

Vol. 819  
No. 128



Friday  
4 March 2022

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)

# 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 SD	Independent Social Democrat
Ind UU	Independent Ulster Unionist
Lab	Labour
Lab Co-op	Labour and Co-operative Party
LD	Liberal Democrat
Non-afl	Non-affiliated
PC	Plaid Cymru
UKIP	UK Independence Party
UUP	Ulster Unionist Party

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# House of Lords

Friday 4 March 2022

10 am

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

## **Elderly Social Care (Insurance) Bill [HL]** *Third Reading*

10.05 am

### *Motion*

Moved by **Lord Hamilton of Epsom**

That the Bill do now pass.

**Lord Hamilton of Epsom (Con):** My Lords, on behalf of my noble friend Lord Lilley, who is suffering from Covid, I beg to move that this Bill do now pass.

**Baroness Penn (Con):** My Lords, noble Lords may wish to have a short debate before we pass the Bill.

**The Lord Speaker (Lord McFall of Alcluith):** Actually, I hesitated very slightly there, but nobody seemed to be standing up. If somebody wishes to stand up, the Floor is theirs.

**Baroness Merron (Lab):** The Lord Speaker is most kind: I will be quicker in future.

I thank the noble Lord, Lord Lilley, who is not able to be in his place today, for his considerable consideration and work during this Bill's passage. I am grateful to him for having given your Lordships' House the opportunity to discuss such important issues, which are particularly timely considering the passage of the Health and Care Bill. As noble Lords will be aware, while discussion on the Bill was welcome, it has unfortunately not found favour across the House. I certainly look forward to the Bill being an encouragement to the Minister to come forward with ways to support the sector properly. I look forward to a real and sustainable plan for fixing the issue that faces us. So, I extend my thanks to all Members of your Lordships' House for their contributions during the passage of the Bill, and to the noble Lord, Lord Lilley, and I look forward to hearing from the Minister.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care (Lord Kamall) (Con):** My Lords, I begin by thanking the noble Baroness, and the Lord Speaker for allowing us time for this debate. I congratulate my noble friend Lord Lilley on securing the time for Third Reading of the Bill, which proposes a state-backed insurance company for social care. I am sure noble Lords across the House will wish my noble friend a speedy recovery. I thank him for his thoughtful proposal to address the long-standing issue of unpredictable social care costs. As many noble Lords will recognise, there have been many reports over the last few decades and they have just sat there gathering dust on shelves: to date, we still do not have a proper system. The Government wholeheartedly

agree with much of the analysis underpinning the Bill and I shall mention but a few of the ideas that stood out for us.

First, we are well aware of the challenges around the private market delivering insurance for social care costs, so we recognise the benefits of delivering insurance through a public not-for-profit company owned and guaranteed by government. I also particularly admired how the proposal addresses affordability by allowing people to pay for the insurance premium through equity on their home. Lastly—this is probably the Bill's strongest selling point—it would be cost-neutral to the Exchequer. I recognise the opportunity this presents for the savings to be invested in financial support for those not able to access the insurance offer—for example, people who do not own a home.

I reassure my noble friend that his proposal has been carefully considered in the lead up to the announcement of our reform package from October 2023, but I point out that one of the key benefits of the cap and extended means test is that it is a universal offer—universal for everyone, irrespective of age or home ownership. We believe that a universal cap means people can plan ahead for their care from the outset. Knowing that the cap is there will benefit everyone, not just those who own a home. The home ownership landscape is changing over time, and within that context the Government have developed a package of reforms which is future-proof and gives support and certainty to the current generation, as well as future generations.

In addition to the cap, from October 2023, anyone with assets of less than £20,000 will not have to make any contribution for their care from their savings or the value of their home, ensuring that those with the least are protected. Anyone with assets below £100,000 will be eligible for some means-tested support, helping people without substantial assets and ensuring that many more people benefit from funded support earlier in their care journey. We believe that our reforms significantly improve the current system. In developing the reforms, we had to make tough choices, balancing the generosity of the reforms with how much extra we ask taxpayers to contribute and pay for them. My noble friend may disagree with our current formulation of the cap, but we believe the plan is credible, deliverable and affordable. Therefore, while the Government are not convinced that the Bill is the right course of action, we agree with his intelligent analysis that underpins it and, as the noble Baroness, Lady Merron, said, we will debate this further.

I again thank my noble friend Lord Lilley for putting forward this proposed Bill, and for his engagement in discussing our reforms after this debate.

**Lord Hamilton of Epsom (Con):** My Lords, I know that my noble friend Lord Lilley will be very grateful for the compliments from both Front Benches and he will be glad that he stimulated so much thought in the minds of the Government, judging by the remarks of my noble friend the Minister. He will probably be watching this from his sick bed but if not, I am sure he will read it tomorrow in the *Official Report*.

*Bill passed and sent to the Commons.*

## Organ Tourism and Cadavers on Display Bill [HL] Third Reading

10.12 am

### Motion

Moved by **Lord Hunt of Kings Heath**

That the Bill do now pass.

**Lord Hunt of Kings Heath (Lab):** My Lords, I express my thanks to the noble Lords, Lord Alton and Lord Ribeiro, and the noble Baronesses, Lady Finlay and Lady Northover, for their support. I also thank Victoria Ledwidge of the End Transplant Abuse campaign and the Public Bill Office for their fantastic work in helping to knock this Bill into shape.

We had a very good debate in the genocide discussion last night on these issues of the appalling, dreadful exploitation of people's body parts, combined with, essentially, mass killing by an authoritarian state. In 2019, the China tribunal, led by Sir Geoffrey Nice QC, stated:

"The Tribunal's members are certain – unanimously, and sure beyond reasonable doubt – that in China forced organ harvesting from prisoners of conscience has been practiced for a substantial period of time involving a very substantial number of victims."

The Bill is a small element in dealing with this obnoxious practice. I beg to move.

**Baroness Merron (Lab):** My Lords, first, I congratulate my noble friend Lord Hunt on this very welcome Bill. It is a pleasure to see the issue debated so well and regularly in this House. As my noble friend knows, he has the full support of these Benches in his endeavours. UK citizens must not be permitted to support the international organ tourism industry, where those organs are sourced illegally. I hope to see an end to the display of human cadavers in cases where the displayers have not obtained the consent of the deceased to do so. On so many levels, the issues with which this Bill deals are totally unacceptable, and I am glad that this Bill gives your Lordships' House the opportunity, as we also had last night, to consider how to take action. This is a moral imperative, and my noble friend can count on continued support from these Benches.

As we approach the end of this Third Reading, I thank the Minister and your Lordships' House for the time spent on and engagement with this issue. I wish the Bill every success.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care (Lord Kamall) (Con):** My Lords, I thank the noble Lord, Lord Hunt, for bringing this Bill to the House and for enabling further debate on the best approach to tackling transplant tourism and how to ensure that consent is always provided for the public display of bodies of the deceased.

While all noble Lords will agree with the sentiment behind this Bill and have been horrified by the way in which the Uighurs are treated by the Chinese Government, we feel that that the new provisions it would introduce could create unnecessary burdens while doing little more than the existing legislation to address their concerns about human rights abuses. Looking at the data, the Government have not seen evidence of any

large-scale travel of British citizens to other regions seeking a transplant for payment or without consent. Indeed, despite our having a growing and ageing population with increasing healthcare needs, the figures from NHS Blood and Transplant demonstrate a steady and consistent decline in patients receiving follow-up treatment on organs received overseas: from 72 patients in 2006 to just seven in 2019.

In addition, existing provisions in the Modern Slavery Act and the Human Tissue Act already make transplant tourism an offence in many circumstances. Because of this, we believe that the most effective action we can now take is to work towards removing any incentive for UK residents to seek to purchase an organ by continuing our efforts in improving the rates and outcomes of legitimate organ donations, while maintaining the highest standards of care for those in need of an organ.

I turn now to the issue of the public display of bodies, on which there has been some debate, especially in terms of people who have given consent before their death for their bodies to be displayed. We believe that existing rules make it clear that any establishment which seeks to display bodies must provide proof of consent. If it cannot, it will not receive a public display licence from the Human Tissue Authority, and any exhibition of bodies without a licence, when one is required, will be breaking the law. I am informed that the Human Tissue Authority does receive requests from people in Britain who seek permission for their bodies to be displayed after their death.

That said, I thank all noble Lords for their contributions, which allowed for an important and wide-ranging debate on this topic. It also served as an opportunity to highlight the broader human rights concerns which I know all noble Lords share. I particularly acknowledge the persistence of the noble Lords, Lord Hunt and Lord Alton, in bringing these issues forward for debate. I congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Hunt, on being successful in the ballot with this Bill.

**Lord Hunt of Kings Heath (Lab):** My Lords, I am very grateful to my noble friend Lady Merron for her kind remarks, and to the Minister, who has given up quite a lot of time to allow us to discuss this. As he knows, I do not agree with the Government's conclusion. He is very busy at the moment with Report stage of the Health and Social Care Bill, and he has much to contemplate over the weekend. I just hope that he may undertake a conversion when it comes to my Amendment 162, and that next week, he will be sympathetic.

*Bill passed and sent to the Commons.*

## Education (Environment and Sustainable Citizenship) Bill [HL] Third Reading

10.19 am

### Motion

Moved by **Lord Knight of Weymouth**

That the Bill do now pass.

**Lord Knight of Weymouth (Lab):** My Lords, I beg to move that this Bill do now pass, and in doing so I thank noble Lords on all sides, Jamie Agombar from Teach the Future, Ann Finlayson from SEEd and members of Peers for the Planet for their support. There are many outside organisations, both environmental and educational, which have met with me, discussed this and given great encouragement. Finally, I thank Darren Jones MP, who has agreed to take this forward in the other place.

I hope that the Bill encourages the Government to build on the consultation the Secretary of State launched at COP 26 on 5 November, and to firm up on the direction of travel set out in that strategy by moving from a voluntarist approach to something that has rather more teeth. I hope they can embrace that as this is debated in the other place.

**Lord Blunkett (Lab):** My Lords, can I just say a word before my own Front Bench responds? I congratulate my noble friend on this legislative endeavour and, crucially, the debate it has initiated both in this House and across the education sector. Citizenship education would be enhanced if we were able to add to the existing curriculum, as my noble friend Lord Knight indicated, this critical issue for the future.

Given the geopolitics of the moment—the crisis facing Ukraine, the energy issues that reverberate from that conflict and the Russian action against a sovereign country—it is absolutely crucial that we have in our schools and colleges the necessary education, enthusiasm and commitment to ensure that we get this right for the future.

**Lord Watson of Invergowrie (Lab):** My Lords, we are all indebted to my noble friend Lord Knight for bringing this Bill forward and, in doing so, drawing on his long-established commitment to and campaigning on sustainability and environmental education.

At earlier stages of the Bill, both the Minister and her predecessor said the Bill was unnecessary as schools could be trusted to teach pupils about the issues that combine to create the climate emergency as part of citizenship education. But young people themselves tell us that that is not enough. The Government should—and, I believe, could—support it as one way of reinforcing the messages they sent out at COP 26. I know that is not going to happen, but we on these Benches support my noble friend's Bill and wish it well in another place.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education (Baroness Barran) (Con):** My Lords, I thank the noble Lord, Lord Knight of Weymouth, for highlighting this very important issue. While the Government agree with the sentiment of the Bill, as the noble Lord, Lord Watson, just suggested, they do not believe that amending the curriculum is the right way to encourage pupils to learn about a sustainable environment. The subjects of citizenship, science and geography all include content on sustainability and the environment, and schools have the autonomy to go into as much depth on these subjects as they see fit.

We are taking action to support schools to develop further pupil knowledge and skills in relation to these very important issues. Our draft sustainability and climate change strategy, which we announced at COP 26, set out two new initiatives: the national education nature park and the climate leaders award. Together, these schemes will build on knowledge gained in the classroom to provide practical opportunities for all pupils to learn more about nature and biodiversity, develop key digital skills that are essential components to solving climate change and be empowered to take positive action. Alongside this, teachers will have access to improved training in climate education, including a primary science module curriculum, science CPD and free access to high-quality resources. We have engaged widely and plan to publish the final strategy in April.

**Lord Knight of Weymouth (Lab):** My Lords, I am grateful to my noble friends Lord Blunkett and Lord Watson—particularly my noble friend Lord Blunkett, who is the father of citizenship in our schools. I think my noble friend Lord Watson's comments about the views of young people that autonomy is not delivering are shared by teachers. If the Minister, or her colleague Robin Walker, had the appetite and the time to meet with me and Darren Jones before the Bill goes to the other place, we would be very grateful.

**Baroness Barran (Con):** Either I or, even better, my honourable friend in the other place would be delighted to meet with the noble Lord.

*Bill passed and sent to the Commons.*

## **Education (Careers Guidance in Schools) Bill**

### *Second Reading*

10.24 am

*Moved by Lord Lucas*

That the Bill be now read a second time.

**Lord Lucas (Con):** My Lords, I beg to move that this Bill be now read a second time. In doing so, I pay tribute to my honourable friend Mark Jenkinson, the MP for Workington, who had the sagacity to choose a Bill that the Government will support—not an easy thing, as various noble Lords have demonstrated—and which will make an important and solid improvement for all our children.

It is a very simple but effective Bill. Clause 1 amends the scope of Section 42A of the Education Act 1997, which puts a statutory duty on schools to secure independent careers guidance. The Bill extends careers provision to all pupils in state secondary education, bringing year 7 pupils into scope for the first time. It also extends the duty to all academy schools and alternative provision academies. Clause 2 revokes 2013 regulations that extended the careers guidance obligations to pupils aged 13 to 18. These are no longer needed as this Bill extends to all secondary-age pupils.



[LORD LUCAS]

In practice, these clauses mean that all pupils in all types of state-funded secondary schools in England will be legally entitled to independent careers guidance throughout their secondary education. They show a determination to achieve guidance for every single child in every single state secondary school in every single local authority, without exception. The Bill will also establish consistency by applying the statutory careers duty to all types of state school, bringing approximately 2,700 academy schools and 130 alternative provision academies into scope.

By extending the lower age limit to year 7, the Bill also brings the careers duty into line with the Government's careers framework for schools, the Gatsby benchmarks, which apply to years 7 to 13. This will enable the Government to meet a commitment they made in the *Skills for Jobs* White Paper and will reach over 600,000 year 7 pupils each year. It will also mean that we can give year 7 pupils early exposure to a range of local employers so that they gain experience of the workplace, ask questions and develop networks. They will begin to learn about the local labour market, which is important because skills needs around the country are very different.

Equally important—as my noble friend will no doubt expect me to say, given my performance on the skills Bill—is exposure to careers not available locally. That is important for both students and communities. As regards students, somewhere in Eastbourne, a town founded on hospitality, care and education, is a future nuclear engineer, and somewhere in Workington, a town founded on nuclear engineering, is a Michelin-starred chef. Those young people must not be denied the breadth of possibility which should be open to them. There are institutions in this country, such as Education and Employers and Founders4Schools, which exist to open those doors for pupils, and I really hope that my noble friend the Minister will be able to commit to continued support for bringing a breadth of opportunity to young people, wherever they grow up.

It is also really important for communities. I was part of a committee of this House that looked at seaside towns, and it was clear that these towns had become narrow in the range of opportunities they offered, and that the self-belief in their ability to change had declined. Opening the eyes of children is an important part of that. Getting children to have a breadth of career aspirations then makes them available to new industries coming in, and having a breadth of industry and activity in a town makes it much more resilient to shocks such as Covid or whatever else may come our way.

Early careers guidance can support important decisions that need to be made from the age of 14—whether it is choosing between GCSE subjects or making the decision to change schools to attend a university technical college. We must ensure that our young people are well informed in their opinions.

If the Bill is passed, I count on the Government to make it easier for schools to understand the changes to the law and what action they need to take, and to encourage or require Ofsted to focus clearly and consistently on how every school is meeting its statutory duty by providing independent careers guidance to

every pupil throughout their secondary education. I very much hope that this additional requirement on schools will be matched when it comes to deciding what their funding will be next year.

If I may add a request of my own to this estimable Bill, it is that the Government stay the course and build on what has been achieved over the last 10 years, thinking particularly of the Careers & Enterprise Company and the careers hubs they have created. It is terribly easy for a Government to think that they might do better than that and to start again from the beginning. In this sort of area, that is a really difficult and dangerous thing to do. It takes ages to build up relationships with schools and with businesses—the network of understanding, prestige and respect that makes this sort of thing work well.

The Careers & Enterprise Company has done an excellent job, though it does need help at this time. Changes elsewhere, particularly with local enterprise partnerships, mean we have to look again at how careers support in schools interfaces with employers nationally and locally. I know that the Government are doing some things in the skills Bill, but they need to connect better with what they have already achieved in the Institute for Apprenticeships in terms of relationships with employers and what the levelling-up department will doubtless be doing. We need something integrated—something that employers will respect and to which they will commit really good people, so that the information and expertise coming into the Government accurately reflect what the people at the top of business want, not just a box-ticking exercise from big companies.

It is always difficult to do these things—I understand why the Government like to rein in these creatures that they do not properly control and to make sure they are working with government and not against it. But it is much better if we can work—and build—on the achievements of the past, rather than throw them out. I beg to move.

10.32 am

**Baroness Morris of Yardley (Lab):** My Lords, I very much welcome this Bill, which is a very good use of a Private Member's Bill, and I congratulate Mark Jenkinson on introducing it and for the work he did in the House of Commons. I also thank and congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Lucas, on how he introduced it. I want to broadly support it—there is absolutely nothing there with which I disagree—but it gives us the opportunity to discuss a few issues and that is what I want to do.

First, I probably ought to declare an interest. In my work with the Birmingham Education Partnership, we have a contract with the Careers & Enterprise Company. I wish that to be noted.

The noble Lord, Lord Lucas, may be interested to know that in Birmingham, it is the school-led Birmingham Education Partnership that has the contract with the CEC, not the LEP. When he is looking at future ways of delivering, he may wish to reflect on that and I would be very happy to discuss it with him—and, indeed, the Minister—if that was appropriate.

I want to talk about two areas. First, part of the legislation includes academies—big congratulations to Mark Jenkinson on achieving that. I cannot remember

how many times I have tried to include academies in other legislation. I was always told that it was not needed because it was part of the funding agreement. I see this not only as important in the light of the careers education Bill, but—as far as I can remember—it is the first time the Government have made the move and said yes, academies can be affected and influenced by the legislation as well. I have never quite understood why, if you are a child who goes to an academy, you should be denied something that Parliament thinks is good to teach children. This is a really good move and I welcome it.

The main point I wish to make concerns the substance of what might happen now that we have got careers education and guidance going into year 7, which is undoubtedly a good thing. This House has a good record of discussing careers education. We have discussed it in its own right and as part of legislation many times. I worry about the same thing every time we discuss it and that is what I want to address: we are at risk of seeing careers education as merely providing information and widening the horizons of young people. This is absolutely vital. You cannot decide to be something if you do not know it exists. The more you see it, the more you talk about it and the more you talk to people who do that job, the more likely you are to be motivated to try to achieve it. That is where our discussions tend to stop. With respect, the noble Lord, Lord Lucas, mentioned it and I do not disagree at all, but my own experience as a teacher and a person teaches me that it is not all that needs to happen if we are to achieve what we want to achieve.

Really, there are three parts and we ignore the last two. First, the children need the information. Secondly, they then need to make a decision that it might be for them—and that is so difficult. I look at my own life and there are lots of times when I have had the information, but I have not been able to work out the decision in a way that has been the right way forward. I taught children like that; it was not that they lacked the information, but they lacked the skills to align it to their strengths and weaknesses and then make the decision. The third part is that even if you make the decision that that is what you want to do, taking that first step to do it is really tough. How many times have we wanted to do something, known it is the right thing, but not known how or not been confident enough to take that first step along the road to achieving it? I think of children who do not have a lot of support at home and come from areas of significant deprivation: of course they need their horizons broadening. But it is at those next two steps where they often fall back. They have not got the skills, or they are not helped to make an effective decision, and when they do make the decision, they need someone by their side to give them the confidence to start the journey to try to achieve their dreams.

I am not for a minute saying that is not in the Bill, but I worry that when we talk about this aspect of education, we concentrate a lot on giving children the opportunity to see more people in jobs they may want to do and then leave them floundering because we do not help them with the skills to make the decision and the confidence to move forward.

On the whole, however, I again congratulate Mark Jenkinson and the noble Lord, Lord Lucas, and I very much hope that this will become a part of our national curriculum.

10.37 am

**Lord Shipley (LD):** My Lords, I agree entirely with everything the noble Baroness, Lady Morris, has said, particularly about one-to-one support for young people at the right time in the careers guidance they get. I welcome the Bill introduced by the noble Lord, Lord Lucas, and I wish it swift progress.

I had the privilege of chairing the Select Committee on Youth Unemployment last year, which reported in November and to which the government response is due very shortly. We received substantial evidence on the need to extend and deepen careers guidance in schools to broaden young people's horizons, reduce gender stereotypes and boost social mobility. The Bill fulfils a small part of what we recommended by extending the duty to provide independent careers guidance in schools to include year 7 pupils and to extend it to all academies. In those respects, it represents an important step forward.

We reported that there was a lack of knowledge of occupations among young people, plus a lack of knowledge of employment requirements and opportunities—of apprenticeships, traineeships and progression routes. The Baker clause that gives a range of providers access to speak to pupils about technical routes and apprenticeships has been patchily complied with by schools, although there are signs that this may be improving. It is vital that it does.

The committee—and we will have the opportunity to debate its report on the Floor of the House soon I hope—concluded that careers guidance should be extended to primary schools. That is because children begin to think about their futures when they are as young as five or six. By the age of seven, life-defining decisions are being formed in their minds; by the age of 10, many have already made career-limiting decisions; and by 14, those decisions tend to be very firm. Children's perceptions of what they could do are often based on where they live, who they know and what jobs those people do, the employment of their parents and friends, and their own education. We concluded that their education needs to become much more important as a factor.

At this stage, I draw attention to the North East Ambition career benchmarks primary pilot, involving 70 primary schools across the region, which has now reported on its second year. It was established by the North East Local Enterprise Partnership and is supported by the EY Foundation. There are eight benchmarks, adapted from the Gatsby benchmarks to a primary setting, incorporating curriculum learning linked to careers, visits and visitors, encounters with FE and HE, and personal guidance. The pilot has been successfully embedded. It has built capacity, is being extended to more primary schools and has shown how it can be replicated at scale right across the country, particularly in disadvantaged areas. It should be part of the Government's levelling-up plans. If you level up people, you can level up places.

[LORD SHIPLEY]

The Bill's sponsor in the House of Commons, Mark Jenkinson MP, said on launching the Bill:

"Good careers advice is important to all children ... But it's really important that from as early an age as possible, we seek to set out the options."

I agree. We have this Bill, but we need to go further. We need a framework for effective careers learning at primary level, teachers recruited and trained to lead in schools and a specific careers leader in every secondary school, as well as training for all middle and senior leaders in those schools. Careers education and guidance must not come too late to help a young person form proper judgments. They should not, for example, be obliged to choose their specialist subjects before they consider their hopes for employment. Young people should leave school in a position to succeed. That is what levelling up is about.

10.42 am

**Baroness Altmann (Con):** My Lords, I, too, congratulate my honourable friend Mark Jenkinson and my noble friend Lord Lucas on introducing this Bill. I also congratulate the Minister and the Government for their welcome support for it. I fully support the aim to provide independent careers guidance and ensure that it is available throughout the state-funded secondary school system in this country, including in academies. It seems difficult, if not impossible, to justify the exclusion so far of some secondary pupils from statutory independent careers guidance, which pupils in other institutions are automatically entitled to. Clearly, this is part of the levelling-up agenda and will help to ensure wider opportunities for all our school children.

Clause 1 ensures that careers education must start as soon as possible after secondary education begins. That means that it will become, for all Year 7s, a marker that they have reached a new stage of life, rather than waiting until Year 8. It also includes a duty to provide information about education opportunities available after age 16, such as technical training, apprenticeships or on-the-job training, to guide students into other non-school or non-university paths. This is so important for those who may not be suited to an academic university course and will help to guide children who may not otherwise consider them into practical courses for the start of a future working life so they do not feel pressured to apply only to university, which may not suit them.

Finally, as my noble friend Lord Lucas said, as part of careers education in 21st-century Britain, we must ensure that we include access to information about not just the local employment opportunities but national opportunities for careers that would be available to pupils. Crucially, we also need to include a recognition that our children should not necessarily expect, in 21st-century Britain, a career to last for the rest of their life. We need to make clear that it is okay to change your mind, too; if you think about something you definitely want to do in Year 7, you may change your mind later. Throughout life, there will be a need to move to different types of work, retrain and reskill. I hope that our careers education will help students recognise that, as they progress through life, their career can mould to fit them and the needs of the local, national or even global jobs market.

10.45 am

**Lord Holmes of Richmond (Con):** My Lords, it is a pleasure to take part in this Second Reading debate. In doing so, I declare my interest as chancellor of BPP University and as a trustee of the Burberry Foundation, which does much work on careers levelling up in Yorkshire and internationally. I add to the congratulations for my noble friend Lord Lucas and my honourable friend Mark Jenkinson in another place. While congratulating noble friends, it is right and proper to mention my noble friend Lord Baker. He gave us Baker days and, lastly, the Baker clause. With UTCs and his understanding of technical education, he has done as much as anybody to ensure that the nation is in a better place for our young people to come through, work and have fulfilling careers in new technologies, with everything that is required to make a success of the fourth industrial revolution. In many ways, when it comes to technical education, he is the don.

This Bill does exactly what it says; it is simple and clear, and I support it. It helps with levelling the playing field and, through that, levelling up. But I ask my noble friend Lord Lucas and the Minister: are we doing enough to support young disabled people with careers advice? Do careers advisers have the same aspirations and ambitions for disabled young people as for non-disabled young people? I ask the Minister particularly whether careers advisers are fully aware of the support available to help disabled people succeed through higher education and employment, including the disabled students' allowance and the Access to Work programme. As a slight trailer, I am bringing out a report on the disabled students' allowance next week. One of the recommendations is around exactly that and the careers advice that young people can expect and hope to rely on.

Can it be right that the progression rate for young people moving from schools into higher education for non-disabled young people is 47%, while for disabled students with SEN support it is just 20% and for those who have an education, health and care plan it is just 8%? For higher tariff providers—Oxbridge and the Russell group—the non-disabled progression rate is 12%, while for students with SEN support it is 3% and for those with an EHCP it is just 1%. This is quite simply a question of talent. How can we, as a nation, afford to waste such talent purely because it is born into young disabled people? Would my noble friend agree that we currently face an unacceptable situation in this country in that talent is everywhere but opportunity is not?

I say to all young people, particularly young disabled people: whatever your ambition, aspiration or career thoughts, believe in them. You can achieve. Use the careers service and careers advisers to help—it is entirely possible. It has to be the case that we address those numbers so that there truly is equality for everybody across this country. This Bill goes some way towards addressing the unacceptable reality that talent is everywhere but opportunity is not and I wish it a safe, speedy passage on to the statute book.



10.49 am

**Lord Aberdare (CB):** My Lords, I welcome this Bill and wish the noble Lord, Lord Lucas, success in piloting it through this House. I am delighted to hear that it has support from the Government. I am grateful for the briefings I have received from the Careers & Enterprise Company, the Careers Development Institute and Teach First, all of which have played such an important part in completing the careers education jigsaw that has been taking encouraging shape in recent years.

As befits a Private Member's Bill, this is a relatively modest piece of the jigsaw. I entirely support its aim of extending the duty to provide careers guidance to all students in state-funded secondary education. Apart from that, I have little to add about the Bill, as far as it goes, though I slightly regret that it does not go a bit further. I will mention three missing pieces of the jigsaw, which I hope the Minister will comment on in her response.

First, I echo the argument from the noble Lord, Lord Shipley, that careers guidance should be extended even further to include primary education. So many of children's aspirations and attitudes are formed at primary school age and it can only be beneficial for them to gain awareness of the world of opportunities available to them, beyond what they know from friends and family or see in films and television or on social media. As the noble Lord said, this could be key to increasing social mobility. Some 90% of primary teachers surveyed in 2019 believed that career-related learning, supported by employers, can challenge stereotypes about what subjects and jobs boys and girls are interested in. I ask the Minister what thinking there is in government about a possible framework for careers learning in primary schools—possibly based on the Birmingham example that the noble Lord mentioned—and how it might be funded.

Secondly, I worry about the pipeline of highly qualified careers professionals. How confident is the Minister that there will be enough such professionals to meet the needs for independent, high-quality careers information, advice and guidance, including personal guidance, not least after the expansion that this Bill would bring about? A recent CDI survey of careers professionals found that over a quarter of respondents were likely to leave the profession within two years, with poor pay and benefits being the biggest driver and cited by 40%. Action may be needed to promote the profession itself as a career opportunity, offering rewards more commensurate with its importance.

Thirdly, more work is needed to embed careers education throughout the school curriculum, across all subjects. The CEC has a programme with Pinewood Studios and the Academies Enterprise Trust developing resources and lesson plans to demonstrate to students from years 7 to 10 how the maths that they study relates to actual jobs in television, film, production and management. More such programmes are needed, including training and support for subject teachers themselves, with careers awareness built into every stage of their professional development, as promised in the *Skills for Jobs* White Paper. What can the Minister tell us about plans in this area?

Many other pieces of the skills education jigsaw still need to be put into place and I regret the lack of a refreshed careers strategy outlining the overall picture. The strategy launched in 2017 provided much of the recent momentum and, without such a strategy, there is a danger of numerous individual initiatives, worthy in themselves, not forming a coherent whole. To cite one example: we have a much-improved careers system and a focus on apprenticeships, yet hardly any of the apprentices I meet heard about their apprenticeship from their schools.

I wish this Bill well and look forward to hearing from the Minister how she and her colleagues plan to fill remaining gaps in the jigsaw so that the welcome progress made in careers education over recent years is maintained. Nothing could be more important, both for the nation and for our young people.

10.53 am

**Lord Baker of Dorking (Con):** My Lords, I begin by congratulating Mark Jenkinson, the Member of Parliament for Workington, for introducing this Bill. I know him well because in his constituency there is a university technical college on the north-west coast near Sellafield, which is now the most successful school in Cumbria. It is probably the most successful school in the north of England, as 70% of last year's school leavers became apprentices and the rest went on to university or got a local job. The college has been outstanding. He knows how important it is for children to be given an alternative to the very narrow academic education, with the eight academic subjects that they now have in schools. Children have to be aware that there is another world out there with a lot of opportunities.

I am afraid that this debate could not happen in Russia because we have not come here as a servile body to lavish praise on the Government and to say how wonderfully they have done on career guidance over the last 10 years. The record has been dismal and bleak. Why do I say that? It is not a casual, careless argument. In 2010, when the Conservatives became responsible for education, there were more than 100,000 apprentices aged under 19. In 2020, it had fallen to just over 50,000. That is failure, not success.

I draw the attention of the Minister to the excellent report from the Select Committee on Youth Unemployment, chaired excellently by the noble Lord, Lord Shipley. Figure 21 in the report shows the number of apprenticeships over the last 10 years; it shows that, as I have just said, there were 100,000 apprenticeships falling to lower than 50,000.

We were also very concerned in our report about how to improve the information going to disadvantaged children. Children who live in the leafy suburbs with grammars schools do not require that sort of guidance but children who live in disadvantaged areas and are now restricted by this very narrow academic curriculum need advice, guidance and help.

We were very disturbed to find that in many disadvantaged areas there were very high levels of youth unemployment. The general level of youth unemployment among NEETs is about 9%. We analysed youth unemployment in various boroughs in the West Midlands. I refer the Minister to figure 22 in the

[LORD BAKER OF DORKING]  
report—not immediately, but later. The general level of youth unemployment is 9%, but we found that in Sandwell, it was 20%, in Wolverhampton it was 19%, and in Stoke and Birmingham it was 18%. In those areas, knowledge of alternative study and changes in career prospects are just not getting through, quite frankly.

I now come to the Baker clause. I do not talk about a Baker clause on the grounds of vanity or reputation. When you are 87, vanity and reputation are really all in the past. I introduced the Baker clause only in order to get a good message over to youngsters in schools of the alternatives available to them apart from eight narrow academic subjects. I persuaded the Government three years ago. Unfortunately, they decided to do the drafting themselves and did not make it workable.

I suggested that they ought to make a duty on schools to have a meeting to explain—first to the 12 and 13 year-olds, then to the 14 and 16 year-olds and then to the 16 and 18 year-olds—all the alternative provision that is available from, for example, apprenticeship providers, FE colleges, independent sixth-form colleges that have very practical A-levels and not the academic ones, and university technical colleges.

They said that the Minister would issue advice and the schools would follow. The Minister issued advice and nothing happened at all. When we approached the schools they said that they were sorry, they could not arrange the meeting, they were too busy or could only have a meeting one Friday afternoon in July and things like that. It has been completely inoperable for the last three years. The Government have done nothing about it until now. They said they were going to consult on it. You do not need to consult on a really simple subject like that. You just have to make up your mind and act.

When UTCs applied to schools to go in and talk to their students, we were fobbed off. We were told not to appear. When we complained to the Government, again they did nothing. They did not approach the schools; they did not reproach the schools and tell them anything—they did nothing. They said they would go out to consultation. You do not need consultation on a simple subject like this.

Now, we will have the debate on the Baker clause when the amendment comes back in the next fortnight or so to this House. Again, I suggest to the Government that they have got it wrong. What they are saying now is that all the schools have to do is to produce one meeting. I am conscious of the time, but time is not a problem; people are not speaking and no one has spoken for five minutes so far, so the Whip may relax.

The current clause says that only one meeting should take place in each of the three years. On the evidence, I want three meetings, but it is being said that everyone would have to have nine meetings. That is completely wrong—it is false news. I want three meetings, with 12 to 13 year-olds, 14 to 16 year-olds and 16 to 18 year-olds. We will debate that later.

I will briefly quote some things from our report. We listened and talked to lots of unemployed people in the north-west, Nottingham and London. A young person said,

“when I was in school in Year 11 apprenticeships were not really spoken about, I didn’t know anything about them. Even now I don’t really hear a lot about them. I only first heard about them at the time I applied for one”.

This is the ignorance that children have when they leave school today. It is very evident in our report.

We also recommend that Ofsted should not give “outstanding” to any school that does not have a proper career advice policy and implementation. These are the sorts of recommendations that I hope the Minister will warmly support when she answers our report, otherwise we will just sink backwards. We must make progress in this area and not depend on the failure of the past.

*11.01 am*

**Lord Addington (LD):** My Lords, it is rather daunting to follow the noble Lord, Lord Baker, who has been described today as the don in this field of career education by someone on his own side. I have not disagreed with him much on this subject and I do not think I did at all today. He says he does not care about reputation, at the age of 87; I think we will use his reputation when he reaches 88 and 89 to try to put some pressure on the Government on this.

The Bill is a good but small thing. It takes a step forward and deals with some of the historical anomalies and oddities of academies that we are constantly dealing with. The noble Baroness, Lady Morris, is absolutely right about the attitude, “We cannot do this because it is an academy”—but this is supposed to be a universal education system. We go back and forth on this all the time, and a Bill that at least sets that precedent—regardless of its primary purpose—is taking a step forward. Mark Jenkinson, who is watching us very astutely from just outside the Bar, may have set a precedent he did not look to set.

On making sure that there is more advice on careers guidance, I am struck by one thing: you really cannot start talking about this early enough. The term “careers guidance” might not be right for primary schools—“lifestyle choices” might be better—but I am reminded of what the noble Lord, Lord Lucas, said about conservative changes: if something is already there, at least people will have a rough idea of what you are saying. We can spend our entire lives reinventing the wheel; if we want to make some small changes, we might get a term that we know and then slightly adapt it. Stereotype-breaking is essential, to make sure that people actually know what is going on.

This is a very odd time; now, we have to get people not just to aspire higher but to think laterally. The level 4 and 5 executive shortage in our country, which was probably done no favours by saying that everybody should go to university to get to level 6, so they then have to de-skill in certain subjects, has been going on for decades and has been made slightly worse. We must think differently. That means we need informed people not only giving information but interpreting it. Those who made that point were right—“Here is a list of facts; read down the list”, but what do the facts mean? What are the options? What steps do I take, and what support is there to enable me to take them?

I had a nagging suspicion that I would end up agreeing with everybody; I discern that I will clearly have to read my noble friend Lord Shipley's report, and not just the executive summary. I am not sure I should thank him for that.

**Lord Baker of Dorking (Con):** We have made it very simple to read by having lots of illustrations. There are about 30 illustrations, which is very unusual for a Select Committee report, because we thought that now people—particularly with all the government press conferences—look at charts and understand the issues very quickly. It will not be too demanding for the noble Lord to look at the pictures.

**Noble Lords:** Oh!

**Lord Addington (LD):** I walked into that, didn't I? I thank the noble Lord. I turn to the next report I will have to read, from my friend the noble Lord, Lord Holmes. Special educational needs are an area which will put greater demand on staff. We are talking about 20% to 25% of the population. If you have a problem accessing forms of education because of special educational needs—an effect which I think we can agree applies here—you will need to apply things differently. I remind the House of my interests in this and as a dyslexic who uses such things as voice operation, having gone through how it applies; with every technological advance, you will have to learn how to apply it.

I reiterate to the Government one more time: if they insist that people have to pass English and maths in a written, pen-and-paper test, they will effectively be countering their argument. The recent announcements on access to higher education and other things go counter to their own legislation. If the Government have time, to get some idea while we are going through this about how that guidance will appear would be really helpful—and how we make sure it is coherent and holistic, transferring people to better options and continuing to give them the basis to transfer afterwards. I think it was the noble Baroness, Lady Altmann, who said that people will no longer be in the same job for life. We must try to get that flexibility and knowledge built in.

This Bill is a good step forward. I encourage all noble Lords to get behind it and make sure it gets on to the statute book, but it is only part of the process. It sets the precedent for making sure that all schools, regardless of how they were founded and when and in which piece of ridiculous or great legislation—depending on your point of view or how much it has annoyed you recently—in our universal system have a universal system of supply. It sets a precedent for making sure you know that what happens both in your local environment and down the road, even if it is a long road, is also available, and that you might have to transfer between them. These are all important things. We must make sure that it is coherent throughout.

I hope the Minister can also give a small assurance that we will make sure that, when looking at all forms of providers throughout this legislation, we apply with sanctions, for the reasons raised earlier. It would be interesting to get a little nod towards that.

Can the Minister give us a coherent assurance that we will make sure that we invest in the people who deliver? Without that, this legislation does not really matter. Will there be another series of lists and another tier of teachers who have gone through the A-level system giving advice about what could be done to get to level 4 via a T-level—which, once again, we do not understand yet properly? That will not help. We need people who are properly trained, because training is the important bit. Unless it is of high quality, we may as well give up and go home now.

11.09 am

**Baroness Wilcox of Newport (Lab):** My Lords, as we heard from the noble Lord, Lord Lucas, and others, this promising Bill would extend the existing duty that some schools have to make careers guidance available. It would mean that all secondary school pupils in the state sector got access to independent careers advice.

Labour supported this Bill in the Commons, and I am happy to reaffirm this today. These measures are an important first step in aligning the experience—and, ultimately, the life chances—of state school pupils with their independently educated peers, who we know in general have much greater access to information. Indeed, as a former teacher in the state sector with 34 years' experience, I can confirm that careers guidance was always a moveable feast. However, in my former school, Hawthorn High School in Pontypridd, we were fortunate to have the skills and knowledge of one of the area's outstanding careers teachers, as noted by her regular grade 1 Estyn grading—my former colleague Helen Lima. Every student deserves the opportunity to have such support. As my noble friend Lady Morris said, young people lack the skills to make the appropriate decisions—particularly youngsters with greater socio-economic needs.

Careers education must be a crucial building block of the Government's schools policy—and their levelling up. I am glad to see the levelling-up Minister here to listen. Labour stands ready to help the Government in their aims on this wherever we can. There is a serious gap of rigorous and dynamic careers guidance in our schools. In the *Skills for Jobs* White Paper, the DfE admits that

“there is no single place you can go to get government-backed, comprehensive careers information.”

We have the opportunity to correct this, and we simply must ensure that the provision put in place is evidence-based and effective.

It is no use, for example, if pupils are encouraged into contracting industries, or not informed about burgeoning ones, especially in our dynamic area of future technologies. Indeed, despite the admirable intent of the Baker clause—and boy, did I like those Baker days from 1988 onwards; they were very useful—a third of students say they have received no information about apprenticeships. So I urge the Minister to consider monitoring and evaluation when implementing these measures. What metrics will the Government use to define success—user satisfaction or employment outcomes? And, importantly, how will we change course if the scheme is failing?



[BARONESS WILCOX OF NEWPORT]

I pay tribute to the honourable Member for Workington, who is sponsoring this Bill. In Committee in the other place, he pointed out that only 45% of secondary schools and colleges are involved in career hubs, the formal partnership between schools, businesses and training providers. This seems like a lost opportunity. I would argue that the Government could go further and faster. Is their aim for the number to be 100%, and by when?

Labour's strongly held view is that every young person should be able to expect quality work experience—an experience that opens their horizons and is judged not on whether they are safe but on whether it helps them to experience their future world of work. Indeed, I am delighted that the leader of the Opposition in the other place has announced an excellent offer that will be introduced by the next Labour Government. It will include the equivalent of two weeks-worth of compulsory work experience to connect young people with local employers, build the skills for work and ensure that every child and young person has access to quality careers advice in their school by giving every school access to a professional careers adviser once a week: a Helen Lima for every school.

Until that day, however, I conclude by reaffirming our overall support for the Bill and my gratitude to all those supporting it. These are surely common-sense measures and a solid step on the way to helping school pupils into meaningful employment and a bright future.

11.14 am

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education (Baroness Barran) (Con):** My Lords, I join your Lordships in thanking my noble friend Lord Lucas for bringing forward this Bill, and I thank all noble Lords who have participated in this debate. I am also grateful to my honourable friend the Member for Workington for his work on this important Bill, and I congratulate him on ensuring that it passed through the other place.

High-quality careers guidance prepares young people for what comes next. It connects young people from all backgrounds to education and training opportunities that lead to great jobs—as my noble friend Lady Altmann said, not just one great job but several over a career. Furthermore, careers guidance is an essential underpinning to the Government's skills reform, and that is why I am happy to lend my support, and that of the Government, to this Bill.

The cross-party support apparent in the other place shows that there is agreement in both Houses that careers guidance in secondary schools is vital and, in particular, on the benefits of inspiring our young people about a range of great careers, raising aspirations and encouraging them to maximise their talent and skills. The Government support the Bill because we want to level up the country, give access to opportunity and allow talent to flourish—as my noble friend Lord Lucas said, whether that be in the locality you grew up or outside it.

As we emerge from this pandemic, good-quality careers advice is essential to build a workforce that is dynamic and flexible. It is critical that young people

are provided with guidance on future labour market opportunities and growth sectors, so that they can learn the skills they need to be successful in our fast-paced and ever-evolving jobs market—a point that the noble Baroness, Lady Wilcox, mentioned.

My noble friend challenged me on whether the Government would stick with the programme, and I am pleased to reassure him that in the *Skills for Jobs* White Paper, we committed to extending career hubs, career leader training, digital support and the enterprise adviser networks—the employer volunteers—to all secondary schools and colleges in England. Your Lordships will remember that that recommendation was in the Augar review, and we accepted it. My noble friend explained the Bill very ably. It is a simple but effective Bill, and I will not repeat what it aims to achieve, but I shall attempt to address some of the points raised by your Lordships today.

I know that my noble friend Lord Baker and I do not agree on absolutely every aspect of widening pupil access to alternative providers, but we agree on the principle of it, and we agree that there are still too many schools failing to comply with provider access legislation. Your Lordships will be aware that, through the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill, we aim to strengthen the law so that all schools must offer at least three encounters with providers of approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships for pupils in years 8 to 13. For the first time, we will introduce parameters around the content of these encounters to safeguard their quality.

The noble Lord, Lord Addington, and my noble friend Lord Holmes raised the important issue of careers provision for those students with special educational needs and disabilities. The Bill extends careers provision to all pupils in state secondary education, including those in mainstream schools with special educational needs provision, and in special schools. The Careers & Enterprise Company works with career leaders to design and deliver career education programmes tailored to the needs of young people with special educational needs and disabilities. All mainstream and special schools have been invited to be involved in the Careers & Enterprise Company's inclusion community of practice, which operates out of 32 career hubs and currently reaches 628 educational establishments. This national community of best practice sharing was established to enable young people with special educational needs to be much better supported in their careers education, and this will be rolled out to all careers hubs in the next academic year.

I do not want to dwell on the minimum education requirements raised by the noble Lord, Lord Addington, but I remind him that we are consulting on them; this is not a decision.

The noble Baronesses, Lady Wilcox and Lady Morris of Yardley, rightly talked about the importance of work experience. The careers statutory guidance makes it clear that schools and colleges should follow the Gatsby benchmarks. They are evidence-based, as the noble Baroness opposite rightly challenged, and offer both personal guidance and experience of work as part of their career strategy for pupils.



The noble Lords, Lord Shipley and Lord Aberdare, mentioned the value of engaging children in primary schools. Of course, they are right that this has the potential to broaden horizons and raise aspirations. The Careers & Enterprise Company has produced a suite of resources to support the delivery of these activities in primary schools, and we support programmes such as Primary Futures that help to broaden students' aspirations at an earlier stage.

The noble Lord, Lord Aberdare, asked for a clearer careers strategy. He may be aware that the Government have appointed Professor Sir John Holman as the independent strategic adviser on careers guidance. He is currently advising us on greater local and national alignment between the National Careers Service and the Careers & Enterprise Company. He will also advise on the development of a cohesive and coherent careers system for the long term; we expect to receive his recommendations this summer.

As we have heard from your Lordships, we cannot underestimate how important careers advice is. The Bill will help to make sure that every young person in a state secondary school, whatever their background and wherever they live in the country, can get on in life. I thank your Lordships for their contributions, which the Government are pleased to support; I urge the House to do the same.

**Lord Aberdare (CB):** My Lords, the Minister has made no reference to my concern about whether careers professionals will be available in sufficient number and quality to deliver the ambitious plans that the Government have outlined.

**Baroness Barran (Con):** We are confident. We are working in a number of ways, which I am happy to set out for the noble Lord in writing.

11.22 am

**Lord Lucas (Con):** My Lords, I am grateful to all noble Lords who have spoken, particularly my noble friend the Minister for that reply. I think that, if today were a baking day for my noble friend Lord Baker, he would have an oven full of hot cross buns. As ever, his was an impressive speech and one that we should all listen to. I very much look forward to the debates that we will have when this Bill returns to this House. It is really important that something we all agree should happen is framed in such a way that it does happen.

I support what the noble Baroness, Lady Morris of Yardley, said about how difficult it is for people to realise that something might be for them and then take the first step, and about the efficacy of having someone by their side to help. I really hope that we find the Government determined to move forward on careers hubs and career leaders' education, including working with education employers; my noble friend the Minister mentioned the work done by Primary Futures and other equivalent organisations to produce people who can be by someone's side when they are looking at taking that first step.

The noble Lord, Lord Shipley, focused on extending this to primary. It is important. Children coming into secondary school have a lot of their ideas formed by that stage; a narrowing has taken place. It does not

take much. I have been on several Primary Future expeditions. At that age, children are so uncritical. They open up to new ideas so easily. They love sitting down next to a policeman or a nurse, or someone like that, who can talk to them about what they do in a way they have not had exposure to. It really works well as a formula.

As ever, my noble friend Lord Holmes waxed lyrical on disabled people. I must say, I have found it astonishingly difficult to employ disabled people. I have never found a structure, with charities or the Government, that makes it easier for me to communicate with and reach disabled people or understand how to do that better. I hope that we will see some progress on that; we need a structure that industry can relate to and which really supports disabled people. It is not beyond human wit.

Thinking about my noble friend Lady Altmann's speech, I am reminded of Cisco's pride that its champion apprentice was a woman who was previously a hairdresser. It had changed its advertising, so that the way it described its jobs appealed to people like that. It is not hard, if you are given help or you have the inspiration, to make changes, but it really helps if you have a structure to work with in doing that.

I am extremely grateful to all who have spoken. I wish the Bill a swift and untroubled passage through this House and very much look forward to its implementation.

*Bill read a second time and committed to a Committee of the Whole House.*

## Local Government (Disqualification) Bill

### Second Reading

11.27 am

*Moved by Lord Udney-Lister*

That the Bill be now read a second time.

**Lord Udney-Lister (Con):** My Lords, I am reminded of the fact that the strength of your Lordships' House is when we can come together to improve legislation and close legislative loopholes in an attempt to strengthen our democracy and protect the citizens of our country.

In this Second Reading, together we have the opportunity to prevent sex offenders serving in local government. As someone who, like many noble Lords present, started their public service at the coalface of politics by serving as a local councillor—I did so for 35 years—I was surprised, in fact horrified, to learn that a loophole exists in our legislation that allows sex offenders to avoid disqualification from local office.

When we consider the role of local councillors in the community, we must think of the position of trust that they hold and the work that they do, often with the most vulnerable members of our society. I do not need to go into depth on this point, as the duties undertaken by our local representatives, while perhaps not celebrated enough, are well known to noble Lords present. However, I reiterate from my own experience as both a former councillor and a former council leader that, every day, councillors and those holding

[LORD UDNY-LISTER]

local office across the country work closely with children and vulnerable adults. We must therefore do everything we can to ensure that those who are convicted of a sexual offence are barred from the privilege of serving their local communities on a local authority.

The loophole that exists is found in the legislation that covers disqualification from office in local government. Noble Lords will be aware that, if someone is subject to a custodial sentence, they are automatically disqualified from their elected post. However, bizarrely, when a sex offender does not receive a custodial sentence but is still deemed to be that much of a threat that they are placed on the sex offenders list, there is nothing in law to prevent them taking up office in local government.

The fact that someone who has committed offences of the most grotesque nature can then be allowed to stand for election and occupy a position of trust and responsibility in their community is an outrageous flaw in our electoral law and something which I hope that noble Lords will help to correct with the passage of this Bill. In observing the proceedings and passage of the Bill through the other place, I was appalled to learn that due to this legislative loophole, individuals on the sex offender register have been able to retain their seat after refusing to resign. This is simply outrageous, as holders of office in local government should, as the majority of them are, be people who embody the values of public life and abide by the laws of this land. This loophole casts an unsavoury shadow of doubt over the security of the vulnerable, especially children, and we therefore have a duty to come together, not only to strengthen our law but to strengthen trust, integrity, and confidence, in our system of local government.

We have before us a relatively short yet slightly complex Bill, which seeks to remove the loophole I have just described. The Bill is not intended to reform the complexities of other areas of electoral law, nor should it be seen as an opportunity to bring about wider disqualification clauses. The Bill is about acting swiftly to safeguard the vulnerable. It will update the disqualification criteria for local government members, including councillors, mayors of combined authorities, the Mayor of London, and London Assembly members, who are subject to relevant notification requirements or orders due to their sexual misconduct, preventing them not only standing for office but remaining in office. If they have already been elected to serve, we are aiming to fix the current as well as the future.

In this country, our system of local government is deeply rooted in having strong local representation of people who are of good character, worthy of trust and beyond reproach. Through the Covid-19 pandemic, I witnessed first-hand a resurgence of the role and duties carried out by our local officeholders on the ground, and I can foresee the duties of our locally elected representatives only being extended in the future. Therefore, we must ensure that only those with integrity can stand to serve. Those holding office in local government today are tasked with making decisions on behalf of children and vulnerable adults. Therefore, it is obvious that those trusted to make decisions should be of irreputable character.

Our local representatives deserve our utmost respect. The vast majority work tirelessly to strengthen the country and are the very foundation of our democracy. However, sadly, there are rare occasions when the behaviour of some falls below the standards that the public expect, and when cracks appear in the foundations of our democracy, we in this place must strive to seal the gaps.

It should be noted that the Local Government Association, in its quest to ensure that the highest standards of integrity and conduct are present in public life, supports the objectives of the Bill. The Bill received cross-party support in the House of Commons and arrives in your Lordships' House with the support of Her Majesty's Government. I thank Sir Paul Beresford, who championed the Bill through the House of Commons, and the Government and opposition parties for their support so far. I further pay tribute to the officials who have combed through the complexity of our electoral legislation to help ensure that the Bill is sufficiently primed to close the loophole mentioned.

I hope your Lordships will look favourably on affording the Bill a safe passage through this House, so that together we can close a loophole and thus strengthen our democracy for the better. I beg to move.

*11.34 am*

**Baroness Goudie (Lab):** My Lords, I welcome the Bill. Like many others in this House, I was in local government and found it wonderful to be there, and I find it wonderful to know that today we are trying to reform these kinds of loopholes. I thank Sir Paul Beresford for bringing the Bill forward and the Labour Party for giving it its full support.

We must ensure the highest standards of conduct and integrity in local government. I hope this will be reflected in elections with a higher turnout than we have seen in the last few years. I look forward to seeing a better turnout. That is the object of the Bill. The Local Government Association supports it. I support it. It sets out grounds of disqualification for members of local authorities in England, including parish councillors, members of combined authorities, the Mayor of London and London Assembly members.

The Bill asserts new grounds of disqualification relating to sexual offences, expanding the criteria to include being on the sex offender register or being subject to a sexual risk order under the Sexual Offences Act. These individuals should not be able to run for public office or retain their seat if already elected. Recent cases have restated the need for reform.

I have one criticism: the Bill does not go far enough. It should also include Members of this House, Members of the House of Commons and the police and crime commissioners, and it should be extended throughout the United Kingdom.

*11.36 am*

**Lord Hayward (Con):** My Lords, I approach the Bill from a somewhat Janus point of view. I welcome its contents but, rather like the noble Baroness, Lady Goudie, I am concerned about its nature, in that it

does not cover other elements. When I spoke at the Second Reading of the Elections Bill, I identified—the noble Baroness, Lady Hayman picked up this—that there are 25 major pieces of legislation relating to elections. Our election law is a mess. Unfortunately, this piece of legislation just adds another point to it. A matter that I will return to in Committee on the Elections Bill is precisely this point: we are passing a piece of legislation to exclude certain people from certain elected offices, but we are not excluding those same people from other elected offices. There is a complete mess in relation to those banned from local councils, those banned from standing for office as police and crime commissioners and those banned from being in this House or the House of Commons. It is somewhat ironic that there are fewer restrictions on people being elected as Members of Parliament than as police and crime commissioners and councillors. Somebody could therefore become Prime Minister with far fewer restrictions imposed on them than if they were to be a local councillor.

In conclusion, I add one other observation. It is not directly relevant to the Bill but it relates to a frame of mind. There is a tendency in this day and age for all parties to disown candidates who have made comments on social media that are regrettable but were often made when they were youngsters. Then, in the haste and fear of an election, the candidate is disowned and dropped. All parties should address this issue. It is not relevant to the Bill, but it is well worth all parties giving serious consideration to how they cope with the content of social media which in many cases people made in their youth.

Overall, I welcome the Bill but regret the circumstances under which it is coming forward because, as the noble Baroness, Lady Goudie, said, there should be other similar disqualifications and a general review of disqualifications for all elected offices.

11.39 am

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock (Lab):** My Lords, I shall be brief and begin by confirming that the Labour Party fully endorses this proposed legislation. I also pay tribute to Sir Paul Beresford for promoting this important Bill in the other place and to the noble Lord, Lord Udny-Lister, for sponsoring it in your Lordships' House. As my noble friend Lady Goudie just said, it is also supported by the Local Government Association.

As we have heard, as it currently stands, sex offenders who avoid a custodial sentence are not disqualified from running for local government positions in England and Wales. We know that people often seek out elected representatives when they are at their most vulnerable and in deepest crisis. Those of us who have held such office, whether at council level or here, know that we see more vulnerable people than we would really like to and, importantly, we can vouch for being that support and backdrop for thousands of people, day in and day out.

As legislation, the Bill is very specific and small but, if passed, will have a huge impact because it will close the loophole that allows sex offenders to hold respected positions where they will have contact with these

vulnerable people. I am particularly concerned about children in care, whom councillors are expected to protect. The noble Lord, Lord Udny-Lister, rightly said that, if this goes through, it will strengthen our democracy.

I also pick up the important point made by my noble friend Lady Goudie and the noble Lord, Lord Hayward, about needing consistency across all elections when we are choosing our representatives. It is only right that the representatives elected to carry out these important roles are fit and proper people. As the noble Lord, Lord Udny-Lister, said, they should embody the values of public life. It is unacceptable that a small loophole in existing legislation means that people who should be looking out for the most vulnerable are in a position where we might still doubt that that is the case. It is important that the change to disqualification criteria is made in relation to all representations, with a particular focus on those who act as corporate parents, as councillors often do. Labour fully supports the Bill and is pleased that the Government are taking it forward.

11.42 am

**The Minister of State, Home Office and Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (Lord Greenhalgh) (Con):** I thank noble Lords, in particular my noble friend Lord Udny-Lister, for sponsoring this Private Member's Bill. I also congratulate the honourable Member for Mole Valley, Sir Paul Beresford, for all the work he has done to progress this Bill through the other place. The two of them share one thing in common: they were both leaders of Wandsworth, which is known, by them at least, as “the brighter borough”. I served for 20 years in Hammersmith and Fulham, and learned an awful lot from them and from what they achieved for their local residents. My noble friend has an unrivalled record, certainly when I compare it to mine. As he said in his speech, he served as a councillor for 35 years, with great distinction, and—I do not know how he survived it—19 years as leader of a London borough. That requires some survival instinct; it is quite incredible. Beyond that, he served five years in City Hall, along with the then mayor, Mayor Johnson, before completing the pyramid with two years in Downing Street. It is great that this Bill is sponsored by my noble friend, whom I very much consider a mentor.

The Government support the Bill for three main reasons. First, preventing registered sex offenders from either standing or serving as councillors, mayors or London Assembly members will strengthen communities' faith and confidence in their elected representatives. Secondly, the Bill delivers on the Government's stated commitment to bring local government disqualification into line with modern sentencing practice for sexual offences. Thirdly, the electorate has a right to expect that the people who stand and serve to represent them and their local communities are of good character.

The current disqualification criteria for local government candidates and councillors will automatically disqualify anyone for five years if they are convicted of a custodial sentence of three months or more, suspended or not. This rule dates back to the Local Government Act 1972. However, while the existing law is still effective



[LORD GREENHALGH]

in addressing serious cases of criminal behaviour, it does not take account of the non-custodial sentences the courts now issue for certain categories of sexual offences. This means that some individuals who are convicted and who ought to be disqualified do not meet the current threshold and can therefore slip through the net.

Noble Lords have indicated that they agree with me and the Government that it is quite intolerable that people deemed by the courts to pose a risk to children and vulnerable adults are not barred from serving as members of local authorities. The Bill rights that wrong by updating the law to ensure that only fit and proper persons can stand or serve as locally elected officials. We know, of course, that the vast majority of local authority members serving their communities are of good character, worthy of trust and beyond reproach. But, with some 120,000 councillors in England, there have inevitably been cases in which the behaviour of elected officials has fallen well below the standards the public expect and deserve.

**Lord Campbell-Savours (Lab):** The noble Lord, Lord Hayward, referred to two excluded categories. Why were they excluded, as this is probably an off-the-shelf Bill?

**Lord Greenhalgh (Con):** I was going to come to that; I was not going to finish my speech without addressing that point, but I will bring it forward a paragraph or two. The answer to why this does not apply to MPs, as was raised by my noble friend Lord Hayward, or to PCCs, as was raised by the noble Baroness, Lady Goudie, is that standards and conduct for MPs and PCCs are governed under separate regimes, with their own mechanisms to disqualify or sanction unacceptable behaviour. There is currently the power to recall a MP, under certain circumstances, if at least 10% of the constituency electorate signs a petition. I take the general point: this Bill tidies up this issue, but there is another regime in place. I think my noble friend alluded to that point.

I had better resume from where I was. We know that the vast majority of local authority members serving their communities are of good character, worthy of trust and beyond reproach. That is one of the reasons why, in 2018, the Government responded to a consultation to update the local government criteria with a commitment to legislate on this matter. This was, in part, in response to an infamous case in which a parish councillor, shortly after being elected, was convicted of possessing indecent images of children. He was placed on the sex offender register but not given a custodial sentence. Despite repeated calls for him to resign, he refused to stand down and actually remained a parish councillor for the full term. The law as it stands allowed him to continue to do so, but this Bill would prevent such circumstances occurring again.

These new disqualification criteria will protect our communities by barring such individuals from holding office while they remain subject to the notification requirements for sexual offences or subject to a sexual risk order. Where offenders pose such a severe risk to

the public that they are subject to indefinite notification requirements, communities can feel safe in the knowledge that such individuals will remain disqualified from elected office for the entire duration.

On its remit with regard to the devolved Administrations, I should state that the Bill applies to England only, as much of local government is devolved. The Scottish Parliament can make corresponding provision and the Welsh Government legislated on this matter last year. That said, since the UK Government retain the responsibility for elections in Northern Ireland, we will work with the Northern Ireland Executive to extend these measures there too, with a comprehensive package addressing the rules that govern both candidates and sitting councillors.

The Government strongly believe that there should be severe penalties for locally elected councillors who break the bonds of trust that hold local democracy together. This Bill puts that principle into practice, while ensuring that local government can continue to command people's faith and trust, both now and in future. The Government are therefore delighted to support the Bill.

*11.49 am*

**Lord Udney-Lister (Con):** My Lords, I say thank you very much to the noble Baronesses, Lady Goudie and Lady Hayman, the noble Lord, Lord Hayward, and the Minister for their support for this Bill. In particular, I thank the LGA, which has been very supportive on its journey. I fully understand the arguments about why this should be widened to other groups, but an argument has been clearly made by the Minister about why that should be done by other mechanisms in another place. This will deal with the problem in local government and I urge you to support it. I also thank the Minister for his kind words.

*Bill read a second time and committed to a Committee of the Whole House.*

*11.50 am*

*Sitting suspended.*

## **Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Safeguarding and Road Safety) Bill** *Second Reading*

*12.30 pm*

*Moved by Lord Borwick*

That the Bill be now read a second time.

**Lord Borwick (Con):** My Lords, I first must make my declarations of interest. I am currently the holder of a London taxi proprietor's licence, as I own a single London taxi and employ a taxi driver. In the past, I spent most of my business life in the taxi industry. I was chief executive and a big shareholder in Manganese Bronze Holdings plc, which manufactured, distributed and financed the traditional London taxi and developed the first mobile phone hailing system in the world,



which became the first wheelchair-accessible public transport system. I will always be grateful to the late Sir Bert Massie and a fine civil servant, Ann Frye, for pushing me to do that. Later I was chairman of the company that adapted the Mercedes Vito to make a wheelchair-accessible London taxi. All those interests have now ceased.

The Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Safeguarding and Road Safety) Bill will improve public safety while travelling by these modes of transport. Taxi drivers throughout the country are great people generally. There are quality systems in place in almost all boroughs. This is desirable because the customer, the traveller, is in a uniquely vulnerable position. Passengers are often alone, often away from home in an area they do not know. The customer chooses the first empty taxi plying for hire and has no way of choosing their taxi driver. That puts a burden on the authorities to get the regulation right. In most parts of the world, among the top 10 problems to be faced is the number of complaints about taxis. In London and many other towns around the country, taxis are among the features that a mayor gets compliments about. Drivers are proud of their knowledge and most had a warm sense of achievement when a taxi driver won “Mastermind” on TV a few years ago. Of course, they knew that they could have achieved that prize if only they had tried.

The main focus of the Bill is on formalising information-sharing between taxi and private hire vehicle licensing authorities, specifically safeguarding and road safety concerns identified by other authorities. Ensuring that serious and credible concerns about a driver are shared will facilitate more considered licensing decisions as authorities will have greater access to the relevant facts. As noble Lords may know, the authorities responsible for taxi and private hire vehicle licensing in England are lower-tier and unitary authorities such as district councils. The exception to this is in London, where Transport for London is the licensing authority. These licensing authorities decide whether each applicant for a taxi or private hire vehicle driver’s licence is fit and proper, and that is where this Bill can help.

In some areas, a phenomenon has occurred whereby a driver who loses his licence in one area reregisters with the adjacent licensing area and essentially carries on as before. It would be unreasonable to expect an authority to check each application manually with the other 275 licensing authorities for previous adverse history. So, it is the duty of the law, I suggest, to allow technology to perform this task instead. While the number of bad guys who get a taxi driver’s licence is small, their importance is great because they jeopardise the whole system of regulation of quality.

It is important to note that the Bill would only make more information available to licensing authorities. It does not change the criteria under which licensing authorities make their decisions, nor does it tie a licensing authority into making a particular decision. Licensing authorities are currently required by legislation to keep records of the licences they have issued. They must also make this information available if asked for it, but there is no requirement to share information with other licensing authorities about the licences they have suspended, refused or revoked. There is a voluntary

database, the national register of refusals and revocations, known as NR3, which some licensing authorities use. However, the use of this database is far from universal. This means that there remains the possibility that a driver deemed unsafe in one licensing area and who has their licence revoked may well reapply for a licence and successfully hide that decision from a different licensing authority.

I am sure the Minister will agree that this situation is unacceptable, and it is one of the issues the Bill seeks to address by ensuring universal usage. To do this, the Bill would mandate licensing authorities in England to record in a database decisions to suspend, revoke or refuse a licence which are based on specific safeguarding and road safety concerns. For privacy reasons, the Bill ensures that the reasons behind the licensing decision would not be recorded directly on to the database; instead, this information would be held separately by the relevant authority. Licensing authorities would be required to search the database for each applicant. Where an authority identifies a record on the database relating to their applicant, the Bill would require them to contact the authority that made the entry to gather the details of that decision. The authority would then be required to have regard to the information provided. To be clear, the licensing authority would not be bound by that original decision. In fact, licensing authorities can, and undoubtedly will, make different decisions for a variety of reasons. Therefore, a driver’s inclusion on the database would not automatically preclude them from gaining a taxi or private hire vehicle driver’s licence.

The Bill gives licensing authorities access to more information relevant to their decision, which will help them to make the right decision. That decision may be to grant the applicant a licence. As noble Lords will have seen, the Bill builds timescales into that process to ensure that information is provided promptly, so that the process does not unduly delay a driver’s application. The database itself would be designated by the Secretary of State for Transport. This means that the Bill could mandate a database already in use, such as the national register to which I referred earlier. Although the cost of such a database is not expected to be significant, the Bill allows the database operator to charge a fee to licensing authorities to cover the associated administrative costs. The fees can be charged only if the Secretary of State has agreed the fee level.

The other key issue the Bill seeks to address is the safeguarding and road safety concerns an authority may have about taxi and private hire vehicle drivers working in their area but licensed in another. Again, the Bill does not grant any new powers; it seeks only to ensure the sharing of relevant information in a timely manner. As noble Lords may know, drivers can undertake pre-booked journeys in areas other than the one in which they are originally licensed. However, only the licensing authority that issued a driver’s licence can revoke or suspend it. This means that, where a driver is suspected of acting in an unsafe manner in one licensing authority’s area but is licensed elsewhere, the local authority is reliant on the authority which issued the licence to take action against that driver. While it is expected that one licensing authority would act on another’s concerns, the Bill would seek to formalise

[LORD BORWICK]

the process of reporting serious and credible safeguarding and road safety concerns. It would do so by requiring licensing authorities in England to share with the relevant authority concerns they have about drivers licensed in other areas.

The Bill acknowledges that drivers need protection from vexatious or frivolous complainants, but safety is rightly at the heart of the Bill, and drivers must be able to continue to earn a living where it is safe for them to do so. To achieve this balance, the concerns would have to be related to safeguarding or road safety concerns, as set out in the first clause of the Bill. The concerns would have to be serious and credible enough that the licensing authority would have considered suspending or revoking the driver's licence were they one of their licensed drivers.

Where a licensing authority in England receives a safeguarding or road safety concern from another authority about a driver it has licensed, the Bill would require it to consider whether to suspend or revoke the licence. The authority must make its decision and inform the reporting licensing authority within 20 working days of its reasons. This would provide important clarity and consistency for licensing authorities on the action they must take when concerns are raised about a driver licensed in another area.

It might be said, as is so often, that this Bill should have progressed many years ago. Noble lords may surprise me and the Minister with some analysis which reveals a flaw we have not spotted. I am not sure that I look forward to that—but we are told that there is no room in the legislative agenda for amendments to the Bill and that, if any are promulgated, it will fail. That would be a shame.

The point has been made that there are several other ways in which the taxi industry can be improved by further legislation. My honourable friend in another place, Nickie Aiken, the Member for Cities of London and Westminster, has done great work on trying to solve the problems of pedicabs in London. Alas, this Bill is not the place to achieve that. The Bill has had widespread support in another place. It was first proposed by Daniel Zeichner, the Labour MP for Cambridge, and this particular incarnation was proposed and delivered by my honourable friend Peter Gibson, the excellent MP for Darlington. Perusal of *Hansard* reveals the enormous amount of work he did to progress it. On this lonely Friday afternoon, I hope that we in our House can do justice to the aspiration outlined by Peter Gibson to help travellers in his constituency and elsewhere.

The Bill should be seen for what it is: a vital next step to improve public safety when travelling. It does not grant new powers but, through sharing of relevant information, it makes better use of those which exist. I beg to move.

12.43 pm

**Baroness Brinton (LD) [V]:** My Lords, I declare my interest as a vice-president of the Local Government Association and as a disabled person who uses an electric wheelchair. I have used taxis across the United Kingdom. I congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Borwick,

Peter Gibson MP and, before him, Daniel Zeichner MP on this Private Member's Bill, which will make a key improvement to the experience of vulnerable passengers and to how licensing authorities can keep them safe. I shall focus on two areas: passengers assaulted by drivers, and disabled people refused a service by drivers despite the requirements under the law.

Assault by a driver is a very serious offence. Drivers are in a position of trust but too often there are incidents that have placed passengers at risk, or worse. I am sure Members of your Lordships' House are aware of the cab driver John Worboys, who received two life sentences for a number of rapes and assaults: it is now believed he committed more than 100 offences against women using his cab to trap them. More recently, a predatory London private-hire driver raped a passenger and sexually assaulted two other women, and in 2019 police were looking for a London taxi driver who allegedly assaulted a passenger by braking excessively and causing them to fall off their seat during an argument in his cab.

I now turn to disabled people. Watford Borough Council—my local council—has an excellent public notice on the legal rights of disabled passengers using taxis and minicabs, which followed a series of complaints that drivers were refusing to take disabled passengers. It then surveyed disabled passengers and ran a mystery-shopper exercise to test the system. It was shocked at the results, but I am not surprised.

My own experience occurred about five years ago after leaving your Lordships' House one cold winter's evening. I live one mile from Watford station, and I arrived after 11 pm. My wheelchair battery was too low to get me home and it was sleeting. There were two wheelchair-accessible taxis in the queue, and both refused to take me, the first saying that he did not want to get out of his cab and get cold and wet, and the second saying that it was not worth it for such a short journey. There were no other accessible cabs available. One of the other drivers remonstrated with these two, who just refused to help, and I had no option at that hour but to go home, very slowly, pausing for long periods to try to preserve the battery life. It died around 250 metres from home, and I then had to get out—luckily, I can walk—and I had to push my big, 90-kilogram chair home. I am sorry to say that my experience of being refused a journey was not unusual, and I have travelled around the UK relying on taxis that frequently ignore the law. I am looking forward to hearing the contribution from the noble Lord, Lord Holmes, who may well have similar experiences where guide dogs have been refused.

Watford Council's problem is that these drivers were not licensed by their own authorities, for reasons set out very helpfully in the briefing from the Local Government Association. Can the Minister and the noble Lord, Lord Borwick, tell us if the breaching of the law on taking disabled passengers is enough to qualify for this Bill? I am rather hoping that it is.

The wider safeguarding issues relating to drivers who assault or threaten passengers, which I raised at the start of my speech, are equally important: every other part of our lives aims to provide safeguarding practice to prevent people who are known to provide a

risk to the public from being put in positions of trust. The reporting of drivers of concern has not kept pace with the lifting of restrictions for taxis plying for trade, which used to do so only in their licensing areas. This Bill will change that. A duty will be placed on local authorities to report serious safeguarding or road-safety concerns relating to a different council that has licensed that driver. I particularly want to see a formal—not voluntary—central register of drivers who are thought to be a sufficiently credible and serious risk that would put the driver at risk of having their licence suspended or revoked, or who have had their licence revoked, to prevent drivers trying to play the system, as outlined by the noble Lord, Lord Borwick.

This Private Member's Bill introduced by the noble Lord, Lord Borwick, will close this loophole; but I also agree with the LGA's proposal that the Department for Transport should bring forward a taxi and private hire vehicle licensing reform Bill to replace all the current outdated legislation and to modernise the licensing system for taxis and PHVs. This is vital for both passengers and drivers. I recognise, however, that this is not a matter for today, and I support this Bill's clear and limited aims, and wish it well in its passage to becoming law.

12.48 pm

**Lord Holmes of Richmond (Con):** My Lords, it is a pleasure to take part in this Second Reading. I congratulate my noble friend Lord Borwick and Peter Gibson MP on getting us to this stage. I will not, in any sense, spare my noble friend's blushes: what he did for accessibility of all London taxis is as much as anybody has done positively for accessible transport. It made a difference to this capital; it made a difference to transport; it made a difference to accessibility right across this country and right around the world. International cities look to London and what he—and thus we—did, and it is an absolutely fabulous testament to his work that this was achieved. What is my noble friend the Minister's view on where accessibility is likely to go in London if we do not hold strong to that which the noble Lord, Lord Borwick, set in place so many years ago?

I support the Bill, which is clear and concise. It is about safety, and that has to be a thoroughly good thing. Cabbies are a cornerstone of communities up and down this country, carrying in passengers' shopping and looking out for people. The most striking example is that it was local cab drivers who first alerted the authorities to the horrors of Harold Shipman.

I have two brief questions for my noble friend the Minister. First, where are the Government on having a national database, which could be built on new technologies such as distributed ledger technologies so that it could operate in real time, be immutable and, in this sense, be a thoroughly positive force? Secondly, how quickly can drivers who are mistakenly put on the current register, for a number of reasons, address and correct those details?

As we are talking taxis today, I take the opportunity to go a little wider, first on issues of accessibility. What data do the Government gather on how often disabled people are refused from taxis? I have certainly had the

experience, in London and across the country, of being refused service when travelling with my guide dog. Here is the thing: it does not matter how many times it happens; when you experience refusal and discrimination, it is not a cerebral experience—you feel it in your heart and your gut.

Secondly, I turn to some of the things that seem to be happening with so-called shared space. Is it sane, consistent and coherent for taxis to be excluded from areas where buses and cycles are allowed to go? I cite Tottenham Court Road in London, where cabs are not allowed for the vast majority of the hours of the day. How can I and the noble Baroness, Lady Brinton, get to meetings in areas such as Tottenham Court Road? Cabs are banned from Bank Junction but buses and cycles are allowed through. Cabs have never been involved in an accident at Bank Junction. As my noble friend is the Minister responsible for TfL, I ask her to lay out what exactly is going on.

Across London boroughs, roads are similarly closed to cabs. In Kensington and Chelsea it is fine—you can get around the borough in a cab, no problem. In other London boroughs, roads are closed to cabs but available to buses. How can it be that those roads allow a diesel bus but not an electric cab?

Further, what is the public policy situation? Why do we not cherish our cab services up and down the country, as we should? Why do we not see them more clearly in public policy as an absolutely key part of public transport?

I support the Bill, which is good for safety, disabled people and all people. Hail taxis!

12.53 pm

**Lord Bassam of Brighton (Lab):** My Lords, what a pleasure it is to follow the speech of the noble Lord, Lord Holmes, on this topic. First I congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Borwick, on sponsoring and leading on the Bill, as well as his honourable friend in another place Peter Gibson and my honourable friend Daniel Zeichner on his earlier work.

As expertly set out by the noble Lord, the purpose of the Bill is to increase the safety of passengers by introducing new checks on taxi and private hire drivers. For that very reason, we welcome the measures contained in the Bill. Specifically, as I understand it, the Bill would oblige taxi and private hire vehicle licensing authorities to submit information about refusals, suspensions and revocations of driver licences to a national database. Licensing authorities would have to check the database before making licensing decisions. That seems both logical and very sensible.

At present, all licensing authorities require DBS checks, but these reveal only prosecutions. Many unacceptable incidents do not lead to charges or even to police involvement. The important thing about the Bill is that it brings co-ordination to the national licensing system, something long overdue.

The Bill would create an additional check by allowing the sharing of other relevant information, by requiring licensing authorities to keep registers of licences issued and to make this information available on request. Supporters of the Bill have said that although the



[LORD BASSAM OF BRIGHTON]

main focus is protecting the public, it will also benefit drivers by boosting their reputation and providing an important measure of comfort—and, more than that, confidence—for taxi service users.

I hardly need to say this but, a year on from the tragic murder of Sarah Everard, nobody needs reminding that we must do all we can to enhance public protection, particularly of people in a position of vulnerability. The noble Baroness, Lady Brinton, referred to some very useful examples to suggest how this measure may be of value and use in ensuring that we do not let a few rogue drivers into the taxi-driving profession. It must be said that the taxi trade is generally well regulated. Taxi drivers offer millions of examples every day of being the very best in providing a public service, which most of us use without a second thought because they are, as the noble Lord, Lord Holmes, has told us, trusted and friendly. They are of course never short of offering their opinions and worldview on more or less every topic.

I share in the points made by the noble Lord, Lord Holmes, about the need for greater accessibility and protections for those who are disabled and vulnerable users of taxi services. I also share his aspiration for taxi services to be seen much more in the light of being a public service, rather than a private add-on. We need legislation that perhaps modernises the framework in which taxis and private hire operators work.

I have one question of the Bill's sponsors; I am sure it is something I have missed. Will the Bill cover Uber service providers? I have assumed that it will but would welcome reassurance on that point. My guess is that the taxi trade as a whole would welcome that assurance too, because it believes in a level playing field and Uber offers what is, after all, a national service.

Labour has supported the Bill through the House of Commons and we will continue to support the measure in your Lordships' House today. I wish it well from here.

12.57 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport (Baroness Vere of Norbiton) (Con):** My Lords, I too thank my noble friend Lord Borwick for bringing forward this Bill, which the Government wholeheartedly support. I am also so grateful for the support expressed for the Bill by my noble friend Lord Holmes, the noble Baroness, Lady Brinton, and the noble Lord, Lord Bassam. I think we would all pay tribute to my honourable friend Peter Gibson, the Member for Darlington, for successfully steering the Bill through from the other place to your Lordships' House.

My noble friend Lord Borwick, with his incredible experience in the area of taxis—I was not aware of quite how much he had done for accessibility and am grateful to my noble friend Lord Holmes for reminding us of that—has very ably set out the purpose of this fairly narrow Bill. As I said, the Government support it and are very keen to see its provisions in place as soon as possible. But I am standing here as the Government and, although we support the Bill, I would like to address a few things in the wider taxi and PHV space.

My noble friend Lord Holmes talked about taxis and PHVs as public transport and, to an extent, the Government agree. We see them as an integral part of the wider transport network. Any good local authority will think incredibly carefully about how these vital services are able to reach people and then drop them off at their destinations, particularly those who are disabled and others who may be vulnerable. Taxis and PHVs are licensed and enforced by over 270 different authorities. Many agree that that is too many and may lead to inconsistencies and a greater risk of failure.

In the levelling-up White Paper which we published on 2 February, we announced that we would explore transferring the responsibility for licensing taxis and PHVs to upper-tier and combined authorities in England. One benefit of reducing the number of licensing authorities from around 276 to just over 80 could be increased consistency in licensing standards. A second would be that licensing would be in the hands of the same authorities that draft local transport plans; I think that makes perfect sense and look forward to progressing those proposals. In the context of such large numbers of licensing authorities, the Government are very focused on consistency in licensing and enforcement and raising standards, particularly with regard to safeguarding across the sector.

In 2017, we commissioned the task and finish group on taxi and private hire vehicle licensing to consider the adequacy and efficiency of the legislation and guidance and to make recommendations to address the priority issues. The Government responded to that report in 2019. We committed to legislate when parliamentary time permits to set national minimum standards in licensing, introduce national enforcement powers and establish a national licensing database to include all driver, vehicle and operator licensing information. That remains our intention.

In the meantime, however, the Government have published the *Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards*, which clearly set out what licensing authorities should do to safeguard children and adults. I have written to licensing authorities many times since the publication of the statutory standards to emphasise their importance and ensure that authorities are moving quickly to improve their safeguarding policies. One aspect of the statutory standards strongly recommends the use of information-sharing tools in licensing, specifically the national register of refusals and revocations, also known as NR3. Uptake and use of NR3 has been good and has been growing—I get literally monthly updates, so I can see what is happening—but it is not yet universal. That is why this Bill will help us to make sure that the usage of that or an equivalent database is mandatory. Essentially, the Bill mandates the existing direction of travel to improve safeguarding.

The next step for the department is to update the best practice guidance, and there will be a consultation on that shortly. It will cover licensing, enforcement and accessibility, including a strong recommendation that every driver be required to complete disability awareness training. We recognise that taxis and PHVs are a vital mode of transport for many people with disabilities, and I was appalled to hear about the experience of the noble Baroness, Lady Brinton, at her local station. She asked a specific question about the



interrelationship between refusing to take a disabled passenger and this Bill. I will write to her on that and other matters that have been raised, because I am looking at the time and I know that I am well over.

Finally, on my noble friend Lord Holmes' point about taxi access on certain roads, it is true that I am the Minister for TfL and, indeed, the Minister for every highway authority in the country. Local highway authorities are responsible for determining how road space is allocated, and of course they must be responsive to local communities. I encourage anyone who has an issue with what a local highway authority is doing to get in touch with them.

To close, I am grateful to my noble friend Lord Borwick. I look forward to the passage of this Bill, and I hope that it can pass into legislation as soon as possible.

**Lord Holmes of Richmond (Con):** My Lords, I know we are short of time, but I have a brief question for the Minister before she sits down. Regarding authorities for streets such as Tottenham Court Road and other areas that refuse taxis, thus making them inaccessible for disabled people, does she agree that that is a prima facie breach of equalities legislation and their public sector equality duty? I am happy if she wants to write on that subject.

**Baroness Vere of Norbiton (Con):** I am very grateful to my noble friend for giving me the opportunity to write to him on that.

1.03 pm

**Lord Borwick (Con):** My Lords, I thank all noble Lords who have spoken in support of the Bill this afternoon, particularly the noble Baroness, Lady Brinton. Assault and refusal by drivers are exactly the sort of comments that would be added to the database and are relevant to the discussion as to whether that driver gets a new licence.

Of course, the range of wheelchairs carried by taxis nowadays varies enormously. We found that the type of wheelchair used most is, in fact, a baby buggy. Indeed, as we age over the years, it is possible to say that we all spend time in wheelchairs, and we are lucky if we do so only at the very beginning of our lives. But it is terribly important that disabled people be able to get a wheelchair-accessible taxi everywhere. A long time ago, I think in the original Disability Discrimination Act brought in some 20 years ago, the enabling legislation for statutory instruments to make all taxis wheelchair accessible was put in, so they await the moment when those statutory instruments are brought forward.

On false accusations, which was mentioned by my noble friend Lord Holmes, there is of course still the opportunity for such accusations to be appealed against by the taxi driver and dealt with through the appeals system in each borough. In answer to the noble Lord, Lord Bassam, all Uber vehicles are licensed as private hire vehicles, so they are covered by the Bill.

I thank noble Lords very much for their help, and I beg to move.

*Bill read a second time and committed to a Committee of the Whole House.*

## Office for Demographic Change Bill [HL] Second Reading

1.06 pm

*Moved by Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbotts*

That the Bill be now read a second time.

**Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbotts (Con):** My Lords, it may seem inappropriate, perhaps even in bad taste, to be discussing 20 to 25-year projections of our population when on the other side of Europe, a country's cities are being reduced to rubble. The situation in Ukraine is fast-moving and this country must play its part both in providing shelter for those who have fled and, no less importantly, in assisting those who wish to return home to help restore their homeland to peaceful prosperity. Nothing I say in the next few minutes should be seen as in any way reducing our duty to help the people of Ukraine.

One of the downsides of a five-year electoral system is that complex issues that have consequences stretching into the future—what the insurance companies call “long tail” issues—tend to be avoided. Keynes was undoubtedly right when he said:

“In the long run we are all dead”,

but political death can come every five years. However, the general public are not foolish. They know when complicated decisions are being avoided, and each time Governments dodge these decisions, trust and confidence is marginally further reduced. This cannot be good for our democratic way of life.

That takes me to the Bill, for in few areas have the long-term concerns of the general public been so consistently overlooked by successive Governments as that of demographic or population change. Let me give just a couple of numbers. The last 25 years saw our population grow by 9.1 million to 67.1 million, made up of a mixture of natural increase and net migration. The most recent ONS projections suggest that the population will grow by just under another 4 million by 2045, and that annual population growth will remain not far below historic levels at just under 285,000 per annum. It is important to remember what this figure means: 285,000 per annum means an average daily increase of 780, or 5,500 per week. It means we are putting a large village—a small town—on to the map of the UK every week, 52 weeks a year; and, 4 million people is roughly one and a half cities the size of Manchester.

Raising these uncomfortable truths is dangerous, because one can variously be called a narrow-minded little Englander, an economic illiterate, a closet racist, a eugenicist or sometimes all four. But my concern is not about people's race, colour or creed. It is not about seeking to shut the door to all new arrivals—we all recognise the cultural and economic dynamic that new arrivals bring—but it is about the scale of population increase. It is about the impact that scale will have on the country we leave to our children and grandchildren. And it is about the fact that the Government have no strategic plan to address the multifaceted challenges that population change inevitably brings.

[LORD HODGSON OF ASTLEY ABBOTTS]

Am I alone in my concern? Most certainly I am not. In connection with this Bill, I commissioned some polling by Focaldata. This revealed that 71% of the population are concerned about the impact of the forecast further population increases. In case Members of your Lordships' House think this is a concern to the white British community only, I asked the polling company to focus on ethnic minority communities. The answer there was that 60% were similarly concerned.

Everyone needs to recognise that any demographic change—up or down—results in trade-offs. Over the next couple of minutes, I shall identify a few of the most important. Most people look at population growth through an economic prism of increasing our total national GDP. Of equal relevance is how this increase has been shared out. The truth is that, measured by median wages per head, the rapid population growth of the past 25 years does not appear to have benefited a large number of our fellow citizens. Another reason is to redress the current imbalance in the structure of our population, especially as regards the social care sector. Today's young people are inevitably tomorrow's old people, requiring yet more people to look after them, resulting in what David Attenborough has memorably called a population Ponzi scheme.

Meanwhile, these new people require homes, schools and hospitals. We live on average as 2.3 people per dwelling. A population which is growing, as it is, by 780 per day requires 339 new dwellings every day, 14 every hour, or one every four minutes, night and day. As Danny Dorling, Professor of Geography at the University of Oxford, has pointed out, we are concreting over our country at a faster rate than at any time in our history. Of course, we also need to remember Robert Kennedy's famous phrase that GDP measures almost everything except that which makes life worth living. The trade-offs of population growth in environmental, ecological and societal terms are considerable.

Therefore, I argue that there is an urgent need to address this formidable range of issues and, no less importantly, at the same time reassure the general public that they are being addressed. One way to achieve this would be to create a new independent body to provide transparent, evidence-based, strategic commentary on this country's demographic future. I call this body the office for demographic change, or ODC. I have used the design of the existing Office for Budget Responsibility as a model.

How would it work? Clause 2 of my Bill would require the Government to prepare annually a statement setting out their policies in relation to anticipated changes in the demography of the United Kingdom. Clause 1 establishes the ODC and imposes a series of duties on it. Clause 1(2) proposes duties to collect evidence about the impact of population change, in particular in relation to the Government's own stated demographic objectives. Clause 1(4) specifies a number of assessments that the ODC is required to make, in particular on the ability of the country to comply with its existing treaty obligations, such as those relating to climate change. Clause 1(3) requires the ODC to report at least annually, with the reports being laid before Parliament for debate by both Houses, which is an

important aspect of restoring public trust and confidence in this policy area. Clause 1(5) gives the ODC complete discretion as to how to perform these duties, provided that it is objective, transparent and impartial. Importantly, the same clause ensures that the ODC cannot consider the impact of any alternative policies: it is an analyst of the Government's demographic policies, not a creator of them.

Let me pull together the threads of my argument. The United Kingdom is already a relatively crowded island. For example, it is three times as densely populated as France, and England will soon overtake the Netherlands as the most densely populated country in Europe. Crucially, nearly 60% of the inhabitants of this country believe it is already overcrowded. The Government now need to take positive steps to respond to this continuing high level of public concern.

I have not been able to see my noble friend's speaking notes for his reply to this debate, but I very much hope that he will not say that all these issues are being addressed by the Migration Advisory Committee—they are not. The MAC, which is a perfectly fine body, looks at one issue only: the impact of migration on employment prospects and the consequent general impact on the economy. The MAC could, and should, usefully be subsumed into the new ODC, but in no way does the MAC address the wider environmental, ecological and social issues.

Creating an ODC would provide a means of bringing together and balancing the views of economists and business leaders; ecologists and environmentalists; and social scientists and local communities. It would represent an entirely fresh way of looking at our demographic future and the trade-offs which inevitably will be required. I do not pretend that this will be easy.

In his book *The New World Order*, Henry Kissinger wrote:

"To undertake a journey on a road never before traveled requires character and courage: character because the choice is not obvious; courage because the road will be lonely at first."

I hope that the Government, and indeed the opposition parties, will on this occasion show the necessary character and courage. I beg to move.

1.16 pm

**Viscount Craigavon (CB):** My Lords, I congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbotts, on introducing this Bill and the way that he has done it; I speak very much in support of it. I spoke in favour of these same ideas contained in an amendment previously offered by the noble Lord in the Immigration Bill. It was resisted by the then Minister, mainly on the grounds that immigration was covered by the Migration Advisory Committee and that its role was being widened to cover the immigration system as a whole.

I hope that this debate and the future of the Office for Demographic Change—the ODC—can range much wider than just immigration, as will my contribution now. Attention is being drawn today to the central role that population size, increasing or decreasing, plays in so many aspects of our lives. If the Minister today tells us that the Cabinet Office would be the "hosting" ministry for the resulting provisions in this Bill, I hope that that office could anyway become the lead centre

for liaising with the many other ministries which are also directly affected by what happens to UK population size. I hope that might emerge regardless of what happens to this Bill.

I realise that this Bill is rightly drawn quite tightly in order to start off with a manageable remit, and one accepts the stated assumption that the ODC may not consider the impact of any alternative policies—but it can commission research and draw on the experience of other countries around the world. Following what is proposed in the Bill, the annual charter would set out the population projections in different timescales and what policies might be needed to achieve an acceptable level of population. This would be subject to an annual parliamentary debate. That would bring a most useful focus on this subject from multiple angles, and one would hope that over time it would develop some sort of agreed methodology in this very complex subject. The assumption is at present that there is no attempt at such a general assessment.

One of the main concerns worth addressing is how much the continuing reduction in UK total fertility rates is based on conscious and intentional decisions—maybe based on economic circumstances—and how much is driven by an intuitive, almost unconscious, preference. It is also very difficult to quantify the widely claimed reaction of this being a crowded island, with which many agree.

Personally, I shy away from the general economic growth mantra, but that itself in future might be affected by artificial intelligence rather than AI having any direct physical influence on the number of births. Having followed over many years the progress of numbers in China and the one-child family norm—it has now officially ended but is still voluntarily prevalent—it is astonishing to learn that what the Chinese call assisted reproduction technologies, such as IVF, are used by more than 1 million people a year and are widely encouraged. We know how many other national schemes to bolster population have largely failed over the years.

Although we can learn from other countries, I realise that this Bill mainly addresses the UK, where we have major considerations relating to population to deal with—for example, the cost of housing and the exorbitant cost of childcare, as well as the issue of pensions in the broader context of the interests of the old versus the young. All those are concerns of different ministries.

Finally, in this short debate, I again congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbots, and Civitas on this initiative, which will, I hope, lead to greater things—if not exactly what is in this Bill. I hope that the Minister may see fit to encourage the location of the Cabinet Office as the centre of wisdom and feedback on this subject from all other ministries.

1.21 pm

**Baroness Neville-Rolfe (Con):** My Lords, it is a great pleasure to follow the perceptive remarks of the noble Viscount, Lord Craigavon. I also look forward to hearing from my noble friend Lord True, from his pivotal position in the Cabinet Office.

I support my noble friend Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbots and his Bill. It is simple, will cost little and deals with a subject of the first importance; I say “of the first importance” because, in the long term, the effects of demographic change are perhaps the most important factor in the world.

By way of illustration of the truth of that proposition, I draw the House’s attention to a recently published book, *Youthquake*, by Edward Paice, which deals with the demography of Africa. In it, I learned that, by the middle of the century, Nigeria is expected to be more populous than the United States; that the extraordinary rate of growth of population in many African countries shows no signs of lessening, so far, at any rate, and despite forecasts to the contrary by those believing that increases in prosperity inevitably lead to a slowing birth rate; and that, by 2035, the African workforce is likely to exceed that of both China and India—today’s huge battalions—and be increasing at a greater rate. I defy anyone to say that all that will not have an impact on global and national politics, including in countries far from Africa, such as the UK.

I will increasingly focus on these trends—both the challenges and opportunities—in my work as chair of Crown Agents, a development organisation, and chair of the UK-ASEAN Business Council, both of which are listed in my register of interests. However, we lack a strong foundation of accessible and objective data on demographics.

The UK’s demographic position is of course different, but the importance of demography in policy formation is every bit as important. I have the honour of chairing your Lordships’ Built Environment Committee. We recently produced a report on housing that drew heavily on all sorts of population estimates, including on ageing, on household formation—hence on divorce and other social mores—and on many other factors. Policies in almost all areas are influenced by demographics.

I have on many occasions debated, particularly with my noble friend Lord Hodgson, my concern that the lack of proper dynamic projections of population means that these are not taken properly into account in policy-making and planning in key areas of importance to citizens. These include schools and universities, hospitals and primary care, transport provision, flooding, energy security and, of course, housing and green spaces. The new office would help to fill that gap.

If you do not know the facts, you will in general adopt worse policies. Arguing for the advantages of ignorance is always a hard task, yet when my noble friend has suggested a demographic office previously, that is effectively what the Government have done. Perhaps I am being a little unkind, in that the actual argument given was that such an office was unnecessary—no doubt said with a straight face.

The real reason why the suggestion does not commend itself is political fear, and we all know why. Among many concepts conjured up by the word “demography” are immigration and race, and they have rarely been linked with political advance. However, to my mind demography is much wider than that, and I urge the Government to show some courage, even if that might not follow the advice of Sir Humphrey. Government policies need the firmest possible foundations in fact



[BARONESS NEVILLE-ROLFE]

and they need long-term thinking, not the short-term, narrow, business-led approach of the Migration Advisory Committee, which was mentioned the last time the matter was debated. Some of us are already tiring of the relentless short-term decision-making fuelled by 24-hour rolling news, Twitter and other social media. I think the new office would provide a powerful antidote.

In conclusion, the establishment of an office for demographic change of the kind recommended by my noble friend Lord Hodgson would be a good way of providing firm foundations in fact. It would bring new long-term thinkers and experts into government to the benefit of us all, and it would publish objective, impartial data on which we could all draw. The House of Lords should certainly be behind that.

**The Earl of Shrewsbury (Con):** My Lords, I support my noble friend's Bill and congratulate him on bringing it to your Lordships' House.

**Viscount Younger of Leckie (Con):** My noble friend should be aware that the noble Baroness, Lady Greengross, should be speaking.

**The Earl of Shrewsbury (Con):** I beg your pardon.

1.26 pm

**Baroness Greengross (CB):** My Lords, I am pleased to speak in support of the Private Member's Bill by the noble Lord, Lord Hodgson, to create an office for demographic change. I supported the noble Lord's earlier attempt to raise these issues by tabling an amendment to the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill on 16 September 2020, and I hope that on this occasion this important issue finds more favour in your Lordships' House, as we cannot continue to ignore the important issues that the Bill raises for us all.

I declare my interest, as set out in the register, as chief executive of the International Longevity Centre UK, known as the ILC UK. The ILC contributed to the 2019 Civitas report *Overcrowded Islands?*, specifically to highlight that, due to longevity, the number of older people living in the UK is set to increase by half by 2030.

The Bill is not just about immigration. I make it clear that I am an internationalist who passionately believes that our lives are enriched by people from overseas coming to live and work in this country. Unfortunately, when we talk about immigration, the emotive language of Enoch Powell's notorious "rivers of blood" speech or the views espoused by political organisations such as UKIP tend to come up. These sorts of views could not be further from my own.

The issue is that we live in a country whose population, according to the Civitas report, has increased by over 6 million people since 2001 and is projected to increase at an even faster rate in future. We know that, particularly in London and the south-east of England, the growth in population is not sustainable and our infrastructure is not keeping up. At current rates of population growth, in 20 years we may struggle to maintain our

current water and sewerage infrastructure. To meet the housing demand, we will have to develop areas that are currently used for farming and potentially harm our ecosystems. The ONS projects that the number of households in the UK will increase by 4 million, or 17%, in the next 23 years. At a time when we are struggling to maintain our current health and care system, we face building many more hospitals to cater for population increases rather than using resources to shorten waiting times for medical procedures. On employment and the economy, we need to consider what population growth will mean for younger and older workers. Both groups have historically been the most vulnerable in the labour market.

Again, this is not to say that we do not want the contribution of migrant workers, whom we rely on in many parts of the economy. It means that we need an office for demographic change to assess the impact and ensure that immigration and other relevant policies are supporting the Government's charter for demographic change.

We face significant challenges in the coming years. Climate change will see a surge in people leaving lands and nations that become uninhabitable. This country will be a desirable location for many, but if the population increases by too much too quickly, we will soon face serious problems. Our own ecosystem will be compromised and the quality of life in this country will decline. These are serious considerations when we look at the future of our country. Sadly, these points have not been given serious enough consideration by successive Governments. The Bill presents an opportunity to take this important issue seriously, and I commend it to the House.

1.31 pm

**The Earl of Shrewsbury (Con):** My Lords, I apologise to the noble Baroness; it is such an excellent Bill that I got a little overenthusiastic.

I support my noble friend's Bill and I congratulate him on bringing it to your Lordships' House. I read his background briefing to Civitas, and I find it a most interesting document. I have long been an advocate and supporter of the ideas put forward by my noble friend Lord Tebbit when he served in Baroness Thatcher's Government. His answer to the problem of large-scale unemployment was most controversial but, I believe, right. "On your bike", he advocated, in order to find work. Today, that is very much the case. Many people I know from a wide variety of backgrounds have moved house and area to seek new employment, and they have had to retrain and learn new skills and trades. Indeed, I have a son who is a chartered surveyor who has done just that and moved three times, I think, in 12 years.

A movable workforce with changing skills to suit new markets is a fact of today's modern life, and thus, demographics change constantly. Near where I live, the market town of Uttoxeter has changed dramatically over recent years, as has our county town, Stafford. There is new building in abundance, so those house developers and supermarkets must take demographics very seriously and their research must be meticulous.



The knock-on effect of demographic change is considerable, and it affects so many issues, including boundary changes of parliamentary constituencies. As my noble friend says in the summary of his document, population changes past and present arouse very strong emotions, and those changes affect every part of our national life. I say “Hear, hear” to that: they affect schooling, healthcare and myriad areas.

Therefore, in conclusion, the establishment of an office for demographic change would, in my view, be a most necessary and important step forward. I support the Bill and wish my noble friend every success with it.

1.33 pm

**Lord Green of Deddington (CB):** My Lords, I speak in support of this admirable initiative by the noble Lord, Lord Hodgson, whose expertise in this area is matched only by his determination to get it attended to. I fully endorse his opening remarks—if I may say so, an outstanding summary of the issues—and I endorse the powerful arguments outlined by the noble Baroness, Lady Neville-Rolfe.

As noble Lords probably know, I have been engaged in one part of this field for about 20 years. Throughout that time, there has been deep reluctance to address the sheer scale of immigration, which has now become central to the future of our society.

At this point, I should mention my non-financial interest as president of Migration Watch. We have been at the forefront of this debate—criticised, of course, but we have been consistently correct. I shall give just three brief examples.

First, in 2002, we estimated that non-EU net migration would run at 2 million over the following decade. We turned out to be almost spot on; the ONS’s later estimate was 2.1 million. Secondly, in 2003, the Home Office commissioned research that found there would be between—wait for it—5,000 and 13,000 arrivals each year from the eight new eastern European members of the EU. We described that estimate as “almost worthless”. In the event, the average was 72,000 a year. That is five and a half times the Home Office’s highest estimate. Thirdly and lastly, in 2013, we estimated that inflows from Romania and Bulgaria would add at least 50,000 a year to the population. More criticism came, but the subsequent ONS estimate was 44,000 a year—not 50,000, but pretty close, you might think.

I mention these examples to illustrate that there is a vocal pro-immigration and, indeed, pro-asylum lobby in the UK. It follows that any mechanisms such as those proposed in the Bill will have to be very robust—and they probably could be.

The great merit of the proposal is that an office for demographic change could cover all the many and important consequences of massive levels of immigration, such as those that have occurred over the last two decades. Indeed, it could bring together the true implications for our economy, environment and social stability.

I believe that the public, while not being experts on statistics, understand that the very statistics that have been mentioned can point to important issues that need to be addressed in an effective and organised way.

The polling mentioned by the noble Lord, Lord Hodgson, found that 71% of the population are concerned about the current population forecasts. The public are also concerned about social cohesion and environmental damage, and apparently 65% consider that the Government should set a strict cap for immigration.

I have long believed in the common sense of the British people and these opinion poll results fully confirm that, in my view. I just add that a similar percentage, about 65%, support the work of Migration Watch. That amounts to about 30 million adults. When I mention that from time to time in the Chamber, it seems to amuse the Liberal Democrats but, actually, it is very important.

Between 2000 and 2020, the UK population increased by 8 million. Between 80% and 90% of that increase, or roughly 7 million, was due directly or indirectly to immigration. That kind of increase simply cannot be allowed to continue.

I conclude by pointing out that if, by the time of the next election—I am a Cross-Bencher, of course—the Government have clearly failed to take back control of immigration as they promised at the last election, they will have a heavy price to pay, especially in some critical constituencies, and quite right too.

1.37 pm

**Lord Horam (Con):** My Lords, one reason I support my noble friend Lord Hodgson’s Bill is that it will encourage long-term thinking. He mentioned in his opening remarks “long-tail issues”, which is a common phrase in the insurance industry. In the epic contest between our western-style democracies and dictatorships, which we see playing out in the world, democracies are often said to suffer an inability to think long term, because of the frequency of general elections. They always look at short-term fixes for solutions. I believe this sort of agency could promote a more balanced approach, with more attention to longer-term issues that have a fundamental effect on quality of life in this country.

The second reason I support the Bill is that it will encourage us to look at the environmental, ecological and social factors, as well as the purely economic. I say that as an economist myself. As my noble friend Lord Hodgson said, life is not all about increasing gross domestic product and I fully concur.

Ministers have said in the past when discussing this issue that this proposal is covered by the activities of the Migration Advisory Committee. However, if you look at the members of that committee, you see that they are almost exclusively labour market economists. They look at skill factors—whether we have a shortage of lorry drivers, people with digital skills or care workers—and are not concerned with wider issues such as the beauty of our countryside, the space that we occupy and the ecological effects of population growth. So it is not an appropriate body to look at these issues, even though the Government have said in the past that it is. I have also talked to Professor Bell, chairman of the Migration Advisory Committee, who agrees that the remit is quite specific and limited.

[LORD HORAM]

My third reason for supporting the Bill is that we are a small country. Bill Bryson called his delightful travelogue of Britain *Notes from a Small Island*. When the Americans came over here in the Second World War, they had a briefing from their staff that said, “England—think South Carolina. It’s the same size.” Even today, South Carolina only has 10 million people. We have five or six times that number in England. If you look around the world, there are only four countries of a similar geographical size to our own that have a greater population: Taiwan, South Korea, Rwanda and Bangladesh.

In those circumstances, we must look very carefully at how we use land. I noted that when the present Prime Minister was still a journalist for the *Daily Telegraph*, he wrote in an article on 25 October 2007:

“It is time that we had a grown-up discussion about the optimum quantity of human beings in this country, and on the planet. Do we really want the south-east of England, already the most densely populated country in Europe, to resemble a giant suburbia?”

“Hear, hear,” I say. We do not want that to happen, and we must work out policies which prevent it.

I will make one final suggestion to the Minister on this subject. The Prime Minister has tasked Mr Rees-Mogg in the other Chamber to come up with some ideas about the benefits of Brexit. I voted remain in the referendum but, none the less, I would like to see some of the benefits of Brexit brought forward. Might I suggest that building up an office for demographic change could feed into that, by essentially looking forward and giving a bit of vision to the whole area where this country is going, post Brexit? As Harry Perkins, the hero of former Labour MP Chris Mullin’s excellent novel, *A Very British Coup*, said, “We politicians spend a great deal of time looking at the ground. Just occasionally, we should gaze at the stars.” I think my noble friend is gazing at the stars here in a very illustrative and visionary way, and I agree with his Bill.

1.43 pm

**Lord Bassam of Brighton (Lab):** My Lords, it falls to me to strike a discordant note in this universe of unanimity that we have had this afternoon. I regret doing that in one way, because I find much to agree with in what the noble Lord, Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbotts, had to say, and generally he and I tend to be on the same side of sensible, progressive arguments. However, on this occasion I find myself unconvinced.

As other noble Lords have commented, the arguments for this office of demographic change—or for demographic change, I am not quite sure which it is—have been aired before, when we had the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination Bill in 2020. We on the Labour Benches remained a long way from being persuaded then, and although it is traditional for this House to give Bills a Second Reading, our concerns over the general drift of this Bill have not much changed.

Wikipedia defines demography as

“the statistical study of populations ... defined by criteria such as education, nationality, religion, and ethnicity.”

That is a much wider range of criteria for understanding society. In a sense, my primary question for the supporters of the Bill is: what is wrong with relying on the current

impartial data provided to us by the ONS to make policy decisions on? By any interpretation, it interprets population data and demographics and, as one or two other noble Lords have commented, there is the Migration Advisory Committee, which is well respected and produces authoritative judgments on population shifts and, in particular, migration matters.

I think we should be clear. I think this Bill is very much more about immigration than demographic change. The noble Lord’s 2019 report making this proposal was called *Overcrowded Islands? The Challenges of Demographic Change for the United Kingdom* and there is a clear reference to population rather than demographic change. The only reference to a specific criterion in the noble Lord’s Bill is at Clause 2(1), which places a duty on the Government to

“prepare an annual document for the Office for Demographic Change, to be known as the Charter for Demographic Change”

which would set out “policies”—in other words, it is a policy document—

“relating to anticipated demographic change.”

So far from being an independent source of advice, it is to determine and provide policy options. The think tank that published the report has published many other reports, including *Large-scale Immigration: Its Economic and Demographic Consequences for the UK*, which argues simply that the economic benefits of large-scale immigration are outweighed by the strain of population growth. It is about that rather than about being an independent nation in how we judge the demographics of our country.

Since the noble Lord raised the issue in his opening comments, which were very interesting, how would the office for demographic change respond to things such as the crisis in Ukraine where we are all being asked, quite rightly, to provide humanitarian support? Where would that sit among the office for demographic change’s priorities? How much more constrained might we be in those circumstances if that office had opined that we could not accept more migration, even of a temporary nature, because of the pressure it places on public services?

I always think that we should be careful in how we look at and what trust we put in data in such fields. As the noble Lord knows, it can be highly loaded and political by its very nature and not as neutral perhaps as the noble Lord and other noble Lords who have contributed to this debate might argue.

In short, I support investigation, objective judgment and data-led policy interventions, but I do not see much purpose or point to the Bill, other than the slightly less than helpful contribution from the noble Lord, Lord Green of Deddington, underlining where he saw the value of this demographic change coming from. Like other noble Lords, I favour debate and careful thought about migration issues, but I am not convinced that this Bill, if it were enacted, would add much to our understanding of migration as its design seems entirely motivated by a desire to prompt loaded questions. For those reasons, I feel unable to support the Bill, but it is the tradition of this House that we do not oppose Bills at Second Reading, particularly Private Members’ Bills.

1.49 pm

**The Minister of State, Cabinet Office (Lord True)** (Con): My Lords, I thank my noble friend for initiating this debate. Of course, as with the noble Lord opposite, I understand fully that he is not making any statement about the terrible events in Ukraine, which we all condemn and regard with the utmost horror. I might add, as a student over many decades of the history of the Orthodox Christian world, that I find it tragic to see the humane, literary culture of the great Russian nation being traduced by a tyrant and its history and faith being distorted and abused to justify this foul and impious war and the massacre of innocents.

Perhaps I ought to add another personal reflection and declare an interest as a vice-president of the LGA, although I have been retired from local government for some time now. As a long-time council leader, I know the importance of accurate demographic information. That is certainly an objective that we all share and that the country requires.

I also agree with everybody who has spoken—my noble friend Lady Neville-Rolfe put it very well—that long-term planning is important. I do not think that Governments of all shapes and sizes have been very good at this. I had the privilege of chairing a Select Committee of your Lordships' House on intergenerational fairness, with the noble Baroness, Lady Greengross, as a colleague. I think it true to say that we found that things could be done better by all Governments, and in Whitehall, when it comes to looking forward.

I thank all noble Lords who have spoken today for their thoughtful contributions. As my noble friend's Bill points out, in a sense, at the heart of good policy-making are the proper use of data and the production of statistics. Understanding the growth, change and distribution of the UK population and its impact is certainly important for immediate policy concerns, as in local government, and for planning for the future.

But—here I ask a similar question to the noble Lord, Lord Bassam—in our judgment the Office for National Statistics serves as a model the world over in its production of statistics. First and foremost, this includes the census programme, with data collected last year and due to be published later this year for Northern Ireland, England and Wales. Alongside this excellent piece of work, the ONS works to produce regular updates on population statistics and makes regular forecasts for demographic change alongside its annual population estimates. I know this to be an area of great focus for the current National Statistician and everyone working at the ONS.

Much of the work my noble friend is suggesting that this new office of demographic statistics might conduct is already catered for by the Office for National Statistics. I do not know whether he is suggesting taking this work away from its current home and putting it into a new body. If so, that would be needlessly disruptive, could be a source of duplication and is likely to incur unnecessary costs for the taxpayer.

As I acknowledged at the outset, we can always improve on how this data is used in decision-making. The Office for National Statistics is planning on running a master class on how using data can better inform decision-making for policymakers. I understand that

it is also developing a session specifically on improving understanding of demographic data and its impact on policy-making. I hope it will make information on that available to your Lordships in due course.

On what the Government are already doing in this area, the Green Book commits policymakers to “consider whether longer term structural changes may occur in the economy or society”,

which include demographic changes. As part of this, the OBR uses demographic statistics as part of its economic and fiscal forecasting, and both national and local government regularly use ONS population and household projections in long-term planning for health, social care, education and pensions.

On the broader point about how to think about demographic change, I submit to my noble friend that while most of the issues he raises are clearly of great significance, demographic change is only one factor in our policy responses. We certainly face challenges as a growing nation—most of those who spoke addressed this—but the idea that the only solution to this is to somehow fix our population to some concept of a manageable level is too pessimistic about what we can achieve through advances in technology and considered policy-making.

Like most of us, I was born into a nation much smaller in population than it is today. There have been challenges, about which many have spoken, but we have also seen great improvements and advancements in our way of life in our lifetime, and that is true for all parts of the nation and all sections of the population, despite the poverty and problems that existed and still exist in our nation today. The Government can always do more in terms of measuring the impact we have on the environment—I agree with those who have made this point—and how we best deliver for a changing country, but to view all this through the lens of demographic change is too simplistic and not what best serves the country.

However, in relation to immigration, the Government have clear commitments, not always recognised in your Lordships' House. We have moved, as we promised in 2019, to overhaul our immigration system by ending the free movement of people into the United Kingdom, taking back control of our borders, introducing a points-based immigration system, welcoming in-demand workers and offering a range of new and bespoke visas, making it easier to attract and retain the best and brightest talent. But the question runs slightly wider than that.

The Office for Budget Responsibility, which my noble friend has aimed to emulate with this proposed office, has a clearly defined remit as to what it makes its forecasts on, and its oversight of policy areas is largely restricted to the fiscal domain. This office for demographic change would, however, reach far and wide across government policy, and while its assessments and forecasts might be of interest to policymakers, this type of analysis rightly belongs in various policy departments. It is important that they do that analysis—there I agree with my noble friend—but to have such a swathe of policies constantly under review by a government body that is charged with assessing policy through this one lens is not necessarily the most conducive to good policy-making. So while the Government of



[LORD TRUE]

course welcome scrutiny of our policies and their impacts, we believe this is generally best done by Parliament and third-sector organisations, except in a limited number of cases.

I am sure my noble friend will continue to advise and reflect on these important policy issues and we will continue to listen keenly to what he and all other noble Lords who have spoken have to say on how we best go about addressing the important challenges that he raises, but it is not the Government's preferred approach to set up new public bodies, nor do we think it is necessary in this case, so we cannot support setting up the organisation he proposes in the Bill. Despite a productive discussion today, to which I have listened carefully, the Government have reservations about the specific proposals put before us. Therefore I must ask that, as the Bill goes forward, everyone across this House carefully considers the specific implications of these proposals.

**Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbotts (Con):** My Lords, I am very grateful to all those who have participated in this debate. I absolutely recognise that this is a very delicate and difficult subject in which almost anything one says is capable of being misinterpreted, and frequently is. Therefore, I do not so much want people to agree with me—although I would like them to—as for this to become a respectable matter to discuss, which it has not been. Out there, a lot of people feel they cannot talk about it because they will be attacked for that.

Briefly, I thank the noble Viscount, Lord Craigavon, who talked about the disjointed approach to this whole policy. He said that I had drawn the ODC too tightly, but my noble friend on the Front Bench said I had drawn it too broadly, so I think I am pretty much in the right place, in that case. I thank my noble friend Lady Neville-Rolfe for her support. She asked about costs. The MAC costs £900,000 a year—that is the MAC's budget. I think the MAC should be subsumed into this body, so when my noble friend the Minister says we are going to create a new body, we are not, we are going to get rid of one. I know that “one in, one out” is part of the Government's policy, therefore I think that probably 1.5 million to 2 million quid would cover the enlarged body. I thank the noble Baroness, Lady Greengross, with her knowledge about the impact of demographic change on older people, and my noble friend the Earl of Shrewsbury with his knowledge about reskilling and the impact of new arrivals on that.

The noble Lord, Lord Green of Deddington, has faced, and put up, uncomfortable truths for many years. From time to time, I have been ashamed by how he has been treated by the House. Every Member of your Lordships' House is entitled to be treated with respect. His style may be a trifle uncompromising sometimes—I accept that. Nevertheless, his facts and figures are accurate, even if some noble Lords find uncomfortable some of the conclusions which may have to be drawn from them.

I thank my noble friend Lord Horam for his comments on long-term thinking going wider than just the economy and being crowded. I think the only state in the US which is as crowded as the UK is New Jersey.

The noble Lord, Lord Bassam, and I have had common cause on many occasions in the past—and no doubt will again in the future. He is, as one would say at the pub, “a decent bloke”. However, I must say that this was a very, very sorry performance. *Overcrowded Islands?* had a question mark after it. What is wrong with the current data? What is wrong with the Migration Advisory Committee? We have heard several noble Lords talk about this. I will not detain the House by discussing how we would deal with the situation in Ukraine, but I could.

I say to the noble Lord that he is faced with a problem—namely, he is talking to two audiences. The first is the elite in the big cities and university towns. They regard this subject as insufferably vulgar, prejudiced and populist. The latter is the insult of the chattering classes. They believe that it will be all right on the night and that, if we stop talking about it everything will be fine. The rest of the country, however—if you go back to my old seat in Walsall North, the West Midlands, or elsewhere—is a completely different world. Do they think that there is an issue here? You bet they do. I must say to the noble Lord that, before we get to the next election, the Labour Party must decide where this fits. The red wall seats ain't going to come back if what the noble Lord has espoused today is the Labour Party's policy at the next election. This was one of the major reasons for them coming to us in the first place.

**Lord Bassam of Brighton (Lab):** To correct the noble Lord, I say briefly that my party and I recognise the importance of these issues, but this is not the right way to set about having that debate. That is the difference between the noble Lord and me.

**Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbotts (Con):** I am very happy to accept that rejoinder.

I say to the Minister: am I surprised? No. Am I disappointed? Yes. Are the ONS and MAC providing enough? We know that they are not; they are not joining up the dots. He had to read out the cost to the taxpayer of from £1.5 million to £2 million. Frankly, demographic change is an important part of any levelling-up policy—the flagship policy of this Government. What demography does will have an impact on our ability to deliver this. After giving a challenge to the noble Lord, Lord Bassam, I give one to my noble friend. We lost the Chesham and Amersham by-election because of building in the green belt. Now, we are proposing to build all across the green belts in our shire counties in the south-east of England and in other parts of the country. It is intensely unpopular and, unless we show people that we are doing something about it, we shall rue the day. I had hoped that when my noble friend came to the Dispatch Box that we would get the noble Lord, Lord Botham. In fact, we got Geoffrey Boycott.

I will end with two very brief quotations. The first is from David Aaronovitch, a writer from the *Times* I often quote, who said:

“I have a regular correspondent—let us call him Igor—who writes to me from Offa's Dyke ... Running through Igor's protestations is a sense of bewilderment. And in this he captures what I now

feel. What many of us are feeling and expressing. How could they? Why would they? Why didn't we know? What is it about them that we just don't get?"

Secondly, Octavia Hill, co-founder of the National Trust, wrote:

"We all want quiet. We all want beauty ... We all need space. Unless we have it, we cannot reach that sense of quiet in which whispers of better things come to us gently."

The underlying purpose of the ODC is to provide for Igor, and millions like him all across the country, "that sense of quiet which whispers of better things will come to him gently."

I commend the Bill to the House.

*Bill read a second time and committed to a Committee of the Whole House.*

*House adjourned at 2.05 pm.*

