraire Lads football team, which my brother used to play for, to the Headlanders netball club and the Hundens Lane bowls club to name just a few. It would be remiss of me not to mention the Quakers, Darlington’s football club, which have a very famous alumni in the Three Lions’ best ever goalkeeper, Jordan Pickford. Like many of us from Darlington, I love the town, I like a laugh, I work hard and I do not like to be taken for a fool.

I was sent here to right the wrongs that have led to too many in our town being let down, and I will do just that. I will not lose sight of those who sent me and went above and beyond to put their time and trust in me—my teachers, the St Augustine’s community, my Labour family and, of course, my parents, my brothers and my husband, all of whom have had their personal lives thrust right into my political story, not entirely through choice, but in the name of our common goal, which is a better future for our community.

I am lucky to be here. I got a second chance on a vocational master’s degree at Newcastle University, where I was taught on the job how to be a journalist. I come from a long line of people who have done better for themselves than was expected of them, and I will dedicate my time in Parliament to knocking down barriers to opportunity for everyone in our town, so that no matter their postcode they can live the life they want, well.

I was inspired by those who went before me on our brilliant *Northern Echo* paper, which was founded in 1870—two years after the constituency of Darlington—and still boasts fantastic campaigning journalists. They include Chris Lloyd, the town’s historian—I am mentioning him in this speech so that he will help with my new blue plaque scheme for the town—and Kayleigh Fraser, who is still chasing me for a quote. Sorry, Kayleigh.

This Saturday just gone, I had the joy of visiting a new tourist attraction in Darlington—Hopetown, named after the area of the town in which I grew up, where Darlington’s famous contribution to the railways and the industrial revolution was based. The new attraction incorporates our railway heritage and has incredible

artefacts, top-of-the-range art installations and digital interactive educational points to tell our story to visitors. I am telling Members this because I welcome everyone—on both sides of the House—to come and visit. When they do, they must try the Black Diamond ice cream; it is already taking off on social media.

I have huge pride in the town’s industrial contribution and I am delighted to be the first Darlington Member to represent Heighington and Coniscliffe, and with them come their beautiful villages and even more railway history. Mr Deputy Speaker, this is for you to note especially. I learned something new about my home town this weekend. Before the establishment of the railways, our clocks were not standardised and Darlington operated a full four minutes behind Westminster, so, as those who know me well will attest, I still like to operate on Darlington time. As a nod to tradition, I shall be keeping to my town’s original time for the duration of my time on these Benches.

One of the artefacts that caught my eye in the museum, among the railway medals and the framed timetables, was an award from 2019 for the manufacturing giant Cleveland Bridge. Like so many brilliant companies over recent years, Cleveland Bridge has ceased trading. What makes this company particularly of note is its vast global contribution. It built the Sydney harbour bridge and, in fact, the former Health Secretary and Labour Darlington MP, the right hon. Alan Milburn, referenced it in his maiden speech two decades ago. I am determined that our manufacturing contribution in Darlington is not consigned to museums and the history books. We are proud people and we are grafters. We do not need handouts; we need a Government who allow our brilliance to shine again. I have already had the excellent engineering firm Cummins to Parliament to discuss making our area a green hydrogen cluster and ensuring that hydrogen is at the heart of our decarbonisation strategy. I look forward to working with my neighbour, my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton North (Chris McDonald), an expert in green hydrogen and the future of steel, in his new brief.

Over the course of the campaign that led up to my election, the biggest thread from the people of Darlington, from people of every income, background and political persuasion, was that the cost of living is too high and public services are at breaking point. I firmly believe that this Government must urgently tackle the mental health crisis blighting our town and region. In my own network, I know seven men who have died by suicide. Mental health waiting times and services for men, mothers, children and veterans are way behind where they need to be. I will be relentless in my approach to improving our mental health services for everyone in our town. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, who I know shares my passion for equity between mental health and physical health, will not be able to avoid me, just as soon as I can work my way around the Palace labyrinth.

As a woman in politics, I am frequently offered unsolicited advice and told that I need a thick skin, although I firmly believe that those with too thick a skin have been ruling this Chamber for too long, and I am here to represent ordinary people with compassion, because I am one of them. I am only too aware of the emboldening effect that online platforms give bullies and harassers. I think we have reached a fork in the road

and I will use my position to stamp out online bullying, not just for those who are victims of it now, but for the next generation, who I believe we have a duty to protect.

This Labour Government are committed to tackling climate change and wealth creation, and that is an opportunity for our region that must be grabbed with both hands. That is why I have already visited Hitachi with my neighbour and friend the hon. Member for Newton Aycliffe and Spennymoor (Alan Strickland), to put my full support behind efforts to secure the future of skilled and essential jobs at the Newton Aycliffe plant that employs many of my constituents.

The Treasury and many other key Departments have a presence in my constituency, providing skilled graduate jobs, which we welcome and want to build on. I will be a champion for public money being better spent. I have made my career improving public procurement contracts, fighting for working people to earn a wage they can live on and have decent terms and conditions. I will use that experience to ensure that when public money is spent in Darlington, it provides the best possible bang for our buck in impact and outcomes for our town. I will be a loud voice on this issue and will work with everyone and anyone who believes, like I do, that we can get our regional economy thriving with decent jobs for local people, so that people can work hard and earn enough to save for their future, and have safe, secure housing and spend quality time with their families. I am very fortunate that the Chancellor will be visiting her second office in Darlington regularly and I am committed to maximising the opportunity that brings to benefit my community.

My constituency and everyone in it has the potential for a bright future, and I will do everything I can to secure it. While I want to make our country better, my priority is improving the lives of those in my home town, those who raised me, those who have sent me here—the good people of Darlington. So, in keeping with my railway theme, full steam ahead!

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Christopher Chope): Before calling the next speaker, I have to announce that we will have to reduce the time limit for speeches by all those other than maiden speakers to five minutes.

3.31 pm

Dr Neil Hudson (Epping Forest) (Con): It is a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Darlington (Lola McEvoy). I congratulate her on a fantastic maiden speech. I know she will be a proud champion for her area.

I must start my first speech of this Parliament by expressing to my constituents how humbled I am to be elected as their new Member of Parliament for Epping Forest. Epping Forest has given so much to me and my family over so many years and it is an honour and privilege to try to repay that and stand up in Westminster for our fantastic communities.

I cannot mention my constituency without mentioning my predecessor, Dame Eleanor Laing. I pay tribute to her 27 years of tireless service on behalf of Epping Forest and this place, as an MP, in shadow Cabinet and as Deputy Speaker and Chairman of Ways and Means. She was in the Chair for my maiden speech, a very

personal and emotional occasion, a few days after the passing of my father Christopher, her constituent whom she knew so well. I am so pleased that she will continue in public service in the other place. Our area is privileged to have been represented not only by Dame Eleanor Laing, but by the former Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill, who represented the then seat of Epping from 1924 to 1945.

Today we are talking about home affairs and security. I want to pay tribute to our brave, hard-working police on the frontline, who are keeping our streets and communities safe and secure in Essex and right across the country; to our brilliant Essex police, fire and crime commissioner Roger Hirst; and to our chief constable, Ben-Julian Harrington. They have truly led the way in reducing crime, with antisocial behaviour down by at least 63% in the past five years. I firmly believe that that needs to continue. I know, of course, that my constituents in Epping Forest feel that there is a lot more we need to do to keep our communities secure and safe; their concerns include violent crime, fly-tipping, drug crime, burglary, shoplifting, fraud and car crime.

We also need to think about international security. I am proud that the previous Conservative Government supported Ukraine and I am pleased that the new Labour Government will be doing that as well. I was disappointed that the new Government omitted from the King's Speech our cast-iron commitment to spending 2.5% of GDP on defence; I really urge them to move forward on that quickly.

I welcome the fact that in the King's Speech mental health was given the same attention and focus as physical health. Parity of esteem between mental and physical health is so important; it is something that I have raised since my maiden speech. I urge the Government to confirm the work we did with 3 Dads Walking to get age-appropriate suicide prevention on to the school curriculum to protect our young people.

As a veterinary surgeon, I was disappointed by the lack of any mention of animal health and welfare in the King's Speech. In the last Parliament, huge strides were made to bolster our reputation in the area of animal welfare, with the Animal Welfare Sentencing Act 2021 and the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act 2022. I urge the Government to continue that progress and to support legislation on issues such as banning the smuggling of puppies and heavily pregnant dogs and the importation of dogs with cropped ears.

Epping Forest is a beautiful area and has precious green spaces, but I am nervous that the Labour Government will put some of that in jeopardy by re-badging the green belt as grey belt. We must make sure that new housing is put in the right places and that infrastructure is protected. I urge this Government to carry on with the capital build projects committed to by the previous Conservative Government: a new community diagnostic centre at St Margaret's hospital in Epping and rebuilds for the Princess Alexandra hospital in Harlow and Whipps Cross hospital—hospitals my constituents depend on. Those projects were committed to by the previous Government and I urge the Labour Government to carry on with them in full.

It is important that we as a constructive Opposition help this Government to serve our communities and get things right, but that we point out things when we feel they are getting them wrong. I wish this Government

[Dr Neil Hudson]

well, and I look forward to working with colleagues across the House on important issues of public health, animal health and welfare, protecting our green spaces and ensuring that our constituents have access to the good health and education systems that they deserve.

3.36 pm

Ian Byrne (Liverpool West Derby) (Lab): It is an honour to follow the hon. Member for Epping Forest (Dr Hudson), who I am delighted to see back in this place, and all the new Members who have made fantastic maiden speeches in this debate. It is a huge honour to be re-elected to represent my community in Liverpool West Derby, and to continue to serve in the place I grew up, especially under a Labour Government.

It is fantastic to welcome into my constituency the new wards of Page Moss, Swanside and Old Swan. It has been a real pleasure meeting my new constituents, who do so much for our communities. I look forward to working with Jan and her team at Swanside Community Centre, Rhiannon and her team at The Gate Community Centre, and Kate and her fantastic team at The Joseph Lappin Centre.

I am delighted that we now have a Labour Government with an historic mandate for change from the British public—a mandate to end the destruction of working-class communities; to end the decimation of public services; and to end austerity and create opportunity for all, lifting millions of people out of poverty. We must boldly seize this opportunity to deliver on the trust placed in us.

On behalf of so many families in my constituency, I will continue to campaign for the right to food to be enshrined in UK law, so that everyone is legally protected from the scourge of hunger and we can end the obscene growth of food banks since 2010, which was caused by political choices. As a proud trade unionist, I am delighted that the Government will legislate for a new deal for working people. I have seen the human cost of fire and rehire with my brother, who was a victim of the British Gas cull, and many constituents have written to me about their experiences. As a former trade union organiser with Unite, I know the difference trade unions can make in the workplace, improving terms and conditions and transforming lives and the economy.

I welcome the Bills that will bring rail services into public ownership and at last allow communities to take their bus services back into public ownership. I look forward to working with the metro mayor to achieve that. I am also delighted to see the return of the football governance Bill, which I was proud to scrutinise in Committee during the previous Parliament. Giving football supporters a real voice in shaping the beautiful game is vital to securing its future and continued success.

A shameful legacy of the previous Government and their austerity agenda is that 43% of children in Liverpool West Derby are now living in poverty. The reason I am in Parliament is to ensure that those children and others like them are given a chance to thrive and live their best life under a Government who support them, rather than consigning them to a life of limited opportunities from an early age. That is why I wholly support the removal of the two-child cap on benefits, which would immediately lift 100,000 children out of poverty.

Finally, I welcome the inclusion of a Hillsborough law in the King's Speech. Shamefully, no one has been held accountable for the unlawful killing of 97 people and the injuries and enduring trauma suffered at Hillsborough, despite the 2016 verdict of the longest inquest in this country's history. I pay tribute to all families, survivors, campaigners and legal experts such as Pete Weatherby, Elkan Abrahamson and Debbie Coles, who have fought for a change to the law to ensure that the pain and suffering of the Hillsborough families and survivors is not repeated, and that there is a fit and lasting legacy. I also pay tribute to the many Members and former Members of this place who have fought across parties for that law.

Many people would benefit from a Hillsborough law. I have had the privilege of hearing directly from people affected by a range of scandals and tragedies, including the Post Office Horizon scandal, Grenfell, covid-19, the "Truth About Zane" campaign, nuclear test veterans, the Manchester arena bombing, the infected blood scandal and hormone pregnancy tests. What is clear in those cases and many more is that the Hillsborough playbook has been used time and again by public servants and institutions. They are still allowed to withhold the truth, lie about their actions and blame victims for their own failures and mistakes. That is why a full Hillsborough law is urgently needed, including a legal duty of candour on all public bodies and parity of legal representation to ensure that the scales of justice are rebalanced.

The 97 who were unlawfully killed at Hillsborough, their families and survivors, and indeed all who have suffered such a fate at the hands of the state, deserve nothing less than the legacy of a Hillsborough law implemented in full. That would begin to end the culture of state cover-ups that has shamed our nation for far too long.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Edward Leigh): For his maiden speech, I call Richard Tice.

3.41 pm

Richard Tice (Boston and Skegness) (Reform): May I congratulate the hon. Member for Darlington (Lola McEvoy), my hon. Friend the Member for Clacton (Nigel Farage) and others on their excellent maiden speeches?

It is a great honour to represent Boston and Skegness, which I believe is the most fertile constituency in the country. I refer of course to the productivity of the amazing agricultural farmland in the constituency. At the heart of it is Batemans Brewery, a fantastic family brewery launched in 1874.

Lee Anderson (Ashfield) (Reform): Good beer.

Richard Tice: Good beer indeed. There is the extraordinary engineering feature of a lattice of ditches, dykes, drains, rivers and havens that ensure that the farmland is productive.

At the eastern end of this great constituency is sunny Skegness, where millions go for their holidays every year—the home of the first Butlin's, in 1936—and where the fourth longest pier in the country was built in the late 1880s. It is an extraordinary and remarkable town. It has the benefit of producing what I think is possibly the best value, most delicious and greatest portions of ice cream, to which I am very partial.

If we head west from Skegness, over the farmland, we reach the historic market town of Boston. It has the tallest parish church tower in England—known as “the Stump”—built over 500 years ago. A couple of hundred years ago, Boston was the largest trading port outside London. Of course, it was Bostonians who, in 1630, left the Isle of Wight for north America, where they established Boston, Massachusetts. It is a remarkable constituency that I am proud to represent.

I pay tribute to my predecessor, Mr Matt Warman, who was the MP for nine years. His legacy is in healthcare in particular. We are building at the moment a £40 million accident and emergency facility—he played a role in that. He saved a children’s unit from closing, and he had a significant role in securing the diagnostics care unit that is under construction. Those are great achievements.

There is a reason I overturned the largest ever Conservative majority in the country. Despite the Jolly Fisherman being the symbol of Skegness, my constituents are not feeling very jolly at the moment. Seven out of 10 of them voted to leave the European Union. They trusted the previous Government—they took them at their word—but they now feel a sense of political betrayal in a number of areas.

The first people who are not very jolly are the fishermen themselves, who feel that various bureaucrats including the Environment Agency, Natural England and the Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities are acting so as to try to suppress or destroy this great industry for our seafaring nation, one that produces food and generates great revenues. In addition, bureaucrats are making the issue of flooding a serious problem in my constituency. Thousands of homes have been flooded, and with a failure to properly maintain sea level defences, tens of thousands of homes are at risk, again because of bureaucracy and inertia. Another reason why my constituents are really quite grumpy is that the stupid net zero policies will result in hundreds of massive, ugly pylons blighting the environment and countryside of my constituency, as well as solar farms planned on incredibly productive agricultural farmland. It is absolute idiocy.

Then, of course, there is another big issue that is making my constituents very grumpy indeed. One of the slogans for leaving the European Union was to take back control. The previous Government promised it; do you remember that slogan? It was about money, laws and borders—yes, borders. It was about controlling immigration and having smart immigration—working, integrating and speaking the language—which we should all agree is a great thing. Instead, the previous Government opened the doors to mass immigration, with significant consequences for towns such as Boston and other towns up and down the country.

I will give Members an example. Every morning in the centre of Boston, dozens and dozens of east Europeans arrive in the marketplace with nothing to do. They have been hoofed out of the houses in multiple occupation where they are hot-bedding—two or three shifts a day on the same mattresses—because of mass, uncontrolled immigration. They have got nothing to do, and they have been aided and abetted in coming to the UK by false promises made by morally bankrupt businesses, which are helping them to get national insurance numbers for overseas persons under a scheme that we thought had closed.

We thought the EU settlement scheme had closed, but it turns out that it has not. If someone fibs about how much time they have spent here before 2020, they can still apply, so many are still arriving, and they are not integrating. They are not learning the language, and regrettably, it creates an intimidating atmosphere in the centre of the town—I know this goes on elsewhere. The implication is most seriously felt by women who work in the town centre, who feel unsafe leaving their place of work, and by constituents who do not want to go into the centre of this great market town at night because they fear, frankly, that it is not safe. When they go there at night, there is no chance of seeing any police whatsoever—I have been there on a number of occasions. What those people will see is drug dealers in the centre of the marketplace, plying their hideous, vile trade night in and night out. That is completely unacceptable.

During the election campaign, I went to numerous houses; for example, there was one where seven people were living in a house with two bedrooms. It was a Bulgarian family, and only one member of that family spoke any English at all. They said, “We’re here to claim benefits—your health benefits and housing benefits. We would prefer it in Bulgaria, but we want to take your benefits and then send the money home.” That is what is going on up and down the country, and it is completely unacceptable. *[Interruption.]* There is muttering—the truth hurts. The establishment do not want to talk about this, do they?

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Edward Leigh): Order. The convention is that during maiden speeches, everybody keeps very quiet. Whatever you think of what is being said, for a maiden speech, keep quiet.

Richard Tice: I repeat that smart immigration—working, integrating, speaking the language—is a great thing, but there are serious consequences of uncontrolled mass immigration.

As Member of Parliament for this great constituency, my objectives are to attract more business and more investment. The great port of Boston needs to grow and expand, and we want more infrastructure—for example, a new bypass around Boston itself. With these things, my constituency of Boston and Skegness can be great once again.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I call Jo White to make her maiden speech.

3.50 pm

Jo White (Bassetlaw) (Lab): I begin by thanking the people of Bassetlaw for putting me here. My commitment is to serve all residents to the best of my ability. I thank the hon. Member for Boston and Skegness (Richard Tice) for his contribution, and I look forward to debating with him in this place. Today’s debate has a direct link to the ongoing discussions on poverty. Having seen the last Government shut all three Bassetlaw police stations and both courthouses, I will have much to say on the issue in this Parliament. Crime and poverty have a clear connection.

I need no lessons on how a lack of money impacts on children growing up—I lived it—but that experience taught me something far more valuable in understanding the impact of poverty and inequality, because what my

[Jo White]

family lacked in money, we more than made up for in love and in hopes and dreams. I was brought up to believe in me and what I could achieve. My mother got herself out of poverty because of the Open University, and my father made a choice all too familiar today. He gave up his engineering job to be a Sainsbury's warehouseman to guarantee cheaper food, and of course he served as a shop steward for USDAW. I remain proud of both my parents for what they did for me. I was a free school meal kid—separate queue, of course—and a free school uniform kid, with clothes from the jumble sale and no new, smart, bright white socks for me, but I had no poverty of aspiration, no holding back, no shutting down of my dreams. That is good parenting, backed by their hard work. I commuted six hours every day to complete my own studies, taking my newborn baby in a carrycot with me. That is what learning to aspire results in.

I get the little me's so common in Bassetlaw and elsewhere: they are my people, my responsibility. Money is often a problem, but poverty of aspiration is much a bigger one to overcome. You are told that you cannot do that, that this door is not for you, that you stink, that you are thick, that your hopes are only ever dreams and can never be realised; well, this kid never stopped dreaming. Today's little me's—the ones who do without the flashy trainers, who play outside but never go inside the big sports stadiums or the posh restaurants and the cafés, who do not fly on aeroplanes or get taken to museums or theatres, who have never seen the King or his palace or Big Ben—in my area, in my constituency of Bassetlaw, are too often expected by this place to celebrate a rapidly changing world by getting to the back of the queue and behaving themselves. I am not having that. I drove trucks across the channel—the only woman in the drivers' section on the ferries. Small boats—new problem? The flight cases I drove were huge, with ventilation and a false bottom. The border sniffer dogs were an infrequent luxury. I regularly ran the gauntlet of organised crime and desperate people.

My predecessor had the biggest swing in 2019. I broke the record again but then quickly lost it to even more historic big swings to Labour. I know he likes his beer and I applaud his regular support for our local pubs, where he can drown his sorrows every time his beloved Notts County football club fails to deliver. I do not know whether he is planning on taking up golf, but Bassetlaw is the centre of British golf with seven serious golf courses, Ryder cup hosts and star players, and a magnificent municipal golf course. We regularly provide more of the Ryder cup team than entire golfing countries and Joe Dean of College Pines golf club showed the potential to reach these heights at the Open this weekend. From Danny Willett to Matt Fitzpatrick, we continue to grow international golfers—Lee Westwood, our freedom of the borough champion, continues to inspire our young boys and girls. He learned his trade on the council-run golf course, which is open and affordable to all.

Nobody stopped me dreaming big and that is the Bassetlaw I intend to deliver. My style of being an MP will be outcomes-based. If I can do it, then so can you. Look not only at where you are, but at where you are going. This kid made it here and I put you all on warning: I will be knocking on the doors that kids in my

area do not go through, and they will be coming with me, and I can assure you that I will channel my inner Michael Caine for those of you who choose to ignore my knock. The biggest single crime would be to get here, where people like me are not supposed to be, and merely sit here and make up the numbers. This kid has only just begun and there is no time to waste.

3.56 pm

Josh Babarinde (Eastbourne) (LD): It was inspirational to listen to the story of the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Jo White) and her determination to never stop dreaming. It was also inspirational and fantastic to hear maiden speeches from many others. I was interested to hear the competition among some Members about the length of piers in seaside towns. I hail from the great town of Eastbourne. While some hon. Members might have a longer pier than mine, it is important to remember that what you do with it is most important. On our pier we have cafés, we have bars and we have a former nightclub, at which I once organised parties. We have got it all going on on Eastbourne pier.

But it is also an inspiration, looking around this House and reading about its Members, to see and be part of the most diverse Parliament ever: more women than ever before; more LGBT people than ever before; and more Joshes than ever before—this House's population of Joshes went from zero to seven overnight on 4 July. That is what we call an open-door policy. If Members struggle to remember which Josh I am, I can make it very simple for them: this Josh represents Eastbourne, officially the sunniest town in the UK. As an Eastbourne lad born and bred, it is the honour of my life to represent my home town and in particular to fight to protect services at our local hospital where I was born, the Eastbourne district general hospital, as our Member of Parliament. I am so grateful to the people of Eastbourne for placing their trust in me.

Gorgeous sunrays aside, my town shines brightly in the many other accolades that it holds too. We are the home of the first roller-skating ice rink in the UK in 1875, the first five-a-side football tournament in 1957, and the birthplace of the Arctic roll in 1958. Most personally, Eastbourne is the town that made me.

Home was not always safe when I was growing up, but thanks to a wonderful family who loved me, thanks to Scout leaders at 1st Seaside troop who challenged me, and thanks to teachers at Cavendish school who believed in me, Eastbourne gave me opportunity. In fact, there is a particular supply teacher I had who I want to pay tribute to right now: Caroline Ansell, who went on to become the Conservative MP for Eastbourne and is my predecessor. Mrs Ansell and I first met in the religious education classroom—room 116 in Cavendish school—when I was 15 years old. Perhaps she would have given me a detention or two had she known at that time that one day I would come for her next job at the ballot box some years later. But seriously, Caroline dedicated herself to Eastbourne, and I put my recognition of her commitment on the record.

I also pay tribute to another predecessor: Stephen Lloyd, my good friend, whose service to our town inspires my own. He is a complete and utter legend. There is another predecessor as the Member of Parliament for Eastbourne whose memory this House can, and must,

never forget: Ian Gow, who served from 1974 until he was appallingly assassinated in 1990. A few years before my time, Ian Gow is remembered and still admired by Eastbournians as an extremely hard-working member of Parliament. The shield that honours him in this House serves as a reminder of his service, his grave sacrifice and our duty to pursue debate and disagreement with civility, respect and peace.

Turning to the subject of this debate, I want to share a migration story that says a lot about the character of my town. It started on a summer's day in 1960s Eastbourne, when a sweet, retired lady, Mrs Baker, noticed a curious sight. She saw another lady, also white, pushing a small black boy in a pram. Mrs Baker, curious, struck up a conversation with that woman and asked what was going on. Mrs Baker learned that the boy had been sent to live with that woman by a young Nigerian couple, and she was caring for the boy while the couple studied in London. Inspired, Mrs Baker said that she would love to do the same. Coincidentally, the black boy's mother was pregnant again, and was for a third time a couple of years later. Babies two and three were sent to live with the Baker family in Eastbourne. They were Toki Babarinde and Wale Babarinde, my uncle and my dad, and it was part of a sort of private fostering arrangement that was not uncommon between west African families and white families at that time, although it was not without its complications.

In my dad's case, and for his brothers too, moving to Eastbourne was a ticket to opportunity. They loved their upbringing and Eastbourne embraced them. Sadly, my uncle Toki died earlier this year. Sat in the chapel during his funeral, I turned behind me, and among a sea of Nigerian faces was one white lady also paying her respects: Charmaine Baker from the Baker family. That moment gave me goosebumps, just like those moments when old-school Eastbournians look at me in all my brownness, all my gayness and all my working-class-rootedness and say, "Josh, you are one of our own."

I share that story to say that while Eastbourne's hospitality traditions are often associated with the mighty bucket and spade, they go far deeper. Eastbourne's true hospitality traditions are of generosity, welcome, tolerance, multiculturalism and compassion. The story of how I ended up in this House is testament to that, and I believe that with those values the same goes for our country, regardless of what other Members in various places in this House may say.

While our town benefits from more sunshine hours than any other in the country, that blaring sun sometimes casts shadows, too. I am gutted to say that Eastbourne is also home to the busiest food bank in the country. Last year, it distributed more food parcels per head than any other food bank in the UK, according to the Trussell Trust. That is why, working with Eastbourne food bank's inspirational CEO, Howard Wardle, I led Eastbourne to become the first council in the country to declare a cost of living emergency and to unlock emergency funding for those struggling most. It is also why I sincerely believe that the Government should be even more ambitious in leading the fight against poverty by scrapping the two-child benefit cap.

A compassionate state is by no means a state that makes us soft or weak. In fact, care is power. We cannot have enterprise, innovation or justice if we do not have a culture of care and compassion. That has underpinned

my career's work, founding and running an organisation supporting vulnerable young people out of crime, out of gangs and into employment.

Our constituents have sent us here to be bold in rebuilding and reimagining our great country's spirit of having one another's backs. As Eastbourne's MP, I will strive to achieve nothing less.

4.5 pm

Andy Slaughter (Hammersmith and Chiswick) (Lab): It is a pleasure to take part in the debate and to see Labour's Home Office team in their places. May I congratulate the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Josh Babarinde) on a charming speech?

Under the previous Government, we became used to theatrical announcements of legislation on crime and punishment that went nowhere while the infrastructure of our courts and prisons decayed, so I was encouraged last week to hear the straightforward way in which the Lord Chancellor made her statement on the prison population. The overcrowding of prisons is a problem that the Labour Government inherited, and a problem that they intend to solve. The early release scheme run by the previous Administration was chaotic: the probation service was completely overstretched and prisoners were being released without support.

I have spoken before in the House about the appalling conditions in our prisons, most recently after a visit to Wormwood Scrubs prison, which is sadly no longer in my constituency. I visited the Scrubs with the previous prisons Minister, the right hon. Member for Melton and Syston (Edward Argar). Despite the best efforts of governors and staff, we were met with overcrowding, doubling up in single cells with unshielded toilets, 23-hour lock-ups and a building subject to extremes of temperature due to antiquated heating and cooling systems. Is it any wonder that with the prison population so high and conditions near uninhabitable, prison as a rehabilitative exercise is a thing of the past? One might think that the squalor and violence that blight many prisons acts as a deterrent; in fact, it ingrains and normalises the culture of offending and reoffending.

I welcome the announcements from the Government and the Home Secretary in the knife crime action plan. It is right that we ban the sale of zombie knives, ninja swords and machetes, but there is another angle to this. Home Office homicide statistics show that more than 40% of all deaths from knife attacks are caused by kitchen knives. Two years ago, the elderly parents of one of my constituents were stabbed to death by a man with a serious mental health condition who then killed himself. The weapon in those horrific crimes was a kitchen knife taken from his family home. In the past, I facilitated meetings between Home Office officials and campaigners calling for knives for general sale to be made with rounded tips. That is a simple but effective way of reducing deaths and serious injuries, which I hope the Government will take up.

Another problem inherited from the previous Government, and one that I know will be a top priority for the Lord Chancellor, is the courts backlog. There is a human cost to the backlog: victims of crime waiting years for justice, children trapped in limbo in the family court system, and the bereaved waiting years for inquests in the coroners courts. Those issues are inextricably

[*Andy Slaughter*]

linked with other failings of the previous Government, including the systematic destruction of legal aid resulting in a chronic shortage of legal aid providers, an unprecedented barristers' strike, and courts in such a bad state of disrepair that they are unable to function. All of us who have been involved in the legal profession know how important the role of legal aid and early advice is, and we look forward to the full implementation of the Bellamy review.

There are many more problems within the justice system that this Government will seek to address over the next few years. The Criminal Cases Review Commission must be made fit for purpose. Here again, the Lord Chancellor has already taken action. The terrible mistake in devising and expanding imprisonment for public protection must be unwound. Anti-SLAPP legislation is needed to protect free speech. It would also be good to see the implementation of Lord Leveson's proposals for low-cost arbitration in media cases.

Finally, I know that the Lord Chancellor is committed to introducing all aspects of the proposed Hillsborough law, alongside legal aid to victims of state actors, to create a level playing field in inquests and inquiries. A welcome addition would be the national oversight mechanism proposed by Inquest and other campaign groups to ensure that inquiry recommendations are actually implemented.

It is a great relief to know that justice and home affairs issues are back at the top of the Government's list of priorities. I have no doubt that this Labour Government will achieve the change they promise, and I am looking forward to working with colleagues to help make that happen.

4.10 pm

Dr Ben Spencer (Runnymede and Weybridge) (Con): I believe that tributes have not yet been paid to the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Andy MacNae) for his fantastic maiden speech—I apologise if I did not notice that. I want to put on the record what a wonderful speech he gave, particularly his personal story, his campaigning for those who have suffered child loss and his work for the north. I hope that we have seen a future Minister for the north in him.

I thank my constituents for returning me to the re-formed Runnymede and Weybridge constituency. Since then, several people have asked me, "Ben, you've been a Back Bencher in the party of government, and now you're a Back Bencher in opposition. How's your job going to change?" I said, "Actually, the main job won't change that much." I am here to support the Government to succeed. I want them to succeed—we all need them to succeed. I do not want the Labour party in power, but I want the Government to succeed. I am here to hold the Government to account and to work with them to ensure that things go well.

My mission continues to keep Runnymede and Weybridge moving—something that I am sure my constituents were sick of hearing during my re-election campaign. I look forward to continuing to deliver for people locally. I am proud to represent Runnymede and Weybridge constituents. One of the best things about the area I live in and am proud to represent is our

wonderful communities. Under the boundary changes, we have taken in Cobham, Downside, Oxshott and Stoke D'Abernon, which have fantastic local communities.

If hon. Members will indulge me, I want to talk about one of our community champions, Councillor Charu Sood, who sadly is very poorly with cancer and is undergoing treatment in hospital. Charu is a councillor for St George's Hill and is the embodiment of a local community champion. In the years since her election in 2018, she has achieved a huge amount: setting up Weybridge in Bloom and Sew Weybridge, which prepared personal protective equipment during the crisis, supporting Ukrainian refugees and raising funds for various charities. She is an amazing community champion, and I pay tribute to her and wish her well in her ongoing treatment.

In the two minutes I have left, I would like to talk about amendment (g), which stands in my name, to the motion on His Majesty's most Gracious Speech. Sadly, my amendment was not picked for a vote, but I see it as the first stage in the battle against the Government's awful policy to tax education. Like many people across the UK, and in Runnymede and Weybridge, where one in five children are educated in the independent sector, as a family we have also chosen independent education for our children, so I declare a financial interest as part of this campaign.

I have spoken to many independent schools in my patch, which have told me that 5% to 10% of kids will move back to the state sector as a result of the policy. Most parents who send their kids to independent schools are not the mega-rich magnates characterised by the Government, but, like all parents, people who make difficult budgeting decisions on how to spend their money.

The policy of taxing education, which we have never done before and never should, will only put more pressure on the state sector. There will be more disruption for the kids who are forced to move out—disruption that the covid generation of children just do not need. I sincerely hope that the Government will look at the challenges, the problems and the fact that a lot of children with special educational needs in independent education do not have education, health and care plans, and are thus saving the Government money, and think again about this awful policy. I will hold them to account, as will many of my colleagues on the Conservative Benches.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Edward Leigh): I call Nesil Caliskan to make her maiden speech.

4.15 pm

Nesil Caliskan (Barking) (Lab): I am honoured to deliver my maiden speech, and I thank the wonderful people of Barking who have elected me. If you will indulge me, Mr Deputy Speaker, I would also like to thank my wonderful husband, who has been by my side every step of the way. This year, 2024, has been quite the year for us. With a new baby girl, seven months old, and a general election being called, sleep has not been on our side as a household. But of course it has all been worth it, and I now have the absolute privilege of representing the east London constituency of Barking.

I would like to pay tribute to my predecessor, the right hon. Dame Margaret Hodge, who served diligently as the Member of Parliament for Barking for three decades. Dame Margaret has become known not only

for her tenaciousness, but for her warmth. She held several ministerial posts in the last Labour Government and served as Chair of the Public Accounts Committee. From taking on and winning against the far right in Barking to campaigning against tax evasion and avoidance, Dame Margaret was always fiercely brave in standing up for what she thought was right, regardless of political party.

As I prepared for my maiden speech, I thought about some of the parallels between Margaret's family and my own. Margaret's family were Jewish, escaping Nazi-occupied Europe, and Margaret herself fled Egypt for the United Kingdom in 1948 in fear of persecution. My grandparents, Osman and Neriman Tango, are of Turkish Cypriot Muslim background. They escaped violence in Cyprus, arriving in London on Christmas eve in 1972. My mum, Alev, was born in Cyprus in 1967 and was cared for in a United Nations tent. The three of them sought safety in the melting pot that is London's east end. They spoke no English, they had no qualifications and no money, but they were safe.

As I stand in this Chamber and address hon. Members, I cannot help but think of my grandfather, my late grandmother and my mum. I do not think my grandparents could have envisioned that in one generation their granddaughter would be a Member of the mother of all Parliaments. It shows what is possible in this country, and I feel so deeply honoured to be here. I thank my mum, who taught me and my two sisters, Neri and Eda, that we must always try our best, work hard, look after and care for others when they need our help, be grateful for an education, and, when we can, find a way to give back. Those are my values, and I know that they are the values held by families in my constituency.

Barking and Dagenham is a special community in London and a place that I have come to know and love. Many of my constituents have a similar story to my family, with heritage from different parts of the world. There are also communities in my constituency that have lived there for generations, deeply proud of their Barking and Dagenham roots—and so they should be. Barking constituency is a place with a rich history, whether it is industrial heritage, including the former Barking power station opened by King George V, or the UK's largest council estate built after the first world war as part of the Government's "homes fit for heroes" scheme. Now Barking is younger and more diverse than the London and national average. That is one of the things that make it such a vibrant place in which to live, but it faces challenges. The unemployment rate in the constituency is worse than in any other London borough, and average earnings are much lower than elsewhere. Shamefully, 23% of children in Barking are living in poverty.

Economic growth is critical for the whole country, and for my constituents. Economic growth is what allows Governments to invest so that we can all benefit from public services—schools, our NHS, frontline services run by local authorities, and a welfare system that values dignity for the individual. Economic growth means additional investment in crucial work delivered by children's services, tackling youth crime and violence in our communities. But economic growth does more than just pay for decent public services; it can deliver people good, well-paid jobs that secure a roof over their heads, food on the table and hope for the future. It is the

only route out of poverty, and indeed it is how my grandparents broke away from the cycle of poverty. That is why I wholeheartedly welcome the Government's commitment to economic stability and growth outlined in the King's Speech last week, including plans for a national wealth fund alongside a new deal for working people.

I also support the Government's commitment to address the housing crisis, especially because it is one of the drivers of poverty. The average house price in Barking has gone up by 21% over the last five years, and rents have soared. There are thousands of people in temporary accommodation, and a quarter of my constituents live in the under-regulated private rented sector. That is why the Government's plan to bring forward a renters rights Bill to end section 21 no-fault evictions is so important for Barking, as is their commitment to speed up planning and infrastructure to get more homes built.

The King's Speech was an agenda from a Government who are on the side of my constituents. It is a plan that gives hope to people in this country who for too long have felt abandoned. Hope for the future, with deliverable plans to improve lives, is why I entered politics, and, I am sure, why Members on both sides of the House entered politics. It is why I served as a council leader before coming to this place, and why I decided to run to be Member of Parliament for Barking. Politics is perhaps the greatest vehicle for change, and it is why this place matters. Building more homes, giving children a better start in life with free breakfast clubs and more qualified teachers, cutting NHS waiting times, lowering bills with Great British Energy—these things matter, and they will improve the lives of people in my constituency. They are all possible, and only possible, with economic growth.

So to the good people of Barking I say: I promise to be on your side. I will represent you faithfully, and I will fight for a better future for Barking so that every person has the opportunity to fulfil their potential—something that is possible only if people feel safe in their communities. I will always champion public services, and I will stand up for investment so that local people benefit.

I am honoured to speak in the Chamber, and I will repay that honour by working hard for my constituents as the MP for Barking.

4.23 pm

George Freeman (Mid Norfolk) (Con): It is a great honour to speak in this new Parliament, my fifth, and particularly to follow the hon. Member for Barking (Nesil Caliskan), who spoke with dazzling eloquence about her constituency, but also about the importance of diversity in our democracy. It is wonderful to see such diversity in the new Parliament. I congratulate the new Prime Minister and his team of new Ministers on that, and on their laudable tone of humility and public service. In the same spirit, I thank our Leader of the Opposition for both the fantastic tone in which he conceded on election night, and the tone in which he started his new role. One can say many things about the politics of the last few years, but our Leader of the Opposition was not doing this for money; he was doing it out of a very deep sense of public service in the finest traditions of this country.

[George Freeman]

At a time when so many democracies around the world are struggling, democratic trust is under threat. I want to highlight what a wonderful 10 days it has been here, because we have seen the transfer of power with such peace and stability. The pictures from this Chamber that are going around the world show how this Parliament still stands for the very best of democratic civility. As a new generation of newly elected MPs and new Ministers take office with a mandate for change, all of us who have served in government and seen how hard it has become to deliver real, lasting reform will wish them well in the spirit of the late, great Jo Cox. As democratically elected parliamentarians, we do indeed have far more in common than divides us.

Whatever our politics, we share a deep and urgent need to show that MPs, politics and Parliament can make a difference, that there is serious respect for Government accountability throughout this House and at the sweaty corners of the Dispatch Boxes, and that Government is not—as I fear so many have, sadly, come to believe—an inevitably unaccountable, bureaucratic machine that always wins, no matter who people vote for. For my part, in the field of science and technology, I stand ready to help this Parliament and this Government see through the vital work needed to unleash the science, technology, engineering and mathematics economy.

Mr Speaker, you may be asking how I survived the Chernobyl meltdown of conservatism in Norfolk—we delivered not one but three Portillo moments on the night. I thank the people of Mid Norfolk for electing me for a fifth time, and I will quickly share with the House the key messages that they gave me as I knocked on 29,000 doors. They said that they wanted a politics of honesty, integrity and accountability first and foremost, and they wanted the new Government and the new Parliament to tackle three key issues. The first was immigration. It was very clear across the whole of my constituency that people feel that our security and our sustainability, both economically and in terms of public services, require the new Government to go further in tackling the wave of immigration that has hit this country in the last few years.

The second issue mentioned was housing and planning. There is deep exhaustion with the way that too many big developers are running rings round our councils and dumping big commuter housing estates in the wrong places, with no investment in infrastructure. We need new towns on railway lines to drive a net zero and sustainable model of living.

The third issue was the NHS and healthcare. People are fed up with our pouring billions of pounds into the system in London, because they are not seeing properly integrated mental health provision, social care and healthcare on the ground locally.

As we debate the King's Speech, it is important that we are honest about the legacy of the last 14 years. It has not been 14 years of failure and cuts, as one or two Government Front Benchers have portrayed it. The truth is that we were hit by an extraordinary legacy from the financial crash in 2008, which caused £700 billion of debt. Then we had the Brexit disruption, followed by the pandemic, which led us to spend £400 billion on relief. The war in Europe has cost us £40 billion. Any one of those events would have knocked the breath out of the great Lady Thatcher.

This has been an extraordinary period of unprecedented shocks, and there is much in the last 14 years to be proud of. I would cite the introduction of universal credit; the tackling of welfare fraud; the school reforms; the 5 million apprenticeships; the degree apprenticeships; the huge reduction in youth unemployment, which was at a scandalous level when we took office; the progressive tax cuts for the lowest paid; huge improvements in life sciences, technology and innovation; green growth—we are the only country to have halved emissions while growing our economy; and the pensions triple lock.

On a personal note, I am deeply proud of the work that we have done in the life sciences and in the creation of the new Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, the 10-year science and technology framework, the creation of the Advanced Research and Invention Agency, our re-entry into Horizon and our groundbreaking international collaborations. If we are to make this a decade of national renewal, the innovation economy is completely key to driving investment, opportunity and clusters around the country, and to harnessing the regulatory leadership needed for this country to be the dynamic innovation economy that we can be. In that vein, I welcome the new ministerial team and wish them all support as they seek to unlock that mission.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Speaker: Order. The House will know that the election of Deputy Speakers took place today. Before I announce the results, I would like to thank the right hon. Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh) and the hon. Members for Mitcham and Morden (Dame Siobhain McDonagh) and for Christchurch (Sir Christopher Chope) for serving as Deputy Speakers over the past week.

I will now announce the results. Nusrat Ghani was elected Chair of Ways and Means. Judith Cummins was elected First Deputy Chair of Ways and Means. Caroline Nokes was elected Second Deputy Chair of Ways of Means. I congratulate those elected and look forward to working with them. I thank the people who did not make it for standing, and for the way that the election has taken place. The results of the count will be made available as soon as possible in the Vote Office and published online.

I call Sojan Joseph to make his maiden speech.

4.30 pm

Sojan Joseph (Ashford) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for this opportunity to make my maiden speech in the House as the first ever Labour Member of Parliament for Ashford. I am delighted to be called to speak in this important debate. I congratulate all new Members who have delivered their maiden speeches today. I am beyond grateful and deeply proud to have this opportunity to do so, and I am excited to represent a community such as Ashford, which is waiting upon change—not just any change, but change that speaks volumes. I was excited to commute to London after I was elected, but I was shocked at the expense of £93 for an hour-long train journey. That is the same as it would cost me to get my weekly groceries at a bargain shop in Ashford. Luckily, we have more and more bargain shops opening for business in Ashford.

I intend to press for the implementation of policies that will maintain and restore our town's natural beauty, as well as introducing more local businesses to help

Ashford to thrive and bring back its prosperity. I take joy in representing such a diverse community as ours and, coming from Kerala, a southern state in India, I am proud to have been selected by the people of Ashford.

Ashford has been a market town since the middle ages and is home to a hospital named after the renowned physician William Harvey. It is a major hospital for those within east Kent. Many rely on that establishment to deliver many forms of healthcare, but recently it has been overcrowded yet understaffed. Having worked in the NHS as a mental health nurse for the past 22 years, this is a subject I hold close to my heart, and it is certainly something I would like to look into.

I would like to pay tribute to my predecessor, Damian Green, and the work he has done for Ashford over the past 27 years, as well as acknowledging his impressive record in the House, having been First Secretary of State, Minister for the Cabinet Office, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Minister of State for Policing and Criminal Justice and, finally, Minister of State for Immigration. I have great respect for the successes he had, such as working on a cross-party basis with local councillors to bring an excellent skills-focused college to Ashford, attracting more keen students to the heart of the town. He also supported work to convert the previously derelict Newtown Works into a film studio and he has helped to protect the Kent countryside, both of which I value dearly, as protecting the beauty of the constituency is vital.

I would also like to acknowledge Damian Green's efforts in campaigning to bring back services to the continent from Ashford International train station, which is a personal target of mine. I believe Ashford would benefit from restoring that international travel, as it previously heightened tourism and the number of businesses, both foreign and local, situated in the town. I am pleased that the King's Speech highlighted the idea of a better relationship with Europe through the creation of a new policy, which will assist in bringing international travel back to Ashford.

Ashford has great connectivity to London, thanks to the development of HS1. As a result, more people have chosen to move towards Ashford and make it their home. However, the infrastructure has simply not caught up. GP surgeries, dentists, housing, roads and schools need improvement, and I will campaign on these issues as the new Member of Parliament.

As there have recently been boundary changes to my constituency, I would also like to pay tribute to my other predecessor, Damian Collins, who represented the parts of Folkestone and Hythe that are now within the new Ashford constituency—namely, Hawkinge and surrounding villages. I am glad to embrace the natural beauty and historic significance of these areas. RAF Hawkinge was important during the second world war and, as the closest operational airfield to France, it was used during the battle of Britain to defend against enemy aerial attacks. I could go on and on about the constituency's unique and vibrant towns and villages. As the House can tell, I am very content and very proud to represent these areas.

Our farmers play a valuable role both locally, in rural areas of the constituency, and in the wider economy. Importantly, they help to provide food security, stabilising the agricultural sector. However, they also face workforce shortages and are being hit hard by increasing energy costs.

I am pleased that the King's Speech contains a Bill to create the publicly owned Great British Energy, which will reduce energy bills in the long term.

It is clear that our public services are in decline. The NHS faces many problems. Staff lack morale, and mental health services, in particular, are deteriorating. My career background is in the NHS and mental health, so this is close to home. I have seen children as young as nine years old self-harming, and I have seen many people, young and old, end their life while waiting for treatment. This is a serious issue, and it must be addressed.

It is clear that, in recent years, the importance and value of our NHS has not been highlighted, so its maintenance has not been prioritised. We face an ever-growing yet ageing population, leading to hospital overcrowding and a heavy dependence on social care, which is itself hanging by a thread. Yet the hospitals are severely understaffed and hugely underfunded, to the point that we can no longer fulfil people's demands or catch up with these growing issues.

After hearing His Majesty's Speech, I am reassured that a new Bill will be introduced to address mental health and learning difficulties, and that the Government have already taken the initial steps. This is a necessary step towards reaching a better NHS and a better future in which we can get people back to work, supporting economic growth.

Finally, I thank the members and supporters of Ashford Labour party for their work to secure this historic victory in Ashford, as well as extending my thanks to my wife, Brita, and our three children. I am incredibly proud to be standing here on behalf of my constituents, and I look forward to working with those around me, from all parties, to make the change that our country desperately needs.

4.37 pm

Dr Kieran Mullan (Bexhill and Battle) (Con): I begin by congratulating the hon. Member for Ashford (Sojan Joseph) on his maiden speech, in which he spoke about his constituency with passion. Having NHS experience myself, I welcome any Member with frontline experience of our public services, which I am sure he will put to very good use during his time in the House.

I welcome the opportunity to speak in today's debate on immigration and home affairs, which are two areas that are important to me. I believe that how we tackle illegal migration will be a totemic political issue in the coming decades, not just because of its probable global scale but because it will test whether Governments in the UK and elsewhere are willing to face down often well-meaning but misplaced ideas about how best to protect the rights and welfare of individuals while preserving community cohesion and overall fairness in society. Criminal justice was one of my primary reasons for wanting to come to this place because, despite recent good progress under the previous Government, I feel that our criminal justice system does not do enough to secure justice for the victims of serious crime.

At the end of 2023, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the number of people who had been forced to flee their home stood at 117 million. Irregular migration to Europe is rising. According to the European Union's border agency, Frontex, there was a significant increase in irregular border crossings

[Dr Kieran Mullan]

last year, estimated at approximately 380,000 people, driven, it says, by economic, social and security instability in parts of Africa. Over the last 15 years, Frontex has detected 1.4 million irregular border crossings into the EU. The United States has seen even bigger increases of migrant flows from South America. The question is what to do about it.

First, I do not demonise people who make the journey—that is something we should avoid. People naturally want to improve their lives and their family's lives. For those arriving from conflict zones, their original motivation for leaving was, of course, to protect themselves, but Governments and politicians cannot afford the luxury of blind sympathy for people in difficult circumstances. We have to act rationally. What is sustainable? What are voters in democratic countries, who have to pay to provide refuge for people, willing to accept?

I supported the Rwanda plan because I believed it was both fair and rational. Right now, who gets asylum in this country and who the British taxpayers pay to support is determined by the ability of people to make the journey into Europe and the UK. That is not fair. I believe that the agencies that placed people in Rwanda for re-homing were against the plan, because they failed to move with the times in understanding the changing nature of the issue.

This is no longer the same problem that the European Convention on Human Rights, the European Court of Human Rights and the refugee agencies were set up to address. The scale of the problem has, and will, continue to grow. There is a fear that if the UK implements such a policy, as Australia did, it will become more and more difficult for anyone to apply successfully for asylum in a western country. I understand that concern, but these agencies and well-meaning human rights advocates need to wake up to what will happen if we do not control these movements of people. We will see a surge in far right support and risk even more unpalatable solutions.

Providing safe and legal routes is, by no means, an answer. Whatever safe and legal routes we set up will have criteria and, inevitably, not all people will be able to make it here on that basis. The fit and young will continue to make small boat crossings to overcome that barrier, so we will be right back to where we started.

Labour may have some short-term successes, for example on some obvious thing we may not have done when it comes to tackling gangs, but let us look at Labour's track record. Labour Members opposed all of our measures to increase sentences for people trafficking and the Prime Minister himself opposed the deportation of foreign criminals. That is not an encouraging track record. I wish them luck in the proposals they have put forward, but none represents a sustainable solution. As a number of EU countries have recognised, moving people and offshore processing are the way forward.

I pay tribute to the good progress we made on crime and justice in the previous Government. We introduced a whole-life tariff for premeditated child murder. We introduced Harper's law, a mandatory life sentence for the manslaughter of emergency service workers. Importantly, we reformed Labour's halfway release, bringing it up to two thirds for the most serious offenders.

There is no doubt that the pandemic, the associated court backlog and the increase of thousands of prisoners being kept on remand have made other difficult decisions necessary. I take the Justice Secretary at her word when she says these are "temporary" solutions, although if she had sunsetted them she might have had more credibility. However, I send her my goodwill.

More generally, there is an intellectual snobbery towards people who think the punishment of offenders is a public good, a positive thing that is necessary for the functioning of our society. In my experience, the Ministry of Justice is happy to focus on the experience of victims but not so much on whether they actually get justice. I will continue to campaign and push this Government, as I did the last Government, to move the whole-life sentence for child murder away from just significant premeditated child murder to all child murder. We will all have been horrified by stories of parents murdering their own children, very often not in premeditated circumstances. I think people like that deserve to face justice with a whole-life order.

I will also campaign on the use of life sentences. The term is misleading, often reported as jail for life, when it almost never is, which is an insult to victims. Those are my priorities. I will welcome the new Government's progress in those areas, but I will be there as a sceptical champion for victims of crime along the way.

4.43 pm

Sarah Champion (Rotherham) (Lab): This morning we woke to the horrifying confirmation that violence against women and girls in the UK is endemic. The national policing statement detailed that there are 3,000 offences recorded each day, but let us remember, that will be the tip of the iceberg. For example, 83% of women do not come forward to report rape to the police, and many offences will not even be recognised as such by the victims because of the deep-seated misogyny in this country. The system, as it currently stands, fails women and girls. What we need now is root and branch change.

In March 2023, the now Prime Minister promised to halve violence against women and girls if Labour won office. He said he would put domestic abuse specialists in police control rooms and set up dedicated courts for rape trials. I am proud that in the King's Speech the Prime Minister is living up to his promises. In my Government's proposed Bills, I was reassured to see specific measures to tackle misogyny, from teaching children about healthy relationships and consent, to putting rape victims back at the heart of our criminal justice system.

Until now, rape conviction rates have been appallingly low. A total of 68,387 rapes were recorded by the police in 2023, but, by the end of that year, charges had been just 2.6%, and the average wait time for rape cases to get to court was 839 days. That should shame us all. I am hopeful that the plans to introduce specialist rape courts to fast-track cases will make the change and I support them.

On that note, I wish to take a moment to thank the victims and survivors, as well as the past and present Victims' Commissioners, for the hard work that they have done in campaigning to make these necessary changes. I thank my Government for acting on my campaign to stop registered sex offenders from changing their names.

And I greatly look forward to working with those on the Front Bench to close all legal loopholes that allow dangerous sex offenders to slip through the net.

Following many years of fighting alongside inspirational survivors, including Della and the Safeguarding Alliance, I am optimistic that we are finally nearly there with Della's law.

Now I turn to a topic that needs all of our attention—child protection. Safeguarding should start with every parent and every child having access to a Sure Start. Unfortunately, most people are not automatically born to be a good parent, but Sure Start can give them the support and encouragement that they need to become one.

Early intervention is always the best and cheapest solution. I urge the Government to rebuild this inspirational offer, after the Tories tried to demolish it one centre at a time. I welcome the Home Secretary's plan to introduce a statutory definition of "child criminal exploitation". This is something that I have been campaigning on for many years and could never understand why the previous Government resisted it. Until now, there have been multiple definitions, resulting in a confused and fragmented response by authorities. Between 2022 and 2023, more than 14,000 children were identified as at risk of, or a victim of, child criminal exploitation. I hope to work with the Government to ensure that the new statutory definition is in line with international standards of child trafficking, not just an extension of the adult definition. For too long, we have seen the abuse of child victims being misinterpreted as "choice". A child can never "consent" to their abuse or exploitation.

I wish to end where I started, with Labour's commitments to halve violence against women and girls. I urge my Government to seize this moment and to be bold and ambitious. We owe women and girls more than just lip service. They deserve real, tangible action. I stand ready to assist as a friendly critic, but also as a helping hand.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Edward Leigh): I call Shockat Adam to make his maiden speech.

4.47 pm

Shockat Adam (Leicester South) (Ind): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for calling me to speak in this debate. It is an honour to follow the hon. Member for Rotherham (Sarah Champion) who spoke on a subject on which we can all agree—safeguarding our women and children. There have been many excellent contributions today, and it is an honour to follow each and every one of them.

In my short time in this House, it has become abundantly clear to me that the most important person is you, Mr Deputy Speaker, with your desire to keep speeches and contributions short, and that that is the best way for me to curry favour with you. With that in mind, I shall make my maiden speech.

I arrived in this country as a toddler from the heart of Africa to the heart of the midlands: Leicester. That city nurtured, schooled and shaped me. It would be fair to say that, no matter where I am in the world, there is a corner of a foreign field that is forever Leicester. The vibrancy, the diversity and, occasionally, the complete rawness of the city were the backdrop of my upbringing.

I remember very well as a child those free, small, cold bottles of milk that I used to get at school—I remember very well when it was stolen from me as well. I remember embarking on my life journey with friends from all different creeds, colours, religions and no religion, and we made a life for ourselves in this amazing country. I remember also moments of racism. One that comes to mind was with my late mother. We were in a park and were set upon by a group of people who hurled abuse and foul things, including language and objects, in our direction. But those incidents were superseded by kindness, love and understanding from the great people of this country.

As the youngest child by a distance, I was often referred to by my family members as the mistake, but my mother always referred to me as a miracle, and ever since then I began to believe it. My mother, who did not get the opportunity of a formal education in her lifetime, ensured all her children made the most of what this country had to offer. It was this mother who, when I suggested when I grew a bit older that I wanted to study history at university, looked at me as if I was about to become history, so, like a dutiful child, I did optometry.

And that brings me to here. I have checked the archives, and it appears I am only the second optometrist to have ever become an MP. So, I hope I can bring a little of my professional skills to help the House to focus on what matters and not be myopic in our decision making. With laser-like reflections, I believe we can bring 20/20 vision to matters before us and not make a real spectacle of ourselves. But the serious point is this: with better usage of optometrists, our GP services and our pharmaceutical colleagues, we can ease the burden on secondary care in our hospitals. We all need to work joined up and together.

As we are on the topic of health, at this juncture I would like to pay tribute to my predecessor Jon Ashworth, a shadow Health Secretary for more than five years before latterly taking on the shadow Paymaster role. He had the honour before me of representing the wonderful Leicester South constituency. In his maiden speech in 2011, he said it perfectly:

"I am privileged to represent a constituency of huge diversity, vibrancy and tolerance, and while we must never be complacent, our communities generally live harmoniously together. We are part of a city renowned across the world for welcoming incomers. Families have come from across the globe to make their home in Leicester South...Our diversity"—

ethnicity—

"enriches our cultural, social and civic life, and contributes immensely to our economy, too."—[*Official Report*, 8 June 2011; Vol. 529, c. 200-201.]

He represented Leicester South with distinction for 13 years and I hope I can live up to the reputation he earned as a dedicated champion for our city.

Talking of champions, Leicester is the city of champions—another miracle. I am from the city that defied all the odds in the 2015-16 season when Leicester City became premier league champions, proving again that miracles can happen. I have been a diehard fan ever since I was a child, when one of our favourite sons, Gary Lineker, was still on the bench. We have the Tigers for our rugby force and the Foxes for the cricket, whilst the Riders are usually top of the court in basketball, and in Mark Selby we have a snooker world champion. But on a serious note,

[Shockat Adam]

we must invest in sports facilities, not only to continue this rich tradition but to give our youth opportunities to improve their physical and mental wellbeing and occupy their time in positive pursuits. Too many of my young constituents told me they have nothing to do, and we must give them that opportunity.

Young people also bear the brunt of the housing crisis, and in Leicester we face overcrowding and waiting lists of over six years—worse than some London boroughs. We urgently need more affordable homes.

Leicester—another miracle—is where we found the remains of the last Plantagenet king. The bones of Richard III had been lying undisturbed for over 500 years until they were discovered under a car park in 2012. Please do come and visit him at our beautiful cathedral. We are a friendly bunch, regardless of what you may have read and heard about us. To quote Shakespeare,

“My heart is ten times lighter than my looks.”

My city is a united city. We celebrate all religious festivals—Christmas, Diwali, Vaisakhi, even the Caribbean carnival—with equal vigour, and have lived in harmony for over half a century. However, in recent years fractures have appeared, sown by those who wish to divide us, often by weaponising language. I understand that our isle has finite resources, but we must always have infinite empathy, infinite sympathy and an infinite vocabulary to build bridges, not to destroy them. In the words of the great Muslim Sufi poet Rumi, “We must raise our words, not our voices. It is rain that brings forth flowers, not thunder.”

During my campaign, I was humbled: I thought I knew my city, but I really did not. Within my city there was an underbelly, a shadow, a city within a city. While I used to speak about people who had a conflict between eating and heating, during my campaign I met them. Food banks at 11 o'clock on a Tuesday morning had over 80 people queuing, and I was told that was one of the quietest days they had ever had. We must tackle the cost of living crisis and reduce the wealth inequality in our country. It is not ethical or sustainable for any civilised nation to go on that way.

One poignant incident from my campaigning was when I knocked at a house and a lady peered through a partially opened door. I could not see her whole face, but saw enough to see a life of sadness and tragedy. She explained that she had had a relatively successful life, but something had happened at work—a little bit of bullying—and she went into a depression cycle and never really recovered. She said to me, “I will vote for you if you can do one of two things.” What did she ask me? She said, “If you could just plant me a tree so I can see it, that would make me smile, and if you could get me a fountain so I can see some water trickling, I'll vote for you forever.”

It is important to remember that it is the simplest things that people want and that make the biggest difference to their lives. They want someone to speak up for them in these corridors of power, to speak about the injustices in the world, to give a voice to those who do not have one, who have no might, authority or power—whether that is the forgotten in Yemen, the victims of conflict in Sudan, or the victims of the ongoing devastation in Palestine—regardless of where they are in the world.

I will always endeavour to speak truth to power and demand that this new Government take action for the poor and dispossessed, not just the powerful.

Finally, if my campaign ever had a catchphrase, it would be the Chinese proverb that says, “The best time to plant a tree was 25 years ago, in order to enjoy its beauty, its shade and its fruit, but the next best time is today.” We must plant that seed of unity, equality and justice now to ensure that our future generations can enjoy the fruits of friendship, fairness and peace.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Edward Leigh): I call Brian Leishman to make his maiden speech.

4.57 pm

Brian Leishman (Alloa and Grangemouth) (Lab): I thank the hon. Member for Leicester South (Shockat Adam); I am sure many of us will find him a very hard act to follow. I congratulate all the hon. Members who have made their opening contributions to this Chamber. I have listened intently and been impressed by their passionate delivery and the personal content they have shared.

At the outset of my speech, I would like to thank my family for the encouragement and strength they have given me on my journey to this place. Without their unwavering support, I would not have become a local councillor and then an MP. It is with gratitude, and with enormous pride at being elected as the first ever Member of Parliament for Alloa and Grangemouth, that I take my turn to address the Chamber.

I also take this opportunity to highlight my respect for all the candidates who were on the ballot paper. I admire anyone who wants to dedicate themselves to public service, and I pay special tribute to Mr John Nicolson. Those hon. Members who were re-elected to this place a few weeks ago will all know that Mr Nicolson's sartorial elegance was matched by his trademark eloquence in this Chamber and in representing the constituents he served with great distinction.

With the Forth running through Alloa and Grangemouth, many people on both sides of the river felt it was not a natural constituency, but when we look at the communities and towns that make it up, our new constituency makes perfect sense.

Clackmannanshire, being the smallest county in Scotland, is affectionately known as “the wee county,” but be under no illusion: although it is small in size, it is mighty in its industrial heritage. Industry is a tradition that stretches right across our constituency. Alva and Tillicoultry were the home of luxury woollen mills. Both run along the foot of the impressive and beautiful local hills, as does Menstrie, the westernmost village of the three, which is synonymous with yeast manufacturing—vital, of course, for one of Scotland's national drinks. Indeed, alcohol production has been a fixture in Alloa for decades, and it was once regarded as Scotland's brewery town, but sadly nowadays only a few remain.

Crossing the Forth, we leave Scotland's brewery town behind and come to Grangemouth, which was once known as Scotland's boom town. The Grangemouth refinery started operating in 1924. This being the centenary year means that it should really be a time of great celebration, but it has been announced that refining oil in Grangemouth is to stop—possibly as soon as May 2025.

What happens next to the Grangemouth refinery will reverberate around all our constituencies. Oil will be part of the energy mix for years to come—that is a fact—but we also know that we need to accelerate the cleaner, greener energy industries that will combat climate issues, lower our bills, increase national security and reindustrialise communities.

The term “just transition” has entered the modern lexicon, but many people I spoke with while out campaigning did not know what it actually means. It simply means moving from one industry to another without leaving workers and their communities behind to deal with devastating economic and social consequences. Historically, many workers in Alloa and Grangemouth have been victims of deindustrialisation and so-called market forces in a system that has valued profits over people and created a society of gross inequality.

We are at a crossroads. We know what will happen if Grangemouth stops refining before a new industrial cluster is ready. It would mean that hundreds of workers lose their jobs, workers and families have to leave their communities in search of work, and the pubs, cafés and shops of Grangemouth all lose custom. Allowing a gap between ceasing refining and the new greener energies being operational is as unfair as it is unpalatable. Grangemouth cannot go from being boom town to ghost town. In the past few weeks, my Government colleagues have engaged with the union, the companies involved with the refinery and the Scottish Government, and we are committed to exhausting all possibilities of making Grangemouth the site that we all need it to be.

My constituency is called Alloa and Grangemouth, but it is also my honour to represent Larbert, Stenhousemuir and many surrounding villages across both the Falkirk and Clackmannanshire council areas. As a football fan, it would be remiss of me not to mention one of Sauchie’s favourite sons: multiple European cup winner, Scottish internationalist and respected pundit Alan Hansen. I know that the House will join me in expressing relief at his recovery from a recent health scare. It would also be remiss of me not to congratulate Stenhousemuir football club—the Warriors—on their league championship win last season. I am very much looking forward to the Alloa and Grangemouth constituency derby between Alloa Athletic and Stenhousemuir FC in league one next year.

On the subject of sport, before coming to this place I was a golf professional. It might not seem it at first, but being a golf professional has transferable skills for being an MP. The building of relationships, the creation of rapport, serving people and trying to improve things for them are skills that will stand me in good stead in this place—also, working in golf for 23 years has got me used to dealing with Tories. Working in golf was fantastic: it took me to places that I would never have been and allowed me to speak with people I would never have met. We truly are richer when we encounter people from other parts of the world and learn about their culture and customs. That applies not just when we go to different places; it also benefits us here in Britain when we welcome people into our communities.

Our communities need action that improves people’s lives and gives them not just hope but the route out of struggle. Rest assured, I will work with local businesses, charities and third-sector organisations in my constituency, and with UK Government colleagues and counterparts

from the Scottish Government, to deliver the change that people need. I know that my voice carries the necessary weight to bring about that change—not because of who I am, but because of the position I hold. The people of Alloa and Grangemouth have given me the responsibility to use my voice, and I intend to do so for the benefit of everyone from every community across the constituency that I am so proud to represent.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Edward Leigh): I call Max Wilkinson to make his maiden speech.

5.4 pm

Max Wilkinson (Cheltenham) (LD): It is my honour to stand in this Chamber as the Member of Parliament for the beautiful town of Cheltenham, and it is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Alloa and Grangemouth (Brian Leishman). I heartily commend what he said about Alan Hansen, who I watched on television on many occasions as a young football fan.

Since last summer, when my wife returned to work after maternity leave, I have been enjoying the unusual combined roles of wannabe Member of Parliament and stay-at-home dad. They tell me it is a job requiring endless patience, a great deal of tolerance, the ability to understand almost inhuman forms of communication and boundless enthusiasm for clearing up a never-ending supply of mess—and I hear a toddler can be tough, too.

I want to start by giving thanks to some of the people and groups that have made the past year so joyful for me: Baby Bounce and Rhyme at Cheltenham library, and in particular Heather, who leads the singing; Andrea and Mary at Highbury church playgroup; and Sophie at Little Notes. My experiences over the past year have reinforced my views about the challenges I already knew so many parents face, and I have met many new parents in the corridors over the past couple of weeks. I will always speak up in this place for children, including my own offspring—so, Elodie, if you are at home watching me droning on, please tell Granny to put “The Wiggles” on instead.

I offer my sincere thanks to the former Justice Secretary, Alex Chalk, the first Member of Parliament for Cheltenham to serve in Cabinet. Conservative Members should note his wise words on the prison population: that we should follow the evidence, not the dogma. But such praise for my predecessor is perhaps best communicated through the words of one member of House staff, who upon being introduced to me as Alex’s replacement, responded with a line that really hit home and will last with me forever: “Oh, that’s a shame. He was nice.” Luckily, I am not easily offended, and I will try to be nice too. I also thank two of my political mentors, Martin Horwood and Nigel Jones. Both are past MPs for Cheltenham who made an indelible impact on me and on our town.

My predecessors knew what I know: that Cheltenham is full of big-hearted people whose community spirit and love of hospitality, the arts and culture make it a special place to be. We have so many festivals, including literature, horse racing, poetry, music, jazz, food, cricket and science—I could go on—that we are known as the festival town. We live in a food and drink paradise: we have excellent pubs, bars, cafes and restaurants, as well as the DEYA brewery and Dunkertons cider. We are the home of Holst, of Superdry and of the polar explorer

[Max Wilkinson]

Edward Wilson, but there is more. Local historians record that Cheltenham was the site of the first parachute descent. In 1838, John Hampton jumped out of a hot air balloon 9,000 feet above the town and glided to earth under an umbrella-like contraption. At this point, my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston and Surbiton (Ed Davey) might be getting too excited, so I will leave it there. Cheltenham's rich cultural tapestry is interwoven with generously proportioned parks and gardens, and is surrounded by beautiful Regency architecture and rolling hills. It truly is a feast for all the senses, and our schools are first-rate, too. Education is at the heart of our town's values—it is on the town crest.

I am so proud to have been elected for the town I love at the second attempt. That second-time success follows a trend in my relationship with Cheltenham. First impressions are clearly not my thing, and they could have led to a very different path in my life. In fact, my first job interview in Cheltenham—many years ago, when I had a full head of hair—was so bad that not only was I not offered the job, but when the boss called back weeks later, having apparently been turned down by all the other candidates, the starting salary had suffered a rapid cut of around 10%. Members will know that that is a spending power reduction that even the former Member for South West Norfolk would struggle to match in her most strident moments. I took the job anyway, of course, because you do not turn down the chance to move to Cheltenham.

I am proud to have already kept my first promise as a Member of Parliament. I have joined the Robins Trust, which supports Cheltenham Town FC. They remain a division ahead of Forest Green Rovers, despite being relegated last season—with my apologies to the hon. Member for Stroud (Dr Opher). I have led campaigns already to invest in affordable housing in Cheltenham, to fight climate change and to support food banks, because we have them. It is a disgrace that a town as wealthy as Cheltenham has more than 700 people using food banks regularly. We have a unique scheme in Cheltenham where food bank users also get free access to the leisure centre. I would recommend that all Members try to roll that out in their area. However, if there is one priority I will pursue relentlessly, it will be undoing the harm caused to our local health services these past few years. Alongside the word “education”, our town crest also features the word “health”. I will defend our local hospital, and I will campaign on primary care, too.

One matter of vital importance linking this place and Cheltenham is GCHQ. Their work is secret and they never ask for our thanks, but thousands of people in Cheltenham work hard for us every single day. If I may veer dangerously close to policy for a maiden speech, I was pleased to see that the cyber-security and resilience Bill will be coming before Parliament. This is a huge opportunity to update the UK's cyber laws by reforming the Computer Misuse Act 1990, and that will help better defend our cyber-defenders who work so hard for us in Cheltenham.

It was with those issues and more in mind that I was accosted at Paddington station the night before my first day here. I was lost in thought, and a tourist approached me and said, “Excuse me, Sir. How do you get to

Westminster?” I was of course delighted to be recognised by a member of the public so early in my political career, so I decided to give him the full benefit of my political story. After about 15 minutes, I had been through all my best campaigns, my door-knocking technique, the best leaflets I have ever delivered, and I was just telling him about doing aqua aerobics with our leader, my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston and Surbiton, in our iconic Sandford Park lido. Sadly, I had got it wrong. He interjected, “Sorry, friend; I just wanted to know which tube line to take.” That is a cautionary tale for all new Members: let us not get ahead of ourselves. We are here for our constituency first and foremost, and for me it will be Cheltenham first every time.

5.12 pm

Marsha De Cordova (Battersea) (Lab): It is a pleasure to follow the maiden speech of the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Max Wilkinson), and I congratulate all hon. Members who have made their maiden speeches today. I also acknowledge my colleagues in Government, who I have to say have literally been hitting the ground running and getting on with rebuilding our country. I would like to begin by placing on record my thanks to the constituents in Battersea for electing me a third time. It remains an honour and a privilege to serve as their MP.

The King's Speech will deliver a truly transformative programme of change and national renewal, and turn a page on 14 years of Conservative chaos, decline and division. The Conservatives crashed our economy, imposed Brexit, presided over austerity, presided over the biggest fall in living standards on record, broke our public services, including the NHS and the criminal justice system, and failed to prepare adequately for the covid pandemic. I could say that the list goes on.

In contrast, Labour in government has already set out the first steps of how it will create sustainable growth that works for everybody, restore economic credibility and deliver more safe, secure and affordable homes, as well as deliver a new deal for workers, rebuild the NHS and make Britain a clean energy superpower, while also tackling crime and antisocial behaviour. More importantly, Labour will break down the barriers to opportunity for children and young people, so that we can finally give them a future and hope.

On the Conservatives' watch, the Government did nothing to tackle the housing crisis, mortgage bills and rents soared, leaseholders were trapped in unsafe homes, and renters faced insecurity and injustice. Thousands of my constituents who are leaseholders will welcome plans to make commonhold the default type of tenure, ending the outdated leasehold system, and tackling unregulated and unaffordable ground rents.

Battersea has a higher number of private and social renters than the national average, so it will be a relief to many that the renters rights Bill will abolish section 21 no-fault evictions and provide greater stability and security. Our plans will strengthen tenants' rights and protections, apply the decent homes standard to the private rented sector, and ensure that tenants can request a pet, an issue I have worked on alongside Battersea Dogs and Cats Home.

Reforms to the planning system will deliver the housing that both Battersea and the country so desperately need, and the introduction of mandatory house building

targets will finally get our country building again. However, it is vital that decisive action is taken on the shortage of accessible homes. Inaccessible homes not only impact on one's physical and mental health, but limit disabled people's ability to live, study and work, so we must make it our priority to ensure that homes are accessible for all.

Our new deal will transform the lives of workers not only in Battersea but across the country. The employment rights Bill will ban exploitative zero-hours contracts, end fire and rehire, provide rights from day one and update trade union legislation. Alongside it, the draft equality Bill will not only root out structural inequalities by setting out equal pay rights for black, Asian and ethnic minority and disabled people, but introduce mandatory ethnicity and disability pay gap reporting for larger employers. We can and must go further in this space and ensure that we change course by ending the shameful Tory record on disability employment, where the gap is wider than it has been and the pay gap is at 14.6%. But I have every faith in my colleagues in the Department for Work and Pensions, who I will work alongside to deliver this.

This King's Speech sets out an ambitious and progressive path to deliver the programme of change that the people of Battersea and across our country so desperately need.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Edward Leigh): I call Sir Ashley Fox to make his maiden speech.

5.16 pm

Sir Ashley Fox (Bridgwater) (Con): I congratulate the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Max Wilkinson) on his excellent maiden speech, and I am pleased to follow him.

It is a great honour to be elected to this House to serve the people of Bridgwater. I thank them for putting their trust in me. Bridgwater is a most diverse constituency. It combines the three historic towns of North Petherton, Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge, and Bridgwater itself. The constituency runs from the coastal villages of Berrow and Brean in the north to the villages of Nether Stowey and Enmore in the foothills of the Quantocks in the west and Middlesbrough and Othway on the Somerset levels in the east.

The battle of Sedgemoor was fought near Westonzoyland in 1685. It was the end of Monmouth's rebellion and we should all be grateful that it was the last battle fought on English soil.

Bridgwater was one of the original boroughs to send elected Members to this House in 1295, although it is not an unbroken record. In the 1868 general election the two Liberal candidates defeated the two Conservative candidates by just 44 votes. Such was the evidence of bribery and corruption—on both sides, I must add—that the two MPs were unseated and the borough disenfranchised. A royal commission later found that over £1,500, more than £200,000 in today's money, had been spent on bribes. Mr Deputy Speaker, I can assure you that I have paid particular care to my election expenses.

Bridgwater has a radical tradition. One of our most famous sons is Admiral Robert Blake, regarded by many as the father of the Royal Navy. He represented

both Bridgwater and Taunton in this House in the 17th century and fought on the side of Parliament in the civil war. Another of my radical predecessors is Vernon Bartlett, who won the seat in the 1938 by-election in what at the time was a remarkable defeat of the Conservative Government. He stood as an independent progressive, endorsed by both the Labour and Liberal parties, opposed to the Munich agreement. In this country, we often credit Winston Churchill for his opposition to the policy of appeasement of Nazi Germany, but it is less remembered that the Labour party under Attlee, Bevin and Dalton was the strongest opponent of that disastrous policy. I am sure that all Members, but especially Labour Members, will be mindful of their party's proud history of opposing appeasement as this Government decide how to support Ukraine and how best to deter future Russian aggression in Europe.

I pay tribute to my predecessors from the two former constituencies that make up the new seat of Bridgwater. James Heappey is the former Member for Wells. He stood down at the last election, and he is well liked and respected in Burnham and Highbridge. He served with distinction at the Ministry of Defence. He was also a kind and helpful colleague when I was selected as a candidate, and I thank him for his service.

Ian Liddell-Grainger represented Bridgwater and West Somerset for 23 years and is remembered for the support he gave our rural communities following the terrible flooding in Somerset during the winter of 2013-14. Ian visited the affected areas every week and persuaded David Cameron to visit Somerset to witness the devastation for himself. It has not been forgotten that the former Prime Minister turned up without wellington boots. Ian led the campaign for a barrage over the River Parrett, which is now in the early stages of construction. I will continue his work to ensure we dredge our rivers and maintain our defences, so that we minimise the threat of flooding.

I also want to mention Tom King, now Lord King, who represented Bridgwater for 31 years, until 2001. It is a mark of the respect and affection in which he is held that his name was mentioned so many times on the doorstep during my campaign. Tom also wrote a helpful endorsement saying why people should vote for me, which only goes to show how wise he is.

Bridgwater is an industrial town. It has many small businesses, and I will do all I can to support them. We need to encourage entrepreneurial spirit, because that is how we create prosperity for all our citizens. We welcome thousands of tourists every year to enjoy our beautiful Somerset coastline. I want to encourage those tourists to spend longer in Somerset, to visit more of our beautiful countryside and to consume more of the excellent produce from our farmers and growers. Bridgwater is also the home of the Guy Fawkes carnival, the UK's oldest carnival, and one of the largest illuminated carnival processions in Europe. Hundreds of volunteers work tirelessly to create this fantastic spectacle and to raise thousands of pounds for charity.

Much has been achieved for Bridgwater and for Somerset over the past 14 years. Hinkley Point C is being constructed and will provide secure and low-carbon energy to the whole region for generations. The electricity it produces will power Gravity, the smart campus where Agratas will build one of Europe's largest gigafactories. These two projects will provide jobs and opportunities

[*Sir Ashley Fox*]

for years to come. The town of Bridgwater was awarded £23 million under the previous Government's town deal initiative. That will fund many important local projects, including restoring our historic docks and refurbishing the arts centre and the town hall theatre, but there is more to do.

I will work with our new police and crime commissioner to tackle the antisocial behaviour that affects our towns. I will campaign to protect Pawlett Hams and stop it being turned into an unwanted salt marsh by the Environment Agency. I will keep the promise I made during the campaign to Aaron Reid, the headteacher of Haygrove school. It is one of the top-performing schools in Somerset, but also one of three schools in England built by Caledonian Modular and now condemned as unsafe. The last Government promised to rebuild Haygrove, and I trust that the new Government will honour that promise. I will support the school as we work with the council and the new Government to find a solution that benefits the pupils and staff of Haygrove.

I am proud to have been elected by the people of Bridgwater. I will serve them faithfully and to the best of my ability.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Edward Leigh): To make his maiden speech, I call Richard Baker.

5.25 pm

Richard Baker (Glenrothes and Mid Fife) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for allowing me the opportunity to give my maiden speech. It is a privilege to follow so many excellent maiden speeches in this important debate. I congratulate the hon. Member for Bridgwater (Sir Ashley Fox) on his powerful and witty speech. I must also congratulate in particular my hon. Friend the Member for Alloa and Grangemouth (Brian Leishman) on his excellent speech, too. As a former professional golfer, it is fitting that he won his seat on such a huge swing, and his brilliant speech showed us why. The bar has been set intimidatingly high in this debate.

I feel all the more honoured to be elected by the people of Glenrothes and Mid Fife to be their representative in the House and follow in the footsteps of predecessors who served the constituency with such distinction. I pay tribute to the outgoing MP, Peter Grant, who served with such commitment and so diligently on behalf of his constituents. He will rightly be proud in particular of his contribution to the successful campaign for the reintroduction of the Levenmouth rail link both as Fife council leader and as an MP, for his service on the Public Accounts Committee and for campaigning for the rights of victims of financial scandals through his role on the all-party parliamentary group on personal banking and fairer financial services.

I also pay tribute to Peter's predecessor, Lindsay Roy, who was such a brilliant MP for the constituency. Today, Lindsay is a tireless advocate for Parkinson's UK, making the case with passion and eloquence for improved support for people with Parkinson's and for investment in medical research. His example should not only give hope to people with Parkinson's; he is an inspiration to us all.

I am a new Member in this Parliament, but I was privileged to serve in the Scottish Parliament for 12 years. I have already observed some of the differences between Holyrood and here. This institution is older and often more complex—as indeed are many of its Members—and there are many procedures and protocols to learn, but while there are differences between the Parliaments, the purpose we have is a common one: to serve our constituents. We have heard over the past weeks how it is vital to have strong relationships between the UK Government and the devolved Administrations. That is of course true. However, I believe that there are still too few opportunities for Members of each of our UK Parliaments to work together on many matters of shared responsibility and interest. I hope that there can be greater collaboration between all our parliamentarians in the course of the next five years.

On a personal note, may I say that I am proud that my wife Claire Baker continues to serve the people of Mid Scotland and Fife in the Scottish Parliament with such skill and dedication? I was delighted that Claire and our daughter Catherine could be in the Gallery when I was sworn in.

I have also been greatly privileged to work for disability charities in my time away from elected politics. For the past two years, I have worked with the charity Enable in a role supporting people with learning disabilities on campaigns for their rights, not to speak on their behalf but to support them to be their own advocates for change as experts by experience. In the media, in public forums and in Parliaments, Enable member ambassadors have told their own stories and powerfully argued the case for a more equal society. The need to tackle these inequalities is clear when people with learning disabilities have a life expectancy of 20 years less than the rest of the population, only about 7% are in paid employment, they have fewer opportunities in education and they are twice as likely to experience bullying. I will miss working with them, but I will not miss the opportunity in this Parliament to make our country a fairer and a more equal place for disabled people.

I will also not miss the opportunity to be a champion in the Chamber for the people of Glenrothes and Mid Fife. The constituency stretches across Fife, from Methil, Buckhaven and the Wemyss villages on the coast to ancient Markinch and the new town of Glenrothes, and from Kinglassie and Cardenden and the villages of Benarty to Lochgelly and Kelty. Those and other communities in the constituency have their own histories and priorities, but so many are linked by their proud connections to the mining industry. That is why the decision by this Government to end the injustice of the miners' pension scheme, so that funds in the scheme are kept for its beneficiaries, will be so important for so many of my constituents.

The communities of my constituency can look back on a proud industrial heritage, but it is vital that they can also look forward to their future as a hub for innovation, technology and our growing renewable sector. The biomass plant at Markinch, the hydrogen for domestic energy pilot at Buckhaven, and the Fife energy park at Methil are all examples of how our constituency can benefit from the exciting plans for GB Energy and our goal for Scotland to play a leading role in making Britain a green energy powerhouse.

We have to seize this opportunity. Buckhaven and Methil have the highest number of deprived communities in Fife, which is why we have to realise the ambition for the area and increase employment through expansion in renewables. It is vital that UK Ministers work collaboratively with management, unions, the Scottish Government and Fife council to ensure that despite the financial difficulties of Harland & Wolff, which operates the fabrication yard at Methil, the 200 skilled jobs and apprenticeships at the yard are secured, along with its infrastructure and facilities. That skilled workforce and the facilities at the yard will be instrumental in realising Fife's ambition to be a thriving hub for the renewables sector in Scotland.

It means so much to me to be given the chance to be a champion for our part of Scotland. My mother was a teacher at Beath High, the school attended by one of our most celebrated novelists Sir Ian Rankin, who grew up in Cardenden in the constituency. In Sir Ian's book "Set in Darkness", Inspector Rebus carries out criminal investigations at the Scottish Parliament. We can only wonder where he finds inspiration for the plots of his novels, but I am sure we can all agree that Fife can be proud to call one of our finest writers one of our own.

I also know how resilient our communities can be, and how we can look to better days even after the toughest of times. When I was growing up in Fife, my father was a vicar in Lochgelly during the miners' strike. My father-in-law Jim was a proud member of the National Union of Mineworkers. When I stood for election to this place in 2015, he gave me a miner's lamp to bring with me to Westminster if I won, to remind me what I was here to do. I was not elected in 2015, and after that election nearly 10 years ago, many would have thought that the flame of the Labour and trade union movement was fragile and flickering, but today in this Parliament it burns brighter than ever. Ten years later, the lamp will be with me here in Westminster, and it will remind me why I am here: to deliver the change that our country needs and to show that, through political action, we can deliver the stronger, fairer society that so many people in my constituency gave so much to achieve.

5.32 pm

David Simmonds (Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner) (Con): May I draw the House's attention to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests?

It is a pleasure to participate in today's debate on the King's Speech and to follow the hon. Member for Glenrothes and Mid Fife (Richard Baker), who is one of many on both sides of the House who gave a warm and positive speech. We welcome that context because, although cross-party there will be much political debate about the contents of the King's Speech, we all recognise that it is a privilege and an honour to be in this House and to participate in that debate on behalf of our constituents.

I thank my constituents in Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner for returning me for my second term as a Member of Parliament. There were a number of things in the King's Speech that they would wish me to draw attention to, such as the damaging impact of VAT on schools—the taxing of education is of huge concern in my constituency, which has many mainstream and special educational needs independent schools. They would also wish me to

mention the loss of green-belt protection and the decision of an incoming Government to prioritise the deregulation of the green belt rather than building the 1.4 million homes that already have planning permission in our country.

On the decision to press ahead with GB Energy, those of us with a background in local government know that it is a policy model that brought the cities of Nottingham and Bristol to the very edge of bankruptcy. We will hold the Government to account to ensure that GB Energy does not do to the United Kingdom what the decisions of those Labour councils to press ahead with those projects did to the capacity of local authorities to deliver vital public services, as well as increasing bills for vulnerable households.

The main theme of today's debate is immigration and home affairs. Having served briefly as a Parliamentary Private Secretary in the Ministry of Justice in the previous Parliament, I welcome the tone of many things that have been said about criminal justice. In particular, I hope to see the new Government continue the commitment, as previously set out, to sentencing reform. All of us, in all parties, wish to see fewer victims of crime. The previous Member for Cheltenham, who received a very warm tribute from his successor the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Max Wilkinson), set out measures on the use of modern technology and tagging that aimed to ensure that we bring down the rate of reoffending which has long dogged the criminal justice system here in the UK.

As a Member of Parliament who proudly represents a suburban constituency in London, I recognise that following the 2014 reforms on shoplifting, which were agreed in partnership with the retail sector, the police and the security industry, it is time to look again at how they work. We welcome the fact that, overall, there was a major reduction in serious crime in particular under the previous Government, but we will be holding the Government to account and Mayor Khan to account for the fact that his neglect of the suburbs has left many of our constituents concerned about the availability of police teams which in theory should be there but all too often seem to be abstracted for other duties. The measures to protect shopworkers need to be part of that context of the reform of how we deal with shoplifting to ensure that anyone who works in retail or owns a business in retail enjoys the protection from our police forces and our criminal law that they rightly deserve.

On illegal migration, there is a lot of noise and fuss, but I hope the Government will continue patiently with the work done previously, in particular with the authorities in France. I have met the people doing that work, both here in the UK and on the French side, to bring to justice criminal gangs—the successful prosecutions achieved of those involved in setting up smuggling. I pay tribute to the work of the BBC in shedding light on the complexity of the international gangs, highlighting how often the kingpins seek to find refuge in places such as Iraq, where they are beyond the reach not just of the criminal law in the United Kingdom but in that of Europe too. I hope that when the Government set out that commitment we will see effective measures put in place.

I say gently to the hon. Member for Clacton (Nigel Farage), who is no longer in his place, that we know from the extensive debates around the ECHR that it stands as no barrier whatever to the deportation of criminals and those who should not be here. We have

[David Simmonds]

successfully achieved that in respect of many, many countries. What we need to ensure is that people are no longer putting their lives at risk in the channel.

I will finish with a brief word about the NHS. Those who visit Hillingdon hospital and Northwood and Pinner cottage hospital in my constituency will see that work is under way to deliver those projects. I can promise the Government that I will be holding them to account to ensure that those projects are completed.

5.37 pm

Paulette Hamilton (Birmingham Erdington) (Lab): As this is my first time being returned to Parliament, I would like sincerely to thank all the House staff for making the process so smooth for me and all our new colleagues.

I am delighted to say that this King's Speech has filled me with hope. We have suffered over a decade of Tory neglect, mismanagement and chaos. We have endured five Prime Ministers, seven Chancellors, 10 Education Secretaries, 12 Culture Secretaries and 16 Housing Ministers. Finally, we have a Labour Government with a plan to put politics back into the service of working people. We have a plan to save the NHS; nationalise the railways; reform benefits; recruit more teachers; properly fund councils; invest in green energy; clean up our rivers; provide children with breakfast in school every day; prioritise women's health; reduce the gender pay gap; create a national care service; and bring transparency and accountability back to public office. It finally feels like the adults have entered the room, but I am under no illusion: the hard work is just beginning.

Nine months ago, I stood in this Chamber, albeit on the Opposition Benches, to respond to the King's Speech in despair at the levels of crime and antisocial behaviour impacting our communities in the Erdington constituency. My constituency has the highest rate of knife crime in the west midlands. People contact me almost daily about Erdington high street. Residents have made it very clear that they are frightened to go into the high street. I hear the same story time and again: our high street has become unrecognisable. Where we used to have thriving small businesses we now have empty shop fronts, drug dealing and violence, so we have our work cut out. Labour has inherited chaos in community policing. Huge issues in our criminal justice system mean that not only is crime not being prevented, but it is not being punished either. That is why I welcome the new neighbourhood police guarantee.

When we speak about crime and antisocial behaviour, we must also talk about community mental health. As a district nurse and an independent lay manager—I refer the House to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests—I know how mental health services have been decimated, and how badly our communities are suffering in silence when it comes to their mental health. We cannot prevent crime without talking about mental health and improving community services, and I was glad to see provisions to modernise the Mental Health Act and make it fit for the future.

This King's Speech shows Labour's commitment to change: a commitment to higher growth and cheaper bills, a commitment to put the NHS back on its feet,

and, crucially for my constituency, a commitment to create safer streets. It is vital that we crack down on antisocial behaviour and violent crime in our communities so that everyone can feel safe, and I am delighted that the King's Speech pledges to create new respect orders, to halve serious violence in the next decade, and to take strong action to tackle violence against women and girls and knife crime.

When I stood here nine months ago, I said:

"We need to stop the decline and start fighting for a better future."—[*Official Report*, 15 November 2023; Vol. 740, c. 742

Well, that fight starts now.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Siobhain McDonagh): I call Paul Kohler to make his maiden speech.

5.41 pm

Mr Paul Kohler (Wimbledon) (LD): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to make my maiden speech—although I must admit to a degree of trepidation following the excellent maiden speech of the hon. Member for Glenrothes and Mid Fife (Richard Baker). It was a compelling, poignant and witty speech, as were so many of those that went before.

It is a huge and humbling honour to be elected to represent and serve the people of Wimbledon, a name that is synonymous with strawberries and cream, grass courts and tennis, but a constituency that includes so much more, extending from Morden underground station in the south—where you, Madam Deputy Speaker, have your constituency office—to Old Malden in the west, where the Pre-Raphaelite masterpiece "Ophelia" was painted by Sir John Everett Millais on, or more accurately in, the Hogsmill river.

Wimbledon is a suburb of London, but has two farms, a village, a wonderful common, the occasional Womble, three professional and many amateur theatres, two cinemas, the Wimbledon College of Arts—part of the University of the Arts London—and vibrant small businesses, many of them in the arts and hospitality. It has a park designed by Capability Brown, although that is currently under threat from the All England Club—Members should see my early-day motion for further details—and the beautiful River Wandle, when it is not blighted by that running motif in so many Liberal Democrat speeches, sewage. Its housing stock ranges from grand mansions to crumbling social housing. It has one of the most affluent and well-educated electorates in the country, but also a 38% deprivation rate, despite the best efforts of excellent local charities including Dons Local Action Group, Wimbledon Guild and Faith in Action. It is also a diverse and harmonious constituency, boasting one of the largest mosques in Europe, a beautiful Buddhist temple, a Reform synagogue, Europe's first fully consecrated Hindu temple, the Papal Nuncio, and Christian churches and places of worship of almost every denomination.

As well as hosting the world's premier tennis tournament, we are home to England's most progressive football club, AFC Wimbledon—a club which knows that fans, not the money men, are the beating heart of any team, and a club which embodies the values at the heart of the Government's eagerly awaited and much anticipated football governance Bill. That is unlike, it pains me to say, my own team, Crystal Palace, which has previously argued against the reforms heralded in the Bill, much to

my shame. That is not to mention the shame of my constituents, who have just learned that their MP is a Crystal Palace fan.

I am playing a dangerous game here, because, as our defeated opponents now know and we will no doubt know some day, constituents are not slow to show their displeasure. A few weeks ago, I knocked on one door and asked the gentleman who answered if he had decided for whom he was going to vote. “I like her,” he said. “Her—the Conservative?” I replied. “No, her,” he responded. “What, the Labour candidate?” “Yeah, I like her. I don’t like him much.” “Who?” “Him. I don’t like him.” “What, the Lib Dem?” “Yeah, I don’t like him.” “You mean me?” “I don’t like him.” “That’s me.” “I really don’t like him.” “That’s me!” “What, you?” “Yes.” “Oh. Nothing personal, mate.”

But politics is personal, of course. Not infrequently, it is much too personal, although my Conservative predecessor, Stephen Hammond, and I stayed the right side of the line most of the time. We saw each other as opponents, rather than enemies. At this point, I must pay tribute to Stephen, who was a hard-working and committed constituency MP—due in no small part to the prodigious efforts of his office manager, his wife Sally, who ran a tight ship and a very efficient operation. Quite bizarrely, while Stephen and Sally are now tasked with letting staff go and dismantling that very office, I am kept busy trying to replicate their exact set-up. How is that sensible, efficient or cost effective? Surely it would make more sense for every constituency to have a permanent MP’s office that is staffed by caseworkers who, as in a department of state, move seamlessly, along with the ongoing casework, from the outgoing MP to the incoming MP. But it is what it is.

As liberal Wimbledon’s first ever Liberal MP, I will, despite the distractions, work tirelessly to represent my constituents and their values. As an academic lawyer, I will do all I can to defend the rule of law, which is under threat from our badly neglected and crumbling civil and criminal justice system. In particular, our prisons and probation service are in crisis. May I take this opportunity to congratulate the Prime Minister on the inspired appointment of James Timpson as Prisons Minister? There can be no one better than the chair of the Prison Reform Trust, who has walked the talk throughout his professional life, to lead a national debate on the role of prisons and imprisonment. We need to explore more effective alternatives to prison, including house arrests and curfews, while putting the victim at the heart of the criminal justice system by fully embracing restorative justice—something that I know from personal experience can have a transformative effect on victims, as it did on my family, with the added bonus of dramatically curtailing rates of recidivism.

There is much more I would like to say—for example, about the need to restore neighbourhood policing, which, as the Home Secretary said earlier, was decimated under the previous Government. Somewhat more parochially, there is an urgent need to guarantee the long-term future of Wimbledon police station, which, six years after my judicial review quashed the Mayor of London’s decision to close it, remains under threat, despite the Casey report making it clear that local police stations are critical to the success of neighbourhood policing. But those discussions will have to wait for another day.

To conclude, Madam Deputy Speaker, may I just say that I look forward to working constructively with Members on all sides of the House on these and the many other pressing issues that face us, both now and in the years to come?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I call Ben Coleman to make his maiden speech.

5.48 pm

Ben Coleman (Chelsea and Fulham) (Lab): Thank you very much for calling me, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is a great honour for me to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham Erdington (Paulette Hamilton), who spoke with passion about the NHS and her great expertise in this area, and to follow the hon. Member for Wimbledon (Mr Kohler), who talked about the joys of canvassing, which I found interesting. It has been really lovely to hear so many other fantastic maiden speeches from my hon. Friends.

I am incredibly proud to be standing here as the first ever Labour Member of Parliament for Chelsea and Fulham, and I thank all those voters who put their trust in me.

I realise, with a majority of 152, that that was not everyone, but I also realise that many people there will have voted Labour for the first time and I promise to be on the side of all my constituents.

Boundary changes mean that I follow in the illustrious steps of two people. My Conservative predecessor Greg Hands served 19 years in this House, and for 11 of them he was a Minister. He held senior roles in the Treasury, in Trade and in Business, and he was twice Minister for London. He was also the chair of the Conservative party at one point. He approached his job, as he approached all his jobs, with impressive energy, determination and loyalty to his party, and I know he will be missed by many of his constituents.

I am also delighted to pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for the new constituency of Hammersmith and Chiswick (Andy Slaughter), two of whose former wards I now have. I am extremely grateful for his generosity to me, both during the campaign and since. He is an absolute local legend with voters. Plenty of people said, “Well, I’m going to vote Labour, but it has to be Andy, not you.” I am going to try very hard—maybe I will fail—to live up to that local legend, and the challenge and high standards that he has set.

Chelsea and Fulham really is a wonderful place to represent. It runs along the River Thames from just by Charing Cross hospital down to Chelsea bridge. That is three bridges away from this House, if any of you want to go and visit it. A walk of less than an hour takes you from the 150-year-old market in Fulham’s North End Road to the world-famous King’s Road in Chelsea, with its iconic role in pop, art and fashion culture in the swinging ’60s and the punks and the new romantics of the ’70s and ’80s.

There are also four world-class hospitals. We are incredibly lucky to have the Royal Brompton, the Royal Marsden, the Charing Cross hospital and the Chelsea and Westminster hospital. There are too many outstanding schools across the primary and secondary sectors to name. We are also blessed with two premier league teams: Chelsea football club and Fulham, and both of them are steeped in sporting history.

[Ben Coleman]

Like so much of London, Chelsea and Fulham is enriched by a diverse community. We have people from African-Caribbean, Somali, Arab and European backgrounds. Indeed, the French MP for Northern Europe—yes, there is a French MP for Northern Europe—told me that two thirds of all the French in this country live in my area and the area represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington and Bayswater (Joe Powell), so it is quite a French area as well.

Chelsea and Fulham is also home to hundreds of Army veterans who have sacrificed for their country, from the residents of Stoll Mansions in Fulham to the Chelsea pensioners at the Royal Hospital. I have to say that championing the Stoll military veterans as they faced losing their community recently was one of my greatest privileges, and I am grateful to the Secretary of State for Defence for visiting them with me and lending his support to the campaign. I know that many of the veterans will be delighted that he now represents veterans in Cabinet, and I hope he will visit them again when they move to their new home in Fulham.

Fulham, together with Hammersmith, has the distinction of being the only place in England where the council—a Labour council—provides social care at home for free. I was responsible for overseeing that as the council's former cabinet member for health and adult social care, and I very much look forward to joining the debate about the funding of social care across our country.

But against all this, I am afraid there is trouble in paradise. Alongside the great wealth in Chelsea and Fulham, there is also painful poverty. I cannot tell you how grateful I am to all the local charities who provide essential support to the many people in need. Food banks have been mentioned by several hon. Members on both sides of the House during today's debate. For me, if anything is an indictment of the past 14 years, it is that food banks have become part of the British way of life.

The food bank that serves Fulham today feeds more people in one month than it did in the whole of 2012, when it started. At the food bank that serves Chelsea, demand has gone up by 800% since it opened its doors in 2018. People who are in work are using food banks, as well as children and pensioners. The demand for them is growing, and poverty, locally and nationally, is made much worse by the persistent inequalities, both in Chelsea and Fulham and across our country, not least of race and disability. These are also issues that I feel passionate about and will be pursuing in my time here in this House.

And then we have Charing Cross hospital. I am proud that I helped to save this wonderful hospital when the previous Government tried to sell most of it off. At the time, they promised to give the hospital a floor-by-floor refurbishment. It desperately needs modernisation and rebuilding, and they promised to do so by 2030, but then they broke their promise.

Another problem facing my constituents is that Thames Water constantly dumps sewage into the Thames by Chelsea and Fulham. Last week alone, it just chucked the stuff in for nearly 24 hours. There has been no regulation and no proper controls over the last 14 years.

The wonderful houseboat community down by the river in Chelsea faces an existential threat from a predatory, secretive landlord, and I will be doing more to stick up for that community, too.

I have mentioned the King's Road, and its residents are very worried about the huge office blocks spoiling the area. Marks & Spencer seems to have become a property developer, not just a purveyor of sausages, sandwiches and underwear.

My constituents are also worried about crime and the lack of neighbourhood policing. High prices and rents are pushing families and young people out of the area and, as it has been so incredibly difficult to build social housing over the past 14 years, thousands of my constituents are living in overcrowded conditions or are waiting years to be offered a secure, genuinely affordable home. This is all in Chelsea and Fulham.

Against that backdrop, the good news for my constituents is that we now have a Labour Government who are determined to renew the country. We have a new approach, we are focusing on growing our economy and we are, thank goodness, resetting our European relationships, which is very much welcomed by my constituents—Chelsea and Fulham is one of the most pro-European constituencies in the country.

The other good news is that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has already pledged to rebuild and modernise Charing Cross hospital, and the Government have already started cracking down on the water companies. They have started to develop a new child poverty strategy, and they are starting to take back our streets, which my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham Erdington mentioned—earlier today, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary set out so well the steps we are taking. People who rent privately will get new rights and protections from this Government, and we will build 1.5 million decent homes in which people can actually afford to live.

As the Government begin their journey of repairing and rebuilding our country, I come back to the words of a good friend of mine, Phil Storey, who runs the food bank that serves Fulham. He said to me the other day, "We want to stop people ever needing food banks. The day we can close our doors because we are no longer needed is the day I dream of." I make this pledge to my constituents. As the Member of Parliament for Chelsea and Fulham, working with the Labour Government, I will do all I can to strengthen our economy, to build a fairer, safer and kinder society, and to bring Phil's dream closer to reality.

5.58 pm

Sarah Green (Chesham and Amersham) (LD): I congratulate the hon. Member for Chelsea and Fulham (Ben Coleman) on his maiden speech. It is a great privilege to serve in this place, and I welcome him. I also congratulate the Government Front Benchers as they take on their ministerial responsibilities.

I will focus on three bits of legislation mentioned in the King's Speech that have generated interest among my constituents in Chesham and Amersham. The first is the water special measures Bill, because the Liberal Democrats have led the charge on calling for tougher penalties for water companies that dump sewage in our

rivers and fail their customers. I am therefore keen to learn more about the Bill and the powers it will give to ban bonuses and introduce new fines.

Residents and businesses in Chalfont St Peter spent the first half of this year struggling to cope with sewage-filled floodwaters. Some had the horrible experience of their bathroom and kitchen plug holes burping sewage into their home. Thames Water later admitted to me that the cause of at least some of this sewage being brought into homes was that the company's tankers had released floodwater, which they had pumped out of another area, into the wrong location, overloading the drains. Thames Water's response to this year's various problems in different parts of my constituency has been disgraceful, so I look forward to hearing how the Government will ensure that Ofwat finally uses its teeth and starts holding the likes of Thames Water to account.

The second Bill in the King's Speech that I would like to touch on is the planning and infrastructure Bill. I represent a constituency where a significant amount of land is classified as green belt. My constituents are keen to get a definition of what "grey belt" means. Other than poor quality and ugly, there has been little detail about exactly what land would fall into that category. I also look forward to hearing what steps the Government will take to ensure that any new developments include the GP practices, other vital services and infrastructure to support them.

The third announcement in the King's Speech that I would like to talk about is the Government plan to end VAT exemption for independent schools. The issue has been raised with me by several parents who send their children to independent schools in order to receive additional support for special educational needs and disabilities. I welcome the confirmation I have received that pupils with an education, health and care plan will remain exempt from VAT. There are, however, children receiving support for SEND in the independent sector who do not have EHCPs. I hope that the Government can offer assurances that such children will be taken into account as they pursue this policy.

I will end by mentioning healthcare. While I welcome the Government's focus on reducing waiting times, I was disappointed not to see specific mention of improving access to GP appointments, because that is raised with me week in, week out. Just this weekend it was raised by residents in Gerrards Cross, where there is no GP practice. I hope that, with their significant mandate, the Government will give access to GP appointments the attention it desperately needs.

6.1 pm

Bell Ribeiro-Addy (Clapham and Brixton Hill) (Lab): Rail in public ownership, stronger workers' rights, a publicly owned energy supplier, a ban on no-fault evictions and an end to the non-dom tax status—these are some of the key foundations to recovery that we can celebrate in this King's Speech, after 14 years of austerity, privatisation and squeezed living standards, but I want to touch on a few things that were not included.

I was pleased to support the amendment in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool Riverside (Kim Johnson). Removing the two-child benefit cap is the most cost-effective and immediate way for our Government to lift 300,000 children out of poverty. The notion that in the sixth-largest economy in the

world we cannot find the money has to be wrong. While the taskforce is good, we must make moves as soon as possible to make this a reality. If there were a national emergency, we would find the money. If the levels of child poverty at the moment are not a national emergency, I do not know what is.

I was also pleased to support the amendment in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry South (Zarah Sultana) to end the supply of arms to Israel and uphold international law. The Government have called for a ceasefire and we need to back that up with action.

I will focus the majority of my remarks on the dreadful legislative legacy on civil liberties left behind by the previous Government. If we take simply the broad heading of our liberties, the previous Government curbed the right to protest, to free assembly, to freedom of speech, to organise in trade unions and to freedom from covert operations by the state. The right to vote has been suppressed. Religious freedom was attacked through the demonisation of Muslims and Muslim communities. We cannot possibly pose as champions of freedom and democracy while these stains remain on our statute book.

In addition, we should note that the previous Government did nothing to correct the gross imbalance that now exists between employers and trade unions with regard to workers' rights. They promised to block the gross abuse that led to the scandal at P&O but did absolutely nothing. They also toyed with the idea of regularising the legislative mess around a woman's right to choose, and so address issues of women's sexual and reproductive health, and expanding access to safe and legal abortions throughout the country. We cannot repeat these serial failures to act. This is about what it means to live in a free society.

Furthermore, there is a slew of secondary legislation, rules and guidance that infringe or suppress the rights of citizens. There are too many to mention, but I am thinking about the Covert Human Intelligence Sources (Criminal Conduct) Act 2021, the Overseas Operations Act 2021, the Elections Act 2022 and the Public Order Act 2023. A running theme throughout those Acts is, in effect, to place officers of the state above the law—whether they be police officers, members of the armed services, members of the security services or others—as long as they were acting under the direction of a more senior officer.

These laws severely curtail the fundamental rights of citizens. Under these Acts, it is officers of the state who decide what is lawful, not the courts. I remind hon. and right hon. Members that placing agents of the state above the law is almost the very definition of a police state. It is authoritarian and anti-democratic. It is not the legal basis of a free and democratic society. The same is true of any claim that is made that officers of the state determine the law. They do not; their duty is to uphold it. Over time, I would confidently expect each and every one of these pieces of legislation to face legal challenges, including, if necessary, in the European Court, because they are so flawed and draconian.

If our democracy is going to work for everyone, it has to include everyone. Our party has already made important commitments to extend the franchise to young people by bringing in automatic voter registration. Scrapping the exclusory voter ID laws that the Tories introduced is

[Bell Ribeiro-Addy]

another urgent priority to strengthen engagement in the democratic process. A survey by More in Common estimates that more than 400,000 people were prevented from voting in the general election due to these undemocratic rules. The same research shows that people of colour were 2.5 times more likely to be turned away. Let us be clear about this: any law that disproportionately stops black and brown people from participating in our democracy is racist. The voter ID laws were introduced on the pretence of tackling voter fraud, yet between 2017 and 2022 there were just 18 convictions. Compare that with the 400,000 people blocked from voting at the ballot box.

There are so many things that we want to see. I want to congratulate the Prime Minister on his announcement that there will be an early repeal of the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023. This, too, is an anti-democratic, authoritarian measure that places members of the armed forces above the law. The Prime Minister's announcement on this should be a model for the rest of the legislation that I have mentioned.

It is also very important to look at some of the actions that the previous Government took. They rushed legislation through in a very hurried way. In fact, they gave us a model for doing things in the future. I wish to point out that the people of this country voted against that Government, so let us repeal all of their awful legislation both quickly and decisively.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Siobhain McDonagh): I call Frank McNally to make his maiden speech.

6.6 pm

Frank McNally (Coatbridge and Bellshill) (Lab): It is a pleasure to follow the passionate speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Clapham and Brixton Hill (Bell Ribeiro-Addy).

I come to this House as the new Member for Coatbridge and Bellshill. To have been elected to represent the communities that I have always called home is humbling, and it is a responsibility that I do not take lightly. I wish to start by thanking you, Madam Deputy Speaker, Mr Speaker and the House staff for what has been an incredible welcome here at the Palace of Westminster. It cannot be easy herding 300-plus new and excitable MPs around, but you have done so diligently and I commend all the staff of the House.

I also wish to pay tribute to my predecessor, Steven Bonnar, who served as the Member for Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill in the previous Parliament. We live in volatile political times, and it is important to remember that there is often more that unites us than divides us. That was the case with Steven and me, and I wish him, his family and his staff all the very best for the future.

My seat has been well represented over many years, but, perhaps alarmingly for me, it has had five different MPs in recent times. In fact, there has been a new MP elected at every election since 2015. I fervently hope that that tradition will come to an end at the next election.

I also wish to pay tribute to my other predecessors and friends, including Hugh Gaffney and, of course, Sir Tom Clarke, who served this place with great distinction for 33 years. He was a man knighted by both His Majesty the King and His Holiness the Pope for his service to

those in the most need, particularly the disabled. Sir Tom's predecessor was the late Jimmy Dempsey, a legend across Coatbridge and Bellshill. Jimmy's first speech in the House, in 1959, was on unemployment and workers' rights. His final speech, just before his death 23 years later, was on the exact same subject. I am confident that he would be incredibly proud of Labour's new deal for working people, the employment rights Bill so ably championed by my right hon. Friend the Deputy Prime Minister.

My constituency is rooted in Lanarkshire, made up of the towns and villages of Coatbridge and Bellshill, of Mossend, Gartcosh, Glenboig, Moodiesburn, Bargeddie, Viewpark, Fallside, Birkenshaw and Tannochside—I am sure that if I have missed one, my constituents will be chapping my door or sending me messages as I speak.

My constituency was once known as the "iron burgh", the beating heart of Scotland's industrial heritage, from the mining villages to the steel towns—sadly consigned, for the most part, to history. That history includes the fire at the Auchengeich colliery on 18 September 1959, resulting in Scotland's worst mining disaster of the 20th century: 47 miners lost their lives, 41 women were widowed and 76 children lost their fathers. The 65th anniversary is later this year, when we will gather to remember those lost, but also to redouble our efforts to ensure that workplace protections, safe conditions and workers' rights exist to serve all people, no matter the job or the industry, or the age. I know that the retired miners will be absolutely delighted that it was announced in the King's Speech that those on the Treasury Bench would be ending the injustice of the mineworkers pension scheme.

Out of the post-industrial landscape a new mosaic continues to form in my area—one of manufacturing, of distribution, of new technologies, and of local businesses that have generated international reach, including at Strathclyde business park in Bellshill, which continues to attract local and global companies.

Bellshill is also famous for its former maternity hospital, which operated for over 120 years. It is the birthplace of many big names. One national newspaper a few years ago ran the headline, "The Town That Gave Birth to Legends". Included within that legend category are my noble Friends Lord Reid of Cardowan and Baroness Hazarika of Coatbridge, both of whom moved and seconded the Gracious Speech in the other place last week. They were born in the same place just a few years apart—as were the late former right hon. Member for Livingston, Robin Cook; Texas superstar Sharlene Spiteri; and even one Sheena Easton. The hospital's final incarnation was opened by her late Majesty the Queen in 1962, which was quite a moment for Bellshill. Sadly, I will be unlikely to acquire legend status as I was born in Greenock.

I think it is appropriate at this point to thank my parents, Danny and Edwina, and my wife Steph, who have been a tremendous source of strength. Without their steadfast encouragement, I would never have sought to stand for election to this place. So if it all goes wrong, if I am ever disorderly or I ever rebel, Mr Speaker and the Whips will know who to blame.

When reflecting on today's debate, when we move beyond some of the rhetoric that we hear around immigration, it is important to recognise the tremendous contribution that immigrants make to our society, and have done

over many generations—my own family included—from Irish immigrants settling in Coatbridge in the 19th century to the Lithuanian community that thrived in Mossend, and now Ukrainian refugees, hundreds of whom have settled in my constituency following Putin's barbaric invasion of their homeland; forced from their families, their homes, their jobs and their way of life. I am proud of the welcome that they have received from my constituents and key agencies across Coatbridge and Bellshill. The contributions that immigrants have made, and continue to make, to our economy, our public services and our communities more broadly, are immense. Sadly, not all of that history is good. It is a tale often blighted by racism, sectarianism and hatred, which we should fight every day to root out—and keep out—of our society.

On my first visit back to my constituency after my first week here in Parliament, I had the opportunity to visit Coatbridge community food bank. The team there do exceptional work in incredibly challenging circumstances. As many right hon. and hon. Members have cited today, every day we see people being pushed to the brink and hear stories of those who are enduring enviable hardship and have understandably lost hope. Making their lives better is my mission and my purpose in this place.

I welcome the provisions outlined in the Gracious Speech, from a serious plan to grow the economy to supporting businesses and improving public services; from GB Energy—which, in case anyone happened to miss the memo, will be headquartered in Scotland—to a new deal for working people that addresses the scourge of low pay and tackles exploitative practices, and a real strategy to end the scourge of poverty. I look forward to working with right hon. and hon. Members across the House. As I begin my journey here, our Government have also begun their journey to make our country fairer and better, and to stand up and fight for those in the most need, rooted in the values and history of the Labour movement. I wish them all the best of luck in their endeavours.

6.15 pm

Matt Western (Warwick and Leamington) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend the new Member for Coatbridge and Bellshill (Frank McNally) on a fantastic speech, and congratulate all those we have heard from today across the House. It is evident that this Parliament is going to be a vital and vibrant forum for debate, and it is refreshing to have not only so many new faces, but clearly so much ability here.

They say that a week is a long time in politics, and perhaps the last fortnight feels like a lifetime. We have seen optimism surge across the country, palpably improved, because the public see a Government with purpose and acting at pace. We have seen 40 new Bills introduced through the King's Gracious Speech. An electrifying pace has been adopted, and I commend both the Prime Minister and the whole Front-Bench team for the work they are doing. From halving violence against women and girls to the scrapping of the Rwanda proposals, from putting in place special measures against water companies to the football governance Bill, the list goes on.

However, it is the legislation aimed at addressing the instability and insecurity in our country, while delivering prosperity, that I think is so important. That instability

is felt by people, businesses and public authorities and is perhaps seen by other national Governments, and our economy experienced catastrophic consequences from the kamikaze Budget 18 months ago. I welcome the legislation that has been put forward to achieve that goal.

That insecurity manifests itself in many different ways. We see 14 million people living in poverty, 4.3 million of them children, and 1 million, incredibly, living in destitution. We see insecurity of tenure and the rise of no-fault evictions, which is why legislation for renters' rights is so important, and the insecurity of leasehold, hence the importance of the legislation on leasehold and commonhold. We see the insecurity of work, the zero-hours contracts and the loss of rights in the workplace that people suffer. That is why the employment rights Bill will be so important.

It is all down to the economy. What we can do with the economy, in addressing and repairing the corrosion wrought by austerity, is so important. I believe the means will now be at our disposal, through the establishing of a national wealth fund. We have seen sovereign wealth funds in many other countries and what they have done to transform those countries. I believe the legislation addressing pension schemes, unlocking the wealth that we have here, will be an important contribution to that. Something like less than 2% of the £2.5 trillion of pension fund assets run by 30,000 often very small schemes is invested in UK. That is such a small proportion. There will be benefits for the UK, but also for our wider economy.

Above all, we will address and reform planning legislation and infrastructure, bringing more affordable housing to our towns and cities—particularly towns such as Warwick and Leamington, where we have relatively high property costs. The King's high school site, right in the heart of Warwick, has lain dormant for five years because the developer has not got around to developing it.

The legislation to deliver GB Energy will be so important for transforming the energy mix in this country, doubling our onshore wind, trebling our solar energy production and quadrupling our offshore wind. The great grid upgrade, for which National Grid has been pushing for so long, will be so important. Critically, it will bring down bills by an average of £300 per household while addressing climate change at the same time.

I believe that education is at the core of what we can bring, along with a modern industrial strategy. The work being done by the Education team is so important. What can our universities bring to this equation? Higher education is so important, and universities are real dynamos—generators of wealth and prosperity—in our region through their scientific research, the development of new materials and research projects, and the new energy clusters. This is a new Government of energy, ambition and public service who will put country first, party second.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Siobhain McDonagh): I call Helena Dollimore to make her maiden speech.

6.21 pm

Helena Dollimore (Hastings and Rye) (Lab/Co-op): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for calling me to make my maiden speech during this important debate

[*Helena Dollimore*]

on the King's Speech, which set out the agenda of change that the country voted for and which this Labour Government will deliver. I congratulate all new Members who have made maiden speeches today.

It is the honour of my life to represent my home of Hastings and Rye. I know that you are very familiar, Madam Deputy Speaker, with all that we in Hastings and Rye have to offer visitors—especially our famous fish and chips. In recent years, our fisherman have worked hard to keep our local fishing industry going in the most difficult of circumstances, and they will always have my full support. Hastings and Rye hosts the world crazy golf championship every year, and we also hold the world record for the biggest gathering of pirates in any one place—a record that we try to beat every year on pirate day. Although one of my predecessors in representing Rye was himself a real pirate, I am relieved to say that that cannot be said for many of them.

Sally-Ann Hart worked extremely hard for our constituency, and I thank her in particular for her work in support of women and children fleeing domestic abuse—a legacy that I hope to build on. Another thing that we wholeheartedly agree on is speaking out about the unacceptable levels of abuse and intimidation that too many Members of this House have faced, particularly women. The plaque of the late Jo Cox is facing us, and that of Sir David Amess is behind me. They are a constant and tragic reminder of where that can end. I also pay tribute to my Labour predecessor, Michael Foster. He is well known in our area for helping so many residents and for having been a passionate champion for Hastings and Rye during his time in this House.

Many Members will know our area for a very famous battle that took place in 1066. Historians may still be arguing about where exactly it took place, but it is safe to say that it has cemented our place in the history books. Since then, we have continued to play our part in British history—from being immortalised in the novel “*The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*” to being the birthplace of television. Perhaps what defines us most, though, is our community spirit, underpinned by our volunteers and charities, who do so much. Our calendar is full of carnivals and festivals, from Jack in the Green to bonfire nights. Those events are made possible only by volunteers who give up their time to give back to the community and raise money for our local charities. Volunteers also maintain and protect so many of our amazing public spaces, from Hastings country park to Rye harbour nature reserve and Camber Sands.

There are also some points of our history that we would rather forget, such as the unveiling of a certain stone tablet in Hastings during the 2015 general election campaign by my right hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster North (Ed Miliband). That stone may have been consigned to history, but I know that my right hon. Friend will be back very soon to unveil some new green energy infrastructure, and that it will be longer-lasting than the stone.

Although we have often found ourselves at the centre of historical events, we have not always felt all of the benefits. Our road and rail infrastructure is stuck in the past: we may be a similar distance from London as Brighton is, but our train takes twice as long. We lie at the end of the A21, a road that has been described as

the least developed in the south-east of England. As any driver will tell you, we have the worst potholes in the country, and our water infrastructure is also failing us: Southern Water has a lot to answer for in my constituency, dumping record levels of sewage along our coastline from St Leonards through Hastings to Fairlight, Pett, Camber Sands and Winchelsea beach. Some sewage has even come into people's homes and gardens in my constituency, and when the water pipes have failed, we have faced major flooding in homes and the town centre and been left without a water supply for days on end. I am pleased to see that the water special measures Bill, which will start to clean up our water industry, is part of this King's Speech.

The cratered state of our roads and crumbling water infrastructure is symbolic of how we have too often been forgotten by Westminster. Life expectancy is lower than the national average, a trend that has got worse over the past 14 years. People wait longer for an ambulance in my constituency than anywhere else in the south-east of England, and the situation is particularly bad in our villages and rural areas such as Winchelsea, where people wait 45 minutes on average when having a stroke or heart attack. That is why this Government's plans to cut NHS waiting times cannot come soon enough.

As a seaside destination, our area has benefited hugely from tourism, but we are also at the sharp end of the housing crisis, with spiralling rents and simply not enough homes being built. Too many of my constituents are left in poor-quality rental accommodation, whether by Southern Housing or private landlords. That is why I so welcome the measures in this King's Speech to get Britain building again, building more homes and giving all renters more protections.

This Government have a mission to break down the barriers to opportunity. That is sorely needed in my constituency, where almost 40% of children are growing up in poverty and over half our young people are leaving school without the essential qualification of a grade 4 in English and maths. How we treat our children says a lot about us as a society; before joining this House, I had the privilege of seeing that up close in many different countries as an aid worker with Save the Children. It is always children who suffer the most in war and conflict. I have sat with young mums in Yemen holding their starving babies, so hungry that they do not have the energy to cry, and have heard harrowing stories from Rohingya women who have fled ethnic cleansing and sexual violence at the hands of the Myanmar military. I always promised those women that I would share their stories with the world, and my time in this place will be no different.

We are at a time in history when more children are growing up in conflict than ever before. Rightly, much focus has been devoted recently to the appalling events in Israel and Palestine—there, too, it is children bearing the brunt of war. We must redouble our efforts to bring about peaceful solutions to all these conflicts, and must remember that all the global issues we face, from climate change to migration, can only be solved by working across borders with our international allies and through strong, multilateral institutions such as the United Nations.

Just as I have been so inspired by the women I have met living in some of the toughest places on Earth, I also wanted to acknowledge some of the women whose

shoulders I stand on closer to home. Madam Deputy Speaker, I know I speak for many Labour Members when I say how much we miss your sister, the late, great Baroness Margaret McDonagh. [HON. MEMBERS: “Hear, hear.”] She always had such wise counsel to offer us, and that is the reason why many of us sit on these Benches today. I also thank my family and friends for all the support they have given me in getting me to this place.

This King’s Speech will begin to deliver the change and renewal that Hastings and Rye voted for. I look forward to working hard for all my constituents across Hastings and Rye and delivering that much-needed change.

6.29 pm

Clive Lewis (Norwich South) (Lab): It is an absolute privilege to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Helena Dollimore). I watched earlier as she was polishing her “Edstone” joke outside the Chamber, and it was delivered with aplomb.

I am hoping, for colleagues’ sake, that I have to make this contribution to the King’s Speech debate only once; believe me, doing things twice is not what it is cracked up to be. Either way, it makes a wonderful change to be on the Government Benches to speak in a King’s Speech debate in which for once stability eclipses chaos, renewal surpasses decay and hope trumps despair. Let me tell my new colleagues that it is not usually like this, at least it has not been for the past nine or 10 years, maybe longer. Too often, we have been here making speeches that mourn the erosion of our democracy and our rights at work and that can only bemoan the continual and unceasing scapegoating of our communities, the destruction of our rivers, the undermining of our judicial system, the betrayal of international human rights and the deepening of a climate crisis. But not today, because this King’s Speech is a veritable cornucopia of progressive policies pregnant with the potential to unpick decades of drift and deterioration. I would not try to say that after a couple of pints.

There are of course caveats. Announcements on the two-child benefit cap and arms export licences to Israel are but two issues we await to hear more on in the near future. In the interim, however, I for one welcome the announcement of our anti-child poverty taskforce. If done properly, it has the potential to lift thousands of children from my constituency and millions beyond out of hunger and hardship, and to give all our children the start in life they deserve—a start denied them by the last Government.

However, we could go further. We could build new institutions and put power in the hands of those who need it most. One of the lessons I learned watching a Conservative Government close down Labour’s much-loved and beloved Sure Start centres was that, if we give communities the ability to wealth-build and thus help themselves, the institutions built cannot simply be switched off by an incoming Government hostile to poverty reduction. The late and great Robin Cook understood this. He lamented Labour Governments who

“never change the system because they think they don’t need to. And when they lose, they have no power to change it.”

The marginality of this Parliament and the rising spectre of right-wing authoritarianism demands that we legislate as if this were a one-term Government, and one

that could easily be followed by a Government with little respect for democracy, tolerance, progressive values or even human rights. In this age of anger and perma-crisis, policy delivery is no longer enough. Transformative change, empowerment and new institutions to deliver are what is needed to future-proof society against the shocks to come. We do not have to look far for examples of what they could look like. The NHS is an institution that is the closest thing to socialism this country has ever attained, and it is the reason most Brits give as to why they are proud to be British.

Let us repower and rebuild our local authorities—democratic institutions that for too long have been undervalued, underfunded and stripped of responsibility. Let us redouble our efforts to strengthen trade unions—institutions that push power back to people in the workplace. Such institutions, both new and old, will help undo 60 years of democratic erosion and make people feel empowered over their own lives. If we do this right, it will pull the rug from under the feet of the hatemongers and authoritarians, because they thrive on anger born of powerlessness, a sense of betrayal and a vacuum of purpose. People-orientated, democratic, institutional power blows them away.

I want to conclude with this observation. The true risk to this country is not the rivers of blood, as some would have us believe, but rather rivers of excrement and rivers running dry. In only a few decades’ time, my constituency might not have drinking water, because of a combination of the climate crisis and corporate corruption in the form of price gouging and criminal levels of under-investment. Immigration and asylum did not lead us here any more than membership of the EU did. Failing institutions, the erosion of democracy and economic failure brought us here. It is that our Government must fix, so let us get to it.

6.33 pm

Tahir Ali (Birmingham Hall Green and Moseley) (Lab): Yesterday and today, I have witnessed a number of maiden speeches from both sides of the House. There have been some excellent contributions which I must say were absolutely wonderful to listen to. I would like to thank the residents of the newly drawn constituency of Birmingham Hall Green and Moseley who have put their trust in me. It is a privilege and a great honour to speak in the King’s Speech debate today. Like most of my constituents, I am excited by the legislative agenda it sets out. Labour has hit the ground running with a bold plan for the transformation of our country that I believe will get us back on track after 14 years of chaos. It is because of that promise that I want to speak to several areas covered in the King’s Speech.

First, I am proud of Labour’s commitment to the most ambitious house building programme in a generation, particularly in terms of social housing. This programme must be designed and implemented in a way that addresses the significant regional disparities in housing provision.

My constituents will be thankful for Labour’s approach to youth provision. From tougher measures to tackle antisocial behaviour and knife crime to educational reform through Skills England, I believe over the course of this Parliament our young people will receive the support and training they need to take advantage of every opportunity afforded to them.

[Tahir Ali]

The newly outlined children's wellbeing Bill will undoubtedly make a huge impact on families in my constituency, where child poverty is at unprecedented levels. The provision of free breakfast clubs as well as the development of a new child poverty strategy are both welcome and necessary after 14 years of deprivation. This Bill will also provide extra support to children with special educational needs, who need the greatest support and have previously been denied it.

While there are arguments in favour of retaining the two-child benefit cap, it is also clear that we can go much further and lift hundreds and thousands of children out of poverty. The significance of lifting this cap for the most vulnerable in our society cannot be overstated and I hope there is movement on this in coming months.

I am particularly glad at the direction taken by this Government towards regional and local government. As we all know, Birmingham is facing an unprecedented financial crisis, putting at risk valued services such as libraries and support to children and families as well as infrastructure and investment. In the limited time available today, I will not be expanding on what can be done to save those services, but debates and discussions will take place through other means.

That brings me to amendment (c). I put my name forward to be added, but for whatever technical reasons, it was not added.

I want briefly to address some of the newly elected independents in this House. Throughout the election they denounced the Labour party with divisive and harmful rhetoric. Luckily, we are now able to measure their words against their actions, and unsurprisingly they are found lacking in signing a Labour amendment. "Labour, the party of genocide"; "Labour, the party of nastiness"—that was the rhetoric played out in the election campaign when many candidates, especially women, were harassed and intimidated. Today, those independents sit on the Opposition Benches, but they are willing to sign a Labour amendment. Please go back and explain to your constituents the rhetoric that was played out. Why have you now joined forces with Labour Members by signing amendment (c)? Are you now saying that Labour is the right party?

Ayoub Khan: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Tahir Ali: No, I will not. You need to go back to your constituents and explain that. I will not take any interventions.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Siobhain McDonagh): Order. I draw the hon. Member's attention to the fact that when we use the word "you" in this House, we are referring to the Chair.

Tahir Ali: I apologise for not using the correct word, and with that I am out of time.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

I apologise to all hon. Members who have not been called to speak today, but we must now start the wind-ups. I call the shadow Minister.

6.39 pm

Tom Tugendhat (Tonbridge) (Con): May I start by sending my congratulations and those of my party to the hon. and right hon. Members who have been elected today, the hon. Members for Sussex Weald (Ms Ghani) and for Bradford South (Judith Cummins) and the right hon. Member for Romsey and Southampton North (Caroline Nokes)? I congratulate them all; I am sure they will fulfil their roles as Deputy Speakers with great integrity and honour.

I turn briefly to some of the maiden speeches, of which there have been the most extraordinary number. I am grateful to have sat through many of them, although perhaps not all. My hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr Snowden) brings fantastic previous service to the House, although I hope he is not bitten by another dog. I must also pay tribute to his wife Caroline's courage and his campaign. I also cite the hon. Member for Worthing West (Dr Cooper), who is not shy of a cake. Although that may not be the public service or public health message that she wishes to bring, it is one that I share. I am delighted that the hon. Member for Gateshead Central and Whickham (Mark Ferguson) highlighted the Glasshouse, which is indeed at the cultural heart of our nation. The hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Andy MacNae) gave a moving account of a tragic loss, and his campaign for recognising baby loss is one that will be backed across the whole House. The hon. Member for Clacton (Nigel Farage) surprised us all by actually discussing the subject of the debate.

The direct access of the hon. Member for Darlington (Lola McEvoy) to the Chancellor will no doubt raise huge hopes in her constituency. The addiction of the hon. Member for Boston and Skegness (Richard Tice) to ice cream suggests that he should team up with the hon. Member for Darlington. I suggest they might one day be friends.

The hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Jo White) does belong here, no matter what she says and no matter what anybody else says. The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Josh Babarinde) taught us the meaning of pier envy, which was a new one on me. The baby girl of the hon. Member for Barking (Nesil Caliskan) will no doubt bring enormous joy, but if my experience is anything to go by, enormous sleepless nights, too. No doubt she too will be voting in the Lobby very soon.

I must pay enormous tribute to the work of the hon. Member for Ashford (Sojan Joseph) in healthcare. As a child I was a frequent flyer and user of the William Harvey hospital, so I am grateful that he continues to serve in that community. The hon. Member for Leicester South (Shokat Adam) hid a king or found one—I am not sure quite which. The hon. Member for Alloa and Grangemouth (Brian Leishman) made a passionate defence of the need for domestic energy production, and I share that view enormously. I am sorry he does not share it with the right hon. Member for Doncaster North (Ed Miliband), but perhaps he will inform him better.

The hon. Member for Cheltenham (Max Wilkinson) had kind words to say about our friend Alex Chalk, who served the House and that constituency with great integrity and decency. My hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Sir Ashley Fox) recalled the last battle on British soil and is now seeking to power our country

with nuclear energy. As he will know well, this country only ever builds nuclear power stations under a Conservative Government.

The hon. Member for Glenrothes and Mid Fife (Richard Baker) committed to work on disabilities, and that sentiment will be shared by many here. The campaigning technique of the hon. Member for Wimbledon (Mr Kohler) is undoubtedly original. The hon. Member for Coatbridge and Bellshill (Frank McNally) can only hope to break the track record of getting a second term in that seat, and even those of us on the Opposition Benches might be supportive of that.

The history of piracy of the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Helena Dollimore) will no doubt worry the Whips something rotten. I am sure she will fail to put them at their ease—certainly not so early in the Parliament. The fashion advice of the hon. Member for Chelsea and Fulham (Ben Coleman) would be welcomed by those of us who missed the 1960s, but he no doubt will be contributing. I thank him for his kind words to our friend Greg Hands, who served the constituency so well.

I turn to the King's Speech, rather than the maiden speeches—the King, after all, has given one himself. Sadly he did not choose his own words, and I am not sure they were the ones he would have chosen. It is, however, as ever a pleasure to be speaking across the Dispatch Box from the hon. Member for Wallasey (Dame Angela Eagle), and I wish her the very best of luck in her new role. Becoming a Labour Immigration Minister must be a strange experience. After all, Barbara Roche, one of her predecessors, wrote that she was “appalled” to be appointed Immigration Minister in the Blair Government. One of Barbara's contemporaries, David Blunkett, famously said that there was “no obvious limit” to the number of migrants who could settle in the United Kingdom. I suspect we will not get such frank honesty from this Prime Minister or this Home Secretary. However, in their hearts I suspect that neither of them truly believes in controlling legal and illegal migration.

The hon. Member for Wallasey has my sympathy. It cannot be easy to defend a Government who have already scrapped the deterrents that worked, lost the commander of the border strategy unit and now all but offered an amnesty. Oh dear, these days are difficult, are they not? No doubt she has already read the advice of her frontline officers, because the National Crime Agency was extremely clear. It has been tasked by that Government to tackle criminal gangs, but it has already said that we need an effective deterrence agreement, and since it has publicly pointed out that no country has ever stopped people trafficking upstream in foreign countries without a deportation scheme, I am certain that it will not have minced its words in private.

The Minister of State, Home Department (Dame Angela Eagle) *rose—*

Tom Tugendhat: The hon. Lady will get plenty of time in just a moment.

Despite that, the Home Secretary has promised the British people results and urged us to put faith in her plans. I have long heard and listened to the right hon. Lady, who has been a friend for many years, so let me ask the question put yesterday by my right hon. Friend the Member for North West Hampshire (Kit Malthouse). If, God forbid, the Home Secretary is wrong and the

numbers rise—I know; wonders will never happen—what will she do? Will she take responsibility and resign, or will she reach for the old Blair-Brown playbook that is the golden thread running through the King's Speech and instead farm out the blame, set up a new quango, pretend it is not her problem and hope that it all goes away?

I am sorry to tell you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that having listened to the debates over the last few days, it seems that Labour's approach to illegal immigration is absolutely typical of how it plans to govern. This is a Government who will be overbearing when they should stand back and absent when they should stand tall. They will be too hesitant in defending our country from her enemies abroad, too controlling—or uncontrolling—of our borders, failing to protect decent people from criminals. But they will be all too willing to creep into every corner of our personal lives. This is a Government who seem determined to prioritise left-wing ideology over the interests of the British people; I am afraid that is what Labour does.

That is what is happening in education, where the Government are rolling back the quiet revolution that has made our schools some of the best in the western hemisphere; in energy, where they claim that they will reduce bills by creating an energy company that does not generate energy; and in skills, where the best they can offer a generation that aspires is another bloated regulator. Those are the policies of a Government who value jobs for bureaucrats over results and ideological purity over the wellbeing of the British people.

I am afraid that the economy cannot afford such ideology. We need honesty in the challenges that we face. Despite the Chancellor's attempts to talk down the position that she has found herself in, that is indeed what she has inherited. Despite the selective memories on the Government Benches, we know the facts. We have the lowest inflation and the fastest-growing economy of any G7 country, the deficit is down, unemployment is down and the economy is growing, all despite a global pandemic and a war raging in Europe. That recovery is now at risk. Labour talks about growth, but businesses are already groaning at the proposed increase in regulation that the Government are proposing and are fearful of the tax rises that we are all expecting from the Chancellor and that she is effectively rolling the carpet for this autumn.

The changes in workplace regulations will not protect new employees; they will simply put businesses off hiring them. The trouble with Labour's plans is that we know that however well-meaning they are, they always lead to the same outcome. While Conservatives see industry as the source of our prosperity, Labour just views it as something to be taxed. It thinks that entrepreneurs are not grafters but greedy, and it cannot see that drive and energy bring opportunity to a whole community, not just to an individual or a company.

To that, I say this. Just as our security should not be taken for granted, neither should our wealth or prosperity. No one owes us a living or a good life. If we punish those who create jobs and make it harder or more expensive to run a business, this country will get poorer. It will not happen overnight; it will creep up on us, with investments not made, business ideas not taken forward and entrepreneurs moved abroad. Little by little, those good

[Tom Tugendhat]

intentions will lead to well-predicted consequences. Where we should be going for growth, Labour is designing a state of stagnation.

The direction that the Government have chosen to take is all too clear: a state that is weak on defence, weak on protecting our borders and weak on maintaining order, whether in schools or on the streets. Yet, that state presumes to tell us how to live our lives, offering us less choice about how we educate our children, run our businesses, rent our homes and do our jobs. In only a few weeks, the Government have already shown themselves unable to commit to the steps needed to keep us safe, unable to secure our borders and unwilling to let the British economy thrive.

The Labour party talks a good game, but actions speak louder than words, and its actions so far have been those of a party determined to put ideology over this country's interests.

6.50 pm

The Minister of State, Home Department (Dame Angela Eagle): Hon. Members would not think that the right hon. Member for Tonbridge (Tom Tugendhat) was in the Government that presided over a Parliament in which living standards were lower at the end than at the beginning. They would not think that this is a man who presided over a hash of a Government that had eight Home Secretaries, five Prime Ministers and 10 Education Secretaries all within a few years. To listen to him, hon. Members would think that he was still on the Government Benches, lecturing us about the fantastic record that his party has delivered for this country when, actually, he has just lost an election by a landslide.

It is a great pleasure to respond to this debate on the King's Speech. We have had a fascinating debate, of the type that we can only really have at the beginning of a Parliament, particularly a landslide Parliament where the Government have changed. We have had 20 maiden speeches today, which means that we have had 68 over the past five days of the debate on the King's Speech. From listening to the contributions from all sides of the House that we have been privileged to hear today, I know that in this Parliament the new Members on the Government Benches will drive the Government forwards, and those on the Opposition Benches will hold them to account. I certainly look forward to being a part of it.

I congratulate all those Members who have made their maiden speeches today, including the hon. Member for Fylde (Mr Snowden), who was the police and crime commissioner in his area. My hon. Friend the Member for Worthing West (Dr Cooper) explained how beautiful her constituency is and how she was trying to make it even more sustainable. Her commitment to equity and public health shone through. My hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead Central and Whickham (Mark Ferguson), an old mate of mine, made Gateshead sound as interesting as I knew it was. My hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Andy MacNae) mentioned Janet Anderson, one of his predecessors, who came to the House when I first arrived. His comments on the Boundary Commission were heard with empathy across the entire House.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Clacton (Nigel Farage), who came in and did his usual. I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Lola McEvoy), who paid tribute to her predecessor Peter Gibson, who is a particularly good friend and had many friends across the House, who were all sad to lose him. She gave us another gastronomic tour of her constituency. Not being able to eat at all while listening to the debate, and listening to 20 maiden speeches with massive amounts of information about the food offering in those constituencies, has been a bit of a torture for me.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Boston and Skegness (Richard Tice), who also did the food thing. My hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Jo White) told us she is proud of her parents, and her insights into working class aspirations and success will have struck many a chord on the Government Benches. I also congratulate the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Josh Babarinde), who I learned is one of seven Joshes who have flooded into the House of Commons after the election. He presented us with a particular nightmare of actually defeating the teacher who taught him when he was 15. That would be a nightmare for any of the teachers on the Labour Benches. Just be careful who you teach at school—you never know what might happen in future.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Nesil Caliskan), who made a fitting tribute to her predecessor, the right hon. Margaret Hodge, who is a particular friend and inspiration for a lot of us. My hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Sojan Joseph) made a superb speech. We heard from the hon. Member for Leicester South (Shokat Adam). My hon. Friend the Member for Alloa and Grangemouth (Brian Leishman) was particularly fast in talking about his transferrable skills as a golf professional, and transferring them over to being an MP. We look forward to claret jugs arriving to ensure he can make friends of us all.

The hon. Member for Cheltenham (Max Wilkinson) was particularly thoughtful about Alex Chalk, whom he defeated and who, again, was well liked across the House. We also heard from the hon. Member for Bridgwater (Sir Ashley Fox). My hon. Friend the Member for Glenrothes and Mid Fife (Richard Baker) talked about the differences between the Scottish Parliament and this Parliament. I am sure he will continue to see differences as they emerge, but he is right that this place is indeed older and more complex. My hon. Friend the Member for Chelsea and Fulham (Ben Coleman) made a very good maiden speech, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Coatbridge and Bellshill (Frank McNally). Last but my no means least, my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Helena Dollimore) had to wait over six hours to make her contribution and did not waste a word of it. They all showed that the House continues to go from strength to strength.

Ms Stella Creasy (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op): The Minister will have heard the concern across the House about the Conservatives' two-child cap on benefits. Because it exists, in the past year alone 3,000 women have had to fill in a form to admit to the Department for Work and Pensions that they have been raped and had a child that was non-consensual. That is more than the number of rape convictions under the last Government. Can she assure us that that form and that approach has no future under this Labour Government?

Dame Angela Eagle: I agree with my hon. Friend. The work of the taskforce on child poverty is beginning. All aspects of the mess the Conservatives left us with, including that disgraceful clause, will be looked at.

Stephen Flynn (Aberdeen South) (SNP): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Dame Angela Eagle: I am very happy to give way, but could the right hon. Gentleman hurry up? I'm very close to the end of my speech.

Stephen Flynn: I thank the Minister for giving way. Can she perhaps clarify to the House why a taskforce is required to delete the appalling and abhorrent rape clause? Can she clarify that any Labour MP who votes for the SNP amendment tonight will not lose the Labour Whip?

Dame Angela Eagle: I am not a Whip, so I am not going to clarify what will happen. I am doing a difficult enough job as it is without trying to become the entire Labour Whips Office.

We have to turn the page and move on from the last period that we have all lived through. The Gracious Speech is the first Labour programme for government in 14 years and it is an exciting and ambitious programme. There are 40 Bills on topics ranging from clean energy through to economic stability and the Hillsborough law. It is a programme as ambitious for the country as the British people are, a programme that lays out a vision for a brighter, better future: to establish GB Energy to bring down energy bills; an employment rights Bill to end fire and rehire, and strengthen sick pay for workers; reforms to bus franchising to deliver local transport; regulation of water companies to clean up rivers, lakes and seas; and critical measures to strengthen Britain's border security and improve policing across the country, two of this Government's core missions. That is the change for which Britain voted on 4 July. It is a King's Speech to be proud of, it is a King's Speech to deliver, and I commend it to the House.

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The House divided: Ayes 117, Noes 384.

Division No. 2]

[6.59 pm

AYES

Anderson, Lee	Cooper, John
Anderson, Stuart	Costa, Alberto
Andrew, rh Stuart	Coutinho, rh Claire
Argar, rh Edward	Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
Atkins, rh Victoria	Cross, Harriet
Bacon, Gareth	Davies, Gareth
Badenoch, rh Mrs Kemi	Davies, Mims
Baldwin, Dame Harriett	Davis, rh Sir David
Barclay, rh Steve	Dewhurst, Charlie
Bedford, Mr Peter	Dinenage, Dame Caroline
Bhatti, Saqib	Dowden, rh Sir Oliver
Blackman, Bob	Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain
Bool, Sarah	Easton, Alex
Bowie, Andrew	Evans, Dr Luke
Bradley, rh Dame Karen	Fortune, Peter
Brandreth, Aphra	Fox, Sir Ashley
Braverman, rh Suella	Francois, rh Mr Mark
Burghart, Alex	Freeman, George
Cartlidge, James	French, Mr Louie
Cleverly, rh Mr James	Fuller, Richard
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey	Gale, rh Sir Roger
Cocking, Lewis	Garnier, Mark

Glen, rh John
Griffith, Andrew
Griffiths, Alison
Harris, Rebecca
Hayes, rh Sir John
Hinds, rh Damian
Hoare, Simon
Holden, rh Mr Richard
Holmes, Paul
Huddleston, Nigel
Hudson, Dr Neil
Hunt, rh Jeremy
Johnson, Dr Caroline
Jopp, Lincoln
Kearns, Alicia
Kruger, Danny
Lam, Katie
Lamont, John
Lewis, rh Sir Julian
Lockhart, Carla
Lopez, Julia
Lowe, Rupert
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, rh Kit
McMurdock, James
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Mohindra, Mr Gagan
Moore, Robbie
Morton, rh Wendy
Mullan, Dr Kieran
Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
Obese-Jecty, Ben
O'Brien, Neil
Patel, rh Priti
Paul, Rebecca
Philp, rh Chris
Pritchard, rh Mark

Abbott, Jack
Abrahams, Debbie
Adam, Shockat
Ahmed, Dr Zubir
Akehurst, Luke
Alaba, Mr Bayo
Aldridge, Dan
Alexander, Mr Douglas
Alexander, Heidi
Al-Hassan, Sadik
Ali, Rushanara
Ali, Tahir
Amesbury, Mike
Anderson, Callum
Anderson, Fleur
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Arthur, Dr Scott
Asato, Jess
Asser, James
Athwal, Jas
Atkinson, Catherine
Atkinson, Lewis
Bailey, Mr Calvin
Bailey, Olivia
Baines, David
Baker, Alex
Baker, Richard
Ballinger, Alex
Barker, Paula
Barron, Lee
Barros-Curtis, Mr Alex
Baxter, Johanna

Raja, Shivani
Rankin, Jack
Reed, David
Robertson, Joe
Robinson, rh Gavin
Rosindell, Andrew
Shannon, Jim
Shastri-Hurst, Dr Neil
Shelbrooke, rh Sir Alec
Simmonds, David
Smith, Greg
Smith, rh Sir Julian
Smith, Rebecca
Snowden, Mr Andrew
Spencer, Dr Ben
Spencer, Patrick
Stafford, Gregory
Stephenson, Blake
Stride, rh Mel
Stuart, rh Graham
Sunak, rh Rishi
Swann, Robin
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Thomas, Bradley
Tice, Richard
Timothy, Nick
Trott, rh Laura
Tugendhat, rh Tom
Vickers, Martin
Vickers, Matt
Whittingdale, rh Sir John
Wild, James
Wright, rh Sir Jeremy

Tellers for the Ayes:

Joy Morrissey and
Mike Wood

NOES

Beales, Danny
Beavers, Lorraine
Begum, Apsana
Bell, Torsten
Benn, rh Hilary
Berry, Siân
Betts, Mr Clive
Billington, Ms Polly
Bishop, Matt
Blake, Olivia
Blake, Rachel
Bloore, Chris
Blundell, Mrs Elsie
Bonavia, Kevin
Botterill, Jade
Brackenridge, Sureena
Brash, Mr Jonathan
Brickell, Phil
Bryant, Chris
Buckley, Julia
Burgon, Richard
Burke, Maureen
Burton-Sampson, David
Butler, Dawn
Byrne, Ian
Byrne, rh Liam
Cadbury, Ruth
Caliskan, Nesil
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Campbell, Irene
Campbell, Juliet
Campbell-Savours, Markus

Carling, Sam
 Champion, Sarah
 Charalambous, Bambos
 Charters, Mr Luke
 Chowns, Ellie
 Clark, Feryal
 Coleman, Ben
 Collier, Jacob
 Collinge, Lizzi
 Collins, Tom
 Conlon, Liam
 Coombes, Sarah
 Cooper, Andrew
 Cooper, Dr Beccy
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Costigan, Deirdre
 Cox, Pam
 Coyle, Neil
 Craft, Jen
 Creagh, Mary
 Creasy, Ms Stella
 Crichton, Torcuil
 Curtis, Chris
 Daby, Janet
 Dakin, Sir Nicholas
 Darlington, Emily
 Davies, Jonathan
 Davies, Shaun
 Davies-Jones, Alex
 De Cordova, Marsha
 Dean, Josh
 Dearden, Kate
 Denyer, Carla
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Dickson, Jim
 Dixon, Anna
 Dixon, Samantha
 Dollimore, Helena
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Downie, Graeme
 Duncan-Jordan, Neil
 Eagle, Dame Angela
 Eagle, rh Maria
 Eastwood, Colum
 Eccles, Cat
 Edwards, Lauren
 Edwards, Sarah
 Egan, Damien
 Ellis, Maya
 Elmore, Chris
 Entwistle, Kirith
 Eshalomi, Florence
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Fahnbulleh, Miatta
 Falconer, Hamish
 Farnsworth, Linsey
 Fenton-Glynn, Josh
 Ferguson, Mark
 Ferguson, Patricia
 Fleet, Natalie
 Foody, Emma
 Fookes, Catherine
 Foster, Mr Paul
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Francis, Daniel
 Frith, Mr James
 Gardiner, Barry
 Gardner, Dr Allison
 Gelderd, Anna

Gemmell, Alan
 German, Gill
 Gilbert, Tracy
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Gittins, Becky
 Glindon, Mary
 Goldsborough, Ben
 Gosling, Jodie
 Gould, Georgia
 Grady, John
 Greenwood, Lillian
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Hack, Amanda
 Haigh, rh Louise
 Hall, Sarah
 Hamilton, Paulette
 Hanna, Claire
 Hardy, Emma
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hatton, Lloyd
 Hayes, Helen
 Hayes, Tom
 Hazelgrove, Claire
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hillier, Dame Meg
 Hinchliff, Chris
 Hinder, Jonathan
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hopkins, Rachel
 Hughes, Claire
 Hume, Alison
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hurley, Patrick
 Hussain, Mr Adnan
 Hussain, Imran
 Ingham, Leigh
 Irons, Natasha
 Jameson, Sally
 Jarvis, Dan
 Jermy, Terry
 Jogee, Adam
 Johnson, rh Dame Diana
 Johnson, Kim
 Jones, rh Darren
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Lillian
 Jones, Louise
 Jones, Ruth
 Josan, Gurinder
 Joseph, Sojan
 Juss, Warinder
 Kane, Chris
 Kane, Mike
 Kaur, Satvir
 Kendall, rh Liz
 Khan, Afzal
 Khan, Ayoub
 Khan, Naushabah
 Kirkham, Jayne
 Kitchen, Gen
 Kumar, Sonia
 Kumaran, Uma
 Kyle, rh Peter
 Kyrke-Smith, Laura
 Lamb, Peter
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Noah
 Leadbeater, Kim
 Leishman, Brian
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewin, Andrew
 Lewis, Clive

Lightwood, Simon
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 MacAlister, Josh
 Macdonald, Alice
 MacNae, Andy
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, rh Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Martin, Amanda
 Maskell, Rachael
 Mather, Keir
 Mayer, Alex
 McAllister, Douglas
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McCluskey, Martin
 McDonald, Chris
 McDonnell, rh John
 McDougall, Blair
 McEvoy, Lola
 McFadden, rh Pat
 McGovern, Alison
 McIntyre, Alex
 McKee, Gordon
 McKenna, Kevin
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McMahan, Jim
 McMorris, Anna
 McNally, Frank
 McNeill, Kirsty
 Midgley, Anneliese
 Miliband, rh Ed
 Minns, Ms Julie
 Mohamed, Abtisam
 Mohamed, Iqbal
 Moon, Perran
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Morris, Joe
 Mullane, Margaret
 Murphy, Luke
 Murray, Chris
 Murray, rh Ian
 Murray, James
 Myer, Luke
 Naish, James
 Naismith, Connor
 Nandy, rh Lisa
 Narayan, Kanishka
 Nash, Pamela
 Newbury, Josh
 Niblett, Samantha
 Nichols, Charlotte
 Norris, Alex
 Onn, Melanie
 Onwurah, Chi
 Opher, Dr Simon
 Oppong-Asare, Ms Abena
 Osamor, Kate
 Osborne, Kate
 Osborne, Tristan
 Paffey, Darren
 Pakes, Andrew
 Patrick, Matthew
 Payne, Michael
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pearce, Jon
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Mr Toby
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, rh Bridget
 Pinto-Duschinsky, David

Pitcher, Lee
 Platt, Jo
 Pollard, Luke
 Powell, Joe
 Powell, rh Lucy
 Poynton, Gregor
 Prinsley, Peter
 Quigley, Mr Richard
 Race, Steve
 Ramsay, Adrian
 Rand, Mr Connor
 Ranger, Andrew
 Rayner, rh Angela
 Reader, Mike
 Reed, rh Steve
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reid, Joani
 Reynolds, Emma
 Reynolds, rh Jonathan
 Rhodes, Martin
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
 Richards, Jake
 Riddell-Carpenter, Jenny
 Rigby, Lucy
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Robertson, Dave
 Roca, Tim
 Rodda, Matt
 Rushworth, Sam
 Russell, Mrs Sarah
 Rutland, Tom
 Ryan, Oliver
 Sackman, Sarah
 Sandher, Dr Jeevun
 Swards, Mr Mark
 Shah, Naz
 Shanker, Baggy
 Shanks, Michael
 Siddiq, Tulip
 Simons, Josh
 Slaughter, Andy
 Slinger, John
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, David
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Sarah
 Smyth, Karin
 Snell, Gareth
 Stainbank, Euan
 Stevens, rh Jo
 Stewart, Kenneth
 Stewart, Elaine
 Stone, Will
 Strathern, Alistair
 Streeting, rh Wes
 Strickland, Alan
 Stringer, Graham
 Sullivan, Kirsteen
 Sullivan, Dr Lauren
 Sultana, Zarah
 Swallow, Peter
 Tami, rh Mark
 Tapp, Mike
 Taylor, Alison
 Taylor, David
 Taylor, Rachel
 Thomas-Symonds, rh Nick
 Thompson, Adam
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Tidball, Dr Marie
 Timms, rh Sir Stephen

Toale, Jessica
Tomlinson, Dan
Trickett, Jon
Tufnell, Henry
Turley, Anna
Turmaine, Matt
Turner, Karl
Twigg, Derek
Twist, Liz
Uppal, Harpreet
Vaughan, Tony
Vaz, rh Valerie
Vince, Chris
Walker, Imogen
Ward, Melanie
Waugh, Paul
Webb, Chris
Welsh, Michelle

West, Catherine
Western, Andrew
Western, Matt
Wheeler, Michael
Whitby, John
White, Jo
White, Katie
Whittome, Nadia
Williams, David
Witherden, Steve
Woodcock, Sean
Yang, Yuan
Yasin, Mohammad
Yemm, Steve
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Noes:
Christian Wakeford and
Taiwo Owatemi

McDonnell, rh John
Medi, Llinos
van Mierlo, Freddie
Miller, Calum
Milne, John
Mohamed, Iqbal
Moran, Layla
Morello, Edward
Morrison, Mr Tom
Munt, Tessa
Murray, Susan
O'Hara, Brendan
Olney, Sarah
Perteghella, Manuela
Pinkerton, Dr Al
Ramsay, Adrian
Reynolds, Mr Joshua
Robinson, rh Gavin
Roome, Ian
Sabine, Anna

Savage, Dr Roz
Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Shannon, Jim
Smart, Lisa
Sollom, Ian
Stone, Jamie
Sultana, Zarah
Swann, Robin
Taylor, Luke
Thomas, Cameron
Voaden, Caroline
Wilkinson, Max
Wilson, Munira
Wilson, rh Sammy
Wishart, Pete
Wrigley, Martin
Young, Claire

Tellers for the Ayes:
Kirsty Blackman and
Ben Lake

Question accordingly negated.

Amendment proposed: at the end of the Question to add:

“but respectfully regret that the Gracious Speech fails to include immediate measures to abolish the two-child limit to Universal Credit; recognise that this policy is pushing children into poverty; further recognise that 1.6 million children are currently impacted and maintaining this policy will result in 670,000 additional children suffering poverty by the end of this Parliament; believe that eradicating child poverty must be a primary priority for the newly-elected Government; and therefore call on the Government, as a vital first step in tackling child poverty, to immediately abolish the two-child limit.”—(*Stephen Flynn.*)

Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 33), That the amendment be made.

The House divided: Ayes 103, Noes 363.

Division No. 3]

[7.15 pm

AYES

Adam, Shockat	Forster, Mr Will
Allister, Jim	Franklin, Zöe
Amos, Mr Gideon	George, Andrew
Aquarone, Steff	Gethins, Stephen
Babarinde, Josh	Gibson, Sarah
Begum, Apsana	Gilmour, Rachel
Bennett, Alison	Glover, Oly
Berry, Siân	Goldman, Marie
Brewer, Alex	Gordon, Tom
Brown-Fuller, Jess	Green, Sarah
Burgon, Richard	Hanna, Claire
Byrne, Ian	Harding, Monica
Cane, Charlotte	Heylings, Pippa
Chamberlain, Wendy	Hobhouse, Wera
Chambers, Dr Danny	Hussain, Mr Adnan
Chowns, Ellie	Hussain, Imran
Coghlan, Chris	Jardine, Christine
Collins, Victoria	Jarvis, Liz
Cooper, Daisy	Jones, Clive
Corbyn, rh Jeremy	Khan, Ayoub
Dance, Adam	Kohler, Mr Paul
Darling, Steve	Law, Chris
Davey, rh Ed	Leadbitter, Graham
Davies, Ann	Lockhart, Carla
Dean, Bobby	Logan, Seamus
Denyer, Carla	Long Bailey, Rebecca
Dillon, Mr Lee	MacCleary, James
Doogan, Dave	Maguire, Ben
Easton, Alex	Maguire, Helen
Eastwood, Colum	Martin, Mike
Eastwood, Sorcha	Mathew, Brian
Flynn, rh Stephen	Maynard, Charlie

Abbott, Jack
Abrahams, Debbie
Ahmed, Dr Zubir
Akehurst, Luke
Alaba, Mr Bayo
Aldridge, Dan
Alexander, Mr Douglas
Alexander, Heidi
Al-Hassan, Sadik
Ali, Rushanara
Ali, Tahir
Amesbury, Mike
Anderson, Callum
Anderson, Fleur
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Arthur, Dr Scott
Asato, Jess
Asser, James
Athwal, Jas
Atkinson, Catherine
Atkinson, Lewis
Bailey, Mr Calvin
Bailey, Olivia
Baines, David
Baker, Alex
Baker, Richard
Ballinger, Alex
Barker, Paula
Barron, Lee
Barros-Curtis, Mr Alex
Baxter, Johanna
Beales, Danny
Beavers, Lorraine
Bell, Torsten
Benn, rh Hilary
Betts, Mr Clive
Billington, Ms Polly
Bishop, Matt
Blake, Olivia
Blake, Rachel
Bloore, Chris
Blundell, Mrs Elsie
Bonavia, Kevin
Botterill, Jade
Brackenridge, Sureena
Brash, Mr Jonathan
Brickell, Phil
Bryant, Chris
Buckley, Julia

NOES

Burke, Maureen
Burton-Sampson, David
Butler, Dawn
Byrne, rh Liam
Cadbury, Ruth
Caliskan, Nesil
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Campbell, Irene
Campbell, Juliet
Campbell-Savours, Markus
Carling, Sam
Champion, Sarah
Charalambous, Bambos
Charters, Mr Luke
Clark, Feryal
Coleman, Ben
Collier, Jacob
Collinge, Lizzi
Collins, Tom
Conlon, Liam
Coombes, Sarah
Cooper, Andrew
Cooper, Dr Beccy
Cooper, rh Yvette
Costigan, Deirdre
Cox, Pam
Coyle, Neil
Craft, Jen
Creagh, Mary
Creasy, Ms Stella
Crichton, Torcuil
Curtis, Chris
Daby, Janet
Dakin, Sir Nicholas
Darlington, Emily
Davies, Jonathan
Davies, Shaun
Davies-Jones, Alex
De Cordova, Marsha
Dean, Josh
Dearden, Kate
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Dickson, Jim
Dixon, Anna
Dixon, Samantha
Dollimore, Helena
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Downie, Graeme

Duncan-Jordan, Neil
 Eagle, Dame Angela
 Eagle, rh Maria
 Eccles, Cat
 Edwards, Lauren
 Edwards, Sarah
 Egan, Damien
 Ellis, Maya
 Elmore, Chris
 Entwistle, Kirith
 Eshalomi, Florence
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Fahnbulleh, Miatta
 Falconer, Hamish
 Farnsworth, Linsey
 Fenton-Glynn, Josh
 Ferguson, Mark
 Ferguson, Patricia
 Fleet, Natalie
 Foody, Emma
 Fookes, Catherine
 Foster, Mr Paul
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Francis, Daniel
 Frith, Mr James
 Gardiner, Barry
 Gardner, Dr Allison
 Gelderd, Anna
 Gemmell, Alan
 German, Gill
 Gilbert, Tracy
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Gittins, Becky
 Glindon, Mary
 Goldsborough, Ben
 Gosling, Jodie
 Gould, Georgia
 Grady, John
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Hack, Amanda
 Haigh, rh Louise
 Hall, Sarah
 Hamilton, Mrs Paulette
 Hardy, Emma
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hatton, Lloyd
 Hayes, Helen
 Hayes, rh Sir John
 Hayes, Tom
 Hazelgrove, Claire
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hillier, Dame Meg
 Hinchliff, Chris
 Hinder, Jonathan
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hopkins, Rachel
 Hughes, Claire
 Hume, Alison
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hurley, Patrick
 Ingham, Leigh
 Irons, Natasha
 Jameson, Sally
 Jarvis, Dan
 Jermy, Terry
 Jogee, Adam
 Johnson, rh Dame Diana
 Jones, rh Darren
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Lillian

Jones, Louise
 Jones, Ruth
 Josan, Gurinder
 Joseph, Sojan
 Juss, Warinder
 Kane, Chris
 Kane, Mike
 Kaur, Satvir
 Kendall, rh Liz
 Khan, Afzal
 Khan, Naushabah
 Kirkham, Jayne
 Kitchen, Gen
 Kumar, Sonia
 Kumaran, Uma
 Kyle, rh Peter
 Kyrke-Smith, Laura
 Lamb, Peter
 Leadbeater, Kim
 Leishman, Brian
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewin, Andrew
 Lewis, Clive
 Lightwood, Simon
 MacAlister, Josh
 Macdonald, Alice
 MacNae, Andy
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, rh Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Martin, Amanda
 Maskell, Rachael
 Mather, Keir
 Mayer, Alex
 McAllister, Douglas
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McCluskey, Martin
 McDonald, Chris
 McDougall, Blair
 McEvoy, Lola
 McFadden, rh Pat
 McGovern, Alison
 McIntyre, Alex
 McKee, Gordon
 McKenna, Kevin
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McMahon, Jim
 McMorris, Anna
 McNally, Frank
 McNeill, Kirsty
 Midgley, Anneliese
 Miliband, rh Ed
 Minns, Ms Julie
 Mohamed, Abtisam
 Moon, Perran
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Morris, Joe
 Mullane, Margaret
 Murphy, Luke
 Murray, Chris
 Murray, rh Ian
 Murray, James
 Myer, Luke
 Naish, James
 Naismith, Connor
 Nandy, rh Lisa
 Narayan, Kanishka
 Nash, Pamela
 Newbury, Josh
 Niblett, Samantha

Nichols, Charlotte
 Norris, Alex
 Onn, Melanie
 Onwurah, Chi
 Opher, Dr Simon
 Oppong-Asare, Ms Abena
 Osamor, Kate
 Osborne, Kate
 Osborne, Tristan
 Paffey, Darren
 Pakes, Andrew
 Patrick, Matthew
 Payne, Michael
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pearce, Jon
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Mr Toby
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, rh Bridget
 Pinto-Duschinsky, David
 Pitcher, Lee
 Platt, Jo
 Pollard, Luke
 Powell, Joe
 Powell, rh Lucy
 Poynton, Gregor
 Prinsley, Peter
 Quigley, Mr Richard
 Race, Steve
 Rand, Mr Connor
 Ranger, Andrew
 Rayner, rh Angela
 Reader, Mike
 Reed, rh Steve
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reid, Joani
 Reynolds, Emma
 Reynolds, rh Jonathan
 Rhodes, Martin
 Richards, Jake
 Riddell-Carpenter, Jenny
 Rigby, Lucy
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Robertson, Dave
 Roca, Tim
 Rodda, Matt
 Rushworth, Sam
 Russell, Mrs Sarah
 Rutland, Tom
 Ryan, Oliver
 Sackman, Sarah
 Sandher, Dr Jeevun
 Sowards, Mr Mark
 Shah, Naz
 Shanker, Baggy
 Shanks, Michael
 Siddiq, Tulip
 Simons, Josh
 Slaughter, Andy
 Slinger, John
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, David

Smith, Jeff
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Sarah
 Smyth, Karin
 Snell, Gareth
 Stainbank, Euan
 Stevens, rh Jo
 Stevenson, Kenneth
 Stewart, Elaine
 Stone, Will
 Strathern, Alistair
 Streeting, rh Wes
 Strickland, Alan
 Stringer, Graham
 Sullivan, Kirsteen
 Sullivan, Dr Lauren
 Swallow, Peter
 Tami, rh Mark
 Tapp, Mike
 Taylor, Alison
 Taylor, David
 Taylor, Rachel
 Thomas-Symonds, rh Nick
 Thompson, Adam
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Tidball, Dr Marie
 Timms, rh Sir Stephen
 Toale, Jessica
 Tomlinson, Dan
 Tufnell, Henry
 Turley, Anna
 Turmaine, Matt
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twist, Liz
 Uppal, Harpreet
 Vaughan, Tony
 Vaz, rh Valerie
 Vince, Chris
 Walker, Imogen
 Ward, Melanie
 Waugh, Paul
 Webb, Chris
 Welsh, Michelle
 West, Catherine
 Western, Andrew
 Western, Matt
 Wheeler, Michael
 Whitby, John
 White, Jo
 White, Katie
 Williams, David
 Witherden, Steve
 Woodcock, Sean
 Yang, Yuan
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Yemm, Steve
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Noes:
Christian Wakeford and
Taiwo Owatemi

Question accordingly negated.

Amendment proposed: at the end of the Question to add:

“but, while welcoming measures aimed at upholding standards in public life, which have been neglected under UK, Scottish and Welsh Governments in recent years, humbly regret that the Gracious Speech does not include sufficient measures to address the crisis in health and care, such as the introduction of a legal right to see a GP within seven days, a guarantee for cancer patients to start

treatment within 62 days from urgent referral, free personal care in England, better support for carers, and a cross-party commission on social care; and call on the Government to stop the scandal of sewage dumping against which the previous Government failed to take action, including by replacing Ofwat with a new regulator, to support families with the cost of living and to tackle poverty, including by introducing a national food strategy, extending free school meals to all children in poverty, and by scrapping the two-child benefit cap, to ensure that rural communities and farmers receive adequate support, and to reform the system for parliamentary elections by replacing first-past-the-post with proportional representation, so that every vote counts.”—(*Christine Jardine.*)

Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 33), That the amendment be made.

The House divided: Ayes 85, Noes 382.

Division No. 4]

[7:30 pm

AYES

Adam, Shockat	Jones, Clive
Amos, Mr Gideon	Khan, Ayoub
Anderson, Lee	Kohler, Mr Paul
Aquarone, Steff	Lake, Ben
Babarinde, Josh	Lowe, Rupert
Bennett, Alison	MacCleary, James
Berry, Siân	Maguire, Ben
Brewer, Alex	Maguire, Helen
Brown-Fuller, Jess	Martin, Mike
Cane, Charlotte	Mathew, Brian
Chambers, Dr Danny	Maynard, Charlie
Chowns, Ellie	McMurdock, James
Coghlan, Chris	Medi, Llinos
Collins, Victoria	van Mierlo, Freddie
Cooper, Daisy	Miller, Calum
Corbyn, rh Jeremy	Milne, John
Dance, Adam	Mohamed, Iqbal
Darling, Steve	Moran, Layla
Davey, rh Ed	Morello, Edward
Davies, Ann	Morrison, Mr Tom
Dean, Bobby	Munt, Tessa
Denyer, Carla	Murray, Susan
Dillon, Mr Lee	Olney, Sarah
Dyke, Sarah	Perteghella, Manuela
Eastwood, Colum	Pinkerton, Dr Al
Eastwood, Sorcha	Ramsay, Adrian
Farage, Nigel	Reynolds, Mr Joshua
Foord, Richard	Roome, Ian
Forster, Mr Will	Sabine, Anna
Franklin, Zöe	Savage, Dr Roz
George, Andrew	Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Gibson, Sarah	Smart, Lisa
Gilmour, Rachel	Sollom, Ian
Glover, Olly	Taylor, Luke
Goldman, Marie	Thomas, Cameron
Gordon, Tom	Tice, Richard
Green, Sarah	Voaden, Caroline
Hanna, Claire	Wilkinson, Max
Harding, Monica	Wrigley, Martin
Heylings, Pippa	Young, Claire
Hobhouse, Wera	
Hussain, Mr Adnan	
Jardine, Christine	
Jarvis, Liz	

Tellers for the Ayes:

Jamie Stone and
Munira Wilson

NOES

Abbott, Jack	Aldridge, Dan
Abrahams, Debbie	Alexander, Mr Douglas
Ahmed, Dr Zubir	Alexander, Heidi
Akehurst, Luke	Al-Hassan, Sadik
Alaba, Mr Bayo	Ali, Rushanara

Ali, Tahir	Creasy, Ms Stella
Allister, Jim	Crichton, Torcuil
Amesbury, Mike	Curtis, Chris
Anderson, Callum	Daby, Janet
Anderson, Fleur	Dakin, Sir Nicholas
Antoniazzi, Tonia	Darlington, Emily
Arthur, Dr Scott	Davies, Jonathan
Asato, Jess	Davies, Shaun
Asser, James	Davies-Jones, Alex
Athwal, Jas	De Cordova, Marsha
Atkinson, Catherine	Dean, Josh
Atkinson, Lewis	Dearden, Kate
Bailey, Mr Calvin	Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Bailey, Olivia	Dickson, Jim
Baines, David	Dixon, Anna
Baker, Alex	Dixon, Samantha
Baker, Richard	Dollimore, Helena
Ballinger, Alex	Doughty, Stephen
Barker, Paula	Dowd, Peter
Barron, Lee	Downie, Graeme
Barros-Curtis, Mr Alex	Duncan-Jordan, Neil
Baxter, Johanna	Eagle, Dame Angela
Beales, Danny	Eagle, rh Maria
Beavers, Lorraine	Easton, Alex
Begum, Apsana	Eastwood, Colum
Bell, Torsten	Eccles, Cat
Benn, rh Hilary	Edwards, Lauren
Betts, Mr Clive	Edwards, Sarah
Billington, Ms Polly	Egan, Damien
Bishop, Matt	Ellis, Maya
Blake, Olivia	Elmore, Chris
Blake, Rachel	Entwistle, Kirith
Bloore, Chris	Eshalomi, Florence
Blundell, Mrs Elsie	Esterson, Bill
Bonavia, Kevin	Evans, Chris
Botterill, Jade	Fahnbulleh, Miatta
Brackenridge, Sureena	Falconer, Hamish
Brash, Mr Jonathan	Farnsworth, Linsey
Brickell, Phil	Fenton-Glynn, Josh
Bryant, Chris	Ferguson, Mark
Buckley, Julia	Ferguson, Patricia
Burgon, Richard	Fleet, Natalie
Burke, Maureen	Foody, Emma
Burton-Sampson, David	Fookes, Catherine
Butler, Dawn	Foster, Mr Paul
Byrne, Ian	Foxcroft, Vicky
Byrne, rh Liam	Francis, Daniel
Cadbury, Ruth	Frith, Mr James
Caliskan, Nesil	Gardiner, Barry
Campbell, rh Sir Alan	Gardner, Dr Allison
Campbell, Irene	Gelder, Anna
Campbell, Juliet	Gemmell, Alan
Campbell-Savours, Markus	Germann, Gill
Carling, Sam	Gilbert, Tracy
Champion, Sarah	Gill, Preet Kaur
Charalambous, Bambos	Gittins, Becky
Charters, Mr Luke	Glindon, Mary
Clark, Feryal	Goldsborough, Ben
Coleman, Ben	Gosling, Jodie
Collier, Jacob	Gould, Georgia
Collinge, Lizzi	Grady, John
Collins, Tom	Greenwood, Lilian
Conlon, Liam	Gwynne, Andrew
Coombes, Sarah	Hack, Amanda
Cooper, Andrew	Haigh, rh Louise
Cooper, Dr Beccy	Hall, Sarah
Cooper, rh Yvette	Hamilton, Mrs Paulette
Costigan, Deirdre	Hardy, Emma
Cox, Pam	Harris, Carolyn
Coyle, Neil	Hatton, Lloyd
Craft, Jen	Hayes, Helen
Creagh, Mary	Hayes, Tom

Hazelgrove, Claire
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hillier, Dame Meg
 Hinchliff, Chris
 Hinder, Jonathan
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hopkins, Rachel
 Hughes, Claire
 Hume, Alison
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hurley, Patrick
 Hussain, Imran
 Ingham, Leigh
 Irons, Natasha
 Jameson, Sally
 Jarvis, Dan
 Jermy, Terry
 Jogee, Adam
 Johnson, rh Dame Diana
 Johnson, Kim
 Jones, rh Darren
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Lillian
 Jones, Louise
 Jones, Ruth
 Josan, Gurinder
 Joseph, Sojan
 Juss, Warinder
 Kane, Chris
 Kane, Mike
 Kaur, Satvir
 Kendall, rh Liz
 Khan, Afzal
 Khan, Naushabah
 Kirkham, Jayne
 Kitchen, Gen
 Kumar, Sonia
 Kumaran, Uma
 Kyle, rh Peter
 Kyrke-Smith, Laura
 Lamb, Peter
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Noah
 Leadbeater, Kim
 Leishman, Brian
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewin, Andrew
 Lewis, Clive
 Lightwood, Simon
 Lockhart, Carla
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 MacAlister, Josh
 Macdonald, Alice
 MacNae, Andy
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, rh Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Martin, Amanda
 Maskell, Rachael
 Mather, Keir
 Mayer, Alex
 McAllister, Douglas
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McCluskey, Martin
 McDonald, Chris
 McDonnell, rh John
 McDougall, Blair
 McEvoy, Lola
 McFadden, rh Pat
 McGovern, Alison
 McIntyre, Alex
 McKee, Gordon

McKenna, Kevin
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McMahon, Jim
 McMorris, Anna
 McNally, Frank
 McNeill, Kirsty
 Midgley, Anneliese
 Miliband, rh Ed
 Minns, Ms Julie
 Mohamed, Abtisam
 Moon, Perran
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Morris, Joe
 Mullane, Margaret
 Murphy, Luke
 Murray, Chris
 Murray, rh Ian
 Murray, James
 Myer, Luke
 Naish, James
 Naismith, Connor
 Nandy, rh Lisa
 Narayan, Kanishka
 Nash, Pamela
 Newbury, Josh
 Niblett, Samantha
 Nichols, Charlotte
 Norris, Alex
 Onn, Melanie
 Onwurah, Chi
 Opher, Dr Simon
 Oppong-Asare, Ms Abena
 Osamor, Kate
 Osborne, Kate
 Osborne, Tristan
 Paffey, Darren
 Pakes, Andrew
 Patrick, Matthew
 Payne, Michael
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pearce, Jon
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Mr Toby
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, rh Bridget
 Pinto-Duschinsky, David
 Pitcher, Lee
 Platt, Jo
 Pollard, Luke
 Powell, Joe
 Powell, rh Lucy
 Poynton, Gregor
 Prinsley, Peter
 Quigley, Mr Richard
 Race, Steve
 Rand, Mr Connor
 Ranger, Andrew
 Rayner, rh Angela
 Reader, Mike
 Reed, rh Steve
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reid, Joani
 Reynolds, Emma
 Reynolds, rh Jonathan
 Rhodes, Martin
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
 Richards, Jake
 Riddell-Carpenter, Jenny
 Rigby, Lucy
 Rimmer, Ms Marie

Robertson, Dave
 Robinson, rh Gavin
 Roca, Tim
 Rodda, Matt
 Rushworth, Sam
 Russell, Mrs Sarah
 Rutland, Tom
 Ryan, Oliver
 Sackman, Sarah
 Sandher, Dr Jeevun
 Sowards, Mr Mark
 Shah, Naz
 Shanker, Baggy
 Shanks, Michael
 Shannon, Jim
 Siddiq, Tulip
 Simons, Josh
 Slaughter, Andy
 Slinger, John
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, David
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Sarah
 Smyth, Karin
 Snell, Gareth
 Stainbank, Euan
 Stevens, rh Jo
 Stevenson, Kenneth
 Stewart, Elaine
 Stone, Will
 Strathern, Alistair
 Streeting, rh Wes
 Strickland, Alan
 Stringer, Graham
 Sullivan, Kirsteen
 Sullivan, Dr Lauren
 Sultana, Zarah
 Swallow, Peter
 Swann, Robin
 Tami, rh Mark
 Tapp, Mike
 Taylor, Alison
 Taylor, David

Taylor, Rachel
 Thomas-Symonds, rh Nick
 Thompson, Adam
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Tidball, Dr Marie
 Timms, rh Sir Stephen
 Toale, Jessica
 Tomlinson, Dan
 Trickett, Jon
 Tufnell, Henry
 Turley, Anna
 Turmaine, Matt
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twist, Liz
 Uppal, Harpreet
 Vaughan, Tony
 Vaz, rh Valerie
 Vince, Chris
 Walker, Imogen
 Ward, Melanie
 Waugh, Paul
 Webb, Chris
 Welsh, Michelle
 West, Catherine
 Western, Andrew
 Western, Matt
 Wheeler, Michael
 Whitby, John
 White, Jo
 White, Katie
 Whittome, Nadia
 Williams, David
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Witherden, Steve
 Woodcock, Sean
 Yang, Yuan
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Yemm, Steve
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Noes:
Christian Wakeford and
Taiwo Owatemi

Question accordingly negated.

Main Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

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

Most Gracious Sovereign,

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

Address to be presented to His Majesty by Members of the House who are Privy Counsellors or Members of His Majesty's Household.

Business without Debate

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 15),

That, at this day's sitting, the Motion in the name of Lucy Powell relating to Business of the House (Today) may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour, and Standing Order No. 41A (Deferred divisions) shall not apply.—(*Lucy Powell.*)

Question agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE (TODAY)

Ordered,

That at today's sitting the Speaker shall put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of Lucy Powell relating to Westminster Hall not later than one hour after the commencement of proceedings on the Motion for this Order; such Questions shall include the Questions on any Amendments selected by the Speaker which may then be moved; proceedings on that Motion may continue, though opposed, after the moment of interruption; and Standing Order No. 41A (Deferred divisions) shall not apply.—(*Lucy Powell.*)

WESTMINSTER HALL

Ordered,

That, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 10, there shall be no sitting in Westminster Hall until Tuesday 3 September.—(*Lucy Powell.*)

Commercial Sexual Exploitation

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

7.47 pm

Tonia Antoniazzi (Gower) (Lab): There have been huge advances in the battle for women's equality in recent decades, but on some issues, we have gone backwards. Chief among them is commercial sexual exploitation. [*Interruption.*]

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Siobhain McDonagh): Order. I ask that Members leave the Chamber quietly, out of respect for the Adjournment debate.

Tonia Antoniazzi: Giving someone money, accommodation, food, a job or other services on the condition that they perform sex acts is sexual exploitation and abuse, yet the global trade in sexual exploitation—perpetrated primarily against women and girls—is bigger than ever before. Sex trafficking is the most profitable form of modern slavery in the world, while violent, misogynistic pornography is consumed on an unparalleled scale, mostly by men. This was not an accident, and it was not inevitable: we could and should have done so much more to protect women and girls. Instead, the past 14 years have been a veritable golden age for pimps and pornographers.

Carolyn Harris (Neath and Swansea East) (Lab): Does my hon. Friend agree that under the United Nations protocol on trafficking, a victim does not need to have travelled in a vehicle in order for a trafficking offence to have been committed, yet under the UK's Modern Slavery Act 2015, they do? This means that exploiters who are not actually moving a victim in a vehicle from one place to another are not being prosecuted as traffickers. It would make a huge difference if there were parity between the two pieces of legislation, to make sure that trafficking is justly prosecuted.

Tonia Antoniazzi: I thank my hon. Friend for her intervention. I know that the Minister is listening and will likely agree with her, as I do.

Multimillion-pound pimping websites have been allowed to operate freely. Men who drive demand for sex trafficking by paying for sex have been left to abuse with impunity, while the most popular pornography websites in the country have been free to peddle videos of rape and sexual abuse.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I commend the hon. Lady for bringing this debate forward. She was active on this subject when she was on the Opposition Benches, and I commend her for that. To be fair, so was the Minister in her place tonight, so I am quite sure that, whatever we ask for, the Minister will respond in a very positive fashion, and I am glad about that.

Does the hon. Lady not agree that we must be at pains to ensure that the open border between Northern Ireland and the Republic is not used as a trafficking channel? Would she join me in asking the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to meet the relevant Republic of Ireland Minister to discuss and agree how we can collectively ensure that this is not a back door to abuse and misuse?

Tonia Antoniazzi: I thank the hon. Member for his contribution, because, having been a shadow Minister for Northern Ireland and from working with Women's Aid in Northern Ireland, I know that this is a real problem. I welcome his offer to join him in meeting the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Minister to discuss this further, and I thank him very much for his intervention.

The previous Government stood by and let this happen, which was a shocking abdication of duty. Women and girls deserve so much better from the Government. I am looking forward to seeing this new Government stepping up and protecting women and girls from commercial sexual exploitation, and in this debate I will set out how.

First of all, let us be clear: prostitution is violence against women. Men who pay for sex are not regular consumers harmlessly availing "workers" of their services. Healthy, non-abusive sexual relationships require both parties to mutually and freely want to have sex. Offering somebody money, or food or a place to stay, in return for their performing sex acts is sexual coercion. It is simply not possible to commodify sexual consent. As the United Nations special rapporteur on violence against women and girls has stated,

"prostitution is intrinsically linked to different forms of violence against women and girls and constitutes a form of violence in and of itself."

Most women exploited in prostitution were highly vulnerable before even entering the sex trade, and suffer severe consequences as a result. A Home Office report noted that approximately 50% of women in prostitution in the United Kingdom started being paid for sex acts before they were 18 years old, while up to 95% of women in street prostitution are believed to be problematic drug users. I and my hon. Friend the Member for Neath and Swansea East (Carolyn Harris) have met these women and seen the struggles that they have in Swansea city centre, and I know that they are there to fuel their drug use. They are pimped out, and it is heartbreaking.

This is how I use my politics: when I think about the most vulnerable people in society, I think about the women who were crying because they have had their children taken away from them permanently. They were not able to make ends meet, and they had to be taken out by their pimp to earn in order to feed themselves and to live their lives in a basic way. I really do believe that we should always think about those women when we talk about women in this House.

I want to read the words of Crystal, a survivor who has spoken out about her experience of prostitution. She said:

"I became involved in prostitution in my early twenties, courtesy of my then 'boyfriend'; I now use the word pimp. My body always hurt from the constant rough sex. I'd get jaw ache from blow-job after blow-job. Group stuff was especially harrowing...I developed Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. I got flashbacks and nightmares, when I could sleep. The addiction and the prostitution went together—I sold myself to fund my habit, and I couldn't do it sober. It was a vicious cycle."

Too often in discussions about prostitution and sex trafficking, there is silence when it comes to the people who perpetrate this kind of abuse: men who pay for sex. So it is only right that I also read their words today. Here is what one man wrote in a forum for sex buyers about a woman he paid £100 to perform sex acts on him:

"This is a classic case of 'the pretty ones don't have to work hard'...She's Polish, and her English is not good...I was reminded of The Smiths' song 'Girlfriend in a Coma'...All the while she

seemed completely disinterested and mechanical...I finally decided to fuck her, in mish...All the while, she kept her face turned to one side."

I apologise for the language, Madam Deputy Speaker.

As one of her first acts in government, I urge the Minister to recognise the violence that women such as Crystal endure and the harmful actions of sex buyers by adding prostitution to the Government's tackling violence against women and girls strategy, just as the Scottish Government have done.

So what do we know about sex buyers? We know that 3.6% of men in the UK report having paid for sex in the previous five years, and we know that the level of demand for prostitution varies over time and place. That is because men who pay to sexually exploit women are not helplessly reacting to uncontrollable sexual urges; they are making a choice, and that choice is influenced by a range of factors, including the risk of criminal sanction.

Importantly, we also know that the harm perpetrated when a man pays for sex is not restricted to the individual woman he exploits. As the Home Affairs Committee concluded last year, sex buyers "fuel demand for trafficking". The cohort of men who create demand for the prostitution trade is the same cohort that creates the demand driving the trafficking of women into that trade. So we have a group of men perpetrating a type of violence against women that financially incentivises further violence against women. That should prompt a robust legal response from Government that holds sex buyers accountable for the severity of their actions.

But that is not the legal response we have. In England and Wales there is a loose patchwork of laws relating to prostitution, with no consistent objective underpinning them. Third-party facilitation of prostitution is illegal in some circumstances yet permitted in others. Victims of sexual exploitation face criminal sanction for soliciting in a public place, while individuals who pay for sex face criminal sanctions only if they kerb-crawl or pay for sex with an individual "subjected to force". Even then, the law is very rarely enforced.

The consequences of this legal fudge are all around us, hidden in plain sight. Across the country, vulnerable women are being advertised online and moved around networks of so-called pop-up brothels. Organised crime groups dominate this ruthless trade, exploiting predominantly non UK-national women.

Let me give a snapshot of what is happening. Over a 12-month period, Leicestershire police visited 156 brothels, encountering 421 women, of whom 86% were Romanian. In Bristol, the Police Foundation identified 65 brothels over a two-year period. Over three quarters of the brothels displayed links to organised crime groups, and 83% of the women in them were non-British nationals. In city after city, women are being trafficked and exploited, and for one overriding reason: there are men willing and able to pay to abuse them. This has to stop. It is just unbearable.

Mia de Faoite, a survivor of prostitution who now trains the police on how to combat commercial sexual exploitation, points to how we should do this. She says:

"Prostitution is what most people imagine it to be: violent and dangerous. In the six years that I was involved, I endured a gang rape and three separate rapes...The only countries in Europe who are making a substantial impact in the fight against modern day slavery are the ones who have acknowledged and faced the cause: the demand."

Mia is right, and I urge the Minister to listen to her.

A growing number of countries and states are waking up to the fact that without demand from sex buyers, there would be no supply of women into prostitution and sex trafficking. By criminalising paying for sex and decriminalising victims of sexual exploitation, the Governments of Ireland, France, Sweden, Norway and Canada have shifted the burden of criminality off victims and on to perpetrators. England and Wales must be the next countries added to that list.

Sweden was the first nation to adopt demand reduction legislation in 1999, affording us more than two decades of evidence. The results are stark: demand has dropped, public attitudes have transformed and traffickers are being deterred. The most recent research found that 7.5% of men in Sweden had paid for sex. Just 0.8% of them had paid for sex in the previous 12 months—the smallest proportion recorded in two decades and the lowest level in Europe.

I have seen at first hand how agencies collaborate to implement Sweden's sex purchase Act, having met police and support workers there tasked with holding sex buyers accountable and assisting victims. Co-ordinated multi-agency working, backed up by strong political leadership, have been key to translating the legislation into real change on the ground.

Those who want to preserve the right of men to pay for sex have claimed that outlawing this abusive practice would simply drive the prostitution trade underground, making it harder to identify victims. However, as a study commissioned by the European Commission concluded, there is a logical fallacy at the heart of that argument. Sex buying is largely opportunistic and relies on advertising. Sex buyers have got to be able to find women to sexually exploit, and the police can look at exactly the same adverts that they do. If sex buyers can find women being exploited, so can the police.

Solely going after sex buyers is not sufficient to stop sex trafficking, however. We also have to crack down on the pimping websites that enable and profit from this abhorrent trade. Pimping websites are commercial online platforms dedicated solely or partly to advertising women for prostitution. They function like mass online brothels, making it as easy to order a woman to exploit as it is to order a takeaway. Despite it being illegal to place a prostitution advert in a phone box, the same advert can be legally published for profit on a website. Our laws have not kept pace with technological change, and pimps have got rich as a result. As the Scottish Parliament's cross-party group on commercial sexual exploitation found in its inquiry into pimping websites, a small number of highly lucrative websites dominates the market, centralising and concentrating demand online. The sites make it simple and fast for traffickers to advertise their victims and connect with their so-called customer base in towns and cities across the UK.

Shamefully, the previous Government not only failed to stop pimping websites from operating, but collaborated with them. Since 2018, Home Office officials have met 20 times with Vivastreet, one of the biggest websites advertising prostitution. What has been the result of that collaboration with mass prostitution rings? The Home Affairs Committee's conclusion was:

"The threat posed by websites advertising prostitution, the continuing failure of their owners to implement even the most basic safeguards against pimping and trafficking, and the sheer scale of trafficking for sexual exploitation they facilitate, is at total odds with the National Crime Agency and Home Office's

decision to collaborate with them. We found this public partnership working inexplicable, particularly given the total absence of evidence that it has led to a reduction in the scale of trafficking facilitated by these websites—and the flagrant facilitation of trafficking enabled by, for instance, single individuals being allowed to advertise multiple women for prostitution."

The Home Affairs Committee, the all-party parliamentary group on commercial sexual exploitation and the Scottish Parliament's cross-party group on commercial sexual exploitation have been united in their conclusion that in order to bust the business model of sex trafficking we have to drag our anti-pimping laws into the 21st century by making it a criminal offence to enable or profit from the prostitution of another person, whether that takes place online or offline. Hand in hand with that anti-pimping law, we need a cross-Government strategy to help survivors exit sexual exploitation and rebuild their lives. That is because in order to stop sexual exploitation, we have to end impunity for pimps and punters, and provide support—not sanctions—for victims.

I turn to pornography and the action that we need to finally start tackling the rampant commercial sexual exploitation on pornography websites, as well as their wider harms. A groundbreaking inquiry into the pornography trade by the all-party parliamentary group on commercial sexual exploitation concluded that we cannot simply end the epidemic of male violence against women and girls without confronting the role that pornography plays in fuelling sexual objectification and sexual violence. The fact that Government have hitherto failed to tackle even the most egregious abuses perpetrated by this predatory industry is not because that has proved too difficult, but because there has not been sufficient political will. That has to change now.

The findings of the group's inquiry were extensive and unequivocal. I urge the Minister to study them carefully. I will highlight just a few. First, pornography consumption fuels sexual violence. There is extensive evidence from experimental, non-experimental, longitudinal and cross-sectional studies of that. Research indicates that pornography influences viewers' so-called sexual scripts, shaping their understanding, expectations and decisions in relation to sexual behaviour. Pornography also serves to dehumanise and sexually objectify women, fostering attitudes that underpin violence against women and girls.

Secondly, illegal content is freely accessible on mainstream pornography websites. Lawlessness characterises the online pornography trade, with films featuring child sexual abuse, rape and trafficking victims found on some of the UK's most heavily visited sites. Thirdly, the inquiry concluded that sexual coercion is inherent in the commercial production of pornography. I will quote the words of Alia Dewees, a survivor of pornography and trafficking who now works to support other survivors. Alia was just 20 when she was first paid to perform in pornography. Giving evidence to the all-party group, she recalled,

"when I did not want to consent, when I was feeling uncomfortable, unsafe, or unwilling, I did not have the freedom to leave that shoot without repercussions. I didn't have the freedom to leave and know that I wasn't going to be sued for breach of contract."

Alia experienced that immense pressure to participate in filmed sex acts because on a previous date she had signed a legal contract to do so. That is commercial sexual exploitation. Like too many other women, she was subjected to a horrifying level of sexual abuse in this so-called industry. She bravely spoke out.

[Tonia Antoniazzi]

There are simple, practical steps that Ministers can take now to rein in the lawless activities of pornography sites and implement basic safeguards. Such measures should include making the regulation of pornography consistent across the online and offline spheres, as recommended by the British Board of Film Classification, and requiring online platforms accessed from the UK to verify that every individual featured in pornographic content on their sites is an adult and gave permission for the content to be published there. Safeguards must include giving individuals who feature in pornographic material accessed from the UK the legal right to withdraw their consent to material in which they feature being published or distributed further. We have the power to make that burden a little lighter by giving individuals who feature on pornography websites the legal right to have that content taken down.

I would like to pay tribute to the Ministers on the Front Bench. Labour voted in support of the amendment tabled by the now Minister of State at the Home Department, my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull North and Cottingham (Dame Diana Johnson), but it was blocked by the Conservative Government. Now that Labour is in power, I hope that we will see vital safeguards in a Government Bill soon. In opposition, Labour could only use words in the fight against commercial sexual exploitation. Now we can use deeds. This Government must shift power out of the hands of punters, pimps and pornographers, and place it into the hands of women and girls.

8.10 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Jess Phillips): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Tonia Antoniazzi) for securing this debate, which, as she pointed out, is my first as a Home Office Minister—although definitely not my first on this subject, by any stretch of the imagination. From the outset, let me say that it is a privilege to have been asked by the Prime Minister to serve, and to work on some of the issues to which I have devoted much of my life both inside and outside this building.

We have an enormous task on our hands. Debates such as this underline why it is so critical that we make real progress in protecting women—and in this instance, men as well, and all people—from harm. We know that sexual exploitation disproportionately affects women and girls. As I said, it affects men as well, although those who are buying sex tend always to come from the same group.

It is time that we treat tackling violence against women and girls as the national emergency that it is. New Government policies will be announced in due course, but I want to restate that I believe passionately that change in this area is needed and, until it is achieved, we must not rest. On hearing accounts such as those we have heard tonight from my hon. Friend, I am not sure how we could come to any other conclusion. I will continue to work closely with charities and non-governmental organisations—I have met almost all those mentioned by my hon. Friend—to support services in advancing their efforts to protect survivors and hold perpetrators to account.

Turning to the specific points of the debate, this Government will use every lever available to stop commercial sexual exploitation, and all kinds of sexual exploitation. We are committed to tackling the harms that it brings. The most vulnerable in our society deserve nothing less. When looking at commercial sexual exploitation, it is undeniable that we have to consider carefully those who are exploited under the guise of completely legitimate prostitution. That is often the argument that comes back, but not one that we should recognise.

We are only a couple of weeks into the new Government, so I hope that Members will understand that I am not in a position today to make commitments on specific policies. However, I want to make it clear to my hon. Friend and all Members that they will be coming, and she has my word that I expect change in this space. Currently, the acts of buying and selling sex are not in themselves illegal in England and Wales. However, some activities that can be associated with prostitution are offences, including activities linked to exploitation, which she talked about.

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 makes it illegal to pay for the sexual services of a prostitute subjected to force, threats or any other form of coercion or deception. This is a strict liability offence, meaning that it is not a valid defence that the defendant did not know that the person was being exploited or had been subject to force or coercion. As my hon. Friend pointed out, I have very grave concerns about how well this works in practice—I am happy to say from here that it does not. Like so many convictions that we seek for crimes of violence against women and girls, the numbers are woeful.

We want to understand the scale of the issue and how best to respond to it. The Home Office is currently providing £1.36 million of funding to Changing Lives—I declare that I was the chair of the Changing Lives adult sexual exploitation partnership, though I am no longer—to address the current gaps in evidence of the levels and types of online abuse and exploitation, to help us better understand the pathways that are needed to improve support. This is important work and I thank the amazing Changing Lives for undertaking it. We are also providing £378,000 of funding over two years to Trevi Women, which provides trauma-informed support to women survivors wishing to exit on-street prostitution.

We are aware of the different legislative approaches to prostitution, such as those implemented in Northern Ireland and different parts of Europe. There is a wide range of potential legislative approaches. Further work is needed to understand the options we will have as a Government. I will work with the NGOs and charities to explore those options, ensuring that the protection of women and girls from exploitation is at the forefront of our approach.

The trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation is a horrific crime, and we are determined to safeguard victims and to bring ruthless perpetrators of this crime to justice. That means ensuring that the police relentlessly pursue perpetrators who pose the greatest risk to women and girls, using all the tools at our disposal to protect victims and get dangerous perpetrators off our streets.

As I am sure hon. Members are aware, sexual exploitation is a significant part of the trafficking space in this country. We will build on the Online Safety Act 2023 to ensure that online companies fulfil their duty to eradicate

this exploitation from their sites. There is much work to do in this particular space, as has been highlighted by my hon. Friend. I have had many cases where this has not been handled well at all. Indeed, there are images of me on pornographic websites that I cannot get taken down.

We will use every lever to halve violence against women and girls in the next decade in the Home Office and across the whole of Government, with policing and other experts. The demand for commercial sexual services fuels the exploitation of women who are forced or coerced into prostitution. The use of commercial sexual services should not be normalised. We will look across

Government to use all the levers available to change attitudes in the longer term, reducing demand for commercial sexual services and protecting women from exploitation.

We hope to see huge advances on the issue of sex for rent. I tip my hat to the now Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, my right hon. Friend the Member for Hove and Portslade (Peter Kyle)—

8.17 pm

House adjourned without Question put (Standing Order No. 9(7)).

Written Statements

Tuesday 23 July 2024

BUSINESS AND TRADE

Assimilated Law Report

The Secretary of State for Business and Trade (Jonathan Reynolds): Today I have laid a report regarding the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 before Parliament and published it on gov.uk. This report updates the House in line with the obligations under section 17 of the REUL Act, which requires a report to be published and laid before Parliament every six months detailing all revocations and reforms of assimilated law.

This is the second report to be laid before the House. While it is very early in my tenure as Secretary of State for Business and Trade, and this report outlines the activities of the previous Government, it is right that this obligation is fulfilled and this update is given to the House.

The report today summarises the data on the assimilated law dashboard, providing the public with information about the amount of assimilated law there is and where it sits across the various Departments. The dashboard reflects the position as of 23 June, showing that a total of 6,735 instruments of REUL/assimilated law concentrated over approximately 400 unique policy areas have been identified.

The amount of REUL/assimilated law has decreased slightly since the last Government's update to the dashboard in January 2024. This is due to Departments undertaking further analysis on the REUL/assimilated law they own between January and June and identifying some errors and duplications.

Since the previous update to the dashboard the previous Government revoked or reformed 132 assimilated law instruments. As such, the previous Government revoked or reformed 2,361 instruments of REUL and assimilated law in total.

The report gives details of a further 24 statutory instruments using powers under the REUL Act and other domestic legislation which the previous Government laid since the previous report, including on rail, aviation, health, product safety, merchant shipping, and weights and measures.

The timing of this report only gives me the opportunity to set out this Government's high-level intentions for the future reform of assimilated law. This Government are committed to creating a pro-business environment with a regulatory framework that supports innovation, investment and high-quality jobs. This will be key to realising our national mission to deliver economic growth,

on which so much depends. We will ensure regulation supports the building of new roads, railways, reservoirs and other nationally significant infrastructure. We will also make changes to national planning policy to make it easier to build laboratories, digital infrastructure and gigafactories, while also simplifying the procurement process to support innovation and reduce micro-management.

[HCWS17]

WORK AND PENSIONS

Labour Market

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Liz Kendall): Today I am announcing plans to get Britain working as part of the Government's No. 1 mission: growing the economy.

We have seen record numbers—2.8 million—excluded from the workforce due to long-term sickness and nearly 1 million young people—one in eight—are not in education, employment, or training.

The plans we are setting out will deliver an employment support system that addresses the labour market challenges of today and tomorrow.

We will set a long-term ambition to get to an 80% employment rate, alongside helping more people out of low paid and poor-quality work. To support this, I will work across Government to deliver fundamental reform in three areas:

Undertaking a major overhaul of jobcentres—bringing together Jobcentre Plus and the National Careers Service to create a new national jobs and careers service focused on helping people get into work and get on at work, not only on monitoring and managing benefit claims.

Establishing a youth guarantee—offering training, an apprenticeship, or help to find work for all young people aged 18 to 21.

Empowering local leaders and local areas to tackle economic inactivity—we will give local places the responsibility and resources to design a joined-up work, health and skills offer that is right for local people, as a key part of their local growth plans. The Department will support local areas to make a success of this new approach, including through devolving new powers over employment support to catalyse local action and change.

To drive these changes forward, as part of our growth mission, the Government will publish a White Paper, to set out the policy framework for delivering on these manifesto commitments. To help inform and shape our new approach, I will also be establishing a labour market advisory board of leading experts, chaired by Professor Paul Gregg, who will provide my Department with insight, ideas, and challenge as we design and drive a fundamentally new approach.

[HCWS18]

ORAL ANSWERS

Tuesday 23 July 2024

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Tuesday 23 July 2024

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