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# HOUSE OF LORDS

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<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Party/Group</b>
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

Monday 29 January 2018

2.30 pm

*Prayers—read by the Lord Bishop of Chelmsford.*

## Brexit: Audio-visual Services

### Question

2.37 pm

*Asked by Lord Clement-Jones*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the ability of United Kingdom audiovisual services to take advantage of the European Union country of origin rules after Brexit.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Lord Ashton of Hyde) (Con):** My Lords, the broadcasting industry has continuously emphasised the significance of maintaining the country of origin principle. We are committed to working with the sector to ensure that those points are explored and considered as the UK develops its stance on exit negotiations as part of the overall effort to secure the best deal for the UK as a whole. The effect of leaving the EU will depend on the exit negotiations.

**Lord Clement-Jones (LD):** My Lords, there are hundreds of channels based here which are broadcast to the EU and get the benefit of a single regulator in the form of Ofcom. The Creative Industries Federation states, in its report today on global trade and Brexit:

"To ensure the UK remains a leading hub for international broadcasters, the continued mutual recognition of broadcasting licences between the UK and EU Member States is imperative".

Does the Minister agree with that statement, and will the Government treat this as a priority in trade negotiations? Is this not another example of where the straightforward solution would be to stay in the single market?

**Lord Ashton of Hyde:** My Lords, I am very pleased to confirm to the noble Lord that we will treat this as a priority. Of course he is right that the broadcasting industries are one of the UK's success stories. In fact, 55% of the TV channels based in the UK mainly targeted the European market in 2016, and 53% of the video-on-demand services primarily targeted the EU. It is definitely one of the top priorities of my department, and we communicate regularly with the Department for Exiting the European Union to ensure that it is one of its.

**Lord Bassam of Brighton (Lab):** My Lords, given that the multichannel sector is worth £4.2 billion a year to the UK economy, can the Minister explain how the Government intend to guarantee access to EU markets, given that EU rules will require broadcasters to make editorial decisions and deploy their workforce within the EU post Brexit?

**Lord Ashton of Hyde:** The noble Lord has put his finger on the fact that it will be a challenge but, luckily, it is one we are up to. The point to bear in mind is that a European country which receives, on average, 45% of its channels from abroad—for some smaller countries,

it is 75%—wants a respected regulator which will make sure that the channels it receives are up to standard, and that is exactly what the UK provides.

**Viscount Colville of Culross (CB):** My Lords, I declare an interest as a series producer at ITN Productions who has just sold a series across the European Union. Are the Government planning to renegotiate the AVMS directive, which defines "European work"? If not, does the Minister recognise the damage that will be done to the UK television production sector if its productions cannot compete with a 50% European work quota?

**Lord Ashton of Hyde:** My Lords, the Government are actively involved in the renegotiation of the AVMS directive, and I believe that the plan is for the trialogues to finish some time this year. I do not want to disagree with the noble Viscount, who is an expert in these things, but I think that the European work status is confirmed by the Council of Europe transfrontier television convention.

**Lord Razzall (LD):** Do the Government agree with the recent recommendation of the DCMS Committee in the other place? The committee said:

"To address profound industry uncertainty ... the Government must as an urgent priority state its negotiating intentions with respect to the Country of Origin rules framework and", more particularly,

"set out its contingency plan, should the rules cease to apply after Brexit".

**Lord Ashton of Hyde:** My Lords, the report to which the noble Lord refers was published last Thursday. Although we are quick in DCMS, we have not come to a considered opinion on it yet.

**Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town (Lab):** My Lords, one of the issues raised by the creative industries again and again has been about the ability of people to move to work across the EU. I have heard the same as the Minister said—that his department has been very open to talks with the creative industry. Unfortunately, his colleagues at the Home Office have not always been as open to hearing from them about their needs. On their behalf, could he talk to the Home Office about being able to engage in those demands?

**Lord Ashton of Hyde:** My Lords, we agree that migration and key skills in the creative industries generally, and the audio-visual sector as well, are crucial. We have made that point very clear to the Home Office. We are liaising with the Migration Advisory Committee to make sure that we have up-to-date information. We have made it aware that in the audio-visual sector 5.7% of the workforce come from the EU. However, interestingly, the immigration system appears to be working for the audio-visual sector, because more than that—6.7%—come from outside the EU.

**Viscount Waverley (CB):** Would the Minister use the case in reverse and encourage Mezzo, probably the best music channel in the whole world, which is beamed only into Europe, to be available in the United Kingdom?

**Lord Ashton of Hyde:** I am not aware of that, but I am sure that it would be a very good thing.

**Lord Foulkes of Cumnock (Lab):** Has not the Minister noticed that, week after week, we have had question after question and report after report from our excellent committees showing that sector after sector is going to be really harmed by our withdrawal from the European Union—which he describes as a “challenge”? Is not it about time that the Government came to their senses and took the advice and indications from Mr Barnier and many others that an opportunity is there for us to think again and stay within the European Union?

**Lord Ashton of Hyde:** I do not agree with that. The Government are carrying out the will of the British people and will continue to negotiate on behalf of the country to get the best deal that it can on leaving the EU.

**Lord Forsyth of Drumlean (Con):** My Lords, is not it obvious that, with our fantastic success and brilliance in creative industries, our future lies in free trade and a global market and not in being sucked into a protectionist racket?

**Lord Ashton of Hyde:** The noble Lord is right to highlight the success of the creative industries. It is a world-leading example of what Britain does well, and we will continue to do that for the benefit not only of the EU after the negotiations but of the rest of the world as well.

## Turkey: Human Rights *Question*

2.44 pm

*Asked by Lord Balfé*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the strength and effectiveness of their representations about human rights abuses to the government of Turkey once the United Kingdom is outside the European Union.

**The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon) (Con):** My Lords, the United Kingdom and Turkey have a close and constructive relationship that enables us to raise our human rights concerns at the highest levels. We do not expect this to change as we leave the European Union. In addition to bilateral channels, we address human rights issues in other multilateral fora, including the Council of Europe, of which Turkey is also a member.

**Lord Balfé (Con):** I thank the Minister for his reply, but point out that when we are outside the European Union we will no longer be a part of its common position. That will mean that we are not able to shape that common position, nor will we be part of it when we are making representations. Does the Minister consider that the little bit of independence which we gain is worth putting us in the same position as, say, Canada, another largish NATO ally but one which is very much on the margin when it comes to making representations in Ankara?

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Britain's position with Turkey goes beyond our membership of the European Union. Let it not be forgotten that the United Kingdom has been the strongest voice for Turkey's membership, to broaden the base of the European Union. I disagree with my noble friend: it is not a small decision or issue. Leaving the European Union, with the opportunities that provides to global Britain, will present the United Kingdom with a new way of defining relationships; we will continue to strengthen our existing relationship and influence with Turkey.

**Lord Collins of Highbury (Lab):** My Lords, for a long time the United Kingdom's policy towards Turkey was to encourage it to join the European Union, for the very good reason that it improved standards, held people to account and applied the rule of law. By leaving, we will be saying to Turkey: “Do what we say”. That is not good enough. Surely, we need to act collectively to defend human rights.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The noble Lord is aware that we will act to defend human rights, not just with our European Union partners—we will continue to have a strong relationship with them on this important issue once we have left the Union—but also through other bodies such as the UN body on human rights. We will continue to make the case for human rights across the piece. That also means that when we see human rights abuses in countries such as Turkey, with which we have relationships, we stand up and make our position absolutely clear.

**Lord Scriven (LD):** The Minister will be aware of the repeated abuses of Turkish LGBTI citizens' human rights by their own Government, including the firing of rubber bullets to stop Pride celebrations. The EU has withheld €175 million of money due to Turkey to protest at this and other human rights abuses. If we are to leave the EU, what will come first in the Foreign Office's policy towards Turkey: trade or action on standing up to protect human rights?

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The noble Lord does a disservice to Britain's history. Britain has always been a proud proponent of human rights. It continues to be so while it is a member of the European Union, and it will continue to be a proud proponent of human rights once we leave the European Union.

**Lord Tebbit (Con):** My Lords, can my noble friend tell me how successful have been the European Union's representations to Turkey to clear these matters up? From what we have heard, it should have been a pushover for them.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** That is for objective commentators to assess but, as my noble friend will recognise, we have had success in influencing Turkey on a range of human rights issues. Recently, it was British representation which ensured the release on bail of most of the human rights defenders before trial, although one is still in detention. That is down to the strong relationship which the United Kingdom has with Turkey on human rights. Turkey does listen to our protests.

**Lord Cashman (Lab):** My Lords, there have been worrying developments in Turkey recently, and the EU has been very vocal and effective. I refer specifically to the president's denouncement of the established and renowned Boğaziçi University in Istanbul and the banning of any lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans exhibitions and cultural events in Ankara. Will the Minister join with others in reinforcing that such a ban, supposedly due to security concerns, should not be used to diminish the human rights and civil liberties of all citizens in Turkey, particularly those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans?

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** As the noble Lord will know, the United Kingdom did at that time make its position on this issue absolutely clear to the Turkish authorities and continues to do so. We will continue to raise it in international fora. Indeed, it continues to be raised in all our bilateral meetings and dealings with our Turkish counterparts.

**Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne (Con):** Does the noble Lord agree that, despite the many qualities of the European Union, its handling of Turkey has been negative, retrogressive and incompetent, and that you can tell that by the way in which north Cyprus responded to the excellent overtures from the European Union at the time when Cyprus joined? Does he also agree that Britain is in a unique position with respect to Turkey, given that both are very early members—almost founder members—of the Council of Europe, and that it is much better to have Turkey discussing issues round the table than to have it outside the door, as the European Union has successively proved?

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** I share my noble friend's sentiment that we have been disappointed with colleagues across the European Union who have not been supportive of the United Kingdom's position of encouraging Turkey's membership. However, we will continue to work with Turkey after we leave the European Union, and we will work with the European Union—whether that is through our membership of the Council of Europe or whether it is through our continued membership of NATO—to ensure that on important issues, where we agree, we will make those positions absolutely clear and, where we need to make our position clear to the likes of Turkey on human rights, that position will also be made clear.

**Baroness Tonge (Non-Aff):** My Lords, the Minister speaks very proudly of this Government's defence of human rights, but when will they start to defend the human rights of Palestinians, particularly Palestinian children?

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** I know that the noble Baroness has been a very strong campaigner on this issue, and she knows for a fact that the United Kingdom has been, and continues to be, very vocal on it. We have a very strong relationship with Israel which allows us to have candid conversations in which we stand up for the rights of the Palestinian people and of the children held in detention in Israel. I reiterate that the United Kingdom believes that the long-term solution

to the crisis in the Holy Land and the Middle East that is ripping apart communities at times is a two-state solution, and the United Kingdom stands by that.

**Lord Reid of Cardowan (Lab):** My Lords, in view of the Minister's answers regarding our support for Turkey's position, is it not ironic that the will of the people, to which he and other Ministers keep referring, was persuaded, at least in substantial part, by the dreadful rumours that 76 million Turks would join the European Union?

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The noble Lord may speculate, and there will be different reasons as to why people voted, but I do not agree. I accept that certain elements of the campaign were not desirable. I made my position clear at that time, as did the Government. That applied to those on both sides of the campaign. However, the fact is that, in a referendum voted for by both Houses, the majority of people voted to leave the European Union. We are not listening to the likes of Mr Barnier, and we do not need his direction; we needed the direction of the British people, they have given it and we are following it.

## Crown Prosecution Service: Disclosure Procedures *Question*

2.53 pm

*Asked by Lord Morris of Aberavon*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they intend to set up an independent inquiry into the role of the Crown Prosecution Service and its relationship with police authorities in respect of disclosure procedures in criminal cases.

**The Advocate-General for Scotland (Lord Keen of Elie) (Con):** My Lords, following a joint inspectorate report last year, the Attorney-General launched a review of disclosure procedures. This will report in the summer. Last week, the National Police Chiefs' Council, the College of Policing and the CPS published a joint action plan for disclosure improvement. The House of Commons Justice Committee has now announced an inquiry into disclosure. We have no present intention to institute an additional inquiry.

**Lord Morris of Aberavon (Lab):** My Lords, I welcome what is being done belatedly, but confidence in the criminal legal system in the Crown courts has been seeping away almost daily. Will the action proposed apply also to the magistrates' court, where non-proceeding seems to be the norm? Since the DPP, who has made some very bold statements, is obviously struggling with the police, with their limited resources, to provide material for disclosure, will the Attorney-General join the Home Secretary in studying what was done in 1998? There was a failure to prosecute deaths in custody cases, so I appointed a senior ex-circuit judge to do an independent review, and he delivered a damning report in two or three months.

**Lord Keen of Elie:** My Lords, we recognise that compliance with disclosure requirements is vital if there is ever to be a fair trial. On a review of present

[LORD KEEN OF ELIE]

policy, the Attorney-General's review will take account of recent reports from judges and Her Majesty's inspectors, as well as gathering additional evidence from bodies, including the judiciary, the Bar Council, the Law Society, police representatives, and prosecutors. In addition, last week the Attorney-General and the Home Secretary addressed a joint letter to both the CPS and the chief constable of the national policing lead on disclosure and the chief executive of the College of Policing, repeating their expectation that a full review is undertaken of all cases similar to those that have already been identified, to determine whether disclosure has been properly carried out.

**Lord Thomas of Gresford (LD):** Does the Minister not agree that it would be quite disproportionate for the victim to be required to disclose all her emails and electronic messaging to her attacker and his lawyers to trawl through at considerable public expense? Will the Minister not pursue the suggestion I made in our debate a fortnight ago that there should be a protocol whereby a defendant is required to give key words, such as his name, his nickname, places, people and events, to the prosecution for it to carry out such an investigation and to disclose whatever material he has suggested is produced?

**Lord Keen of Elie:** My Lords, I certainly agree with the indication that it would be disproportionate for a victim or complainant to have to disclose the entirety of their social media communications. It would be intrusive and inappropriate, and would impact upon the willingness of complainants to come forward in particular circumstances, so there has to be a balance. It would also raise very real data protection issues, so we have to take account of that. As regards a protocol, we are reviewing protocols in the context of disclosure, and I noted what the noble Lord said about a keyword search.

**Lord Mackay of Clashfern (Con):** My Lords, is it feasible for the police to ask the complainant whether they have commented on the relationship in question in any media? I do not mean that they should give any detail, but at least it would alert the police as to whether it was worth looking at. Secondly, it is over 32 years since I had responsibility for these matters in Scotland, but I wonder whether there is any suggestion that this problem exists there.

**Lord Keen of Elie:** I am obliged to my noble and learned friend for his observations. On the police inquiries, as I understand it there is no reason why the police should not make appropriate inquiries of a complainant with respect to her social media and other communications that might be relevant to a particular complaint. In addition, the defence have to submit a schedule outlining their own case, in which they will have the opportunity to identify from the police schedule of material that has been recovered that which should be disclosed for the purposes of trial. On whether a similar issue has arisen in Scotland, disclosure is an issue in all jurisdictions; it is a question of how it is handled. Here we are concerned with the handling issue, not a resource issue.

**Lord Blair of Boughton (CB):** My Lords, I could not disagree more with the Minister. We are, quite simply, dealing with a resource issue. The law on disclosure is as clear as daylight, but it was written before iPhones and social media came into existence. Does the Minister agree that whatever guidance is issued to the police and their forensic IT investigators, there has to be some concern about whether they have the resources to do this in cases of rape when they also have cases of terrorism and organised crime to deal with?

**Lord Keen of Elie:** My Lords, clearly the development of digital media has increased the demands made on both the police and the prosecution service in the investigation of crime. Indeed, in their most recent report, *National Disclosure Improvement Plan*, the National Police Chiefs' Council, the College of Policing and the Crown Prosecution Service indicated that they will develop a joint protocol by March 2018 for the examination of digital media.

**Baroness Chakrabarti (Lab):** My Lords, on the one hand we have urgent crisis reviews of pending prosecutions for fear of potential non-disclosure and unsafe trials and, on the other hand, we have various women's groups telling us that the existing law designed to protect women from degrading questioning about their sexual histories is not being applied, and that causes fear as well. To add insult to injury, a notorious sex offender will be released on parole without rhyme or reason and without a voice for the victims of crime. Will the Minister please agree that it is time for the Government to give urgent attention, if not resources, to restoring faith, trust and confidence in our criminal justice system?

**Lord Keen of Elie:** My Lords, what is necessary is that a responsible Government should not arm wave but, instead, respect the rule of law.

## Brexit: Gibraltar Question

3 pm

*Tabled by Lord Luce*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether Gibraltar will be fully integrated into the Brexit negotiations for both the transitional period and the longer-term arrangements.

**Lord Laming (CB):** My Lords, on behalf of my noble friend Lord Luce, I beg leave to ask the Question standing in his name on the Order Paper.

**The Minister of State, Department for Exiting the European Union (Lord Callanan) (Con):** My Lords, the Government are clear that Gibraltar is covered by our exit negotiations, and we have committed to involve it fully as we exit the EU. We will not exclude Gibraltar from our negotiations for either the implementation period or the agreement for the future. We are taking Gibraltar's interests into account, and the fifth meeting of the UK-Gibraltar Ministerial Forum on EU Exit took place in December, chaired by Minister Robin Walker.

**Lord Lamington:** My Lords, I am grateful to the Minister for that reply. Can he enlarge on the principal mechanisms to assure the people of Gibraltar that they will not be excluded from any of the discussions? The Minister will know very well the sensitivity of this issue for the people of Gibraltar.

**Lord Callanan:** I totally agree with the noble Lord that these are sensitive matters. We regularly consult the Government of Gibraltar. It is also fair to say that we have excellent bilateral relations with the Government of Spain. We last met them on 11 January to take these matters forward, and so far the discussions have been constructive and helpful on all sides.

**Baroness Butler-Sloss (CB):** My Lords, I am a vice-chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Gibraltar. One thing that the Gibraltarians are particularly concerned about is the transition period and the real possibility that Spain will exercise its veto, which the EU countries have accepted, to prevent Gibraltar being involved in the transition discussions.

**Lord Callanan:** I thank the noble and learned Baroness for her question, but I really do not think that the word “veto” should be used in these circumstances. We have excellent relations with Spain and, as I said, we have been discussing these issues with Spain in a constructive and helpful manner. The discussions are going forward well and we expect a positive result.

**Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town (Lab):** My Lords, last week I met Sir Joe Bossano, the former Chief Minister, who stressed that not only does Gibraltar have a land border with what will be the EU 27 but that many Gibraltarians consider it to be a border with a potentially hostile state that has designs on their territory—and, of course, the ability to close that very short border. Given that, as we have just heard, paragraph 24 of the EU’s guidelines on the negotiations gives Spain an effective veto, will the Minister give an unequivocal pledge both to guarantee the Rock’s sovereignty and to make its future economic prosperity a priority in the negotiations?

**Lord Callanan:** Of course we can give a pledge to the people of Gibraltar on their sovereignty—we have done that many times—but I do not think that using the words “hostile state” is helpful in the circumstances. The discussions have been positive and cordial. We are engaging with the Government of Spain and trying to resolve the issues. The noble Baroness is right to point to the land border, but it is now a Schengen border. Many residents of Spain—something like 7,000 a day—cross that border to work in Gibraltar, so there is a desire on both sides to make the arrangements work as smoothly as possible.

**Baroness McIntosh of Pickering (Con):** My Lords, as we have both served in the European Parliament, does my noble friend agree that Gibraltar has had good representation through a nominated Member of the European Parliament? That representation will presumably cease at the European elections next year. What discussions will there be and what mechanism

will be in place to ensure that, at a crucial time for Gibraltar’s future, she will have representation in the European Parliament?

**Lord Callanan:** I think matters have moved on a bit since my noble friend was in the European Parliament. It is actually attached to a UK geographical area—the south-west region—and so it has a whole region of MEPs to represent its interests in the European Parliament. We will take Gibraltar’s interests fully into account. We consult Gibraltar regularly and will make sure that its interests are well represented.

**Lord Palmer of Childs Hill (LD):** My Lords, Monsieur Barnier’s name was mentioned in response to Question 1 and Question 2 today. The same Mr Barnier told a Select Committee of the Spanish Parliament, on 23 January, that Gibraltar was not part of the negotiations. Is he misinformed in this respect? Will the Minister confirm that, if we make the mistake of leaving the EU, Gibraltar will be included not only in the negotiations but in the final settlement and agreement—because that is not clear?

**Lord Callanan:** I say to the noble Lord that I think it is clear. The Prime Minister said in Parliament on 18 December that,

“we will be ... negotiating to ensure that the relationships are there for Gibraltar as well. We are not going to exclude Gibraltar from our negotiations for either the implementation period or the future agreement”.—[*Official Report*, Commons, 18/12/17; col. 758.] It could not be clearer.

**Lord Wigley (PC):** Does the Minister not accept that the predicament of Gibraltar would be largely overcome if we remained in the single market and the customs union?

**Lord Callanan:** I will repeat what has been said in the discussions we have had many times on this: we share the position of the Labour Front Bench that we are leaving the single market and leaving the customs union.

**Baroness Harris of Richmond (LD):** Will the Minister tell me of any discussions the Government have had with the Government of Spain about all the long queues that there still are on the border between Spain and Gibraltar?

**Lord Callanan:** We are clear that queues are, of course, unacceptable and extremely inconvenient for anybody seeking to pass either into or out of Gibraltar. We discuss these matters regularly in our excellent discussions with the Spanish Government.

**Lord Grocott (Lab):** My Lords, already today we have had two or three supplementary questions and three main Questions on the EU and withdrawal, and we have two days this week, Tuesday and Wednesday, scheduled for debate, and 10 days scheduled for Committee stage—so there will be no shortage of opportunity for Members of this House to quiz Ministers. But could the Minister reassure everyone that, despite the calls for us to ignore the referendum that have come from one or two questioners today, in particular from my very good and noble friend Lord Foulkes, he will be

[LORD GROCOTT]  
careful to keep in mind not just the 17.4 million people who voted as they did in the referendum but, more specifically—if I can be parochial about this—the 2:1 majority of voters in the West Midlands who were quite clear about the decision that we should leave the European Union?

**Lord Callanan:** I agree with the noble Lord that of course we will be taking their interests into account. There was a similar majority in my own region—but there were remain majorities in other parts of the country. We act as a nation, and it was a referendum of the United Kingdom as a whole. It was a clear decision to leave the European Union; that decision was confirmed in my party's election manifesto and in the noble Lord's party's election manifesto; and we will proceed to implement that decision.

## Defence Modernisation Programme

### Statement

3.08 pm

**The Minister of State, Ministry of Defence (Earl Howe) (Con):** My Lords, with the leave of the House, I shall now repeat a Statement made in another place on 25 January by my right honourable friend the Secretary of State. The Statement is as follows:

“I undertook to return to the House at the earliest possible opportunity to update honourable and right honourable Members on the programme to modernise defence, which the Ministry of Defence will be conducting in the months ahead.

Following agreement of the high-level findings of the national security capability review by the National Security Council, I have agreed with the Prime Minister and Chancellor that we should take forward its recommendation for a programme of further work to modernise defence to deliver better military capability and value for money in a sustainable and affordable way. This is essential if defence is to make its full contribution to national security.

The *National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015* set out a clear ambition to ensure that the Armed Forces can tackle the threats that we face. It also proposed important new policy initiatives, including a stronger international approach, pursuit of innovation, modernised personnel policies and defence making a bigger contribution to our national prosperity, and we are making real strides to unlock greater efficiency and productivity.

Protecting the United Kingdom and our people remains our first priority and responsibility. As the threats we face become more complex and intertwined, we will need to work ever more closely with our NATO allies. We can also expect to remain actively involved with our partners in the Gulf in tackling shared threats to our security, and the Asia-Pacific region will become more important to us in the years ahead. The Ministry of Defence is making a major contribution to our prosperity as we procure the equipment that our Armed Forces deserve and support defence exports, in which there have been recent successes, most notably the £6 billion Typhoon contract agreed with Qatar.

Significant events last year—the callous terrorist attacks in London and Manchester, and the major storms that ravaged British dependencies in the Caribbean—are reminders of our wider responsibilities. We need to contain threats that have their origin overseas and be prepared to react swiftly and effectively when crises arise. As we identified in 2015, this will require the joint force that we are building to be versatile and agile. It will need to be capable of operating in all five domains: land, sea, air, space and cyber. It will need to be international by design, routinely exercising and operating with allies and partners. It will need to be credible and capable of operating against state and non-state threats—normally not alone but with NATO allies and other partners, but we must also be able to act on our own if and when required. It must be able to contribute to our national security at home, working with the police and other national security organisations.

While the major elements of our plans for Joint Force 2025 remain the right ones, in order to secure competitive advantage over our potential adversaries we need to ensure that we can move quickly to strengthen further our capabilities in priority areas and reduce the resources that we devote elsewhere.

The Government commissioned the national security capability review to ensure that we have the policy and plans to implement our national security strategy, so that our investment in national security capabilities is as joined-up, effective and efficient as possible to address current national security challenges. A report will be published later in the spring.

As my right honourable friend the Prime Minister said in her recent Lord Mayor's banquet speech, the threats, risks and challenges have become more complex and intertwined and have developed in areas and ways that we broadly expected, but at a much greater pace than was foreseen. The defence budget is £36 billion this year—the fifth largest defence budget in the world—and it will increase by £1 billion each year so that it will be almost £40 billion by 2021. The UK remains one of the few countries to exceed NATO's 2% spending target, and this Government have committed to continue to increase the defence budget by at least 0.5% above inflation every year. However, we must do more to ensure that we use our resources effectively and deliver the efficiencies that the department has committed to, so that they can be reinvested in the capabilities that we require for our Armed Forces.

It is for these reasons that I have agreed with the Prime Minister and the Chancellor to launch the modernising defence programme so that we can strengthen and modernise the Armed Forces to meet the threats that the NSCR identified. Modernising defence will allow us to deliver better military capability and value for money in a sustainable and affordable way, and it will allow us to ensure that defence capabilities complement other national security capabilities in the most effective way. I am determined to realise this goal through a modernised, more productive and more effective joint force that can deter threats more effectively and ensure that we can deliver what is required of defence today and succeed in any future conflicts. Turning this approach into reality will be my key goal for the modernising defence programme.

This programme will involve four strands of work. The first three will optimise how the MoD is organised and is operating; identify further efficiencies and ways to be more productive, including through an aggressive programme of business modernisation; and improve our performance on the commercial and industrial issues. The fourth strand will look at the capabilities that defence requires to contribute to our three national security objectives today and in the future, but also and most importantly, to understand the ever-changing threats that this country faces. I am determined to use the modernising defence programme to ensure that defence can make its full contribution to our national security on a sustainable basis.

I will speak to right honourable and honourable Members about this programme of work on a very regular basis and I will keep the House updated as decisions are made. In the meantime, I would warmly welcome any contributions that right honourable and honourable Members would like to make. My department and I will be consulting beyond the House as this programme of work gets under way in the weeks ahead.

Protecting our national security and the safety of the British people both at home and abroad remains the Government's first priority. Let us make no mistake—the world is becoming a more dangerous place. We cannot afford to shy away from this reality, nor can we take our security for granted. But even more than that, in a post-Brexit world, Britain must continue to champion the global good. It must continue to reach out to seize global opportunities and deal with global threats. Our history teaches us that we cannot have prosperity without security. To protect that prosperity we must have Armed Forces that are primed and ready to tackle the challenges to come”.

My Lords, that concludes the Statement.

3.17 pm

**Lord Tunnicliffe (Lab):** My Lords, I thank the Minister for repeating the Statement, and perhaps I may be the first to congratulate him on his birthday. That is the charming bit over.

We welcome the decision to separate out the modernising defence programme from the national security capability review. That, frankly, is not much of a statement because anything has to be better than a Cabinet Office-led NSCR which is financially neutral. But this Statement reads as though one has had access to a whole series of other Statements, so I will confine myself to trying to understand the detail of what it sets out. Early on in the Statement it says:

“Following agreement of the high-level findings of the national security capability review”.

Are the high-level findings of that review already in the public domain? If not, can the noble Earl tell us what the other high-level findings of the review are? Have they been published, and if they have not, will he explain why we have heard about just one finding and not the whole suite?

Later in the Statement we are promised that the national security capability review will be published later in the spring. Seasons of the year can be variable in this place, so can I ask for an assurance from the

Minister that we will have a precise definition of “spring”? This morning I took the trouble to google the word and you have two choices: meteorological spring ends on 31 May while astronomical spring ends on 21 June. I will settle for either date provided that we have a commitment that the review is going to be published. The reason I am looking for that assurance is that I think I have been told—I may be misquoting the noble Earl—in one of our many debates on defence that there would be the second annual report on SDR 2015 by the end of 2017. The end of 2017 was last month. Is there to be a second annual report on SDR 2015? If so, when?

Later in the Statement there is slipped in—“slipped in” is unfair, but it is towards the end of a long paragraph—the commitment:

“However, we must do more to ensure that we use our resources effectively and deliver the efficiencies that the department has committed to”.

What are those efficiencies? Are they the ones committed to in SDSR 2015? The noble Earl will know from our debates about defence, of which we have had several in recent months, that virtually nobody believes that such efficiencies are achievable. Indeed, in the areas that one has been able to measure, the reduction in resource has clearly stalled. What does the noble Earl mean by “efficiencies”? Having been in the efficiency business in my professional career, I define “efficiencies” as achieving the same with less resource or achieving more with the same resource. All too often in defence, “efficiencies” has meant cuts. Could we have a categorical assurance that these efficiencies genuinely will be about achieving more with less? If it really is about more with less, why, in the last seven years, have the Government not achieved those efficiencies anyway?

Later in the Statement, we are told that the “programme”—that is, the defence modernisation programme—

“will involve four strands of work”,

but it then goes on to define only one. What are the other three strands? It sounds very precise and as though there is a very clear plan behind the Statement. If there is, could it be revealed to us? The fourth strand is to look at what is required to contribute to the “three national security objectives”. I am sure that in the tons of paper that the MoD produces I could find what the three national security objectives are, but could the Minister enlighten us as to what the three national security objectives are that the fourth strand pursues?

Following the Statement in the other place there was a debate. Somewhere in that debate there was a commitment by the Government to deliver the report on the defence modernisation programme by the Summer Recess. Will the Minister restate that it will be delivered by the Summer Recess? Could he give us some feel as to the certainty of that, particularly given the failure to deliver previous reports by their due date?

I do not think that the Statement says anything about “financially neutral”, but in the debate that followed the Secretary of State for Defence said on at least four occasions that the defence modernisation review would not be financially neutral. I think he said it four times, but perhaps it was more often. Does “not financially neutral” mean that the Government have

[LORD TUNNICLIFFE]

decided to provide more money for defence? Presumably “not financially neutral” does not mean that there will be even less money. I hope that is what it means, but could we have a straightforward yes or no answer: is more money to be found for defence? Whatever the answer to all these questions is, I have real trouble in my own mind understanding how a fiscally neutral NSCR will work with a not fiscally neutral defence modernisation review.

**Lord Campbell of Pittenweem (LD):** My Lords, I join in the congratulations to the noble Earl on his birthday and thank him for repeating the Statement. He must feel, to some extent, that today is a rerun of the discussion we had last Monday. On these occasions tribute is often paid to the Armed Forces, but I have a question on that. What evidence is there of any impact on recruitment and retention as a result of the uncertainty that has surrounded these issues? I also remind the noble Earl that, as some of us in the House will remember, a lot of the language in the Statement is very similar to what we saw and heard in *Options for Change* and *Frontline First*. We know that the outcome of both exercises was a substantial reduction in defence expenditure and hence in capability as well.

There are only two passing references to NATO. I press the noble Earl on how far, and to what extent, interoperability with NATO and our other allies will lie at the very heart of the exercise it is now proposed to carry out. As has been said on a number of occasions in response to questions in the other place, the Secretary of State asserted that the exercise would not be fiscal-neutral. Last Monday the noble Earl rather adroitly avoided answering my question as to whether he agreed with the Secretary of State, and indeed the head of the Army, that more money needs to be spent on defence. I offer him another opportunity to answer that question and I hope he will forgive me if I ask: yes or no?

**Earl Howe:** My Lords, I thank both noble Lords for their good wishes. I will do my best to answer the questions that have been put to me. The noble Lord, Lord Tunnicliffe, asked about the findings of the NSCR. We are not making an announcement on those findings today. The NSCR is the report referred to that will be published in the spring. It will not be the early spring; I hope the noble Lord will allow me to leave the Government some flexibility on that matter, but our ambition is to publish the findings of the NSCR before what most people would regard as the summer. As for the annual report on the 2015 SDSR, which was indeed due at the end of last year, the noble Lord is right: publication has been slightly delayed. I hope it will be delayed for not too much longer but we remain committed to publishing the second annual report.

The noble Lord asked about efficiencies, as a number of noble and noble and gallant Lords have done in the past. In taking this work forward we will take all existing efficiencies into account and our targets for achieving further efficiencies. We will also look for opportunities to identify new efficiencies by understanding how the MoD can reduce duplication and adopt new approaches to delivering a more modern organisation.

I am well aware that there is a great deal of scepticism around efficiencies. I endorse the noble Lord's interpretation of the word: this is about finding savings that do not adversely affect defence outputs. We are very strict about that and if any noble Lord would like to quiz me further, I will be happy to answer.

He asked about the work strands of the MDP. I hope the timetable and detail of the work will emerge very soon. In essence, we are looking at a work strand that focuses on the MoD operating model and will deliver plans for a stronger and more capable head office.

Secondly, there is the efficiency programme and business modernisation. This consists of obtaining independent assurance over the existing efficiency plan, identifying any new savings deliverable through up-front investment and understanding how the MoD can reduce duplication and adopt new approaches to delivering a more modern organisation.

Thirdly, there is the work relating to our commercial and industrial partners: assessing how the MoD can improve on strategic supplier management, improve its commercial capability, and build on improvements to the performance of Defence Equipment and Support—DE&S. Those three work strands are already under way. There will be a continuation of those work programmes.

The fourth strand is, I am sure, the one that interests noble Lords the most. It is about defence policy, our outputs and our military capability. It is about analysing the global security context and implications for defence policy, understanding the relative priority of defence roles and tasks, and identifying opportunities—and, indeed, imperatives—for modernising capability, the workforce and force generation. I hope that gives a flavour of the four strands of work.

The noble Lord asked me to enlighten the House on the three national security objectives. To refresh the memories of noble Lords, as described in SDSR 2015, the first is,

“to protect our people—at home, in our Overseas Territories and abroad, and to protect our territory, economic security, infrastructure and way of life”.

The second is,

“to project our global influence—reducing the likelihood of threats materialising and affecting the UK, our interests, and those of our allies and partners”,

and the third is,

“to promote our prosperity—seizing opportunities, working innovatively and supporting UK industry”.

What confidence do the Government have that the MDP will be completed by the Summer Recess? We intend the MDP to be substantially complete by the Summer Recess. Our aim is to be in a position to share headline conclusions by that time and we are confident that we can achieve that. That means sharing as much as we possibly can with Parliament and with Heads of State and Ministers at the NATO summit.

I was asked by both noble Lords about the prospect of defence receiving more money. It is only fair that noble Lords do not press me too hard on this at this point but I will say that my right honourable friend the Secretary of State has been speaking regularly to the Chancellor since arriving at the Ministry of Defence. He will continue to do so as the MDP progresses, but

let us put this question into its context. Against the backdrop of the increasing threats that the Statement refers to, this work is about ensuring that the Armed Forces have the capabilities they need to keep our nation safe. That is the objective. Given that, it is important that we maintain the dialogue that is already in train with the Chancellor. I will not pre-empt the results of the dialogue by plucking extra funding figures out of the air, but if we conclude that defence needs more money, we will have a very alive conversation with both my right honourable friend the Prime Minister and my right honourable friend the Chancellor.

The noble Lord, Lord Campbell, asked me a number of further questions. The first was about the effect on recruitment and retention. As I have said, any prolonged uncertainty is damaging and we have to acknowledge that. The recruitment and retention climate is difficult. It is difficult, however, to pinpoint a single reason for that. I think there are multiple reasons for it. What we will see over the next few months, however, is a much more inclusive dialogue about the programme as it goes forward. I hope that that effort in the direction of transparency will dispel a lot of the uncertainty that perhaps exists at the moment. My right honourable friend the Secretary of State is very clear about the outcome: he does not wish to do anything that will damage defence. It is important to restate that with regularity.

Interoperability with our NATO allies is certainly an important strand of our work, as it has been since 2015, when we articulated one of our overarching aims, which was to be “international by design”. That means not only working with our allies on training, strategy and doctrine but having equipment that is interoperable.

I hope I have answered noble Lords’ questions but I am happy to answer further questions.

3.35 pm

**Lord Boyce (CB):** My Lords, I guess we welcome this quasi-defence review, although it would probably not have been needed if SDSR15 had been properly funded in the first place. If the NSCR is to be a benchmark for this review but will not be published until the spring, and noting that the Secretary of State for Defence in his Statement is encouraging contributions and consultation, how can sensible contributions and consultation take place without knowing what the benchmark is until the spring?

**Earl Howe:** My Lords, the NSCR and the modernising defence programme that flows from it are intended to act a means of implementing the 2015 SDSR. It is the SDSR that we should take as the baseline for the work we are doing because we still believe that many of the headline findings of the SDSR are as valid today as they were then. We can have a sensible discussion about our defence needs but clearly, as the work proceeds, the Ministry of Defence will wish to consult closely with other government departments that have an interest in what we do.

**Lord Sterling of Plaistow (Con):** I draw attention to the summary of the national defence strategy of the United States of America, which was released last week. If noble Lords have not seen it, it is by General Mattis. It is an extremely interesting document, down

to earth and in spoken English, and I cannot recommend it more highly. I would like to plagiarise it and pinch some of his comments. I had the pleasure of joining the Secretary of State for breakfast last Wednesday, and I came away with the view that he is a man we should support foursquare, and parliamentarians from both Houses who are interested in defence—there are many of them, from all parties—should support him in every way possible. A key relationship for the future will be between Sir Mark, our national security adviser, and the Secretary of State, but I suggest that the fourth strand is the key strand. The last word of the fourth strand talks about strategic needs for the future. A combination of brains and innovation can deal with the first three; much of it is already known. I suggest, however, that the key date we have to consider is that of the next NATO summit which takes place on 11 and 12 July in Brussels. The right outcome to that will go down marvellously with our European friends, our American allies and, most importantly, the Commonwealth. If we walk in with empty words, they will forget us completely. When we walk in—this is the key—we need at least 3% for the future. We must have a greater presence, with many more people in the armed services. That way, when we go in to speak at that summit, the result should be, “The Brits have come back”. Does my noble friend the Minister agree with my last comment?

**Earl Howe:** I am very grateful to my noble friend for his support of this programme of work and for the support that he expressed for my right honourable friend. I can tell the House, having worked with my right honourable friend for a number of weeks now, that he is 110% behind our Armed Forces and will fight very hard to ensure that we have an outcome that is credible, sustainable and affordable, and in which everybody will have confidence. My noble friend is right in that a critical date this year is that of the NATO summit. I am sure that we will arrive at a position where our allies have as much confidence as we do, and it is very important that we work towards that date in our minds.

**Lord West of Spithead (Lab):** My Lords, the noble Earl is absolutely right that there is cynicism. It is not surprising when one bears in mind that for the last 12 months the noble Earl has very loyally been telling us how all in the defence garden is rosy, how wonderful the money for defence is and how wonderfully everything is going. Then we find out last week that his Secretary of State, a year ago, had seen the Prime Minister and said there is insufficient money in defence. We desperately need more money and are making cuts now that are very painful, so that is hardly surprising. My question relates to the crisis in defence today. If we are not being fiscally level, and there is fiscal enhancement, is it possible, in year, to find some money from the Treasury to stop the cuts to training, in terms of spare gear and of repair work, to enable our forces to actually do the things they really need to do? There is a very real crisis in defence.

**Earl Howe:** My Lords, I hope noble Lords will agree that I have always been open with the House about the stresses on the defence budget, not least those arising from the EU referendum. In particular,

[EARL HOWE]

we have been quite open about the fact that the exchange rate has impacted our procurement budget, so I cannot agree with the noble Lord that we have tried to obscure the strain on our budget. I am not aware that there is the prospect of any in-year money, but I take issue with his word “crisis”. Speaking to my finance colleagues in the Ministry of Defence, it is pretty clear that we can get through this year, albeit with some temporary cuts to training which I agree are regrettable. But we can get through this year in good shape. The decisions that we need to take affect next year and beyond.

**Lord Hennessy of Nympsfield (CB):** My Lords, I warmly welcome the winnowing out of this exercise from the Cabinet Office’s capability review, but could the noble Earl explain the difference between a defence review and a defence modernisation programme?

**Earl Howe:** My Lords, as I tried to explain a little earlier, a fully fledged defence review would look very like the exercise that we conducted in 2015: going back to basics on what threats we face, what our ambitions are as a country and what we need to do to deter those threats and to provide for those ambitions. This modernisation programme takes the fundamentals of the SDSR as read, because we believe them to be credible. It is to decide what capabilities we now need, in the face of intensifying threats around the world, to counter those threats in a way that ensures that we have a sustainable programme going forward.

**Lord Cormack (Con):** My Lords, I have particular knowledge of the right honourable Gavin Williamson, the Secretary of State for Defence, who succeeded me as Member of Parliament for South Staffordshire. Because most Members of your Lordships’ House do not know him, and many of them have a lifetime’s knowledge and experience of the things we are talking about, could my noble friend—in whom I have very real confidence and for whom I have great admiration—arrange, at an early date, a meeting in the Moses Room, so that the noble and gallant Lords in particular can have the opportunity of meeting and questioning the Secretary of State?

**Earl Howe:** I am grateful to my noble friend. That is a very constructive idea, which I shall relay to the appropriate quarter.

**Lord Davies of Stamford (Lab):** I second the admirable suggestion by the noble Lord, Lord Cormack. If we are serious about value for money in defence, is it not important that we seize every viable opportunity that presents itself for collaboration with allies in defence procurement? The F35 programme is a good example of that, though of course the size of the US defence budget means that it is hardly an equal relationship. Does the Minister agree that OCCAR has done, and is doing, a splendid job in managing the collaborative defence procurement of a number of European countries in some very important programmes, including the A400M? I declare an interest because I renegotiated and relaunched that project in its present form. Can he give the House an assurance that if we leave the EU, which I think would be a disastrous idea from every

point of view, including this one, we will nevertheless remain committed to OCCAR in the work that it is doing in this field?

**Earl Howe:** I join the noble Lord in commending the work of OCCAR. He is absolutely right that many of our defence programmes are not directly related to our membership of the EU but are bilateral or multilateral, and we certainly wish to see those continue. That is why we at the Ministry of Defence are keen to ensure that the Brexit talks result in as frictionless a trading environment as possible between ourselves and the remaining members of the EU. Interoperability is one consideration in our support for these joint projects; another is value for money and a third is cutting-edge capability, a lot of which this country is in the lead in providing.

**Lord Craig of Radley (CB):** My Lords, it is welcome news that there is to be this study programme. “Modernisation” is a portmanteau word; perhaps the Minister could give some examples of defence capabilities that are most urgently in need of study under the modernisation rubric.

**Earl Howe:** I cannot give the noble and gallant Lord specific examples of equipment. However, I can say that in the area of cyber we need to ensure that we are ahead of the game and that our programmes for the Royal Navy are as up to date as they can be. It is about focusing our resources on the areas that are most important regarding the threats that face us. It is also about ensuring that we have infrastructure that is fit for purpose, both in our head office and in the Armed Forces themselves. That relates very much to the efficiency programme. I am confident in that programme; we have a way to go on it but we are doing well. If one thinks about certain platforms in the Army, the Royal Navy and the air force, efficiency is a very live issue in all those contexts.

**Lord Touhig (Lab):** I add to noble Lords’ comments in wishing the Minister many happy returns of the day. I think he is 67; he should be reassured that that is only 19 degrees Celsius. Just 10 days ago in the Moses Room, the Minister said he could not stand before us and commit the Government to conducting a full defence review. I am very sorry that this is not going to be such a full defence review because it will be another wasted opportunity. We need a major review, as has been said all across the House by noble and noble and gallant Lords today. Just picking at the edges is not going to be sufficient. If we do not have a major and full defence review, then in one or two years’ time, if he is still the Minister, the noble Earl will be back apologising once more for having to go through the whole exercise again.

**Earl Howe:** I hope I can assuage the noble Lord’s concerns to some extent by reminding him that we wish the modernising defence programme to be an inclusive process. We are eager to hear from parliamentarians and others about what we should be thinking about most of all. So, even if this is not badged as a fully fledged review, I hope noble Lords will feel able to raise with the Government the concerns and issues that they wish to.

**Earl Attlee (Con):** My Lords, in my short 25 years in Parliament, the best defence review I have seen was the SDSR 1998 of the noble Lord, Lord Robertson. But it was ruined by the Treasury's 3% year-on-year cost saving, because you can never get such cost savings. Why do we keep including efficiency savings in the defence budget, because you can never get those efficiency savings, nor even the money to pump prime them?

**Earl Howe:** I do not share my noble friend's scepticism about the efficiency programme. In fact, we already forecast a line of sight to 90% of our formal target of £7.4 billion, as set by the Treasury. I emphasise that these savings will not adversely affect defence outputs. I am talking about things such as transforming the way we procure equipment. We can get a lot better at that. The single-source contract regulations have saved us hundreds of millions of pounds already. We will be saving money by reviewing the military allowances. That programme is in addition to the multiple efficiency drives over recent years, such as improving our equipment support contracts, working more closely with industry partners to drive efficiency in, for example, the submarine programme, changing the way we procure complex weapons and, not least, a reduction in the size of our civilian workforce. Throughout those efficiency drives, we have maintained a world-class military, and that is what we will continue to do.

**Lord Ramsbotham (CB):** My Lords, I think I heard the noble Earl refer to temporary cuts. My experience of cuts in defence is that once a cut has been made, it is cut. Can he please explain what he meant by temporary cuts and what will be temporarily cut?

**Earl Howe:** My Lords, I was referring to temporary cuts in some of the training for, for example, the Royal Marines. That is very regrettable, I would be the first to acknowledge, but the service chiefs are clear that these cuts cannot and must not be anything other than temporary. We are not, at the moment, making the kind of reductions to British defence that were widely speculated about at the end of last year. It has never been the Government's intention to make such cuts. As I said, we are looking to strengthen defence and we will not pursue changes that would be damaging, but that does not mean that we will be looking to preserve every aspect of the department's current plans. We will be working closely with the service chiefs to explore what changes need to be made to produce the headroom for the kind of modernisation that we want to pursue.

**Baroness Jolly (LD):** My Lords, the 2015 SDSR called for swingeing cuts to civil servants across the whole department, but of course it is civil servants who can deliver some of the savings that we have talked about this afternoon. Can the Minister update us on how successful the department has been at reducing the number of civil servants?

**Earl Howe:** There has been considerable success in reducing civil servant numbers—for example, arising from our withdrawal from Germany. However, we have always been clear that the last part of the target will remain the most elusive. Unfortunately, I do not have figures in front of me as to how far we have got.

It is still very much part of our target, set by the Treasury. We are doing our best to implement those targets, but clearly, as the modernising defence programme goes forward, there may—I am sure there will—be a case for us to have a further conversation with the Treasury about what a whole force concept looks like in the context of the programme that we are undertaking.

**Lord Marlesford (Con):** My Lords, my feeling is that the weak link in our national security is actually the Home Office. I am thinking particularly of the Border Force: it is a great deal more efficient since it was taken over and commanded by an admiral, but it does not have the right resources or technology available, and there is no proper, joined-up arrangements with our coastal defence. That is a big lack. Will my noble friend, who I admire so much, at least look at the possibility of a more joined-up approach in that respect of our national security?

**Earl Howe:** My Lords, yes, and that is one of the reasons why I mentioned earlier that, as this work goes forward, we shall want to consult very closely with our colleagues in other departments of government. My noble friend has referred to an extremely important part of the work that we do under strand 1 of the national security objectives, protecting our people. That must involve joint working between departments.

## Environment: 25-year Plan

### *Motion to Take Note*

3.55 pm

*Moved by Lord Gardiner of Kimble*

That this House takes note of *A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment* and of Her Majesty's Government's stated goal of working with communities and businesses to improve the environment within a generation so that it is left in a better state than that in which it was found.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Lord Gardiner of Kimble) (Con):** My Lords, it is the greatest of privileges to open this debate on the Government's 25-year plan to deliver our ambition to leave the next generation a better environment than was given to us. In the context of this debate, I declare my farming interests as set out in the register.

The approach we take puts the environment first, and will enhance the daily lives of all who live in our great country. To achieve this, we seek the active engagement of farmers, land managers and the fishermen producing food for us, and who are instrumental in shaping our environment and acting as stewards of our environment. We surely have a moral obligation to protect and enhance the environment, for this and future generations, in harmony with the sustainability of our farming industry and for the benefit of all species with which we share this planet. This transformation must be achieved on an extensive scale, yet delivered through local action. We will continue to work with all the Defra group, including the Environment Agency and Natural England, to make sure that change is implemented in an open and transparent way.

[LORD GARDINER OF KIMBLE]

As the Prime Minister and Secretary of State have made clear, protecting and enhancing the environment is a central priority for this Government. *A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment* sets out the actions that we are taking now and in the future to achieve this ambition. This is not just the responsibility of government; everyone needs to play their part. We all need to act now and ensure that we advance year in, year out. However, as recommended by the Natural Capital Committee in 2015, we need a long-term approach, which is why this is a 25-year plan.

It is also important to remember that environmental change occurs not just across the years but across borders. While this is a plan largely for England, we will continue our strong collaboration with the devolved Administrations and deliver our international obligations as four parts of the UK.

We know that our task extends beyond these shores. We have committed to provide long-term protection of vital habitats and species around our overseas territories through the blue-belt programme, and have committed at least £5.8 billion to help developing countries to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change, reduce deforestation and support cleaner economic growth. We work through the UN, G7 and G20 to tackle marine plastics pollution at an international level.

To achieve our ambition, we have set out clear goals in the plan which maximise the benefits we obtain from the environment. On clean air, significant progress has been made in improving air quality. Since 1970, emissions of potentially damaging sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides have fallen by 96% and 69% respectively. Our ambition is to reduce significantly the effect of air pollution on health. Only last week legislation was passed to address air pollution from medium-sized combustion plants and generators.

On clean water, we are determined to improve the quality of our rivers and waters. We have introduced new rules for water relating to farming, which will be in force from April this year. While our rivers may be cleaner than they were 50 years ago, we will continue to work with the Environment Agency, local authorities, farmers and businesses so that we all bear down on pollutants that affect our waters and environment.

We also aim to support our native plants and wildlife to thrive and enhance the beauty of our landscapes. We will help to achieve this by restoring 75% of 1 million hectares of protected sites to favourable condition, and by increasing woodland in England, planting 444,000 acres of trees. We will put the environment at the heart of planning and development to create better places for people to live and work, while maintaining economic growth. We intend to embed an “environmental net gain” principle for development, and explore options to introduce conservation covenants in English law.

We will invest in a new northern forest that crosses the country in a belt of trees to bring accessible community woodlands to an area of increasing population. This project will be a test bed for new, innovative funding mechanisms that seek to combine public and private sector funding, working in partnership with charitable trusts to secure extra funding. We will

support people in the UK to engage with nature, but also make it easier for everyone to take action themselves to improve the environment. We will support a year of green action next year and take inspiration from the excellent work of the National Citizen Service and others to advance change.

We are investing £10 million to boost children’s connection with the environment, helping primary schools create nature-friendly grounds. Pupil referral units already do an excellent job for pupils in our most disadvantaged areas and we will support the expansion of school outreach activity, trebling the number of opportunities for people to visit specialist farms for health, social or educational care services.

Enhancing the beauty of our landscapes can often reduce the risk of harm from flooding. That is why we are already investing in natural flood management solutions. We will make sure that national planning policy is maintained and strengthened so that new homes are built in a way that reduces demands for water, energy and material resources and improves flood resilience. We will make sure the resources we obtain from nature are produced and used sustainably and efficiently, on land and at sea. We have set out our core principles for a replacement to the common fisheries policy in this plan, and this will be expanded on in the fisheries Bill later this year. Marine protected areas are vital for the further protection of our marine wildlife and today already cover 23% of UK waters. We will complete our network of marine protected areas by next year.

We must also tread more lightly on our planet and manage the pressures that the environment faces in a more enlightened manner: we must work with nature. We are already taking action to minimise waste. Our ban on microbeads, one of the strongest in the world, demonstrates global leadership in tackling the litter which is so detrimental to marine life. We are exploring ways to use the tax system and charges to reduce single-use plastic waste. We have already announced that we are working with industry to explore introducing plastic-free supermarket aisles, with some notable successes already. By continuing to work with businesses, retailers and local authorities, we will achieve our ambition of zero avoidable plastic waste.

We urgently need to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Although we have cut greenhouse gas emissions by 42% since 1990, our clean growth strategy sets out how we will continue to decarbonise the power sector. We want to encourage more businesses to offset their emissions by planting trees to help us meet our targets. Our national adaptation programme, to be published this year, will set out how we address the risks of climate change and adapt to its impact.

In 2016, we played a crucial role in amending the UN Montreal protocol to deliver a phase-down of hydrofluorocarbons, potent greenhouse gases, by 85% by 2036. We are on track in the UK. This year, we will see a 37% cut in the amount of hydrofluorocarbons placed on the market compared to 2015. We will make sure levels of harmful chemicals are significantly reduced through actions set out in our upcoming chemicals strategy, including exploring how we can bring together our monitoring work to develop a single early warning system for emerging chemicals of concern.

As Minister with responsibility for biosecurity, I place the utmost importance on enhancing biosecurity to protect wildlife and livestock and boost the resilience of plants and trees. We are developing public/private partnerships to encourage greater investment for research into plant and tree health. Our tree health resilience plan, to be published this year, will set out a national-level framework for how we can build the resilience of our trees, supported by the work of our chief plant health officer.

The plan does not sit in isolation. The clean growth plan published in October last year works to reduce emissions and boost economic growth. Our industrial strategy promotes the move towards a regenerative, circular economy safeguarding our future prosperity. Together, alongside Defra's strategies for clean air, resource and waste, litter and pollinators, they form a coherent approach to boosting economic productivity, prosperity and clean, green growth, while restoring and enhancing our natural environment and tackling the scourge of litter and waste which lets our country down badly. All these objectives are complementary to each other.

To deliver our vision we require reliable data, strong governance and accountability and a robust delivery framework for environmental protection. We will consult shortly on a new body to hold government to account. Whether the new body will assume responsibility for monitoring progress on the goals or provide independent advice will be considered in the consultation.

Strong foundations come from strong principles. We will propose a new policy statement on other environmental principles to apply after we leave the EU. These principles, which underpin EU legislation, are already central to government environmental policy.

The prize to be seized through all this work is for our islands to secure our health and well-being, our livelihoods and a lasting, positive future for the natural world. We must surely act together across all parties and none to achieve these common objectives. The fulfilment of this plan is an imperative for all as it goes to the core of daily life of everyone, wherever they live in this country. That is why the challenges this plan identifies must be tackled. Government and Parliament must give a lead, but for us to advance these objectives each and every one of us in our nation must engage. The words of this plan must, and will, be translated into action. I beg to move.

4.08 pm

**Baroness Young of Old Scone (Lab):** My Lords, I declare interests as the chairman of the Woodland Trust and either president or vice-president of a range of environmental and wildlife bodies, including the RSPB and the Wildlife Trust for Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire—a fine part of the world.

I thank the noble Lord, Gardiner, for his exposition of the plan. The noble Lord, Lord Deben, alas, is not in his place today. When he was Secretary of State for the Environment, he used to say that environment NGOs were “thank you, but” organisations; they used to thank him for anything that he achieved but always impressed on him that more was needed. The 25-year plan raises that sort of response in my heart.

The Government have to be admired because it is a tough pledge to leave the environment in a better state at the end of a generation, bearing in mind some of the immense pressures and the real signs of decline, such as climate change and declining biodiversity. Fifty-six per cent of species in this country are in decline—much threatened by agricultural practice and, increasingly, by urbanisation. The Minister talked about improvements to air quality but we have been struggling in the end game of making sure that air quality meets environmental standards on a European basis. Soils are rapidly becoming a key issue, having been neglected in the past. The startling figure that the Woodland Trust has come out with reveals that our country may actually be deforesting at the moment, rather than increasing woodland cover. It is admirable that the Government are being bold and looking forward but, as I said, we are “thank you, but” organisations so I will now have a go at some of the thank yous and buts.

First, it is great that there has been recognition of the myriad benefits of woods and trees. Noble Lords have heard me bang on about those so often that I shall not bore them again. It was a great pleasure a few Sundays ago for me to hear a Prime Minister, Mrs May, launch on “The Andrew Marr Show” her support for the northern forest. This £500 million project has been brought together by the Woodland Trust and the Community Forest Trust. It will be a wonderful forest: 50 million trees will be planted over 25 years and it will span from Liverpool to Hull and greatly help the economic regeneration of the north.

But there is a huge mismatch between the amount of new woodland planting that the Government are committing to deliver through their own funding and the stated commitment to increase woodland cover in England to 12% by 2060. We are currently at around 10%. The plan commits to planting 7,200 hectares per annum with government resources for the next 25 years, which is better than the measly 700 hectares achieved in 2016. But that means that the target in the plan will be heavily dependent on a range of players planting trees, not just the Government. We will need developers, local authorities, businesses, farmers, private individuals and public bodies to take a role. Will the Minister give a commitment to incentivising all land managers to plant trees, as the Government develop a post-CAP land-use policy? Will he assure the House that environmental benefits, including woodland creation, will be at the heart of future farming payments and tell us how the Government intend to arrive at their woodland cover objective of 12%, without more ambitious planting targets and schemes than are currently in the plan?

Another “thank you, but” goes for the commitment in the plan to protect ancient woodland, because protecting existing woods is as important as creating new ones. Our existing woods are under threat from development and tree disease, as the Minister said, and from conversion to other land uses. Based on the evidence that it has, the Woodland Trust believes that we are now in a state of deforestation, where actual woodland cover is reducing. But, to be honest, the data is pretty duff and we do not really know—which is a bad way to be in this data-rich age. So we welcome the role of the new national tree champion. I would

[BARONESS YOUNG OF OLD SCONE]

quite like to be that champion but I am sure I am not eligible, being *parti pris* and part of the Woodland Trust—but good on that person, whoever they are. However, they need to ensure that improved baseline data is available, that monitoring improves and that there is real reporting of all woodland losses if we are really to protect our existing woodland resource.

I particularly welcome the reiteration of the manifesto commitment to improve the protection of ancient woodland, but 700 ancient woodlands are currently under threat. HS2 is a big enemy of ancient woodland and, as we dash for housing, that, too, is beginning to threaten ancient woodland considerably. So the Government really must go further than the changes they have already proposed to the National Planning Policy Framework. I have seen two independent legal opinions, sought by the Woodland Trust and by lawyers active in the development field, which confirm that the proposed changes to the NPPF would not alter the currently inadequate level of protection for ancient woodland in practice.

I therefore hope, again, that the role of the national tree champion will come good. I was slightly anxious to see that he or she will explore opportunities to further strengthen the protection of ancient woodland. I rather hoped that the NPPF changes, when they came forth, would have done that job and that he would not need to worry his head about that one. All this illustrates the fact that government alone is not sufficient: we need all government to be involved, not just Defra, and we need other players to make a difference.

It is encouraging to see the natural capital approach that the Government are putting at the heart of the plan, but we must make sure that ancient woodland is not seen as part of this process. Ancient woodland is 400 years old; it is a complex web of species and ecosystems and is completely irreplaceable. It should not be damaged in the first place and cannot be traded as part of a no net loss scheme.

Last but not least in my “thank you, but” list, I will address the governance gap after breakfast—I mean, Brexit; Brexit and breakfast are a real contradiction in terms. After Brexit we will have lost the sanctions that Europe provided on government and government bodies for failing to meet environmental standards: namely, infraction proceedings and fines. There is a promise in the plan on consultation and on an independent body that will hold government accountable. We must look closely at how independent that body is and what sanctions it will have. Will the Minister tell the House whether the new statutory body will have, for example, the power to bring a legal challenge to the Government if they fail to meet the objectives of the 25-year plan?

Overall, therefore, the 25-year plan is a “thank you, but” job. There are lots of initiatives; it needs legislative and policy underpinning; there is an excellent direction of travel; but it now needs clear, measurable objectives that are based in statute, and better metrics—and it needs to report to the public and Parliament year on year. Can the Minister tell us how and when these will be put in place? I will end by saying, “Thank you, but”.

4.16 pm

**Baroness Featherstone (LD):** My Lords, “thank you, but” is an excellent description of this debate.

Some in your Lordships’ House may remember a very old radio programme called “Beyond Our Ken”, which went on to become “Round the Horne”. One of the characters was named Fallowfield and his response to any question was, “Well, I think the answer lies in the soil”. He was right—who knew? The bulk of my speech today addresses that issue.

Last year, my team and I did a lot of work on agriculture and land use change and it is all published in a report we commissioned entitled *A Vision for Britain: Clean, Green and Carbon Free*. It is well documented that the Government will miss their carbon reduction targets for the 4th and 5th carbon budgets. The UK will need to find significant reductions in a range of different and complex sources of greenhouse gases arising from our land use and our agriculture, because agriculture accounts for around 10% of UK greenhouse gas emissions. We will have to take drastic action to ensure that negative emissions from the United Kingdom’s land use, land use change and forestry includes addressing our degrading peatlands and supporting the use of sustainably sourced timber in construction, together with additional carbon removal through soil management, afforestation or alternatives.

First, on peatlands, as far as I am aware, the Government have never counted the emissions from our degrading peatlands as part of our emissions totals. That underestimates our carbon emissions, so the actual situation is worse than it seems. It is clear that we need not only to preserve our existing carbon sinks but to significantly increase them. I am pleased that the Government clearly recognise in the plan the need to address the peatland issue. The report includes this example:

“Over the last 200 years, we have lost 84% of our fertile peat topsoil in East Anglia. The fens there could lose the remainder in just 30-60 years”.

That is shocking. We will therefore have to cut emissions from peatland by 16 metric tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent by restoring that peatland, especially in upland areas. Can the Minister say whether the actions proposed in the report will deliver the 14% reduction in emissions that the climate change committee says is necessary? I do not think they will. Of course, attention to restoring our peatlands holds huge potential not only for reducing emissions but for reducing flood risk and supporting biodiversity.

In terms of improving our approach to soil management, the Government state that,

“by 2030 we want all of England’s soils to be managed sustainably”. If we read the highlighted actions in the plan, we find that:

“Defra will invest at least £200,000 to help develop soil health metrics and test them on farms across the country”,

and,

“investigate the potential for research and monitoring to give us a clearer picture of how soil health supports our wider environment”.

That is obviously to be welcomed but I suggest that it is small stuff and should be going hand in hand with action. We know enough already to take action. Why

can we not follow France's lead in promoting the "4 per 1,000" soil initiative to increase the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> captured by four grams per kilo? Of course, we also need to manage the reduction of fossil fuel use in the sector and improve land management practices for natural carbon sequestration with a better application of manure and fertiliser. I suggest that addressing soil compaction should be a priority for the Government.

As was said by the noble Baroness, Lady Young, we need an even more ambitious programme of afforestation in order to meet carbon removal associated with the Committee on Climate Change max scenario, which it estimates will require 30,000 hectares of additional woodland coverage in the UK each year by 2050. I go for the max scenario because we are not reducing our emissions adequately to get anywhere near the 1.5 degree limit that we have signed up for in the Paris Agreement. To put it in context, that commitment to 30,000 hectares a year is around half a New Forest. The government plan is to plant 180,000 hectares by the end of 2042, which is simply nowhere near enough.

We also need to work with industry and forestry sectors to support the increased use of sustainably sourced wood in construction, which delivers negative emissions, rather than the use of carbon-intensive materials such as concrete. The ability of wood used in buildings to capture carbon from the atmosphere and store it for long periods is a huge opportunity that we should not ignore. We also need a recognition that alternatives to woody biomass, such as organic waste, agricultural residues, algae and domestic energy crops, could play an important role and contribute to landfill reduction strategies.

In the given time, I have been able to address only one section of this very large plan but I was hoping for a really bold, radical plan that defined new commitments, enhanced old commitments and laid down clear objectives and metrics that would effect measurable and reportable results. We need new environmental legislation and the plan should be placed on a statutory footing. ClientEarth has said that the plan is "full of empty promises", and Wildlife and Countryside Link says that words must be backed up with action. I do not want to be unkind to the Government—I think that they are trying—but I hope that they understand the message that warm words will not be enough. In responding to the debate, perhaps the Minister will lay out a clear road map for how this plan will be delivered and the measurables for the journey, and say what reporting will be made to Parliament. If we are to have confidence in the plan, what legal framework will the Government put in place to ensure delivery?

Therefore, although I welcome the 25-year environmental plan, I feel that the proposed actions in the report are not strong enough, urgent enough or extensive enough. I encourage the Government to go much further and much faster.

4.23 pm

**Lord Cameron of Dillington (CB):** My Lords, I declare interests as a farmer and landowner, as chair at the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology and as a trustee at Rothamsted Research.

I have a lot of good things to say about this plan. It is ambitious and sets out precisely what we ought to be doing in many different fields. However, something about it provoked a memory for me of the tombs of the nobles at Luxor, dating from 4,500 years ago. The pictorial stories set out how those ancient Egyptian nobles aspired to live their lives—something which, from all accounts, they singularly failed to achieve. I hope we will not be looking back, in a mere 25 years' time, wondering why we failed to live up to our expectations. Certainly, our past record does not inspire much confidence, with an ongoing decline in biodiversity and four-fifths of our chalk streams still not classed as fully functioning ecosystems. Furthermore, I worry that this plan is closely linked to the current ministerial team at Defra.

In my first draft of this speech I touched on a series of mild changes that I might have made to the plan, but instead I would now like to focus solely on its long-term execution, and pick up the last words of the noble Baroness, Lady Featherstone. How can we best ensure that this excellent plan will work? Twenty-five years is a mere blip in environmental terms, but it is a very long time in politics. Can we get all political parties and all regions signed up for 25 years? Unlikely, I would have thought. Will even all future Secretaries of State sign up? The way things go, over 25 years that could be up to 12 different people.

There is no doubt in my mind that, when it reaches its final post-consultative state, the key principles of the environmental plan—its prime targets and commitments—must be embodied in primary legislation. It should be like the Climate Change Act 2008, where a framework and targets were set and a body was established by Parliament to report to Parliament. The body should be funded by several departments, because I am always worried about the piper being paid by only one sponsor. The plan already involves several departments—the MHCLG, the Department of Health and Social Care, the Department for Education, the Department for Transport and even DfID—so that should not be difficult. I admit that more legislation for Defra during the Brexit period might be a challenge, but an environmental protection Bill is promised, and perhaps the proposed environmental protection agency could be the relevant body.

Is not the quality of life aspired to by this plan even more important to the next generation than, say, the effects of climate change? Perhaps even the noble Lord, Lord Deben, could agree that they are inextricably linked. Is not this plan even more important to our young voters than possibly some of the best-laid economic plans, which no one really believes in? Is this plan not exactly what we need to set out on our own after Brexit, with a high-quality agenda? It is probably not as important to the young as housing, but I bet it comes a pretty close second. For anyone to believe in the plan, it has to be established for the long term by statute and be continually monitored independently. We are told that the young are disillusioned by politicians, because the latter come and go without making any real difference. Let us surprise them, and fix this plan, in whatever final form it takes, firmly in the psyche of our nation.

[LORD CAMERON OF DILLINGTON]

As the noble Lord, Lord Gardiner, said, to make the plan really work we need to get most of the people in the UK to sign up to it in their personal lives. We are the environment. We affect it by the way we live and work, and the way that we travel between the two. You can legally enforce certain aspects of the plan and, I hope, the government responsibilities, but unless we all adopt it in our hearts it could be 150 pages of wasted words.

If I have a criticism of the plan as it stands, it is that not enough thought has been given to selling the ideas by appealing to the social and economic aspirations, as well as the environmental aspirations, of people at large. It is the three-legged stool of sustainable development. We need a marketing programme over many years, because we have to inspire people for them to make a difference. There are good proposals to involve urban communities and schools, but it is a pity that we do not yet have the Agriculture Bill to see how we will inspire the land-managing community. We all know that environmental success and the growth of biodiversity will not happen by itself. Farmers, landowners and even householders must be encouraged, not regulated, to positively foster an enhanced natural world—an enhancement that will improve the lives of everyone, socially, economically and, of course, environmentally.

I am coming to the end of my time, so I finish by drawing the attention of the House to the fact that nearly 30 years ago, when I was at the CLA, we tried to promote the case for environmental land management services, as mentioned in the plan. I spent a lot of happy time trying to ingrain the concept of ELMS—as we called them—into the minds of departments, their Ministers and even local authorities. Having read this plan, I must say it was immensely gratifying to see that, after all this time, their day appears to have finally come.

4.29 pm

**The Lord Bishop of Salisbury:** My Lords, I very much welcome this ambitious and attractive plan, which is good for the environment, the economy and quality of life. The Lords spiritual have a strong interest in the environment out of a concern for the care of God's creation as well as the opportunity stated in the Natural Capital Committee's advice to Government in September 2017 as part of the preparation for this plan. It said:

"The Plan is a huge economic and social opportunity that can genuinely transform the natural environment, support the growth of the economy, allow citizens to reconnect with the health, wellbeing, spiritual and educational benefits of interacting with nature, and gift our children a richer, better and more resilient natural inheritance. With a natural capital approach, the environment should no longer be regarded as an obstacle to development; rather, a healthy environment is the basis of sustainable economic growth".

My former colleague and now near neighbour, the noble and right reverend Lord, Lord Chartres, reminded us regularly in the diocese of London that the economy is a wholly owned subsidiary of the environment. There is a spirituality about this as well as a technical challenge.

*A Green Future* is a significant change of mindset and very much to be welcomed. The plan will be the basis for holding Her Majesty's Government to account. Having set the direction, there now needs to be considerable work to translate ambition into action. Out of 44 success criteria in the plan, only 11 are what could be called smart objectives. As currently set out, these success criteria go only a small way to explain how the plan's actions will serve to meet the goals. For example, what does,

"Achieving zero avoidable plastic waste by the end of 2042", mean? What is avoidable plastic waste? Compare that with the European Union's less ambitious but much more specific policy announced just a few days after the publication of *A Green Future* that,

"all plastic packaging ... will be recyclable by 2030".

To aid this increase in recycling rates, the European Commission will provide €100 million of finance to develop smarter and more recyclable plastics. How much finance will Her Majesty's Government commit to making these developments happen?

The ambition in relation to plastics is laudable, but there needs to be more to boost our stalled recycling rates. In 2015, they fell for the first time in more than a decade. There is a proposal to extend the 5p plastic bag charge, but nothing about charging for disposable coffee cups, of which only one in 400 is recycled. The plans do not include a bottle collection scheme. Every day, 38.5 million plastic bottles and 20 million aluminium cans are sold across the UK. Evidence from other countries such as the US, Norway and Germany shows that introducing a simple deposit on plastic bottles and cans can raise collection rates above 90% and reduce litter, so it is disappointing that the plan does not follow the recommendations of the Environmental Audit Committee for a legislated deposit returns scheme for plastic drinks bottles. The Scottish Government committed to that at the end of last year. Will this be revisited by Her Majesty's Government?

The House will welcome the Government's intention to update the plan at least every five years, develop a set of indicators on metrics to monitor progress by the end of 2018 and report annually to Parliament.

Currently, as has already been pointed out, the EU has the power to fine the UK for breaches of environmental standards. It is not yet clear whether the proposed UK environmental watchdog will have the same power, so I have sympathy with the noble Lord, Lord Cameron of Dillington, and those who have suggested that there needs to be an environment Act to do for the restoration of nature what the Climate Change Act is doing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; that is, by creating stronger accountability for such an important matter.

Three further things worth commenting on are: timing, because this is urgent; policy integration, because we need joined-up thinking and action; and developing an international approach, because environmental matters do not keep national boundaries. They are going to need much stronger handling than is suggested in the report. For example, the Paris Agreement on climate change recognises the urgency of the task. We are still a long way from agreements that will meet the two degrees Celsius target, yet we know that to be effective,

change needs to be front-loaded. Christian Aid and CAFOD, the British churches' aid agencies, have identified that the UK Government's overall spending in developing countries continues to be more on fossil fuels than renewable energy. As was noted in the recent debate about green finance, there is an urgent need to scale up financing in support of a big shift to renewable energy both in public finance and private finance.

In housing, there is a laudable ambition to build many new homes. For them to be energy efficient with low or zero-carbon emissions, that will not be achieved by deregulation. Specific targets need to be set for different parts of the plan which can identify quick wins and recognise the most urgent actions so that we develop changed actions and new habits capable of furthering this admirable plan.

4.36 pm

**Baroness Byford (Con):** My Lords, I begin by declaring my farming and other interests as listed in the register. The 25-year environment plan is long awaited and I for one am very glad that the farming and environment plans have been merged into one document. I am grateful to the Minister for introducing this debate. As he will be aware, some 70% of our land is farmed; crops, livestock, forestry and conservation are all interlinked in good farming practices. The food industry that they supply is worth more than £100 billion a year, and farmers must look to making profits if the wider aspirations of this plan are to be achieved.

There is insufficient time to cover all the topics, so I will concentrate on three chapters in the report: namely, chapter 1, on using and managing land sustainably; chapter 3, on participation and improving health and well-being; and chapter 4, on the reduction of pollution and waste.

I begin at page 32 of the report. This section highlights the need to improve our soil, air and water—in other words, the earth's natural resources—by improving land management, helping biodiversity and delivering new environmental land schemes. I am sure that the Minister will recognise that a one-size-fits-all approach will not suit all types of land or farming methods and that the flexibility in these schemes that is referred to in the plan is essential. I turn to page 37 which states:

“We will continue to invest in technical advice to support farmers and land managers in delivering the outcomes and to help them to work together”.

The Minister will be aware of the coming together of various farmers to create farmer clusters which have been growing in number since they were started back in 2008. Their valuable work together has created corridors of adjoining land that has boosted conservation and wildlife. These are great success stories which encourage profitable farming and conservation to go hand in hand. It is a good example of what can be achieved and I welcome the Government's announcement of an agriculture command paper which will involve wide consultation with farmers and stakeholders.

I turn to chapter 3, “Connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing”—something which is precious to us all. I welcome this chapter, which considers ways to encourage children to be close to nature. Many schools give their students the opportunity to visit farms to observe and, in some

cases, handle livestock and have the joy of being outside in the rural countryside. I place on record my gratefulness to FACE for its work in schools and to LEAF for promoting Open Farm Sunday, which gives families a chance to visit farms and learn about food production. I mention in passing the importance of care farming projects, which help those who are individually disadvantaged.

Sadly, too many people have never experienced the peace that can be found in the countryside. This week is homeless week, and only yesterday at Leicester Cathedral the reverend Helen Hayes, a pioneer priest among the homeless, spoke of the difference that a visit to the countryside can make. She and others took a very small group of disadvantaged people, some homeless, who were given the opportunity of a three-day break in Derbyshire. When they initially met them, the people they were taking had their heads down and their hoodies up. Their self-worth was at rock bottom. But, as the days went on, they were transformed by their visit, and at the end they were standing tall and appreciating the countryside. I am glad that this 25-year plan includes a section on well-being, because it is hugely important. Doing more to help people who have hit difficult times will be worth while.

Finally, I turn to chapter 4, on the reduction of pollution and waste. Over the past years, I have regularly asked questions on fly-tipping. Waste dumped on public land is cleared by the local council at public cost. When it is dumped on private land, the owner has to foot the bill. The problem is becoming worse. Councils use CCTV in areas where they know that there is regular activity, but criminals in rural areas arrive early or late, at dusk or in the dark, using vehicles carrying only a very small number plate for identification. Sometimes I wonder whether we should not have to have that sort of identification in a much bigger state so that it can be seen even in those dark times.

I move now to plastics, which are used by manufacturers to change the image, shape or weight of their products. When the party opposite legislated to reduce the packaging weight, pet food manufacturers moved away from tins, which were universally recycled, and introduced pouches, which have to go to landfill. Much more work needs to be done to ensure that manufacturers use products that can be recycled—I so agree with the right reverend Prelate. I understand that recycling systems that use infra-red to separate plastic from the rest of the rubbish have to send all the black plastic to landfill. Could the Minister tell us whether research is being undertaken in this area?

As others have suggested, if this 25-year environment plan is to succeed it must set challenging but realistic targets. Progress must be monitored and revised regularly. I understand that a five-year review is planned. The Government have also proposed to set up an independent statutory body to oversee that plan to assess progress in the environment and conservation sectors. But we should not be afraid to have flexibility with any scheme, because over the years new and exciting things will be discovered about ways we can do things better.

I welcome the opportunity to take part in this debate. The plan challenges each and every one of us to think about the way we live and use natural resources. I wish it and the Minister every success.

4.45 pm

**Baroness Scott of Needham Market (LD):** I start by offering a welcome to this 25-year plan for the environment, even though it is by no means perfect and has been justifiably criticised as heavy on aspiration and light on detail. The plan outlines some progress that has been made: it highlights significant improvements in water quality made in recent decades. Most of us in this House are old enough to remember that we were once “the dirty man of Europe”; bathers waded through raw sewage on their trips to the seaside. So what does success look like? Last May the European Environment Agency reported that in 2016 96% of Europe’s beaches met the basic standards and 85% met the most stringent requirements. How do you achieve such success and what can we learn from it?

It started with campaign groups making a fuss and raising awareness among the general public, leading to political pressure. The response to that was legislation that included binding targets, an enforcement regime and penalties. This changed behaviour. Pressure groups continue to act to highlight shortcomings and the whole process becomes iterative. Of course, because water quality is a cross-border issue, EU legislation such as the bathing water directive and the water framework directive were the legislative underpinning. It seems to me that campaigning groups are fundamental to holding Governments’ feet to the fire. In recent years changes to charity law have been made regarding what the Government describe as “lobbying” but is in fact the rightful campaigning role of this sector. The rules have been described as having “a chilling effect” on charities’ ability to get their concerns across, especially during election time. These groups must be able to tell truth to power.

The plan recognises that many of the proposals will need to be put on a statutory footing. However, there is already a huge body of existing EU legislation which does much of this work: around 80% of the UK’s environmental law comes from the European Union. A number of environmental organisations have expressed the view that the provisions in the withdrawal Bill simply do not provide sufficient safeguards, while constitutional experts query the legal status of retained EU law: we will continue that debate tomorrow. Many of the objectives in the plan are weak, they lack statutory force and targets remain aspirational. The Government have already missed non-binding targets for halting biodiversity decline, phasing out horticultural peat, achieving good ecological status for water and others. Some objectives are unambitious. For example, the target for water quality does not set a date for achieving good ecological condition, unlike the water framework directive, which does. Experience of climate change legislation shows that targets should include realistic delivery dates, with milestones for achieving them.

As we have heard, the plan commits to an independent environmental watchdog as a replacement for enforcement at EU level. For such a body to be effective, it must be properly resourced. We are currently seeing serious funding issues with other statutory regulators, such as the Charity Commission, Natural England and the Marine Management Organisation. This has to be a concern. Such a body must have an effective complaints mechanism and access to remedies for the whole of

civil society, and should definitely be accountable to Parliament, not to government. As the Minister emphasised, cross-border working is essential to delivering the plan. A new post-Brexit framework for international co-operation must be a priority. The Defra website names 40 international agreements on environmental matters to which the UK is a signatory. Can the Minister say how many of these we are signed up to as a consequence of EU membership and how many in our own right? Are there any we would not seek to rejoin? I am sure that the House would like an assurance that the fact that many of these agreements are justiciable in international courts will not be a bar to our continued membership.

The 25-year plan must address the UK’s impact on nature overseas. We are dependent on natural resources embedded in our imports: 70% of the water consumed here comes from imports, as does about one-third of biomass. Is the Minister able to give an assurance about the important role played by European funded research projects? Can he say that every effort will be made to see that the UK remains engaged in the same way that other non-EU member states, such as Norway, currently do? This issue was highlighted in the EU Select Committee report into regional co-operation in 2015. We noted then that the economic and environmental importance of shelf seas, such as the North Sea, is four times higher than the open ocean. We found that a lot of data is collected but not widely shared or fully utilised. However, one mechanism that exists for doing this is the European Marine Observation and Data Network, so can the Minister say whether we will continue to participate in its projects? In a similar vein, the RSPB has highlighted the value of European funding for environmental projects such as LIFE and BEST, not just here in the UK but in the British Overseas Territories. Is the Minister able to tell the House the current thinking on projects such as these?

Last summer I fulfilled a long-held dream to visit Svalbard and came away with both wonderful memories and serious concerns about the rapid environmental changes which were evident even to a visitor such as me. We were given strict instructions to leave nothing behind and take nothing away. The one exception to that rule was litter, which we were encouraged to collect and take back to the ship. Among my stash, there in the high Arctic, just a few hundred miles from the North Pole, I found, washed clean by the ocean’s currents, a polystyrene burger box. It is a reminder that pollution and environmental problems know no boundaries and that we can tackle them only if we work together.

4.50 pm

**Lord Krebs (CB):** My Lords, I declare my interests as a member of the advisory board of the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit, I work for the Wellcome Trust on its programme on environment and health, and I am a former member of the Committee on Climate Change. I welcome this long-awaited 25-year plan. It has not been quite 25 years in the making but it has been quite a long time. I congratulate the Government on their breadth of ambition and their long-term view.

As the plan records, some aspects of our environment, such as our beaches and some of our water bodies, have improved in recent decades. As has already been said, this is in large part a result of EU legislation. Nevertheless, there is a lot to be done. Only one-fifth of English water bodies are in good condition and only one-third of our sites of special scientific interest are in favourable ecological condition, and this proportion is declining. Only 4% of upland peat is in favourable ecological condition.

In relation to biodiversity, the plan reports some success stories on page 21. Indeed, there are some success stories, in part due to the excellent work of organisations such as the RSPB, the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, and the Wildlife Trusts. But these are still the exception rather than the rule. The RSPB's *State of Nature 2016* report states that 56% of the 8,000 species recorded have declined in the past few decades and more than one in 10 is in danger of extinction. Although many of the steepest declines occurred in the late 20th century, the trends have, with rather few exceptions, not stopped or been reversed. Shockingly, the report concludes that the UK ranks 189th of countries in the world for the preservation of its biodiversity. This is in spite of the fact that previous Governments have had targets for reducing or reversing wildlife declines.

So will it be different this time? At the moment we cannot tell, but if noble Lords look at the 25-year plan they will see that the actions to tackle biodiversity and habitat loss include “learn lessons”, “consider”, “investigate” and “evaluate”, none of which sounds too promising. But, as has already been mentioned, the plan also states that there will be a set of metrics by which progress in all areas can be measured. Can the Minister confirm that these metrics will be outcome-focused and quantifiable, with timescales and clearly identified owners?

Equally important is the question of who will establish and report on the metrics. The plan says:

“We will develop a set of metrics ... We will report on progress annually”.

It is really important to understand who “we” is. I hope it is not the Government measuring and reporting on their own progress. As other noble Lords have already said, it would be far better to have a fully independent statutory body, analogous to the Committee on Climate Change, reporting to Parliament on progress in implementing the plan. Does the Minister agree that the public, Parliament and environmental groups would have more confidence in the implementation of the plan if there were an independent body, set up under a new environment Act, charged with reporting to Parliament on progress?

Although the plan is published by Defra, it will require commitment from across government and many other bodies to implement it. I shall take two examples from across government. Page 35 states that all newbuilds will be climate resilient and energy efficient yet, in the Housing and Planning Act 2016, the Government refused to incorporate measures such as zero-carbon homes and sustainable urban drainage systems that would help to guarantee that. Will the Minister reassure us that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is now fully committed to those requirements?

My other example relates to chapter 3, which correctly identifies the link between environmental and human health, but in only a very limited way. Is the Department of Health and Social Care fully signed up to the plan? I offer the advice of the Wellcome Trust, which has a major research programme on environment and health, if the Minister and his officials would like to take it up.

Finally, I turn to scientific evidence. Plans to enhance the environment should be based on the best available science. A recent review by the University of Cambridge showed that many of the current agri-environment schemes have little evidence to show that they work, and that other measures would be more effective in protecting and enhancing biodiversity. The same report concludes that the approximately £1 million spent in the UK on bat gantries, meant to protect bats from flying into traffic, has been a waste of money because they do not work. In this crowded and heavily exploited island, combining the protection of nature with maintaining livelihoods is a delicate balancing act, and good science is needed to ensure that we achieve the right balance. Research by the Natural Environment Research Council on shell-fisheries and shore-birds has shown how the interests of the shell-fish industry and of conservation can be satisfied if there is proper research to underpin decision-making. Can the Minister assure us that the implementation of the plan will be based on scientific evidence and that Government are prepared to invest in the necessary research to ensure that all actions, whoever carries them out, bring real benefits to our environment?

4.57 pm

**The Earl of Selborne (Con):** My Lords, I refer to my farming and environmental interests set out in the register. Like other speakers, I welcome this 25-year plan but, like the noble Lord, Lord Cameron, I speculate about whether we can be confident of a successful outcome in 25 years' time.

I want to limit my remarks to the concept of natural capital accounting, which is central to this plan. We have to recognise that to deliver on protecting our natural capital and enhancing our ecosystems, we must first have an agreed understanding in the public and private sectors of just what we mean by natural capital, how we monitor it and how one restates one's accounts to take it into account. We need agreement on how national, regional and local priorities, however local, for restoring and enhancing ecosystem services can be determined. They have to conform clearly to the overall strategy, as set out in this paper. There also has to be recognition that no implementation plan can succeed unless there is widespread ownership of the plan involving the managers of the natural resource in question as well as others with an interest in the outcome.

The concept of developing policy objectives informed by natural capital got a major boost under the last Labour Government when they commissioned the United Kingdom national ecosystem assessment. It was published at the beginning of the coalition Government in 2011. It provided a comprehensive overview of the state of the natural environment in this country and offered a new way of estimating our national wealth. The underestimation of the value of

[THE EARL OF SELBORNE]

natural processes such as water filtration or air purification can be appreciated if you try to calculate the cost of providing these ecosystem services would by industrial means.

Since that report, there have been many helpful studies on how we should take account of the full value of ecosystem services in our decision-making, not least from the Natural Capital Committee. But as the committee itself stated in its advice to the Government on the draft 25-year plan last September, as already mentioned,

“there are significant gaps in current knowledge and a lack of joined up approaches to data collection, measurement and monitoring of the UK’s natural assets ... many different agencies are responsible for the collection of data (e.g. the Forestry Commission, Environment Agency, Met Office, Natural England, and Joint Nature Conservation Commission). This leads to both gaps and duplication in the data collected and inconsistencies in approaches to analysis”.

If the 25-year plan is to benefit from using natural capital accounting and monitoring, there simply must be a concerted attempt by Defra to align all these. Defra’s job here is to knock heads together.

If the plan is to deliver in 25 years’ time, there needs to be a robust evidence base, as has just been stated. We are still awaiting definitive guidance from the Office for National Statistics on the development of national natural capital accounts, without which you cannot measure overall progress on natural capital improvement. Much of our natural capital is, inevitably, owned and managed by the private sector, so the plan will need to mobilise sustained private sector initiatives.

We have already heard much about agriculture—not surprisingly as it is the sector that manages 70% of our land, and so is clearly a highly important industry in delivery of the plan. But even the largest farms will invariably benefit from following the guidance of the Lawton report of 2010, which suggested that working in larger blocks, with neighbours, to deliver enhanced ecosystem services at a parish or landscape scale is going to be much more effective. Providing bigger, better and more joined-up habitats will deliver better results for biodiversity enhancement. As the water companies and farmers have demonstrated, as referred to in the report, you simply cannot contemplate flood control and water purification without operating at this scale and larger.

The recent development of farm clusters, a number of which have now been set up, has the great virtue of being run by farmers or land managers. The members know what it is feasible to deliver in terms of environmental enhancement and, with suitable encouragement, can select and deliver agreed local improvements to ecosystem services. I say “agreed”, because it is no good the farmers just charging off and saying, “This is what we want to deliver”. One should say in parenthesis that delivering food or timber is an ecosystem service and very desirable, but clearly we want to move on to other services.

Getting a considerable number of land managers to consult their neighbours and the relevant agencies, and to agree among themselves what programmes can be delivered, will take a bit of organising. In other words, a part-time, paid convenor is required for each

cluster. Therefore, I strongly recommend to Defra that the funding of such convenors would prove a highly effective way of ensuring delivery of many of the land-based objectives in its 25-year plan.

5.04 pm

**Lord Hunt of Chesterton (Lab):** My Lords, I declare my interests as a professor at UCL; president of ACOPS, an NGO that reviews the marine rubbish around our shores; and director of an environmental consulting company.

This report is a welcome return to strategic UK and international planning for the UK environment; indeed, that is mentioned by the Prime Minister in her foreword to this document. This restores the mistakes made by the coalition Government, who in 2011 eliminated the widely admired Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution and the UK sustainability development strategy, which was established by John Major after the Rio Earth Summit. Both were effective in co-ordination so the new development is welcome. However, all parties have continued with the co-ordination of climate change and—it is important to relate—environmental policies for people, especially those in exposed areas in the UK and globally. I am familiar with North Devon, where several villages in steep valleys were flooded last week and were even on the nine o’clock news.

The main conclusion of environmental science, practice and policy is that co-ordination is essential. That also means international co-ordination, which has to go beyond government agencies and departments to regional, international and global bodies. For many experts and civil servants, the implementation of international environmental co-ordination has been frustratingly slow but it has happened and, if politicians and parliaments are determined and support it, will continue to. For example, as I saw when I represented the UK at the World Meteorological Organization, there was greater co-ordination of meteorological, hydrological and oceanographic data and this had led to the improved prediction of weather and flooding extremes and the consequences for food, forestation and desertification. There are also the very important environmental changes in the Arctic, which will have a significant impact in the UK in the next 25 years, as the House of Lords Select Committee discussed.

It is important to consider the changes that there are going to be in clean energy. Green energy has been an important development in the last 25 years, but in future we are going to see the use of not only solar and wind but also the less visible but important power of small-scale nuclear fission, which has been much discussed in the press. There is also the likelihood in the next 25 years of modular nuclear fusion, which is being developed in the UK by the private sector and the Government. It will not be necessary to wait until 2040 for the large international fusion system; I believe this important development will happen long before that, in the next five to 10 years.

With this cleaner energy, we may well have a future in which vehicles are primarily electrically driven. As Rolls-Royce explained in a seminar last week, we may also have electrically driven short-range aeroplanes. Another feature of clean energy supplies will be the pumping and desalination of water, which enables the

billions of people still suffering from water shortages and waterborne diseases to get water, as was debated last week here in the Lords. Over the next 25 years the Government should also consider the decades after that, when the UK will finally have to begin to deal with its stored nuclear radioactive waste. It may be in geological reserves or, as Euratom has suggested, it could be transformed and made safe by alternative isotopes.

Another important feature of the environment is the urban environment, which other noble Lords have not emphasised. Here I emphasise a considerable UK success, with support from all the parties: the restoration of the environment in the east end of London—the Olympic legacy, as it is called. No other country has been as successful as this in developing an Olympic Games, and now we see remarkable green developments in the environment and water supplies there, with new cultural and educational areas. Although that is a great plus for the UK, and there are other important port cities such as Liverpool, many people have commented to me that in many rural areas we see considerable poverty and environmental and social deprivation. The standards in communities have gone backwards. The very successful Sure Start programme introduced by the Labour Government was dropped in 2010-11 by the coalition Government, and the consequences for some of those areas is very serious. There seems to be no acknowledgement by the Government of the damage. What do they propose for those communities in the next 25 years?

Finally, one feature of the environment which has not been mentioned is the connection of industrial, environmental and cultural development which one sees in many other European countries. We have our great pop festivals here and there, but many beautiful areas of Britain should have much greater cultural investment, and that should be an important part of the environment looking to the future.

5.10 pm

**Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer (LD):** My Lords, I declare my interests as in the register. Today, I mostly want to talk about biodiversity and measuring improvement. Of course, the aims in the plan are laudable, but how will we know that the environment is in a better state? Sure, we can measure that water is cleaner or that the air has fewer pollutants in it, and we can see some things, such as those which the author Michael McCarthy describes in his book, *The Moth Snowstorm*. I am sure that many of your Lordships will remember when moths used to,

“pack a car’s headlight beams like snowflakes in a blizzard”, or the insects that used to stick to the windscreen. There was just so much insect life. Now, those moths have, by and large, gone.

Perhaps that tells us as much as a scientific calculation, but the environment plan needs to measure whether the whole ecosystem is improving. Currently, the lack of definition of ecosystem health undermines the plan’s entire approach to biodiversity. Will the return of a few iconic species be measured as success, even though many other species become extinct? Take the plan’s proposed increase in wildflower meadows. It is of course a good aim in itself, because a wildflower

meadow is a lovely thing to behold, but it should be about far more than its flowers. It should support colonies of insects. Butterflies, bees and, in turn, insect-eating birds, should do well and find enough food to feed their young. In damper areas, frogs would find shelter. The meadow is cut later for hay when the seeds have mostly set and, in the meantime, hares can make their forms in the long grass for themselves and their leverets.

The picture I am painting is of a whole ecosystem, but what if the new wildflower meadows have no hedges where birds can nest? What if the meadow is next door to arable fields where there is intensive use of slug pellets? Then the frogs, thrushes and so on are likely to die of metaldehyde poisoning.

As I search the plan for definition, I found that it is only marine areas that benefit from the government ambition to be ecologically coherent. Those words are very important. I hope that the Government will develop an ambition for the terrestrial places, too, to be ecologically coherent.

The environment plan has a nod to Lawton and the need to create landscape-scale areas and wildlife corridors. It talks of the nature recovery network, and I was very excited about that. Like the noble Lord, Lord Krebs, I turned anxiously to the actions listed on page 59 that would enable that to happen. As he found, they are “considering”, another “considering” and then “evaluating”. In my book, those are just thoughts about actions.

What about measuring the health of ecosystems or, as the report calls it, metrics, which is rather a dry word for its job of creating a picture of ecosystem health? In its current form, the plan will be like a 500-piece jigsaw with 250 pieces missing. The plan itself recognises this, because on page 130, it states that the Government need “better measures”. The metrics need to consider, for example, the potential value of the site, including the role that it can play in connecting habitats. Currently, the metric looks only at habitats in development sites and, strangely, does not account for the species present. The inclusion of the species metrics will be essential to the delivery of biodiversity net gain. For biodiversity net gain to be effective, it should be mandatory for all developments, which I believe is not the case currently. As other noble Lords have identified, there are no milestones for the delivery of long-term targets. This is very much a work in progress, and there is a long way to go.

I was surprised at the very strong emphasis on the reintroduction of native species. Is that really the most productive use of limited resources and effort? Why not try first to preserve what we currently have but which is really threatened, such as the curlew, the small tortoiseshell butterfly, the natterjack toad or even the hedgehog? The environment plan is very light on whether, in future, farming policy will be based on a conversation with nature or just diminishing somewhat the battle against it. I was heartened that the Minister talked about working with nature because too often there is a mistaken thought that it is a choice between agricultural productivity and an agro-ecological approach.

[BARONESS MILLER OF CHILTHORNE DOMER]

There is a very interesting quote from John Cherry, the farmer who started the organisation Groundswell. He said:

“It has been calculated the ‘good’ bugs outnumber the ‘bad’ bugs by a factor of 1,700:1. So the chances are collateral damage by insecticides will take out a lot of the guys looking after our wheat and controlling potential pests. Many farmers now find they are routinely applying slug pellets. Could it be they would be better off allowing ground beetles to control them? It may be coincidence, but on our farm we have found since we stopped using insecticides on wheat, our need to pellet for slugs has all but disappeared”.

That is the sort of approach that we need to see in this plan.

In my last few moments, I shall just mention a few of the things that I welcome, such as the tree health resilience plan and, maybe, the integrated pest management. I do not understand quite what the Government mean by,

“at the heart of a holistic approach”.

I hope that it means what I think it means. I welcome the national parks and AONB proposals. The Government obviously feel that they are on more solid ground there than with land with no particular designation. I particularly welcome connecting people with the environment. The Government should recognise all the work done by people like the RHS, delivering horticultural learning into schools.

I welcome the statement on illegal wildlife trade. Does that mean that the Government are committing to continue to fund and, one hopes, expand the wildlife crime unit, which is of global importance but is always having to fight for its financial future? Finally, I welcome the mention of international work on migratory species in our overseas territories. I hope that we continue to contribute to scientific work globally.

5.18 pm

**The Earl of Caithness (Con):** My Lords, I give a very warm welcome to this plan, prepared by my noble friend and others. It outlines great aspirations with which it is hard to disagree and provides a good template for the future. It is welcome news that it has been welcomed by some of the more sensible environmental groups, which are acting more in concert with the farmers than as political lobbyists, as in the past. That is a welcome move.

To an extent, we have already travelled down some of the road of the improving natural environment. I give as an example Sir John Lawton’s report in 2010, *Making Space for Nature*. For many years, Governments of all persuasions have said that they wish to improve the environment and biodiversity, but each year that has got worse.

So why could it be different this time? There are a number of reasons. First, we are going to leave the EU and the common agricultural policy, and that gives a huge opportunity. There is also a change of mood of appreciation of the environment. Despite that, an overwhelming majority of people now live in urban areas. In the UK, nine out of 10 people must go back at least five generations before they find an ancestor who worked on the land. It is important to work not only with those who live on the land, like the farmers, but with everybody involved who wants to improve

nature. Working with farmers is easier now, because they are going to be able to do what they so often want to do—improve the environment. Organisations such as the Nature Friendly Farming Network are already acting in that way.

We also need to connect with people and the environment, as Chapter 3 outlined well. The noble Lord, Lord Cameron of Dillington, and my noble friend Lady Byford majored on this. However, Defra has a difficult task ahead. It has to reduce its budget by £147 million and, as at 30 November, had to recruit for 400 or so full-time posts. How is that going? Perhaps some of those posts could be apportioned to work on replying to debates in this House. I have received no replies to the questions I asked in my debate on 7 December.

I agree with what my noble friend Lord Selborne said about natural capital, but that is only one tool in the box. It must not be the only one which the Secretary of State uses to improve our natural environment. Like the noble Baroness, Lady Miller, I too want to talk about biodiversity. Charlie Pye-Smith, in his excellent book, *The Facts of Rural Life* wrote that Nick Fox, another scientist, farmer and conservationist, told him:

“Conservation should be about maintaining high levels of biodiversity, which is the sign of a healthy habitat. Biodiversity is not just about species diversity, but the structural diversity of habitats and the range of trophic levels. It’s not about encouraging the biggest population of any one species, but ensuring that each is in balance with the habitat and the resources”.

That is one of the best descriptions I have read: it should be taken as the Government’s aim.

This plan has shied away from discussing tough issues such as wildlife management, and these have to be confronted. We know that we need good habitat and sufficient food supplies all year round but we must also accept the truth—uncomfortable for some—of predator and species control. There is a little objection to the culling of deer in Richmond Park that is happening now. Transpose the lack of that control to Dartmoor, for example, and one finds a biological desert compared to some well-managed grouse moors. I hope the Government will make species predator control part of any agreement involving wildlife and biodiversity management.

The noble Baroness, Lady Young of Old Scone, mentioned the threat to trees and ancient woodland and I sympathise with her, but she did not speak about the threat to those woodlands of the grey squirrel, the muntjac deer and overstocking of deer. On page 60, the plan says:

“We will encourage dynamic management of nature”,

which hints at wildlife management without spelling out what it means. When will we be told more about this? For example, the plan suggests that hen harriers, “when carefully planned and managed”,

can enrich our environment. There is indeed a Defra hen harrier action plan, but it is not mentioned in the report and it is not put into action because of the obduracy of the RSPB, which refuses to accept the scientific evidence. We could have had many more hen harriers by now. I like the idea of the 500,000 hectare nature recovery network and am glad that Defra is learning lessons from the nature improvement areas and farm clusters: again, it is working with the grain.

Turning briefly to tenant farmers, who will receive the financial benefits from public money for public goods? It is no difficulty for owner-occupiers and landowners, but what about the tenant farmers? Should landlords such as the Elan Valley Trust, a charity owning 47,000 acres, encourage their tenant farmers to farm in a more environmentally sensitive way and then take part of what the farmer gets in rental? There is a huge principle here. I gather that the RSPB will follow the Elan Valley Trust's example with its new tenancy agreements. The Government need the support of tenant farmers to achieve their aims.

I support what the noble Lord, Lord Hunt of Chesterton, said about green infrastructure in urban areas and welcome what the report says. However, we have a clash in urban areas between a demand for more housing and the existence of gardens. Will the Government look at all local authority plans, including that of the Mayor of London who wishes to build many new houses on suburban gardens? There is a clash there to be resolved.

I repeat what I said on 7 December: it is up to all of us to participate in the changes that are necessary to improve our environment.

5.25 pm

**Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb (GP):** My Lords, it is always a pleasure to follow the noble Earl, Lord Caithness, who has such expertise in the natural world. It is also a pleasure to see the Secretary of State with us today. I hope that he is listening to the debate but I do not think he has done so very much so far. I think he should be separated from the noble Viscount, Lord Ridley, if the Government Whips could do that.

I would very much like to welcome this document and, in a sense, I do as the Government appear to be thinking in the right terms. However, there are two huge flaws which they have to put right before they take this measure any further. I would be happy to give them the Green Party's *Manifesto for a Sustainable Society*, if they are interested, which should put them on the right track.

The first problem is that there is not enough reference to legislation in the strategy; in fact, there is barely any. The Government cannot talk in these fine terms if they do not say exactly how they are going to bring their proposals into being. That is a big flaw. Secondly, the strategy talks about the effects of climate change and how to deal with them but does not talk about its causes and how to deal with them. Therefore, it is talking about damage limitation: how to manage damage and decline. We cannot allow that; we just do not have the time. The Government are already in breach of a lot of their environmental commitments. Climate Earth has taken them to court on air pollution, and won the argument in court. It has taken repeated threats from the EU for the Government to do anything about cleaning up our polluted rivers. The Government do not have a very good track record of delivering on the environment. That just does not wash when they have a 25-year environment plan. I could have written the executive summary to this plan; I thought it was very good, but the plan itself is lacking and lightweight and is a missed opportunity.

I know that much of this 25-year plan has arisen thanks to the work of the Natural Capital Committee. That committee has recommended that the plan should be placed on a statutory footing. Therefore, I have four questions for the Minister. If he cannot answer me today, perhaps he can do so in writing. First, when will the Government commit to incorporate the plan in statute, or will they indeed do so? That is incredibly important. Defra has said that it will "legislate when needed", but the Government's intention seems to be to legislate in dribs and drabs, with no coherence—the odd Bill here and the odd statutory instrument there. It is a very weak approach. The Secretary of State seems to have a genuine interest in, and care for, the environment. However, Ministers move post, enthusiasm wanes, reality bites and sometimes it is difficult to get legislation through Parliament. Therefore, we need to move fast and get an environment Act in place so that all these aims and ambitions are turned into law while we have the political will to do so.

The 25-year plan makes a lot of natural capital and that is very welcome as environmentalists have talked about it for decades. However, I am worried that it will go down the same path as David Cameron's commitment to make national well-being a key economic indicator and a central part of decision-making. That idea seems to have died a death; we do not hear about it anymore. That shows that these lovely ideas are completely useless if they are not put into legislation. If the Government are serious about natural capital, they should put the Natural Capital Committee on a statutory footing, with powers to scrutinise legislation and assess its impact on nature's common wealth.

It is impossible to go through this debate without mentioning Brexit. I will not rehearse my speech for tomorrow—or Wednesday—on the withdrawal Bill but the Government need to heed the fact that they must get their legislative proposals in order, and fast. These gaps will have to be filled before the Committee stage, otherwise there will be no option but for your Lordships' House to put forward amendments that put these things into the Bill. Can the Minister please commit to publishing legislative proposals urgently, so that we are not forced to try to put stopgaps in the Bill?

The plan also proposes to embed a principle of "environmental net gain" in the planning system. We all know that nature is a very complex system and not easily replaceable. Environmental net gain cannot be allowed to be an excuse for developers to ruin one area and replace it elsewhere—for example, by planting orchids a couple of miles away. That just does not wash. I was on a council which took away a substantial chunk of land and then gave back the same area, but in tiny squares and triangles all over the council's area. That just was not good enough. The RSPB has been mentioned today. It has expressed concerns that net gain must be based on a three-step mitigation hierarchy. It says that developments must, first and foremost, avoid any impact. Secondly, it says that if impacts happen they must be mitigated and, thirdly and only in exceptional circumstances, that there must be compensation where biodiversity or environmental impacts cannot be avoided. There are some irreplaceable habitats. We have heard about

[BARONESS JONES OF MOULSECOOMB]  
ancient woodland, for example, which, once lost, cannot be replaced. Such habitats are inappropriate for this concept of net gain.

It is amazing how quickly the time goes. We really have to do something about plastic quickly. Something the Government could do almost immediately is to have a deposit system on plastic bottles. Please, are we going to see that? I am also incredibly concerned about recycling at the moment. The recycling market is struggling with low oil prices, which means that it is much better to produce new plastics than use recycled ones. That is of course an absolute disaster. I would like to know whether the UK Government have been lobbying against EU recycling targets. Is that true, and what representations have been made to the EU on those targets? I am very concerned that we are not ambitious enough in our recycling targets. On air quality, I propose to bring a Bill before your Lordships' House on clean air. I very much hope that it will get general support.

There are many green voices in this Chamber. I might claim to be the only Green Party Member here but I am not the only green voice. I hope that the Government will listen to these green voices and hear the critique of their 25-year plan and how we can improve it to make it a real environmental plan, not just fine words.

5.33 pm

**Earl Cathcart (Con):** My Lords, before I start I should declare that I have a farm and forestry and let houses.

I think most people welcome this plan, in that it is wide-ranging in the number of areas covered, but it is short on detail. The plan is an ambition and it sets the direction of travel. It is to be welcomed for that but some NGOs are disappointed by the lack of consultation before the plan was published, so Defra must engage with the NGOs and those who will implement the plan. Some NGOs originally expected a high-level framework of the plan to be published before a more detailed version, and stakeholders to have already been consulted before the final plan was put together, but this did not happen. Defra asked the Natural Capital Committee to advise it on its aims for the plan. There was some disappointment that the NCC's membership consisted entirely of seven professors. It was all academics with no farmers, foresters or agronomists et cetera involved. So when the flesh is put on the bones of this skeleton plan, it is vital that full consultation is carried out with experts on the ground—those who have to put the plan into practice. Without that, the plan will just not work.

Secondly, farmers have carried out a huge amount of work over the last 30 or 40 years to encourage wildlife, as well as benefiting the landscape, soil and water and reducing their impact on the climate, much of which was unpaid. Most farmers have already planted trees. On my farm we have planted six new woods, half of which received no grant. I suspect that most farmers and landowners would like more trees on their land. Farmers have also planted over 20,000 miles of hedges, some with a grant but many without.

Like many others, we have recently cleaned out four ponds without grants. This will let the sunlight in and encourage insects.

Like many areas in the countryside we have one of the local cluster farm groups that have already been mentioned by my noble friends Lady Byford and Lord Selborne. I am a member of one that consists of about 20 farmers, who work together over 20,000 acres to produce a cohesive environment programme that boosts biodiversity in that enlarged group of farms, rather than each of us working in isolation. In our case, our aim is to encourage turtle doves, grey partridges and lapwings, along with barn owls and snipe, marsh fritillaries and other butterflies, bats and wetland plants. My point is that farmers already do a huge amount of environmental work for no extra payment. So as far as this plan is concerned, if the Government get it right they should be pushing at an open door.

Thirdly, how do the Government encourage farmers to take up any of these schemes? It must be remembered that farmers and landowners need to make a profit from their enterprise to survive. This includes farming and environmental schemes. Without a profitable farm business, farmers will go bust and then there will not be the people to look after the environment. For example, cereal growers might expect to make a profit of between £150 to £200 an acre, depending, of course, on the price and yield. So when these environmental schemes are put forward, the Government should have in the back of their mind that farmers should be compensated sufficiently for the loss of this potential profit, because any environment scheme will take acres out of production for the farmer. One recent Countryside Stewardship scheme was very poorly taken up by farmers because it was overcomplicated and the amount being paid to them was a fraction of what they would get if they continued to grow cereals. As for the Government encouraging farmers and landowners to plant woodland, why would a cereal grower plant, say, 100 acres of woodland and forgo an annual profit of £15,000 to £20,000 for cereals when he will not receive a return from his forestry investment for 30 or 40 years? I will certainly be dead by then.

Many people think that food production and environmental projects are incompatible. I do not believe that is right and I encourage the Government to produce an environmental policy based on encouraging farming activities that not only improve productivity but deliver environmental benefits or improve our resource efficiency. This plan could be very exciting if only the Government will listen to those who have to put it into practice.

5.39 pm

**Lord Judd (Lab):** My Lords, the point the noble Earl just made about the importance of working with those affected and interested is tremendously important. There is a lot of good will, and that needs to be maximised by enabling people to feel that they are part of the implementation of the plan.

I found the plan a good read. Those who drafted it should be commended; it is better than most government documents one reads. It also has a lot of interesting ideas and aspirations, as we have heard from several

noble Lords. I like to put in a plug where it is deserved; the noble Lord, Lord Gardiner, is winning a lot of brownie points in his role by his obvious personal commitment to the environment and the way in which he is going out of his way to get out of the ministry to meet and talk to people in the field. That is done well, and he should be thanked for that.

The plan is aspirational. It is short on detail and it is certainly very short on how it will be implemented. What the noble Lord, Lord Krebs, said, is also important: one must have an effective arrangement to measure progress. It will be crucial that it is felt to carry weight because it is independent and free-standing. It would be disastrous if the Government became their own monitor on progress. There needs to be an independent voice, which will be valuable for government itself.

When we look at what the plan talks about, we have to realise that for an awful lot of people the environment is not in this realm at all. The noble Lord, Lord Heseltine, once said something which really struck home to me: that we have to remember that, for very many people, “environment” is the block of flats in which they live. We must not become so concentrated on the countryside and the rural environment that we do not look at the importance all the time of enhancing and improving the urban environment. With the great drive in housing and affordable housing, it is terribly important that that is imaginatively tackled, with green space available to the inhabitants and with an immediate opportunity for youngsters, for example, to have fun and enjoy themselves without becoming a public nuisance.

It is also important in the urban environment to avoid stigma—but that goes for the countryside too. I have always thought it sad that we have created a situation in which people can say, “Those are the council houses”. With a bit more imagination, those houses could have been attractive houses which enabled people to feel that they were part of the community and not stigmatised as living on the council house estate. I hope that that kind of point will be kept in mind, too.

The plan does not overemphasise the issues of light and noise pollution, which have become great social curses. I was a youngster in the Second World War, and I came to appreciate the blackout. I remember my older sister taking me outside in the blackout on many occasions to look at the sky. How many children in our society have the opportunity to see the sky? It is crucial to their development and education to see themselves in perspective against the realities that are there. Light pollution needs to be given far more attention, as should the issue of noise pollution. Too many people have never had the chance to think in a peaceful and quiet environment—they experience noise all the time. Before I was born, my own family moved from central London to a rather attractive suburb outside London, on the North Downs. They said that one of the things they found difficult to adjust to was the noise of the individual vehicles, because for years they had been used to noise all the time, even back then in the 1920s and 1930s. That needs a great deal of attention as well. A lot of joined-up work needs to be done on healthcare, education, and certainly youth work.

We should remember that 80% of scheduled ancient monuments are on agricultural land. If the plan is talking about access, so people are able to learn from and enjoy our heritage, some issues need to be resolved. Again, this is an illustration of how we need more practical suggestions about how things will be tackled.

My last point picks up what has already been said by several other noble Lords. Environmental issues which affect us cannot be contained within national frontiers; they all have regional and global implications. If we are to have a strategy that is effective and right for our environment, it has to be one in which, inescapably, we work together with others in other nations on how we get it right.

5.47 pm

**Lord Teverson (LD):** My Lords, I draw to the attention of the House my interests as a proud member of the board of the Marine Management Organisation and as a director and chair of a small number of regional development companies in the south-west.

I absolutely agree with the noble Earl, Lord Caithness, that the one area where Brexit should work in particular is around the common agricultural policy and changing issues there. However, it is interesting that we now have a commitment from the Government to keep the area payment system right the way through until 2024—a full six years-plus, which is about a quarter of the 25 years in this environmental plan. So we are perhaps already pushing back some of the action as regards how we move forwards.

I know that the Minister often feels frustrated by many of these environmental debates, which are sometimes initiated by my own EU Select Committee, because we all pile down our concerns and look negatively at these things. I therefore also start by saying that this report and the plan are important. I congratulate the Government on trying to look 25 years ahead, and they have not forgotten marine at all, which is often a side issue. I am particularly pleased that the report talks about the “polluter pays” principle; I hope that will be reflected in the withdrawal Bill in due course. I welcome the move and the commitment to natural methods of flood defence, which is inevitable but which is now being taken on by the Government, as well as, in the marine area, the whole blue-belt issue.

However, the one area I particularly welcome, which comes back to a point made by the noble Lord, Lord Krebs, who is still in his place, is around homes. Although this is primarily a MHCLG area, page 35 of the plan says:

“High environmental standards for all new builds. New homes will be built in a way that reduces demands for water, energy and material resources, improves flood resilience ... encourages walking and cycling”.

and it mentions resilient buildings. Yet I remember only too well in July 2015 the Chancellor making a statement and a policy decision at Treasury level—not at the DCLG, I admit—to get rid of the zero-carbon homes targets for 2016. That programme had been worked on by the industry as well as by environmental NGOs and the climate change lobby.

However, two years after that and three years after the announcement, here we are bringing it back. Like the noble Lord, Lord Krebs, I would like confirmation

[LORD TEVERSON]

from the Minister that the MHCLG is also committed to doing this, because it requires improved building regulations—regulations, not just aspiration. Once those building regulations are in place—I know this from my role in development—you have to comply with them. You tell your customers or the people you are building for that that is what you are going to do and, as we have seen in the car industry, economies of scale soon bring the cost of the buildings back to where they were before. Therefore, I am very encouraged by that and I hope that the Minister can give further confirmation of it.

The area on which I want to concentrate and which I find particularly interesting is referred to two pages earlier in the report—embedding a net environmental gain principle for developments, including housing and infrastructure. The Minister will probably not be able to go into that a great deal in his reply but I would be very interested to hear more about it. We are now used to plain speaking from Defra and its Ministers, which I welcome, and Defra now has a spring in its step as a department, which is good. However, when reading about this embedding we again see language such as:

“We will seek to embed ... We will explore strengthening ... and will consult on making this mandatory—including any exemptions ... We would expect this should have a net positive impact”,

and those things are delegated to local authorities. This is a hugely important principle. The plan says:

“This will enable housing development without increasing overall burdens on developers”.

One hopes that that is the case but it seems to me to be another “have your cake and eat it” approach. I do not understand how there will not be what would be defined as an increasing burden on developers. They might welcome that if it is mandatory for all developers, but I would be very interested to hear how that goes.

In my last few minutes I would like to talk about the international side. Some Members have mentioned Brexit but Brexit does not apply to the European environment. I would be interested to hear from the Minister how we intend to work with Europe, particularly with regard to invasive species—an area that I know the Minister has championed over the years. How will we co-ordinate environmental policy in the future where we share the environment with all our European neighbours? Will we remain a member of the European Emissions Trading Scheme? It is mentioned in the Climate Change Act. It seems very important and is something that the Government have promoted in the past. Importantly, chemicals are also mentioned in the plan. Will we remain a part of the REACH regime? From the evidence that the sub-committee had, I know that the chemical industry is very keen to remain a part of that.

I have come to the end of my time. I welcome the plan but I can understand some scepticism towards it. I remember the plan first being launched by Liz Truss. We are now two Secretaries of State further on and it is still there, which is good news. However, we have not met our clean air targets—we are still struggling there—and our recycling rates are not what they should be.

Our attitude seems to be that it is still too difficult to get recycling up to 65%. So there are a number of areas where we should be cautious.

I shall be interested in hearing the Minister’s comments on something that was mentioned in particular by the noble Lord, Lord Cameron of Dillington: will the Government and not just the enforcement authority be able to make this a much more independent process, as with the Committee on Climate Change? If the Government are really serious about this, then having an independent body that similarly tries to meet targets and gives independent advice will be important in making sure that the Government reach those targets and in future-proofing them beyond whoever happens to be in government—it might even be a Conservative Government—in 25 years’ time.

5.55 pm

**Lord Marlesford (Con):** My Lords, I should like to say, first, how glad I am that we have my noble friend Lord Gardiner of Kimble as the Minister. He is pretty good and we are lucky to have him.

My interests are declared in the register but the only one that I shall particularly mention in this debate is that I am president of the Suffolk Preservation Society. However, I would like to refer to the fact that I spent 12 years on the old Countryside Commission. I mention that because the chairman throughout virtually the whole of that time was our late colleague Lord Barber of Tewkesbury. He died just a few weeks ago aged 99, so he did pretty well in terms of the length of his life but he also did a wonderful thing for this country. We all owe him a deep debt of gratitude for his perceptive and dedicated work as a conservationist.

There is a bit of a lesson there. In those days, I happened to be on that commission and on the Rural Development Commission at the same time, and there was also something called English Nature. Those three bodies have now been amalgamated into Natural England. Following on from what the noble Lord, Lord Teverson, said, I say to the Government that invigilation is very important. It is important to have a sensible body to advise the Government on what the pressure groups are saying. Pressure groups are quite different; they overstate their case. However, bodies such as the ones I have mentioned or indeed the Environment Agency, which the noble Baroness chaired with distinction, are there to give a balanced assessment, and that is very important. Civil servants in Whitehall are very clever and so on but you cannot expect them to know very much about these things.

One thing about having an invigilating body is that, if it covers too big an area, the people who form the council or whatever it might be—outsiders; people like us who sit on it—have too big a responsibility to be able to do it properly. If there are a dozen of them and they have a huge area to cover, they will not do it effectively. Having the Countryside Commission, English Nature and the Rural Development Commission was a better way of handling things than having one much larger quango.

We are talking here about the beauty of Britain. The countryside is one of our very greatest treasures and that is why we have to protect it. In earlier days, it could be destroyed and replaced; now, that is much

more difficult—once it is destroyed and put under several feet of concrete, the danger is that it will never come back again. I remember the very wise words of one of our best Secretaries of State in that area, Nicholas Ridley, who was, I think, the uncle of my noble friend Lord Ridley. His policy was “the protection of the countryside for its own sake”. That really mattered. It stated succinctly something that we and the civil servants all followed, and it was very helpful. Conservation and protection matter to us. It is partly a matter of dealing with big problems that arise but it is partly also a matter of luck. If the old Palace of Westminster had not burned down in 1834, it might have lingered on quite unfit for purpose and been replaced, perhaps in the 1960s, with some ghastly concrete brutalism, which we would be only too glad to move out of. Let us cherish what we have.

I want very quickly to mention two or three points. The first is an example of where we can save things. One of the great achievements of the National Trust—a body of 5 million people, bigger even than Mr Corbyn’s Labour Party—is operation Neptune. Without it, we would have lost the coastline for ever. The original target was to acquire and protect 900 miles of coastline, and I think it has more than 700 miles already, which is good.

Let me give a practical example, however, of where things have gone wrong in my own backyard, the little medieval town of Framlingham. Framlingham is very important historically and in its beauty. There were three big development plans to plonk 360 houses in three different areas. One area was a genuine brownfield site, where there had been a mill. That development was done by a company called Hopkins Homes; it is not completely right, but the company made a pretty good job of it and should be praised. The other development is called Mount Pleasant. It was done by Persimmon and the results are perfectly frightful. I recommend that those noble Lords who have not done so read the wonderful speech by the noble Lord, Lord Best, when he introduced the housing debate on 11 January. The third development is in an area that has been taken over by Taylor Wimpey, which is putting in another 150 or so houses. It is a greenfield site, and the development will block the view of the castle and the church from the east side. It should never have been allowed but, sadly, the inspector allowed it. We in the Suffolk Preservation Society did our best to save it, but we did not succeed.

I hope that one thing the Government will do is ensure that the inspectors are kept well directed as to what the desires of the people and the interests of the country really are. You cannot rely on the developers: they will, understandably, do whatever they think will make them a quick buck.

## **Contaminated Blood**

### *Statement*

6.02 pm

**Lord Young of Cookham (Con):** My Lords, with the leave of the House, I shall repeat in the form of a Statement the Answer given by the Minister for the Constitution to an Urgent Question in another place. The Statement is as follows:

“The contaminated blood scandal of the 1970s and 1980s was an appalling tragedy that should never have happened. Victims and their families have endured so much pain and hardship and they deserve answers about how this could have happened. I am grateful to the honourable Lady for bringing this issue to the House today, and for her leadership, alongside the honourable Member for Worthing West, Sir Peter Bottomley, of the all-party parliamentary group, which has done such consistent and constructive work on this issue.

As honourable Members will know, following the Prime Minister’s announcement in July last year that there would be an inquiry into these terrible events, the Department of Health launched a consultation on what the form and scope of that inquiry should be. I would like to thank all those who contributed to that process: we understand how difficult and painful describing these events must have been. The responses to that consultation were carefully considered by Cabinet Office officials. As a result, we confirmed that the inquiry would be statutory, established under the Inquiries Act, and we moved the sponsorship of the inquiry from the Department of Health to the Cabinet Office.

Before Christmas, we announced that the inquiry would be chaired by a judge. We have asked the Lord Chief Justice to provide us with a nomination. We hope to announce the name of that judge very soon. Once the appointment has been announced, the Cabinet Office will have early discussions with the chair about setting up the inquiry, and will encourage the chair to quickly hold further consultation with the affected communities over the inquiry’s terms of reference.

Finally, I want to reiterate again that I, the Minister for the Cabinet Office, and the Prime Minister are determined that those affected by this appalling tragedy will get the answers they deserve”.

6.04 pm

**Lord Hunt of Kings Heath (Lab):** My Lords, I am most grateful to the noble Lord for repeating that Answer. I remind the House that I did have some ministerial responsibility for this area some years ago. It has now been over six and a half months since the Government first committed to an inquiry into this tragedy. It is disappointing that we are still waiting for an inquiry chair to be appointed, but I have noted with a great deal of interest what the noble Lord said today. I echo, if I may, his tribute to the two co-chairs of the all-party group that he referred to.

The noble Lord said it is hoped that a chair will be appointed to the inquiry as soon as possible. Will he set out whether there is an outline timetable as to when the terms of reference will be agreed with the chair and when the formal setting-up date for the inquiry is likely to be decided? We know how important it is to get the terms of reference right. I understand that the people affected would like the chairman of the inquiry, and not the Minister, to consult with them on the terms of reference before they are formally set. Will the noble Lord give consideration to that? Will he also confirm that the terms of reference will cover the aftermath of the tragedy, as well as the run-up to it?

**Lord Young of Cookham:** I am grateful to the noble Lord for that very constructive response, and I endorse what he said about the all-party group. The Haemophilia Society has also been very active in this area for many years. I expect the chair to be announced in days rather than weeks; that is how I interpret the “very shortly” commitment that was given in another place.

It will fall to the chairman to determine the terms of reference. Before he does so he will, as the noble Lord suggested, want to consult the affected community on those terms of reference. Once he has done so, and has made a recommendation to the Minister for the Cabinet Office, I anticipate that there will be another Statement to the House setting out the scope of the inquiry. The noble Lord asked a final question about whether the terms of reference will include what happened afterwards, as well as what happened before. As I said, we expect the chair to consult on the terms of reference, and I am sure he will take on board the point that the noble Lord has just made in drawing up the terms of reference that he will submit to the Government.

**Baroness Featherstone (LD):** My Lords, sadly, I have to declare an interest. Some noble Lords will know that my nephew died; he was a victim of the contaminated blood scandal. Concerns have been voiced over the timing of this inquiry, and I want some assurances from the noble Lord. He mentioned the Haemophilia Society, but I do not know how aware he is of some disquiet and concern among the haemophiliac community about the society. Can he assure me that the Haemophilia Society will have no special status in this? A vast number of victims feel that the Haemophilia Society contributed to the scandal, rather than alleviated it. That does not reflect on the noble Baroness who is now president of the Haemophilia Society. This scandal has gone on for 40 years, but it is still very important that those who are affected do not feel that the Haemophilia Society has the special ear of the chair or the Government. I want also an assurance that the terms of reference will be broad enough to catch the harms that were done, and that the victims will have the ability to input to those terms of reference.

**Lord Young of Cookham:** I am grateful to the noble Baroness, and I am very sorry to hear that she lost a nephew as a result of this tragic sequence of events. I looked at the Haemophilia Society website earlier today, and I did pick up the controversy that she has just referred to. I think it will be an important, but not exclusive, witness and giver of evidence to the terms of reference, and I am sure that the chair will be aware of the anxieties that the noble Baroness has just referred to. We want to ensure that all those who want to give evidence are able so to do. I hope that the chair will take the advice of many of those who gave evidence that there should be a regional dimension to this inquiry. People should not have to come to London if they want to give evidence.

**Baroness Masham of Ilton (CB):** My Lords, will Scotland and England be treated the same? Will the inquiry cover all of the countries involved, including Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales as well as England? There have been some problems in the case with which

I was dealing with regard to compensation if you lived in Scotland and were contaminated in England, or vice versa.

**Lord Young of Cookham:** I am grateful to the noble Baroness. This is a UK inquiry. The problem affected the whole of the UK. There are provisions under the Inquiries Act for consultation to take place with the devolved Parliaments and Assemblies, but it is a UK inquiry. There is a specific issue about the arrangements made for helping those who suffered. It is a devolved responsibility. Those particular responsibilities may differ in Scotland from the rest of the UK.

**Lord Elystan-Morgan (CB):** My Lords, while I welcome the Government’s initiative in this matter, may I ask about an inquiry that was conducted about 10 years ago by the late Lord Archer, a former law officer? It was privately commissioned, but published thereafter. I think that the recommendations were accepted by the Government of that day. Can the Minister tell us something more about that, which was apparently a searching and revealing study into this matter?

**Lord Young of Cookham:** The noble Lord asks a question that is right at the extremity of my familiarity with the subject, but I looked it up and the noble Lord is quite right. There was an independent inquiry in the early 2000s by the former Solicitor-General for England and Wales, Lord Archer. I understand that it held no legal or official status at all. It was unable to subpoena witnesses or demand the disclosure of documents, but it looked at some of the issues and discovered that some important documents had been destroyed. There were issues of missing evidence. After he reported, Lord Jenkin, who was also a former Secretary of State, voiced his difficulties about obtaining documents for the inquiry. That inquiry is available and will be available to the statutory inquiry. I hope that it will be able to build on some of the work that Lord Archer undertook.

**Baroness Meacher (CB):** My Lords, can the Minister assure the House that the different groups of sufferers within this community will all be consulted by the chair and the panel? There are widows, people who are still suffering, people with HIV and people who do not have HIV and they have all been treated differently and in many cases grossly inadequately over the years. This is one of the concerns. People do not want the Haemophilia Society to be the one group that is consulted, because people from these different situations want to speak for themselves. I would like to think that the Haemophilia Society reflects everyone’s interests, but I absolutely respect the wishes of the different groupings. That assurance would be very helpful to them.

**Lord Young of Cookham:** I am very happy to give that assurance to the noble Baroness. As she may know, there were more than 800 responses to the consultation that we launched in July, which concluded in October, so it is quite clear that there is a substantial body of people who take an interest in the subject and have already made representations. I am sure that the chair will want to consult with a wide range of people—survivors and relatives—before he or she finalises terms of reference.

## Environment: 25-year Plan

### *Motion to Take Note (Continued)*

6.13 pm

**Lord Oxburgh (CB):** My Lords, I too welcome this 25-year plan for the environment. It is nothing if not ambitious. It is clearly a first step in making the country more liveable, both for us and for the plants and animals with which we share it and on which we depend. The plan contains a great deal that is good, but success will really depend on it securing continuing cross-party support. We cannot have wavering if the political climate of the country changes. This is something that we need to stick to.

Defra is proposed as the owner on behalf of the Government. That seems appropriate, but active co-operation will be needed from other departments as well. Defra will need strong support from the Cabinet Office to ensure that others give the plan sufficient priority. The plan must be shared government-wide and feature in the forward-look plans of every government department. It is proposed to establish a new independent body to monitor progress against a series of metrics and to hold the Government to account. As various noble Lords have suggested, it is entirely appropriate that the Committee on Climate Change could be taken as a model for this.

The plan places heavy emphasis on natural capital. That concept is not without its critics, as we have heard today, but it also carries advantages. The beneficial practical applications were mentioned in the plan itself. But although there are difficulties in applying or assessing clear and fixed values for particular assets, the importance of the approach is the focus that it brings to assessing the real value that we derive from every aspect of our environment.

One of our most valuable natural capital assets, and one of the most neglected, is fresh air. Fresh air in crowded cities is all too often polluted by vehicle emissions. In that connection, the plan offers the opportunity to make two quite distinct points. First, it proposes ending the sale of internal combustion engine vehicles by 2040. That is understandable, but it is wrong. The emissions from vehicles should be banned with performance standards, not the technology itself. In the future, a super-diesel operating on a synthetic fuel might turn out to be the greenest means of local transport. Secondly, clean air is an asset to which we can attribute value. A recent study carried out by the British Lung Foundation estimated the direct costs of respiratory conditions to the NHS at around £11 billion a year. If as little as a quarter of that is attributable to vehicle emissions, on cost grounds alone we should act decisively to restore this element of our natural capital—not to mention the persistent ill health and premature deaths associated with it. This is an urgent and solvable problem and the mayoral initiatives in London are to be applauded.

However, there is one area to which the plan devotes too little attention. It is the major decline in numbers of the most undervalued and admittedly, for us, least charismatic animal group on earth—the insects. Reputable studies in the UK and elsewhere demonstrate population declines of over 75% during the last three decades.

We know that from our own experience if we compare driving 20 years ago with today. Twenty years ago, we had to clean the summer insects off the windscreen with every fill-up. Today, that is a rarity. Similar declines are recorded in mainland Europe and in Canada.

Apart from the honey bees, should we be concerned? The answer is an emphatic yes. Insects have an unobtrusive but key role to play in our environmental system. Aside from their most obvious part in the animal food chain for birds, small mammals and others, they are very important as pollinators of crops. Although largely unseen, insects are important for breaking down waste products within the soil and conditioning it for plant growth. If the decline continues, the consequences for the human food supply look bad. Although the general trends are not clear, it is worrying that the records are insufficient for detailed analysis and the declines are not properly understood. I am prompted by the relatively low profile of insects in the plan to ask the Minister to review the environmental monitoring work of his department and to take advice on whether it is really sufficient to support this 25-year plan. The same point has been made by various other noble Lords. Long-time series of observations made in the same way under the same controlled conditions are not popular with those seeking quick results from science, but they are essential to support the science we need to understand and manage the environmental problems we face.

To conclude, this plan is a good first step, but we need better observational records. We should make sure that we regulate outcomes, not technologies, and recognise that the real challenge will be implementing the plan.

6.21 pm

**Viscount Ridley (Con):** My Lords, it is always an honour to follow the noble Lord, Lord Oxburgh. I declare an interest as a landowner with a strong interest in practical conservation—for which, two years ago, I was proud to win the Bledisloe Gold Medal from the Royal Agricultural Society of England. That, I believe, is what is known as a humble brag.

I wish to make two points. The first is that this 25-year plan makes a promising start towards recognising that environmental improvements are achieved mainly by people on the ground such as farmers and gamekeepers rather than commanded by officials in offices, but that it needs to go further in this direction. Secondly, science, technology and innovation must be encouraged to deliver better environmental outcomes. They are on the whole the solution, not the problem. Instead of going back to nature, we must go forward to nature.

The Government are right to reject proposals from those who lobbied strongly for greater statutory regulation, inspection and punitive fines for farmers, an approach that has often failed to help wildlife very much. We need to make sure that landowners are not left worse off if rare species turn up on their land. Voluntary conservation encouraged by carrots will achieve more than enforcement of compulsory schemes with sticks. If I read the plan right, it will aim to encourage rapid take-up, with minimal red tape, of prescriptions like conservation headlands, which are working well on my farm and others for the return of tree sparrows,

[VISCOUNT RIDLEY]

linnets, yellowhammers and the like. I particularly welcome the inclusion of so many recommendations made by farmer-facing organisations such as the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust with its first-hand experience at its experimental Leicestershire farm, Allerton, of how to combine profitable farming with increasing biodiversity. So it is refreshing to read the recognition in the plan that biodiversity depends on productive farming.

Sustainable intensification is the key concept here. On a global scale, you cannot have space for wilderness and biodiversity unless you also have highly productive agriculture. Since 1960 we have reduced by 68% the amount of land globally needed to produce a given quantity of food. That spares land for nature. Likewise, in the British countryside, a productive wheat field with a bird-seed crop around its edges, like I saw some examples of from my train window this morning, is far better for birds than a messy bit of bad farming or abandoned land.

In this respect, can I ask my noble friend the Minister to clarify how conservation covenants, mentioned on page 62 of the 25-year plan, would work? If a landowner commits to manage part of his land permanently for conservation, by agreement with conservation bodies, might there be, as there is in the United States, a tax incentive like gift aid or a grant? If not, what is the incentive that will drive the take-up of such covenants? Could he also say how he plans to make sure that environmental subsidies to farmers and landowners are paid by results and not by intentions, as is the case today? This has been mentioned in the debate by the noble Lord, Lord Krebs, and others. Surely a farmer or indeed a bird charity should have to prove that lapwings on their land are breeding successfully, rearing chicks to fledging, rather than just being attracted to breed there and then having their nests destroyed by crows or ploughs or seeing their chicks starve for lack of suitable brood-rearing habitat. Could he therefore confirm what all landowners know, including the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, that a vital tool of conservation is predator control of grey squirrels, mink, foxes, crows and other species living at unnatural densities, and that this will be recognised in any new environmental subsidy regimes?

I welcome the concept of environmental net gain. It is essential that we emulate successful conservation elsewhere in the world by offsetting development with habitat creation off-site. This is a far more effective tool than trying to avoid hurting every individual newt or bat that happens to live in a spot zoned for development merely to provide employment to bat inspectors and newt inspectors.

On the matter of science and technology, I hope that the Government recognise the fantastic opportunities that innovation represents for helping the environment. This is something conservation organisations do not always fully grasp, in my experience. No-till farming, made possible by cheap herbicides, can vastly improve soils. Precision weeding with robots will soon be able to reduce the use of chemicals. Autonomous machinery can replace heavy tractors with platoons of smaller, lightweight robots that work at night and cause less soil compaction. The indoor production of salads and

herbs using LED lights can greatly reduce the land take of some kinds of farming. In Japan there are warehouses producing 30,000 lettuce heads a day with no chemicals and using less water and energy than if they were produced out of doors.

Genetic modification has demonstrably cut the use of insecticides, improved the yield of crops throughout the world, and can do so here. We now import vast quantities of GM soybeans for animal feed, having failed to genetically modify our homegrown peas. An exciting invention from Nottingham University called N-Fix coats plant seeds with beneficial bacteria to enable cereals to fix nitrogen from the air, reducing the need for synthetic fertiliser. There is growing evidence that the new technique of CRISPR gene editing can improve yields, spare land and reduce the need for sprays or ploughing. Gene editing can also lead to solutions to the growing problem of how to eradicate invasive species, as can the development of contraceptive vaccines, including the vital work of the Animal and Plant Health Agency.

I suspect we can much reduce reliance on chemicals over the next few decades, not by going back to organic agriculture with its destructive reliance on repeated cultivation and its use of toxic copper-based pesticides, but by going forward to nature with the new technologies of precision farming and gene editing. We can have more prosperous British farming with less subsidy and more flourishing wildlife with a few carefully targeted incentives. We can save the taxpayer money, boost wildlife and preserve the best of the British countryside all at the same time.

6.28 pm

**Lord Redesdale (LD):** My Lords, I should also like to welcome this report, but with caveats. I must declare my interests as the CEO of the Energy Managers Association and of the Water Retail Company. I am a landowner and some of my tenant farms are in the Higher Level Stewardship scheme. Obviously I will not ask many questions because I will not get them answered, but it is worth making the point that we have already planted tens of thousands of trees and have undertaken many of the measures. However, without some of the subsidies that upland farms receive at the moment, they will face a very difficult future. There is a great deal of interest in exactly what support, rather than subsidy, will mean.

Many members of the Energy Managers Association are responsible for achieving the company's targets. This morning I wrote a short article on LinkedIn, which is a great use of social media, asking which questions should be asked in this debate. So far 10,000 people have clicked on the article and I have had 50 responses. I promise that I will not ask all 50 questions; if you ask more than two or three, you might as well forget it. It was interesting to note that most of the responses from these individuals highlight the very problem that many sustainability managers have: without clear regulation or legislation and targets, it is difficult for them to make companies undertake things. Of course, many of these targets fight against each other. Some of the issues concerning recycling and waste cause difficulty when you talk about companies' growth.

This comes down to the one question I would like to ask the Government. The document's wording is extremely good. It is aspirational, although many of the issues are covered by present European Union regulations. Many of them are targets that we already have. If we are to have a clear and concise view—there has been discussion of a Climate Change Act-type body, which would be excellent—could the Minister say when regulation or an environmental Bill will be brought forward to achieve these aims? Without that, many of these will remain aspirations and will remain extremely difficult for those people who have to undertake implementation.

One of the points raised—it is quite good when you get a vast number of people who have read the document as part of their working lives—is that the word “renewables” is not listed at any point throughout the document. I must commend the drafting team for their drafting gymnastics; the document talks about decarbonisation of the energy system, but does not include the word “renewables”. That is rather impressive. I understand why it mentions it because it then goes into the clean growth strategy, which is covered elsewhere.

However, one of the really interesting pieces of research I have been looking at could be very helpful, and it concerns the growth of solar. The large solar farms we will need to meet our green growth strategy, rather than solar panels on people's rooftops, are already taking tens of thousands of acres from fields, but there is a real opportunity: we have tens of thousands of acres that could be used for environmental purposes. A great deal of evidence shows that the insects that the noble Lord, Lord Oxburgh, talked about could thrive in these areas. They are of course, by their very nature, somewhat deprived of light, but there are areas around them. Nesting birds could also be encouraged. This area is growing. There is planning permission for around 10 gigawatts of solar, so we will see a great deal more of it on the horizon.

The second point is one I will come back to, which is water. We have a real problem with agriculture. As my noble friend Lady Miller pointed out, we are destroying our topsoil. Using solar farms as a way of renewing that topsoil, or not using it and ploughing it up, would be a great way to reduce the amount of drainage run-off.

Many noble Lords have talked about natural capital, but we do not understand how important it will be to look at. I had a long missive on one of the areas we are talking about, on understanding the cost of natural capital. The noble Baroness, Lady Young of Old Scone, talked about ancient woodlands and HS2. If you take the natural capital value of that into account, you would put a tunnel underneath the Chilterns area of outstanding natural beauty and it would be cost-neutral. Often we do not take into account the fact that trees have a value because you can just cut them down—it is easy.

I deal with water on a daily basis as CEO of one of these new retail companies. Our aim is to increase water efficiency, although the market has been set up just on price, but we have been warned about a drought in the south-east that is coming this summer. We have

had two dry winters. Without a great deal of rainfall, we will have a problem. This is a real issue because the Government do not take water seriously unless there is a drought or a flood. Of course, with climate change, droughts and floods are two sides of the same coin because we are seeing a major change in the rainfall pattern. If we have a drought in the south-east, we should understand exactly what will happen: the Itchen—a habitat that is unique throughout the world—will get even more abstraction. That will be an issue for the water authority in that area.

I have one point on one of the faults with the document. I take on board that there is a great deal of good will in it but if we take the document as read, the abstraction licence regime change will take place only between 2022 and 2027. Considering the damage that we are doing at the moment, that is a real issue.

I should finish with this point. The Secretary of State has mentioned red squirrels and the problems with grey squirrels. I ran a campaign, which I have talked about a great number of times. We took out 27,500 grey squirrels. If he would like information on how to kill grey squirrels, I am very happy to give it. They are natural capital; you can eat them.

6.36 pm

**Viscount Hanworth (Lab):** My Lords, I declare that I am a member of the European Union Energy and Environment Sub-Committee. My reason for this declaration is that I wish to allude to some of the evidence that we have heard from witnesses and to some of the ministerial replies to our inquiries regarding their opinions on proposed legislation from the European Union.

The Green Paper on the 25-year plan for the environment, which we are discussing, is full of laudable ambitions and good intentions. I hesitate to be critical of it. However, we have been waiting a very long time to see this document. It is the product of an agenda that has suffered significant delays. It is appropriate to question the Government's commitment to some of their declared aims. The issues on which I wish to concentrate are the disposal of our domestic and industrial waste and its recycling. This also entails the composition of the waste and the question of what can be done to make it more amenable to recycling and less harmful to the environment.

The European Union has proposed some stringent targets for recycling. These are expressed, somewhat crudely, as the percentage of the waste, by weight, that should be recycled. A target to recycle 65% of urban waste by 2035 was agreed by the European Council and the European Parliament in December. The proposal now awaits a vote of approval by the member states. The target has already been reduced from 70% by 2030, which was initially proposed by the European Parliament. However, the UK has asserted that it cannot support even the lesser target. The UK delegation has proposed a 55% minimum target, while declaring that it has been unable to identify a mix of policies that would be effective in reaching a higher target. Nevertheless, waste management is a devolved matter, and Scotland and Wales have both adopted a 70% target.

[VISCOUNT HANWORTH]

Our committee has been struck by the variability of the recycling rates across the country, even within limited geographic areas. Thus, whereas South Oxfordshire already achieves a 67% rate of recycling, Greater London has a far lesser rate of 32% and the rate for the London Borough of Newham is a mere 14%. The explanations for the derelictions of some local authorities that have been offered to our committee have sounded unconvincing. It has been asserted that it is far more challenging to achieve high rates of recycling in urban areas than in rural areas and that many local authorities are locked into waste management contracts.

The truth seems to be that rates of recycling are correlated with the incomes available to local authorities. The matter has surely been exacerbated by the cuts to local authority incomes and expenditures that the Government have imposed. In any case, the degree of variability in the rate of recycling is indicative of a lack of a co-ordinated national policy. It is clear that, if the Government were willing, we could do much better.

The pronouncements that have accompanied the publication of the Green Paper suggest that the Government are keen to confront a wide range of environmental issues. However, a cursory examination of some of the practical proposals belies this impression. For example, the proposals for dealing with the menace of single-use plastic items are wholly inadequate. The 5p charge on plastic bags, which had been imposed on larger retailers, has now been extended to smaller shops. It should have been applied universally in the first instance and, in any case, it has already been mandated in European Union legislation. The scourge of plastic packaging should have been addressed by imposing a cost upon manufacturers commensurate with the environmental damage that it inflicts. There should be mandatory design guidelines to eliminate polymer mixes in plastic packaging that make recycling close to impossible. Many single-use plastic products should be banned.

Much of our plastic waste has been exported to China, but from January China has banned imports of such waste. The consequence is that, until we establish adequate facilities for recycling it, this plastic waste will be consigned to landfill sites or exported to some of our European neighbours for incineration as refuse-derived fuel. The Government have been unwilling to adopt any of the obvious measures and it is difficult to understand why. Perhaps the answer lies in their adherence to a free-market ideology that discourages intervention of Governments in commerce and industry and exalts the sovereignty of consumers.

An odd accompaniment to the 25-year environment plan is a cost-benefit analysis that expounds the metaphysical concept of the capital value of the environment. This has been the work of the Natural Capital Committee, a group of self-styled neo-classical economists who have been appointed to the task by the Government. Cost-benefit analyses attempt to apply the precepts of commercial project appraisal to social investments and to other initiatives of public authorities that have an enduring effect. This has to be done in the absence of markets that could determine the monetary values of the outcomes. It is proposed that, in the absence of a market value, consumers should be asked

to declare what they would be willing to pay to obtain the benefits of a project or to avoid its detriments. This is not an appropriate way to determine how we should confront the threats to our environment. Instead of seeking to uncover the self-interested opinions of individual consumers, we should seek to create a social consensus in favour of actions that might save us from the sort of thoughtless folly that is bound to result in a universal detriment. It is the duty of Governments to take a lead in forming such a consensus, and I do not believe that this Government are fulfilling their duty adequately.

6.42 pm

**Lord Greaves (LD):** My Lords, I enjoyed reading this report and I wondered what it will be like in 25 years' time. I cheered the good points, I laughed at some of what I thought was the nonsense in it and I was increasingly concerned by what may be the underlying philosophy of it, but I will come back to that. The noble Lord, Lord Judd, pointed out that the environment is not just rural, green, nice and good for health and well-being; it includes the urban as well as the rural environment and much of the urban environment is very good, of course. However, it also includes harsh, cold and wet streets where homeless people are living; shoddy new housing in badly designed estates; dirty streets, due to cuts in local authority spending; A&E departments where staff and patients are struggling in conditions of squalor; and roads full of potholes, not least where I live. So when we talk about the environment, let us talk about the whole environment.

There are some good things here and I pick out one or two. Restoring peatlands is a cause I have championed in your Lordships' House in the past. The noble Lord, Lord Krebs, pointed out that upland peat is in very bad condition. Can the Minister say whether the stuff in the plan about peatlands includes upland peat? There is mention of the northern forest and again I give notice to the Minister that I will keep banging on to make sure that part of Lancashire, at least, is part of the northern forest. Protecting and recovering nature, reviewing national parks and AONBs—this is all good stuff. The area in which I have misgivings is what is called “natural capital”, which at times is just mentioned and at others seems to be the underlying philosophy, described as “the new approach”. Page 19 says:

“When we give the environment its due regard as a natural asset—indeed a key contributor—to the overall economy, we will be more likely to give it the value it deserves to protect and enhance it”.

It is clear that that means monetary value. It goes on:

“Natural capital is the sum of our ecosystems, species, freshwater, land, soils, minerals, our air and our seas ... This value is not captured by traditional accounting methods”.

It mentions wildlife as being a particular difficulty. I ask: why should wildlife be captured by traditional accounting methods? There is a question here and I will come to it at the end.

If you are looking at a hierarchy of the systems of all sorts that we operate and live within, the financial and economic systems do not come at the top. The first is clearly the planet on which we live, the structure of the land masses, the atmosphere and oceans that are crucial to life of all kinds and what we do, and then the whole of the biosphere. These things exist

and would exist without us. Economics is a human construct; economic theory and economic systems are one way in which we make sense of and organise what we do. The problem of economics is that it tends to regard environmental issues as “externalities”, as resources that are put into the economic system. It talks about “ecosystem resources” and thinks about inputs and places to dump waste when we do not want it any more. The ecosystems—the environmental system on the planet—is surely much more fundamental than economics, which is just one of the systems we have, along with our social systems and the rest, that take place within the environment. If the aim is to develop a means of giving everything a monetary value, there is a real risk that we will end up knowing the price of everything and the true value of nothing.

If noble Lords think I am exaggerating a bit, page 133, tucked away at the back, says:

“In order to improve our understanding of our natural capital we will: continue to work with the Office for National Statistics to develop a full set of natural capital accounts for the UK that are widely understood and shared internationally. Taken with the new outcome indicators, these accounts will provide a much richer picture of changes to the environment over time ... We will also develop new digital tools and maps to make the use of robust economic values easier for everyone”.

Then, over the page, it says:

“At present we cannot robustly value everything we wish to in economic terms; wildlife being a particular challenge”.

So I went to an excellent and very revealing website describing everything that the Natural Capital Committee, this group of seven professors, does. I quote:

“The Natural Capital Committee defines natural capital as “those elements of the natural environment which provide valuable goods and services to people, such as the stock of forests, water, land, minerals and oceans”.

Then it talks about assessing the value of it. I wonder, if this is fundamental to the report, whether it has got it upside down. The right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Salisbury earlier in this discussion said: “The economy is a wholly owned subsidiary of the environment”. I think that is the right way around.

If natural capital is just one approach that informs our discussion, it can be useful, obviously. It is obviously useful, if people are looking at the value of the coastal path and coastal access, to look, among other things—matters of principle, perhaps—at the value to coastal economies. That is a valuable approach and I have talked about it in your Lordships’ House. If it is the thing on which everything else depends, that is fundamentally wrong. It will result in a large amount of gobbledegook. Some of the natural capital documents I found had mathematical equations in them. I was going to bring them but not only did I not understand them, I did not know how to read them out, so I did not. It will be bogus in practice and it will be used to overturn local and democratic debate, wishes and decisions.

I will finish with a quote from John Muir, the famous Scottish naturalist and conservationist, who went to America and founded the national park movement. He said:

“When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world”.

That is the way we should be looking at this. When all this natural capital stuff is discussed and proposals are put forward, we should treat them with a certain amount of scepticism and make sure that they are not just an attempt to impose so-called neoclassical economics on everything—including plants, animals and the whole of the natural world.

6.50 pm

**Lord Framlingham (Con):** My Lords, I add my thanks to our Minister for all the work he is doing in this field. Nobody better understands both agriculture and the environment than he does, and we are very lucky to have him in his position.

I welcome the 25-year plan and the Prime Minister’s pledge to be,

“the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we found it”.

In my maiden speech in the House of Commons in November 1983, over 34 years ago, I said:

“I am deeply concerned that our generation ... has it in its power, as never before, either to preserve and enhance our environment for future generations or, possibly, to ruin it beyond repair”.

I ended by saying that I hoped that,

“my generation will be thanked and not cursed by those to come”.—[*Official Report*, Commons, 4/11/1983; col. 1120.]

Since then I have watched as both awareness and concern have increased but I am not sure that they have been matched with the necessary action. This plan—which, as I say, I welcome very much—comes as a broad canvas and today’s debate has ranged far and wide and been absolutely fascinating. I will speak specifically about trees and practical matters.

I am delighted that the true worth of trees is now universally recognised and that environmentally they have quietly shuffled themselves centre stage, where they belong. I am particularly keen on urban trees, which are so important to people who live in urban areas. In our towns and cities we must have schemes—properly costed, regularly implemented and protected from cuts—for the care and planting of trees, overseen always by qualified arboriculturists. Our woodlands are battling on two fronts: first, to protect existing woodlands and, secondly, to plant new ones. According to the Woodland Trust, 700 ancient woodlands are currently under threat from development across the UK. It believes it is vital that the legislation protecting them is tightened up, to close loopholes which may be exploited by unscrupulous developers.

As has been touched on already, precise data on ancient woodlands are hard to come by. What is needed is a strict regime of mapping and recording all the other relevant details, held and made available in a national register so that we all know exactly where they are. As far as planting new woodland is concerned, the Woodland Trust recently produced figures showing that we are losing more woodland than we are planting. It stated that across England as a whole we are probably entering a “state of deforestation”. It is to be hoped that this plan, properly executed, will correct this situation.

Of great concern to the tree world is biosecurity: protecting our nation’s trees from pests and diseases imported on foreign stock. At a recent conference, Nicola Spence, the Chief Plant Health Officer, said

[LORD FRAMLINGHAM]

that her top pests and diseases currently were: xylella, plane wilt, longhorn beetles, pine processionary moth, emerald ash borer, and bronze birch borer—quite a horrifying list. We have had Dutch elm disease. We have ash dieback. We know what can happen. We must, as a matter of urgency and in the light of Brexit and all it offers, tighten our rules. We must take advantage of being an island: if need be, introduce bans where appropriate and reconsider introducing a quarantine system. In a position statement, the Woodland Trust says that it will use only UK-sourced trees. The Arboricultural Association similarly states that landscapers should avoid, where possible, using “directly imported stock”. Many nurserymen and landscapers are already changing their policies.

On a slightly different matter but still on biosecurity and hygiene, in its position statement *Biosecurity in Arboriculture and Urban Forestry*, the Arboricultural Association highlights the often-overlooked need for precautions to avoid transmitting disease when engaged in tree surgery or forestry operations, and the need for the careful cleaning and disinfecting of clothing, tools and vehicles, together with the careful disposal of arisings. Action needs to be taken soon to highlight this issue.

I will now share a pet hate with the House: ivy growing on healthy trees, particularly oaks and particularly in Suffolk. I recently tabled a Written Question and received a very unsatisfactory Answer, to the effect that it is not really seen as a problem. Well, it is a huge problem in Suffolk and, I suspect, other counties. Ivy climbing up an already dead tree does not matter but ivy climbing into the crown of a healthy tree can and often does prove fatal. Numerous once-healthy oaks, now looking like giant broccoli plants, are being smothered and killed off all over Suffolk—some, I must say to the Minister, quite close to where he lives, and I urge him, if he can find the time, to review the situation and perhaps change his department’s advice. Absolutely no sensible purpose is served by letting ivy climb up a healthy tree.

Finally—and sadly when talking about our nation’s environment over the next 25 years—I am bound to mention the environmental disaster that is HS2. For most of the next 25 years, this astronomically expensive infrastructural white elephant will be gouging its way through our English countryside. Few want it, no one is prepared to stop it, and for the rest of the lives of many of us in this Chamber it will be a constant reminder of the gap between government and the people, and the follies even a democracy cannot stop.

6.58 pm

**Lord Chartres (CB):** My Lords, in following the noble Lord, Lord Framlingham, I have to say that there is a considerable ivy problem in Wiltshire as well and I echo his concern about that. I declare an interest as an ambassador for the World Wide Fund for Nature and someone with more than 40 years’ membership of a series of environmental organisations and initiatives. Like so many others in your Lordships’ House, I hugely welcome the publication of this 25-year plan. The changes that we need to make to the way we live now are urgent but achieving them will take wisdom

and a sustained and developing approach over the next quarter century. We have heard some intriguing and delightful ideas. Like the noble Baroness, Lady Young, I relish the notion of a sort of Ent warden for trees—a tree champion. I would love to see the ideal profile for such an Ent.

As somebody who has lived in central London for more than 30 years and who has brought up a family in the heavily polluted square mile of the City of London, I welcome the emphasis placed on air quality. The noble Lord, Lord Oxburgh, looked at this in statistical and global financial terms. For me, it was brought home on a recent visit to a primary school in West Drayton—close to Heathrow but, more significantly, close to the confluence of motorways—where I discovered that on every school journey staff must carry a box of respirators, so prevalent are asthma and breathing problems among the children.

The point has already been made, so I will not labour it, that much of our existing regulation about air quality and so much else is derived from EU legislation and the withdrawal Bill has not been clear about the machinery for enforcement and any sanctions regime after Brexit. We know that these things will have to be reinvented, and the 25-year plans aims,

“to set up a world-leading environmental watchdog, an independent statutory body to hold Government to account”.

This is crucial, as other noble Lords have said—it must have teeth as well as protection from short-termist demands for watering down standards. I believe that we are fortunate in having an intelligent and energetic Secretary of State as well as a Minister in this House who has been widely commended, but such is the churn which afflicts all Governments that we must insure ourselves against a time when the climate is not so benign.

The plan also deals with putting a price on natural capital. We have had several contributions from noble Lords discussing this concept. I understand the proper concern to develop metrics to inform our decision-making, but that is not enough to generate energy for change. Twenty-five years’ involvement in a symposium focused on the health of our rivers and oceans, “Religion, Science and the Environment”, brought home to me that numbers and statistics repeated at a plethora of international conferences do not generate the energy needed for a transformation in the way we live now. The noble Lord, Lord Cameron of Dillington, argued in parallel for this sort of initiative and some sort of inspiration. This plan is ambitious but there must also be understanding and modesty about the limits of any Government’s capacity to deliver the necessary change together with an awareness of the crucial significance of building partnerships with civil society. We have not heard this afternoon about the role of artists and journalists, which is crucial. They have a huge contribution to make, as the recent BBC “Blue Planet” series has once again demonstrated.

For the vast majority of the world’s population the sense of nature as a sacred trust and not just an economic resource is a powerful force which ought to be harnessed. There is scope for translating the themes in this plan into the daily practice of millions of people throughout the world. We need imagination. We need a disposition to build partnerships and to

propose imaginative ways forward. We need the imagination demonstrated by Bishop Nathan of Uganda. He insists that each confirmation he performs must be accompanied by the planting of a tree. When he arrives in a village to do his confirmations, the first thing he does is count the saplings, and if there are not enough, he refuses to confirm the requisite number of candidates.

For an ambitious plan such as this to succeed it needs not only metrics but a language and an approach complemented by educational alliances—education alliances are discussed with primary schools—with the wisdom traditions of the world and their day-to-day practices. Yesterday, the Church year turned to looking forward to Lent and Easter, and this is perhaps a moment to recall the words of Pope Francis in his 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si*:

“Many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change. We lack an awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging, and of a future to be shared with everyone. This basic awareness would enable the development of new convictions, attitudes and forms of life. A great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal.”

7.05 pm

**Baroness Bakewell of Hardington Mandeville (LD):**

My Lords, this has been a most fascinating and informed debate. We have listened to many speakers with a wealth of experience in protecting and enhancing the environment. I thank the Minister for delivering on his promise to secure a debate on this subject so quickly and at such a timely moment, when it can feed into the debate on the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill, which will start tomorrow and continue on Wednesday.

We have heard some marvellous speeches about the importance of trees, about ancient woodlands from the noble Baroness, Lady Young of Old Scone, and about the dangers of ivy on healthy trees from the noble Lord, Lord Framlingham. I wholeheartedly agree with him. It is one of the bugbears of my life as well. We heard about carbon and green gas emissions from my noble friend Lady Featherstone and about the need to restore peat lands, soil welfare and the importance of water quality, which were spoken about by the noble Baroness, Lady Byford. Pressure groups around the UK are mentioned in the plan. As my noble friend Lady Scott of Needham Market said, water quality is vital to the life of the planet and to this country.

The plan is extensive and aspirational. Most environmental groups that have contacted me have welcomed the plan as a step in the right direction but felt it could go much further and be more strongly enshrined in law. The exception was ClientEarth, which felt the plan was full of empty promises. While being aspirational, which is good, the plan certainly needs to be grounded in statute and to be enforced if it is to deliver as the Government hope it will. As the noble Lord, Lord Cameron, so eloquently said, it has to deliver for the sake of our young people who care so passionately about the environment. My noble friend Lady Miller asked how success will be measured. That is a question the Minister needs to answer. How will we know? What about the ecologically coherent aspects of the plan that have to be addressed across all sectors?

The noble Earl, Lord Caithness, said that we have some hard decisions to make on wildlife. I agree that that is important. The examples he gave are food for thought. Tenant farmers need to benefit from efforts to make their farms sustainable. The benefits should not be going to landlords.

Last week, with the noble Baroness, Lady Byford, and the noble Earl, Lord Caithness, I met the Nature Friendly Farming Network, a self-organised group of farmers from across the UK with a passion for sustainable farming and nature. Formed last year, it welcomes the 25-year environment plan and the commitment to the environment it shows, including the commitment to put the environment first when it comes to future agriculture support. The Secretary of State recognises that the common agricultural policy has in the past led to environmental damage and that direct payments are a largely inefficient use of taxpayer money. He has said that he will replace the basic payment scheme with a system of investment in public goods, and the environment is the principal public good. It will be important for the public money invested to be equal to the task.

There is a positive recognition that productivity and sustainability go hand in hand and need to be addressed in tandem. This is an important change from previous attempts to deal with them separately or even to see them as in opposition. A real test of the plan will be how it delivers on both of these.

The continued investment in technical advice and landscape co-ordination is also welcome. Farmers are pleased to see references to this in the plan, as they know that working in partnership, whether with other farmers, landowners or advisers, is often the key to achieving great things for nature and the environment.

All this is very positive, but this view is not shared across the whole UK. When the Secretary of State, Michael Gove, visited Ireland recently to talk to the Northern Ireland farming conference, he talked about England, England, England. This left those in southern and Northern Ireland wondering just what it was he has planned for the farming communities there. If the plan is to be successful, there has to be widespread co-operation across the whole of the UK, including the devolved Administrations. As previous speakers have said, the Government must tackle this issue and not leave it to others.

The role of insects is vital, as detailed by the noble Lord, Lord Oxburgh. Pollinators are important to growing crops, plant survival and honey production. They are both at the bottom of the food chain, but are a vital part of it.

As many have spotted, there are anomalies in the rhetoric coming from Government. The Prime Minister and Secretary of State have stated forcefully their wish to see a reduction in the use of plastics in the UK. They have set a target of 2042, which is far too late. Yet, while regretting the use of plastics on one hand, on the other the Government have cut their funding to WRAP, resulting in WRAP having to make 25 staff redundant. WRAP is the very organisation which would have helped the Prime Minister to deliver her waste reduction plan. These redundancies came just one week after the launch of the 25-year environment

[BARONESS BAKEWELL OF HARDINGTON MANDEVILLE] plan. Targets need to be set on recycling waste plastic coffee cups or to phase out their use, as the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Salisbury has already flagged up.

All the way through the plan, the text is all about co-operation with other countries, both within the EU and worldwide. However, there is sadly more evidence that the Government are talking the talk, but not walking the walk on this issue. As we know, the country's recycling rate has flatlined at 44%, short of the EU target of 50% by 2020. Despite the Prime Minister and Secretary of State's reassurance of commitment to recycling, the Unearthed project has discovered from an EU delegation's notes that UK officials have indicated the UK will not support an EU-wide target of recycling 65% of all municipal waste. If this is correct, this is a scandalous backtracking even before the new plan is put into operation. Can the Minister confirm whether this is true?

Throughout the plan, the Government indicate they will set up bodies to enforce the aims of the plan. It talks about "a responsible body" to oversee covenants. Can the Government now say exactly how the enforcement body will be set up, who will sit on it and whether it will be independent of government?

We would also like to know when Defra will set out the process for developing further objectives and milestones for delivery. What standing will those objectives have in law? If the objectives are voluntary, what assurances can the Minister give the House that the plan will be delivered, a point raised by the noble Lords, Lord Krebs, and the noble Lord, Lord Judd?

What discussions have the Government had with the devolved Administrations about new, shared environment goals? What format will the annual progress reports take in public and in Parliament? Does the Minister expect the new statutory environment body to have the power to bring a legal challenge if the Government fail to meet the objectives of the 25-year environment plan?

I was disappointed not to see a specific date when the Government will implement a total ban on the sale, import and export of ivory from the UK. In the debate in the House on the last Thursday before Christmas, the majority of those taking part were in favour of a ban on ivory sales, and this move would be supported by the majority of the public. I look forward to the Minister's response to this important debate, on a subject which I know is dear to his heart, as it is to many here today.

7.15 pm

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch (Lab):** My Lords, I am grateful to the Minister for initiating the debate today and to all noble Lords who have spoken with such knowledge and passion about the challenges which we know face our environment going forward. It is fair to say that across the House we welcome the intent of the Government's vision. The document has been a long time coming, and has had its fits and starts, but I think we now have a blueprint which has some coherence and which gives a sense of the Government's ambition for the environment, which is very welcome.

We particularly welcome the advice given to the Government by the Natural Capital Committee and the decision of the Government to absorb many of its recommendations into the plan. As the report says:

"In the past, our failure to understand the full value of the benefits offered by the environment and cultural heritage has seen us make poor choices".

We can change all that if we alter our mindset and place a new value on our natural assets such as our land, clean air and water, our regenerating ecosystems and our diverse species. This requires hard choices—it is not an easy option—and a significant change in government priorities, but it can be done.

We also welcome the Government's ambitions to become a global environmental champion. The Labour Government led the way internationally through the Climate Change Act, which recognised that each country must play its part in addressing the threat of greenhouse gases to the viability of our planet. Our legally binding emissions targets and the statutory delivery bodies we created are still world class. It is up to this Government now to prove that they can take that leadership to the next level by developing a global agreement, for example, to halt deforestation and to protect scarce water supplies so that we can sustain our planet for the future.

Similarly, we welcome the recognition of the crucial role that oceans play in supplying oxygen, absorbing carbon dioxide and maintaining biodiversity. As a marine nation, we have a particular role to play in demonstrating that it is possible to use and manage our seas sustainably. The extension of the marine conservation zones is key to this, as will be the introduction of genuinely sustainable fishing quotas based on the best science available and in line with our international obligations.

These and other promises set out in the plan give us hope that there is a genuine determination to make the plan a reality. But this is a huge task, and forgive me if I am slightly sceptical. I would not be doing my job if I did not remind the House that the Government do not have a great record on the environment. The truth is that despite promising to deliver the greenest Government ever in 2010, we have seen seven years of disappointment.

We can all remember David Cameron's "hug a husky" moment, but from then on, it all seemed to go downhill. For example, the Government cut support for renewables, closed the department dealing with climate change, axed the Sustainable Development Commission, voted against key environmental protections and allowed air pollution to escalate into a public health emergency. As we have heard from several noble Lords this evening, our record on building regulations, which were dealt with during that time, has left much to be desired. My noble friend Lord Hunt reminded us that there was so much more that we could have done on clean energy in the past, and so much more that we now need to do.

But never mind, it is all different now, because we have a new Secretary of State, who undoubtedly has breathed some life back into a neglected department—as I have said before, it is a pleasure to welcome a sinner back into the environmental fold. Nevertheless, we have some remaining concerns. Although it is impossible

to do justice to all the issues raised, my “thank you, but” comments—to echo my noble friend’s words—are as follows.

First, as many noble Lords have said, the document is rather short on specific commitments. In essence, it is rather more a strategy than a costed and timed action plan. If you compare it for example to the clean growth strategy produced by BEIS, it has far fewer projections, measurables and markers. Although we all accept the need for long-term planning in this sector, by the same token 25 years is a long way away and far beyond the influence and reach of this Government. As the noble Lord, Lord Cameron, said, 25 years is a blip in history, certainly in environmental history, but it is a long time in politics.

We would be far more reassured if some of the deadlines were commitments to which this Government could be held to account. I hope that when the promised metrics to chart progress are produced by the end of 2018, they will include a substantial number of actions—based, yes, on the best scientific advice and innovation—on items that the Government will deliver in this parliamentary term. Then we might have something to celebrate.

Incidentally, I can think of no one better to be the new tree champion than my noble friend Lady Young of Old Scone. And I take the points made by my noble friend Lord Judd and others who talked about the urban environment. We are in danger of seeing natural capital and the natural environment as being the countryside, but it goes far beyond that.

My second concern is that there is a preponderance of woolly commitments in the report. This point was made powerfully by the noble Baroness, Lady Miller, and the noble Lords, Lord Krebs and Lord Teverson. The report’s wording leaves something to be desired, talking about,

“working with interested parties to consider ... exploring the potential ... reviewing existing plans ... investigating the potential for research ... considering delivery options”,

and so on. These do not sound much like a Government who have made their mind up about much. I hope the Minister is able to reassure us that there is some urgency in the department to put some teeth and determination into the rhetoric.

Thirdly, at the launch of the document the Government placed great emphasis on the need to clean up plastic from our environment. We all agree that a powerful case was made for this in the “Blue Planet” series. I know we all care passionately about the issue of plastic and have debated it in the past. However, as the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Salisbury has said, the plan contains few specific measures to tackle plastic waste. For example, a plastic-free aisle is not going to make much of an inroad into the 800,000 tonnes of plastic packaging waste produced by supermarkets each year. Meanwhile, as several noble Lords have said, there is no mention of the single-use bottle deposit scheme or the levy on disposable coffee cups, which the Government have previously raised.

At the same time, dealing with waste and resource efficiency requires an ambition well beyond plastic recycling. I agree with my noble friend Lord Hanworth that our record on recycling across the piece has been poor, which is why we are concerned about reports that the Government are blocking the new EU recycling

targets, a point that has been made recently in the press. We need to re-engineer the way we use resources so that they can be used again and again in a genuine circular economy. This will require clear government direction and investment. It cannot be left to individual businesses to act on a voluntary basis. I agree with the noble Baroness, Lady Bakewell, that WRAP has a crucial role to play in all this, and it is a great shame that there have been reports about its budget being cut. If we do it well, it will not be a negative action; it will provide huge growth in green jobs, which in turn could give a major boost to our economy. So it is regrettable that the resource and waste strategy promised for later this year has not been incorporated into this document, leaving many questions unanswered.

Fourthly, the plan relies on a great deal of cross-departmental delivery, as a number of noble Lords have mentioned—for example, working with BEIS on the clean growth strategy; working with the MHCLG on the planning and housing implications for sustainable living; working with the departments of health and education on improving health and well-being and bringing children closer to nature; and working with the devolved nations to provide coherent themes for action across the Government. This cross-departmental working is notoriously difficult to achieve. Despite the launch speech by the Prime Minister, I doubt the 25-year environment plan is a priority for other departments. On top of all that, there are the arm’s-length agencies that are cross-referenced in the document, which also need to be co-ordinated into a sensible whole. So there is a major challenge here in terms of where ultimate responsibility lies and who is going to ensure that everyone across government plays their part to deliver the plan. What mechanisms does the department have in place for overcoming the renowned reluctance of the Minister’s colleagues to work on a collaborative basis?

Lastly, as a number of noble Lords have argued, there is a noticeable absence of legal underpinning for the proposals. The document talks of consulting on a new independent body to hold the Government to account, but is that really good enough? I echo the concerns of my noble friend Lady Young of Old Scone and several other noble Lords: these commitments will be taken seriously only if they are backed by the force of law and a new environment watchdog with real teeth to hold the Government to account for its compliance with environmental law and, if necessary, force them to take action to mend any broken promises. That has to include the powers to take Ministers to court and be subjected to serious sanctions, such as fines, when environmental laws are broken. The noble Lord will know that this is an issue that we are going to refer to in the EU withdrawal Bill, but it is a shame that the Government did not take the opportunity to set out a clear legislative underpinning in this document.

With that said, we welcome the overall ambition of the Government and very much look forward to seeing how it matches up to reality in years to come.

7.26 pm

**Lord Gardiner of Kimble (Con):** My Lords, this has been a totally absorbing and wide-ranging debate. We all have a shared purpose. Your Lordships’ experiences

[LORD GARDINER OF KIMBLE]

have given me much food for thought and—I say to the noble Lord, Lord Teverson—encouragement. On the question of “Thank you, but”, noble Lords have also used the terms, “important”, “laudable”, “admirable” “welcome”, “coherent”, “promising”, “refreshing”, “good read” and “right terms”. I think that means the receive button is on across this House on something that we all want to ensure is implemented. Some noble Lords have been very generous about the current ministerial teams and so forth but I think this matter has captured the national mood as well. I will say more about this later. As we work day in and day out, year in and year out towards this 25-year plan, as endorsed by the Natural Capital Committee in 2015—and in the scheme of things 25 years is not that long—I feel strongly, although I accept that this will be interpreted as an excuse, that this plan is the better for the time that it has taken and the rigour that is now in it, with a range of action points that we wish to take forward.

I want to clear up immediately something that was in my opening remarks for the noble Baroness, Lady Bakewell of Hardington Mandeville. Clearly it is important, indeed essential, that we work collaboratively with all parts of the UK. Because of devolution this plan legally refers to England, but it is essential that we work not only collaboratively within the UK, as I explained, but with our partners because many of the issues that affect us, such as water, air and disease, come from our neighbours and vice versa. It is imperative that we work internationally and for the interests of both land and sea.

Your Lordships also recognised the importance of setting ambitious targets against which we can measure our performance to drive success. This is why the plan sets out clear goals for the environment in every area, a number of which I set out in my opening remarks.

It was interesting to hear the noble Lord, Lord Hunt of Chesterton, talking about clean energy at home and overseas. The Government are now investing nearly £1.5 billion to position the UK at the global forefront of ultra-low emission vehicles development, manufacture and use, so that we can transition away from petrol and diesel cars, which will no longer be sold by 2040—although I was mindful of some points made by the noble Lord, Lord Oxburgh, on the matter.

The noble Baroness, Lady Jones of Whitchurch, is right to be sceptical, because it is her responsibility to keep the Government’s feet to the fire, but the comprehensive clean air strategy will set out further steps to tackle what we all know: the issue in many of our towns and cities must be addressed as soon as we possibly can. That is why it is important that last week, with consent across the House, we went further than required by the EU directive to tackle some of the most polluting generators. The reduction of those emissions will take us a significant way to achieving our 2030 air quality targets, but there is more work to be done.

I want to go to the heart of what so many of your Lordships spoke about on metrics and an independent body. The noble Lord, Lord Krebs, raised that, as did those on the Front Benches, the noble Lords, Lord Judd, Lord Teverson and Lord Redesdale, and the noble Baroness, Lady Miller of Chilthorne Domer.

It is very important that we do not set these metrics in isolation and that they are consulted on. By definition, a statutory body requires legislation. I will be very straightforward and say that consultation on the precise vehicle by which that manifests itself is yet to be determined, but clearly it needs a statutory footing. The role of the statutory body will be designed through the consultation, and I very much look forward to your Lordships participating in a rigorous response to that consultation, because we expect and want it to have a strong role in holding the Government to account on the achievement of the metrics.

On the issue of research and evidence raised by the noble Lord, Lord Krebs, yes, of course we want to work collaboratively and in partnership with the scientific community. That is essential. All that we do is based on the best scientific evidence available. However, being a country person, I must also agree with my noble friend Lord Cathcart that it is very important in that blend to have the practical knowledge of the grass roots in the countryside playing its part in the essential management of the countryside.

Meeting the targets we set ourselves requires that we take co-ordinated action across all the areas in which we traditionally work. We need to embrace innovation and take the unique opportunity for change now before us. My noble friend Lord Ridley referred to innovation. I was struck by this on a day’s visit to Harper Adams. The wider adoption of precision farming, moving away from hydrocarbon to zero-emission vehicles and working with nature but, to use my noble friend’s words, working forward with nature is also tremendously important.

It is with some embarrassment that I say to the noble Baroness, Lady Miller of Chilthorne Domer, that I know the Cherry family in Hertfordshire very well indeed, and I know what it is doing with the Groundswell meetings and the large number of farmers coming to the conferences it holds on min and no-till, and the advantages it has. I must say that when I looked at it for my very heavy clay soil in the Vale of Aylesbury, I found that it is not necessarily as straightforward in different soil structures, but the advances made in carbon capture and increase in soil fertility are something that we should all think about.

The noble Baroness, Lady Featherstone, also raised soil health. The plan sets out our intention to improve soil health, including the development of meaningful metrics which will allow us to develop cost-effective and innovative ways to monitor soil. We will develop a land management scheme with minimum bureaucracy that provides flexibility. I was struck by the words of my noble friend Lady Byford: this needs to be flexible. We also need to move towards a more effective application of the “polluter pays” principle, which the noble Lord, Lord Teverson, mentioned.

As so many noble Lords mentioned, it is essential that we work with farmers, land managers and others to consider the role of the new environmental land management scheme. I was very struck by the noble Lord, Lord Cameron of Dillington, saying that he remembered this from his earlier times and at last it is coming to fruition. The proposals in the Command Paper later this spring, to be followed by an agriculture Bill, will be a very important feature of our work.

As my noble friend Lord Cathcart also said, we need to see how this will all work in practice. Most of us farmers want to feel that what we are doing enhances the environment. From my many meetings with farmers and discussing this with people whom I know very well, we all want to know how we should do this: what is the best way to achieve public support for the public good for the nation? I have also been struck during my visits by the commitment of farmers and land managers whether to pollinator-friendly cropping or to other measures to help insects and birds. All around the country, many landowners and farmers have been doing that for generations.

We also need to work with foresters and other land managers to maximise the many benefits obtained from our woodlands. I have always enjoyed my meetings with the noble Baroness, Lady Young of Old Scone, because we feel very strongly about ancient woodland and the glories of those wonderful trees, but also the importance of helping landowners to plant trees on, say, their marginal land, and to encourage agroforestry. It is like houses: building houses in the right place is like planting trees in the right places. As has been said, all this activity will be supported by a newly appointed national tree champion to drive the step change in tree planting that we need, including the delivery of 1 million urban trees.

I so agree with what my noble friend Lord Framlingham said about urban trees and the enhancement and pleasure that they give. I do not mind which complexion they may have, but local authorities chopping down trees—in my view, entirely unnecessarily—need to think about their environment and the vandalism in some of our towns and cities, when we should be planting more trees to make them more beautiful. Our pledge is also for a further 11 million trees elsewhere. Although your Lordships have spoken about woodland, farming and the countryside, I absolutely agree with what the noble Lords, Lord Judd and Lord Greaves, and the noble Baroness, Lady Jones of Whitchurch, said. We must address the challenge of living in a contemporary way in our towns and cities.

I was also struck by what the noble Lord, Lord Judd, said—here perhaps I have to refer to the countryside again—about light pollution. Dark skies are an essential glory of our national parks. We should also think about noise. The work that we are doing on low-emission vehicles and the reduction in noise means that we could be one of the last generations to endure some noisy vehicles. We must ensure that the needs of our growing population are met without harming the natural environment. I agree that that will be a challenge. That is why investment in clean innovation, zero-emission vehicles and measures to tackle local air pollution where the situation is so grave are vital.

We will restore and protect peatlands. They are one of the extraordinary glories of our landscape. That will include the uplands, and we will make £10 million funding available from April for a peatland grant scheme and publish the English peat strategy this year.

On the northern forest stretching along the M62 corridor from Liverpool to Hull, I will have to write to the noble Lord, Lord Greaves, on the precise boundaries, but my understanding of geography is

that that would take in a whole swathe of countryside from Liverpool to Hull. But I shall come back to him on that matter.

The plan also sets the actions that we will take to recover nature, not just preserving our existing wildlife and environmental heritage but improving it. The point was made by a number of noble Lords on net gain. Clearly, we need to work closely with the MHCLG in its work in revising the national planning policy framework. We will consult on whether requirements for net gain for biodiversity should be mandated; we shall also expand the net gain approach to include wider natural capital to deliver benefits such as flood protection, recreation and improved water quality. All of this is very important, and I am very keen, in development, that while we ensure that we have more houses—we must ensure that people have affordable homes and that there are homes for people, whether in villages, cities or brownfield sites—we look at this within the prism of net gain for the environment as well.

Restoring nature means protecting it from risks. My noble friend Lord Framlingham raised this issue. We have had ash dieback more quickly than we should have done because of what we did and should not have done, but its natural spread means it is now reaching into many counties of England, having come across the channel. We need to increase awareness of biosecurity threats at the border and maintain an alert system to detect high-priority invasive non-native species and implement contingency plans to eradicate them as rapidly as possible, wherever that is feasible. So far, with the Asian hornet, we have been able to accomplish that. We shall work with industry to drive improvement in animal health and publish a tree health resilience plan this year.

We are blessed with the most glorious and varied landscapes. For me, it is the countryside where my soul soars. I agree that we should care for it for its own sake, but I particularly mention the national parks and AONBs, for which I am responsible, and the promise of a Hobhouse review for the 21st century, considering designations and how designated areas deliver their responsibilities and whether there is scope for expansion. The Government will work with the national park authorities, AONB partnerships and conservation boards to deliver environmental enhancement. Of course, bearing what my noble friend Lord Cathcart said in mind, that means working very closely with farmers in securing these objectives.

We will act to improve our management of nature and how we engage with it; we also appreciate that many of the activities that have been part of our modern lives have a negative impact on the environment. We will regulate to secure improvements where necessary. We need to recognise better the ever-growing importance of opportunities provided by the circular economy, and we will build on the progress of the plastic bag charge, which has already reduced the use of carrier bags by 83%. It is very important that we work in that regard, as we have done with our national litter strategy, whereby we called for evidence on measures to reduce littering of drink containers and promoting recycling. I say to the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Salisbury that, with all the strategies alongside the

[LORD GARDINER OF KIMBLE]  
environment plan, the call for evidence on the cost benefits and impacts of reward and return schemes is the first step in considering these very important options. I also acknowledge the tireless commitment by my noble friend Lord Marlesford on addressing littering.

These actions will transform our environment for the better. That will be co-ordinated, first, with local activity. My noble friend Lord Selborne mentioned widespread ownership, and I so agree with that. The point about the farm clusters mentioned by many of my noble friends is hugely important, and we will make best use of existing local nature partnerships. We will continue public investment in the environment; as well as taking steps to ensure public sector investment, we will stimulate innovation through a new natural environment impact fund.

On our international commitments, I have to say to the noble Baroness, Lady Scott of Needham Market, that we have no intention at all of weakening our current environmental protections. Indeed, we are in the business of strengthening them. The UK has a long environmental protection history, and we are signatories to many international agreements. I hope that the noble Baroness will forgive me, but the list is long. I shall write to noble Lords because there have been so many questions, but I shall also of course write about which agreements we are members of in our own right.

I said in my opening speech that we would report on progress and hold ourselves to account. Defra will report regularly on performance against goals to ensure that the plan remains responsive to changing times. We shall refresh it at least every five years, revisiting the policies within it. The independent body on which we will consult early this year will have a key role in monitoring our delivery. That is obviously something for consultation.

In the very short time I have, I want to say that I was very struck by what the noble and right reverend Lord, Lord Chartres, said, in referring to “Blue Planet II”, but also the importance of change. We all have to change. With what we are seeing on plastics, with businesses starting to act, and on our environment, wherever we live, in town or country, on land or at sea, I believe that the actions of this plan and their advancement will make a huge difference. I agree with the noble Baroness, Lady Featherstone, that we need to quicken the pace of change; that is very important. The Government recognise their responsibility. This plan, protecting and enhancing for the next 25 years, alongside many other strategies, sets a clear direction for food production in harmony with the environment; economic growth in a circular and clean economy; vibrant biodiversity; the wise use of resources; a better environment wherever we live; and an awareness of how essential the environment is.

I am sorry, but there is so much in this plan. I very much hope that we will continue the dialogue, and I know that your Lordships will, quite rightly, keep the pressure up—and I shall look forward to it. As I see this, it is an honest endeavour, and we cannot fail in it. If we are to pledge as a Government and a country to leave our country in a better state than the one in

which we found it, which is a very traditional as well as a contemporary aspiration, it is essential that we all engage and use all our energies to make this a successful plan. I realise that there may be scepticism. It is a lot of words, but there is a lot of action that we must all take, too.

*Motion agreed.*

## Russia

### *Question for Short Debate*

7.48 pm

*Asked by Viscount Waverley*

To ask Her Majesty’s Government what is their current strategy towards relations with Russia.

**Viscount Waverley (CB):** My Lords, with the leave of the House, the noble Earl, Lord Cork, has kindly agreed to finish up if the ails of the season intervene during my remarks.

At a time of escalating rhetoric, some of it ill-informed, misinformation and polarisation, relations with Russia must command our attention. The perspective of the United Kingdom, and that of the West more generally, in addition to that of Russia require consideration. Time constraints do not permit me other than to commend to the Minister to take note of Russia’s enhanced relations with China and Turkey, nor will I comment on the internal affairs of Russia given the proximity of the upcoming presidential election.

The UK’s current disagreements include: Russia’s actions in sovereign countries—Ukraine, with eastern Ukraine and Crimea, and Syria; serious contentions of election interference and the cyber sphere; and the death of Mr Litvinenko. The UK therefore supports the strict EU and US sanctions regimes. We have a long-held view also that attempts to undermine a rules-based order—universal human rights, rule of law and democracy—are unacceptable and must be challenged.

The visit to Moscow by the Foreign Secretary in December might suggest a degree of bilateral progress, despite differing views. The bilateral relationship hitherto remained deadlocked, with co-operation and dialogue held hostage, all official contact blocked, zero intelligence co-operation and the intergovernmental steering committee on trade and investment on hold since 2014, with inevitable consequences. This is not helpful in these turbulent times.

As things stand, with our current policies and approach, Moscow is dismissive of the UK. It insists on respect and to be engaged with as a player on the world stage. Russia views the current international order as detrimental to its interests. Western concern is that Russia could up-end the existing balance of the world if allowed to act in an unfettered manner, free of constraints.

Russia believes it would be better served by a system of spheres of influence, in which major powers are pre-eminent in their respective regions. This pre-eminence would be determined by those able to be responsible for their foreign policy—the US, China and Russia—with each to have an equal say on matters of importance and with the Security Council being the venue for managing world affairs.

Russia perceives itself as disadvantaged by the current security order in Europe and is strongly opposed to continued NATO expansion, which it sees as a threat. Not consequentially, Moscow has made modernising its nuclear arsenal central to its strategy.

Russia was of the view that US diplomacy in Syria was marginalising its interests and took an opportunity to step in with military intervention when it perceived western democracy was failing. It appears satisfied that its regional geopolitics has been enhanced. Nevertheless, it remains concerned with the security situation in the Middle East region, particularly with its border areas currently destabilised by returning extremist jihadists.

A commitment to early negotiations between Ukraine and Russia would be a useful development, with continuing support for the Normandy peace process. Beyond that, a more proactive role and trust for the OSCE by Russia would be viewed positively, while commitment and reconsideration of financial contributions to the Council of Europe and a resolution to the impasse regarding the presentation of credentials to the Parliamentary Assembly would be welcomed.

Current economic sanctions are designed to both punish Russia for aggressive actions and deter it from future coercion. It considers that the US sanctions law means that resolution of the Ukraine crisis will not result in the lifting of US sanctions and therefore questions whether the EU will lift sanctions if the US does not. There are indicators of future dilution of the EU sanctions regime, possibly led by Germany when it confronts its national priority to secure gas. This is in addition to recent reported violations of sanctions in the Far East.

The current level of co-operation on cybersecurity is reflective of the overall relationship, and mechanisms are urgently required to define the rules of the game. There appears to be broad western consensus of comprehensive orchestrated interference. One challenge is that the West and the Russians have very different views as to what constitutes hacking. There is potential, nevertheless, for all sides to work together to combat cybercrime and the use of the internet by terrorists. I have called on HMG to consider taking a lead internationally by devising and promoting a new global treaty to nail this issue. A mutual cyber non-interference pact would be helpful. I understand that Russia would welcome the opportunity to participate.

As things stand, with current policies and approaches, we in the UK would be deluding ourselves if we believed that we are a priority for Russia. However, the UK now has a real opportunity globally, in a new-look UK post Brexit, to play to our strengths; to carve out a valuable future acting as an honest broker on the world stage. We are respected the world over for our natural sense of fairness and world-class diplomacy. The world's problems, including climate change, global terrorism, the rising gap between the rich and the poor and cybersecurity all need co-operation between the world's players, which should include the UK and Russia. We should focus more on areas of common interest, and not just on what divides us. There is scope for a summit meeting to define these areas. A new era of mutual respect would serve both sides well.

So what might lie ahead for UK-Russia relations? Engagement is naturally preferable, although conundrums exist over the present UK official mindset. HMG could become more positive, bold and innovative and might wish to develop a more constructive, clearly defined engagement by advancing along four tracks: track 1 would be Government to Government; track 2 would be security co-operation and military dialogue; track 3 would be trade, scientific research, climate change, health, the international drugs problem, culture, sports and the all-important civil society co-operation including educational exchanges; and track 4 would be parliamentary interaction.

Economic co-operation can reshape the course of any relationship. I am reminded of the recent MOU and road map between Russia's Ministry of Economic Development and France's Ministry for the Economy and Finance on innovative clusters development, with Germany having more than 10 times the number of active joint ventures or entities registered with or in Russia that we do. Engaging with the Patriarch and the Russian Orthodox Church and co-operation in the Arctic would be equally useful. The strength of a relationship is determined by how broad it is, and by it not being an exclusive preserve of government.

I draw towards a conclusion. Noble Lords might possibly have read the lead article in Friday's *Daily Telegraph* with the strap-line:

"Russia is ready to kill us by the thousands".

I feel compelled to comment briefly in light of this evening's debate. While I certainly do not advocate that the UK throws caution to the winds, the suggestion of impending apocalypse is excessive. The Russian ambassador has reacted vehemently to the article on his embassy's website. If, however, the Defence Secretary's assertion was indeed correct, we have to ask ourselves why. It could be the result of a bilateral relationship that has been in the freezer for many a year. In that case, what is going to be done about it?

Much could be gained by conducting patient and persistent diplomacy; a broad bilateral engagement and an atmosphere of good relations would be a preferable route. HMG might wish to recall Henry Kissinger's advice,

"to be wary of those who encourage anti-Russian sentiment when it is not in the long-term strategic interests of the West".

It might serve us well also not to forget that Russia, as the Soviet Union, came to our aid in the Great Patriotic War, known to us as the Second World War. Their losses were immense. Without them, we would not be here today. I have in my library *Memoirs of a Soviet Ambassador: 1939-1943*. One of Ivan Maisky's observations was that his recollection of official meetings he attended in London differed from the official records of the day. Therein might lie a clue to the United Kingdom's engagement with Russia: bridge that gap and build the trust vital to underpin a productive future relationship. I look forward to a robust debate on these issues.

7.59 pm

**Lord Howell of Guildford (Con):** My Lords, I thank the noble Viscount, Lord Waverley, for promoting this debate and for the constructive tone of his remarks.

[LORD HOWELL OF GUILDFORD]

I shall make a few quick observations in the limited time allowed. First, it is often forgotten that although Russia has a huge land mass and many talented people, in global terms it has a dwarf economy: half the size of Italy's, less than half the size of ours, one-ninth the size of China's and fourteen times smaller than that of the USA. The amazing thing is how such a shrunken economy, so poorly run, manages to have such an impact on the world.

For example, Washington nowadays seems in a permanent frenzy about Russia. There is talk of a new cold war. As we have heard, Russia is conducting a vicious war in Syria, although to what end is not at all clear. It has caused mayhem in Ukraine, grabbed back Crimea, as well as chunks of Georgia, is busy doing its best to destabilise central Europe and the Balkans, developing new forms of hybrid and deceptive maskarova warfare, has forced the whole of NATO on to the alert, threatened our subsea energy links and, of course, allowed, and maybe even encouraged, a sort of botnet wild west of cyberhacking and false and fake news, through a maze of criminal syndicates, and possibly official sources as well. Russia spends about the same as the United Kingdom on defence but seems to get a lot more for the money.

Putin mark 2 in his second presidency will not, of course, last for ever, even with arranged elections, and the oil and gas revenues on which he floats will steadily drain away, like the Aral Sea, and leave a lot of Russia high and dry, regardless of any temporary OPEC deals with the Saudis. Gas sales to western Europe will fall, and so will oil and gas prices as American shale exports compete and renewables replace hydrocarbons. The danger for a weakened Russia in the longer run, as the future Eurasia emerges, is that having lost the chance to modernise back at the time of the end of the Soviet Union, it could now be bypassed while China and Europe link up. It should be careful not to become the "black hole" between Europe and China that Zbig Brzezinski called it. But in the meantime, let it be clear that despite all the talk of current bad relations, the British people feel a real warmth for the Russian people, for their heroism and their endurance. The country is rottenly led but its people are our friends. We should always make that distinction clear. However, I am afraid that is not the view of the Russian leadership at the moment, so what should be our approach?

First, it is not just a question of firm NATO military postures on the ground. Nowadays the battle is just as much via non-military means, in the narrative as on the physical front line. We are much better placed than during the Cold War. There is no coherent ideology uniting the Russians, as in communist times. Secondly the noble Viscount, Lord Waverley, is right that we have to trade with Russia as much as possible. Trade and commerce are great pipelines of truth and awareness. The opening northern Arctic route should help here greatly.

Thirdly, we have to strengthen our already good cultural relations through all possible channels. Russian scholars and Russian students should be welcome here, suitably checked of course, and we have to continue with, and increase, our excellent space co-operation with Russia. Fourthly, we have to show zero tolerance

for Russian criminality, wherever it occurs, including, of course, in London, as the TV show "McMafia" has shown us so vividly. Fifthly, we have to use every device of soft power and information power which the digital age allows, as the Russians themselves do, to counter Russian weaponising and twisting of information, as the Prime Minister reminded us the other day. Sixthly, we have to keep pressing all the time for Russia's full adherence, as a nuclear power, to the disarmament treaties and processes. Seventhly, we have to focus sanctions on identified miscreants, fraudsters and rogues, such as the murderers of the lawyer, Magnitsky—I declare a former interest as an adviser to the great Bill Browder—but we should not go overboard on general sanctions, which never work well, halt trade and often have the opposite effects.

Our policies need to get smarter. We have to change the way we think about today's world and its connections. We have to look beyond Putin to a new kind of international networking, as much non-governmental as official. I believe that is the right approach for this medium-sized, but awkward and persistent disrupter of efforts to establish a more stable world order. The Russian genius is not dead, but it is time it woke up to a transformed world.

8.03 pm

**Lord Browne of Ladyton (Lab):** My Lords, first, I draw attention to my entry in the register of interests, particularly my work with the Nuclear Threat Initiative. I am delighted to follow the noble Lord, Lord Howell. I agree with much of what he said and join him in congratulating the noble Viscount, Lord Waverley, on securing and introducing in such a balanced way this overdue debate on such a polarising issue.

For my part, I shall concentrate on strategic security. Since the historic events of the 1990s changed Europe for ever, efforts to build mutual security in the Euro-Atlantic region have lacked urgency. For a decade or more, trust and confidence have deteriorated, as has the security environment. In the absence of new initiatives by all parties, including the United Kingdom, things are only likely to get worse in the short term. If, in the words of the Foreign Secretary, we want to work together with Russia to achieve a better future, the first step in acting to advance our common interests is to identify concrete, practical, near-term initiatives designed to reduce risks, rebuild trust and improve today's Euro-Atlantic security prospect.

For about 10 years, I have devoted significant energy to keeping lines of communication open between the West and Russia. NATO countries and Russia possess about 95% of global nuclear inventories, with many weapons minutes from use. My motivation is that current NATO-Russia relations help create an environment where miscalculation, accident, mistake, or catastrophic terrorism are the most likely catalysts for nuclear use. With little communication or co-operation between NATO and Russian military leaders, issues around decision time and the command and control of nuclear forces, particularly, are most acute. Magnifying the risks of a nuclear mistake is the emergence of cyberthreats to strategic warning systems and command and control. Increasingly, experts are warning of the threat of a cyberattack on our strategic weapons systems.

I commend to the House two excellent studies over a period of four years by the US Department of Defense, Defense Science Board. In the first it says in terms that,

“the cyber threat is serious and that the United States cannot be confident that our critical ... (IT) systems will work under attack from a sophisticated and well-resourced opponent utilizing cyber capabilities”.

In the second, the authors recommend that the highest priority is to protect a select limited set of nuclear and other strike capabilities: a specially protected subset, as it were, to ensure survivability. The implication is that because of the cyberthreat they cannot be sure that their deterrent and command and control systems will work as designed. The significance of this for strategic stability is grave. If the US cannot assure its leaders of this, we—the United Kingdom—cannot be certain that we are immune to this risk either.

In these difficult circumstances, dialogue is essential and it is possible. For the last 10 years, I, Ambassador Wolfgang Ischinger, former Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov and former Senator Sam Nunn and, increasingly, a wider group—a mix of senior government officials and experts from the US, Canada, Russia and 15 European nations— have been advocating urgent co-operative action between the West and Russia on areas of existential common interest. Our arguments have developed and are now concentrated on a few urgent matters. They are set out in public reports and documents and go as follows. As we did during the darkest days of the Cold War, Americans, Europeans and Russians must work together to avoid catastrophe, including by preventing terrorist attacks and reducing the risks of a military, or even nuclear, conflict. The carefully considered view of a wide range of senior political, diplomatic and military figures across the whole region is that this should include reducing the risk of nuclear use; increasing, not suspending, military-to-military communications; increasing transparency in the air to avoid military activity in the NATO-Russia shared area presenting an unacceptable risk to civilian air traffic; reducing the threat of insecure nuclear and radiological materials; and recognising that we have crossed over to a new nuclear era in which cyber capabilities transform the nuclear risks, engaging in urgent discussions for reaching at least informal understandings on cyber dangers related to nuclear facilities, strategic warning systems and nuclear command and control.

There are many important issues facing Europe, America and Russia today, but identifying a new policy frame—existential common interests—that can stop the downward spiral in relations is vital and the near-term, practical steps identified here are the only place to start.

8.08 pm

**Baroness Cox (CB):** My Lords, I warmly congratulate my noble friend on securing this timely debate.

I will focus on the ongoing crisis in Syria and seek assurance from the Minister that the United Kingdom will work with Russia to promote peace and progress. As the military war abates, political conflicts will undoubtedly escalate. I will highlight Russia's role in freeing Syria from Islamist terrorism, promoting

reconciliation and building foundations for democracy. I will also briefly refer to apparent attempts to discredit Russia, including allegations of the use of chemical weapons.

Russia has assisted the Syrian army to liberate Syria from Islamist terrorists by, inter alia, protecting Damascus from ISIS attack in 2015; liberating hundreds of square kilometres of ISIS-occupied territory, including Deir ez-Zor and Palmyra; and disrupting ISIS oil trade and supply routes. Russia has also helped to establish four de-escalation zones and facilitated over 1,000 local truces, bringing peace to hundreds of towns and villages. In Damascus, I have twice met the Minister for Reconciliation, a member of the political opposition, who describes the risks taken by those involved in reconciliation and the immense value of these reconciliation initiatives. It is widely believed that the UK position is that the West should provide financial support for reconstruction only if a transition away from al-Assad is achieved. What is the United Kingdom's position regarding support for reconciliation and reconstruction initiatives in Syria?

I turn to the latest allegations of the use of chlorine gas in eastern Ghouta. The only evidence emanates from the discredited White Helmets and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, based in Birmingham. While chlorine gas creates highly visible clouds of vapour, no photographic evidence has been provided to substantiate these allegations. Few media reports mention that eastern Ghouta has for years been under the control of jihadist groups classified as terrorists by the United Kingdom. Those groups have been shelling the old city of Damascus, especially the Christian quarters. When I was there in November, the shells were still coming in on Damascus and targeting civilians.

Today marks the beginning of the Syrian national dialogue congress in Sochi, which aims to promote the UN-led Geneva process in compliance with UN resolutions. It calls for an inclusive dialogue between the Syrian Government and the broadest possible spectrum of the opposition. The congress is not an alternative but a supplement to Geneva. Together with Iran and Turkey, Russia has invited the main regional and international actors, including the United Kingdom, to the congress. Will the Minister indicate how Her Majesty's Government have responded to this invitation?

On my last visit to Syria, I met a wide variety of religious leaders, representatives of diverse political parties, internationally respected artists, musicians and intellectuals, humanitarian aid organisations and members of local communities. Every one to whom we spoke expressed sincere appreciation of Russia's support, which has recognised the primacy of expelling ISIS and other Islamist terrorist groups, and helped the Syrian army to achieve this important objective.

There is also deep concern that Her Majesty's Government's response to the war in Syria may prioritise political objectives over the well-being of the Syrian people, including imposing regime change; supporting Islamist-related opposition groups; undermining Russian initiatives; refusing to recognise the validity of Russian contributions to end the conflict; and refusing to co-operate in initiatives to promote the development of democracy and the reconstruction of a devastated land. I hope the Minister will reassure the people of

[BARONESS COX]

Syria that Her Majesty's Government respect their right to determine their own future, and will work with Russia and other nations to bring an end to the war, promote democracy and enable the rebuilding of their historic land.

8.12 pm

**Lord Robathan (Con):** My Lords, in August 2015, when I was a member of neither House of Parliament, I was contacted by the Foreign Office and informed that I had been banned—put on a stop list—and was unable to go to Russia. I was in very good company, including Malcolm Rifkind and other rather more distinguished people than myself. I saw it as a bit of a badge of honour but the best reaction was that of a Dutch MP on the same list, who said, “Not even my wife reads my speeches but I'm delighted that President Putin does”.

For those noble Lords who have not seen it—some may have done so—I recommend the film “The Death of Stalin”. It is a very funny comedy but also factually true. It takes the mickey out of the Stalinist Soviet state. Of course, the authoritarian Russian Government cannot cope with the ridicule of a regime which so many look back on fondly. Apart from the fact that I would like to visit St Petersburg, why should any of us worry? We have to deal with a host of unpleasant regimes. At the moment, there is a huge furore from rather ridiculous left-wingers about a proposed visit by the President of the United States; I rather wish that they would make more noise about the situation in Putin's Russia.

In Russia, opposition leaders and journalists are murdered. I cannot cover them all but Alexei Navalny, the opposition leader, was arrested during a peaceful demonstration at the weekend. I understand that he has now been released, so that is all right then. But what about Boris Nemtsov, the former Deputy Prime Minister, who was murdered in Moscow in 2015? What about Sergei Magnitsky—I am not very good on my pronunciation—who died in prison in 2009 and was referred to by the noble Lord, Lord Howell? If there is anybody who has not read Bill Browder's *Red Notice*, they really should. That is of course all domestic Russian stuff and it should not concern us. Noble Lords may believe that Boris Berezovsky committed suicide in Sunninghill in 2013, and that in 2012 perhaps Alexander Perepilichny—it is a bit of a tongue-twister—died from overexertion while out running in Surrey. But there is absolutely no doubt that not one mile from where we sit, Alexander Litvinenko was murdered with polonium by Russian agents in 2006.

Is Russia really a threat to us? I spent the best part of a year of my life on the inner German border. There are no longer serried ranks of Warsaw Pact tanks facing us but Russia did invade Georgia 10 years ago, and is still there in Abkhazia and elsewhere. It annexed the Crimea four years ago; many people living in the Crimea may wish to be Russian but there were international treaties, especially the Budapest memorandum of 1994, which was signed by Russia and guaranteed the borders of Ukraine. Also in 2014, Russia annexed Donbass in eastern Ukraine; it is still

fighting there. Have we forgotten that flight MH17 was shot down in 2014 by Russian missiles, whomsoever pulled the trigger? It was probably Russian allies in Ukraine and there were 298 deaths, of whom 200-odd were European and 10 were British. So it does affect us. Others will, and indeed have, talked about the real threats of cyberattacks, or attacks on our infrastructure and hacking. The Defence Secretary and the Chief of the General Staff have referred to these things recently. But we also need to be able to defend our NATO allies in the Baltic and eastern Europe from a more conventional, or even somewhat unconventional, attack with little green men.

We had the ambassador here a couple of weeks ago, courtesy of the noble Viscount, and he certainly fulfilled the second half of Sir Henry Wotton's old adage about diplomats. He would not tell me why I was banned, but he said that he believed that the EU would shortly lift sanctions. I agree with my noble friend Lord Howell and the noble Lord, Lord Browne, about both the people of Russia and the need for dialogue. However, I also commend the British Government, the US and the EU on their sanctions. We must maintain them, because Russia, however much we may deny it, is a threat to our allies, to international stability and, as I hope I have illustrated, to our own country and to people here.

**Baroness Stedman-Scott (Con):** My Lords, I remind all noble Lords of the speaking time, as we are already eating into the Minister's time.

8.17 pm

**Lord Judd (Lab):** My Lords, as I watch the horror of the Russian bombs in Syria and the refusal of the Russians to see the counterproductivity of what is happening—they are boasting about victory when there is no victory at all in the battle for hearts and minds, and the cost of what they are doing is yet to be seen by mankind across the world—my mind goes back to the time when I was rapporteur to the Council of Europe on the conflict in Chechnya. During the conflict I visited Chechnya nine times, and I was in Russia 12 times in connection with it. I was one of the first, with a small group, to arrive in Grozny after the bombardment. I shall never forget that experience. A group of good friends from the Council of Europe, we were stunned and silent for the best part of an hour as we looked at what confronted us. It was a ghost city, bombed to smithereens, and it seemed that any building still standing would have to be demolished before rebuilding and reoccupation could begin. Following that came the experience of the disappearances, torture and oppression, and barbarity—the absolutely indiscriminate attacks on communities and families because it was alleged that people had done things against the Russians.

I was one of those who, after the fall of communism, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the rest, had high hopes that we could see something special emerge in Russia. It has been a profound disappointment that that did not happen. I agree with those who say that we must not lose sight of the importance of dialogue because we must not give up on that hope. There are wonderful people in Russia, and exciting things could still happen. But we must be realists about the

barbarity. I personally knew Anna Politkovskaya and Natalya Estemirova, and I had been at a meeting with Colonel Litvinenko, and I saw what happened to them. But it is not just about what happened to them but about what happened to countless ordinary people in Chechnya and Russia itself. We must be realists—it is a ruthless regime. Quite apart from anything else, we were extraordinarily decent about it, but I smart at the thought that the murderers who brutally murdered the former KGB colonel trailed radioactivity around our capital city with apparent impunity. They have never been brought to trial. We must face up to what Russia is in reality, but we must also look at the Russian people as a whole and see that, in the end, we must build peace and reconciliation with them. We must not just slip back into a Cold War mentality, which would be fatal.

However, counterproductivity is the issue. We are dealing with a situation across the world about how we win hearts and minds, which is as important and vital in our own stand against terrorism as it is with Russia itself. It is too easy to slip into a counterproductive position in which we in fact encourage the extremists of tomorrow.

8.21 pm

**Lord Chartres (CB):** My Lords, I am glad to follow the noble Lord, Lord Judd. I declare an interest in that until the beginning of this year I chaired the liaison group between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Church of England.

Our understandable concern with current Russian policies does not, I imagine, blind any of us to the trauma through which the Russian people have passed over the last century and the resulting impact on their world-view. There is no excuse now for misunderstanding the nature of the Bolshevik regime—as there was, because there was a period in our country when it was impermissible to question the importance and the goodness of the great Soviet experiment—and its hangover in present political patterns. One of the most impressive figures to emerge from the twilight of the Soviet era, Alexander Yakovlev, said:

“I came to the profound conviction that the October coup d’état was a counterrevolution that marked the beginning of a criminal-terrorist fascist-type state”.

The civil war, the gulag and the Second World War claimed millions of victims, and among them some of the finest representatives of Russian culture. There were huge numbers of Russian, Muslim, Buddhist and Jewish martyrs.

Given the nature of the trauma visited on the Russian people during the Soviet years and the social and economic distortions, it was perhaps naïve—I share the disappointment that the noble Lord expressed—to believe that the transition to anything like liberal democracy and the market economy would be easy in Russia. Russian commentators who are prone to see conspiracies everywhere are especially sceptical about what seems to be a recent western faith in peremptory regime change. With their own experience of the revolution and its aftermath, they argue that deposing a Saddam Hussain, a Gaddafi or an Assad in a structure where power is concentrated at the top is simply inviting chaos.

So while we do, and ought to, refrain from loose talk of the kind which caused so much confusion about the precise intentions of the West in Georgia, and while we demonstrate our utter seriousness about defending our NATO allies in the Baltic states and developing and improving our cyber defence capabilities, as other noble Lords have said, we ought not to be cynical about the Russian capacity for regeneration and ignore the progress being made to restore civil society after its devastation during the Soviet period. I think particularly of the extraordinary achievement of building 30,000 churches since the end of the communist period and developing a community which, as far as the Russian Orthodox Church is concerned, embraces 100 million believers. As the noble Viscount said, the dialogue must include a wide engagement with the whole of culture.

Politicians in our country notoriously are advised not to do God, but wise diplomats in Russia should, and in my experience very often do, recognise the huge potential of people of faith and good will in bringing about social transformation in Russia and, crucially, the need to engage with them.

8.25 pm

**The Earl of Oxford and Asquith (LD):** My Lords, whatever one’s view of the state of our bilateral relations with Russia, and despite the overheated rhetoric that prevails in London, there are some objective issues which have to be recognised. The noble Viscount, Lord Waverley, whom I congratulate on securing this debate, has mentioned some of the main points.

First, there is the Litvinenko case. Then there are the allegations of Russian interference in political campaigns, referenda and elections and so on. Thirdly, there are some aspects of Russian foreign policy—Syria, for example—and, finally, the Russian annexation of Crimea and the intervention in the Donbass. Those are four genuine obstacles which the British Government encounter in their bilateral relations and they need to be addressed in this debate.

Because of the Litvinenko case, our Government will no longer engage in liaison with the Russian security services—the FSB in particular—and that effectively blocks off counterterrorist and related police co-operation. Other countries which do not have a comparable problem consequently find themselves in a more advantageous position, but I do not think that this House has a role to play in recommending how to resolve or ameliorate the problem here.

There are so many lurid allegations of Russian political interference that, frankly, I am a little sceptical of what we are being told at the moment, and I sense that this is a subject best left to the cyber experts to sort out between themselves. It would probably help to clear the air if a working group could be formed to engage in direct dialogue with the Russians—dialogue in which British concerns could be addressed. The worst scenario is to persist with allegations and scare stories that somehow imply that the health of our democratic institutions is so fragile that a spate of Russian-sourced tweets can subvert or discredit them.

On the broader issue of Russian espionage in this country and whether the recent remarks of our Secretary

[THE EARL OF OXFORD AND ASQUITH]  
of State for Defence were well or ill considered, I think it is quite strange to affect surprise that the Russians snoop around our infrastructure: it is what they have done for decades, and actually for a century. If they are not able to mix in polite society, as it were, they do not have anything better to do.

On the matter of Russian foreign policy in Syria and elsewhere, our Government may disapprove but I doubt whether this should be a real blocker to dialogue, any more than it was in the days of the USSR, when Soviet activity around the world was, if anything, more interventionist than Russian policy is now. No, the real problem for us is Russia and Ukraine. I believe that there is no more likelihood of the Russian annexation of Crimea being internationally recognised than was Stalin's annexation of the Baltic states in the 1940s. Perhaps I should declare an interest here because I was the first drafter of the Budapest memorandum back in 1992. The move into Crimea was and is a strategic mistake by Putin, and maybe it cannot be undone except through the passage of time and history, and when circumstances have fundamentally changed. Putin will not leave Crimea but one day lack of recognition will ultimately have the effect that we must desire. It could take a long time.

That leaves Russian aggression in Donbass. This is one issue that is resolvable by engagement with the Russians. Without a resolution there can be no stability and no serious reconstruction in Ukraine. It is a drain on Russia and a disgrace to her reputation, and it is of strategic concern to the European continent. This is not the place to suggest how a resolution could be achieved: in the final resort, the Ukrainians and the Russians are the ones who have to sort it out between themselves. France, Germany and the US have failed so far to effect a breakthrough, but I believe that there is a specific role we can play here and that Britain should become engaged. Until we do, we cannot expect to have any influence on the matter at all.

That is the simplest lesson of all. Russia has plenty of potential partners and interlocutors to act with and talk to. However, as one eminent Russian recently said to me, the Russian relationship with Britain resembles a marriage which no longer works: at least when there were daily rows and arguments, it meant that the couple retained an interest in each other; when indifference sets in, the relationship is dead. I fear that indifference is setting in. Very simply, if we do not engage, we do not have any influence.

8.31 pm

**Lord Luce (CB):** My Lords, I first visited what was then the Soviet Union 41 years ago in 1977 as a member of an all-party parliamentary delegation. That visit made an indelible impression on me. I returned with two reflections, which, in a broad sense, remain the same today. First, I believed that we must retain our defences in the West and ensure that Soviet leaders, as they then were, understood our determination to do so. Secondly, I recognised that we are both proud nations and share a European culture, but are massively ignorant about each other, and need to get to know each other better as a people. I learned for the first time on that visit that 20 million Russians had been

killed in the Second World War, and that millions more died under Stalin in the 1930s. I came back with the view that they were a tired, worn-out people, whose leaders were spending a disproportionate amount of their resources on defence. These characteristics apply broadly today.

We have seen the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the chaos, the anarchy and the lack of the rule of law. This has been exploited by gangs of oligarchs at the expense of the people. Ironically, many of their children are educated in the United Kingdom and the west today. As they often do in that country, they have swung from anarchy to authoritarianism. Putin has become a nationalistic dictator, tightening his grip in order to stay in power. We in the west need to carry out a penetrating and accurate analysis of the nature and scale of that threat.

Today, I want to make one point. The vital part of our strategy must be sustained: long-term dialogue between our people, as well as Governments, to strengthen our mutual knowledge and understanding, because there is so much ignorance about each other. Of course, ignorance breeds fear. I do not know how many in this Chamber have read the works of Svetlana Alexievich, winner of the Nobel Prize for literature. Her diaries are based on interviews with hundreds of Russians, and they are very telling. They demonstrate that the lives of so many Russians are, to use my own words, nasty and brutish, but that these people are also deeply spiritual and Christian.

I endorse very strongly the work of the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee. Paragraph 187 of its report of March 2017 said that the Government, "must look beyond ... Putin and develop a long-term strategy to engage with the Russian people".

There must be more exchanges in education, culture, business and science, recognising the work of the British Council and the BBC World Service. Above all, there must be a,

"people-to-people strategy building bridges".

I will therefore end on one example of an already very successful people-to-people strategy, which could be followed by others. The Pushkin Trust was established in 1987 by the Duchess of Abercorn, who was a descendant of Pushkin. It now involves thousands of schoolchildren in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, Scotland and Russia using modern networking to link up and encourage creative programmes in the spirit of Pushkin and, through dialogue, to establish common ground and understanding. It has broken down barriers between Roman Catholics and Protestants and is now breaking down barriers between the Irish and Russian schoolchildren. This is truly about the future and it stimulates mutual understanding among young people. We now need a flowering of initiatives such as that of the Pushkin Trust. I hope the Minister will endorse the policy of dialogue and encourage more people-to-people contact.

8.35 pm

**Lord Sheikh (Con):** My Lords, I thank the noble Viscount, Lord Waverley, for initiating the debate. I will specifically talk about the UK's relations with Tatarstan and how we can strengthen our ties with it.

Tatarstan is a semi-autonomous republic in Russia located in the centre of a large industrial region of the Russian Federation. I have been to Kazan, which is the capital of Tatarstan, and spent a few days there. I spoke to the people of Kazan, both Tartars and Russians, and I found that the relationship between Muslims, Christians and others is extremely friendly and cordial. In Kazan there is a place called the Kremlin, where a mosque and a cathedral face each other. This is symbolic of the friendship between all the communities in the region. As someone who is interested in promoting interfaith dialogue, that pleased me a great deal.

The President of Tatarstan visited the United Kingdom in November last year and met with us in the House of Lords. He was indeed very friendly and requested that I attend a business conference in Kazan. He also invited us to send a trade delegation from the United Kingdom to Tatarstan. I will attend the conference in May, and I hope that we will be able to arrange a trade delegation of British businessmen to Kazan. The president is very keen to strengthen trade and educational and cultural ties between Tatarstan and the United Kingdom. We should actively pursue these and achieve the right results, which will be mutually beneficial.

I will mention some details about Tatarstan and the opportunities that we can pursue. Tatarstan is one of the leading and most economically developed regions in Russia, rich in natural resources. It is prosperous in many ways, presenting opportunities for us to be involved in. At a conference held in London in November last year, His Excellency Mr Rustam Minnikhanov, the President of Tatarstan, said that Tatarstan is interested in attracting British businesses, technology and investments to the region and that they will readily provide support for these activities. The president further said that there are opportunities for British companies to be involved in areas such as power engineering, the automotive industry, production of auto components, IT, agro-industrial activities, engineering, pharmaceuticals, aircraft construction, the oil and gas industry and the transport sector. In addition, they would like to develop and expand their Islamic finance market. That was music to my ears as I am actively involved in promoting our expertise and knowledge in Islamic finance overseas.

President Minnikhanov also noted that Tatarstan is an innovative region which ranked first in the Russian national rating for investment for the third year in a row. In addition, the Russian Federation Government have launched a project in which special economic zones have been created for businesses to manufacture, manage or invest. We can get involved in those zones.

Tatarstan would also like to strengthen and forge educational links with British institutions in the UK. Given that there is only one university partnership with Tatarstan—with Cardiff University—this is an area that is worth looking into. I hope very much that we can look seriously at expanding our links with Tatarstan, and there is certainly an appetite in Tatarstan to do so. I ask my noble friend the Minister if she would like to comment on our relations with Tatarstan.

8.39 pm

**Lord Truscott (Ind Lab):** My Lords, I too congratulate the noble Viscount, Lord Waverley, on securing this debate and introducing it so expertly. At the outset I

wish to declare an interest as chair of the advisory board of the Russian Gold Fund, a private equity investment fund.

It is a commonplace to say that the UK's relations with Russia are approaching an all-time low, including during the Cold War. The Foreign Office asserts that this is because of Russia's own behaviour, most notably the conflict in Ukraine, the seizure of Crimea, general meddling and much else. The declared aim is to punish Russia so that it sees the error of its ways and returns to the path of international righteousness. This may be the aim, but it falls short of a strategy. Russia has said that Ukrainian membership of NATO and the return of Crimea is a red line. It fought wars in the 19th and 20th centuries to retain the strategic Black Sea port of Sevastopol and will not give it up, as was said earlier in the debate.

The United States, for its part, has its America First strategy as enunciated by Donald Trump and its new national security strategy document. This may not be to everyone's liking but at least it has an internal coherence. Russia and China, we are told, are global competitors and revisionist powers. In a fresh "great power" struggle not witnessed since the fall of the Berlin Wall, both countries are labelled the primary threats to US economic dominance and the American-led world order. The status of the United States as the world's only post-Cold War hyperpower is being challenged. Washington's unipolar leadership rejects Russian and Chinese attempts to create a multipolar world of competing centres of power. Putting aside President Trump's assertion for a moment that he wants to build a great partnership with Moscow and Beijing, it is apparent that the US military-industrial complex sees both Russia and China as competitors on the world stage. Relations with China are complicated by its importance as a global trading partner, but as far as Russia is concerned, there are no such constraints. The noble Lord, Lord Howell, mentioned the relative size of Russia's economy.

The Brookings Institution has shown in a study how sanctions themselves rarely make countries abandon their perceived vital interests. But in a way, the sanctions now seem almost irrelevant. They are having an economic impact on Russia, but are far less important than the price of a barrel of oil, given that oil and gas revenues still provide the bulk of Russia's federal funding. Incidentally, with the price of a barrel of oil at around \$71, it is in a healthier state than it was a year or two ago. In constantly ratcheting up sanctions, the US Congress could arguably said to be not seeking a change of behaviour, but aiming for the emasculation of a geopolitical rival.

I have some sympathy with the Ministry of Defence seeking additional funding from the Treasury. The state of our Armed Forces is pitiable. The Russians do have some good capabilities, but to say that they would launch a conventional attack against any member of the north Atlantic alliance, which outspends them by a ratio of around 20:1, is a fantasy. What Russia can do is be a major headache and source of nuisance for the West. The Gerasimov doctrine publicly states how the Russians will apply asymmetric warfare, short of war, in any political conflict, and that is undoubtedly what we have witnessed.

[LORD TRUSCOTT]

There is a way forward on UK-Russian relations, and a number of noble Lords have proposed ways that that could be done. But to make progress, I believe that we need to work together to ensure that there is a resolution of the Ukrainian conflagration. We should fully engage with Russia over issues such as Syria, Iran and North Korea, and in fighting international terrorism, drug and people trafficking. We need to move beyond the current mindless rhetoric and tit-for-tat diplomacy, which is dangerous and, if unchecked, can lead us all to disaster. If we are not careful, talk of war can itself become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

8.43 pm

**The Earl of Cork and Orrery (CB):** My Lords, I add my thanks to those of every other speaker to the noble Viscount for securing this timely debate. It is timely because over recent weeks we have heard much about resurgent Russia's intentions. Such talk and reporting is generally laced with hyperbole concealing another purpose. In this case it is clear what the Secretary of State for Defence was driving at. I cannot say that I blame him, but that is for another debate; actually, it was last week.

But we must look more objectively at our relations with that country. If we trace the timeline of history back to the 17th and 18th centuries, when leaders such as Peter I and later Catherine II, both later known as "the Great", reigned over a vast country with massive social divisions, we see a country where strong and stable government was a prerequisite for controlling the population. When weaker Governments or rulers became established, things tended to fall apart. Sounds familiar, does it not? Democracy is a little-understood concept in Russia, both pre and post revolution. Strong rulers have always been the most successful. We therefore delude ourselves if we seek to impose our liberal democratic standards on a country that has never seen itself as fundamentally a western state. We have to take it as it is and seek to work with it in any way we can.

When I first came face-to-face with Russians during the Cold War, I tended to think that they must be 10 feet tall and particularly good at walking on water. Longer experience of underwater operations revealed the feet of clay that decisively prevented them from such aquatic initiatives. Later, in the Russia of Gorbachev and Yeltsin, I met many ordinary Russians who came across as normal people who had had inculcated into them a vast amount of propaganda about what the western allies would do to them if war were to break out. Most were healthily sceptical about all that.

President Putin, who fits a mould which goes back centuries, is the second-longest serving ruler since 1918, having not yet overtaken Stalin, although I do not seek to draw any parallel between them. When I met him in the office of mayor Anatoly Sobchak in St Petersburg in the 1990s, he was a typical KGB officer. Fundamentally, nothing has changed and he sees his role as being to give Russia and its people their self-respect back after the, as many of them see it, disastrous collapse of the Soviet system. While we laud Gorbachev and tend to despise Yeltsin, Russians often see it the other way round.

With its economy in a mess and substantially smaller than our own, Russia does not necessarily seek to expand its military influence beyond what it sees as its natural borders. Rather, it seeks to expand its economic hegemony and influence through the levers of power available to it. These consist largely of oil and gas reserves, but also lie in its ability, as a command economy, to take centralised decisions quickly and act upon them. It believes that its diplomatic initiatives, backed by limited military force, will assist its climb towards the pinnacles of respect that it seeks. It has embarked on modernisation of its armed forces, although it is hard to see how it appears to have achieved so much in so short a time without spending far more than the advertised 5% of GDP on such programmes. There is nothing new about such deceptions. Some estimates put its Cold War spending at near to 50% of real GDP.

Putin has moved steadily to re-establish the state's authority over its rebels, especially the financial rebels liberated by Yeltsin's largesse, and has given the official classes their respect back by building on anti-western feelings. However, it is in the areas of AI and robotics that Russia believes that it cannot outspend the West. These areas will therefore constitute our new levers of power and we must build on them to establish a new and more open dialogue with the Russian state.

It is time to stop cold-shouldering this physically massive player on the world stage and start to bring it in from the cold, as Smiley would say, by engaging it using the very considerable tools at our disposal. What it craves is respect—respect for its contributions to defeating Hitler and for its recovery from the failure of communism. Respect costs nothing to give, but we must find a way to open the doors, start to unwind sanctions, and begin talking about mutual threat reduction—in a modern sense.

8.48 pm

**Lord Balfe (Con):** My Lords, I will use my four minutes to make a few points. I thank the noble Viscount, Lord Waverley, for initiating the debate. I hope he will find that my response fits into his demand for robustness.

My basic thesis is that Russia is a European country with whom we need a good relationship. I quote in support of that the Russian ambassador himself, who, in response to the report of the House of Commons last year wrote as part of his letter to Crispin Blunt:

"I'd like to state without any reservation that Russia is and will remain a part and parcel of Europe and European civilization". That was Alexander Yakovenko writing to Crispin Blunt last year.

We can have sanctions for as long as we like, but they do not appear to be working and I am not sure that we are clear about why we have them. It seems to me that we always need to have an enemy somewhere or other. It has been demonstrated by the noble Lord, Lord Howell, the distinguished chair of the committee I sit on, exactly how small Russia is in relation to the rest of the world. My view is that we need a new Helsinki: Russia, after all, demonstrated that it was a European power by signing Helsinki at the height of the conflict between the West and communism. That no longer exists.

Russia, as the former Bishop, the noble and right reverend Lord, Lord Chartres, has said, has built 30,000 churches, I think he said. Patriarch Kirill was in London last year; he went to see the Queen. He is now a respected international traveller and person but someone, I remind noble Lords, who had immense trouble in the Ukraine, with the Ukrainian Government trying to confiscate the property of the Russian Orthodox Church, something we should maybe be concerned about.

The point I want to make is that a lot of the conflicts that exist need talking about, not demonstrating against. The borders of Ukraine have been adjusted five times in the last 100 years. Russia is not going to leave Crimea. It is as simple as that. The Ukrainian Government provoked the Crimeans; they tried to abolish the Russian language at one point; they said they would not renew the base lease at another point; there was a huge amount of provocation. The least we owe the Russians is to sit down and have a conference where we can all talk about the differences that exist.

There are another couple of differences. I am probably a very sad person, but over the Christmas holidays I was reading the account of the Soviet Politburo of the 1930s. That clearly does make me very sad. The republic of Abkhazia was causing problems because it would not unite with Georgia; it said that it was a separate place. This is in 1933. South Ossetia was also causing problems. These are not new problems. Some of these people, whether we like it or not, do not regard themselves as being part of the states to which they were assigned, probably wrongly, during the Soviet era. The point I make is that, if we believe in self-determination for Gibraltar and the Falklands, we need to find some way of having self-determination for some of the other bits and bobs around the world that we seem to get very worked up about.

I finish by just pointing out that I was in the Ukraine; I was in the Ukrainian Parliament. All they would say to me—this is during the time when it was part of the Ukraine—was, “We are in the wrong country; we are Russian”. So this is nothing new and my message, all I ask the Minister to do, is to ask her policy people to read what has been said in this debate because what comes through is the need to develop a new policy in our relations between the West and Russia.

8.53 pm

**Lord Kilclooney (CB):** My Lords, as a member of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Russia, I congratulate the noble Viscount, Lord Waverley, on initiating this interesting and timely debate on Russia. I have visited Russia privately several times, including driving through it for one month with my wife and five children to many locations, including Moscow and St Petersburg. Russia is a great and large country and one of our partners in the Security Council of the United Nations. In the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe I worked and co-operated with Russian MPs for several years in Strasbourg. This increased my respect for Russia. It is a proud nation. We differ from Russia over its illegal annexation of Crimea, its involvement in Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, where it is still increasing its presence, and of

course its support for the inhuman regime in Syria, its cyberattacks and, as we saw at the weekend, the imprisonment of opposition leaders. But we also have common challenges, such as radical Islamic terrorism, as the bombs in St Petersburg and Moscow prove, and the terrorism in Chechnya and Dagestan. As a former member of the parliamentary assembly in Strasbourg, I place on record the wonderful work done by the noble and learned Lord, Lord Judge, as rapporteur on Chechnya.

Dialogue is important and we should co-operate more where possible, such as in the exchange of intelligence on Islamic terrorism, the development of tourism and co-operation on energy. There is insufficient contact between parliamentarians in Westminster and Moscow, as the noble Viscount, Lord Waverley, mentioned. There should be more visits by elected Members to each other's countries.

The European Union has been unhelpful by encouraging neighbouring countries of Russia to seek membership of the EU and NATO. Russia has a legitimate interest in events in neighbouring countries and the EU policy is perceived as a provocation and destabilising.

I welcome the recent visit to Russia by our Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson. While it is clear that we have major differences, it is a shame that this was the first such visit in more than five years. I hope that it will not be long before Sergei Lavrov, the Russian Foreign Minister, has a return visit to the United Kingdom. The more they get to know each other, the better for UK-Russia relations. The personality of our present Foreign Secretary could well be helpful in this respect.

I want to see an improved relationship between the United Kingdom and Russia. Of course we have differences, but it is in the interests of the people of the United Kingdom and of Russia that we work more closely together, as well as in the best interests of a greater and more stable Europe.

8.56 pm

**Lord Collins of Highbury (Lab):** My Lords, I, too, thank the noble Viscount for introducing this incredibly timely debate. Defence and diplomacy are the key ingredients for developing our relations with Russia. The Defence Secretary's recent statement may have been full of hyperbole but the words of General Sir Nick Carter are of greater concern, when he said that the UK “would struggle to match” the Kremlin's growing and increasingly aggressive expeditionary force.

Since his 2013 state of the nation address, Putin has set out to wreck the Gorbachev vision in which Russia and Europe could work together to create “an all-European home”, subject to a common legal space and governed by the European Convention on Human Rights. Despite this, I agree with the Commons Foreign Affairs Committee that some interaction with Russia is preferable to no interaction, if only to maintain the basis for a more positive relationship in future, to clarify areas of disagreement and to de-escalate points of difference. Theresa May, too, made it clear that her policy towards Russia is to “engage but beware”. We need to hear from the Minister the impact that that engagement has had on those areas where there appears

[LORD COLLINS OF HIGHBURY]

to be scope for at least a partial alignment of interests, as my noble friend Lord Browne and the noble Lord, Lord Kilclooney, highlighted.

Boris Johnson said after his meeting with the Russian Foreign Minister in Moscow in December that they had identified common ground on issues such as North Korea, Syria and trade, and said that UK and Russian security services should co-ordinate ahead of the World Cup. But what of those other areas of UK interest where the Government say they continue to engage, such as climate change and supporting UK businesses within sanctions parameters?

Last but not least is the important issue of the protection of human rights, as we have heard in this debate. I particularly highlight the persecution of LGBTI citizens, particularly in Chechnya, to which my noble friend also referred. I know the UK has called publicly for it to cease, for thorough investigation and for those responsible to be brought to justice. We have also had the condemnation of the Russian law prohibiting the promotion of non-traditional sexual relations to minors, with its potential to legitimise homophobia and encourage violence. I know the Government have raised these concerns bilaterally at a number of levels since the law was passed in June 2013, but how are the Government supporting businesses? Trade is an important part of leverage and of changing attitudes. Businesses can change attitudes. We know from our experience that diversity in business is good for economic growth, and Russia certainly needs economic growth, as the noble Lord, Lord Howell, said.

Theresa May expressed the hope that one day Russia will choose a different path and become a Russia that will play by the rules. To translate that hope into reality, the Government need to be better prepared and better resourced.

9.01 pm

**Baroness Goldie (Con):** My Lords, I thank the noble Viscount, Lord Waverley, for tabling this important debate. I am so sorry about his indisposition, and I am heartened that he stuck it out. The quality of the contributions and the interest in the debate have sustained him. I thank all noble Lords for their very perceptive contributions, and I shall try to respond to all the points raised.

On the general issue of the UK/Russia bilateral relationship, our diplomatic relationship with Russia goes back more than 450 years to when Queen Elizabeth I sent an envoy to the court of Ivan the Terrible. In the intervening centuries, we may not always have been allies, but Russia has always been an important power and more often than not one with which it has been in our interests to engage. My noble friend Lord Howell rightly pointed out the warmth between the peoples of Russia and the peoples of the United Kingdom. That is an important relationship and is certainly the case today.

However, we cannot pretend that this is an easy time in the relations between our two countries. There are tensions, and many noble Lords referred to them. My noble friend Lord Robathan chronicled various events which have caused deep concern, as did the

noble Lord, Lord Judd. It is necessary for the context of the debate to be mindful of all that. Not surprisingly Ukraine was mentioned by the noble Earl, Lord Oxford and Asquith, and by other contributors. Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its continued destabilising actions in the Donbass are a blatant violation of international law and the rules-based international order. Its actions disregard the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. They violate Russia's international commitments and, frankly, demonstrate callous indifference to human suffering. The United Nations estimates that the conflict in eastern Ukraine has claimed more than 10,300 lives and internally displaced almost 1 million people by the end of 2017. Russia has ignored repeated calls to cease providing financial and military support to the so-called separatists it backs. It has neither complied with its Minsk commitments nor intervened to stop the intimidation and attacks on the OSCE special monitoring mission, which currently includes 66 UK secondees.

There are other threats which various contributors mentioned, such as Russian activities in cyberspace, its threats to western democracies and the incursions by its jets into European countries' airspace. They are further cause and reason for caution in our dealings with Russia. The noble Viscount, Lord Waverley, and the noble Lord, Lord Browne, raised the particular issues of cybercrime and cybersecurity. We remain open to appropriate dialogue with Russia: we want to reduce risk, talk about our differences and co-operate for the security of both nations and of the international community. However, we want to make clear that intimidation and interference with sovereign states is not acceptable.

The noble Lord, Lord Browne, made a number of important points in relation to a possible future strategy, and I shall certainly look with interest at the text of what he said. The noble Earl, Lord Oxford and Asquith, rightly warned of the need, amid all the tumult, to be alert to the realities of the situation. That is a timely reminder.

In relation to the UK's attitude to this and various other issues, as your Lordships will be aware, my right honourable friend the Prime Minister mounted a staunch defence of the rules-based international system in her Mansion House speech last November. She made clear that Russia would not succeed in undermining the free, open and resilient democracies of the West or the alliances between our countries. That message was repeated, and delivered similarly robustly, by my right honourable friend the Foreign Secretary when he visited Moscow in December. On that occasion, he raised concerns about Russia's recent activities in Ukraine and the western Balkans, and its threats to cybersecurity and democracy. He also made clear there could be no "business as usual" with Russia while it continued to support destabilising activities in Europe.

A number of your Lordships brought up human rights in their contributions. The Foreign Secretary also raised serious UK concerns about human rights, in particular: the increasing curbs being placed on civil society organisations and human rights defenders in Russia, due to restrictive legislation; the restrictions on freedom of expression, including freedom of the media; and the appalling harassment and intimidation

of the LGBT community, most notably in Chechnya. The noble Lord, Lord Judd, referred specifically to Chechnya, as did the noble Lord, Lord Collins. These concerns have all been raised by my right honourable friend the Minister for Europe and the Americas.

It is important to say again that we do not want to be in a state of perpetual confrontation, an issue identified by many of your Lordships. As two P5 countries, it is vital for international security that we continue to talk to each other and to work together, where possible, on issues of global concern. Many of your Lordships urged continuing contact and dialogue—the noble Lord, Lord Kilclooney, spoke powerfully about this, as did the noble Lord, Lord Collins.

Our strategy is to engage with Russia, to avoid misunderstandings and manage risks, to push for change where we disagree, and to work together where it is in the UK national interest. Encouragingly, there are a number of issues on which we can and should engage. In foreign affairs, for example, there is North Korea. Yes, we are disappointed at the recent media reports of Russian ports being used as transit hubs for illicit North Korean coal shipments to evade sanctions. We call on Russia, and all nations, to fully implement all sanctions measures agreed by the United Nations Security Council. But both of us want to get North Korea back to the negotiating table and ultimately want a denuclearised Korean peninsula.

Both Russia and the UK have responsibilities to see progress towards peace in Syria, where the noble Baroness, Lady Cox, raised specifically the matter of reconciliation and reconstruction. The UK and EU will provide no support for reconstruction until a comprehensive, genuine and inclusive political transition is firmly under way, because this would disproportionately benefit the regime, which bears overwhelming responsibility for the sufferings of the Syrian people. The UK has committed £2.46 billion since 2012 in response to the Syrian crisis, our largest ever response to a humanitarian crisis.

Ultimately, we hope to see Russia play a more constructive role on the international stage and to see an improvement in the relations between our countries and our people. Aside from the political track, there are two obvious ways to make that happen: one through trade, and one through cultural exchanges.

Clearly, as was acknowledged by the noble Viscount, Lord Waverley, our economic relations with Russia cannot be business as usual. Formal ministerial dialogue on trade was postponed in 2014 following Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and, given Russia's continued destabilising activities in Ukraine, we have no plans to revive the talks. The UK remains fully committed to sanctions enforcement until Russia meets its commitments under the Minsk agreement.

My noble friend Lord Balfe questioned whether our sanctions were having an impact on Russia. I have to say that, beyond the bravado, the Kremlin is very concerned about the condition of Russia's economy and the impact of sanctions exacerbating negative trends. Of Russia's 3.7% overall GDP decline in 2015, Citibank assesses that sanctions caused nearly 0.4%. Moscow knows what it needs to do to remove the pressure of sanctions: implement the Minsk agreement, withdraw its troops from Ukrainian soil and end its support for the separatists.

I say to both the noble Viscount and the noble Lord, Lord Collins, who raised this issue, that, where sanctions permit, Russia remains an important market for British businesses. The noble Lord, Lord Collins, rightly pointed out the significance of trade, and that is correct. Russia is currently the UK's 24th-largest export market. Bilateral trade in non-sanctioned industries is increasing: Russia was the third-fastest-growing market for UK services between 2010 and 2015. Bilateral trade in goods and services in the 12 months has been growing. UK imports from Russia increased by more than 25% and our exports to Russia increased by over 10% in the same period. The UK supports businesses engaging in sectors of the Russian economy that are not affected by sanctions.

I turn to the important issue of cultural links, about which the noble Lord, Lord Luce, spoke eloquently. The UK and Russia are working hard to strengthen our cultural ties. Last year the British Council and our embassy in Moscow worked with Russia to run a successful Year of Science and Education. Events throughout the year helped to stimulate scientific collaboration between our countries. The British Council is now making plans for the UK-Russia Year of Music in 2019. We are looking forward to working with Russia to make the most of that special cultural collaboration. Indeed, we in Scotland have been celebrating our national bard, Robert Burns, and I was interested to learn at a Burns supper in Glasgow that in November a group of schoolchildren came over to Glasgow from St Petersburg to learn more about him. Robert Burns is important to Russia, both the poet himself and his works, and the Russians take a keen interest in that. I say to the noble Lord, Lord Luce, that that is quite an interesting example of people-to-people engagement, which is encouraging.

Of course, we have a World Cup coming up in Russia, and both the UK and Russia share the common goal of ensuring that it is successful. The British team will be based near St Petersburg in the town of Repino. Many thousands of fans are expected to travel from Britain, and we are working closely with Russia to ensure that the arrangements for that run smoothly and that the World Cup is a great success.

In conclusion, we must recognise that the relationship between the UK and Russia is difficult. Many of its activities, from its aggression against its neighbours to its human rights abuses at home, are unacceptable. We continue to support the international sanctions regime and to express our concerns robustly to the Russian Government. However, as the noble Lord, Lord Truscott, emphasised, it is important that we keep channels of communication open, not only to raise these areas of concern but to discuss important areas where we can work together in our mutual interest. The noble Viscount, Lord Waverley, raised the interesting idea of a four-step process. I was intrigued by that. To some extent we do some of that work already, but I will certainly read *Hansard* with interest to see what the detail of that is.

As the Prime Minister said, in our relationship with Russia we must engage but beware. We will continue to take this approach and maintain the long-term goal of an improvement in the relations between our countries. I thought the noble and right reverend Lord, Lord Chartres, made a very optimistic contribution in pointing

[BARONESS GOLDIE]  
out the role of the Church, the need not to be overwhelmed by cynicism and the potential for positive progress in Russia. He is correct; we should not be blind to any of that. We should hope for better things and that, with

determination on the part of Russia and a willingness on our part to engage as best we can, a better future may be achieved.

*House adjourned at 9.14 pm.*