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HOUSE OF LORDS

OFFICIAL REPORT

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Abbreviation	Party/Group
CB	Cross Bench
Con	Conservative
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
GP	Green Party
Ind Lab	Independent Labour
Ind LD	Independent Liberal Democrat
Ind SD	Independent Social Democrat
Ind UU	Independent Ulster Unionist
Lab	Labour
LD	Liberal Democrat
LD Ind	Liberal Democrat Independent
Non-afl	Non-affiliated
PC	Plaid Cymru
UKIP	UK Independence Party
UUP	Ulster Unionist Party

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House of Lords

Thursday, 15 October 2015.

11 am

Prayers—read by the Lord Bishop of London.

Introduction: Lord Gilbert of Panteg

11.12 am

Stephen Gilbert Esq, having been created Baron Gilbert of Panteg, of Panteg in the County of Monmouthshire, was introduced and took the oath, supported by Lord Taylor of Holbeach and Lord Cooper of Windrush, and signed an undertaking to abide by the Code of Conduct.

Introduction: Baroness Mone

11.18 am

Michelle Georgina Mone, having been created Baroness Mone, of Mayfair, in the City of Westminster, was introduced and took the oath, supported by Baroness Morris of Bolton and Lord Freud, and signed an undertaking to abide by the Code of Conduct.

Trafficking: Children

Question

11.22 am

Asked by **Baroness Doocey**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether there has been an increase in the number of cases of child trafficking reported since the Modern Slavery Act 2015 was passed.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Lord Bates) (Con): My Lords, the Modern Slavery Act received Royal Assent on 26 March 2015. The first package of measures was implemented on 31 July 2015. The number of children referred into the national referral mechanism has increased year on year, but it is too early to tell whether there has been an increase in the number of child trafficking cases reported to the NRM since the Modern Slavery Act was passed.

Baroness Doocey (LD): I thank the Minister for that response. I should like to ask about the Home Office counting rules used by the police to record crime statistics, which has been recently updated to take account of the Modern Slavery Act. Will he please explain why there is no specific category to record child exploitation cases, such as domestic servitude? Instead, these crimes against adults and children are lumped together, which will obscure the recording, investigation and monitoring of these heinous crimes against children. Surely this is not the way the Modern Slavery Act was supposed to work.

Lord Bates: The noble Baroness makes a very interesting point and I will look at this. It is of course something that the Crown Prosecution Service will produce guidance about, working with the police forces. Also, the national policing lead, Shaun Sawyer, is leading the Modern Slavery Threat Group, which will monitor this very carefully indeed. We are conscious that we need to get to grips with this problem. If in the process of this law—it is just coming into being, with the offences having been introduced on 31 July—that proves to be helpful, I am sure that it is something that we would look at very carefully. I am happy to continue the discussion with the noble Baroness.

Baroness Hamwee (LD): My Lords, what will be the impact of reductions in police budgets on training of police officers to identify victims—I am sure that the Minister will agree that that needs a degree of training and skills—and to question victims in the most supportive and effective way?

Lord Bates: The question of police funding will obviously be for the spending review on 25 November. There is a change to the formula there. We have made it very clear that this is a high priority. That is why the national policing lead is taking such a strong role on this. Significant amounts of training are already being done through the Crown Prosecution Service, but we will continue to keep that under review.

Earl Attlee (Con): My Lords, what progress are we making in dealing with the problem of vulnerable children being referred into the care of a local authority but subsequently getting lost?

Lord Bates: We are looking at a number of issues, particularly with child trafficking advocates. The care of children, under the 1989 Act, continues to be at a very high level. We are looking at whether the appointment of child trafficking advocates alongside each child, to help them navigate their way through the many different services and the many situations they face, would help tackle the problem referred to by my noble friend.

Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean (Lab): Further to the very important point made by the noble Baroness, Lady Doocey, in her supplementary question, surely Ministers should insist, now, that statistics on children and adults should be separated. The noble Baroness made an enormously telling point—of which I was ignorant—and I hope that the Minister can give her a positive assurance about it.

Lord Bates: I will certainly try to go further. The crime statistics, which were published this morning at 9.30 am, contain a revision to the way in which crime is reported and gives new categories, such as fraud and cybercrime. I simply use this example to say that the Government are not immune to the argument that the nature of crime is changing and therefore how we report it ought to change too. In consultation with the national policing lead and, crucially, with the Independent Anti-slavery Commissioner, who also produced his strategy today, we will look at this very carefully and keep it under review.

Baroness Butler-Sloss (CB): Will the Minister say when the results of the pilot project in relation to the child advocates will be available?

Lord Bates: We have had trials in 23 local authorities, as the noble and learned Baroness, who has done so much work in this area, knows. They are now being reviewed by the University of Bedfordshire and we expect to receive a report shortly. The full details of that report will be laid before Parliament, along with regulations as to what we intend to do.

The Lord Bishop of Derby: My Lords, what is being done to ensure that the responses of police forces to their new responsibilities is uniform across the country, because it may be very patchy with budget pressures? Will the Government take a lead to ensure a uniform response of police forces to these responsibilities across the country?

Lord Bates: Of course I can, and I pay tribute to the right reverend Prelate for the significant work he has done, consistently, in this area. The College of Policing has changed its programme for providing information to and training for police officers on this; we have the national policing lead, Shaun Sawyer, working on that. The task force has been established, and the Crown Prosecution Service is also updating its guidelines and has already undertaken a number of training sessions for regional police forces. There is still much more to be done, but a strong start has been made.

Lord Rosser (Lab): The Minister will obviously be aware of speculation about the size of pending police cuts. How will any cuts in the size of police forces, of the kind suggested that the Government might be contemplating, contribute to addressing child trafficking?

Lord Bates: On the wider issue of policing, the noble Lord will be aware that the crime figures have again shown a fall in crime. Today, in England and Wales, the figures are down a further 8%—down 30% since 2010—and that has been done under a period of very tough settlements for the police, which we recognise. That is a tribute to the police and also to the police and crime commissioners. This is something we need to keep under review. I am confident that the Government have made it clear that this is a heinous crime; the powers in the Modern Slavery Act offer a real hope that we can get to grips with tackling the perpetrators of this crime and that it ought to be a priority.

Social Care Question

11.30 am

Asked by **Baroness Royall of Blaisdon**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what they are doing to ensure that quality social care is provided throughout the country and that the wages of care workers are increased.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health (Lord Prior of Brampton) (Con): My Lords, the Government have made the Care Quality Commission's regulation and inspection regime much tougher to ensure that people receive safe, high-quality and compassionate care. The CQC's report, *The State of Health and Adult Social Care in England*, published today, details how well adult social care is performing overall in respect of quality. The new care certificate is equipping staff to deliver high-quality services, while the national living wage will ensure that they are properly paid.

Baroness Royall of Blaisdon (Lab): My Lords, I am grateful to the Minister for that Answer. I declare my interest as a trustee of Crossroads Care in the Forest of Dean and Herefordshire. The Minister mentioned the new national living wage, which is coming in in April. At the same time, local councils up and down the country will have more and more cuts to their budgets. Notwithstanding what the Minister says, I believe that the sector is in crisis, and the sums simply do not add up. Some care organisations are already pulling out, especially in rural areas, where they do not wish to pay travel times. What are the Government going to do to ensure that there is quality care in isolated areas as well as in other parts of the country? Will the Minister agree to have a meeting with me to discuss this specific issue, which is a matter of deep concern?

Lord Prior of Brampton: First, I would be delighted to meet the noble Baroness any time—

Noble Lords: Oh!

Lord Prior of Brampton:—any place! I look forward to that. We will be accompanied by officials. There is no doubt that the local authority-funded care sector is under considerable pressure at the moment and that the increase in the national living wage will add to that pressure. Those pressures are well recognised by the Government. To some extent they have been addressed by the better care fund. I think that pooling budgets between health and social care is a way forward but we have to await the out-turn of the spending round before we can be more definitive.

Lord Cormack (Con): My Lords, might I express the hope that the meeting with the noble Baroness is not only productive but chaperoned properly? I ask my noble friend to take on board the very important point she made about travel time. It really is very wrong indeed that people should not be paid for travel time, especially in rural areas.

Lord Prior of Brampton: I thank my noble friend for that important observation, with which I agree completely.

Baroness Brinton (LD): My Lords, the better care fund was a good starting point for the integration of health and social care, but the Government deferring the integration of the spending limits in the Dilnot review means, we are told, that there are £6 billion of savings. Will the Government ensure that that saving of £6 billion from not fully implementing the integration

of health and social care is put towards the new minimum wage and the new contracts ensuring that staff are paid for travel between appointments?

Lord Prior of Brampton: The position on the savings from deferring the introduction of the Dilnot proposals is that they are being taken into account under the spending round and I cannot comment further today.

Baroness Pitkeathley (Lab): My Lords, is the Minister aware that data from the Health & Social Care Information Centre show that without doubt the social care system is not just under pressure, as he has said, but at breaking point? The figures also show that family carers are under increasing pressure and receiving far less support and back-up. In fact, their quality of life and satisfaction with social services have dropped hugely in the past two years and now only 39% of them say that they have as much social contact as they want and need. Does the Minister agree that support for family carers is an absolute priority and must be maintained since they are, after all, the main providers of social care?

Lord Prior of Brampton: The noble Baroness says that the care system is at breaking point. The CQC's report out today says that it is "fragile". I think it is very variable. Some care providers are finding life extremely difficult but it is highly variable; it depends very much on the mix of clients that care providers are looking after and the extent to which they are funded by local authorities and the extent to which they are funded privately. But I take on board what the noble Baroness says and take it very much to heart.

Baroness Morgan of Huyton (Lab): Does the Minister agree that one of the issues in the CQC report this morning was the hospital sector appearing to be in a level of crisis? We have also heard about the funding problems. That is directly related to the crisis in the social care system. It is one for thing for Ministers to say that the Government are aware of that but I suppose the real question is: what are the Government going to do about the huge current pressures in the social care system, which everybody recognises?

Lord Prior of Brampton: What the noble Baroness says is absolutely right—the two are linked closely, although it is interesting that the main concern coming from the CQC report is around safety, which is not directly related to the point that she raised. The better care fund is a start on this road. The devolution in Manchester is another point along the journey. Increasingly, over the next five or 10 years, we will see a coming together of the health and social care system.

Baroness Jolly (LD): My Lords, I am sure we all welcome a living wage being paid to care workers, but when this was announced, did either the Treasury or the department do an impact assessment of this new expenditure on the sector?

Lord Prior of Brampton: The impact on the sector is very clear: it will push up costs in the sector. How those costs are funded will be part of the spending round discussions that are going forward at the moment.

Baroness Wheeler (Lab): My Lords, today's CQC report calls on health and social care providers to focus on ensuring that services have the right staff and skills mix to ensure that care is always safe. Does the Minister acknowledge the impact of the funding crisis on residential care and the commission's concern at the delay in the introduction of the care cap until 2020? Both residential and daycare have high vacancy and turnover rates and a chronic problem in recruiting and training care staff, particularly under-25s. Would it not be outrageous if the Treasury kept the £6 billion and did not use it to try to address those issues?

Lord Prior of Brampton: The noble Baroness raises two interesting points. There is a recruitment and a training issue involved in many care homes. This is being addressed by the Government in two ways: first, by raising the minimum wage to the national living wage so that it rises to about £9 an hour by 2020; and, secondly, by the introduction of the care certificate which came out of the Camilla Cavendish report after Mid Staffs, which should improve training in the sector. The funding of local authority-provided care is the issue on which we are awaiting the outcome of the spending round discussions.

Lord Patel (CB): Does the Minister agree that the pressures mounting across the whole range of healthcare, from prevention to primary care, acute care and social care, will just keep getting worse until we address the fundamental issue of adequate resourcing of all the aspects of healthcare? Is it not time to start the debate more widely as to how we are going to do that?

Lord Prior of Brampton: I thank the noble Lord for his comments and, of course, I understand exactly what he is saying. I will put just two points. First, the fundamental problem is that the Government still have a very high level of public borrowing, which we inherited and has been there—

Noble Lords: Oh!

Lord Prior of Brampton: It happens to be true. We cannot carry on spending in the way that we used to spend. We have to balance the books. That is a very fundamental point. The second point is that there is huge variation in the system. Some providers, some hospitals and some care systems are delivering much better outcomes with the same money.

Air Quality: London Question

11.39 am

Asked by **Lord Dubs**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have any proposals to improve air quality in Britain, especially in London.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble (Con): My Lords, improving air quality is a priority for government, involving action at international, national and local levels. We are pushing strongly for EU legislation to introduce a new vehicle test procedure. Nationally, more than

[LORD GARDINER OF KIMBLE]

£2 billion-worth of transport measures have been announced since 2011, including support for local action. Additional measures are being taken by the London mayor. We are also consulting on plans to ensure compliance with nitrogen dioxide limits as soon as possible.

Lord Dubs (Lab): My Lords, is it not true that our Supreme Court has twice in recent years criticised us for not complying with EU legal standards on nitrous oxide? For the Minister to say that we are going to do something when those court decisions have already been made seems a bit late in the day. Will the Minister confirm that it is estimated that 29,000 people a year die in the United Kingdom because of poor air quality, a figure that is rising, and that more than 9,000 of them are in London? Is not the recent scandal about VW emissions a further argument that we should tackle these issues quickly and that, in particular, we should stop giving the owners of diesel cars such financial benefits?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: My Lords, I can assure the noble Lord that a considerable number of things are being done to address that, particularly in London and other cities, where it is a strong issue. I entirely agree that there is a big health issue here; that is precisely why we are working with colleagues from the Department of Health and the health agencies. That is precisely why we are encouraging investment in the ultra-low emissions market. We have the highest number of registrations of those vehicles in the EU. We are not alone: 17 other countries have a problem; five have proceedings against them. We all need to work on this and I agree that it is a high priority.

Lord Framlingham (Con): My Lords, does my noble friend agree that one practical thing that we can do immediately is to push for more tree planting in all our inner cities? Trees take in our carbon dioxide and give us back their oxygen, doing more than anything else to improve the quality of the air we breathe.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: First, I entirely agree that we should be planting more trees. In fact, my party's manifesto stated that we wished to plant 11 million more trees over this Parliament. Trees are a great enhancement to our lives, but we need to ensure their planting and location, particularly in urban areas, because if we have avenues of trees it is often difficult for the emissions to go up, which causes a local problem. There are all sorts of reasons why we need to be careful about the way in which we plant our trees.

The Lord Bishop of London: My Lords, in the Minister's reply, mention was made of the Mayor of London. Is the Minister absolutely convinced that the mayor, together with the boroughs and the City of London, has the necessary powers to effect a pan-London improvement of the situation? Obviously, pollution does not respect borough boundaries and the impression locally is that, at the moment, the mayor does not have the requisite powers.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: I am grateful to the right reverend Prelate. I will certainly look into his point about powers, but I know that the Mayor of London is introducing an ultra-low emissions zone in London from September 2020 covering all vehicles, so I imagine that the powers are there. We believe that there will be a significant reduction in NO₂ emissions and roadside concentrations because of that, but we obviously need to do more. That is why, for instance, we are investing in many more people cycling: it is all part of reducing the amount of road traffic.

Baroness Parminter (LD): My Lords, back-street garages and tuning shops are still removing factory-fitted diesel particulate filters, despite the fact that, as the noble Lord, Lord Dubs, says, diesel particulates have been linked to the deaths of 29,000 people a year. What do the Government now intend to do to stop those garages removing those diesel particulate filters from cars?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: My Lords, the removal of diesel particulate filters is a very serious issue. It is an offence to use a vehicle that has that filter removed. In February 2014, an automatic MOT failure for removal of those filters was introduced. Authorised MOT garages that are found to be offering those removal services may have their authorisation to test withdrawn. We are also conducting further research into this, because it is a serious subject both here and in Europe.

Lord Hughes of Woodside (Lab): My Lords, has any assessment been made of the additional pollution caused in London by the myriad roadworks to produce cycle lanes of benefit to cyclists? Is he aware that the increased pollution must be so bad that many cyclists today will not live to see those benefits? Something must be done to reduce this pollution immediately.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: My Lords, I understand the noble Lord's wish that we do something immediately. There is no quick bullet to this, but I assure your Lordships that considerable work is going on into how we reduce traffic, change how we conduct ourselves and increase the number of vehicles that have low emissions. All of that is part of the investment. The London Taxi Company—part of Geely—has been awarded £17 million under the Government's regional growth fund precisely to get another generation of low-emission black taxis.

Lord Berkeley (Lab): My Lords, the Minister said he is very keen to lower the number of vehicles so as to reduce pollution. He is absolutely right on that, but surely the main solution must be to increase public transport. How can he link an increase in the quality and scope of public transport with the drastic cuts imposed on local authorities all the way round the country?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: My Lords, turning to London as that is where we are, London now has the largest fleet of hybrid buses. There are 600 already on the road and by next year that will be up to 1,700.

There is a lot of very good work going on and we need to work in partnership with local government across the country. The economy and its restoration will make possible all the things that many of us want. If we do not have a strong, secure economy, we will not be able to do the things that all of us would like to do.

Immigration Question

11.46 am

Asked by Lord Clinton-Davis

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether that part of the Home Secretary's speech at the recent Conservative Party Conference dealing with immigration represents their policy on that issue.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Lord Bates) (Con): My Lords, the Home Secretary's speech on 6 October set out the Government's immigration policy. Britain does not need net migration in hundreds of thousands every year. We will introduce a new approach to asylum with strict new rules for people who abuse the system in Britain and greater generosity for people in parts of the world where we know they need our help.

Lord Clinton-Davis (Lab): Does the Minister consider that the use of inflammatory language about refugees by both the Home Secretary—and the Prime Minister, referring as he did to a “swarm of people”—has contributed in any way to a resolution of that issue? Why cannot the Government be more welcoming to genuine refugees, enabling them to play a truly meaningful role in the society in which they live, here and in Europe?

Lord Bates: The noble Lord is right about language. Of course, his Question was specifically about that speech. It is important to remember that that speech was preceded, at the Home Secretary's invitation, by a very moving account from my noble friend Lady Helic about her journey from war-torn Bosnia to this country. The Home Secretary concluded her speech by paying tribute to the people who moved here down the years and generations and,

“played a massive part in making this country what it is ... We have a proud history of relieving the distressed and helping the vulnerable—whether ... through our military, our diplomacy, our humanitarian work ... Let Britain stand up for the displaced, the persecuted and the oppressed. For the people who need our help and protection the most”.

I think that the Home Secretary was absolutely right.

Lord Ouseley (CB): My Lords, Queen Elizabeth I, knowing that there were 10,000 black people in London, said there were too many “blackamoors” in Britain and that they should be removed from these shores. In the following centuries and over the past 50 years, there has been an obsession with immigration and numbers. Successive Governments have brought in Immigration Bills and have failed to deal with the matter of curbing immigration, particularly non-white

immigration. The situation at present is that hate crime has increased 18% over the past year. That is also the responsibility of the Home Office. It is now at 53,000 reported crimes, but the British Crime Survey suggests that it is underreported and that some 800 hate crimes occur each day, the majority of them race inspired. Would the Minister not consider that political leadership in this country should focus on what contributes to the prejudice that leads to increased hate crimes and take a much more responsible leadership role in helping to create cohesion?

Lord Bates: I certainly personalise this by paying tribute to the noble Lord for his work down the years in improving race relations in this country. But he will recognise as well that, often, uncontrolled immigration can actually be the cause of a tension in racial harmony in this country. That is why we need to make absolutely sure that we have a robust and fair immigration system, not only for the people who need our help from overseas but also for the ethnic communities that play such a vital and important role in this country already.

Lord Paddick (LD): My Lords, two significant events happened last week, one clearly far more influential than the other. Can the Minister say which of these events had the most positive impact on social cohesion in the UK: the speech of the Home Secretary to the Conservative Party Conference or Nadiya Hussain winning “The Great British Bake Off”?

Lord Bates: What I would say is that the “Bake Off” result recognises the immense contribution which minorities and immigrants in this country—including second generation and third generation immigrants—continue to make. That is what the Home Secretary said, as I read out at the beginning. She said:

“The people who have moved here down the generations, who have played a massive part in making this country what it is”.

I think that is absolutely right. I think they are both right.

Lord Tebbit (Con): Does my noble friend not agree that the problem is not one of ethnicity? The problems we face are those that spring from divergent cultures. Would he agree that a society can have only one dominant culture? If there are two cultures striving to be dominant, it will cause social strife.

Lord Bates: Where my noble friend is right is that perhaps in the past—the Prime Minister has spoken frequently about this—we have been too silent on what British values actually are. That is one of the things that we need to be more to the forefront about. We have introduced legislation on that and we are going to bring forward more legislation in the counterextremism Bill to talk up the positives of British values rather than those voices that would seek to introduce discord in our society.

Lord Rosser (Lab): The Home Secretary said in her speech:

“We must also have an immigration system that allows us to control who comes to our country ... The numbers coming from Europe are unsustainable and the rules have to change”.

[LORD ROSSER]

Can the Minister tell the House, first, whether making significant changes to the rules affecting free movement within the EU is or is not one of the key issues being pursued or to be pursued by the Government in the negotiations with the EU prior to the forthcoming referendum on our continuing membership? Secondly, if changing those rules is being pursued, what has been the response to date from the other 27 member states?

Lord Bates: I think that the Prime Minister has made himself clear that he is not going to give a running commentary on the nature of this renegotiation. It is important that we do renegotiate our relationship on migration and particularly look at those pull factors to the UK, such as the welfare and benefits system. But, of course, there are other things which are drawing people here in greater numbers as well, such as the fact that we in this country are generating and producing more jobs than the rest of Europe put together. Unemployment is continuing to fall and employment is at its high level. We want that to benefit the people of this country—the people who are already here—rather than being another factor in why people would actually travel here.

Apprenticeships

Motion to Take Note

11.53 am

Moved by Baroness Prosser

To move that this House takes note of the process for monitoring the availability and quality of apprenticeships, and the mechanisms for ensuring an appropriate spread of apprenticeships across the labour market.

Baroness Prosser (Lab): My Lords, I am pleased to be able to introduce this debate today. Let me start by saying a few words about why this subject is so important. We have a low-wage, low-skill economy putting severe pressure on individuals, families and our economy overall—I would be really grateful if people did not converse while I am trying to speak. We have a serious skills shortage, especially in engineering skills of all kinds and the skills required for construction and developing new technologies. We have a particular productivity problem—the productivity puzzle—exacerbated, some would say, by our low-wage, low-skill economy. The Recruitment & Employment Confederation has cited skills shortages as the No. 1 problem facing its members, so if we want to be a real global player and stop relying on imported labour to see us through, we need to up our game.

The Government have pledged to support 3 million apprenticeships by 2020. This must not be a “never mind the quality feel the width” proposal. It will take a bigger and better effort by government departments to co-operate and co-ordinate, coupled with determination to introduce and seriously apply the proposed training levy, and a recognition by the Chancellor of the Exchequer that cutting the money granted to FE colleges is penny wise and pound foolish.

What is meant by the term “apprentice”? I heard someone on Radio 4 describe an apprenticeship as “the moving of learning from head to hand to head”. That is a nice, elegant way of putting it. Over the past few years, the term has been used as a catchphrase for the most meagre of training programmes of scant duration with little or no recognisable qualification at the end.

The TUC has welcomed the consultation on the use of the term “apprentice” but has warned that making it a criminal offence to use it and claim support under the apprenticeship scheme for short-term training which would have had to be provided anyway—for example, in the retail trade—will succeed only if mechanisms are in place to enforce action and monitor and inspect sectors of the labour market where such misuse and abuse is known to be prevalent.

As well as possible abuse, the Government must also monitor take-up of opportunities across the economy. Figures produced for the 2014-15 report of the House of Commons Education Select Committee show that efforts to engage young people in apprenticeships are not proving that successful. During the period 2009-10 to 2013-14, the number of under-16s taking up offers halved from a measly 400 to 200. In the same period, the number of 16 to 18 year-old starts saw a modest increase of just over 3,000. Conversely, again in the same period, the number of starts for those aged 45-59 increased fourfold from 10,000 to 41,850. Is this what the Government were looking for? It takes us back, I suspect, to the misuse of the term and possibly the misuse of the support made available to employers.

The Government’s plan to address the question of misuse and abuse, as mentioned above, will, no doubt, go some way towards redressing this imbalance. However, the Education Select Committee also has called for a rebalancing of current funding, giving more emphasis to support for younger trainees. Are the Minister’s Government going to support this proposal?

The question of more directed support for the younger worker has also been raised by Oxfam, which has concerns about the more vulnerable young person. It suggests ring-fencing funding to deal with the particular needs of care leavers and putting more emphasis on ensuring equality of access, with the intention of reducing gender inequality within the UK. Will any of the suggestions put forward by Oxfam be supported or addressed?

The needs of younger people cannot, of course, be dealt with without looking at what is happening in our schools, where all the evidence tells us that far too many pupils receive poor information, advice and guidance, and some receive no advice at all. In many cases, young people are actively discouraged from taking the apprenticeship route. Careers advice in schools does not have a good history. It has been poor for many a long year, mostly because it is not seen as a specialism but is tacked on to the duties of a class teacher. The very unwise decision taken by the previous Secretary of State to devolve careers advice to individual schools has left the system in an incoherent mess with no overall strategy or recognised standards. However, the major problem is that the recognition and reward system for schools is based upon the percentage of

pupils attaining good GCSE and A-level results, and on the numbers of pupils retained in the sixth form. Small wonder that many schools actively discourage the apprenticeship route, with some refusing to allow local manufacturing companies to come in to talk to pupils. I understand that a new destination test is to be introduced, whereby where a young person ends up at some point in the future will contribute to a school's standing, but horses and stable doors come to mind here. When is the Department for Education going to wake up to the problem that gives schools a real conflict of interest?

Before moving on to more positive areas, I must register the concerns of those engaged in further education. This sector seems to be the poor relation when it comes to funding. The grant per pupil varies across the sector, but funding reductions for post-16 learning reduces the FE sector's ability to deliver the Government's apprenticeship agenda. In addition, sixth-form colleges, unlike schools and academies with sixth forms, have to pay VAT on purchases, providing a very uneven playing field for that part of the education sector charged with delivering vocational learning to pupils, some of whom may well be needier than many others.

There is also room for improvement in the arrangements for regulation and oversight. Currently we have the Education Funding Agency, the Skills Funding Agency, the Higher Education Funding Council for England, the FE Commissioner and Ofsted. That sounds like a system devised for the sitcom "Yes Minister". The Association of Colleges has called for a review of these arrangements. Is there any intention to rationalise what must be an expensive, confusing and unnecessary plethora of governance?

Earlier this year, this House established a Select Committee on Social Mobility. The TUC submitted evidence and noted the findings within the UKCES report *Working Futures*, which flagged up the mismatch between apprenticeship starts and the future requirements of the jobs market. There will be precious little social mobility if young people are training to do jobs that are declining or disappearing altogether. What steps are the Government taking to address this problem and to ensure that there is a fit between training offered and long-term job opportunities?

Now for something a little more positive. We welcome the proposed training levy. Some of us remember the training levies of yesteryear and could not understand at the time, nor since, the reasons for their demise. We very much welcome the requirement for companies procuring contracts valued at £10 million-plus to demonstrate a clear commitment to apprenticeships. However, we would go further and say that those major contractors must play their part in training for the future. We have a very good example in Crossrail, and if it can do that, so can others. The recently announced £70 billion injection into the transport sector will also require skilled labour to carry projects forward, and will give another opportunity for employers to commit.

We also welcome the new degree apprenticeship in professional management. The Chartered Management Institute has said that only 13% of current managers have any management qualification at all. That is not

good enough by any means, so this initiative is therefore welcome. I am also pleased to be able to include here the excellent example set by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority. Obviously, this industry requires a highly skilled and safety-aware workforce, and it has wasted no time in establishing multilevel training arrangements delivered across the country, from Cumbria to Bridgwater in Somerset and from Wales to northern Scotland. Across eight sites between 2012 and 2015, 423 new apprentices were taken on, and this autumn will see a further 215 starts. In order to protect the integrity of the supply chain, the NDA has supported the community apprenticeship scheme and the supply chain apprenticeship scheme. These schemes will help to ensure the continuing availability of skilled labour for the nuclear industry and, to that end, funding support is available to employers engaged within the industry.

I cannot conclude my remarks without a mention of the serious gender imbalance, particularly within the STEM areas of employment. As well as committing to apprenticeships, companies should be required to take positive action to bring in under-represented groups, something Crossrail has again dealt with successfully.

Finally, I will give a shout-out for those girls and young women who take up apprenticeships in the beauty industry. I am not the only person in this Chamber, male or female, who needs a good hairdresser—some may say I need it more than others—who enjoys a massage or a manicure, and so on. Training lasts for three years and is quite intensive. The only problem with these jobs is that they are not anything like as well paid as many skilled jobs that are generally done by men. However, we may need to have that debate another day.

Baroness Chisholm of Owlpen (Con): My Lords, I remind all noble Lords that apart from the noble Baroness, Lady Prosser, the noble Lords, Lord Watson and Lord Stoneham, and my noble friend Lord Courtown, there is a five-minute limit on speeches. It will be much appreciated if noble Lords keep to that time limit.

12.05 pm

Lord Macdonald of Tradeston (Lab): My Lords, I thank my noble friend Lady Prosser for initiating this important debate and for opening it so well.

Since the 1997 Labour Government, there has been cross-party support for increasing the number of apprenticeships. By reducing the skills gap in key sectors of the economy, the shared intention is to close the productivity gap between the UK and other leading nations.

Craft apprenticeships were once well regarded, but their reputation now suffers from recent experience of too many badly defined, short-term schemes that neither trained well nor paid well. Ministers have been repeatedly criticised in debates on this subject in your Lordships' House for putting quantity before quality and for tolerating questionable criteria to hit their targets.

The pledge of the new Conservative Government is to create 3 million new apprenticeships by the end of this Parliament—up from the 2.3 million achieved over five years of the coalition Government. While many

[LORD MACDONALD OF TRADESTON]
important questions have still to be answered, some of the measures recently announced by the Prime Minister deserve at least a tentative welcome.

We on the Labour Benches have in past debates urged government to link the award of public sector procurement contracts to the provision of apprenticeships by competing companies. With its procurement budget now totalling over £50 billion a year, the Government now agree that this would significantly boost apprenticeship numbers, and the No. 10 press notice promises that,

“all bids for government contracts worth more than £10 million must demonstrate a clear commitment to apprenticeships. In particular, employers’ bids will be reviewed in line with best practice for the number of apprentices that they expect to support”.

Can the Minister give the House more detail on how “best practice” in apprenticeships will be defined and then implemented?

The Department for Transport has also announced a target of 30,000 apprenticeship places in its sector by 2020. Will this be encouraged by writing new training requirements into regulatory contracts with the train operating companies, Network Rail and the supply chains? Can the Minister also say if there are any plans to extend contractual obligations on apprenticeships in other sectors that are subject to economic regulation?

The introduction of an apprenticeship levy on large companies is also proposed, to start in April 2017. As my noble friend Lady Prosser said, this policy should again be welcomed in principle. There are successful levy fund training systems in over 50 countries around the world, according to the Government. However, some in UK business are more querulous. Microsoft is concerned that its existing successful training schemes will be disrupted. The CBI wants large businesses which will pay the levy to decide how best to spend it. The British Chambers of Commerce complains that government is too focused on large employers. Smaller companies employing fewer than 250 workers will presumably not pay a training levy. Will they then not have access to the levy pot? Can the Minister say how apprenticeships will be boosted among the smaller companies, which of course employ the majority of the UK workforce?

In response to criticisms of inconsistent, poor-quality schemes, the trailblazer groups, led by employers and set up in 2013, are now publishing their approved standards to create apprenticeships worthy of the name. There are now 140 trailblazer groups, responsible for more than 350 standards and working across a far greater range of jobs than ever before. Again, this is progress that deserves cross-party support.

However, given the history of overpromise and underdelivery in regard to skills training, we can confidently anticipate future concerns being debated in your Lordships’ House, particularly when we factor in the impact that the digital revolution will have on so many sectors of our economy. Digital skills are already essential for all trainees, so I conclude with a plea. Your Lordships’ Select Committee on Digital Skills, of which I was a member, as was the Minister, published its report last February, and a debate on its findings now seems somewhat overdue, even by the measured

pace of this establishment. Perhaps the Minister could use his influence to have digital skills scheduled for debate some time soon.

12.10 pm

Baroness Garden of Frognal (LD): My Lords, I thank the noble Baroness, Lady Prosser, for introducing this debate and focusing our attention once more on the importance of apprenticeships. She has been a doughty champion of equal opportunities and work-based training, and both of these the growth in apprenticeships will help to address.

The level of interest in this subject is seen in the many informative briefings which have come from those with first-hand experience of apprenticeships: educational organisations, colleges, awarding bodies, charities, industry and employer organisations. I thank them all but can speak on only a few of the important issues that they raise. I shall leave to others the financing and apprentices levy. In my few minutes I shall focus on three aspects: the lack of knowledge and understanding around apprenticeships; the emphasis on the quantity of apprenticeships—how will the target of 3 million starts impact on the quality of the training and learning?—and continuity and long-term planning for skills and training.

With regard to lack of knowledge, as the noble Baroness, Lady Prosser, said, we have discussed before in this House how a crucial factor in enabling young people to follow the path which best suits them is careers information, advice and guidance. Even at primary school, children can be enthused about learning if they are made aware of future jobs and careers which capture their imagination, including skills-based jobs. If their curiosity is aroused young, they will be much better informed when they leave school.

Recent research revealed that nearly half of parents do not really understand the alternatives available for their school leaver children. With the best of intentions, schools will tend to advise pupils on the academic destinations they know best; hence they will encourage them to go on to university or college—again, as has been mentioned, with the incentive that this ticks the boxes on which they have to report.

Where apprenticeships are suggested, research has found that nearly twice as many men as women apply. Women tend to be in lower-paid routes and have worse job prospects than men, particularly in those industries that have long been male dominated, such as engineering and construction—industries which are in need of all the skilled workers available, not just the male ones.

Picking up on the remarks of the noble Baroness, Lady Prosser, will the Minister say what incentives are offered to schools to promote and celebrate their school leavers who have been accepted on apprenticeships? Most schools will publish with pride their university entrants. Why not their apprentices? It would be a simple way of drawing to the attention of parents, teachers and other pupils the fact that apprenticeships are something to aspire to, commendable and thoroughly worthwhile.

There is a danger that, in chasing numbers, quality is put to one side. If we really want apprenticeships to be highly regarded, it is vital that training and assessment

continue to meet the highest standards. It is also vital that not too many of those 3 million should be level 2 apprenticeships, with the brand thus becoming associated with a lower-level qualification.

There is great expertise in providers of part-time higher education, who, with government support, could be a cost-effective resource in making apprenticeship training less of a barrier, particularly for SMEs. Can the Minister assure the House that there will be no pressure from government that leads trainers or employers to cut corners to meet targets?

Thirdly, I will mention the churn and change in skills policy. I declare an interest in having worked for City & Guilds over a period of 20 years, long before I was involved in any way with politics. Time and resource were spent—some might say wasted—when successive Ministers brought bright ideas which had been tried and discarded, but apparently not recorded as such in the corridors of power. Where is the collective memory? City & Guilds research shows that in the last 30 years, there have been 61 Secretaries of State responsible for skills and employment policy; at least 13 major Acts of Parliament; and seven major national reviews of skills and training policy, which have made more than 200 recommendations. The policy area has flipped between departments or been shared with multiple departments no fewer than 10 times, and at least 19 different major vocational programmes and initiatives have been introduced. What hope is there for the colleges and trainers who have to provide medium-term and long-term programmes for training, or for employers who have to run their businesses while watching out for changes to policy, terminology, criteria and funding? I appeal to the Minister for greater stability and continuity in the skills agenda. Can he assure us that changes will be made only once previous initiatives and the numerous recommendations have been fully considered?

The value of getting it right is high. Apprenticeships enable young people and adults to gain additional skills, find job satisfaction and contribute to the country's economy: but we do need to get the processes and mechanisms right. I look forward to hearing the other contributions.

12.16 pm

The Lord Bishop of Derby: My Lords, I, too, thank the noble Baroness, Lady Prosser, for introducing this debate so clearly and raising so many important issues. I also commend the Government's aspiration for 3 million apprenticeships and for greater flexibility and a range of standards. I also endorse the point made by the noble Baroness about the reality of a skill shortage and the urgency of us tackling this agenda. I remind the House that apprenticeship comes from an understanding of learning and that it is not just about skills, but about skills learnt in the workplace—that is, in a real context. That, of course, shapes people to be citizens as well as workers. I hope that that understanding of apprenticeship will remain at the centre of this initiative and not get pushed to one side by a more narrow focus on skills per se.

I want to make a number of points and ask the Minister two or three questions. The first point is on the link between learning and the workplace. I live in Derby, and our local Derby College trains more than

2,000 apprentices a year. It has recently introduced 10 employer academies. These employer academies allow people who are learning in the college to be linked with employers who have particular business and skill requirements, so that during their learning students can get bits of work experience, and they are guaranteed an interview for an apprenticeship at the end of the process. We have to drive this whole culture, as others have said, back into the learning in schools and colleges. I know that the Government have commissioned Prospect to do work with schools, but could the Minister say what he thinks of the importance of initiatives such as employer academies to further the link between learning and the workplace at an early stage pre-apprenticeship to prepare and encourage people?

My second point is about the levy. A number of employers—especially large employers—in the part of the world where I operate have expressed some concern about a possible tension between the centralising of funds through the levy and the desire for employers to design and deliver learning in their own place and according to their own requirements. That needs to be looked at very carefully, and I would be grateful if the Minister could comment on the tension between the centralising of funding and a desire for delivery, ownership and control to be local.

My next point, to which the noble Lord, Lord Macdonald, has alluded, is about scale. I have heard concerns from small and medium enterprises about the burden of managing the funding and assessment processes for small businesses. There has also been some concern about the current inspection system, which is much valued, being downgraded. It will be easy for big employers to do this, but, as the noble Lord said, most people in the world of work are in small and medium enterprises. Can the Minister comment on how funding and assessment can be done realistically at that level and on the future of the current inspection system?

Finally, the noble Baroness, Lady Prosser, mentioned gender. It is good that just over half of people in the apprenticeship system in 2013—51.9%—were women, but some of the evidence suggests that women are more likely to be paid less, to receive less training and to have fewer job prospects upon completing apprenticeships. Of course, that is part of a wider issue in society, but I would be grateful if the Minister could comment on how he sees the urgency of this gender imbalance in levels of pay, levels of training and job prospects for women in apprenticeships.

12.20 pm

Lord Lingfield (Con): My Lords, this is a welcome debate and I, too, thank the noble Baroness, Lady Prosser, for securing it. I remind your Lordships of my interest as the chairman of the Chartered Institution for Further Education, one of the Government's new initiatives, which I am delighted to say received the Great Seal on its royal charter just last Friday and has therefore been officially in existence for just less than a week.

I warmly support the Government's target of 3 million new apprenticeships by the end of this Parliament and, like the right reverend Prelate, congratulate

[LORD LINGFIELD]

the Government on the fact that, of the 2013-14 starts, well over half were women. In the early 1990s, the Conservative Government launched modern apprenticeships, which provided the model that we use today. They ensured that young people worked towards a recognised qualification, acquired skills and earned a wage at the same time. However, as the noble Baroness, Lady Prosser, said, the new 3 million target will not of itself deal adequately with the high level of vacancies caused by the skills shortages in so many sectors. To be effective, they must be really good-quality apprenticeships—as the noble Baroness, Lady Garden, said, we hope that many of them will be at level 3—and be recognised widely as such by students, teachers, parents and employers.

Like the noble Baroness, Lady Prosser, I was anxious when I heard of the view expressed by the Ofsted chief, Sir Michael Wilshaw, to the Education Select Committee that too many schools fail to promote apprenticeship to their pupils, wishing to hold on to them for financial and prestige reasons and pushing them, in too many cases, towards weak university courses. It is a sad fact that they are then saddled with huge student loans and often poor employment prospects with which to face paying them. The problem is that most school teachers followed the conventional sixth form and university path while young and so do not understand apprenticeship and too often think of it as a second- or third-order option for their pupils.

So we badly need to promote the cause of apprenticeships as a viable and worthwhile alternative and a sure course towards employment. The Industry Apprentice Council's survey this year showed that 40% of apprentices rated their careers guidance as either poor or very poor. Only 16.2% of those surveyed said that they were actively encouraged to undertake an apprenticeship, while 21.2% said that they were actively discouraged. This must change and there is clearly a need to improve the quality of information concerning apprenticeships that young people receive—many, understandably, have huge misconceptions about what they entail. At the moment, schools are simply encouraged to give guidance about apprenticeships; the Minister should conceive of the fact that it should be compulsory information for all secondary schools.

I want to use my last few words to draw attention to a high-quality apprenticeship development centre, also in Derbyshire, run as a partnership between Toyota and Burton and South Derbyshire College, with a dedicated facility within the manufacturing area of the college's campus. This is well known to schools, students, parents, teachers and employers alike as a provider of first-quality apprenticeships because, of course, of the Toyota brand coverage. During the past two years, Toyota and the college have worked together to offer the apprenticeship programme to other small employers and to supply chain partners of Toyota so that they, too, can benefit from the high level of training development and discipline that is part of the Toyota ethos.

There are many other good examples of larger firms looking outwards in this way and giving apprenticeships real prestige. These are actively championed by the Government and will help us to

continue to secure economic growth in this country and the high quality of technically skilled young people that that requires.

12.25 pm

Baroness Morgan of Huyton (Lab): I would also like to thank my noble friend Lady Prosser for this timely debate today. There is always a danger that we fall into collective patting on the backs and a warm glow when we talk about apprenticeships. In some ways, what we should really be proud of, arguably, were the old-style apprenticeships, so I would like to ask today: how do we look at what worked, learn the lessons of success and failure and modernise for today and tomorrow's world of work?

We often ask in some bemusement why we do not do skills training as well as Germany, to take one example. The answer is pretty simple. We had a fully functioning system like other European countries. In the 1950s, over half of male school leavers went into apprenticeships. Decline really accelerated from the 1970s with recession and falling numbers of jobs in traditional industries. Unfortunately, successive Governments did not then reform and update apprenticeships; they pretty well destroyed them. Out went the core employer-apprenticeship relationship with a combination of quality workplace learning and more formal education; out went the expectation that employers would contribute to the off-the-job costs; and out went the strong and flexible connection between the needs of the local employment market and what was offered via apprenticeships. What came in? A well-meaning but poorly conceived new centralised system of national vocational qualifications based on competencies promised great progress on productivity, but it did not really deliver.

Apprenticeships became popular again with all parties from the 1990s, but the focus since then has been on numbers, not quality. There have not been apprenticeships as we would collectively envisage them, with some very notable and high-quality exceptions. The apprenticeship scheme in the past 20 years or so has been characterised by being heavily focused at level 2, at GCSE level, not a higher level, as required by the economy. Typically, it involves a low-skilled worker who receives pretty poor training. They have been heavily skewed, too, to workers over 25 years of age who previously would have been trained by employers, not on government-funded schemes. The Digital Skills Committee, which I chaired, received candid evidence from a range of employers who said that skills training at FE colleges is too often inadequate to their needs. They also admitted that, since the 2008 recession, they have largely ceased to fund proper training and, because of skills shortages, fear that if they train employees they will be poached by others. Recent Ofsted reports have said much the same thing.

In summary, a combination of central targets for apprenticeship starts and the outcome-based funding system has incentivised providers of training to engage in a drive to the bottom. Large numbers of short, low-level and often low-quality apprenticeships have been favoured over more rigorous, longer, high-quality apprenticeships. That has been coupled with drastic cuts in FE colleges, which are likely to get worse,

affecting largely low-skill, poorly educated, often disadvantaged young people. I confess that I scratch my head that funding lunches for all primary children is a higher priority than FE colleges.

Building on the Richard review and the trailblazers programme, there needs to be fundamental reform. In this context, I strongly welcome the new levy. It is essential that apprenticeships are funded at the sort of level that our competitors have done for many years. But I am anxious rather than excited about the 3 million target. I am sympathetic to writers of manifestos—I have certainly been there myself—but we must not again chase numbers rather than quality.

So what do we need? Apprenticeships have to, again, reflect labour market needs, develop young people's skills to a high level and make a real contribution to increasing productivity. As in Austria, Denmark, France and Germany, we need high-quality, on-the-job learning and high-quality, off-the-job learning in education and training. This is a very big jump from where we are now. We also need to focus on developing advanced-level apprenticeships. There is lot of noise about higher apprenticeships but in reality the numbers are tiny. Yet this is precisely where we need to focus our efforts if we want a genuine alternative to university, and if we want to meet the serious skills shortages that we know are present in our economy. That is precisely where our competitors deliver their numbers.

Core to the success of new apprenticeships is the involvement—indeed, the active and enthusiastic support—of employers. That has been seen in the trailblazers programme. Now we need to reform the whole system, to recreate the self-reinforcing mechanism that originally produced great apprenticeships. The new fund will certainly help enormously, but my plea today is to do quality as well as quantity—indeed, to put quality before quantity at first. If you want one measure, do not let it be the 3 million; let it be where apprentices are one year after they finish their scheme. That should be the key measure of whether or not they have the right jobs and whether they are meeting the needs of the local economy. I should be really interested to hear from the Minister whether that measure is being considered.

12.31 pm

Lord Aberdare (CB): My Lords, I am a firm believer in the value and importance of apprenticeships—for apprentices themselves, for employers and for our economy. So, I very much welcome this debate. I, too, served with the Minister on your Lordships' Digital Skills Committee and it is a great pleasure to follow our excellent chairman in this speech.

Our report in February included a call for more apprenticeships across the board, more digital apprenticeships, and also that all apprenticeships should include a digital skills element. I trust that the Minister is promoting that agenda in his current role. As a vice-chair of the apprenticeships all-party group, I have talked to many young apprentices all singing the praises of the paid apprenticeship pathway, as opposed to going to university. For this debate I have received input from too many industry employer and other bodies to list in my five minutes, but I thank them all.

I very much welcome the Government's target of 3 million new apprenticeship starts in England during the current Parliament, although again I believe an even better target might relate to successful apprenticeship completions. Three key elements are required to reach that target: enough places from employers; enough applicants to take them up; and high enough quality to ensure that they lead to proper transferable skills and jobs.

According to the excellent Library note for this debate, there are, on average, 12 applications for every apprenticeship vacancy. Many more companies need to offer apprenticeships, especially SMEs, so it is disconcerting to hear about growing disquiet among employers about the proposed new funding and delivery model for apprenticeships, despite its being developed under the banner of employer leadership. This disquiet relates above all to the lack of clarity about how the proposed apprenticeship levy will work. There are numerous uncertainties and some scepticism about the Government's claim that firms that are committed to training will be able to get back more than they have put in. That lack of clarity risks making training apprentices seem less rather than more attractive, with the levy viewed more as a tax than an investment. I hope that the Minister will be able to tell us when more detail on the levy will be available to set some of those fears at rest.

SMEs need specific help to offer apprenticeships. They get some extra funding but need other support, too, such as that provided by apprenticeship training agencies—ATAs—or by the automotive sector's clearing-house approach to give SMEs access to suitable candidates, or by BAE Systems' support for SMEs in its supply chain to take on apprentices. What are the Government doing to promote and extend schemes like this to enable many more SMEs to take on apprentices?

In a recent survey of more than 1,300 apprentices by the Industry Apprentice Council, itself made up of apprentices, 56% said that they found their apprenticeships through their own initiative; only 7% said that their careers adviser provided any input and another 7% that a teacher had helped. Some 40% believed that the careers advice they received at school was poor or very poor; 5% had had none at all. Ofsted found 80% of careers advice in school to be below the required standard and 89% of STEM teachers see providing careers information as part of their job, but only 10% know about apprenticeships. I could go on, but these figures speak for themselves.

I hope that the Minister will tell us how the Government plan to tackle the challenge of improving the awareness and status of apprenticeships beyond the limited but welcome provision in the Enterprise Bill. What about getting Ofsted to more formally inspect school careers advice, setting up a UCAS-style application system for apprentices, or giving a major boost to pre-apprenticeship activities such as work experience, traineeships and employer engagement? I declare an interest, in that I used to run a small business providing employability skills training. What about running programmes to increase teachers' and parents' awareness of apprenticeships?

[LORD ABERDARE]

I do not have time to cover the importance of quality for apprenticeships. Three million starts is not good enough unless they deliver real, needed skills, up to a high level, with progression into real jobs. I am attracted by the idea of a new quality mark for apprenticeships, such as NIACE's apprentice charter.

At present, I detect a sense of unfulfilled expectation among employers about the state of apprenticeships policy: employers are willing to pick up the ball and run with it, but need first to be clear about the rules of the game. I hope that the noble Earl the Minister will be able to give some indication of how the Government plan to progress the three critical strands that I have outlined.

12.35 pm

Lord Bhattacharyya (Lab): My Lords, I congratulate my noble friend Lady Prosser on securing this important debate. I declare my interest as chairman of WMG at the University of Warwick. At WMG we are partners in Jaguar Land Rover's Lifelong Learning Academy. I set it up. We have a budget of just under £1 billion. We train workers from across the industry, from advanced apprentices to senior managers. This experience has taught me the importance of updating curriculums and constantly improving the quality of training in classrooms and at work. Vocational learning must be relevant to future careers. Currently, we spend more than £3.5 billion in developing new products. Our competitors are in Germany.

I shall focus on how we can create high-quality apprenticeships. There is broad cross-party agreement on this aim, yet all Governments have struggled to deliver. It is a graveyard of acronyms, from TEC, YOP and YTS to LSC. The challenge we face is practical, not ideological. In Germany, 500,000 young people begin apprenticeships each year, leading to a status that they can take pride in, such as being called technician engineers. Here, apprenticeships have grown mostly among older workers. A decade ago, 80 people aged over 35 began an apprenticeship; last year, 80,000 did so. More than 2,000 people aged over 60 became apprentices. I am a great advocate of lifelong learning, but this is perhaps taking things too far.

Some of these apprenticeships have been of poor quality. In 2012, one supermarket created 50,000 six-month apprenticeships, while their private training provider made more than £12 million profit from these contracts. At the same time, the number of young people on advanced apprenticeships in engineering and manufacturing declined. To their credit, Ministers have learned from their on-the-job training and now argue that apprentices should be new entrants, on quality courses leading to a recognised status. Removing programme-led and short-term apprenticeships was a good start. Now we await the Ofsted report on apprenticeship quality, knowing that the Skills Minister, Nick Boles, has admitted it will expose a great deal of "bad practice".

How can we fix this? Sir Michael Wilshaw has rightly said that,

"to have a truly effective vocational education system, employers must become more involved in its delivery".

Today, trailblazer employer groups are setting new apprenticeship standards. However, progress is slow, with only 54 agreed. When new standards are agreed, there will still be much poor training and some bad employers out there. Ofsted is excellent, but its last annual report showed that it inspected just 16 employers and 40 independent learning providers that taught apprentices. It cannot monitor thousands of employers and hundreds of vocations.

In Germany, the dual system relies on the chambers of commerce supervising training, assessing quality, and setting exams. In Britain, there is no such established industrial partnership driving quality. There is no clarity on how standards will be monitored or inspected in the future. We must create the capability in industry to drive up quality in the workplace.

The apprenticeship levy could provide an answer. Levy payers will receive a voucher to buy training; underspend by other levy payers will increase the voucher's value. We should use a proportion of this pool to also support apprenticeship standards. Employers should create sector funds responsible for updating standards, ensuring vocational training is of high quality, and insisting that students are treated well at work. Ministers are right that the levy must not subsidise firms that do not train; using the levy to support apprenticeship quality would only help firms who do train and apprentices who gain.

We have broad agreement on aims and strategies; now we must get the delivery right. Unless we do that, it will be another two or three years of more reports coming out and we will have no future. I hope the Minister agrees that employers must both contribute to funding apprenticeships and contribute to improving quality.

12.41 pm

Lord Addington (LD): My Lords, apprenticeships are one of those things which everybody hailed as a wonderful idea but nobody has been quite sure exactly what they are supposed to do; I think that would be the assessment finally coming through.

I was probably one of the first to say there were problems, because of one specific area I had experience of: dyslexia in taking the final assessment. I have since discovered, thanks to people at the British Dyslexia Association who have had a look at it for me, that in the new trailblazer guidance there is absolutely no mention of what to do about disability when setting up an apprenticeship. Effectively, it seems that the Equality Act is being ignored. There might be some guidance hidden—and if you dig back far enough there is a mention of some form of legal requirement—but nobody is telling you how to do it. Nobody is telling you how to handle this incredibly diverse, complicated sector, which is overrepresented in the NEET population, this thing we are supposed to be getting rid of with apprenticeships. We are not addressing it.

Then we go to the employers, who are quite convinced that if you have not got a GCSE in maths and English you are utterly unemployable, which means you have got to take an assessment. Other disability groups, including one I have had quite a lot of contact with over the years and have not always agreed with,

the Alliance for Inclusive Education, have raised the concerns for every bit as long as I have. A different group, mainly dealing with people with learning disabilities, once again, feel excluded. Unless you start to address this problem, the apprenticeships are not going to touch one of the biggest groups we have employment problems with.

With the backing of this House, I managed to get people to say that those who had certain types of literacy problems or disabilities could take the final assessment. I thank this House for that and I thank your Lordships' patience for allowing me to bore you for long enough to get it dealt with. Indeed, if it did not bore you it certainly bored me. But unless we start to address this properly, we are always going to miss; we are always going to have people left aside. Employers have got to be told, "It is the Equality Act", but there are ways around this, and reasonable adjustment does not mean we are saying take someone who cannot do the job or access the training. We are saying that you have to do it differently. Certain groups will always be excluded from certain occupations—that is just the way it is—but far fewer than now. There seems to be a total lack of understanding or, indeed, a will to look at the way that changes in behaviour and the application of technology can change the situation. It will not change unless we bring those things together, as we have done in other education sectors. Indeed, higher education is a much better example; you can get through a degree far more easily and with far more support than you can get through the most basic of apprenticeships. That is an absurdity we have not dealt with yet. All the parties represented in this House have a degree of blame for that. We now have to try to address it.

I say to the noble Earl, who is a long-standing friend, can we please get some idea of how the Government are going to bring this forward? For instance, will they make sure that anybody who is teaching in the college-based parts of the apprenticeship has at least some basic awareness of the most commonly occurring disabilities, hidden or otherwise, or at least knows where to go and access that help? We are now encouraging a situation where they are effectively breaking the law. We are institutionally encouraging people to get rid of something that they are required to do under the Equality Act and dozens of bits of legislation before that. Unless we start to do some more work here, we are guaranteeing a level of failure in the system that is unacceptable. I hope we can start to get a coherent answer to this question, because at the moment we are merely storing up trouble for later down the line and, I am afraid, far more parliamentary time will be taken up on dragging awareness to this subject.

12.45 pm

Baroness Warwick of Undercliffe (Lab): My Lords, I congratulate my noble friend Lady Prosser on securing this debate. When I asked the Library for a list of debates on the need for more apprenticeships, I was surprised at the number. It has been discussed in one form or another in this House 14 times in the past 12 months. In fact, I raised it on Tuesday during Second Reading of the Enterprise Bill. So if we are

not making enough progress, the House has done its best to get the problem aired.

The Government are committed to creating 3 million apprenticeships by the end of this Parliament, which is an ambitious target. The Association of Colleges, which trained 294,000 apprentices last year, has said that this target can be met only by increasing the volume of lower level 2 and 3 apprenticeships. However, it is clear from the data provided in the excellent briefing from the Library that, although growth has occurred over the past five years, it has been among adults. Many young people leaving school are not aware of the range of pathways they could take, a point reinforced by several speakers today.

Earlier this year the House of Commons Education Committee urged the Government to ensure that, "more employers commit to providing apprenticeships for young people".

A recent report from Demos, a cross-party think tank, looked at the construction sector. It estimated that 434,000 recruits will be required simply to replace skills lost through older workers' retirement. Yet the report concluded that more employers still need to be convinced that apprenticeships can work for their business. There are 12 applications for every apprenticeship vacancy. The challenge for the Government is to get many more employers on board.

I declare an interest as chair of the National Housing Federation, which represents housing associations in England. In my contribution to the Enterprise Bill debate earlier this week, I pointed out that housing associations, which are themselves businesses and employers, are committed to developing and supporting apprenticeship schemes and want to do a lot more. Over the past three years they have directly employed around 12,000 apprenticeship starters. I thought it would be useful to give a couple of examples of the way in which housing associations have developed their apprenticeship offers.

In Burnley, Calico Enterprise, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Calico Group, created Constructing the Future in 2010. This was one of the first shared apprenticeship initiatives run in partnership with the Construction Industry Training Board, which maximises public sector procurement to create construction apprenticeships. New contractors host an apprentice, with all the recruitment, selection and management remaining the responsibility of CtF. The programme has created more than 150 apprenticeships since its launch, with 85% moving into permanent employment. I very much support the call of the noble Baroness, Lady Morgan, for permanent employment following the apprenticeship to be an indicator of quality. CtF operates across the north-west with all the major housing associations, contractors, 12 local authorities and the majority of further education colleges.

L&Q, my second example, is one of the UK's leading housing associations, owning and managing around 70,000 homes across London and the south-east. The L&Q apprenticeship programme has recruited 23 apprentices in the past 18 months and plans to recruit a further 20 apprentices every year. It pays all apprentices the London living wage, which ensures that its residents are able to join the programme and

[BARONESS WARWICK OF UNDERCLIFFE] sustain their tenancies. They have retained 100% of their apprentices and 100% of them have completed successfully. Apprentices are provided with career progression support and mentoring as they approach the end of their apprenticeship. I could provide many more such examples, if there were time, but I will conclude with some lessons that we have learned about what more employers could do to support apprenticeships.

Employers should ensure that apprenticeships are embedded into their wider planning for workforce growth and skills development, that the training apprentices receive on and off the job is high-quality, and that apprentices have access to ongoing support, pastoral care and mentoring. Employers should seek to widen the talent pool from which they recruit, ensuring that their schemes are accessible and, ideally, go the extra mile to ensure that those who may face disadvantages in the labour market have the opportunity to benefit from an apprenticeship. Employers should look not only internally but to their wider supply chain and seek to leverage additional benefits from their spend with other organisations. Can the Minister confirm that these sound principles will be part of the Government's discussions with employers in their provision of 3 million quality apprenticeships? Certainly, housing associations stand ready to play their part in helping some of the most disadvantaged people into apprenticeships and work.

12.51 pm

Lord Mawson (CB): My Lords, I thank the noble Baroness, Lady Prosser, for introducing this important debate because it is close to my heart. I left school in Bradford at 16, bored, and became a telecommunications technician apprentice with what was then the GPO. I was immediately thrown into the world of work and suddenly had to engage with adults on equal terms—at least, that was the idea. I had to get out of bed at 7 am, get in my dad's car and go to work while listening to Terry Wogan chirping away on the breakfast show, which was a challenge for any teenager. I have spent the last 35 years as a social entrepreneur in both church and secular worlds, applying a business logic and principles to challenging social problems—I think that my colleagues and I have built more than 1,000 projects during that time—and those early skills, hard won through digging up roads, climbing telegraph poles, visiting customers' houses and installing the old Strowger telephone exchanges, proved crucial in later life for the work of an entrepreneur. The culture was all about learning by doing, which is such a crucial skill and so relevant to the enterprise culture in which we all now live.

What now needs to happen to create greater availability and improve the quality of apprenticeships? What are the blockages? In a spirit of learning by doing, let me share with your Lordships what we have actually been doing on the Olympic Park in east London since the 2012 Games to challenge and break open some of those blockages. Here I must declare interests as a board member of the London Legacy Development Corporation and as chairman of the regeneration and communities committee. Since October 2012, the London Legacy Development Corporation has been delivering

a large programme of construction works at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. Through this wide-ranging construction programme, our focus has been on the creation of job and apprenticeship opportunities in legacy for local residents, particularly for young people and under-represented groups who face significant barriers to entering or returning to the construction sector.

The approach to date has been very successful. More than 120 young people have benefited from apprenticeships, hundreds of local people have trained in industry-required trades and skills at the park, and almost 30% of our workforce has been from the local area. Building on this success, the park will benefit from a significant volume of construction work over the next decade, ranging from the cultural education quarter at the £2 billion Olympicopolis development to 1,500 housing units at East Wick and Sweetwater. The breadth and scope of the planned activities present a significant opportunity to continue the LLDC's best-practice approach and address some of the country's current and future demand for skills, particularly through the delivery of apprentices.

Our work is premised on a number of key lessons learned—principles and practices that have enabled us to work with industry in delivering a high number of apprentices at the park. First, a strong client commitment to delivering apprentices is key. Secondly, we are using our procurement process to assess a bidder's track record and proposals for securing local socioeconomic benefits, including apprenticeship delivery. Thirdly, we are embedding commitments contractually and working in partnership with our contractors, operators, tenants and developer partners to deliver them. Fourthly, we are focusing on early intervention with contractors to understand their recruitment needs and apprenticeship opportunities, while taking a leadership role in co-ordinating delivery models to support those needs. Fifthly, we are commissioning bespoke, demand-led training programmes that future proof local young people by providing them with the skills required by industry. Finally, we require that apprentices are paid at least the national minimum wage to aid retention among people.

We have focused on innovative and joined-up delivery models. Apprentices are the solution to solving long-term skills shortages in a multitude of industrial sectors. However, in the construction industry, for example, changing trends such as higher levels of subcontracting and shortened construction programmes have made it difficult for many firms to offer traditional apprenticeships. In response to that, we have promoted the use of shared apprenticeship schemes on the site, using an ATA to work with prime and subcontractors to broker apprenticeship and job opportunities for local people in transformation.

What were the blockages? First, the public sector was setting unrealistic targets. Secondly, there was a need for a whole supply chain approach. Thirdly, there were poorly co-ordinated public sector supply-side responses from the boroughs and further education colleges. All the LLDC's employment and skills work is underpinned by a firm commitment to being employer-led. Fourthly, low wages feed low retention rates.

We need to pay apprentices the national minimum wage. Our experience is that employers are willing to invest in motivated young people.

We all now live in an enterprise culture. Learning by doing needs to become the norm. What will the Minister do to ensure that those valuable lessons learned on the Olympic park are shared nationally across the country?

12.56 pm

Lord Haskel (Lab): My Lords, in their recent paper, *Fixing the Foundations*, the Government seek a higher pay and lower welfare society, giving people the chance to work and progress. Apprenticeships used to provide this but, as my noble friend Lady Morgan told us, the system did not adapt to the economic changes of the 1970s and 1980s and was virtually abandoned in favour of national vocational qualifications. Manifestly, they failed to deliver on pay, productivity and standard of living. As a result, in recent years, apprenticeships have come back.

Yes, apprenticeships came back in favour, but at the same time they became politicised by setting targets to be met speedily and cheaply, with little measure of quality, irrespective of age or need. Those wonderful apprenticeships at Rolls-Royce, Siemens, BAe, JLR and the places which the noble Lord, Lord Battacharyya, told us about have become the exception. As my noble friend Lord Macdonald reminded us, in last week's report from the Sutton Trust, many lower end apprenticeships have become little more than cheap labour schemes.

Thanks to the noble Baroness, Lady Wolf, and the Richard review, we have come to realise how ineffective those apprenticeships are in raising our productivity and standard of living. The best schemes, which benefit the nation's economy and people's standard of living, take several years, involve a lot of input from an employer and require formal tuition, but only 30,000 positions have so far been higher than school GCSEs. The Government's own apprenticeship survey found that 21% of apprentices are receiving no outside training.

I welcome the Government's intention to raise standards above those laid down in May 2012 with the Trailblazer scheme, as recommended by the Richard review, but lots more is needed. The first thing is to take apprenticeships out of politics, abandon targets in favour of standards and priorities, and reduce complexity. Virtually all noble Lords who spoke are in favour of this—are the Government? To this end I would, like other noble Lords, welcome an apprenticeship levy.

In introducing this debate, my noble friend was concerned about the spread of apprenticeships. She is right because the world of work is changing, as your Lordships' Digital Skills Committee reported. A lot of work is now done over the internet by independent contractors—the so-called human cloud. In accounting and legal, translation and languages, design and architecture, and computer and software, independent contractors are available, for instance, through firms such as Upwork which has 20,000 people on its list. Amazon has already prepared a platform for this which you can go on to today, so it is not just driving taxis or delivering parcels that is part of the IT economy.

If we fail to adapt our apprenticeship systems to this new way of working, as we failed to adapt in the 1970s and 1980s, there is a danger of this new style of casual labour racing to the bottom. The Minister and his department have to be creative and find a new form of employment that suits these changing circumstances and also incorporates apprenticeships. What are they doing about this? If all this is well done, we should see not only a higher standard of living based on sound economics but also the rise in skills that we need, rising productivity and a growing economy. These are things a good apprenticeship scheme will deliver to the economy, the kind of thing that my noble friend Lady Prosser spoke about when she opened this debate.

1.02 pm

Baroness Humphreys (LD): My Lords, I also add my thanks to the noble Baroness, Lady Prosser, for securing this debate and presenting me with the opportunity to contribute to it today. I begin by paying tribute to my colleague, the former Liberal Democrat Business Secretary, Vince Cable, who, during the coalition years, took on the Liberal Democrat manifesto commitment to increase the number of apprenticeships and spearheaded the drive to ensure that this happened.

If we cast our minds back to five years ago when the coalition came into being, apprenticeships were uncommon and relatively low status, perhaps a second-best option for those deemed to have “failed” at school. My colleagues in the coalition Government insisted that more resources be put into good vocational training for the 60% who do not go to university. The results are beginning to be seen. It has been heart-warming to listen to the support given to the principle of encouraging young people into apprenticeships from all sides of your Lordships' House today. I welcome the conversion of those who were perhaps initially sceptical.

There has been some criticism that the bulk of apprenticeship growth over the past five years has been among adults. According to the Association of Colleges, only around 6% of 16 to 18 year-olds are in apprenticeships. It says that this can be attributed to inadequate careers advice and young people lacking the relevant skills to enable them to be work ready. I think we would all agree that more needs to be done to overcome employer resistance to taking on young employees who might not stay the course. I also challenge the Government to reconsider their attitude to careers education and guidance, and to ensure that pupils have access to high quality, impartial and transparent careers advice on both academic and vocational routes.

A similar situation pertains in Wales. The Welsh Government's flagship Pathways to Apprenticeships scheme aimed to get 75% of learners into an apprenticeship. However, even its own report published in July had to admit that it had missed its target by a large margin as just 35% of learners progressed on to their scheme in 2012-13. Some 32% said that there simply was not an apprenticeship open to them.

At the beginning of this year, I visited Ysgol John Bright, a Welsh comprehensive school in Llandudno. Its careers department had won a top award for the quality of its careers work and I wanted to see how a modern careers department operated so successfully—not a mean feat, these days. The careers education and

[BARONESS HUMPHREYS]

guidance programme plays a key role in the raising of standards throughout that high-achieving school, helping to monitor pupils' subject choices and progress, and providing the information that pupils need. However, I was met by the head teacher who told me: "If there is one message, and one message only, that you take away from here today, that must be that there is a desperate shortage of high-level apprenticeships in north Wales". That is true.

North Wales covers a large area, of course, ranging from the rural west, through the coastal holiday resorts with their rural hinterlands, to the more industrial areas in the east of the region. It is logical that the availability of apprenticeships reflects the amount and type of industry and businesses in a particular area. Figures from the Welsh Government's StatsWales website showing work-based learning programme starts reveal that last year, for the whole of north Wales, there were 15 level 4 starts in engineering, and 10 of those were to the east in Flintshire, the home of Airbus.

To a great extent, apprenticeships are a victim of their own success. Those young people armed with the relevant careers advice now see them as a viable alternative to university and the demand can only increase. Finally, will the Government introduce a new performance measure that counts how many apprentices gained sustained employment within 12 months of completing their apprenticeships? Will the Minister consider the proposal that a proportion of the funding currently given to providers is contingent on high performance against this new measure?

1.07 pm

Lord Haughey (Lab): My Lords, I thank my noble friend Lady Prosser for securing this very important debate. For someone who served time as an apprentice that gave me the skills I required to virtually guarantee employment for the rest of my working life, it is vital that we do not allow the term "apprenticeship" to be hijacked for political gains. Much has been said by the Chancellor and Prime Minister about the creation of 3 million new apprenticeships during the term of their Government. Young people hearing that believe it is wonderful news and that there is a prospect of 3 million new, meaningful jobs. Unfortunately, that is not the case. In reality, a vast number of these apprenticeships are short-term training courses, mostly taken up by people already employed.

Most of the points I plan to raise have already been raised by my noble friends so I will not subject noble Lords who have taken the time to remain in the Chamber for this very important debate to repetitiveness. However, we cannot allow the term "apprenticeship" to be diluted. Some training providers have seen this as a Klondike. The model we have at the moment does not benefit the individual. As a large employer who spends a lot of money on apprenticeships, I would not be happy paying a levy for it to be spent in the way it is at present. I am really interested to find out what the Government mean by guaranteeing these 3 million apprenticeships as I do not know how that is possible.

I could give many bad examples of what is happening at the moment under the apprenticeship banner. Here is one. In Scotland, if you work in a bar and you want

to attend a training course for a few nights a week, for maybe eight times, and learn how to pour a pint, you will get a certificate. This is deemed a modern apprenticeship. This is wholly unacceptable and I could give many, many cases. I could be here all day.

Over the last 30 years I have funded more than 1,700 meaningful apprenticeships. The true definition of an apprenticeship—as most people here would know it—is training in practical and theoretical skills that would give someone the tools hopefully to keep them gainfully employed for many, many years. Unfortunately, I do not think the vast majority of the 3 million apprenticeships that the Chancellor has announced fall into this category. The lack of investment in apprenticeships over the last 10 years, especially in the construction industry, will come back to haunt us. Therefore, I humbly request the Minister to return to this House and inform the noble Lords how many of these 3 million apprenticeships that have been talked about are new jobs.

I visited a school in Glasgow last week where I spoke to 600 children. I gave them my life story and at the end I was asked by at least six children where the adverts appear for all these new apprenticeships. I could not tell them. It is very important that we do not give false hope to young people. I also think that it has to be explained what these 3 million guaranteed apprenticeships really mean.

1.11 pm

Lord Snape (Lab): My Lords, like speakers from both sides of the House, I thank my noble friend Lady Prosser for the opportunity to discuss this important subject. The amount of interest generated by this subject can be seen by the number of speakers. Of course, the downside of that happy situation is that we all have to gabble through what we have to say in the shortest possible time. In my case, that might be a relief to noble Lords on both sides of the Chamber.

Reference has been made to the Sutton Trust report recently published, *Levels of Success: The Potential of UK Apprenticeships*. In the foreword to that report, the chairman of the Sutton Trust, Sir Peter Lampl, had this to say about apprentices and apprenticeships:

"For apprenticeships to be genuine paths to success for young people they will need to be more widely available and better understood. We need to increase the proportion of apprenticeships at level 4 and 5 (higher)—the best apprenticeships—in addition to ensuring that level 3 (advanced) rather than level 2 (intermediate) is the minimum standard for most apprenticeships targeted at young people. If the Government's promise of three million apprenticeships is to lead to a genuine skills revolution, progression to level 3 must be inbuilt within most level 2 apprenticeships".

Alas, the Government's promise is like lots of other promises that have been made—more in hope than in expectation. The executive summary to the report says apprenticeships are disproportionately populated by those from less advantaged backgrounds, so failure in their provision disproportionately affects this group. As my noble friend highlighted when introducing this debate, there is a sharp gender divide in apprenticeships. For example, engineering apprenticeships remain male-dominated—96% of such apprenticeships are taken up by men. Beauty therapy apprenticeships are female dominated, with 99% being taken up by women. It has

recently been reported that because of this imbalance, female apprentices earn over £1 an hour less than their male counterparts.

My noble friend Lord Bhattacharyya, referred to experiences overseas. The executive summary of the report says,

“Other countries, particularly Germany, Austria and Switzerland, have more effective apprenticeship programmes in terms of both the quantity and quality of provision and offer excellent examples of best practice”.

My noble friend Lady Morgan of Huyton referred to quantity and quality. I am afraid that quantity has taken precedence over quality in recent years, as various speakers have indicated. On 9 March this year, the *International Business Times* carried a report from journalist Samantha Payne headed, “Subway is looking for a sandwich maker apprentice in Newcastle upon Tyne”. Now, my Lords, I have eaten plenty of Subway sandwiches, and very good they are, but that does not strike me as a career for the future. Does one progress from white to brown bread to crusty rolls, perhaps to gluten-free? Who knows? But it does not seem to me to qualify as a description of an apprentice or to qualify such a person for a career in the future.

I would like to bring a case before your Lordships; I know the young person concerned—he drew the matter to my attention knowing that I intended to speak in this debate. Let us call him Joseph. He enquired about an apprentice’s job at an estate agency in Bromsgrove—coincidentally the constituency of the Business Secretary. The job was as an apprentice for 40 hours a week, it entailed taking calls in the office, making appointments to meet clients at homes or conduct viewings, for which obviously the young person concerned would need a car. It paid £2.73 an hour. There was no mileage or transport expenses, so who could afford to take such a job? But it masqueraded as an apprenticeship, as some sort of qualification for the future. The noble Lord, Lord Addington, said that if you did not have O-levels in maths and English, you were somehow written off. Joseph, the person who enquired about this particular job, had no fewer than six GCSEs and three A-levels, yet he could not afford to do such a job.

I am aware that the Government are conscious that the apprenticeship system is being abused and there is provision in the current Enterprise Bill before your Lordships’ House to do something about it. I would put two questions to the Minister. First, would he want his own son or daughter to have to apply for the sort of “apprenticeships” that I have just outlined? Secondly, can he give us some assurance that the Government will not just tackle these anomalies but stop these practices, which cause enormous distress and disillusionment among our young people?

1.16 pm

Lord Lisvane (CB): My Lords, I join the chorus of congratulation to the noble Baroness, Lady Prosser, for initiating this debate. It is a subject of huge social and economic importance, and the debate is very timely. I start with a declaration of interest, or at least of a connection: my wife was an apprentice with Baker Perkins, a company mainly involved in heavy engineering. In the interests of marital harmony I am

not going to be too precise about exactly when that apprenticeship was, but it was at a time when there were very few female apprentices, and even fewer female apprenticeships in heavy engineering.

In the limited time I have, I want to make two points—perhaps parochial in their way, but I hope with a much wider resonance. The importance of apprenticeships is clear and has been emphasised by every speaker in this debate so far. We readily give our political support to proper apprenticeships, widely available to young men and women of all backgrounds, and leading to sustainable long-term skilled jobs.

However, might we not also give our institutional support as a House? In my previous life as Clerk of the House of Commons I started the clerks’ apprenticeship scheme. My aim was not only to create worthwhile apprenticeships for people with few opportunities, but also to reach out to those who would never have thought of working for Parliament and having the privilege of doing so. I had the support of Eddie Stride, the CEO of London Gateway, and a fantastic in-house champion in Joanne Mills of the diversity and inclusion team. There were two cohorts, each of 10 young people, who have now been through their apprenticeships, gaining NVQs in business and administration. From what she said earlier on, I think that the noble Baroness, Lady Prosser, would be very pleased to hear that both cohorts had a majority of women and that both cohorts had a substantial majority of those with BME heritage. I am delighted to say, picking up a point made by the noble Baroness, Lady Morgan of Huyton, that the retention rate for both cohorts was 80% who found jobs in the House of Commons services, and of those who left Parliament, all went to good jobs elsewhere. The third cohort started just a few days ago.

A similar scheme in this House would be a vivid demonstration of our support for apprenticeships. At the moment we have just one apprentice, who is in the Parliamentary Archives, but I know that the Clerk of the Parliaments is keen to do something more ambitious: a proper apprenticeship scheme for the House of Lords administration. I warmly encourage him in that endeavour, and I am quite sure that it will have strong support from noble Lords on all sides of the House.

For my second point, I make no apology for returning to something I mentioned in my maiden speech in your Lordships’ House. We will shortly be faced with very difficult decisions on the restoration and renewal of this unique building. We await the advice of the Joint Committee, which has a distinguished membership from your Lordships’ House, including the Leader of the House, the Leader of the Opposition and the Chairman of Committees. Whichever option is finally chosen, I hope that we can support it through a Westminster academy of skills which could nurture the scarce skills needed for heritage restoration and, even more important, could be a dynamo for creating a wide range of craft apprenticeships continuing long after the restoration of the Palace of Westminster is complete. That would be a wonderful legacy for the next 150 years of this amazing building, and it would truly be an earnest of our support for apprenticeships.

1.21 pm

Baroness Wall of New Barnet (Lab): My Lords, what a delight to follow the noble Lord, Lord Lisvane. I have never heard him speak before. He shared such interesting anecdotes with us. I, too, the almost-penultimate speaker, want to thank my noble friend Lady Prosser for this opportunity. I also thank Semta, which has supported me in putting together some of the facts in my speech.

Many noble Lords have quoted statistics. There are many, and they are quite diverse. We have heard statistics today that have had led to differences of opinion. One of the dilemmas that we—not just government but all of us—face is that only 10% of parents think that an apprenticeship is the best option for their child, according to AllAboutSchoolLeavers. Many speakers, including me, have challenged many Ministers about why schools are not obliged to talk to students about apprenticeships. There is that problem. There are ways of overcoming it, and many organisations have done that.

I shall briefly talk about MBDA, which is an engineering company that supplies Rolls-Royce and many other big companies in the aircraft industry. MBDA insists that when it brings young people in from school there has to be 50:50 young men and women. The result is that the number of young women who come through from that introduction is greater than that of young men. Some of us in the Chamber today will have hosted events.

I have heard young women employed by MBDA talk about their track through. They had the opportunity to go to university, so their qualifications were all there for it. Some mothers were worried about the fact that they would not have the opportunity to wear their best hats when they were going to come through that process. Every one of them will tell you the difference it has made to their lives compared to those of their friends who have gone to university. I remember very readily—and I am sure my noble friend Lady Prosser and perhaps even the noble Baroness, Lady Garden, will, as they were both there—a young woman saying, “I am the envy of my friends who went to university. I now have a Mini and they are still paying off debts”. That is an absolute recommendation for doing that.

I worry, like many others who have said this, and I am sure the Minister has taken it on board, that there are very different views about the levy in businesses of which I am aware. Some clarity and certainty has been asked for. I support that.

The right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Derby is not in his place, but I associate myself with his comment. Many of us who came through industry in the early part of our life were very clear about what apprenticeships were. They were about learning and developing and making sure that the skills that you had were worth while.

I associate myself with the comments made by my noble friend Lady Morgan of Huyton. I worked in the chemical industry. Apprenticeships there were apprentices carrying the rod for the plumber or whoever. Apprenticeships now are not about that, and business does not need that. What we all need, and what businesses need most, is sound apprenticeships. Again,

the Minister has been pleaded with. Many of us have done it on many occasions. We must not dilute what an apprenticeship means. Good training, like at McDonald’s, KFC or anywhere else, is hugely important and benefits the consumer. Real apprenticeships, as they exist in engineering, are essential to maintain the level of skill and, more importantly, professionalism that apprentices come out with to make sure that their future is secure and growing.

1.25 pm

Lord Young of Norwood Green (Lab): My Lords, I, too, thank my noble friend Lady Prosser for initiating this debate and for her contribution. By the time we reach this part, most of the good points have already been made, but I am never afraid of reiteration, so I will do my bit to keep it relevant. Like the noble Lord, Lord Mawson, I was a telecom apprentice, but it was slightly before him as it was called the GPO when I joined. I gained a lot from that.

However, times have changed considerably. I do not quarrel with the Government having a target of 3 million, but, like many, I think the figure needs to be disaggregated. You cannot escape from the fact that, unfortunately, the vast majority of apprentices were people in existing employment aged over 25. Whether that really merits the title of apprenticeship, I am not sure. Of course, we understand the need for lifelong learning and for reskilling and retraining, but the area where many people think we ought to be focusing is on 16 to 19 year-olds or, at a stretch, up to those aged 24.

We have a double whammy: first, demand certainly exceeds supply. A number of noble Lords have made that point in this debate. Secondly, there are the requirements. I thank the Library for its note, which was very helpful. If you look at sector, subject area and age, it is illuminating. There is very little, if any, growth in the construction industry, certainly for under-19s and 19 to 24 year-olds—in fact, there is some decline. If you look at engineering and manufacturing technology, there is a similar picture. In 2012, the figure for under-19s was 114,000, but in 2014-15 we are down to 101,700. That is surely something that should be worrying the Government.

I concur with people who talk about the need for quality as well as quantity. It should be a matter of shame for us that recently a young apprentice started a day in a job and did not finish it because he died. How have we come to a situation in which we are sending young people into an unsafe working environment? When we talk about quality, I hope that is going to include safety.

We welcome the levy and how it is going to be distributed, but we still have the age-old problem that Governments for the past 20 or 30 years have had of getting more companies and SMEs involved in apprenticeships. I notice that, according to the Library Note, even under the trailblazer schemes the involvement of SMEs is quite low. That is worrying if we are serious about wanting to increase significantly the number of apprentices and to inculcate the idea—we should not have to, but clearly we do—in the whole of British industry that, if we want to succeed, it has to contribute towards creating the next generation.

We have a wide range of apprenticeships. I could not help smiling when my noble friend Lord Snape complained about Subway. I do not know what the career opportunities are at Subway, but do not knock the retail trade as a whole. McDonald's runs a very successful apprenticeship scheme; indeed, you can do a foundation degree with McDonald's. It is rather like what my noble friend Lady Prosser said about the beauty industry, if it is right to describe it as that. Apprenticeships are rich and varied, although of course we want more high-level apprenticeships.

The final point is about public sector contracts. My noble friend mentioned Crossrail. It is a textbook example of how to run a big project, create apprenticeships and involve the whole of the supply chain. That is the point that I really want to stress. It is not just about creating the hub. If you examine the Crossrail experience closely, you will see that it has encouraged its companies right through the supply chain and across the country. The interesting thing about Crossrail is that those of us who saw the wonderful TV programme know that one of the main people in charge of that engineering project was a woman. So I am ending on a positive note, and I look forward to the Minister's response.

1.30 pm

Lord Stoneham of Droxford (LD): My Lords, this has been a very good debate. I thank the noble Baroness, Lady Prosser, for giving us this opportunity for it, and for her experience in this field.

As the noble Lord, Lord Young, said, there is no point in repeating all the good points that have been made in this debate, so I will just stick to five themes that have come out of it. I think most of us accept that there is a need to monitor what we are doing here, but what we do not want to do is create an overbearing bureaucracy. We need to find out where there are problems. It has been mentioned in the debate that there are some gender problems; there are also, although I do not think this has been mentioned, some regional problems, in that some parts of the country, such as the north-east, are not getting their fair share of apprentices.

One of the things that we ought to be doing is matching what we are achieving with apprenticeships with where prime shortages are. If there is any sector that we ought to pay particular attention to, it is construction. There are extreme shortages there, and some of the delivery on apprenticeships is not as good as it should be. I hope that there will be ongoing work, particularly across industry, using working parties and LEPs, to identify where those shortages are and concentrate work on apprenticeships.

As my noble friend Lord Addington mentioned, we need to monitor where there are particular problems for those with disabilities, particularly those with dyslexia, and we should appreciate the contribution that those with those disabilities can make. A number of our leading entrepreneurs have come through problems with dyslexia to make a very profound contribution, once they got over the struggle that many experienced with our academic system.

I very much agree with the noble Baroness, Lady Morgan, that we should measure where apprentices are one year after the completion of their apprenticeships. And just as we regularly get surveys telling us how people get an earnings differential when they go through university, we should be promoting similar publicity about the advantages for people going through apprenticeships as well.

Three million is a tough target; I think that everybody in the debate has mentioned that. It is important that we do not just end up in a numbers game. Quality must be a preoccupation. The noble Lord, Lord Aberdare, mentioned that two-thirds of apprenticeships are not actually completed. We should be vigilant in looking at why that is, what the problems are and how we can improve those figures.

There are problems at both the lower end and the top end of skill profiles. We are clearly not getting enough 16 to 20 year-olds. We may want to consider that colleges do more to develop free apprenticeship courses to encourage people to go on to apprenticeships and to provide a source of supply for companies that are prepared to take them on in an apprenticeship at a later age.

My noble friends Lady Garden and Lady Humphreys, and the noble Lord, Lord Lingfield, all mentioned especially the importance of career advice in our schools. I think that everybody accepts that a cultural change has to be undertaken in local communities and schools to encourage more people through vocational and technical education. I would be interested to hear how the Minister thinks that the Government should be giving this a priority. At the higher level of skills, higher-quality apprenticeships should increasingly be seen as an alternative to university courses, providing a direct benefit to industry as well as being attractive as people will not be dependent on student loans.

The levy has been mentioned in the debate. Clearly there are lots of problems with the levy; in fact, the country has been struggling with a levy for training for the past 40 years, so we are going around in a circle here. That will not be helped by the unfortunate fact that, at the same time as we are expecting employers to make greater contributions on pensions and there are going to be pressures from the living wage, we will then expect them to have a levy for training. That is going to be difficult so, whatever we do, the Government must phase this in and concentrate particularly on the sectors with the most training needs. The key is to somehow incentivise small businesses to participate more but also compensate those companies that are doing their fair share of training but fear at the moment that they should not do more because their skills will simply be poached. I hope that the Minister will give some details of the timing and the progress that the Government are making in the consultation on the levy.

On the role of colleges, there has been a lot of discussion that colleges are critical to supporting training requirements, particularly for small businesses, and that they provide the vital source of support that small businesses need. It is an interesting fact, which has not been mentioned in the debate, that colleges educate and train nearly twice as many 16 to 18 year-olds as

[LORD STONEHAM OF DROXFORD] maintained schools and academy sixth forms. Some 70,000 16 to 18 year-olds undertake apprenticeships through local colleges. We have to ensure, as has been mentioned in the debate, that those colleges with good links to local firms and sectors that are dominant in their areas, and which are setting up training programmes associated with those firms, are the most successful. Obviously, we seek assurance from the Minister that the contribution of the colleges will not be restricted by a lack of funding.

Supply chains have been mentioned, mainly in relation to the public sector, which I fully support. I certainly support the good work that was done on the Olympics and is now being done on Crossrail. However, let us not forget the potential in the private sector for the supply chains and the procurement policies to deliver on this as well. The most successful sectors and larger firms can contribute to encouraging their suppliers to improve the skills base in their sectors. We have seen the great success over the last 15 years in the motor industry in getting assembly back into this country, but there is still a big job to be done in improving some of the supply firms to the motor industry in this country, and often it is restraints on skills that are stopping us developing those firms.

So apprenticeships are critical to raising the productivity and global competitiveness in this country. The issue deserves the strong attention that debates like this are giving it. It requires a strong partnership with industry and deserves continuity from Ministers in its delivery, as well as cross-departmental co-operation. The need for an ongoing commitment to quality in this area is overriding.

1.39 pm

Lord Watson of Invergowrie (Lab): My Lords, I, too, join in thanking my noble friend Lady Prosser for introducing this debate and giving us the opportunity to consider these very important matters.

Like everyone else who has spoken in the debate, I welcome the Government's commitment to create 3 million apprenticeships by 2020. The demand for apprenticeships from young people far outstrips current supply. According to the National Apprenticeship Service, more than 1.4 million online applicants competed for 129,000 vacancies posted online last year, which was up 32% on the previous year. So—as has been mentioned already in the debate this afternoon—that is an average of about 11 or 12 applicants per apprenticeship, which of course means that a great many are disappointed.

Some 3 million apprenticeships in the next five years—an increase of almost 50% on the past five—is of course a very ambitious target. However, I do not criticise the Government for that, because it is always better to aim high. The task involved is clear from the statistics relating to 2013-14, the latest available yearly figures for apprenticeships. In that year there were just over 440,000 starts, which showed an overall decrease on the previous year. With 600,000 starts annually needed to meet the 3 million target, there will need to be a very substantial increase if that target is to be met.

With that in mind, the figures published yesterday are not encouraging. At best, they show minimal growth in the number of people starting new apprenticeships—although the figures are yet to be confirmed, which means that the final position might be worse. Not enough of those who want to take up apprenticeships—young people as well as those who are older—are receiving the opportunities they need for quality training and retraining to increase career opportunities. When the next annual figures are published we will need to see at the very least a distinct upward trajectory if the target is not to disappear into the distance.

Currently, only 15% of employers offer apprenticeships. That is a mere 2% more than in 2012 and—as other noble Lords, including my noble friend Lord Bhattacharyya, have said—is very low compared with many other European countries, most notably Germany and Switzerland, where 50% to 60% of employers offer them.

The introduction of the apprenticeship levy may help to increase the number of apprenticeship opportunities but a number of noble Lords—including the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Derby and my noble friends Lord Macdonald and Lord Haughey—have commented on the fact that questions are being asked about how the levy will operate. I am delighted to welcome my noble friend Lord Haughey to the debate. He has a great deal of experience in building up a business and developing it to include many apprenticeships, as he mentioned. I have no doubt at all that, in his typical forthright manner, he will be writing to the Government to explain to them where they are going wrong with the levy and how it might be improved to make it more effective.

A major means of boosting the number of apprenticeships on offer would be to extend the Enterprise Bill provision for apprenticeship targets for public bodies to the private sector. That would certainly encourage more SMEs to become involved. Last week, David Cameron made social mobility the centre of his conference speech, although I have to say that today's announcement that he has decided to turn the clock back half a century by allowing the creation of new grammar schools sends out entirely the opposite message.

Apprenticeships have the capacity to make a major contribution to social mobility but to maximise that contribution they need to be offered across the full range of employment and skills, ensuring that people across the country who may have been excluded for a number of reasons have access to them. We therefore believe that the approach in the Bill to public bodies should be extended to the private sector, both to assist in meeting the 3 million apprenticeships target and to spread training across the economy and provide opportunities in different geographical areas. The Government should also publish a strategy setting out how many apprenticeships they expect to be provided from each part of the private sector. Such a strategy should include a clear indication of the role to be played by further education colleges, which are key players in this yet have suffered wounding cuts to funding, with more to follow.

Recent apprenticeship reforms have resulted in employers being given control. An entirely employer-led design of apprenticeships runs the risk of narrow training that meets the needs of employers but not necessarily those of young people, or perhaps the employment market in general. That is a point not lost on the Engineering Employers' Federation, which said in a submission to Labour's Skills Taskforce that it is important for employers,

"to work closely with unions, colleges and quality training providers to ensure that the partnership works for both the employer and the learner".

The Government should acknowledge—and benefit from—the role that trade unions play in apprenticeships. They have a strong track record of supporting young people in making the transition from training into secure employment.

One of the main reasons why we in the Labour Party want to see as many apprenticeships as possible created is that we know that good training leading to proper, meaningful work can play an important role not just, as I said, in promoting social mobility but also in reducing inequality in the country. This issue was highlighted in the recent report by the Sutton Trust which several noble Lords, including my noble friends Lord Haskel and Lord Snape, referred to. Perhaps unfortunately, that report attracted most attention because of the headline that it had found that the top-achieving apprentices—the relatively few with a level 5 qualification—will earn more in their lifetime than someone with an undergraduate degree from a university outwith the Russell Group. This underscores the logic of the provision in the Enterprise Bill for apprenticeships to be given equal standing to degrees because it will protect the term "apprenticeship" in law and begin to tackle existing misuse, often by unauthorised training providers. It was telling that some 40% of respondents to the Government's recent consultation on the Enterprise Bill said that they were aware of the term "apprenticeship" being misused. Enshrining the term in law will help to enhance the reputation of apprenticeships, which should assist in broadening their appeal to employers who have not thus far engaged.

More importantly, the Sutton Trust report carried a warning that, although the best apprenticeships offer similar financial security as an undergraduate degree, the sector needs to bring about serious change if apprenticeships are to fulfil their potential as a vehicle for social mobility. In the current system, as my noble friend Lady Morgan highlighted, the majority of apprenticeships—some 60%—are set only at GCSE standard, which is level 2. Too many of them offer little value beyond traditional work experience placements and only marginally better lifetime earnings than secondary school qualifications alone. Over the past two years—this is an important statistic—there have been only an estimated 30,000 higher apprenticeships. As many noble Lords have mentioned, the fear is that too many of the new apprenticeships being created will be no higher than level 2.

For that reason, it is important that the Government should monitor the apprenticeships target to ensure that employers are not using apprenticeships for their own benefit simply by replacing existing jobs. All

apprenticeships should provide a nationally recognised qualification, which will go a long way to making sure that apprenticeships provide people with genuine opportunities to progress to full-time employment when they are completed. My noble friend Lady Prosser covered it quite neatly when she talked about the fit between the two.

The Welfare Reform and Work Bill includes duties on Ministers to report annually on progress achieved in job creation and apprenticeships. In addition, the Enterprise Bill provides an opportunity to introduce a mechanism for monitoring the quality of new apprenticeships and who is gaining access to them. I hope the Minister will be able to say something positive on that important aspect of underwriting progress towards the 3 million target.

There should also be greater focus on 18 to 21 year-olds who are leaving education and joining the workforce but who also need to continue in training. The harsh facts are that the majority of apprenticeships currently go to those in the 22 to 25 year-old age group and 45% of all apprenticeships are achieved by people over the age of 25. That is not per se a bad thing, but as far as possible apprenticeships should be made available to those who most need them. Since the economic crisis, young people in their 20's have lost out most across a wide range of outcomes despite gaining higher qualifications than previous generations. I suggest to the Government that the targeting of future apprenticeships at 18 to 21 year-olds, who will be subject to the youth obligation and to restricted entitlement to housing support costs, would contribute greatly to the success of the planned growth in the number of apprenticeships offered.

The noble Lord, Lord Addington, mentioned the issue of equality. His comments on the Equality Act were very interesting and should, I believe, be pursued. Many noble Lords have questioned the gender aspect of apprenticeships, and it is undoubtedly true that simply having a majority of them taken by females is not enough. I will not repeat the comments made about the wage levels of the jobs that many female apprentices move into.

There are other problems with accessing apprenticeships. Only 9% of apprenticeships go to people from a BME background although that group accounts for 15% of the population. The Welfare Reform and Work Bill could be used to address this deficit. The Government should also consider ring-fencing a percentage of apprenticeships for vulnerable groups who may otherwise have difficulty accessing them, such as people emerging from care. Some 34% of all care leavers are not in education, employment or training at age 19, compared with 15.5% of 19 year-olds as a whole.

There are also, as my noble friend Lord Snape said, issues around academic entrance requirements. The Alliance for Inclusive Education has done some excellent work in this area, which has already been referred to, and if the Minister has not already seen its publications I urge him to arrange to do so. In many cases the entrance requirements are simply not capable of being met by people with some disabilities, particularly learning difficulties, and that problem has to be addressed.

[LORD WATSON OF INVERGOWRIE]

This has been both a timely and an excellent debate, with contributions from many noble Lords with great experience of the subject. I am certain that everyone participating in it wants the same outcome: an extension of the apprenticeships available, leading to more real training, which in itself will lead to real, sustainable jobs. That would mean a huge amount to the many young people currently rather fearful as to what life has in store for them. I believe that we all have a duty to do what we can to create the foundations that will allow them to pursue a career and build a life that is rewarding in every sense of the word.

1.50 pm

The Earl of Courtown (Con): My Lords, I welcome the opportunity to set out what Her Majesty's Government are doing to grow the apprenticeship programme, to explain the process for monitoring the availability and quality of apprenticeships, and to set out what is in place to ensure an appropriate spread across the labour market. I am grateful to the noble Baroness, Lady Prosser, for tabling this debate and to noble Lords, who have raised important points. I was particularly interested in the points made by the noble Lord, Lord Lisvane, concerning the need for apprenticeships and the possibility of their use in the restoration of this great palace. I will endeavour to answer all the questions that have been put but, where I cannot, I will ensure that I write to noble Lords and place copies in the Library.

Apprenticeships are real jobs that give people the opportunity to train, develop skills and become fully competent while employed in a role. They are already offered in 240,000 workplaces in England, from microbusinesses to blue chip companies such as IBM, BAE Systems and Sky. We know that apprenticeships benefit individuals, employers and the economy. Improving skills is an important factor in increasing productivity and will be essential to the prosperity of our economy in the coming years.

For young people, apprenticeships can be the first step on the career ladder, for all ages a route to career progression and, for employers, a sustainable way of building a workforce with the skills that they need. While we would not want to interfere in employers' recruitment decisions, we believe there is more to be done to ensure that people from a diverse range of backgrounds, as mentioned by the noble Lord, Lord Watson, including care leavers, are in the best possible place to secure an apprenticeship.

An apprenticeship advisory group helps government to understand and address any apprenticeship equality and diversity issues, as mentioned by many noble Lords, in order to reduce barriers and make apprenticeships as inclusive as possible. For instance, we are promoting reasonable adjustment for disabled learners. I know that the noble Lord, Lord Addington, has been involved in shaping amendments to the Children and Families Bill to support people with difficulties such as dyslexia in completing the English and maths requirements. I totally agree that this is important, and more needs to be done on the guidance to address the management of disabled apprentices, as well as the

issue of employers ignoring the Equality Act. We will ensure that these important issues are reflected in the guidance.

Unlike in most other countries, women are, as mentioned by many noble Lords, well represented within English apprenticeship schemes, with 52.9% of all starts in 2013-14 having been women. We have made enormous progress but there is still much to do. Over the last five years, we have seen significant growth, as mentioned, with more than 2.3 million new apprenticeships. We are now committed, as other noble Lords have said, to 3 million new starts in this Parliament. This is a challenging commitment to deliver because, as I have said, apprenticeships are real jobs, so growth depends on employer demand. The noble Baroness, Lady Warwick of Undercliffe, in particular mentioned this issue. We are taking action to support the growth needed to meet our commitment, working with large and small businesses to begin or expand their programmes, and setting new expectations for public sector bodies, including through public procurement.

We will need to work hard to stimulate both demand and supply across the labour market. The benefits of the programme are clear. The latest research, as at June 2015, shows that adult apprenticeships at level 3 deliver £28 of economic benefits for each pound of government investment. Some 89% of apprentices and 82% of employers are satisfied with the programme, and a higher apprentice can earn £150,000 more over their lifetime. I noted what the noble Baroness, Lady Humphreys, told me about higher apprentices in north Wales.

It has been made easier than ever before to recruit an apprentice, and it is expected that young people will continue to benefit from the expansion of the programme. Incentives are in place to encourage employers to take on a young person. For example, training for 16 to 18 year-olds is fully funded; the apprenticeship grant for employers provides small businesses with £1,500 for each new young person they take on; and, from April 2016, businesses will not be required to pay employer national insurance contributions on earnings for apprentices aged under 25.

Young people's engagement with apprenticeships is obviously a priority, but there continues to be a solid justification for the public funding of adult apprenticeships. Data show strong wage returns for this group: 16% for level 3 and 11% for level 2 per year between three to five years after completion.

The public sector will also play a full role in delivering more. Government will ensure that it is a model employer, developing a skilled workforce for the future. We are demonstrating this commitment via legislation. The noble Lord, Lord Watson, among others, mentioned the Enterprise Bill, which has laid out plans to set apprenticeships targets for public bodies. Many public bodies—in central and local government—already choose to build skills considerations into their procurement. High Speed 2 has a target of 2,000 in the construction phase, and a new college to train the next generation of world-class engineers provides a clear signal that apprenticeships are a priority area. The noble Baroness, Lady Prosser, along with other noble Lords, mentioned Crossrail. This is the largest procurement project across

government and has exceeded its target of employing 400 apprentices over the life cycle of the project, which is due to complete next year. It is the Government's expectation that more apprenticeships will also be generated through public sector procurement.

We all agree that apprenticeships must be high quality, rigorous and focused on what employers need. We have insisted that all must have a minimum duration of 12 months. Furthermore, in order to strengthen and safeguard the reputation of the brand—a point raised by the noble Lord, Lord Aberdare—we are providing protection for the term “apprenticeship” to prevent any misuse.

We have put in place reforms to give employers much greater control. Through our trailblazers, they are designing new apprenticeship standards, deciding which skills, knowledge and behaviours are required as part of a successful apprenticeship for occupations across sectors. Criteria that all new standards must meet have been set to ensure quality and consistency across all apprenticeships. I know that this is of concern to all noble Lords. Standards will also clearly specify any qualifications that are necessary to achieve and demonstrate full competence. There are more than 140 trailblazers involving more than 1,300 employers. So far, approval has been given to develop more than 350 standards. Of these, 187 have been approved and, as mentioned by the noble Lord, Lord Bhattacharyya, 52 are ready for delivery.

The demand for higher standards will ensure that apprentices are stretched. By setting higher expectations for achievement in English and maths and introducing end-point assessment, excellence will be seen and widely recognised. The development of new, more rigorous standards is being extended into sectors with little or no previous history of apprenticeships, such as financial services and the legal profession.

As the noble Baroness, Lady Prosser, said, we are expanding higher and degree apprenticeships to offer new opportunities in occupations such as nuclear, digital, nursing, journalism and surveying. They range from level 4 all the way up to master's degree level, allowing young people the opportunity to combine a world-class degree with a high-quality apprenticeship. We are also giving employers greater control over funding through a simple apprenticeship voucher, so that they can buy the quality training they need and hold training providers to account. The UK-wide levy is being developed for all larger employers in the public and private sector to help fund the increase in quantity and quality of apprenticeship training. In England, for any firm that will be able to get back more than it puts in by training sufficient apprentices, control over funding will be put in the hands of employers via the voucher mechanism that I mentioned. Many noble Lords have asked how this will be taken further. Additional details will be set out at the spending review, but businesses will be given sufficient time to prepare for the change. A consultation on the levy was launched on 21 August and closed on 2 October. The apprenticeship levy will link larger employers directly to its skills investment and promote the value, and drive the uptake, of apprenticeships.

Monitoring, as was mentioned by many noble Lords, is an essential part of raising and maintaining quality across the programme. Ministers are currently considering the future model for the long-term governance of the system. They will say more about this after the outcome of the spending review. In response to the point made by the noble Baroness, Lady Prosser, about the numerous organisations involved in regulation and oversight, these organisations do different things. Some deal with funding and others with the quality of provision, but it is something we can consider.

If we are to get more young people to consider and take up opportunities, it is essential that they receive quality careers advice and guidance at the right time. As my noble friend Lord Lingfield said, since 2012 schools have had a duty to provide independent careers guidance to 12 to 18 year-olds on their options post 16, including apprenticeships. It has been made clear that schools should give employers and other providers the opportunity to inform pupils about what they offer. Ofsted is now giving careers guidance a higher priority in school inspections, and we are working with it to monitor carefully the impact of the statutory guidance. For young people who are not yet work-ready and need extra help, traineeships offer an opportunity to develop the skills and experience they need to compete successfully for an apprenticeship or other job. The noble Baroness, Lady Garden, asked for an assurance that there will be support from the Government to ensure that employers do not cut corners on quality. Yes, we are working with employer-led trailblazers as part of that scheme to develop the quality standards and assessment plans.

The noble Lord, Lord Macdonald of Tradeston, asked about women in science and engineering apprenticeships. Investment is being made in a wide range of initiatives that aim to inspire and engage young people with the opportunities that a career in STEM can provide. There is a commitment to ensure that the STEM workforce is diverse, reflecting wider society, and makes use of all the talents available to it. It is recognised that in some STEM disciplines, there is a particular shortage of women, for example in engineering.

The noble Baroness, Lady Garden, also asked what incentives were offered to schools to celebrate pupils who go on to apprenticeships. Destination measures produced by the Department for Education will now include those going on to apprenticeships. This will help to raise the profile of apprenticeships and of the need to celebrate in the future. As far as extending this to other sectors beyond public procurement, as mentioned by the noble Lord, Lord Macdonald, we are working with employers across all sectors to grow this programme.

The right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Derby asked me to comment on the future of the current inspection system and the information that schools provide for pupils. Ofsted is now giving this higher priority in school inspections, as I mentioned earlier. We are working with it to monitor the impact of the statutory guidance. My noble friend Lord Lingfield asked whether it should be compulsory for schools to offer information about apprenticeships. There is now a duty to provide independent careers advice for 12 to 18 year-olds, which includes apprenticeships.

[THE EARL OF COURTOWN]

A number of noble Lords—Lord Aberdare and Lord Macdonald, among others—made the point that small employers and SMEs are the backbone of our economy in so many ways. Yes, small employers will benefit. More details will follow the spending review and the evaluation of the recent consultation. Businesses will be given direct control over funding and how it is spent.

The right reverend Prelate also asked about the role of learning academies in preparing people for work. They are, as he said, really important. For example, national colleges help the United Kingdom to develop world-class technical skills to compete globally and address high-level skill gaps in key sectors of the economy.

The noble Baroness, Lady Morgan of Huyton, asked about information on where apprentices were one year after completion. All apprenticeships are real paid jobs, so, as with any jobs, individual circumstances change, as the noble Baroness is aware. We are reviewing current reporting arrangements where this important point is being considered.

The noble Lord, Lord Addington, asked about English and maths requirements. If a person with a disability completes all elements of an apprenticeship except for the English and/or maths requirements, they were unable to pass a key skills test because they felt that they were not offered appropriate reasonable adjustments, and they go on to pass the appropriate functional skills qualifications or GCSEs, they can apply for an apprenticeship certificate even if the rest of the apprenticeship was completed somewhat earlier.

The noble Lord, Lord Bhattacharyya, asked whether I agreed that employers should contribute to improving quality as well as quantity. I absolutely agree with that. The trailblazer system, as he knows only too well, is employer-led and is developing quality apprenticeships to meet their skills needs. He also asked whether we should use a proportion of the levy to monitor apprenticeships' quality of standards. We are currently evaluating the responses to the consultation, and will ensure that that issue is considered.

The noble Lord, Lord Haskel, asked what we were doing to incorporate apprenticeships into the new ways of working online. The “Find an apprenticeship” website has between 12,000 and 20,000 vacancies at any one time. This can also be accessed through social media. On average, each apprenticeship listed on the website receives 10 applications.

The noble Lord, Lord Haughey, asked how many of the 3 million proposals were real jobs and where they would come from. As I said before, all these apprenticeships will be real jobs with a minimum 12 months' duration and sustained and substantial training to ensure that the apprentices gain significant new skills. All new placements are required to have robust assessment procedures at the end of the apprenticeship.

A number of noble Lords with whom I had the honour and pleasure of serving on a committee chaired so ably by the noble Baroness, Lady Morgan, asked me outside this Chamber—as did the noble Lord, Lord Macdonald, inside it—about progress on securing a debate on the findings of the digital skills report. I will of course pass on the request to the usual channels.

This has been a quite excellent debate, and there have been many useful contributions from many Peers. Building on the many successes of the last Parliament, we have set out our key measures for apprenticeships, some of which I have outlined today and all of which will ensure that we continue to grow high-quality apprenticeships in a wide range of occupations across England. Again, I thank the noble Baroness, Lady Prosser, for highlighting these very important issues.

2.10 pm

Baroness Prosser: I thank the Minister for that response. Like him, I think this has been a hugely interesting and informative debate. I was particularly pleased that we had contributions to the discussion from all Benches of the House, which was important.

I recognise that this is a rather tricky matter in the sense that apprenticeships come under two government departments, which is always a bit of a recipe for more problems. When I read *Hansard* on Monday, should I discover that my important questions have not been answered, I shall look for the Minister's correspondence in the Library.

I thank all noble Lords who contributed to the debate. Many points were raised which I had not really thought of myself, so I am grateful both for them and for the very interesting and diverse contributions that were made.

Whenever the question of apprenticeships is raised, it reminds me of a television programme from quite a number of years ago on the industrialists and entrepreneurs of the late 1900s. They were men who had made vast amounts of money and built significant organisations in shipbuilding, the arms trade, textile manufacturing et cetera. None of those men had sent their sons—nobody thought about daughters in those days—into those businesses. They had ensured that their sons went into the professions, as they called them—into medicine and law et cetera. We have an ongoing snobbery in this country about trade. It is up to all of us here to promote the value of trade and that sort of learning. I hope the Government will be prepared to give a good lead on this because we need a big cultural shift, so that we can begin properly to compare ourselves with other countries which do not have that history and that attitude. I thank all noble Lords and the Minister for their contributions.

Motion agreed.

Redcar Steel Statement

2.13 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and Department for Culture, Media and Sport (Baroness Neville-Rolfe) (Con): My Lords, with the leave of the House, I shall repeat in the form of a Statement an Answer given earlier today by my right honourable friend Anna Soubry MP in another place. The Statement is as follows.

“When we debated these issues on Tuesday, I was clear then, and am happy to repeat, that the significance of SSI's closure is not lost on anyone. This is a deeply worrying time for anyone affected. We have made

clear our commitment to supporting those affected by the liquidation of SSI. That is why, on 2 October, the Secretary of State and I were in Redcar when we announced a package worth up to £80 million to help the workers directly affected, the supply chain and the local economy more broadly. We briefed the local task force that day on the contents of the package, including the Member for Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland.

As Members will know, some elements of that package have already been rolled out and are delivering support. In terms of helping the individuals, the Jobcentre Plus service only yesterday co-ordinated a large jobs fair to help people affected move into jobs as quickly as possible. Initial reports from that event suggested that around 1,500 individuals attended the event, along with around 50 employers offering 1,000 vacancies. That is on top of the individual support sessions that Jobcentre Plus has offered locally.

The redundancy payments service has established a dedicated team to process the redundancy pay, holiday pay, arrears of wages and other elements that are due to SSI employees, subject to statutory limits, as quickly as possible. I would also note that the Government's business support helpline is prioritising calls from businesses directly affected by the SSI closure, from businesses in the local area with the potential to grow and take on former SSI employees, and from former SSI employees looking for advice on starting a business. These callers will be fast-tracked to an expert adviser who will provide advice on the issues that they are facing, provide information on the local support package, and refer them to any other forms of support that they need. That is a good start, but we must do more.

As Members will be aware, we established a local task force to help shape the support to be provided. Right from the start, our intention was not to impose solutions from Whitehall but to ask the local task force for solutions on how best to target money and support. We have received some initial proposals from the task force around supporting workers impacted by the closure of SSI, mitigating the impact on other companies directly affected by the proposal, and supporting the growth of the wider economy. We are assessing these projects urgently.

Finally, I know that the honourable Member for Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland asked about further education colleges. The full cost of retraining former SSI workers and others made redundant in the supply chain will be met. Local colleges will therefore be able to claim full funding for education and training provided to any learner who was employed at the SSI UK plant in Redcar at any time during 2015, or to a learner made redundant in the supply chain as a result of the plant closure, to support them to gain employment or start their own business. Eligibility will be confirmed by a referral from a DWP work coach or National Careers Service adviser working with affected individuals. This will enable local colleges to provide wide-ranging support to learners, from short programmes of training to support immediate entry into the labour market, or it could involve study leading to full qualifications such as A-levels or equivalent. Colleges which meet quality criteria will receive additional funding to cover the costs incurred by these additional flexibilities.

I will continue to work closely with the local task force, as I hope will the Member for Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland, on how we can best support the workers of SSI, the affected supply chain and the local economy. I can pledge that no worker will be left behind".

2.18 pm

Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town (Lab): I thank the Minister for repeating the Answer, but it is really only about how to help redundant workers. While it is welcome, it is not all new money and it does not help other businesses, from shops and services to suppliers and transport, which will also be affected.

More than this, we should not be in this place. Redcar was to be a major player in the zero-carbon industrial zone based around carbon capture and storage in Teesside. Its loss is a major blow to the project, which had received BIS funding. The Government are overseeing the death of 170 years of steelmaking in Teesside despite the site being viable.

We welcome the steel summit, but why not mothball the site to save the asset? There are companies which are willing to supply the coke ovens or do the mothballing, but the Government have not given the time. Could three months not be found? How can we have a northern powerhouse without this fundamental manufacturing capability? How can the Prime Minister say that steel is vital and do nothing to save it?

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: My Lords, I thank the noble Baroness for her comments. The local task force that we have set up, which of course did very good work in 2010, will be looking innovatively at options. It is able to come forward with proposals. As she says, we have 170 years of great steel heritage and we need to look forward and find good options for Redcar. Like her, I welcome the summit, because it will look more broadly, obviously well beyond Redcar, at the problems and opportunities for the steel industry.

The noble Baroness asked about mothballing. The company made a last-minute, and I am afraid unrealistic, request for the taxpayer to make an open-ended funding commitment to maintain the coke ovens in Redcar. We were not able to accept that request. On the basis of a limited case, the Government had no confidence that there was a realistic proposal for viability and therefore could not give taxpayer support, even if they wanted to breach state aid rules. The awful truth is that there is a world oversupply of this type of steel. The company had already lost £500 million in its operation over the past three or four years, so despite all the endeavour and optimism of 2012, things did not work out. We have to look forward.

On the northern powerhouse, Teesside is actually making an impressive contribution. The Tees Valley LEP is one that I have visited and is very impressive. The latest investment, while not actually on Teesside but in Darlington, was in the National Biologics Manufacturing Centre. We share common ground that that sort of northern investment is very important for the future of the country.

Lord Tebbit (Con): My Lords, we should all be grateful to the Government for their efforts to do something to help the workforce at Redcar, but it is

[LORD TEBBIT]

common ground among us that the fault leading to the closure was not that of management or of the workforce. To what extent was it caused by high energy prices in this country? On the continent, there are steelmakers far less efficient than Redcar, with a far less able workforce and far worse management, which are continuing to be in business. How can that be, in a common market? Furthermore, how can it be that the Chinese are dumping steel into Scotland at the behest of the Scottish Administration? How do these things happen? Why can our steel workers not have a level playing field?

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: My noble friend asks a very good question, which is the question I first asked when I heard about this great challenge. But we have in fact provided more than £50 million in compensation to steelmakers for energy costs under the emissions compensation scheme. We voted—in fact I voted—for anti-dumping measures on certain Chinese steel products and we have identified a pipeline of more than 500 infrastructure projects to help the industry to win contracts. The trouble is that we have a worldwide problem in the steel industry. I know from talking to the French, the Germans and the Luxembourgers that they share that problem.

Lord Brookman (Lab): My Lords, following on from the noble Lord, Lord Tebbit, I have a straight question for the Minister. Is it true that the Lord Chancellor, on his recent visit to China, discussed with the Chinese Government and the steel manufacturers using Chinese steel to build the rail for HS2, which is forthcoming? That is of great concern and follows on from what the noble Lord, Lord Tebbit, said. Why are we using foreign steel—Chinese steel—when we have a use for our own steel in this country to build things that we need in this country? We were talking about the steel industry, not about the general politics of industry and so forth. My plea to you last time was to do something for the steel industry.

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: My Lords, I am not privy to discussions between the Chancellor and Chinese senior Ministers, but I do believe in free trade. The point about the visit was to build relationships both ways. I believe that the Chinese can invest in Britain and can be helpful to Britain. Our industry obviously has to be competitive and produce great steel, as they did for example on Crossrail. That is what we need more of. We are looking forward. We are having a summit, which is taking place tomorrow, to look forward at other opportunities and prospects, and I look forward to hearing the results of that.

Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top (Lab): My Lords, the reality is that there was an offer from a local company, Hargreaves—which ironically is based just outside Consett and is essentially now a coal-mining and haulage business—to put money in and maintain the coke ovens. The coke ovens produce a new form of coke called foundry coke, which is much more value driven and therefore raises a much higher cost because it is more efficient. The Germans want to buy this coke and the only place that it can be made is at

Redcar. The Government not working with the receiver to give some time has meant that the coke ovens will close today and no more opportunity will be there. That is surely something that the Government can and should do something about.

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: My Lords, the Government and the receiver did take time. They used the notice of intention to appoint an administrator. Talks had been going on before. As I said, it was not possible to come up with a viable case for continued use of these coke ovens and the blast furnace on a basis that would be competitive in the world. We all regret that. My heart goes out to the thousands of people who have lost their jobs. We now have to look forward, help them and find new opportunities.

Lord Stoneham of Droxford (LD): My Lords, the tragedy of Redcar is that it was overdependent on one sector. When that sector has problems, which it does because of world capacity, that community is very vulnerable. The hope is that this area should be helped with diversification. Will the Minister explain something? In Portsmouth two years ago, a ministerial task force was set up in a far less tragic situation than Redcar yet I am not sure from what she is saying that the task force has direct government representation on it locally. I respect her view that local views should prevail, but should the Government not be directly involved in this task force in order to make sure that all government departments are properly co-ordinated in the rescue of this area?

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: My Lords, I agree that there is a problem where you are very dependent on one industry. The noble Lord made a very powerful point. The local task force will get support from government officials. It is looking widely at options. On the task force will be Paul Booth, the head of the LEP, which has a large amount of funding from the growth fund and other interests will come in as necessary. We believe that that is the right way forward. Obviously, we stand ready to look at broader issues in the way that the noble Lord described, but this seems the right way forward. We do not see a case for doing quite what we did in Portsmouth. A great deal is going on. The steel summit is taking place tomorrow. The focus on the lessons and the future is strong.

Affordable Housing in Rural Communities

Question for Short Debate

2.29 pm

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask Her Majesty's Government how they plan to deliver a sustainable supply of affordable housing in rural communities, particularly in the light of the planned extension of the Right to Buy scheme.

The Lord Bishop of St Albans: My Lords, I am very grateful to all those who have agreed to contribute to this debate, many of whom have huge experience in this area, and I am looking forward to what they have to say.

The provision of affordable housing is vital to the long-term sustainability of rural communities so that they continue to be places where a broad cross-section of people can live and work. It is all the more important, given that rural house prices are currently well beyond the means of many lower-income and middle-income people. Indeed, it is estimated that in 90% of rural authorities, the average home costs eight times the average salary. However, rural communities currently face a serious lack of affordable housing. Only 8% of rural housing stock is considered affordable, compared with 20% in urban areas. The amount of new affordable rural housing is also low. In 2013, only 2,886 affordable homes were built in rural areas out of nearly 40,000 affordable homes nationally.

Creating more affordable accommodation, particularly rented accommodation, must be a central aspect of any drive to create sustainability in rural communities. I would welcome an update from the Minister on what plans Her Majesty's Government have to boost the supply of affordable rented accommodation, especially in rural areas. Given the current shortage of rural affordable housing, I am very concerned that Her Majesty's Government in partnership with the National Housing Federation are, in effect, forcing a right-to-buy scheme on rural housing associations that may further endanger the supply of affordable rented accommodation in the countryside. I say "in effect" forcing because, while the overall majority of housing associations have agreed and signed up to the NHF deal, rural-specific housing associations raised some very serious concerns, with many of them abstaining from the agreement.

I welcome some aspects of the proposals as they may benefit some of the housing associations—not least, for example, the greater flexibility over how they invest the proceeds of sales. It is also to be welcomed that the deal specifies some circumstances in which housing associations will be exempt from the requirement to sell their housing stock: for example, in rural communities of fewer than 3,000 people and where developments are subject to clear restrictive covenants. I want to mention three areas of the proposals which raise concerns. First, it has been widely acknowledged that the current definition of "rural" used within the agreement is very narrow in scope. To restrict the definition of "rural" to settlements of fewer than 3,000 inhabitants is to exclude some market towns and villages that face exactly the same planning and development difficulties as smaller communities.

Under the current proposals, rural housing associations would be forced to sell off vital affordable housing stock in locations where they have little chance of providing like-for-like replacement, leading to a net loss in the availability of affordable rented accommodation in these rural areas. This is a concern shared by my ecumenical partners within the Methodist church, particularly Richard Teal, chairman of the Cumbria Methodist District. I know that the Hastoe Housing Association and the Campaign to Protect Rural England have written to the Secretary of State for CLG to propose a rural definition that allows for larger rural communities at the discretion of the Secretary of State, and I hope that the Minister will look at this option very carefully.

Secondly, it is important to point out that the rural exemptions contained in the agreement are not exemptions placed on the tenant from the right to buy but exemptions placed on housing associations from the requirement to sell. That means that housing associations which operate across both rural and urban areas can choose to sell off their rural stock, which can be expensive and difficult to maintain, and use that money to build new affordable housing in cheaper urban areas where larger developments can sometimes prove more cost-effective. Such arrangements would again lead to a net loss in the availability of affordable rural housing, despite the safeguards that Ministers have rightly tried to put in place.

Two days ago, the Minister for Housing and Planning in the other place claimed that, "for every home sold, an extra home will be built in that area",—
[*Official Report*, Commons, 12/10/15; col. 43.]

Under the agreement as it stands he can provide no such assurances as there is currently no restriction on where housing associations choose to reinvest the proceeds of sales. This needs to be remedied.

Does the Minister recognise the problem and will she tell the House what safeguards will be introduced to prevent this happening? If Her Majesty's Government will not accept the recommendation made by numerous rural housing associations that affordable housing in rural areas should be actively excluded from the right to buy, will the Minister inform the House whether the Government will consider working with the NHF to introduce a presumption into the right-to-buy agreement that rural housing stock sold under the right to buy will be replaced by housing stock in the same rural communities and that the money will not be invested somewhere else in other urban areas?

Thirdly, on the issue about those areas where affordable housing developments have been built on land that has either been donated or sold at a very favourable price to housing associations by local landowners, very often this land is transferred on the condition that it is made available for affordable rental in perpetuity. A number of rural housing associations are deeply reliant on these arrangements. Indeed, I declare an interest as land and property belonging to a number of Christian denominations, not least the Church of England, has been transferred precisely under these conditions. I believe that the current right-to-buy agreement protects such development from forced sale but that has not been made clear by either the Government or the NHF. Indeed, I have heard of one landowner who has threatened to withdraw from an arrangement to provide land for affordable housing on the basis that those houses may in future be sold on at a profit. Can the Minister confirm that landowners will still be able to donate land or sell it at a clearly favourable price on the condition that those developments will be retained as affordable rented housing in perpetuity?

I want to finish with a comment on the Government's proposals for starter homes, which are an excellent idea to help people on to the housing ladder. At 80% of the market rate they are not affordable for many families. I am therefore particularly concerned at the suggestion that starter homes could provide an alternative means for development to fulfil Section 106 requirements. Given that Section 106 regulations are

[THE LORD BISHOP OF ST ALBANS]

one of the principal ways that new affordable homes are created in rural areas, the impact of such a change would undoubtedly be devastating. Taken alongside the current right-to-buy proposals they pose a threat to the future availability of rural affordable housing. So finally, will the Minister assure the House that Her Majesty's Government will review this matter carefully?

2.38 pm

Baroness Gardner of Parkes (Con): My Lords, it is excellent that this subject been brought to your Lordships' House today. I cannot claim to know a lot about rural housing, but I do know a bit about housing as I served on my local council and, in the Greater London Council, I had quite a major responsibility for it. The points raised by the right reverend Prelate are fascinating and I should like to take up some of them.

I, too, am most concerned about the sustainability of replacements for properties that housing associations might be forced to sell. I noted that the words of the right reverend Prelate were very careful. I served a long time ago on the Sutton Hastoe Housing Association. Indeed, it was there that I first met the noble Lord, Lord Best. I am delighted that he is speaking today because no one knows more about the situation than him.

My only experience of rural housing is that I have had a shared home in a village in Oxfordshire for more than 30 years. We have quite an interesting history, in that in the first instance five or perhaps seven small homes were built and no one wanted them. It was quite difficult to fill them, whereas more recently and currently everyone wants more housing for the people who were born and brought up in the village, as they do not want to change their way of life or be forced to go far away. That is important. Another very good thing in that village is that the people are really consulting carefully about where would be the best places to have developments, and whether the place you would most like is available or not available. A great deal of thought is being given in these small villages to this situation.

On Right to Buy for housing association properties, I support the point that the right reverend Prelate made about the problem of affordable housing. I ask the Minister: what is affordable? What is affordable to one person is not at all affordable to another. Therefore, it is far too wide a phrase to say "affordable housing" and then clump a whole lot of things together that all come up as "affordable housing". We need to think about that.

My uncle, who was the Premier of New South Wales—a Labor Premier, I regret to say—introduced the first affordable housing built on the fringes of Sydney. At the very beginning, the only way they could decide who was entitled was to draw names out of a hat, because huge numbers of people wanted these houses. They built them on a different basis: every penny you paid in rent went towards your eventual ownership of the property you lived in. It changed, and now the housing commission is a vast organisation. I have been out of touch with what has been going on there for 60 years, so I am reporting only on the very beginning of affordable housing in Australia.

On Right to Buy, in the GLC days I met with Mrs Thatcher when either the 1,000th or 10,000th GLC home was sold—I do not know which. The people who bought it were terribly pleased to be able to do so. The GLC officer said that this particular family had phoned every day for six months with a query or concern about what would happen when they bought their house. It was a very momentous thing for them.

I have only another minute to say something, so I cannot say very much. One very important point is that sinking funds are terribly important. If people have the right to buy they should also be helped to have the means to continue to live in the property.

2.42 pm

Lord Stoneham of Droxford (LD): My Lords, I declare an interest as chair of Housing & Care 21. I am delighted to speak in this debate, initiated by the right reverend Prelate. I start by paying tribute to the role of the church in encouraging social housing initiatives to help those with modest means. I have been involved in housing for 12 years, first with the Portsmouth Housing Association, which was set up by a clergyman in Portsmouth, Bill Sergeant. He bought his first house as part of that association in 1972. Forty years later, there are 5,000 houses in that housing association, worth £1.5 billion in assets. He was an amazing social entrepreneur who remains a hero of mine.

I will talk about a much smaller scheme in the limited time that I have, which is in the village of Wickham, just north of Portsmouth, just south of where I live. It is a medieval village that has a small rural housing scheme, an initiative started by the then Bishop of Portsmouth, the late Kenneth Stevenson, who was a very energetic, enthusiastic and highly intelligent Member of this House. In 2004, he asked parish churches to identify the needs of their communities and challenged them to think of new ways in which the church could and should serve them better. St Nicholas Church identified the lack of affordable housing in that community and it sought to meet this need. This is at the heart of the good society, which we really should support and which I thought the Government supported in the early days. They need to support it.

The housing scheme started with a local farmer being approached by a doctors' practice that wanted a surgery. It wanted land at the edge of the village. I know this individual well; he is in his late 70s. He thought that, for his own good, it would be good to have a better local surgery. He was very happy to contribute land at a discount. Out of the discussion came the decision that they should put some affordable housing either side of it, which they did. The housing association was involved. The church decided to set up a community land trust. It took eight of the 20 houses. Four were rented and four were for intermediate housing—so shared ownership, with the trust maintaining 20% ownership of the properties in the shared-ownership scheme. It has the right to buy the property back. It is an excellent scheme that has provided affordable housing in the village.

What will happen under the current government policies? I talked to the trust. It is very cautious. I am glad to say that it will be excluded, although we have yet to see the detail of the Bill. I have, at least: I do not

think there is much mention of rural exceptions; it is certainly implied by the voluntary agreement that has been arrived at. It is very cautious about the future. Of course, it has already had the announcement that, over the next five years, its rent flow will be reduced. Again, I emphasise that that is no problem for the larger association because it has a certain amount of fat that it can cut and it can improve efficiencies, but it is absolutely terrible for smaller associations.

The landowner in this situation is very angry because he thinks that, if he wanted to give further land, Right to Buy would lead to other people getting the surplus value. The housing association will have an exception with its properties, but it will be under great pressure to allow them to be sold, otherwise it is unlikely to get other grants to build new houses. Possibly it will want to build elsewhere. Interestingly, just to the south of this village, another huge development of 3,000 new houses on the edge of the urban area is coming, but the Government are now beginning to say that, under Section 106, they will be limited in the amount of affordable housing that can be provided for rent.

This is disastrous for these communities. We have to understand that housing associations and community land trusts can contribute to balance communities, but Right to Buy and a whole range of government policies are an attack on social housing. The consequences will be substantial and deeply depressing for those who have a commitment to encouraging thriving, dynamic, settled rural communities where families can aspire to see their younger members housed locally, where they were brought up, and where family links can strengthen that local community.

2.46 pm

Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town (Lab): My Lords, we passed an amendment to the charities Bill that charities should not be compelled to sell their assets contrary to their trust deeds. While the new proposals make some exemptions, the Charity Commission, which was not consulted in advance, remains concerned about how trustees can,

“administer ... housing associations in the best interests of their beneficiaries”.

We have heard about the lack of rural social housing: just 8% of housing in small villages is owned by councils or housing associations. A third of rural local authorities own no housing. Land for housing associations to keep working-class or low-income people in the community will not willingly be made available if, within three years, they could be sold off to tenants, and, three years later, resold to richer owners or buy-to-let businesses, which can then rent them at twice the housing association level. Even community land trusts are not automatically excluded from this so-called deal. Furthermore, if a housing association builds, say, 10 units as a group, one of which is then sold, the money from that would not allow the building of one new flat or house, even if land was available nearby at a reasonable price.

The chairman of Tiddicross charity wrote to me and told me that it owns two almshouses. They are lived in by single, less well-off people, usually spinsters or widows who could not otherwise stay in the

conservation village where they grew up. It would be awful, he said, if the tenants could buy their properties, which would inevitably find their way into the open market. Interestingly, his MP, Mark Pritchard, concurred, with his support for our successful amendment to the charities Bill.

How would we pay for these rural sales? It could come only from urban areas. For Westminster, this means selling three-quarters of its much-needed council houses as they become vacant. Camden will lose some 400 units. The price against which the ones to be sold will be judged is an all-London average, but obviously Camden and Westminster are well above the outer London prices, so a higher proportion of their stock will be deemed to be high value and forced to be sold. This money has to be used to pay for new builds in Camden or Westminster, which are not cheap given land prices there, and has to compensate housing associations for their forced sales. Those housing associations will not even be in their own boroughs but might have to be sent, for example, to Norfolk, to compensate for its losses. There will be a real and substantial outflow of funding from London.

Many rural housing associations, as we have heard, including the largest, Hastoe, have not signed up to this so-called voluntary deal, yet they will be forced to go along with it. Money for much-needed affordable rural housing should not come from those in need in urban areas and from the loss of council homes here. Almost 7,000 council houses a year will have to be sold under the proposals if no extra funding is provided, according to the Chartered Institute of Housing today.

This is an unaccountable policy. It is being forced through without parliamentary debate or approval. It is misguided, it is unaccountable, it is a waste of money, which will be spent in a way that means it will get into the private sector and push up rents, and it should be scrapped.

2.51 pm

Lord Taylor of Goss Moor (LD): My Lords, I welcome the opportunity to speak in this debate. I draw attention to my interests around housing and planning, although I have recently stepped down from chairing the National Housing Federation, as its term expired.

I was involved in some of the work which achieved the agreement with the Government. They were elected on a manifesto that clearly committed them to extending right to buy to housing association tenants and I welcome the flexibility they and housing associations have shown, in an overwhelming majority, in finding a settlement that allows recognition of the independence of housing associations and makes it very clear that there are many assumptions about exceptions, including in rural communities where affordable housing is in very short supply.

My interest in extending the opportunities for housing for people on low incomes in rural communities has been long-standing. I did a review for the last Labour Government on rural housing and economies and I very much welcome the fact that, through the neighbourhood planning process, communities have been empowered, in ways very similar to those I

[LORD TAYLOR OF GOSS MOOR]

recommended at that time, to take the initiative in bringing forward affordable housing and other housing measures to improve and maintain the sustainability of rural communities. There is no question that, on average, wages are substantially below the national average—about 20% below—and yet house prices are substantially above it. Because we want to protect rural villages, in general, from unsuitable development, opportunities for delivering new housing are limited.

In many ways I support the Government's work, particularly through the National Planning Policy Framework, to deliver more housing, but I want to raise two specific things that I hope the Minister, and indeed housing associations, through the NHF's work on this, will respond to. I think the Minister is aware of my concerns. The first is that rural exception sites have been brought forward with landowners very often offering up land either for free—and we heard about the church doing so—or, certainly, much below the market value in order to deliver what communities have understood to be in-perpetuity affordable housing, to meet local needs. In some cases that has been guaranteed by covenant, either by the landowner or through long-term lease rather than freehold, or through Section 106, with the local authority covenanting it. In that case, right to buy would not in any place be applicable because housing associations would not be able to sell them, but not in all cases. Very often “in perpetuity” has been assumed because housing associations have not been under any obligation to sell.

Landowners who have offered up land in this way and communities that agreed permission where it would otherwise not have been agreed would be in great distress if those houses were sold. While I believe that most rural housing associations would not wish to sell those—giving the tenant, if they wished to buy, the portable discount to buy elsewhere—none the less some might. I think that would be a breach of faith and I look to both the Government and the NHF to make it absolutely clear to housing associations that they should not do so in those circumstances and if it is possible, through regulations, to prevent it.

Secondly, the provision of fewer than 10 homes, under which the Government do not want any affordable housing to be required is applicable in many urban cases, but in rural communities the great majority of sites brought forward are for fewer than 10 homes. If houses are being sold through right to buy, it is not the case that a council, or indeed a neighbourhood plan, can say that some of those homes should be affordable, and it is very difficult to see what, if any, opportunities there will be to bring forward new homes. Given the legal challenges we do not quite know where this will end but I hope the Government will take the opportunity of the time provided by those legal challenges to consider whether in very small rural communities it is appropriate to lift any obligation for affordable homes at all. Otherwise, it is difficult to see, in those villages, how they will be delivered, unless they are fortunate enough to have a landowner willing to provide a site as an exception site for affordable housing.

2.56 pm

Lord Best (CB): My Lords, I thank the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of St Albans for initiating this debate and for his very helpful opening speech. In essence, the national problem for the next generation in obtaining a decent home people can afford is appreciably worse in most rural areas. Average house prices are significantly higher; average wages are markedly lower. There is only half as much council and housing association accommodation, not least because of the high levels of sales of council housing in villages over past years.

I declare my interest as chair of the Rural Housing Policy Review, sponsored by Hastoe housing association, a leading rural housing provider. Our review involved some of the nation's greatest experts on rural housing matters, including the noble Lords, Lord Cameron of Dillington and Lord Taylor of Goss Moor, along with Jo Lavis as our incredibly helpful secretary. Our report is available on the Hastoe website and I strongly commend it to all those interested in these matters.

Since our report was published in February, three issues have risen to the top of this agenda. With the noble Lords, Lords Cameron and Lord Taylor, I was very glad, yesterday, to discuss these issues with the Secretary of State, Greg Clark, the Housing Minister, Brandon Lewis, and the noble Baroness, the Minister.

First, there is serious concern over the Government's plan to remove the opportunity for local authorities to require affordable homes on sites of fewer than 10 properties. This measure has been subject to action in the courts and is not yet resolved, as the noble Lord, Lord Taylor, said. Because around 80% of sites in rural areas are small and because the affordable housing obligations on housebuilders have produced two-thirds of all the new affordable homes in rural areas, this measure—however helpful in urban areas—would be disastrous for local people requiring a home in their village. Without any homes for local people, the opposition to new development in rural areas is likely to be much intensified, meaning fewer homes overall.

Secondly, the Government's intention to allow housebuilders to substitute starter homes—properties for sale with a 20% discount—in place of shared ownership or rented accommodation would, again, be problematic in rural areas. In most of these localities the 20% discount would not be enough to help those on average incomes and below. The opportunity for purchasers to sell on the open market after five years would mean that, in time, all the properties would be beyond the reach of those for whom previously affordable housing had been provided and kept available.

Thirdly, there has been much anxiety about the extension of the right to buy to housing association tenants. Thanks to the good judgment of the Secretary of State, plans for a statutory right for these tenants will not be pursued and a much more flexible voluntary scheme will be introduced. This will mean that housing associations operating in rural areas will be able—and will be strongly advised—to reject requests to buy and instead to offer the opportunity for the same discount to be applied to the purchase of another property elsewhere. Although some rural housing associations

remain very anxious, this is a much improved outcome from the negotiations between the Government and the National Housing Federation.

Nevertheless, some aspects of the right-to-buy deal continue to be particularly problematic for rural communities. In particular, local authorities that have retained their council housing will be required to raise the money to pay for the right-to-buy discounts, and will have to do so by selling on the open market the most valuable council homes when they fall vacant. Although the details are yet to be hammered out, in some rural areas—including in North Yorkshire, where I am based—it seems likely that a high proportion of the remaining rural council homes will need to be sold when they become vacant to pay for the housing association discounts.

There are now three potentially serious new obstacles to creating and retaining affordable homes for those not able to buy, even with a 20% discount under the starter homes initiative. There is a real danger that people in rural communities on average and below-average incomes will face an even worse housing future in the months and years ahead. I get the feeling that Ministers are willing to consider ways of addressing these difficulties and I hope that the Minister will work with all of us in standing up for the needs of local people in all our rural communities.

3.01 pm

Lord Teverson (LD): My Lords, I declare an interest as a director of Anchorwood Developments and of Wessex Investors, and as a landlord of a single rural property in Devon.

I am less sanguine about this voluntary agreement. In the Housing and Planning Bill that was published in the House of Commons yesterday, there are just two pages on the right to buy and there are lots of blanks even on those. This gives an impression of plea bargaining, like in the United States, in that the Government have a proposition—they were elected on it, it was a manifesto commitment; no one is disagreeing with that—but they have looked at how to implement this and have thought, “Good grief, how are we ever going to get this through Parliament? How are we going to do this legally without the”—as my honourable friend Tim Farron called it—“Mugabisation of action in this area?”. The housing federations have said, “My goodness, how do we mitigate this problem?”. So there has been a sort of alliance that somehow bypasses Parliament and the democratic process to get to a solution that both sides see as a compromise because neither side wants to lose the whole thing completely. That really concerns me.

In the voluntary agreement there are a number of exceptions. What concerns me is the reference to:

“Examples of circumstances where housing associations may exercise discretion over sales”.

There is very little certainty there, particularly when we come back to the issue mentioned by many noble Lords, particularly my good and noble friend Lord Taylor of Goss Moor, around certainty for people who have offered in the past and wish to offer in the future parts of their estate for affordable housing to be

provided. We have very little legal certainty into the future, which will not allow people to be beneficial in that way.

The other side of this is the selling-off of valuable properties. This really concerns me in rural and coastal areas in particular, such as Cornwall, where I live. If you go and knock on the doors of the main street of the port of Fowey, as I have done when electioneering, you will find that the properties are empty or certainly do not have residents there during the winter. Yet these are the most valuable properties—the ones most likely to be sold off. Who are the purchasers likely to be? They are not residents; they are second-home owners. One question I would ask—which was raised, very rightly, in the report of the noble Lord, Lord Best—is: will the Government guarantee that when these high-value properties have to be sold off there will be a covenant around them being the principal residences of those who buy thereafter? Otherwise, what are currently deserts in parts of those coastal villages will become much broader.

I just want to say one thing that is slightly off the agenda, concerning the private rented sector. One of the things I praised the Labour manifesto for in the last election was the fact that Labour wished to extend shorthold leases from six months to two years. This gives much more certainty and is particularly important in rural areas, where it is difficult to change schools and any move from one private rental to another is much more difficult. Will the Government look at that area? I am sure that my own tenant, who is on a shorthold lease, would appreciate that.

Lastly, the question I would really like to ask the Government is: what happens if and when those housing associations do not wish to be a part of this voluntary agreement? How do the Government deal with that situation?

3.06 pm

Baroness Bakewell of Hardington Mandeville (LD): My Lords, I thank the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of St Albans for securing this debate on a topic very dear to my heart.

We are blessed in the UK with vibrant cities, industrial heartlands, beautiful coastlines and idyllic countryside, all of which contribute to the character and economy of our country. At varying times through history, all have suffered to some extent from cyclical patterns of prosperity and decline. But it seems to me that rural communities are continually being penalised. Many living in villages and hamlets struggle to survive: their wages are low, their buses are infrequent, and housing is expensive and in very short supply. Families with children bus them to schools in the next, larger village and watch them develop. The young people who go to university rarely, if ever, return. While there may be jobs nearby, there are certainly no homes for them to rent and they cannot afford to buy. The families of children not leaving for university find their children staying at home far longer than they themselves consider healthy.

Rural communities are a vital part of life. Vibrancy comes from a mixture of people from different backgrounds, all contributing to community life. Nearly

[BARONESS BAKEWELL OF HARDINGTON MANDEVILLE] every village has a clutch of what were council houses. These homes ensure an equitable mix of residents. Sadly, the right to buy has seen many of these homes move into private ownership and they have rarely been replaced by more rented homes. This has drastically reduced the stock of rented properties in villages. Under the rural exceptions policy, some homes have been built. As we have heard, many landowners are happy to support such schemes but this is not likely to continue if the homes are sold off into private ownership, with the new owner enjoying a massive discount—plus the prospect of making a healthy profit when they sell on to another.

The Housing and Planning Bill published earlier this week and its accompanying notes make no mention of what the Secretary of State's criteria for home ownership will be. There appear to be no protections for rural exception sites or community land trusts. This House has had verbal reassurances from the Minister that there would be safeguards in the Bill. Now we have seen the Bill and those safeguards are absent. There are 1.6 million people on housing waiting lists in the UK. We must build more homes for a mixture of tenures, including rented. There are nearly 100,000 homeless children in our country. This is a total disgrace—these could be our grandchildren.

Some 40% of properties sold under the right to buy end up in the private rented sector. There is a desperate need for rented properties. The Government should allow local authorities and housing associations to build more homes, instead of selling off those already in the rented sector.

As the right reverend Prelate said, only 8% of homes in rural areas are affordable as opposed to 20% in cities. Are we really happy to create middle-class enclaves in our villages? The elderly naturally become frailer. Village shops and services close down as those with cars travel further afield rather than buying locally. There are insufficient fit adults living locally to provide the care needed for the frail and the disabled. Carers have to travel out from the towns. Very few young families can afford to move to villages. Who wants to live anywhere without the sound of children's laughter? I, for one, do not. We must protect a sustained mixed economy of housing in perpetuity in our village communities or face creating elderly ghettos. The Minister must rise to the challenge.

3.10 pm

Lord Kennedy of Southwark (Lab): My Lords, I open my remarks by thanking the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of St Albans for putting this Question down for debate today. It comes at a most opportune moment, so I and all the House are grateful to him. I should also declare an interest as a local councillor.

I have no objection to the right to buy per se but I do have concerns about how this proposed scheme is to be funded and operated through the sale of the most expensive properties that local authorities have, and about the process for replacing the homes sold, given the time it will take to replace them. When I was previously a councillor in the 1980s and 1990s, we used to have hard-to-let properties. In 2015, there is no such thing as a hard-to-let property as the pressures to

provide social housing have grown enormously. We are in the midst of a housing crisis in both our rural areas and our towns and cities. Rural areas face particular challenges. I have great concerns that the Government's proposals run the risk of making it more difficult to provide a proper supply of social housing at rents that people can afford in rural areas. The noble Baroness, Lady Gardner of Parkes, made an excellent point about affordable housing in her contribution.

Earnings, on average, are lower in rural areas than urban areas. There is much less housing association and council housing generally in rural areas, so what there is is a precious resource making up just 8% of rural properties, as other noble Lords said. The right reverend Prelate made the point very well about the deal and its effect on smaller rural associations. I am in complete agreement with him there.

Rural areas face particular problems to get the right mix and balance of housing types to ensure that their communities thrive and prosper. The noble Lord, Lord Taylor of Goss Moor, referred to exceptions in this agreement and I look forward to seeing them in more detail. I hope they will offer the protection he referred to. However, if it could take up to three years initially to replace a home sold under this scheme, that seems a very long time to me. The fact that housing associations will have great flexibility about where the replacement home will be placed means that rural areas could be changed very quickly—and not for the better, as communities lose all or most of their social housing. The right reverend Prelate the Bishop of St Albans again made that point in his contribution this afternoon.

My noble friend Lady Hayter of Kentish Town focused on the charitable status of housing associations and the problems this policy will cause them, and I am completely in agreement with the point she made.

It is difficult in a short contribution to cover all the points one would want to make, but I would be grateful if the Minister answered a few questions for me now or perhaps wrote to me and other Members after the debate. What assessment have the Government made of the effects of the loss of large parts of social housing, in particular in hamlets or villages, and the replacement for that lost housing asset being put elsewhere? Does she expect, or will she require, housing associations to put the replacement property in the same rural local authority area it came from, funded by the sale of authority assets? Or is that not to be considered, so that the associations can put the replacement house anywhere?

Have the Government had any discussions on how a replacement property could be provided more quickly than those initial three years? What assessment have the Government made of how many properties will be bought under this scheme? How will they incentivise landowners to release land for affordable housing, rather than keep it for other opportunities? What consultations has the Minister had with organisations such as the pub is the hub, the Association of Convenience Stores or the National Federation of SubPostmasters on the possible long-term effects of this policy on rural communities? Their members need communities to remain vibrant so that their businesses can remain operational and thrive in future. I again thank the right reverend Prelate for his contribution today.

3.14 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Communities and Local Government (Baroness Williams of Trafford) (Con): My Lords, I thank the right reverend Prelate for initiating this timely debate. I also pay tribute to the church and the work it has done in providing rural housing, and to all the other landlords who have done the same thing philanthropically to preserve and sustain their local communities. Perhaps I could start with the context; then, I am very keen to answer noble Lords' specific questions.

In 2010 we inherited the lowest peacetime rate of housebuilding since the 1920s, a dysfunctional planning system and levels of housebuilding that were tumbling. Today, we are growing faster than any other major advanced economy and our job creation is the envy of the developed world. Now, we are meeting the aspirations of people to own their own homes.

On affordable rural housing, this Government believe that meeting the housing needs of rural communities is very important: since 2010, more than 85,000 affordable homes have been delivered in rural local authorities in England. Some communities have gone over and above their commitments. I pay tribute at this point to Willersey in Gloucestershire, which has done just this. But we know that more are needed and we are committed to delivering 275,000 affordable homes over this Parliament in rural and urban areas. The 2015 to 2018 affordable homes prospectus makes it clear that where a particular scheme, for example in a rural location, involves higher than average costs, the HCA will wherever possible seek to take account of such genuine comparators. Our intention is that bidders will not be systematically disadvantaged where there are some higher costs or higher grant bids within their proposed programme.

Local authorities should plan to reflect local needs, particularly for affordable housing, including through rural exception sites. They should also consider whether allowing some market housing would facilitate provision of significant additional affordable housing. Through the Rural Productivity Plan, we will review the planning and regulatory constraints facing rural businesses, including how permitted development rights can better support the provision of new homes, jobs and innovation.

The Government are committed to reforming the housing market and boosting the supply of much-needed housing. Housebuilding starts have more than doubled since 2009 and planning permission was granted for 242,000 houses in the year to June 2015. Almost 800,000 new homes have been delivered in England since 2009. Completions are up and housing starts are at their highest annual level since 2007. More than 260,000 affordable homes have been delivered since 2010 and, with nearly 186,000 affordable builds, we have exceeded our 2011-15 target by 16,000. Over this Parliament, we will ensure the fastest rate of affordable housebuilding in the last 20 years, with 275,000 new affordable homes by 2020.

The right reverend Prelate the Bishop of St Albans asked whether there should be a wider definition of rural. The Government would be willing to revisit the definition if evidence can be provided that this would convincingly increase new housing supply. He also made the point that many new starter homes will not be

affordable to people in rural areas. A number of noble Lords also made the point that starter homes may be a threat to rural affordable housing supply. Starter homes are a new form of low-cost house ownership to help young first-time buyers on to the property ladder, including in rural areas. The definition of affordable housing will be expanded to include starter homes, and a consultation on that will take place shortly.

The August 2015 rural productivity plan announced that starter homes will be encouraged through the use of rural exception sites to help villages thrive. Young first-time buyers face significant affordability pressures in many rural areas, so we want the development of starter homes to make a significant contribution to housebuilding in those areas.

The right reverend Prelate also asked what safeguards are in place to ensure one-for-one replacements locally. Under the agreement with the National Housing Federation, there is a clear commitment to all properties sold being replaced with an additional home. Rural areas will benefit from that and there is a clear exemption for rural housing under the agreement, whereby housing associations can decide not to sell those homes.

Both the right reverend Prelate and the noble Lord, Lord Taylor, asked about situations where landlords donate land and want it kept for the specific purposes for which they originally intended it. The agreement we have in place includes examples of types of property that associations may decide they do not want to sell to the tenant, including supported housing, historic legacy stock and homes in rural areas. It also includes rural properties that are protected by clear restrictive covenants in existing residence contracts. That should give a good basis for housing associations to engage with local landowners and their wishes on the issue.

The right reverend Prelate also asked what the Government will do to deliver affordable rented accommodation in rural areas. That is a very good point. Affordable rent was introduced in 2011, and rents can be set at 80% of local market rents. More than 260,000 affordable homes have been delivered since 2010, as I said, of which 85,000 have been provided in England in 2014-15. I cannot provide more specific figures because of the spending review.

The noble Baroness, Lady Hayter, asked about community land trusts being excluded. They are included in the agreement and are one category where properties can be exempted. She does not look convinced, but perhaps I can meet her afterwards.

My noble friend Lady Gardner of Parkes asked for the definition of affordable housing. It is set out in the *National Planning Policy Framework* and the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008. The NPPF defines it as:

“Social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Affordable housing should include provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision”.

The Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 defines social housing as “low cost rental accommodation” and “low cost home ownership accommodation”. In the Act, a low-cost rent is simply defined as below market

[BARONESS WILLIAMS OF TRAFFORD]
rate. Low-cost home ownership is defined by availability for occupation on a shared ownership or equity percentage basis.

My noble friend also asked about sinking funds. Registered providers are generally required to make provision for a sinking fund, for example to meet future costs in shared ownership developments.

The noble Lord, Lord Taylor, asked about landowners selling land above market price. It has to be at discount of market price, otherwise they will not qualify. He also asked about the 10 units limit on Section 106 orders—we discussed this last night—the small sites threshold. A judgment was issued on 31 July this year quashing the Section 106 small sites threshold. Increasing the number of homes is a top priority, and our policy was aimed at securing it by helping small builders and developers to contribute. Section 106 requirements can be very burdensome and prevent developments actually being built. We now have permission to appeal against the judge's decision.

The noble Baroness, Lady Hayter, said that this was being forced through and was a waste of money. The Government had a clear manifesto commitment to extend right to buy, and we are very pleased that the sector has come forward with a voluntary offer, rather than needing to legislate. The policy will boost not only new home ownership but supply through replacement.

The noble Lord, Lord Best, asked about the impact of high-value council sales in rural areas. We are legislating to require local authorities to pay the Secretary of State a sum in line with the anticipated receipt from the sale of high-value council housing. Councils will be able to retain some of that fund to support new housebuilding in their area.

The noble Lords, Lord Taylor and Lord Kennedy, talked about house prices versus wages in rural areas. It is a particular problem in rural areas; we recognise that there can be that gap. That is why we allocated £1.4 billion through the 2015-18 affordable homes programme in both rural and non-rural areas.

In conclusion, we want to support people who aspire to buy their own homes, and to support young families who sign up for a starter home. As much as possible, we want to support their aspirations by building homes in every part of this country.

Lord Kennedy of Southwark: Obviously, I asked a number of questions that the noble Baroness has not responded to. I assume she will write to me and perhaps place a copy in the House.

Baroness Williams of Trafford: I was about to conclude by saying that I recognise I have not covered everybody's points, and I will write to them in due course.

Sport

Motion to Take Note

3.27 pm

Moved by Lord Moynihan

To move that this House takes note of the Government's consultation paper, *A New Strategy for Sport*.

Lord Moynihan (Con): My Lords, for the first time this century there is an opportunity to design and implement a government strategy for sport and physical activity. The appointment of John Whittingdale and Tracey Crouch ensure that we have the strongest ministerial combination of Secretary of State and Minister for Sport since the DCMS was founded. Their knowledge, experience and expertise provide British sport with a unique window of opportunity. They will be strengthened by the contribution that my noble friend Lord Hayward will bring to this subject and this House, not least in his maiden speech today.

However, it will be principally decisions taken outside the DCMS that will determine the fate of the Government's sports strategy, since in the current economic climate new investment is highly unlikely to be forthcoming. The opportunity to persuade other, better-resourced departments to respond to the review with investment must therefore be a priority for government. The role of government in sports policy has become a co-ordinating one. Co-ordination as a theme should resonate throughout policy foundation. All departments have a role to play.

In the context of departmental co-ordination, and in the interests of sports fans and concert-goers, earlier this year your Lordships, with the support of my noble friend the Minister, worked hard to protect true fans from being ripped off by one of the most manipulated markets in our society. Legislation was passed and from 27 May this year new laws applied to the online secondary ticketing platforms. The Government announced their review this week. All interested parties will study this carefully and be proactive in their engagement with Professor Michael Waterson, who I wish well in this endeavour.

However, I make one request to my noble friend the Minister. This House, in seeking a statutory review of the consumer protection measures, believed that a year was adequate time for Professor Waterson and the committee of experts to undertake a comprehensive review. While the announcement of the review has come somewhat late—four months into the year—will my noble friend consult with Professor Waterson about the time for submitting evidence? A period of three months for submission of evidence would have been reasonable. The proposed five weeks is simply unacceptable and has caused widespread concern.

To give the House an important example, a vast amount of work has been undertaken by both the organisers of the Rugby World Cup and the RFU. Their evidence will be vitally important to the review, as repeatedly recognised in this House. Yet their current focus is rightly on doing their job to ensure the success of the World Cup and the vast organisational and administrative task associated with the ticketing process. It is simply not possible for them to turn their undivided attention to the illegal posting of tickets for the 2016 Six Nations tournament, which is already under way by online touts who are breaking the law. Surely it is unreasonable to insist that the Rugby World Cup ticketing team complete a comprehensive submission to the inquiry given that the current date closes a mere 15 working days after the final whistle is blown. Will my noble friend the Minister please consult with Professor

Waterson and seek an extension for all parties to submit their evidence to the review by, say, the end of December? That would be in line with the timetable for other reviews from the DCMS, including the short nine weeks available to apply to the consultation period for the subject of our debate today.

Unlike the outstanding work to design an effective urban regeneration legacy led by Sir John Armitt, Sir David Higgins and the ODA, who between them delivered their vision for the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and its regenerative influence on the East End of London, the lack of a national sports strategy has meant that we have been unable to transform inspiration into participation anywhere near the levels that we in this Chamber had anticipated. As crucial to making an outstanding Olympic Games, a great Olympic decade touching the lives of everyone in the United Kingdom, both able-bodied and disabled, was always our priority. Lack of government legislation and inadequate funding at the grass roots by local authorities, whose mandate is to treat sport and recreation spend as discretionary and not mandatory, has cast a lengthening shadow over the historic and wonderful summer of London 2012.

In seeking a way out for the new ministerial team, first, I stress the importance of the national governing bodies being at the centre of strategic planning and delivery. NGBs look for a consistent, long-term approach to investment models. It is vital that well-managed governing bodies with best-practice strategic plans and development models are closely involved in all funding and development policies around their sport. This will ensure that there is a strategic approach to development programmes that addresses key needs, integrates the pathway programmes and avoids duplication and inefficiency.

Current sports policy and its measurement is too focused on the once-a-week participation figure. That has led to too much emphasis on a one-size-fits-all approach. Each NGB should be able to build a specific development plan that reflects its own strengths and strategic priorities. What works well for cricket may not be the same as what works well for rowing. NGBs are responsible for the promotion and development of their sport at every level and their engagement with Sport England should be tailored around a wider range of objectives reflecting this broad remit rather than the focus that has developed on judging everything on just an ad hoc, once-a-week participation figure.

In broadening the measurement of NGBs, Sport England should allow them to set their own targets in a number of areas, including: an increase in the number of women and girls playing the sport; social cohesion projects; pathway programmes leading to elite competition levels; governance and equality policies; sporting capital and value such as competitive sport; and the community value of teams and sporting clubs, to mention a few.

Access for the disabled to sports facilities should be a priority. The Government are engaged with the noble Lord, Lord Faulkner, on his Private Member's Bill to ensure appropriate and improved standards of access and facilities for disabled spectators at football grounds. It should go further and introduce legislation to deliver the necessary improvements at all sports

facilities for disabled athletes, fans and their families. I would encourage the Government to introduce a step change at the Department of Health. Put simply, we need a comprehensive programme of preventive health measures as well as clinical targets.

The biggest neglect during the last two decades has been a lack of focus on local authorities, which—in the main—provide most of the facilities that clubs and NGBs of sport need and often finance the most accessible first-stage coaching opportunities across the range of sports. Not only should the delivery of sports and recreation be a mandatory rather than a discretionary spend, as I mentioned, but government should invest in incentives to local authorities through a more systematic provision of rate relief. There is far too much variance across authorities in allocating relief to clubs, transport vouchers, vouchers for governing body qualifications for volunteers and as regards a higher recognition of the role played by local authority facilities. If museums can offer free entry why cannot leisure centres? There are so many ways in which community sport should be better encouraged and supported. The elderly in particular are the largest age group for which there is robust evidence of the economic and social benefits of both getting and staying active, such as the prevention of falls, cardiovascular disease, depression and shortening periods of mobility, not to mention the generational benefit of young and old being active together.

On school sport, the most significant date of this century so far was 25 October 2006, when Gordon Brown—then Chancellor of the Exchequer—urged a national debate about taking sport and fitness more seriously. He, as Chancellor, wrote:

“Today, many schools offer children two hours sport a week, I want every school to do so and I want the hours to rise to at least four by 2010. This means that every child would do sports on most days. I want every school, too, to have a Sports Day to celebrate sporting achievement. And I want every school to offer after-school sport and links with a range of local sports clubs ... I want every school to have teams playing in local leagues—encouraging a healthy rivalry with other schools ... every school should have access to playing fields and better sports facilities. And every talented young sports star should have extra support to help them train and develop ... That's a great ambition for 2012—a nation fitter in health and stronger in civic spirit”.

The key word, repeated six times, is “every”—a universal policy; not, as so often in sport, a patchwork quilt of good practice, rightly receiving applause in DCMS press releases, at the expense of those who miss out from policy delivery. It is hard graft, but we must deliver what we promise to everyone, not just to the fortunate few. Gordon Brown's objectives would in each and every year since 2006 command all-party support in this House; yet sadly, not only have we failed to meet or exceed these targets, we have actually seen a steady decline away from each and every one of them, over a period in which the population has grown by 4 million.

A comprehensive review of school sport is now essential, covering the engagement between the independent and maintained sectors, the effectiveness or otherwise of the school sports premium, the quality of teaching material for the new curriculum and the delivery mechanisms of school sport. In the Governance of Sport Bill—which I introduced shortly before the general election to encourage debate and proposed

[LORD MOYNIHAN]

some foundation stones for a government sports strategy—I included a clause which, in line with an increasing number of Governments and parliamentarians, seeks to criminalise the worst drug cheats in sport, namely those who knowingly cheat clean athletes out of selection or podium success.

These individuals are sports frauds. Fraud as a criminal offence should apply as much to them as it does to fraud in the City of London or in society in general. Yet the Fraud Act does not sufficiently cover the circumstances relevant to doping in sport, thus the need for primary legislation to address athletes who compete in this country and who have knowingly taken prohibited substances with the intention of enhancing their performance. It should be a criminal offence if a person belonging to the entourage of an athlete encourages, assists or hides awareness of the relevant athlete taking a prohibited substance with the intention of enhancing such an athlete's performance.

The fact is that international doping in sport remains the worst crime an athlete can commit. It is cheating, and those who knowingly cheat have no place competing in the world of sport, let alone being selected to represent their country. Why? It is because they have defrauded a clean athlete, not only out of selection but out of their career; they have shredded the dreams of clean athletes with every needle they inject. They have destroyed the years of training and competition necessary to reach the pinnacle of sport.

Every hour of every day the vast majority of athletes are training—long winter hours devoted to a total commitment to deliver their personal best. Many have given up the chance of a career. All make huge sacrifices with the support of their families and friends, governing bodies, lottery players and coaching staff to train, to compete and to live their dream. That should never be dashed by an athlete who cheats, currently secure in the knowledge that a four-year ban can be reduced to two if they give the names of those who supplied them to WADA—a ban which, for some, is no longer than a very serious injury; a ban which, if lasting only a few years, enables them to return to their sport with the benefit of the muscle mass acquired through drugs, to be back on the starting blocks while the clean athlete sits at home.

It would not happen in any other sphere of life. Defraud the bank you work for, and you are fired. Defraud your clients as a lawyer, and you can no longer practise. A year ago, Craig Reedie, president of the World Anti-Doping Agency, spoke out in the face of Germany's proposed anti-doping laws. He said that WADA is,

“completely opposed to the criminalisation of athletes”.

Yet its director-general, David Howman, speaking in Melbourne this week, proposed imprisonment as the most effective way to reduce cheating in sport. A consistent voice from the top is essential if the aspiring athletes of tomorrow are going to heed the message.

The problem is growing. It is time to act. It is athletes who have been consistently calling for action on doping, crime, inadequate governance, lack of transparency and conflicts of interest in the corridors of sports administrators and we should heed their call.

There is no doubt that the real deterrent that cheating athletes face in going to prison—as they do in Italy—is significantly greater than a one, two or four-year ban set by WADA. I believe the deterrent effect of criminalising doping will send a message into the homes and classrooms of young athletes that if they want to compete in the 21st century, they must stay clean. However, it will take a major change in the approach of the international federations of sport and WADA if that is to be accomplished. Governments will have to take a lead.

In closing, what is the status of the Olympic and Paralympic legacy Cabinet committee and unit? When did it last meet? What has been the output of its work? When will this House have the opportunity to review its work in full? In what way has it achieved the objectives of delivering a tangible and coherent approach to the sports legacy from the Games in the regeneration of the East End of London and the promotion and development of sport? These are important questions. Key to the protection back at the grass roots of our playing fields is the role of Sport England as a statutory consultee on all planning applications, and I hope it will remain one. In the triennial review, there was a question about its ongoing role in that context. I hope that question will be answered positively. I wish the Government and, in particular, John Whittingdale and Tracey Crouch well with their endeavour. I beg to move.

3.42 pm

Lord Pendra (Lab): My Lords, in my 40-odd years of making speeches in this House or the other place I cannot remember beginning a speech by heaping praise on two Tory parliamentarians. Perhaps some may say that maturity has shone through at last; on this side, they probably think I have gone soft in the head. Seriously, the noble Lord, Lord Moynihan, is a remarkable person and giving this House an opportunity to discuss the admirable consultation paper *A New Strategy for Sport* is something he must relish, and we relish hearing him. It should not be any surprise that the noble Lord should be leading this debate and speaking so ably, for I witnessed over the years that, as a Minister for Sport in the other place, he always shone over the other Ministers at that time. I should know because I was one of his shadow Ministers and saw five Tory Ministers off in as many years.

I must also congratulate the current Minister, Tracey Crouch, the author of the paper before us, which is the first for 13 years. She is not only knowledgeable about sport but has played and coached sport at grass-roots levels for many years and was on the Culture, Media and Sports Select Committee for five years. I am tempted to say she might even surpass the fine record of the noble Lord, Lord Moynihan, unless, of course, the Government do what has been the custom over the years of moving Sport Ministers before they can have been able to make their mark. I certainly hope this Government will resist that practice in her case.

I must register my interest in the debate: I am the former chairman, and now president, of the Football Foundation.

In this paper, the DCMS has called for ideas on how to increase long-term participation in sport and physical activity and which organisations would be

best placed to deliver that aim. I have no hesitation in responding to that request, although I know that the Football Foundation has formally submitted a response to the department. For my part, I want to point out the indisputable fact that, despite many hundreds of millions of pounds being spent over the years by successive Governments, sport participation in this country is in decline and, without a coherent strategy, it will decline further.

Time prevents me from outlining in more detail the Football Foundation's more lengthy submission, which I am sure the department will consider very carefully. After all the Secretary of State, with his vast knowledge of the issues under review, and having been a former chairman of the Select Committee, is an appropriate person, along with the Minister for Sport, to consider that submission carefully. I am sure that we can all take it for granted that we will not make the progress necessary until we break down the barriers that currently prevent that progress, by getting more participants in sport and physical recreation by tackling the lack of sporting facilities. It does not take a genius to work out that, if people are keen to take up a sport, they cannot do so if there is no place for them to participate in it.

The FA's largest ever grass-roots survey found that 84% of respondents cited poor facilities as the most serious concern. Indeed, a separate survey among 2,500 grass-roots participants carried out by Sky Sports News also found that the lack of decent facilities was the biggest barrier to participation. We really ought to be ashamed that countries such as Germany, France and Holland are meeting the challenge of more participation and the growth in pitch demand. The FA chairman's commission report states that whereas we have 639 synthetic pitches, the Germans alone have 5,000.

It is true that it is not the DCMS alone that should shoulder the responsibility for a new strategic plan. It is necessary for the Department for Education, the Department of Health and others to combine in that endeavour. Health is a particular concern when we consider the problem of obesity, which, according to a Parliamentary Answer to me this week from the noble Lord, Lord Prior, is estimated to cost the NHS £5.1 billion a year. Is it any wonder that the Government's own Chief Medical Officer, Dame Sally Davies, has stated:

"If sport and physical activity was a drug, it would be regarded as a miracle cure?"

Those sentiments are of course true, but investment into local sport facilities is also good for the health of the economy. Grants from such bodies as the Football Foundation to build pavilions and pitches also create jobs. The Government also benefit from an unprecedented seven-to-one return on investment through the foundation. With the FA and Premier League as partners, the foundation more than doubles this again by attracting additional partnership funding, so from the Government's direct investment of £200 million since the foundation was formed in 2000 they have managed to support projects worth more than £1.3 billion. I am sure that these are just the kind of funding facts that the Government are calling for in this consultation exercise.

I conclude by again congratulating the noble Lord on giving us the opportunity to debate this topic today.

3.49 pm

Lord Selsdon (Con): My Lords, I am very grateful to my noble friend for introducing this debate, but I feel, like so many of his noble friends in the past, that I have once again been dropped in it. Many years ago I was minding my own business here when Earl Jellicoe, who was one of my noble friend's mentors, and mine, said, "Malcolm, are you a bit bored? I've got something sporting for you to do. We want to bring sport alive again. We're going to make you chairman of the Greater London and South East Council for Sport and Recreation, responsible for the development of all sport and recreation in Greater London, Surrey, Sussex and Kent—so help me God".

I then found that we were going to have a sort of session. We went off to Alexandra Palace. I found in the mean time that I had been made chairman of the regional sports council—the Greater London and South East Council for Sport and Recreation—and everybody who met me assumed that I was my grandfather. I said, "Couldn't we get involved in playing games?", and they said, "Well, yes". I said, "That's what sport's about. It's about enjoyment, isn't it?". I used to play almost every game rather badly. We found that at Alexandra Palace, where we met, 3,000 people turned up from the regions, who were waiting for instructions. We had not got any staff to give anybody instructions, so I made the suggestion, "Why don't they write how they would like to be instructed, and I will arrange for it to be signed?".

We then started to meet the ethnic minority groups. My favourites were the Rastafarians. They were extremely good at basketball, and they wanted to be able to play in the street. We found that in certain streets of London that were not busy at the weekend, if we arranged for a car to break down at one end and then at the other, basketball hoops with Rasta kit could go on the lamppost—they would not be straight. Jamaicans are very good at bouncing balls. So this happened, with the approval of the police, and everything seemed to work.

The problem was both money and commitment. We then asked, "Where are the green patches of London?". I had to ask one of the airlines that had planes flying low over London—no one seemed to have a map—to tell us where were the places you could go and play friendly sorts of games, and where were the grounds. There were vast numbers of places, often belonging to great estates that would not allow entry. Now, over the years that has changed, and you will find that in many of the London parks, even those that are owned by institutions, at weekends you will see children kicking footballs being guided by football players, who are paid a small amount to do that. So we do have enough facilities.

What dropped me in it was when I was told, "The East End's yours—go and sort it out. No one's ever going to do anything there". I was asked if we could build some kind of sports arena. We set out to build the Greater London and south-east regional council arena, called the London Arena. We were given the

[LORD SELSDON]

land free, and a little bit of money. It was necessary to raise an awful lot more, because one saw the potential for the East End of London, but there was no money. We found that there were always people who would help, such as builders and contractors who were working. If you spoke to them nicely, they would put the earth and materials in the right place for a BMX bike track.

That was a difficult time, but I then had the privilege of talking to Denis Thatcher, who of course had certain ideas. We looked at all the football pitches in London and said, "They've only got two goalposts, one at each end. If you got smaller people, couldn't you have four goalposts across, where you would not damage the middle, and allow them to play during school time and so on?". So this started regularly until the local authorities stepped in and said, "You've got to be a bit more careful". However, we got into real trouble in the arena in Docklands, as we ran out of money. Nobody thought that Docklands and the East End would ever come alive in the way it has now—nobody dreamed of those glittering towers that are there. However, there were the rivers and the entrance things, which made life pretty encouraging.

What I am coming to is, how do we bring the private and public sectors together in this particular world? We need my noble friend with his initiative, but quite often it is up to the local authorities to do this. Over time, I found that there were people in each of the local authorities who would help.

The best things happened down in the East End. We were about to try to build the London Arena and there were some boxing matches going on. A little old lady came up and gave me a nudge. She said, "Hello, love, how are you?". I said, "I'm very well, thank you very much". She asked, "How's your Da?". I asked what she meant and she said, "Well, we haven't seen him around lately". I did not know that my father, who after the war spent an awful lot of his life motor racing, was a boxer. He used the name "The White Eagle" and boxed in Docklands. The old lady said, "You see, my husband was your father's second". I am speaking in a light-hearted way but it is little things such as that that bring things to life. I once made the mistake of saying something on television and I ended up with so many letters because people all feel the same way.

We do not have bad infrastructure at the moment, and the demand for watching sport on television has never been higher. People are watching games that they never considered they would. Little things like that make you wonder. We do not necessarily need a strategy; we need to look at what instruments are available to government, and here again I am thinking of things such as tax allowances. Certain things have happened following certain Olympic Games—for example, Mecca closed down its ice rink at the very time that Torvill and Dean won gold at the Olympics. We are now so successful in sport that there are leaders in the sports world who can encourage people to play their games. I am told that we have more active sports than any other nation in the world. Perhaps, when the Minister replies, she will tell me that she can arrange for me to be provided with a list of those sports.

This is an interesting time. We have had a very good start to this debate and I hope that your Lordships will do all that they can to help the sporting world.

3.56 pm

Lord Addington (LD): My Lords, first, I thank the noble Lord, Lord Moynihan, for giving us the chance to have a look at this paper and discuss it properly. Like the noble Lord, Lord Pendry, I feel that the Crouch/Whittingdale pair deserve tremendous praise. I also salute their courage. Experience tells us that when you ask the rest of government to do something for sport, the response is, "Yes, it is terribly important, but you are asking us to change the way we behave for sport. No, that is somebody else's business". That is the great bugbear that is being taken on here.

The fact is that sport is seen as secondary—as a tag-on—in many people's lives, particularly within the political class. I have mentioned before that I think that most people who get involved in politics have gone through the experience of giving up sport at about the age of 14, when they learned to fake their mother's signature on a note to get out of it. I have said that several times and have not been seriously challenged, but it is certainly a fact that when people talk to a politician about sport, he panics and tells them about his local football team's results. But that is watching. The fact that you are getting involved in something that affects your life comes through in this document.

It is also a very good document because it starts with participation and works through a series of things, which I read as being things that you need in order to get participation right. This list of things is actually a series of loops that come back and support each other to keep the participation going. Can you participate if you have not been given a degree of physical literacy in schools and local clubs? Is the local club going to be a better provider in certain sports because it has more expertise? We are going over old ground here.

How do we change behaviour to get the best out of this? The Department for Education has dealt with this and has come up with a series of answers, most of which have good points in them. We need a consistency of approach. What has changed is what seems to be a more aggressive attitude in the Department of Health—that big, muscular department with lots of spending—which can see at least a medium-term, and possibly a short-term, benefit from changing behaviour in relation to sport. That is a fundamental game-changer. How are we doing this to change what is coming forward? The rest of government then has to come in and say to the other departments: "You will be rewarded; you will be praised; but you will be punished if you don't change your behaviour to get hold of this". That is what we are going through. All forms of local government are also huge players here.

One issue that was not mentioned but should have been was transport. If you want people to take part in a sport, particularly at the ages when they tend to drop out—that is, in their teenage years, those pinch points of 16, 18 and 21, when they do not have their own transport and are dependent on a parent—are we making it easy for them to get to the sporting club? The middle class dominates sport. We have a huge

culture here and are very lucky, with amateur sports taking on their own coaching underneath the auspices of the sporting bodies. It is a huge facility that other places do not have. However, if you cannot get to that club to access that expertise—that internal investment, that voluntary activity—you might as well not have it for this agenda. Do we make sure that local government and the Department for Transport say: “We need a bus route”? That is, a bus that runs when people have finished training to get them home. People will not go through some masochistic process when they are starting out with something of dealing with cold, wet weather for hours and having to walk in it. It just would not encourage anybody to do it. So you have to bring that in; you have to bring everything in together to move this forward.

This document is a good first step. It address that idea that it all comes together. Indeed, it includes the Foreign Office: what does the Foreign Office want from sport? Quite clearly, it wants quite a lot from sport. The Olympics were a wonderful example of soft power. Who knows what the Rugby World Cup will do? How much credit do they get after the host nation has been knocked out? That is a huge question to which we do not know the answer. There are even little spin-offs that allow other people to do things. I have referred very cheekily before to the fact that I was on the organising committee for a veterans’ rugby tournament of parliamentarians—possibly an international level of interaction which was unique to that particular tournament, but we still had a degree of interaction there, something that would not have been accomplished without sport, and a pretty grass-roots, basic level of sport at that.

All of these things are there to be taken from this. The challenge we have is making sure that all parts of government co-operate and accept that they have a responsibility for doing this. It is not just for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, because with the best will in the world, it does not have the muscle. Even with the Olympics behind it, it did not have the muscle to sustain this. I always predicted that the most powerful Sports Minister ever would be during the Olympics. I was right, but it is over: it had one moment, but it did not carry on. The whole of government must come behind this—and this document gives us an example of where to start and where to start looking, though it is not, in any way, a finished document: I do not think anyone ever pretended it was—so that we can get the best out of this. That includes getting the best out of all the cultural interactive levels and giving a model for other voluntary activity.

Finally—and I think it is probably best to finish now as a maiden speaker is waiting to go—if we get this right, we will have a model for most forms of voluntary activity that can be transferred on. Even in this, we are not talking about sport by itself: we are talking about the whole voluntary and social interaction of the nation.

4.04 pm

Lord Hayward (Con) (Maiden Speech): My Lords, in rising to follow the noble Lord, Lord Addington, I am reminded of the occasion when I refereed the first ever inter-parliamentary rugby match between the

British Parliament and the French Parliament. Soon into the game, I had the misfortune and the necessity to lecture both front rows. I turned to the French front row first and lectured it in French. I then proceeded to lecture the British front row. It was only after I had finished the lecture that the front row pointed out to me that I had carried on in French.

My work background is primarily in industry in human resources, which resulted in me spending much of my time in negotiation with trade unions. It was time which, contrary to what many would think, I found overwhelmingly constructive, working with representatives who worked tirelessly for the benefit of their members—a possible parallel with this House.

In the other place, I served for nine years and had the great pleasure of representing the constituency of Kingswood, an area to which I still feel a strong attachment. Kingswood is roughly equidistant between my birthplace of Torquay and what I regard as my family home just outside Oxford, and it is that home village which I am proud to have adopted in my territorial title of Lord Hayward, of Cumnor—a location most noted as the place where Lord Robert Dudley either did or did not murder his wife, Amy Robsart, so that he could be closer to Queen Elizabeth I. I served in the departments of trade and transport, the latter of which drew me tragically into the events of Lockerbie, Kegworth, Clapham and King’s Cross, places which will for ever be etched in my and many other people’s memories.

My upbringing from Oxford to the West Country results in my having a slight or, one might say, occasional West Country drawl. It is an accent into which I would, and still do, drift on occasions. My lead supporter on my introduction was my noble friend Lord Moynihan, whom I thank and congratulate on seeking this debate. When he and I shared an office together as new Members in another place, this variable accent caused him much amusement, although his attempts to mimic my accent caused me equal mirth. My other supporter, my noble friend Lord Glendonbrook, I have known for the past 25 years and I have valued both the advice and friendship that he has given me in that time.

More broadly, I thank your Lordships from across the House and the staff throughout the Palace for the assistance which I have received. Nothing could better indicate the nature of this place and of its Members and staff than the rehearsal for my introduction, which needed multiple re-runs. The staff were so patient, despite valuable time being lost. What none of them could have known was that, because of a slight physical disorder from which I suffer, your Lordships almost had someone faint during the oath. I survived, not least because, in the minutes before, your Lordships and staff had been so helpful. I am sure that this help and generosity of spirit will continue throughout my time in this House. I hope that I can be as generous to other Members of this House and the staff.

Before I comment on sporting matters, I must declare an interest in that, over the past few years, I have been a paid adviser to Sporta, the organisation representing leisure centre trusts.

The debate today is about the Government’s review of sports and their strategy—how we can encourage more to participate for greater benefit. However, the more and the benefit will come in many guises.

[LORD HAYWARD]

I am fortunate enough to be the vice-chairman of trustees at Central YMCA. A few years ago, YMCAfit, which is part of our organisation, worked with Aspire to create a programme known as InstructAbility. This is a scheme which should be better known across the nation at large, although I am sure that there will be many in this House who will recognise the title. People who face all sorts of challenges become qualified personal trainers. Since the scheme was started, some 230 people have completed the programme and most have found industrial placements. Almost nothing in life can be more moving than seeing people, in wheelchairs or not, overcoming their own personal challenges and encouraging others, often fully able-bodied, to overachieve. I hope that when the Government complete their review, they will address how they can do more to encourage disabled people to participate in sport.

Twenty years ago, six guys met in Central Station, a bar in King's Cross. That night, the world's first primarily gay rugby club was formed, the Kings Cross Steelers, a club whose tie I wear with pride today. It is not, and should not be, an exclusively gay club; we exist to play rugby, and if social barriers are broken down in the process, that is excellent. Next month, Steelers, as the club has become known, celebrates its 20th anniversary. The club now fields three teams and was promoted to Essex 1 last season. Over the years, we have brought many people back to rugby, introduced others to the sport and helped in the process to break down many social barriers.

There are now 10 essentially gay clubs in the UK, with two more being formed. There are many more across the world, including in the United States, where virtually every city has a gay rugby club. In recognising our growth as a group of clubs, I thank the RFU and the WRU for all the assistance that they have provided in the past 20 years. They have created the atmosphere that it is possible, in what is apparently a macho sport, to have openly gay role models such as Nigel Owens, Gareth Thomas, Sam Stanley and Keegan Hirst. There are, tragically, no such equivalents in football.

I said that Steelers was bringing people back to rugby. This season, the club has developed a scheme called "Pathway to Rugby". It has been so successful that recently we have had more than 100 players for training sessions each Tuesday and Thursday. We have had to close our books until January. We just cannot cope with any more players. Clearly, many people—in this case primarily gay—want to play rugby. The Government should ensure that everyone, including those within any minority group who want to participate fully in society and therefore in sport, can do so in whatever way they wish.

I ask the Government to do as much as they can to encourage communities to generate opportunities for sport. In formulating their policy in response to this strategy document, the Government should underline their commitment that tackling any form of discrimination, whether it relates to disabled or other minority groups, is a priority and that any form of discrimination is totally unacceptable, from wherever and whenever it may occur.

4.12 pm

Lord Holmes of Richmond (Con): My Lords, I congratulate my noble friend Lord Moynihan on securing this important debate. It is both a privilege and a pleasure to follow my new noble friend Lord Hayward after what I am sure your Lordships will agree was an excellent maiden speech. It is right that my noble friend chose sport for his maiden speech, having been skilfully schooled by my noble friend Lord Moynihan many years ago in their office share. However, I understand that later in the decade my noble friend Lord Hayward could gain access to the office only if he showed his football spectator identity card. I also congratulate my noble friend on the pace he has shown—an important characteristic and quality in sport. Introduction on Tuesday; maiden speech on Thursday. What has he planned for Friday?

This is not the first time in his career that my noble friend Lord Hayward has demonstrated such pace. As a psephologist, he brought us motorway man, one of the key factors in the electoral calculus in the 2010 general election. Motorway man—what a far cry from Basil Fawlty, who hails from the birth town of my noble friend. I am sure noble Lords would all agree that the experience my noble friend has demonstrated will bring much to our deliberations over the coming years, and that, in the light, too, of his humanity and sense of fair play, he is an excellent new addition to the team sheet.

I have a joke for noble Lords. There is an Englishman in a bar. Noble Lords know how the joke goes. There is normally an Irishman, a Scotsman and a Welshman. This time there is not. They are still in the Rugby World Cup.

So, to sport. I commend the strategy. It is comprehensive, far-reaching and hits many of the issues that many of your Lordships taking part in this debate have been involved in for decades. In the Secretary of State, John Whittingdale, and the Minister Tracey Crouch, we have two excellent individuals with great track records, real commitment and passion in this area—a passion shared by everybody participating in this debate today.

I will limit my comments to three areas: equality, world-class performance and the National Lottery. I am lucky enough, as a commissioner at the Equality and Human Rights Commission—an interest declared in the register—to lead a sports inclusion programme. We work with Premiership Rugby, the England and Wales Cricket Board and National Governing Bodies of Sport to increase the participation of black and ethnic minority people, girls and young women, and to increase access at the sports stadia of our first-class county cricket grounds and the Premiership Rugby teams. We have already seen tremendous success: audits of the stadia show that more disabled people are able to enjoy that match-day experience which others have been able to take for granted. Hundreds more black and ethnic minority players and thousands more girls and young women are playing rugby for the first time, led by newly trained coaches and teachers. This is what we need in sport in 21st century Britain—more people from more backgrounds getting involved.

In terms of world-class performance, let us be in no doubt whatever that none of what we experienced or witnessed in the summer of 2012 happened by chance.

It happened because thousands of people wanted it, willed it, planned it, strategised it and made it happen, not least those at UK Sport. The noble Baroness, Lady Campbell, was very much at the spearhead of that during the years in the run-up to, and including, that fantastic golden summer of 2012. Mission 2012 monitored that progress, working alongside all the governing bodies and the great work they were doing and there was a no compromise funding agreement. Will the Minister give a commitment—that when it comes to elite sport, there will always be no compromise on the no-compromise approach that delivered gold, silver and bronze for our Olympians and Paralympians?

So much sport in this country is underpinned by the marvellous—some may say even miraculous—National Lottery. What a fantastic creation of Sir John Major, on which we should never stop congratulating him. It has changed not just the heart but the mind, the head, the soul and the spirit of the United Kingdom. We do not need just to cherish or champion the National Lottery; we need to guard it and guard it well. We are at a pivotal point on the National Lottery. I ask the Minister to commit to looking at what happens with the so-called society lotteries, and say that there will be no change to the proceeds and the prizes that can be given out. Will she consider reintroducing the cap on expenses for challenges to the National Lottery? Will she look at creating even more clear blue water between the National Lottery and gambling, not least in the area of gambling on the outcome of the lottery? Will she redouble government efforts to ensure that every recipient of National Lottery money and every National Lottery partner does everything, relentlessly, to promote the good work the National Lottery does in respect of UK sport?

In short, we need more people from more backgrounds being more active more often. In conclusion, I am sure noble Lords would like to join me in offering our support to all our Olympic and Paralympic athletes as they continue their preparations for the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, Paralympic Games, and beyond.

4.19 pm

Lord Wasserman (Con): My Lords, I, too, congratulate my noble friend Lord Moynihan on securing time for this debate on this important subject. I also congratulate my noble friend Lord Hayward on his witty and moving maiden speech. If that speech is a sample of the contribution we can expect from him, we can all agree that this House is very fortunate to number him among our Members.

Sport is a subject on which I feel very strongly. It played a key role in my life. It was partly because of my active participation in sport as a student that I was awarded a Rhodes scholarship, which brought me, all expenses paid, from Montreal to New College, Oxford. That set the course of the rest of my life, so in a sense it is because of sport that I am addressing your Lordships today.

Before I say anything more, I declare my interest as chairman of the Basketball Foundation, which was established by the British Basketball League to encourage the playing of this sport outside schools. I emphasise the words “outside schools” because most people do not appreciate that basketball is the second most

popular team sport among those aged 11 to 15. Seven out of 10 schools provide it—no prizes for guessing the most popular.

These statistics tend to be greeted by incredulity by most people to whom I mention them, particularly Members of this House. This may be because basketball is a game that is played in state, rather than independent, schools. Nearly all schools entering national basketball competitions are state schools. Contrast this with rowing, for example, where 80% of schools in national competitions are from the independent sector. This might be why basketball is probably the most underappreciated team sport in the country. It might also explain why basketball is so underfunded by government and gets so little attention in the media.

Take the BBC website, which we all consult for scores. If one wants to know the latest British Basketball League scores, one has to click on “Sport”, then “All Sport”, then “A-Z Sport” and then scroll down to the bottom of a long list of almost every sport one can think of. Then comes another tab which says “Full Sports A-Z”. If one clicks on that, one will discover basketball listed between baseball and bowls. While I am a great admirer of both sports—I am an enthusiastic baseball fan—I find it very odd that news about the second most popular team sport among 11 to 15 year-olds should be presented in this way.

I very much hope that the new sport strategy that emerges from the consultation process we are discussing will ensure that the young people who want to play basketball after school have as much opportunity to do so as those who wish to row, or play rugby or tennis. Sadly, I fear that this will not happen unless the new sports strategy really does put equality of opportunity at its heart, as the consultation paper claims it will. The facts are that a very large proportion of those who play basketball live in crowded inner-city areas with limited public sporting facilities and are from ethnic minority and disadvantaged backgrounds. Some 35% of the young people who play basketball thanks to the Basketball Foundation are from the most deprived 20% of postcodes in the country. These young people cannot afford to fill the gaps in state-provided sporting facilities from their own private resources. For them, the Government’s sport strategy is the key to participation in sport and to all the good things that such participation brings.

The question is how to reach these young people and how to fulfil the Government’s commitment to using public money to provide more equal opportunity in sport. I suggest an effective and simple way of doing so that does not involve new structures, agencies or tsars, but involves,

“joining up effectively across government”,

as the Minister for Sport urges us to do in her foreword to the consultation document.

We know that the people from disadvantaged backgrounds living in deprived urban areas, to whom I referred, are also those most likely to get sucked into crime and anti-social behaviour. It is a fact that although 14 to 24 year-olds comprise only 10% of the population, they account for over 40% of the crime. And if they go to prison, 67% of them are locked up again within two years.

[LORD WASSERMAN]

We also know that the proven benefits of participating in sport such as good health, a sense of self-worth, a better education, a wider set of skills and a better chance of a job also help keep these same young people out of trouble. Indeed, we know that playing sport simply as a way of passing the time will make an enormous difference to these young people, to their lives and to the lives of their neighbours. That is why police and crime commissioners, whose primary mission is to keep their communities safe, are outspoken advocates of sport as a way of keeping young people off the streets and out of trouble. That is why PCCs across the country sponsor a wide range of sporting activities.

I have examples I will not mention because of lack of time, but that happens in Leicester, Cumbria and Staffordshire, where, for example, a PCC launched and funded a summer holiday programme called Space 2015, in which 7,000 youngsters aged between 10 and 16 took part. Some 75% of the activities were sports. Because PCCs have to be local residents, they understand the needs of their communities and, more particularly, the needs of the young people in these communities who are most in need of support and would benefit most from it. Because PCCs are already involved in sponsoring and encouraging sport, they are able to make immediate use of any new money available to them. Because they have at their disposal large teams of police officers and civilians who share their commitment to public safety and their belief in the value of sport, they could get new programmes off the ground in weeks, if not days.

PCCs offer us a perfect mechanism for delivering equality of opportunity in sport to those most in need of it. Using PCCs would also enable the Government to ensure that public money spent on sport contributes to their primary objective, which is to keep us safe. What better way of joining up effectively across government?

I hope that I have made the case for giving PCCs a role in this new joined-up strategy for sports. If I have, I hope my noble friend the Minister will ensure that she involves the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, which stands ready to help, in implementing or developing the strategy. I also hope that she will seek the advice and assistance of the two government departments not mentioned in the consultation paper: the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice. Given their responsibilities for community safety, I hope that they, too, can be joined up.

4.27 pm

Lord McConnell of Glenscorrodale (Lab): My Lords, I congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Moynihan, not just on securing this debate but on the, as ever, passionate and authoritative way in which he introduced it. His passion and authority in this subject has been obvious all his life and he has shown that to your Lordships' House again this afternoon. I also congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Hayward, on an outstanding maiden speech. I certainly look forward to future speeches from him in your Lordships' House.

Sport has many benefits for individuals and for society, not least in physical health, but also in contributing to the skills and attributes of team building—loyalty

to a team and to a club—learning to respect rules and building confidence. It ensures that people who come from difficult situations are able to build back into their lives some form of routine by taking part in regular activity, particularly in a team environment. Sport also contributes to national pride. But it has a unique ability to combine that pride with the development of cultural understanding between nations and between peoples at the same time.

I want to focus on two points today, not to duplicate anything that has already been said but perhaps to add other perspectives into our discussion, in the hope that the Minister and the Government can respond. I have had the incredible pleasure, particularly when I was First Minister of Scotland, of enjoying some of the great sporting events of the past 15 years. I particularly remember moments such as running through the sports stadia of the Athens Olympics to ensure that I was in the velodrome just in time to see Chris Hoy win his first gold medal for Team GB; or the first night in the swimming pool in Melbourne, when I was sitting next to the Premier of Victoria, who had been boasting to me that morning that the Scots had no chance against the Australians in the swimming pool—only to see Scotland top the leaderboard after Caitlin McClatchey and others had won their first gold medals in the pool that night. I was hoarse for many days afterwards.

The athletes who inspire us on these occasions should be at the centre of our strategy for elite and competitive sport. While those athletes have been increasingly well supported over the years, as the noble Lord, Lord Holmes, and others have already mentioned, through the National Lottery and other funding schemes, it is also the case that life can be tough for a competitive athlete at the peak of their career. I know from personal experience that athletes sometimes do not fully understand the decisions that are made that have an incredible impact on their lives. They can have spent 10 or 20 years training hour after hour, day after day, in demanding circumstances to reach the level at which they are able to compete across the world, only to find that from year to year decisions on funding, team selection or team organisation affect their performance in ways that they do not understand and which seem to disadvantage them.

Yes, there is a real case for supporting the national governing bodies and the National Lottery and for making a tough effort to ensure that those who deserve the most get the most in our elite sporting programmes. But surely there is also a case for hearing the voice of the athletes themselves and giving them a role in any guidance, in speaking within their own governing bodies and the national sporting bodies in ways that can be heard; for greater transparency in decisions over funding allocations and team selection; and for a greater involvement of athletes in the organisation and preparation of major events. Perhaps the Minister might like to comment on the potential for some kind of statement of athletes' rights and responsibilities—a charter for athletes, perhaps—that could be built into our national sporting programmes in return for the incredible effort that they put into representing their country.

In relation to athletes who come from Scotland—I am sure that this is also true for those who represent Wales and Northern Ireland—there are issues about

the fact that these athletes represent both Scotland and the United Kingdom in different international championships and in different teams at different times. Therefore, it is very important that UK Sport and Sport England do not become one and the same organisation but that UK Sport is seen to represent equally all four nations of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. This is particularly true in relation to the allocation of resources and the identification by national governing bodies and by UK Sport of centres of excellence or programmes of excellence, and their location throughout the country. There should be an active promotion at the UK level of different centres throughout the four nations of the UK that can host programmes of excellence, training and other facilities.

There should be a very clear indication in the outcome of this debate on a national strategy for sport that UK Sport will treat all four nations of the UK on an equal basis and that there will be clear distinction between the organisation, management and purpose of UK Sport and those of Sport England. Only through a clear and transparent understanding of that relationship can the structures and the culture be right so that athletes from Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland feel genuinely represented at the UK level as well as at their national level. That will be important for their performance and for the encouragement of future generations.

My final point, which follows on from the incredible success of Glasgow 2014, is in relation to major events. Incredible increases have already been seen in Scotland in the membership of local sporting clubs and the use of leisure facilities, in the west of Scotland in particular. Glasgow will hold the world gymnastics championships at the end of this month and there has been an increase in participation in gymnastics clubs of 37% in Scotland since the fabulous events in the Scottish Hydro arena last year during the Commonwealth Games. So that issue of legacy is critical and, again, it applies across the whole of the United Kingdom.

However, I would make one point about something that I have observed over the years at both UK and Scottish levels. The inconsistency of individual Governments—new Governments coming in and abandoning the programmes of the previous Government, only to start their own programmes in school sport, community sport or community facilities—does not contribute to a long-term investment in the physical activity of the nation. I therefore urge the Government to do what they can to ensure that any new strategy for sport is all-party in nature, so that it can withstand the tests of time and the turbulence of politics, and ensure that the next generation has years in which to flourish and not just one parliamentary term.

4.36 pm

Lord Framlingham (Con): My Lords, I, too, congratulate my noble friend Lord Moynihan on introducing this debate and my noble friend Lord Hayward on his maiden speech. I am fascinated that, as a referee, he understood what happened in the front row—he is probably the only person on earth who does.

Sadly, sport and money have become inextricably linked both in people's minds—even young people's minds—and in reality. Sport is no longer seen as simply fun to play and enjoy but as a possible lead to a career as a player, coach, administrator, pundit or commentator. There are now university degrees in sport. It has become big business. The problem is that sport of all kinds is exciting to watch, and in these days when television screens have to be filled and advertisers' demands met, it has become an easy peg on which to hang all sorts of commercial interests. Sepp Blatter is perhaps the worst example of someone succumbing to the temptation from lots of money sloshing around in his sport but—and I am not suggesting any dishonesty at all—so many people now at all levels have a commercial finger in the sporting pie.

I take as my example the game of rugby union. It is not only topical but a game I know quite well—I spent many happy years playing for the Bedford club and I venture to suggest that I am the only Member of your Lordships' House to have played against the Springboks. Until some 20 years ago, there were two quite distinctive and separate codes in rugby: rugby union, which was amateur, and rugby league, which was a professional game. Then a movement started to turn rugby union professional. Two reasons were given for this: first, that union players were already being paid, which they were not; and, secondly, that we would never compete with the southern hemisphere teams unless we paid our players as they did, which in turn was untrue. The true motivation, I am sad to say, was pure greed. We have paid our players from that time on and, from an English point of view, the results are there for all to see.

At the time, as a Member of Parliament and with the support of my son who, like me, is a Cambridge blue, I tried desperately to persuade our unique game to stay amateur. I wrote to every club in the land but, although many did not want to do it, I was told that it was inevitable. Nothing is inevitable, apart of course from death and taxes. I remember standing on the terrace of the House of Commons with the late, great Cliff Morgan, who was totally opposed to professionalism. He agreed that if I started an amateur rugby union, he would be its first president. But the tide against us at that time was too strong and we bowed to the inevitable. So a great and unique game was lost and a new one has evolved, with its laws constantly tweaked to try to make it more exciting for the paying customer.

In reality, as winning has become all-important, rugby has become more brutal and more dangerous, with little room for traditional flair and skill. Sadly, parents encourage children to emulate top players. Mini rugby is all the rage. Hits are encouraged. In my day, you did not run through a player; you tried to run round him. Rugby is a contact sport, nevertheless, and should not be played, for all sorts of reasons, until at least the age of 11. All the wrong attitudes and ambitions are being encouraged from the touchline, and injuries abound. Despite everything, winning is not everything. For every winner, there must be a loser. Children should be taught to play hard but to win with modesty and lose with cheerfulness.

[LORD FRAMLINGHAM]

In the current Rugby World Cup—and “World” has to be taken with a commercial pinch of salt, as only 20 countries are involved and only a handful have any chance of winning—the so-called second-tier countries have played all the best rugby in the right spirit and provided the most fun and excitement. The first-tier countries, from whom the ultimate winner is expected to come, practise what is basically all-in wrestling, with the occasional pass, kick and chase thrown in. The referee is now the most important player, aided by his camera and microphone. He talks non-stop and is ruining the game. His decisions in the World Cup have decided game after game.

The game has become too brutal and dangerous. Very serious injuries occur regularly. Soon, there will be a call for helmets to be worn, as in American football. Already, commentators and pundits—who have multiplied incredibly—are preparing the way for American football terminology. We hear about “fumbles”, “carries” and the “first receiver”. The destination is clear. What parent in their right mind would want their child to play this game in the long term?

What can be done? We must acknowledge what professionalism has created and accept that the game for young people is not what it was. It is dangerous and no longer fit for purpose. Today’s debate is entitled, “A New Strategy for Sport”, and perhaps we must, under a new umbrella organisation, encourage schools and universities to get together and amend the laws for their own use to recapture the essence of the old amateur game—and in so doing recapture the joy and excitement created by William Webb Ellis at Rugby School so long ago. The present manufactured monster can then continue its lumbering, commercial, American journey.

Despite all my concerns, I still retain a huge affection for the game and will be watching the matches this coming weekend and wishing all the home nations still in the competition the very best of luck.

4.43 pm

Lord St John of Bletso (CB): My Lords, I am grateful to the noble Lord, Lord Moynihan, for introducing this topical and very important debate. It is important as it is the second time that we have debated a strategy paper—the first being in 2002 and the second at this topical time with the Rugby World Cup.

I fundamentally disagree with the comments of the noble Lord, Lord Framlingham, that rugby is now a dangerous sport. The thought of wearing rugby helmets is unheard of. Nevertheless, that is not for now. Certainly, the exit of the English team was somewhat unfortunate, but it has displayed that the teams from the southern hemisphere—I would say this because I originate from South Africa—are in a different league. I note that the noble Lord, Lord Addington, disagrees with me.

The consultation paper gives an excellent overview of some of the key opportunities but also some of the major challenges which we need to address to promote more participation in sport across the country. I wish to take up the challenge mentioned by the Minister of Sport, Tracey Crouch, who has been here for most of this debate, when she said:

“We need to consider how we make sure that everyone—no matter who they are and no matter what their ability—has the opportunity to take part”,

in sport.

In my allotted time, I will devote my remarks to three areas. The first is what can be done to promote rugby at grass-roots level, to be played by not just boys but also girls, and in not just private schools but also state schools, as well as at universities after children leave school, and in clubs for those who do not go to university. Secondly, I want to follow up on some of the recommendations that many noble Lords mentioned on how to promote more participation in sport. Thirdly, I will talk briefly about the importance of youth clubs.

A week before the start of the Rugby World Cup, I asked a Starred Question as to what steps our Government are taking to maximise the grass-roots impact of hosting the tournament. I did so because, in January 2012, the then Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Jeremy Hunt, declared that the Government would establish at least 1,300 partnerships between schools and rugby clubs, making it easier for young people to continue playing rugby union after leaving education. The Minister answered that the RFU was,

“well on its way to meeting that target by 2017. It has 960 new links between clubs, schools and colleges in its targeted work”.—*[Official Report, 10/9/15; col. 1481.]*

She went on to say that much has been done to promote rugby with women and girls’ clubs.

The RFU is to be congratulated on starting up the All Schools programme that works with secondary state schools, many of which have never played rugby before. Rugby union has traditionally been played mostly by private schools—I was amused by the comments of the noble Lord, Lord Wasserman, when he said that basketball is played traditionally just in state schools. The All Schools programme plans to take rugby to 750 secondary state schools in England as part of the RFU’s Rugby World Cup legacy. If it achieves that and gets to these schools by 2019, that could result in more than 1 million boys and girls playing rugby. That would be a commendable legacy of the Rugby World Cup.

The noble Lord, Lord Pendry, rightly remarked that sports participation since 2012 is in decline. Several suggestions have been made as to how to increase participation. The noble Lord, Lord Moynihan, recommended that incentives should be given to local authorities to promote sport with more leisure centres. More focus needs to be placed on stronger governance and better leadership. I would also like to see more marketing campaigns promoting the health benefits of playing sport. Certainly, more can be done to promote more partnerships between sports bodies and non-sports organisations and government departments. Finally, as the noble Lord, Lord Holmes of Richmond, mentioned, we need more access to good coaches and sport professionals.

One initiative not mentioned so far in this debate or in the report is the important role traditionally played by youth and social clubs across the country. Youth social clubs play a pivotally important role targeting children, a lot of whom come from deprived backgrounds with a lack of sports and recreational facilities. The clubs

provide not just the opportunity to participate in a wide range of sports, but also assist in teaching core job-related skills, such as plumbing and building, and provide religious activities. Sadly, many of these clubs are closing down through lack of adequate funding.

In conclusion, I warmly welcome the aims of this consultation paper *A New Strategy for Sport*. If properly managed and co-ordinated, it will go a long way towards promoting more participation in all sports. However, we need to be realistic. Many would hope that we will win many more gold medals at the forthcoming Olympic Games in Brazil next year. I think that is highly “un-Rio-listic”.

4.50 pm

Baroness Heyhoe Flint (Con): My Lords, my noble friend Lord Moynihan has demonstrated impeccable timing—a trait of this fine sportsman—by securing this debate so soon after the Government closed their consultation, *A New Strategy for Sport*. On that I congratulate him. I would also like to congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Hayward, on his dynamic maiden speech. If his political contributions match his sense of humour, I think we are in for a fine time in this Chamber.

I welcome this most important debate. It is 13 years since Parliament has had a chance to deliberate such proposals from DCMS, and I declare my interests as a member of the England and Wales Cricket Board and vice-president of Wolverhampton Wanderers Football Club—a noble role indeed. Having consulted with six major sports plus the Sports and Recreation Alliance, which represents over 300 governing bodies, I am not in the least bit surprised that a core governance theme has emerged: that the importance of public policy and investment decisions for sport by government must be joined up. This theme has already been mentioned both here and in the strategy introduction by my honourable friend the Minister for Sport, Tracey Crouch. The DCMS, she states, is not the only government department that cares about sport.

The “We care about sports” pledges are emphasised throughout the report. In the consultation document, 10 key headline themes are contributed by 10 different government departments, which all praise the huge benefits that can be secured through sport and recreation to improve the health of the nation. Now, we must ask my noble friend the Minister whether the various Ministers, with their encouraging words for sport, will be supported by financial backing for the project.

David Gauke, Financial Secretary to the Treasury, states:

“It is therefore crucial that Government and sport work together to consider new ways of ensuring the long-term financial sustainability of the sector, building on—but not relying on—public funding”.

That last line sounds rather ominous, given the looming government spending reviews. Both the FA and ECB urge two main thrusts: the final strategy must have genuine support from across government, and government should be more co-ordinated in using sport to deliver public policy outcomes, with particular emphasis on how the two key departments, health and education, should support sport.

NGBs should own the strategic development of their sport and create a long-term delivery plan covering all ages and genders, from the grassroots to the elite level—and not forgetting disabilities.

The Sport and Recreation Alliance suggests that the cross-departmental nature of the consultation is welcome, but the commitment from government departments must go beyond encouraging words. It must manifest itself in understanding the role that sport and recreation can play in achieving its objectives by supporting such action through—here we go again—joined-up, co-ordinated investment. I therefore urge my noble friend the Minister and the Minister for Sport to bring together the 10 government departments represented in the strategy to build a sense of purpose, knowledge and expectation in sport policy delivery, backed by accountability and strong governance. When she has got them all together, please can she lock the door of the room until they have come to some sort of agreement?

Another plea is for a joined-up strategy, with government investment in sport being made in a collective manner, thus erasing wasted opportunities and funding. Given the right financial contributions, NGBs can establish vital policy priorities to improve the health of the nation and its physical and mental well-being, increase educational attainment and participation and bind communities together through socially cohesive economic growth.

The ECB also urges co-ordination of messaging on tax issues through the SRA to focus on community amateur sports clubs’ and NGBs’ expenditure. NGBs set the strategy but fundamentally create partnerships with local authorities and charities, which should be welcomed. The Youth Sport Trust national charity, which has 20 years’ experience in delivering high-quality PE, sport and physical activities in schools, was sadly hit by the withdrawal of government funding by the Department for Education in 2011. This decision had pan-departmental implications and serves as a poignant reminder of why such decisions should not be taken in isolation.

A strong relationship between sport and recreation and local authorities is critical, as has already been mentioned. All local authorities should have a duty to provide a sports and leisure strategy, including preserving recreational space and facilities and offering working partnerships. My beloved football club, Wolves, offers a good example of such a partnership. For several years, the Wolves Community Trust has delivered key messages providing health education, promoting healthy eating and encouraging physical activity for all ages—and I am not talking about the players. Even a Nordic walking programme for adults was devised. Key to this success is the positive partnership Wolves Community Trust established with local partners West Midlands Police, the former primary care trust and local authority schools. Recently in Wolverhampton, public health, which is now within the local authority, has provided funding to deliver a series of workshops for young people in the city and its environs, featuring issues such as employability, sexual health, knife crime and a diabetes programme.

[BARONESS HEYHOE FLINT]

I commend this new strategy for sport. Now let us urge its implementation and witness joined-up government policy and investment, which must be a win-win for all sport.

4.58 pm

Baroness Billingham (Lab): My Lords, the noble Lord, Lord Moynihan, is to be thanked for initiating this debate today. The consultation paper's title is *A New Strategy for Sport*, to which I would add "before it is too late". There are some questions it is best not to ask, and this is one. If the Government seek answers to why their sports strategy has gone so horribly wrong, the reply has to be along the lines of, "Your Government, your time in office and your decisions". The consultation paper seeks to pull together all the ministries that have a crucial impact on sport in England. We must have co-operation between Ministers, and topics such as participation, funding, coaching, governance and provision of sport for those with physical disabilities are essential, but I maintain that they are irrelevant when we consider the real problem underlying the miserable decline in sport and participation.

The decline is even more astonishing, given the amazing opportunities given to sport in the past decade. Could the marvellous London Olympics have been more inspirational? Could more funding have been made available to our athletes? No. The support was unstinting. Could Andy Murray have done more to create a new generation of tennis players? Yet again, the answer has to be no.

Alongside these positive factors, individual sports organisations have performed extremely well, with UK Sport, Sport England and the governing bodies all promoting and encouraging greater participation. By any judgment, it should have been a launch pad to success. However, it has not, and the decline in participation is quite horrendous. The blame has to be laid at the Government's door, and they have to rectify it.

There appears to be a terminal decline in participation, with very few exceptions. The facts and figures tell their own story. How, given the positive climate for the provision of sport, could this have happened? The simple answer is the Government's inability to inspire and promote grass-roots sports across the whole country, and the failure of the Government to put sport itself into state schools, both secondary and primary, and give a sporting opportunity to the around 90% of our young people who attend state schools, against the 7% who are educated in independent schools.

I honestly thought that we had turned the corner in the late 1990s. Sport was brought into the central part of the state school curriculum, with two hours of sport guaranteed, specialist PE staff employed and funding given for enhanced facilities. At last, I thought, sport has its rightful place in schools across the nation. Alas, though, the dead hand of Michael Gove, when Education Secretary, throttled those aspirations. He slashed sport from the school curriculum, inadequately ring-fenced funding for school sports and added insult to injury by selling off more than 10,000 playing fields. There has been no attempt to replace those lost fields since.

The divide between state and independent schools cannot be overemphasised. Take a look at the sporting provision in your nearest independent school: wonderful playing fields, ample time in the school day and outside it, and extra PE staff. If your Lordships do not believe me, listen to the Chief Inspector of Schools, Michael Wilshaw, who warned us that sport was now an optional extra for many state schools. It is not only old Labour lags like me who are constantly demanding a change in the Government's policies for sport. Our own illustrious lordly Olympians, the noble Lords, Lord Coe and Lord Moynihan, have bravely added to the voices of the Opposition. State school children have to rely on sporting parents to give them a chance.

The downwards graph of decline will continue unless there is change. The outcome will be dire for participation, health and sporting success. We saw last week the humiliating spectacle of England's rugby team being eliminated early in an event hosted, promoted and lavishly funded by England. That will become the norm, especially in team sports. Thank heavens for the Davis Cup, where our Scots brothers can take us to victory in a few weeks' time.

However, much can be done to improve the situation. Let us look again at grass-roots provision, bring back school sports for all our youngsters and, while we are at it, why not provide sport more vigorously in universities and colleges? The Americans are creaming off our best sports men and women, offering huge scholarships and robbing us of our future sports stars. My suggestion to the Government is: forget this irrelevant consultation paper and, as someone once said, go back to basics. Sport can be rescued but only if we make fundamental changes. It has to be worth the effort. I hope the Minister can take back these perhaps discomfiting messages, because these issues have to be addressed before we can see genuine improvement in the future of sport in this country.

5.04 pm

Lord Naseby (Con): My Lords, my noble friend Lord Moynihan is one of the terrier-like politicians that we have in this country. We are all the more grateful for that because we are all believers in sport and hope to assist him this afternoon.

I enormously welcome my noble friend Lord Hayward. He and I did a bit of canvassing in Bedford. Somehow we managed to walk together; he is much fitter than I am, but I kept up. I have to remind him, however, that this is a self-governing Chamber. There are no referees here, just self-governing restrictions.

I have the privilege of being nearly 79; I think I have played eight sports quite reasonably. Sadly, I now have the advantage of having two artificial knees, but nevertheless I am delighted to say that I shall be turning out in a fortnight's time as president of the all-party parliamentary golf society to play in the annual golf match.

I will raise four issues in a message to Her Majesty's Government. First, I congratulate all our Governments who have taken big sporting events seriously. Of course I think in particular of the Olympics, of which we all have memories—and, again, my noble friend Lord Moynihan played an absolutely crucial role. That was

followed by the Rugby World Cup, and we should say thank you to those in government who were responsible for that. In 2019 we face the Cricket World Cup—I declare an interest as president of Northamptonshire County Cricket Club—and there we have another opportunity to do something really exciting. I have consulted with my noble friends Lord MacLaurin and Lady Heyhoe Flint—the latter is sitting on the Bench with me today. I think that we in Parliament should do something in relation to that, and I have volunteered to the ECB to try to be a catalyst to make it happen.

Secondly, we and the Government need to recognise that hundreds of thousands of men and women, mothers and fathers, uncles and aunts, go out at weekends and in the evenings with their children, to organise, help, support and cheer on whatever sport their children, or they, are involved in. That means that we must say a huge thank you to them. On 10 September I went to the All England Club, because I am a member there, although I am no longer able to play tennis, to listen to a talk on what it calls *Beyond the Baseline*. It is a mentoring session taken by those who are currently or have been professional tennis players, who mentor children who are having some difficulty in handling life socially one way or the other. It is a very exciting programme. Admittedly, it is only in 27 schools now, but it is a foundation for something very exciting.

After that I had the opportunity to talk to the Tennis Foundation and I asked them, “What can we do to take some of these things forward in life?”. My noble friend Lord Moynihan mentioned the number of hours of sport. He is absolutely right. Four hours, which is the figure he gave, is not asking too much. Secondly, teachers have not been mentioned. It is absolutely fundamental that every primary school teacher, whatever size or shape he or she may be, is trained to teach sport. That would help a great deal.

I also look at the world of cricket, which I love greatly. I was not terribly good at it, but I am still very active in it. There are myriad bodies there: the Lord's and Lady Taverners, Chance to Shine, local charities, and the MCC. In Northamptonshire we have just supported locally the Fred Trueman State School Cricket League, which gives complete sets of kit to state schools. On top of that, of course, we have the ECB. There are all these bodies, and I say thank you to all of them. The big change I have seen recently is that integration gender-wise is progressing, with girls' and ladies' cricket coming on wonderfully. The ethnic dimension is so obvious for cricket because, quite frankly, most of the ethnic communities can play cricket far better than we can. But—and this is a big but—both government and governing bodies cannot just take this for granted. They have to understand that dealing with volunteers can be a sensitive relationship. If you understand that sensitivity, the relationship will succeed, but if you begin to direct too strongly, it will wilt away.

With regard to governing bodies, I shall give two examples where there are slight danger signals. On rugby, I read in the press that the RFU is contemplating moving the Six Nations, or part of it, to the north. I am all for involving the north in rugby, but some things are fairly sacrosanct and that one needs to be

looked at very carefully. Secondly, we have a lot going for us in the world of cricket. There are some very exciting developments. We have to be a little bit careful that commercialisation does not take over to the detriment of the grass roots—which in this case are the 18 counties.

Finally, I look at local government. I am very lucky: I was a Member for Northampton, where the county council and borough council are involved in rugby, cricket, football and motor racing. It is a good case history that my noble friend on the Front Bench might like to take note of.

And really finally, I get tired of reading in the press that MPs are being criticised for taking part in sport. We should recognise that we need fit MPs, not those who put on too much weight. I hope that my noble friend—I will speak to the Minister of Sport as well—will make it quite clear to the press that it is a requirement of our public servants to be fit and to take part in sport.

5.11 pm

Lord Stevenson of Balmacara (Lab): Compulsory press-ups all round!

My Lords, I start by thanking the noble Lord, Lord Moynihan, for securing this debate and for his impeccable timing, as has already been mentioned, in allowing us, at the very last minute, to feed into the consultations around the Government's publication. He is a human dynamo when it comes to sports policy. He is everywhere and his productivity must be unmeasurable. He ought to be bottled and put into the British economy so that we can stop whinging on about it, because he seems to know how to do things. I am also particularly grateful to him for making what I think has been the only laudatory reference to my friend Gordon Brown, the former Prime Minister, who got it right on sport. He is to be listened to on many subjects but is very much out of fashion at the moment, although there may be changes down the corridor that mean that some of the times over which he presided may well be regarded as sunny uplands in the current state of play.

I thank all speakers for their contributions. It has been a very good debate, and I am only sorry—this is meant as no disrespect to those who did speak—that an administrative problem seems to have withdrawn the opportunity to take part from the noble Baroness, Lady Campbell of Loughborough. Her contribution, particularly in relation to the Olympics, would have been very helpful to us.

I also congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Hayward, on his maiden speech. He will soon realise that his rate of progress in making speeches following his introduction—a point picked up by his noble friend Lord Holmes—raises expectations, but on this occasion he certainly satisfied them. It will have done a huge amount of good to the interests that he represents to have seen that tie represented on these Benches, and the words that he said about discrimination will resonate far beyond this Chamber. I am grateful to him for that.

We on this side welcome the fact that the Government recognise that there is a failure in sports participation. I want to make only two points in relation to the document, which I thought was extremely good: the

[LORD STEVENSON OF BALMACARA]

proportion of people taking part in sport once a week is lower than it was in 2009-10, despite the 2012 Games, and the percentage of those on the lowest incomes participating in sport has hit the lowest level since records began.

The consultation paper pulls no punches, which possibly tells us why it was published in the depths of the recess, but it should be praised for its recognition that this is a whole-of-government issue—a point picked up by a number of speakers. It is good to read that a single government department like DCMS does not expect to solve all the problems on its own, and I am sure that the Minister will want to reflect widely across the possible responses that may come back from the whole of government on this matter, because it is necessary to do so.

However, this is not a government-only issue. We have to recognise that all the various agencies, all the clubs and all the volunteers—as mentioned by the noble Lord, Lord Naseby—right across the country have to pull together if we are to salvage something from this. There is a real problem and, although the paper is a bit sketchy on the reasons for the present crisis, many people, including my noble friend Lady Billingham, suggest that a number of the decisions taken by the previous Government have impacted badly on sport, particularly where they have involved the cutting of activity or sport in schools.

As another snapshot, since 2010, fewer children are participating in a minimum of two hours a week. It is worse for girls and even worse for black and minority ethnic children and people from disadvantaged backgrounds. That, together with a decline in adult participation, is what is causing the difficulty.

Of course, the problem of young people losing interest in physical recreational activity is not a new one. It was first identified in a report in 1960 by Wolfenden. Successive Governments have attempted to tackle the issue for more than 50 years, and I do not think we can look at any particular period with any feeling that they cracked the problem. It is, of course, relatively easy to provide for those who have private resources and are enthusiastic about sport, but we have to work much harder to encourage those who are not so blessed. Our aim must be to encourage more and more young people to keep up with a sporting habit and to remain physically active throughout their adult lives. As the noble Lord, Lord Holmes, said, more people from more backgrounds need to be more active more of the time. That is a wonderful aphorism.

To achieve this, we have to be prepared to offer a broad mix of choices that include competitive and non-competitive physical recreational activities—a choice so that children will find a sport that they enjoy and wish to take forward in their adult lives. In this way, we can bridge the gap between children leaving school and leaving sport and getting them back when they are in the community.

A number of noble Lords have mentioned the following point, but I want to emphasise it. The loss of interest in sport is, of course, particularly acute for young girls, whose participation drops off rapidly through secondary school. Although participation levels

are lower for girls throughout primary school, the difference is only three or five percentage points; but by year 11, the average difference between boys and girls has gone up to 13 percentage points. There is therefore a real problem here and I hope that when the Minister comes to respond, given the interest she has previously expressed in your Lordships' House, she will want to pick up on it.

I cannot understand why we cannot find a way forward on this, because sport is every bit as important for women as it is for men. Some 80% of women are not doing enough exercise, according to the Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation, and 1.8 million fewer women than men play sport regularly. The great gap is in the teenage years, but women from disadvantaged groups also participate less. Nevertheless, surveys show that the majority of inactive women would like to participate and a majority of active women would like to participate in more sports. Building on good practice and successful programmes, we have to be able to find ways to tackle these issues and get more women and girls engaged with sport.

In passing, it is also important to note that women are not represented in the numbers that they should be on governing bodies or in coaching. This point has been picked up as well. The overall percentage of women on boards of national governing bodies is 27%, and on nearly half the boards, women make up less than a quarter of the membership. If young women are going to be inspired to get involved in sport, we also need to see them in places of influence within sport. This will also help ensure that the specific needs of women are considered better at every level within the sport, which has not happened in the past.

As the noble Lord, Lord Hayward, reminded us, sport for people with disabilities should be part of every plan for sport. There are people with a variety of disabilities who want to get involved in every type of sport. As I have already quoted from the noble Lord, Lord Holmes, more people from more backgrounds being more active is true for every adult, including those who are disabled. It is good to hear of the progress that has been made by the HRC, both in terms of facilities for sport and for those who wish to watch it and perhaps to get into it through that route.

All individuals should have access to the richness and enjoyment sport brings, as well as to its health benefits. Of course, we saw it in absolute, glorious Technicolor during the Paralympic Games. I have said already in your Lordships' House that one of the most wonderful experiences I have ever had was being asked to present medals to winners at those Games. It is something that will stick with me for my whole life.

I want to mention two or three points that did not, perhaps, get as much coverage in the debate, but are important topics to be addressed by the Minister when she winds up. The question of financial sustainability raised by the noble Baroness, Lady Heyhoe Flint, is really important. Of course, it is good that the Government will continue to fund, directly and through the lottery, the sports that we need. However, we need a step change here. One source that has been touched on in relation to one sport—horseracing—is a levy on the gross profits made by gambling. This introduction of

a sports right seems to me capable of being moved further around the sporting field. Perhaps the Minister could reflect on that, if not in this debate then at some future stage. We will need to find new sources of revenue, and this seems to be a way to do it.

There is an outstanding issue in relation to football to which I would also like to hear a response. It is the promise made by the Premier League to spend 5% of TV revenues, rising to 7.5% and 10% as the income increases, to develop grass-roots football. This has never taken place and I wonder whether the Government will hold the Premier League to its promise.

I agree with the point made by the noble Lord, Lord Moynihan, about the review of secondary ticketing and hope that the Minister will be able to comment on it. I was at a conference this morning where the delay and the tight timetable for responses to the review came in for great criticism.

My noble friend Lord McConnell spoke about the need to think carefully about the way in which funding flows to the nations of the UK and the worry that there might be a problem if funding for individual areas such as Sport England became mixed up with that. We need to make sure that we have clean lines of accountability and transparency. My noble friend's point about the need for athletes to be better involved was also interesting and merits further consideration.

Why does this matter? The consultation paper gets this right. We live in a sports-mad country, with parents, children and local communities all participating in sport and watching sports at events or on television. People's love for sport and enjoyment of it make it an important issue for public policy, but it has many more important beneficial effects as the noble Lord, Lord Wasserman, said. Sport is good for children, helping them to build key life skills; it also makes them feel positive about what they can do and contribute. It also makes us healthy. Physical activity can play a great part in tackling illness, including diabetes, heart disease and Alzheimer's. It brings communities together, creating and strengthening social networks. If we build on universal participation, we will see even greater achievements at elite competition.

To make sport and physical activity a part of the daily lives of many more people will be a challenging task over the coming years. It cannot be a top-down approach; it will be achieved only if we involve people who are already engaged professionally and voluntarily in organising planning and delivering sports activities in our communities. We should still try to achieve that dream of greatly increased participation, even though it may take us 10 or 20 years. We should do it because it matters.

5.22 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and Department for Culture, Media and Sport (Baroness Neville-Rolfe) (Con): My Lords, perhaps I may begin by congratulating the noble Lord, Lord Hayward, on his excellent, informative and very amusing maiden speech. He is a great addition to our Benches and to the powerful sports network—I will avoid the term “mafia”—that exists in our House. I am delighted to underline the Government's commitment

to tackling discrimination in sport, as he suggested. The Government's commitment to equality and fairness throughout the world of sport is reflected in our consultation paper and will be to the fore when the strategy is published later this year.

It is no good claiming that sport is for everyone if everyone is not made welcome. Professional sports clubs and sporting venues have a legal duty to provide reasonable adjustments for spectators with disabilities. Further progress is vital. Clubs must look carefully at the whole experience of every fan, from transport—as has been said—to ticketing, to sightlines and to seating, to ensure that needs are being met reasonably. The Government welcomed last month's statement by the Premier League committing clubs at last to compliance with accessible stadia guidance. I am not sure whether that was the point that the noble Lord, Lord Stevenson, was referring to—he made a point about the Premier League; perhaps we can catch up afterwards because I did not get it.

I am grateful to the noble Lord, Lord Moynihan, for introducing this excellent debate. His experience is exceptionally wide-ranging and his contributions are always compelling—sometimes so compelling that they can cause trouble. I agree with the noble Lord, Lord Stevenson, that every contribution this afternoon has been excellent.

Sport matters. It matters for its own sake and because it has an impact on so many aspects of our lives. That was why, in August, the Government launched a consultation paper entitled *A New Strategy for Sport*. As has been said, this was a genuinely cross-Whitehall effort to which Ministers from 10 different departments contributed themed forewords. This represents departmental collaboration rather than departmental wars—possibly, in the words of my noble friend Lady Heyhoe Flint, in one room. I share all that has been said about the refreshing approach to sport from the Secretary of State and Tracey Crouch, the Sports Minister. They have a little more muscle than some have suggested this afternoon.

We have received over 3,000 responses to our consultation covering a huge range of experiences and viewpoints. I am delighted that this includes responses from business, local government and charities as well as the sports sector and sports fans. I will ensure that today's debate is also fed into the process part of that consultation. My noble friend Lord Moynihan has brilliant timing, as has already been said.

The noble Lord, Lord Addington, commented that transport was important. That might fit in under the heading of “Theme Seven: Infrastructure”. And my noble friend Lord Wasserman said that the Home Office and the MoJ were important because community, safety and order matter.

As several noble Lords have said, sport builds responsibility. It brings together communities and teaches us that common endeavour is best for us all. In a world that has become more individualistic, it has an awesome power to bring together those who play and those who support them, from the Olympics down to the most junior league. Sport uses the skills of people from all backgrounds and builds skills. It brings discipline and the ability to work in a team, which is so vital in the

[BARONESS NEVILLE-ROLFE]

workplace today. In a team game, you have to do your job, or you let the team down. That is really important in the real world. And we are not just interested in team sport, as we made clear in the consultation paper. We want to get people active, not only through sport, in ways that suit them.

There is a definite link between a nation's sporting prowess and its standing in the world. Sport binds us together and affords us a wholesome way to express our patriotism. I think national pride was the phrase rightly used by the noble Lord, Lord McConnell of Glenscorrodale. Like him, I was enthralled by the Glasgow Games, not just by those wonderful Scottie dogs, but because the games created a huge and brilliant legacy. Sport entices people to our shores. Nearly 3.5 million tourist visits were made to the UK because of the 2012 games, resulting in £2.1 billion in additional spending. Former IOC President Jacques Rogge said that our work to create a lasting legacy was a blueprint for future hosts. We have learnt from the experience of others and are left with no white elephants.

My noble friend Lord Moynihan asked about the legacy committee. The legacy committee met during the last Parliament. The Legacy Unit is now in my own department, the DCMS. It published its most recent annual report in August 2015. The report sets out progress against the Government's and the Mayor of London's legacy plans for the previous 12 months. I am glad for the opportunity to draw its attention to the House and to the fact that £14.2 billion of economic benefits in trade and investment followed the Olympics.

We are expecting more than 450,000 international visitors for the Rugby World Cup. Although some of us are licking our wounds after England's exit, other home nations are still in the hunt and the tournament is proving to be a tremendous success, including, as has been said, with second-tier teams. More than 2 million tickets have been sold and it is expected to generate £2.2 billion of spending. The Government and their agencies are working closely with England Rugby 2015 and the Rugby Football Union to ensure that it leaves a lasting legacy. As a mother of a rugby player, I listened with great interest to the comments of my noble friend Lord Framlingham. Like him, I wish all the remaining home nations the greatest of success.

Hosting major events exercises a cultural and soft power that goes beyond economics. We want to see lasting change in terms of communities, the economy, regeneration, equality and participation. Just as sport can bring the international community together, so it does the same thing at a local level. Teenagers, accountants, artists, retired colonels, plasterers and civil servants may all play in a village cricket team, helping to give the village a shared sense of identity. I agree that the lottery has had a massive impact on both community and elite sport, as the noble Lord, Lord Holmes, explained.

We are looking through the sports strategy both at funding sources and how that funding is used. Local authorities also deserve a mention. They have a major role in delivering sport, spending around £1 billion a year. They are experts at joining up with other agencies and community groups to get local people active. The

strategy will consider how Government can best engage with them to ensure optimal use is made of resources. I took the point about parish councils as well as other local authorities.

It is a matter not merely of quantity but also of quality. A good example is Orford Jubilee Park in Warrington, which opened in 2012 and brings together excellent new sport and leisure facilities in the same place as a GP clinic. I also enjoyed very much the Wolverhampton examples of my noble friend Lady Heyhoe Flint.

Sport is good for us—good for soul and body. It is a fantastic way to combat diabetes, depression and heart disease and to give people of all ages a chance to shine and to do something healthy that gives them pleasure. Nationally, one child in 10 is obese when starting school. But at St Ninian's Primary School in Stirling, all pupils walk or run a mile every day. That has been going on for more than three years and not a single child is overweight. What a splendid individual example of good practice. The noble Lord, Lord Pendry, will be pleased to know that we will be bringing forward plans for action on childhood obesity in the coming months. To get children more physically active will be a key part of that action plan.

The Government have ring-fenced more than £450 million for the PE and sport primary premium for all primary schools for the three academic years from September 2013. The average time spent on curricular PE at primary level has increased, I am glad to say, from 109 to 122 minutes per week—every improvement is useful. Sport England is investing more than £1 billion in a youth and community strategy over five years, and the School Games programme, which aims to give every child the chance to play competitive sport, attracted 1.3 million participants last year.

Although 1.4 million more people play sport than when the Olympic bid was won in 2005, there has recently been a recorded decline in sports participation, which has been mentioned, and which we want to see reversed. As the noble Lord, Lord Moynihan, hinted, there is a problem with the figures. We need to look at the Active People survey. It only uses landlines, the noble Lord explained yesterday. It also fails to take account of children below the age of 14, when we know that this is an incredibly important group in sport. I can say today that we are considering the changes that need to be made, and we will be announcing them as part of the new sports strategy before the end of the year.

Like my noble friend Lord Naseby and the noble Lord, Lord Stevenson, the Government particularly want to see more girls and women playing sport. The recent rugby, netball and football world cups displayed some excellent role models and we need to build on this at both the elite and grass-roots levels, such as in *Chance to Shine* in cricket. There are obstacles that put women and girls off sport, including body image and self-esteem issues, and a fear that they lack the right skills. Sport England's "This Girl Can" campaign has been a huge success on TV, on the Underground, on the buses and virally on social media, with 67% of

14 to 40 year-old women recognising the advert—that is a lot—and, more importantly, 60% saying that they have taken action.

I also commend the legacy of the Rugby World Cup in relation to grass-roots sport, which was mentioned by the noble Lord, Lord St John of Bletso. I really think that an important contribution is being made.

I was a little sorry that the noble Baroness, Lady Billingham, took such a partisan view and did not appreciate the fundamental change of approach that has generally been welcomed today. However, I appreciate her experience in sport and in tennis. I very much agree with her about the Davis Cup. I look forward to its final stages.

I was also glad to hear from my noble friend Lord Naseby about mentoring, which is a terrific opportunity in sport. I agree with him about Members of Parliament—and, indeed, Members of this House—taking exercise. If only we had more time to do it.

I am happy to confirm to the noble Lord, Lord McConnell, that we have no intention of merging UK Sport and Sport England, which I think was his concern. UK Sport will continue to nurture elite athletes from all parts of the UK.

My noble friend Lord Moynihan made some excellent points on governance in sport. We will certainly reflect on them in drawing up our strategy. The integrity of sport must be upheld in its governance. Those who run sport owe it to the athletes, fans and volunteers to behave ethically. The recent spectacle at the top of FIFA is depressing and unacceptable. The sooner that Sepp Blatter goes, the sooner the process of reform can begin. By contrast, how welcome it is that my noble friend Lord Coe has become president of IAAF, the world athletics body. He is unquestionably the right person for the job. I would like to see more Britons in leading governance roles.

An expert working group is currently considering how to give football fans a stronger voice in how their club is run and how to encourage greater collective supporter ownership. The group will report to the Government in November.

The integrity of sport is also compromised when competitors cheat by using banned drugs. My noble friend Lord Coe has long been a leading advocate of tough sanctions, and UK Anti-Doping has a good record. As I said, my noble friend Lord Moynihan is always compelling, but I am not sure that new criminal offences are necessary. Serious doping is already covered under existing criminal legislation. At present it is not obvious to us that further legislation is the answer, but allegations of doping are matters for serious concern and it is important that investigations are very scrupulously conducted.

Given its widespread popularity, it is no surprise that sport is also big business. According to the *Sport Satellite Account*, the value of the sports economy was almost £39 billion in 2012, with 1 million people employed in the sector. That is 3.6% of UK employment, up from 2.2% in 2004—so a real growth industry. Hosting events allows us to demonstrate the best of British business to a global audience. Even if we are not the hosts, major tournaments offer a chance to win contracts and promote ourselves. A good example

is Sainsbury's, which sponsored the 2012 Paralympics. It gave the company superb exposure and prompted it to think about how it treated disabled people, as an employer and as a business. Of course, it also brought more funds into sport.

Local sport, including amateur sport, provides another platform for business to advertise and to invest. As we have heard, sponsorship brings in valuable income, with the Rugby Football Union reporting an increase in sponsorship from £19 million in 2013 to £24 million in 2014—so before the world cup.

Sharp practices in ticketing have rightly exercised this House. The measures in the Consumer Rights Act 2015 provide better information for consumers so that they can make informed choices when buying tickets on the secondary market. We nevertheless encourage consumers to check official ticket sites in the first instance.

I am delighted that we have announced the commencement of the review of consumer protection measures in the ticket resale market and, as has been said, that the chair of this independent review is Professor Michael Waterson. He is eminently qualified. He is an industrial economist, an expert in online sales and was a member of the Competition Commission for nearly a decade. I believe he has also acted as a special adviser in the Houses of Parliament.

I appreciate, as the noble Lord, Lord Moynihan, has said, that the deadline of 20 November is a tight one. Because it was in legislation, the events industry, the ticketing platforms and other interested parties have known about this review since March and there has been close on six weeks for interested parties and fans—because I think they are important—to make their views known. I know Professor Waterson will also be consulting experts and we do look forward to seeing people's comments.

To conclude, this debate reflects the fact that sport now represents a very important part of British life. This is true for the individual, for the community, at the political level and for the businesses and creative industries that it supports. I once again thank all noble Lords who have contributed today. We are determined to turn our belief in sport, as a powerful and positive thing, into a national reality.

5.41 pm

Lord Moynihan: My Lords, I thank all those who have participated in this debate, and particularly my noble friend Lord Hayward for his powerful maiden speech. It has been an impressive debate. We have looked for the first time in this House at the proposed new strategy for sport, which, as has rightly been pointed out, has just seen the end of the consultation exercise. We have also considered related subjects.

The initiative by the Government has been welcomed across the House, with the noble Baroness, Lady Billingham, rightly urging us to go further. I congratulate the Minister, Tracey Crouch, on taking this initiative and, indeed, on the widespread praise and support that she has received. I hope that will prove an asset and not a liability, because none of us underestimates the challenges that lie ahead of her. All of us are willing to help in any way we can and we appreciated the fact that despite the challenges of being heavily

[LORD MOYNIHAN]

pregnant and having to stand at the Bar—there are some ways in which we should update our traditions—she managed to be present for virtually all of this debate. That was noted and appreciated.

My noble friend the Minister has answered many questions and I should say on behalf of all of us interested in sport that we are fortunate to have both her and the noble Lord, Lord Stevenson, at the Dispatch Boxes in this House. Through their combined interest in this subject we do manage to achieve a lot on a cross-party basis on sport and I am sure we will do so over the next four and a half years. The only point that I might pick up on is that I did detect a window of opportunity to consider representations on the inquiry, not within a very strict timetable but, in conversation with the new chair, to be a little more flexible, to take into account, not least, the Rugby World Cup. I hope that can be done, because I would hate to think that we were overly time-constrained on what is a vitally important review, which was initiated in this House and is placed on the face of the legislation.

As for doping in sport, I have to say to my noble friend the Minister that I was interested to hear that it is a criminal activity in this country. I can assure her that it is not at the moment. But if there is a law that captures those who knowingly cheat clean athletes out of selection and competition and that is a criminal activity, I look forward to discussing that with her outside the House.

In conclusion, as the noble Lord, Lord McConnell, said, the ultimate rationale for all of us involved in sports administration is the participant, the athlete. They must always come first and must always be listened to. I am delighted to see today in your Lordships' House someone of the standing of Caitlin McClatchey, who won two gold medals at the Commonwealth Games, and who I had the privilege of watching in both of her freestyle finals at the Olympic Games in Beijing and London; and also to see young athletes spending their afternoons listening to this debate and taking it upon themselves, as a priority in their lives, to understand and hear what we have to say. We need to thank her and, through her, all the athletes. We are here only because of those athletes. The only reason I give my time is to try to ensure that in a small way we can give the next generation better opportunities than we had when we were competing. It is a way for all of us who love sport to give something back.

So against that background, again, I thank everybody who participated. I beg to move.

Motion agreed.

Shared Spaces

Question for Short Debate

5.45 pm

Asked by Lord Holmes of Richmond

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact shared spaces have on blind and vision-impaired people and whether guidance for local authorities on shared spaces is fit for purpose.

Lord Holmes of Richmond (Con): My Lords, it is with mixed feelings that I rise to open this debate. It is an important debate but it is a debate that we should not need to have. Shared space is a completely artificially created problem which should never have come across our urban landscape. It is a debate we should not need to have because five years ago the noble Lord, Lord Low, stood up in this Chamber and warned local authorities about the dangers of shared space. Yet, five years on, if not quite an epidemic, shared space has swept the United Kingdom like a pernicious class A drug.

What is shared space? Quite simply, it is this: taking away traffic signals, pedestrian crossings, road markings and pavements and having everybody in that shared space—toddlers and tankers, buses and blind people in the same shared space—with the belief that as a result of this everybody will behave better and have a more inclusive shared experience. As I hope this debate will clearly and emphatically point out, that is not the experience for millions of people up and down this nation.

The proponents of shared space say, “Of course blind people are at a disadvantage. They are at a disadvantage in everything in life. Plus ça change. Quelle damage”. We should mind because that kind of logic in urban design is completely unacceptable. That was the reason why I launched my report, *Accidents by Design*, which I published in July. I surveyed more than 600 people and the findings were stark. They demonstrated that whether you were blind or fully sighted, disabled or non-disabled, a cyclist, a motorist or a parent with young children, your experience of shared space was unremittingly negative. Almost two-thirds of people said they had a negative experience of shared space. Perhaps even more concerning, 35% of people said they actively avoided shared space. That is over a third of the population effectively planned out of their local area.

Those are the statistics but I wanted the report to speak with the voices of the respondents. I wanted their experiences to come through, to gain those narratives, those qualitative data, to sit alongside the quantitative statistics. Let us hear some of those voices. A pedestrian described her local shared space scheme as “lethally dangerous”. A motorist said his local scheme was an “absolute nightmare” that he sought to avoid. That point is interesting because if proponents of shared space are actively using it, if their primary purpose is to create traffic-free areas, they should be honest and open and have the debate on those grounds, rather than using unconsenting pedestrians as human shields for their plan.

For cyclists, shared space is a promise that simply does not deliver. Many people talk about feelings of danger, of being intimidated and feeling terrified. Is this what we want to create for our local communities—our townscapes—in 21st-century Britain? The report was widely received and yet the proponents of shared space sought to push it to one side, suggesting again that it was an issue only for blind people. It is clear that it is an issue for the entire population, up and down the country, yet hundreds of schemes are still in the planning process right across the country.

The scheme as a concept came out of the Netherlands, so, presumably, it is working incredibly well there. In fact, it is not. The scheme is fundamentally flawed and cannot possibly deliver on the promise set out in the government guidance: that this will lead to pedestrians being able to move with more comfort and ease, and enable everybody to share the space better. With whichever design or method, it simply fails if you believe that traffic signals, pedestrian crossings and kerbs can be removed and everybody can share one open space.

What happens when the problems of these schemes are discovered? There is U-turn after U-turn, up and down the country, with the reinstatement of pedestrian crossings or traffic lights in Hackbridge, Warwick and tens of other schemes. Even better is where these schemes are abandoned before they get off the ground once the consultation gives that clear steer from the local community that they do not work, as was the case most recently with the proposed scheme for the Isle of Man. But schemes still remain on plan, as I have said, up and down the country. If this debate can do anything, I want it to raise awareness across the population. Do they want their taxes to be spent on schemes that exclude, are dangerous and terrify? I ask my noble friend the Minister these questions and I urge the Government to strongly consider an immediate moratorium on all future shared space until a thorough analysis can be done of the impact on the local community.

Similarly, I urge the Government to classify so-called courtesy crossings. These are non-crossings where pedestrians have to take their lives in their hands to try to get across the road and where nobody has right of way. These crossings need to be classified so that accident data can be reported and centrally recorded, and so that we can know the truth about shared space where, at the moment, so much smoke and mirrors exists. The reality is, as my report evidenced, a massive underreporting of accidents, serious incidents and, sadly, sometimes fatalities in these shared spaces.

I ask the Minister to review the Department for Transport guidance to enable it to better support local authorities, which are being hoodwinked into believing the bogus benefits of these schemes. Do the Government believe that these schemes prove value for money when, all too often, they have to be refitted or retrofitted with lights and signals, and kerbs reinstated? Is this value for money at a time of incredible pressure on local authority finance? Finally, do the Government believe that so-called shared space delivers on the equality legislation and the public sector equality duty?

To local authorities, I say: tread carefully if you are thinking of walking down the road to shared space. It will exclude; it will intimidate. You will be sacrificing safety on the altar of architectural conceit, planning folly and a scheme which is all about form over function. This will cost, and the cost is measured in so many ways. There is the financial cost of reinstallation and the potential legal cost: currently, three local authorities are on the end of legal action by residents who believe that they have been discriminated against under the Equality Act. The councils have instructed a top London QC. To the residents, I say: is this what you believe your tax should be spent on, rather than having planning which includes everyone from the outset?

That is just the financial cost. What of the human cost? As I mentioned, 35% of people are actively avoiding shared space—a third of people excluded from their local communities. There are accidents, incidents and, in Coventry, Leek and other locations, people have been tragically killed in shared space. My thoughts go out to their families.

In conclusion, I hope that all local authorities take note of this debate, read it and think very seriously before embarking on any shared space scheme. It will cost; it will exclude; it will not be safe. You may well find yourself in court as a result.

5.57 pm

Baroness Kramer (LD): My Lords, first, I congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Holmes, on obtaining this debate and on the work that he has done in the whole area of disability and shared space. The noble Lord, Lord Low, has also been extremely active in this area, as have the national charities: the RNIB, Guide Dogs, and the National Federation of Blind People. Today, an issue of great significance is being brought before this House.

I am not a particular fan of shared space, but the Armageddon picture that has just been painted may not fully reflect the experience up and down the country. There are definitely supporters of shared space and many who look at schemes and explain that they work reasonably for all members of a particular community. That does not mean that there are not many significant issues. I very much support the specific recommendations made by the noble Lord, Lord Holmes, which seem to me to make a great deal of sense.

When I was in the department for 18 months, disability was within my portfolio. We made some significant progress in that area. To my mind, it is crucial that people who have a disability are accepted as a normal part of our society, needing all the opportunities and access that any normal person requires. In those areas where the department had complete control, I think that we made significant progress—for example, on accessible stations—and the industry began to change. The transport industry is culturally beginning to shift in its understanding that, as it plans and moves forward, it must see disabled people as a normal part of its user group, not as an afterthought, an added extra or an amendment to a plan. That is a really significant change.

However, when we tried to make progress on quite a number of issues, we were thwarted on two grounds which I am concerned remain in play. First was the group I call the “anti-red tape Red Guards”. They existed in government when I was there: Ministers for whom every regulation was by definition bad and had to be halted no matter what the benefits. Frankly, to provide opportunity and access for disabled people there is frequently a role for sensible, smart and appropriate regulation, and it is often very difficult to tackle a problem—shared space is a good example of this—when that is ruled off the table. I do not know whether that has changed—I hope it has—but it was a definite and complete obstacle. The number of times we got overturned still makes me frustrated to this day.

The other area where we had great challenges was whenever we tried to work in an area that also fell into

[BARONESS KRAMER]

the purview of DCLG. Of all the government departments that I dealt with, DCLG was the least sympathetic to disability. One reason we did not go ahead and attempt to revise the guidance is that we were very concerned it could end up worse at the end of that process because of the view DCLG took on that. Many of the people there have now changed and I hope that perhaps as we have a different Secretary of State there might be a different environment and a review of guidance could go ahead.

We provided to all relevant parties the charter and advice on shared space developed by the National Federation of the Blind in co-operation with all the other disability groups. I must say that local authorities who were sensitive to these issues immediately understood why they were being provided with that, and we created a link through to it from the department's web page. They saw that they needed to broaden their views and to understand the implications if they looked at shared space opportunities. Of course, that does not deal with those local authorities that are simply insensitive to these issues and, frankly, probably to guidance on any front. So I hope that there is a real opportunity now to relook at that guidance.

Every time this issue was raised it would be pointed out to me by those who did not want to see change and were proponents of shared space that one disability group is in conflict with another. They would look at people in wheelchairs and with mobility issues for whom kerbs are an endless problem and say, "Look, that group benefits from accessibility when we have shared space, and you must keep those issues in consideration as well". I am delighted that the noble Baroness, Lady Thomas, is here because I believe that all disability groups understand each other's problems and the constraints that they have to live with. I want to see the whole disability community, whether that disability is around mobility, vision or hearing, come together to develop a common platform on this issue. That is the way to get past the constant obstacle put forward to re-examining and finding better ways to tackle this problem.

It is important to bring in the motoring community, which has been quite a strong proponent of shared space, and also the cycling community. Again, that is a potentially sympathetic community. However, so often when meeting cycling groups, they have not understood what it is like to be someone who depends on other people avoiding you as you try to cross a street, or to become disoriented because there is an absence of appropriate markers and to have to turn to other people and become dependent in order to move around. Engaging with the cycling community is absolutely key around this issue. That has not happened anything like enough.

Before I left government, the noble Lord, Lord Low, came to my office—I believe the noble Lord, Lord Holmes, was there as well. We agreed that the time had come to have what I would call a summit: essentially a gathering of all relevant parties—from the local authorities to the various voices from the disability community and the engineering, design and

planning community—to start to really discuss these issues in great detail and come to a common platform and consensus.

It seems to me that something like that becomes the basis for guidance in the future, driven not just by a consultation by DfT which is then rewritten by DCLG. It offers a path forward—and not only on this issue: hopefully it also creates that ongoing dialogue. All the groups that we are talking about meet and cross each other in so many different environments. If we could get that common understanding, that communication and that exchange of ideas, we could craft a way forward. I hope very much that the Minister will be able to achieve it.

6.05 pm

Lord Low of Dalston (CB): My Lords, I, too, congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Holmes, on securing this debate and bringing this matter again to your Lordships' attention. I say "again" because, as he observed, I introduced a QSD in remarkably similar terms about five and a half years ago, but to very little effect. The Minister, whom I knew to be a very sensible man, asked me in advance what I hoped to get out of the debate, but then went on to comprehensively shaft me in his wind-up speech. Sensible or not, he had simply swallowed his departmental brief whole. Afterwards, Lord Jenkin, who is also a very sensible man, said to me that he had learnt two things in life: one was to keep pegging away and the other was that it always pays to make a fuss. I intend to make a fuss.

The noble Lord, Lord Holmes, has done us all a signal service by putting his effort where his mouth is and carrying out some actual research on the matter, which he has written up into a report with the singularly apposite title *Accidents by Design*. This has been hailed by a member of the National Federation of the Blind in the following terms:

"This damning blitz on a pet concept for professional streetscapers to impose on the public realm has been shown up as unpopular with people, impractical for our high streets and even mis-reported on by the media ... The eloquence and focus of the Holmes Report must read like a breath of fresh air, not only to blind and partially sighted people but, indeed, to a third of the public, whom the Report found actively avoid shared space".

As we have heard, the idea behind shared space schemes is that, if you remove the traditional demarcators of separate space for pedestrians and motorists, such as kerbs, railings and controlled crossings and, as Ben Hamilton-Baillie, the arch-evangelist for shared space, has put it, fully integrate traffic into urban design so that pedestrians are expected to mingle interchangeably with cyclists, cars, buses and 10-tonne lorries, a "more ambiguous environment" will be created—you can say that again—which, being difficult to interpret and with the risk that pedestrians may be sharing the same space, encourages motorists to drive more cautiously and courteously.

That is not how it appeared to me when I went to see it in action outside Sloane Square tube station with the then chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Eye Health and Visual Impairment. All went well for a while, but—sadly, just after she left—a car came charging through the shared space area, obviously oblivious to the fact that it was a shared space, and

went slap into another car, with a great deal of effing and blinding in consequence. Mr Hamilton-Baillie tells us that shared space has now become, “an accepted approach to street design in many countries”, and that the UK, having started very late, is now beginning to take the lead.

As we have heard, it is expected that priority in the shared space area is negotiated, primarily through eye contact. This obviously puts blind people at a severe disadvantage, but the lack of delineation can make the street more difficult to understand for people with learning difficulties, and the disabled are not the only people affected. A shared surface environment is likely to be much more frightening for elderly people. Small children are told to stop at the kerb’s edge and to look and listen before crossing the road. How can they do that if there is no kerb?

This whole idea is self-evidently barmy. We are indebted to the noble Lord for documenting this in detail. People’s experiences of shared space schemes are overwhelmingly negative: 63% of those who have used shared surface schemes rated their experience as poor, and, as the noble Lord, Lord Holmes, told us, more than one-third of people actively avoid them altogether. This pattern of response was reflected across most choices of travel, with 66% of drivers, 64% of pedestrians and nearly half of cyclists—48%—reporting their experience as poor. Yet overzealous councils continue risking public safety with fashionable simplified street design.

In January 2013, a partially sighted pensioner was killed in Coventry after being hit by a bus on a shared space scheme in an area that previously had a pedestrian-controlled crossing. The court ruled that the bus driver was not responsible for the death after hearing a statement that the shared surface was so confusing as to make an accident inevitable. Yet the noble Lord’s report tells us that there is significant underreporting of accidents in shared spaces areas.

People constantly referred to finding schemes frightening, intimidating and dangerous and to never feeling safe. People commented on poor visibility when trying to cross roads, often due to parked cars and to vehicles not stopping to allow them to cross. One respondent summed up the shared space they used as, “lethally dangerous. In poor light or glare or shadow, drivers cannot see pedestrians. Disabled people and those with poor sight or mobility cannot protect themselves. The idea behind such spaces depends on every user being 100 per cent able and 100 per cent alert at all times, which just doesn’t happen in real life. I consider this whole idea to be completely (and criminally) insane”. One blind user unable to access a local shared space independently said that,

“for people with no sight like myself they are a death trap. I cannot express how terrible they are and how they make me feel so angry; to think all the people responsible for them expect us to use it when we cannot see. I use the one in Leek with my husband and never on my own”.

In promoting these schemes, local authorities are not meeting the public sector equality duty. Under the public sector equality duty, public bodies must have due regard to advancing equality through removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics, taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are

different from the needs of other people and encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low. By authorising shared space schemes, local authorities are not removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by disabled people but are doing the exact opposite. By failing to install kerbs or adequate alternative tactile delineation and controlled crossings, they are not taking steps to meet the needs of people with sight loss, which are different from the needs of other people.

The noble Lord, Lord Holmes, calls for a moratorium until proper impact assessments have been carried out. Guide Dogs also calls for a moratorium pending the production of proper statutory guidance. I see the noble Baroness, Lady Kramer, as a friend and commend her on the work she did while at the department, but I fear I remain a subscriber to the Armageddon scenario. We know enough about shared space schemes to know about the harm that they cause and the lack of evidence that they do any good. I spoke to someone the other day who told me he had been talking to a planner, who told him that the main value of shared space schemes was aesthetic. I do not think we need a moratorium; I think they should be banned.

6.15 pm

Baroness Thomas of Winchester (LD): My Lords, I must confess at the outset that I myself have not had a great deal of experience of shared space, but when I have encountered one on foot I have liked the general ambience, the absence of kerbs and the lack of nose-to-tail traffic. However, I can see that there is nothing to commend them to blind and vision-impaired people, or to many severely mobility-impaired people, unless there is no traffic at all. The noble Lord, Lord Holmes of Richmond, has rightly highlighted this problem as one that must be addressed urgently, and I congratulate him on securing this debate.

First, we must all ensure that we are talking about the same thing. I am grateful to Living Streets for providing me with a glossary of terms in its brief, explaining that shared space, shared surface and shared use are all a bit different. The noble Lord’s Question is about shared spaces—in other words:

“a street or public space where vehicle movement and other activities are combined through informal social protocols, negotiation and design solutions rather than through formal regulations and controls”.

I have read the guidance, which I think is in Local Transport Note 1/11, and was concerned to read the rather complacent sentence under “Visual impairment”. It said:

“If the context and objectives of a shared space scheme proposal indicates that a kerb-free design is desirable, mitigating measures may be required”.

Is that really good enough?

The conventional view is of course that a shared space is a welcoming and friendly environment that enhances everyone’s experience in using it, whether for shopping, sightseeing, meeting people or whatever, where pedestrians, cyclists and drivers all have to watch out for each other as no one group has priority over using the space. However, if just one important group of people—namely, blind and vision-impaired

[BARONESS THOMAS OF WINCHESTER]

people—have an overwhelmingly negative experience, the shared space is not working and should be altered, not least because the local authority is failing in its public sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010, which the noble Lord, Lord Low, has just mentioned. It is very important to mention that duty because it is being used less and less now as we move away from the Equality Act 2010.

All shared spaces are different, and it is the responsibility of the local authority to make it possible for society as a whole to use a shared space. One study done in Hereford, to which I will refer later, said that participants liked the principle of shared spaces more than the practice. As I said at the outset, as someone with mobility problems, I like the absence of kerbs because steep kerbs are impossible for me to navigate, and there are many roads where you have to go for a long distance to find a dropped kerb; they are not as prevalent as they should be in this country. For someone with a visual impairment, though, the lack of kerbs makes it equally impossible for them to get their bearings. Some of the reasoning by planners, such as the eye-contact rule, also highlighted by the noble Lord, Lord Low, shows this up. When I asked Keith Hatter, the chair of Winchester Area Access for All, for his views as someone with a visual impairment, he said:

“The idea that ‘eye contact’ should be a means of interaction between motorists and pedestrians is an irresponsible one, not only for visually impaired people but also for those, such as wheelchair users, whose eye level may be different from that of most pedestrians”.

Mr Hatter is forthright about priorities, stating that he believes the ethos of a shared space must be that pedestrians have priority and that motorists should give way. He is surely right to say there should be a clearly marked route without traffic around the perimeter of any shared space so that vulnerable pedestrians and wheelchair users know they will be safe there. For this to be a reliable space, it must be kept free from restaurant tables and chairs, A-boards and so on. To some people this might seem to negate the whole idea of a shared space. However, this is the minimum requirement of a reasonable adjustment which society must make to stop anyone feeling excluded because of a disability.

The question of kerbs is a difficult one. Mr Hatter makes the point that the use of little kerbs is problematic because they are a real trip hazard. He advocates the installation of kerbs of at least 80 millimetres in depth with strategically placed dropped kerbs, because he says that a guide dog would then recognise it as a point at which to stop to await further instructions.

A few years ago an interesting study was done in Hereford, which I mentioned earlier, about a shared space in Widemarsh Street, which is open to traffic only at certain times of day. There is a blind college in Hereford, which I believe had insisted on the installation of little kerbs. However, the kerbs caused a lot of people to trip, and those who did the study concluded that a tactile edge was a much better compromise than a kerb. This brings me back to my main point, which is that for shared spaces to work successfully, they have to be thought through very carefully, with full consultation

with as many users as possible, particularly with vulnerable users. Contrastingly coloured paving must surely be used, as well as tactile marking.

Bus routes should not be considered for proper shared spaces. In my limited experience, bus drivers will always think they take priority, whatever the original concept of all users being equal might be. Going back to the guidance, I was alarmed to read on page 46 the following sentence:

“There is anecdotal evidence of buses and taxis sometimes travelling at inappropriate speed in certain shared space streets. It might therefore be worthwhile contacting bus operators and local taxi companies to ensure their drivers are aware of what is required of them when passing through these areas”.

Again, I ask whether that vague suggestion is anywhere near good enough.

The Hammond and Musselwhite Hereford study ended thus:

“It can be concluded perhaps that context ... is crucially important and that different areas require different urban form or infrastructure changes”.

Shared space, it said, is not a singular concept but,

“a term that encapsulates many different designs bespoke for the relevant context”.

I agree with the conclusion that each shared space plan must be bespoke, with everybody’s needs rigorously taken into account; and, most importantly, that there must be post-scheme monitoring. I add my voice to those of others who have asked the Minister what action the Government will now take.

6.23 pm

Baroness Royall of Blaisdon (Lab): My Lords, it is a pleasure to follow the noble Baroness, Lady Thomas, who has provided a lot of very practical ideas in this debate. However, I, too, am very grateful to the noble Lord, Lord Holmes, for initiating this debate, which is of interest to thousands of people, but especially blind and vision-impaired citizens up and down the country, and this is a great way to raise awareness. I pay tribute to the work he has done on shared spaces and to his excellent report, and I also pay tribute to the work of the noble Lord, Lord Low.

My own interest in this issue comes from my association with an excellent small charity in the Forest of Dean, Forest Sensory Services, of which I am patron. It provides invaluable support to people with audio or visual impairment, who too often are isolated and sometimes in despair when first diagnosed. One of our great supporters and users is Bill Waddell. He spoke to me of his concerns about shared spaces many months ago and introduced me to the brilliant campaigner, Sarah Gayton, who has done so much to raise awareness of the problems.

The noble Lord, Lord Holmes, has provided a real public service by taking the time to write an honest, tough report. It is eye-opening in so many ways, as he speaks, as he said, with the voice of those most affected. I wholeheartedly endorse the three recommendations, about which he has questioned the Minister this afternoon.

When so much concern has been expressed by such a wide range of our population—from blind people and cyclists to the chief executive officer of the Institute of Highway Engineers and the House of Commons

Transport Committee—and when there are frequent, often serious, accidents, I simply do not understand why the Government have not introduced a moratorium on shared space schemes while impact assessments are conducted, let alone why they have not updated their guidance so that local authorities better understand their responsibilities under the Equality Act. The view of the noble Baroness, Lady Kramer, on the reason for the delay in updating the guidance is indeed illuminating, and I look forward to hearing the Minister's views on that.

According to Guide Dogs, which I must thank for a very useful briefing, current estimates suggest that there are 2 million people with sight loss in the UK, of which around 360,000 are registered as blind or partially sighted. As noble Lords have said, it is essential that local authorities meet their obligations to them under the public sector equality duty. However, by authorising shared surface schemes, local authorities are doing the opposite and turning city centres into no-go areas. The noble Baroness, Lady Kramer, when Minister for Transport, wrote to all local authorities to remind them of the current guidance and duties under the Equality Act. She said:

“The Government expects highway authorities to work towards high-quality, attractive and inclusive streets that work for people of all abilities”.

Sadly, this has had absolutely no effect, so action is now needed.

In my own city of Gloucester, we had a shared spaced at Kimbrose Triangle. As with every other shared space, this was a nightmare for visually impaired people. I can say from experience that it was not comfortable for drivers and sighted pedestrians, let alone for mums and dads with small children, the elderly or people with other disabilities. Bill Waddell and others made representations to the councils and said that the shared space should be replaced by a puffin crossing, which I understand is best for blind people. However, in their wisdom, the authorities continue with a courtesy crossing, which not only is inappropriate and dangerous for visually impaired people, and a headache for cyclists, but has led to a congestion problem, about which drivers, including taxi drivers, are understandably concerned.

I realise that that is a parochial concern and I would not expect the Minister to comment on the specifics, but it is an example of local authorities' unwillingness to listen and, I would add, to take seriously their responsibilities under the Equality Act—an Act that I am particularly attached to, as I took it through this House.

There is evidence throughout the country that shared spaces are not working; quite the contrary, they are dangerous and some have even called their proliferation, “the largest systematic institutionalised discrimination against blind people the UK has ever seen”.

Therefore, does the Minister agree that there is an urgent need to assess the reality of what is happening in respect of these schemes so that there is a real evidence base? I noted in the noble Lord's report that a DfT spokesperson said that it is for local authorities to assess the suitability of introducing a shared space scheme on their roads, and I fear that the Government

may therefore refuse to take any action at a national level. But, as with so many issues, this devolution of responsibility simply is not good enough. This is a question of safety, and central government should make a national assessment.

This problem is not limited to the UK. As the noble Lord himself said, schemes are being developed in many European countries. One was introduced in the Netherlands but they have now also been introduced in Austria, Germany and other countries. They are having a terrible impact on the lives and mobility of blind people, as well as causing accidents, so I wonder whether we should be looking at this from a European perspective. Whatever one thinks about the principle of freedom of movement—and I strongly support it—the truth is that because of the growth of shared spaces, the freedom of blind people to move independently in this country and in other parts of the European Union is being impaired.

On the issue of Europe, can the Minister confirm that European funds are being used to build shared spaces in Coventry, Stoke, Blackpool and Wakefield? If they are, I am not sure that proper account has been taken of the European regulations, which state that accessibility for persons with disabilities must be taken into consideration when programmes are prepared and implemented.

I also take this opportunity to highlight an issue which I am sure leads to some headaches in the Department for Transport: the potential conflict between the pursuit of green transport policies and the needs of blind people. For example, the removal of traffic lights to ease congestion makes it difficult, at times impossible, for blind people to cross the road. If you put together the removal of standard crossings with the welcome growth of electric and hybrid cars, which are often very quiet, you create an immense problem for people who are visually impaired. One solution would be to ensure that all new cars are required to make a noise, and I wonder if that is now mandatory.

Thanks to the noble Lord, Lord Holmes, this has been an excellent debate and I trust that the Minister will now ensure that words are turned into action. This is important for all citizens, but especially for blind people. I remind him that 3 December is UN international day for persons with disabilities. The theme for 2015 is access and empowerment for people of all abilities, and one of the sub-themes is making cities inclusive and accessible to all. The Minister now has seven weeks to act so that blind and vision-impaired people can have a real celebration on that day.

6.31 pm

Lord Tope (LD): My Lords, I, too, join all others in congratulating the noble Lord, Lord Holmes, on securing this debate. I particularly want to pay tribute to him for his persistence in raising and highlighting this issue, and to that of the noble Lord, Lord Low, in previous years. I do not actually believe, speaking as a former councillor for 40 years, that most local authorities deliberately set out to make life difficult for people. It might often feel like that, but I do not think that that is actually the reality. The service that the noble Lord, Lord Holmes, has given to us has been to highlight the

[LORD TOPE]

important issues that local authorities simply have not thought about as much as they should have—in particular, the attention that should be given to the public sector equality duty when considering traffic schemes. We do so in so many other ways, but so often, in my experience anyway, when looking at a traffic scheme it is not properly considered, or if it is, it is only in relation to those with mobility difficulties as distinct from sensory ones.

I wanted to contribute today with some local experience. The noble Lord, Lord Holmes, in introducing the debate, made a passing reference to Hackbridge. Hackbridge is in the London Borough of Sutton, where I was a councillor for 40 years until last year. It is very close to the London Borough of Merton, where the Minister was a councillor for a rather lesser period, but it may well be that he knows personally the area to which I am going to refer. My attention was first drawn to this debate by my former colleagues in Sutton; they had been informed about it at a very early stage by Sutton Vision, and in particular by its vice-chair, Michael Parsons, and by Tracey Collins, who also lives in Hackbridge, from whom my colleagues had received huge help in the area of Hackbridge.

The ambition is to make Hackbridge a sustainable suburb, probably the first in the UK, by the year 2020. Much work is being done with the local community towards this aim. As part of this, last year a scheme was completed, investing £1.4 million in the area to make it more accessible and more attractive. This scheme included the new road layout and the provision of a number of what are called “informal crossings”, particularly around a busy road junction and by a local primary school.

A subsequent independent user survey found that 83% of those surveyed believed that the scheme had improved their perception of the area; 80% said that it had made the area more attractive and appealing; and 68% said that it had enhanced their satisfaction with the local shopping area. Even the local shopkeepers were happy. There is no doubt that the area is now more visually attractive, but—and it is an important “but”—that is of no benefit to those who cannot see it. The provision of so many informal crossings, but no controlled crossings, on busy roads means that the visually impaired no longer feel safe crossing those roads.

Michael Parsons, to whom I referred earlier, who lives in the area and uses a guide dog, no longer feels able to use his local shopping centre, which he has used for many years, because he cannot cross the busy road. He and others like him cannot know whether all the vehicles coming from either direction have seen him and have stopped. He does not know for sure where the pavement ends and the highway begins, because there is no kerb. We have produced a visually attractive scheme which has had the effect of excluding a significant minority of the local community. This sums up the issues that we are debating today.

Needless to say, important lessons have been learned. Next month, Sutton Council will begin a wide public consultation on four options for tackling these issues. All the options have passed an independent safety

audit, and all include a zebra crossing—in other words, a controlled crossing to replace the current informal crossing nearest the school—and provide other controlled crossings. The debate is primarily about where to locate such crossings. When this is all done and the work is carried out, I hope that Michael Parsons and others in his position will again feel safe crossing the road to use their local shopping centre.

I had not intended my contribution to be a debate about Hackbridge—I am grateful to the noble Lord, Lord Holmes, even for mentioning it—but I see it as a real example of the issues that we are debating today. Hackbridge had a scheme designed by experienced traffic engineers from the Greater London Authority and Sutton Council with a huge amount of local community involvement, all with the best of intentions, and it produced a high level of local satisfaction. But within a year, it has had to be redesigned simply because it did not pay enough attention to the needs of the visually impaired.

I have asked my Sutton colleagues what I should ask for in this debate. All of them, councillors and officers alike, said that the present guidance is woefully inadequate and sometimes contradictory, particularly in respect of the needs of visually impaired people. All of them said that there is an urgent need for the guidance to be reviewed and for new guidance to be produced. As is often the case, views differ on whether such guidance should be statutory—I would be interested in the Minister’s view on that—but in support of the need for it to be statutory I will repeat a comment made to me that, like economists, no two traffic engineers ever agree with each other. In my view, there is an added problem in that, unlike economists, every one of us, and certainly every driver, believes that we are an expert traffic engineer.

I learned from the excellent briefing from Guide Dogs that the previous Government committed to review and update their guidance by the end of 2012. That has still not happened. Are the present Government still committed to this review and, if so, by when? Or perhaps I could ask—a little cheekily—whether it was a commitment forced by the Liberal Democrat part of the coalition Government which has now been dropped by the new Conservative Government. I hope that that alone might prompt an answer from the Minister.

As has been said, the enthusiasm for shared space originates from the Netherlands, where it is quite widespread. I am not competent to talk about the success or otherwise of schemes there, but I again have some personal experience by association. My son lived and worked in Amsterdam for seven years where, as for so many others, a bicycle was his main mode of local transport—unlike the many years he spent living in the London Borough of Sutton. When he came back to the UK, he moved to Oxford, where he still lives. Oxford must be one of the British cities most used to cyclists, yet my son was astonished by the contrast between the attitudes of road users in Amsterdam and those in Oxford.

This is not a debate about cycling, but this contrast does illustrate why shared space may well work in the Netherlands, if it does, but not in the UK. It is not just about good design; it is just as much about road user

culture and attitude. In the Netherlands, there is a much greater tolerance between different types of road user and a much better understanding and acceptance of their different needs and difficulties. Perhaps the Minister can say something about what the Government are doing to change attitudes and increase tolerance and understanding among British road users with regard to shared space, but until that is achieved, shared space will not work naturally, however attractive it may look to those who can see it. Regulation and good design, drawn from practical experience, will still be required. I very much endorse the call made by my noble friend Lady Kramer for a proper summit involving all interested parties before a consultation and before the revised guidance is produced.

Reference has also been made to the problem of silent vehicles. All of us will have experienced the problem of silent cyclists who regard the pavement or footpath as a shared space, often because they do not feel safe on the highway. That problem is now growing with the increase in the number of electric and hybrid vehicles that move silently up behind us all, so I hope that the Minister can also say whether the Government accept that as an issue that must be addressed in respect of shared space or more widely.

I thank the noble Lord, Lord Holmes, for giving us this most interesting and important debate. We look forward to the Minister's reply. I am quite sure that the noble Lord, Lord Holmes, will continue to persist as vigorously as he has done up to now.

6.42 pm

Lord Rosser (Lab): As have other noble Lords, I thank the noble Lord, Lord Holmes of Richmond, for securing this debate and for his report on this issue which, as he said, was published three months ago shortly before the Recess. The noble Lord's report is a much-needed reminder that what may seem an exciting and interesting development must be implemented with care and with the needs and requirements of all members of the community in mind.

Reference has already been made to the survey that the noble Lord, Lord Holmes, launched and its findings, with nearly two-thirds of the sample rating their experience of a shared space as poor, just under 20% as fair and 18% as good. Regarding those rating their experience as poor, this was in no way confined to those reporting a long-standing condition or disability, for whom the figure was 70%, since for those reporting no disability the figure was still 57%.

On the basis of my limited personal experience of shared spaces, I prefer using them as a pedestrian than as a motorist, but then, I do not have a disability. When using a shared space as a motorist, my concern is certainly not that I need to drive slowly, but that I may still be involved in a collision with a pedestrian due to factors referred to by the noble Lord, Lord Holmes of Richmond, in his report and by other noble Lords in this debate.

The Department for Transport 2011 local transport note entitled *Shared Space* refers to the fact that the Equality Act 2010 introduced an equality duty that requires that,

"public bodies play their part in making society fairer by tackling discrimination and providing equality of opportunity for all".

It goes on to say that:

"Authorities will need to consider how different people are likely to be affected by new scheme proposals and due regard should be given to the effect they might have on those protected by the Duty".

We are talking not about a due regard that ought to be taken into account, but a due regard that is required to be taken into account. A clear failure to do so must ultimately leave any public sector bodies or authorities responsible potentially open to the prospect of some form of legal proceedings under the Equality Act 2010. It would be helpful if the Minister said whether the Government consider that a correct interpretation of the position and, if so, have any successful legal proceedings been taken on this point under the 2010 Act in relation to shared space schemes?

The Department for Transport document to which I referred states:

"Shared space is a design approach that seeks to change the way streets operate by reducing the dominance of motor vehicles, primarily through lower speeds and encouraging drivers to behave more accommodatingly towards pedestrians".

What happens if there is a deficiency, and the issue of more accommodating behaviour is not then addressed? The document goes on to say:

"Improving pedestrian movement and comfort, as well as creating vibrant spaces, for example, are likely to be primary objectives, and a high level of sharing should only be considered an objective in its own right if it contributes to these higher-order ones".

The document also stresses the importance of post-scheme monitoring to record user behaviour and to assess whether a scheme is operating as planned.

The extent to which post-scheme monitoring is actually taking place is not clear, and perhaps the Minister could tell us if the Government have any information on this point. In the light of what we have heard in this debate—and, indeed, in the report of the noble Lord, Lord Holmes—surely post-scheme monitoring, if it has been taking place objectively with all appropriate parties, must have thrown up some of the serious issues being discussed today.

The very helpful briefing pack for this debate prepared by the House of Lords Library includes a document from the National Federation of the Blind UK, dated January last year. Despite a Department for Transport document stating that, since shared surfaces can cause problems for some disabled people and that it was,

"important that shared surface schemes included an alternative means for visually-impaired people to navigate by ... no DfT guidance is given on this matter, so in many Shared Spaces this instruction has not been implemented, resulting in people with little or no sight being frightened to use these areas".

That was also the finding of the report of the noble Lord, Lord Holmes.

The document from the National Federation of the Blind UK sets out the general abilities and limitations of blind people and of trained guide dogs in order to provide assistance to planners and designers who are responsible for ensuring that streetscape layouts are fully inclusive and meet the requirements of the public sector equality duty. Can the Minister confirm the status of that document in the eyes of the DfT, since it indicates that it should be read in conjunction with DfT guidance documents?

[LORD ROSSER]

The briefing we have had from the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association calls for the Government to issue clear, current statutory guidance for local authorities to use when developing streetscapes to ensure they are safe for people who are blind or partially sighted, and calls for a moratorium on local authorities commissioning shared surface schemes until up-to-date statutory guidance has been issued. I have no doubt that when he responds the Minister will say something about the Government's response to the key recommendations in the report from the noble Lord, Lord Holmes of Richmond, but could he also respond to the call from the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association for statutory guidance and for a moratorium until such up-to-date statutory guidance has been issued?

The noble Lord's report also addressed the issue of accidents in shared spaces, the nature of some of those accidents, and the very low reporting of incidents to the police. Can the Minister provide us with any figures on the number of accidents in shared space schemes, the nature of those accidents, and whether the incidence is higher or lower, or much the same as in conventional streets? Likewise, will the Minister comment on the statement in the report about non-reporting of accidents or incidents in shared spaces, and whether the low level of reporting referred to in the noble Lord's report differs from the level of reporting of accidents or incidents in conventional streets?

The report from the noble Lord, Lord Holmes of Richmond, raises some very serious issues about the design of at least some existing shared space schemes, not just for their impact on and consequences for blind and vision-impaired people, but for people generally. Like other noble Lords, I await with interest the Minister's response, in particular whether the Government agree with the basic findings of the report and, indeed, with the concerns on shared space schemes expressed by many noble Lords in the debate. If they do—and it is difficult to believe that either the report or the concerns expressed today can be that wide of the mark—what actions are the Government either considering or intending to take on shared space schemes to address the issues highlighted in the debate, particularly for blind and vision-impaired people? The DfT cannot issue guidance on shared spaces and then wash its hands of the matter when that guidance either results in some worrying consequences or is not being followed with appropriate rigour.

6.51 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport and Home Office (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon) (Con): My Lords, first, let me say how grateful I am to all noble Lords who have spoken this afternoon and early evening, in particular to my noble friend Lord Holmes for tabling the debate. I welcome the opportunity to discuss the issues in more detail. Before I do so, I acknowledge the efforts of the noble Lord, Lord Low, who has been an avid and relentless campaigner on this important issue. I make it clear that the Government are committed to helping local authorities create more inclusive door-to-door journeys with accessible street environments, stations and transport interchanges, but, underlining the point made by several noble Lords, this is not to be done to the detriment of safety.

I speak with some experience; I have experienced shared spaces. It is something I have looked at before. The noble Lord, Lord Tope, talked of my time as a councillor. During that time I was also cabinet member for transport management and traffic management, among other things. One of the things I learned as a councillor in local government—it is not that different in central government; the noble Baroness, Lady Kramer, talked about experiences as a Minister—is that one of the underlying principles when it came to traffic management was not just whether it looked or sounded good, but whether it made sense and was appropriate to the use of the local area and local residents.

The concept of shared spaces is also interesting. We have heard it defined clearly during the debate. Others might define shared space as my three year-old and my one year-old do—their mother and father's bed at two in the morning. There are various challenges that we all face in different aspects of our life. Nevertheless, important points have been raised and I will seek to take forward many of the questions and answer them. If I am unable to, I shall write to noble Lords in this respect.

I think we all acknowledge that the Department for Transport and the UK in general have had a good record of addressing the travel needs of disabled people when we consider this concept globally. It is standard in the UK to provide accessibility features, such as tactile paving, dropped kerbs, and audible and tactile indicators at traffic lights, more so than in many other countries. I emphasise that shared space is just one option for local authorities to consider in designing streetscape and public realm schemes. It is a design approach that can help to create attractive places, as we have heard, that people want to spend time in without the dominance of motor traffic, a point made by the noble Lord, Lord Tope. This is achieved through a range of measures, the aim of which is to encourage all types of road users to share the full width of a particular street. Shared space design is a spectrum, incorporating many design features. Courtesy crossings and level surfaces may feature, but they are not a requirement and, I emphasise and fully accept, are not suitable everywhere.

The Government's position is set out in the guidance—Local Transport Note 1/11, published in 2011—which is backed up by extensive research, undertaken to inform its development. The Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee, Guide Dogs, and the RNIB were all represented on the sounding board and the project board throughout the research. The DfT has also circulated more recent guidance produced by the NFBUK called *Access for Blind People in Towns*. In December 2013 this was sent to over 3,000 designers and practitioners in local authorities and consultants. It was also made available via the department's website.

It is worth noting that shared space is not a new concept but has been used in residential areas for many years, such as Exeter High Street, which was redesigned as a shared space around 30 years ago. Many rural settlements and historic streets around the UK have always had the concept of a shared surface. However, all of these need to be considered in light of the safety of all users.

Local authorities are currently responsible for the design of streets in their care. But it is also good practice to monitor a scheme post implementation, to ensure that it is working as expected. We expect local authorities to monitor shared space schemes, as with any other design project, and to adjust the design if needed. Indeed, several noble Lords, including the noble Lord, Lord Tope, talked about how schemes are reviewed after they have been implemented. This is not just the case—I emphasise—for shared spaces. Other traffic management measures are sometimes put in and then deemed inappropriate or inadequate for the original intent.

My noble friend Lord Holmes rightly referred to accident data. Although the department does collect accident statistics from local authorities, these do not detail whether a specific incident occurred at a courtesy crossing or in a shared space environment. I will return to that point in a moment.

Just briefly on the point of courtesy crossings, they really should do what it says on the tin. Courtesy crossings are supposed to be crossings where all people and all users extend courtesy. It is unfortunate that they are reliant on 100% adherence, and I fully accept that that is not the case.

Crossings are an important part of the street scene and are a means by which people can easily move around. The noble Baroness, Lady Thomas, talked about her experience in a wheelchair and I can assure noble Lords—coming back to my children—that having two pushchairs that have to be pulled round, over and above kerbs is not always the easiest. At the same time, that cannot be sacrificed for the safety and security of road crossings and I fully hear the points that noble Lords have made.

While accepting that courtesy crossings are an alternative to formal crossings such as zebra or puffin crossings, they do not, as several noble Lords pointed out, confer priority. They are sometimes used within a shared space but are not a requirement of shared space schemes per se. While this remains a matter for local authorities, the justification for courtesy crossings is that they lower traffic speed and reduce the dominance of motor traffic in shared spaces. However, I accept the well-made point by the noble Baroness, Lady Royall, that all users of such crossings need a dose of common sense. I also accept that they do not work everywhere and that their use needs to be carefully monitored and thought through. Formal crossings can still be provided within shared spaces, as can kerbs.

I am also aware that in some places where crossings have been removed, the local authority is now looking to reinstate them in some form. For example, in Kimbrose Triangle in Gloucester, I understand the council has now decided to put a zebra crossing in to address the local concerns that have been raised. From a DfT perspective, we strongly recommend that all crossings, formal or courtesy, are provided with tactile paving—the point which the noble Baroness, Lady Thomas, raised—to ensure that those with visual impairments are helped to navigate them.

Of course, we all need to need to feel safe, but also to be safe. We understand how navigation can sometimes be a problem for visually impaired people in shared

space streets. While our guidance does talk to this and stresses the importance of engaging with groups representing disabled people during the development of any shared space scheme, it also refers to the need for authorities to ensure that their designs are inclusive and reminds them of their duties under the Equality Act. This was a point raised by the noble Baroness, Lady Thomas, and the noble Lord, Lord Rosser, and I fully acknowledge the work done in this respect by my predecessor as Minister for Transport, the noble Baroness, Lady Kramer, who indeed wrote to all local authorities in March this year to remind them of these duties. I sent up a Box note to ask what the response was. Noble Lords may not be surprised to learn that there was a nil return. That throws down the gauntlet and the challenge we face.

My noble friend Lord Holmes and the noble Lords, Lord Low and Lord Rosser, among others, asked about a moratorium and whether the Government will ask local authorities to refrain from implementing shared surface schemes until there is more evidence of the impacts. I assure noble Lords that we are not promoting or encouraging the use of shared space over any other design approach. Local authorities remain responsible for their roads and do not need to seek DfT approval for such schemes

It is also difficult to see how a ban on shared space could be achieved in practice, as there is no single design element we could point to that would allow us to say, “Do not install this”. We also acknowledge, as the noble Lord, Lord Tope, pointed out, that many residents find such schemes more attractive. The driver behind any such schemes should be improving the public realm environment. Somewhere with a great sense of place is important to most people in communities. The noble Lord, Lord Tope, talked about Hackbridge but also illustrated the other element—that this must be balanced with the safety of all concerned, including the visually impaired. That is an essential feature of any traffic scheme.

I will turn briefly to some of the questions. I have already alluded to post-scheme monitoring, which the noble Lord, Lord Rosser, raised, and I will come on to some of the steps we will be taking. I was asked about the status of the NFB documents. These have been circulated to local authorities and are available on our website. The noble Lord, Lord Tope, asked whether the DfT was still committed to revising the guidance on inclusive mobility. I will take this back. I am aware that work has been done but I will write to the noble Lord in this respect. The noble Lord, Lord Rosser, asked for specific statistics on whether there were any legal cases pending relating to the equality scheme. Again, those are not readily available and I shall write to the noble Lord.

One of the things I have learned in my time as a Minister is to take note. But that also means looking at how we can move things forward. Noble Lords may be aware that the Government are currently working alongside the Chartered Institution of Highways & Transportation to produce guidance on shared streets to build on the department’s guidance in the local transport note. This guidance aims to use the practical experience gained from more recent schemes to build

[LORD AHMAD OF WIMBLEDON]

on the existing advice. It will identify good and bad practice and try to move away from the idea that shared space is somehow synonymous with a lack of definition between road and footway. I asked for a specific date in preparation for this debate and I understand that the CIHTs aims to complete this work by the summer of 2016. My own department is fully engaged in this work and is a key member of the project steering group. In addition, the National Federation of the Blind has been involved and attended a meeting on 30 September.

I understand that my noble friend Lord Holmes has been in contact with the CIHT and is due to meet it to discuss this work. I extend an invitation to all noble Lords concerned about this matter and I will be happy

to facilitate a meeting with the CIHT to ensure that its report is well informed and that any other considerations we need to take into account are also fully considered. I also give the assurance that the conclusions from my noble friend's report—the Holmes report, I shall call it—will be fully factored into the work currently being undertaken by the CIHT.

The Government fully understand why visually impaired people and others can find shared space schemes, especially those with shared surfaces, intimidating. We remain committed to working with all groups, and with those producing updated guidance, to ensure that schemes on the ground are attractive and accessible to all but also fully consider all safety considerations.

House adjourned at 7.04 pm.

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