

**Wednesday
18 May 2016**

**Volume 611
No. 1**



**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

Wednesday 18 May 2016

House of Commons

Alphabetical List of Members

[Returned at the General Election, 7 May 2015]

A

Abbott, Diane (Hackney North and Stoke Newington)
Abrahams, Deborah Angela Elspeth Marie (Oldham East and Saddleworth)
Adams, Nigel (Selby and Ainsty)
Afriyie, Adam (Windsor)
Ahmed-Sheikh, Tasmina (Ochil and South Perthshire)
Aldous, Peter James Guy (Waveney)
Alexander, Heidi (Lewisham East)
Ali, Rushanara (Bethnal Green and Bow)
Allan, Lucy (Telford)
Allen, Graham William (Nottingham North)
Allen, Heidi Suzanne (South Cambridgeshire)
Amess, David Anthony Andrew (Southend West)
Anderson, David (Blaydon)
Andrew, Stuart James (Pudsey)
Ansell, Caroline (Eastbourne)
Argar, Edward John Comport (Charnwood)
Arkless, Richard Lambert Thomas (Dumfries and Galloway)
Ashworth, Jonathan Michael Graham (Leicester South)
Atkins, Victoria Mary (Louth and Horncastle)
Austin, Ian (Dudley North)

B

Bacon, Richard Michael (South Norfolk)
Bailey, Adrian Edward (West Bromwich West)
Baker, Steven John (Wycombe)
Baldwin, Harriett Mary Morison (West Worcestershire)
Barclay, Stephen Paul (North East Cambridgeshire)
Bardell, Hannah Mary (Livingston)
Baron, John Charles (Basildon and Billericay)
Barron, Rt Hon. Kevin John (Rother Valley)
Barwell, Gavin Laurence (Croydon Central)
Bebb, Guto ap Owain (Aberconwy)
Beckett, Rt Hon. Margaret Mary (Derby South)
Bellingham, Henry Campbell (North West Norfolk)
Benn, Rt Hon. Hilary James (Leeds Central)
Benyon, Richard Henry Ronald (Newbury)
Bercow, Rt Hon. John Simon (Buckingham)
Beresford, Alexander Paul (Mole Valley)
Berger, Luciana Clare (Liverpool, Wavertree)
Berry, James Jacob Gilchrist (Rossendale and Darwen)
Berry, Michael James Ellwood (Kingston and Surbiton)
Betts, Clive James Charles (Sheffield South East)
Bingham, Andrew Russell (High Peak)
Black, Mhairi (Paisley and Renfrewshire South)
Blackford, Ian (Ross, Skye and Lochaber)
Blackman, Robert John (Harrow East)
Blackman, Kirsty (Aberdeen North)
Blackman-Woods, Roberta Carol (City of Durham)
Blackwood, Nicola Claire (Oxford West and Abingdon)
Blenkinsop, Thomas Francis (Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland)
Blomfield, Paul Christopher (Sheffield Central)
Blunt, Crispin Jeremy Rupert (Reigate)
Boles, Nicholas Edward Coleridge (Grantham and Stamford)
Bone, Peter William (Wellingborough)

Borwick, Victoria Lorne Peta (Kensington)
Boswell, Philip John (Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill)
Bottomley, Peter James (Worthing West)
Bradley, Karen Anne (Staffordshire Moorlands)
Bradshaw, Rt Hon. Benjamin Peter James (Exeter)
Brady, Graham Stuart (Altrincham and Sale West)
Brady, Michael (Newry and Armagh)
Brake, Rt Hon. Tom (Carshalton and Wallington)
Brazier, Julian William Hendy (Canterbury)
Brennan, Kevin Denis (Cardiff West)
Bridgen, Andrew James (North West Leicestershire)
Brine, Stephen Charles (Winchester)
Brock, Deidre Leanne (Edinburgh North and Leith)
Brokenshire, James Peter (Old Bexley and Sidcup)
Brown, Alan (Kilmarnock and Loudoun)
Brown, Lyn Carol (West Ham)
Brown, Rt Hon. Nicholas Hugh (Newcastle upon Tyne East)
Bruce, Fiona Claire (Congleton)
Bryant, Christopher John (Rhondda)
Buck, Karen Patricia (Westminster North)
Buckland, Robert James (South Swindon)
Burden, Richard Haines (Birmingham, Northfield)
Burgon, Richard (Leeds East)
Burnham, Rt Hon. Andrew Murray (Leigh)
Burns, Conor (Bournemouth West)
Burns, Rt Hon. Simon Hugh McGuigan (Chelmsford)
Burrowes, David John Barrington (Enfield, Southgate)
Burt, Rt Hon. Alistair James Hendrie (North East Bedfordshire)
Butler, Dawn Petula (Brent Central)
Byrne, Rt Hon. Liam Dominic (Birmingham, Hodge Hill)

C

Cadbury, Ruth (Brentford and Isleworth)
Cairns, Alun Hugh (Vale of Glamorgan)
Cameron, Rt Hon. David William Donald (Witney)
Cameron, Lisa (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow)
Campbell, Rt Hon. Alan (Tynemouth)
Campbell, Gregory Lloyd (East Londonderry)
Campbell, Ronald (Blyth Valley)
Carmichael, Rt Hon. Alexander Morrison (Orkney and Shetland)
Carmichael, Neil (Stroud)
Carswell, John Douglas Wilson (Clacton)
Cartlidge, James Roger (South Suffolk)
Cash, William (Stone)
Caulfield, Maria Colette (Lewes)
Chalk, Alex (Cheltenham)
Champion, Sarah Deborah (Rotherham)
Chapman, Douglas (Dunfermline and West Fife)
Chapman, Jennifer (Darlington)
Cherry, Joanna Catherine (Edinburgh South West)
Chishti, Atta-Ur-Rehman (Gillingham and Rainham)
Chope, Christopher Robert (Christchurch)
Churchill, Johanna Peta (Bury St Edmunds)
Clark, Rt Hon. Greg (Tunbridge Wells)
Clarke, Rt Hon. Kenneth Harry (Rushcliffe)

Clegg, Rt Hon. Nicholas William Peter (Sheffield, Hallam)
 Cleverly, James Spencer (Braintree)
 Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey Robert (The Cotswolds)
 Clwyd, Rt Hon. Ann (Cynon Valley)
 Coaker, Vernon Rodney (Gedling)
 Coffey, Margaret Ann Wishart (Stockport)
 Coffey, Thérèse Anne (Suffolk Coastal)
 Collins, Damian Noel Thomas (Folkestone and Hythe)
 Colville, Oliver Newton (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport)
 Cooper, Julie Elizabeth (Burnley)
 Cooper, Rosemary Elizabeth (West Lancashire)
 Cooper, Rt Hon. Yvette (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford)
 Corbyn, Jeremy Bernard (Islington North)
 Costa, Alberto Castrenze (South Leicestershire)
 Cowan, Ronnie (Inverclyde)
 Cox, Charles Geoffrey (Torrington and West Devon)
 Cox, Helen Joanne (Batley and Spen)
 Coyle, Neil (Bermondsey and Old Southwark)
 Crabb, Rt Hon. Stephen (Preseli Pembrokeshire)
 Crausby, David Anthony (Bolton North East)
 Crawley, Angela (Lanark and Hamilton East)
 Creagh, Mary Helen (Wakefield)
 Creasy, Stella Judith (Walthamstow)
 Crouch, Tracey Elizabeth Anne (Chatham and Aylesford)
 Cruddas, Jonathan (Dagenham and Rainham)
 Cryer, John Robert (Leyton and Wanstead)
 Cummins, Judith Mary (Bradford South)
 Cunningham, Alexander (Stockton North)
 Cunningham, James Dolan (Coventry South)

D

Dakin, Nicholas (Scunthorpe)
 Danczuk, Simon Christopher (Rochdale)
 David, Wayne (Caerphilly)
 Davies, Henry Byron (Gower)
 Davies, Christopher Paul (Brecon and Radnorshire)
 Davies, David Thomas Charles (Monmouth)
 Davies, Geraint Richard (Swansea West)
 Davies, Edward Glyn (Montgomeryshire)
 Davies, James Michael (Vale of Clwyd)
 Davies, Miriam Jane Alice (Eastleigh)
 Davies, Philip Andrew (Shipley)
 Davis, Rt Hon. David Michael (Haltemprice and Howden)
 Day, Martyn (Linlithgow and East Falkirk)
 De Piero, Gloria (Ashfield)
 Debonnaire, Thangam (Bristol West)
 Dinenage, Caroline Julia (Gosport)
 Djanogly, Jonathan Simon (Huntingdon)
 Docherty, Martin John (West Dunbartonshire)
 Dodds, Rt Hon. Nigel Alexander (Belfast North)
 Doherty, Patrick (West Tyrone)
 Donaldson, Rt Hon. Jeffrey Mark (Lagan Valley)
 Donaldson, Stuart Blair (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine)
 Donelan, Michelle Emma May Elizabeth (Chippenham)
 Dorries, Nadine Vanessa (Mid Bedfordshire)
 Double, Stephen Daniel (St Austell and Newquay)
 Doughty, Stephen John (Cardiff South and Penarth)
 Dowd, James Patrick (Lewisham West and Penge)
 Dowd, Peter (Bootle)
 Dowden, Oliver James (Hertsmere)
 Doyle-Price, Jacqueline (Thurrock)
 Dromey, Jack Eugene Joseph (Birmingham, Erdington)
 Drummond, Felicia Jane Beatrix (Portsmouth South)

Duddridge, James Philip (Rochford and Southend East)
 Dugher, Michael Vincent (Barnsley East)
 Duncan, Rt Hon. Alan James Carter (Rutland and Melton)
 Duncan Smith, Rt Hon. George Iain (Chingford and Woodford Green)
 Dunne, Philip Martin (Ludlow)
 Durkan, John Mark (Foyle)

E

Eagle, Angela (Wallasey)
 Eagle, Maria (Garston and Halewood)
 Edwards, David Jonathan (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr)
 Efford, Clive Stanley (Eltham)
 Elliott, Julie (Sunderland Central)
 Elliott, Thomas Beatty (Fermanagh and South Tyrone)
 Ellis, Michael Tyrone (Northampton North)
 Ellison, Jane Elizabeth (Battersea)
 Ellman, Louise Joyce (Liverpool, Riverside)
 Ellwood, Tobias Martin (Bournemouth East)
 Elmore, Chris (Ogmore) [*By-election, May 2016*]
 Elphicke, Charles Brett Anthony (Dover)
 Engel, Natascha (North East Derbyshire)
 Esterson, William Roffen (Sefton Central)
 Eustice, Charles George (Camborne and Redruth)
 Evans, Christopher (Islwyn)
 Evans, Graham (Weaver Vale)
 Evans, Nigel Martin (Ribble Valley)
 Evennett, Rt Hon. David Anthony (Bexleyheath and Crayford)

F

Fabricant, Michael Louis David (Lichfield)
 Fallon, Rt Hon. Michael (Sevenoaks)
 Farrelly, Paul (Newcastle-under-Lyme)
 Farron, Timothy James (Westmorland and Lonsdale)
 Fellows, Marion (Motherwell and Wishaw)
 Fernandes, Sue-Ellen Cassiana (Fareham)
 Ferrier, Margaret (Rutherglen and Hamilton West)
 Field, Rt Hon. Frank (Birkenhead)
 Field, Rt Hon. Mark Christopher (Cities of London and Westminster)
 Fitzpatrick, James (Poplar and Limehouse)
 Ffello, Robert Charles Douglas (Stoke-on-Trent South)
 Fletcher, Colleen Margaret (Coventry North East)
 Flint, Rt Hon. Caroline Louise (Don Valley)
 Flynn, Paul Phillip (Newport West)
 Foster, Kevin John (Torbay)
 Fovargue, Yvonne Helen (Makerfield)
 Fox, Rt Hon. Liam (North Somerset)
 Foxcroft, Victoria Jane (Lewisham, Deptford)
 Francois, Rt Hon. Mark Gino (Rayleigh and Wickford)
 Frazer, Lucy (South East Cambridgeshire)
 Freeman, George William (Mid Norfolk)
 Freer, Mike (Finchley and Golders Green)
 Fuller, Richard Quentin (Bedford)
 Furniss, Gill (Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough) [*By-election, May 2016*]
 Fysh, Marcus John Hudson (Yeovil)

G

Gale, Roger James (North Thanet)
 Gapes, Michael John (Ilford South)
 Gardiner, Barry Strachan (Brent North)

Garnier, Rt Hon. Edward Henry (Harborough)
 Garnier, Mark Robert Timothy (Wyre Forest)
 Gauke, David Michael (South West Hertfordshire)
 Gethins, Stephen Patrick (North East Fife)
 Ghani, Nusrat Munir (Wealden)
 Gibb, Nicolas John (Bognor Regis and Littlehampton)
 Gibson, Patricia (North Ayrshire and Arran)
 Gillan, Rt Hon. Cheryl Elise Kendall (Chesham and Amersham)
 Glass, Patricia Mary (North West Durham)
 Glen, John Philip (Salisbury)
 Glindon, Mary Theresa (North Tyneside)
 Godsiff, Roger Duncan (Birmingham, Hall Green)
 Goldsmith, Frank Zacharias Robin (Richmond Park)
 Goodman, Helen Catherine (Bishop Auckland)
 Goodwill, Robert (Scarborough and Whitby)
 Gove, Rt Hon. Michael Andrew (Surrey Heath)
 Grady, Patrick John (Glasgow North)
 Graham, Richard (Gloucester)
 Grant, Helen (Maidstone and The Weald)
 Grant, Peter (Glenrothes)
 Gray, James Whiteside (North Wiltshire)
 Gray, Neil Charles (Airdrie and Shotts)
 Grayling, Rt Hon. Christopher Stephen (Epsom and Ewell)
 Green, Chris (Bolton West)
 Green, Rt Hon. Damian Howard (Ashford)
 Green, Katherine Anne (Stretford and Urmston)
 Greening, Rt Hon. Justine (Putney)
 Greenwood, Lilian Rachel (Nottingham South)
 Greenwood, Margaret (Wirral West)
 Grieve, Rt Hon Dominic Charles Roberts (Beaconsfield)
 Griffith, Nia Rhiannon (Llanelli)
 Griffiths, Andrew James (Burton)
 Gummer, Benedict Michael (Ipswich)
 Gwynne, Andrew John (Denton and Reddish)
 Gyimah, Samuel Phillip (East Surrey)

H

Haigh, Louise Margaret (Sheffield, Heeley)
 Halfon, Rt Hon. Robert Henry (Harlow)
 Hall, Luke Anthony (Thornbury and Yate)
 Hamilton, Fabian (Leeds North East)
 Hammond, Rt Hon. Philip (Runnymede and Weybridge)
 Hammond, Stephen William (Wimbledon)
 Hancock, Rt Hon. Matthew John David (West Suffolk)
 Hands, Rt Hon. Gregory William (Chelsea and Fulham)
 Hanson, Rt Hon. David George (Delyn)
 Harman, Rt Hon. Harriet (Camberwell and Peckham)
 Harper, Rt Hon. Mark James (Forest of Dean)
 Harpham, Robert Harry (Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough) [*Died, February 2016*]
 Harrington, Richard Irwin (Watford)
 Harris, Carolyn (Swansea East)
 Harris, Elizabeth Rebecca Scott (Castle Point)
 Hart, Simon (Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire)
 Haselhurst, Rt Hon. Alan Gordon Barraclough (Saffron Walden)
 Hayes, Helen Elizabeth (Dulwich and West Norwood)
 Hayes, Rt Hon. John Henry (South Holland and The Deepings)
 Hayman, Susan Mary (Workington)
 Heald, Oliver (North East Hertfordshire)
 Healey, Rt Hon. John (Wentworth and Dearne)
 Heapey, James Stephen (Wells)
 Heaton-Harris, Christopher (Daventry)
 Heaton-Jones, Peter (North Devon)
 Henderson, Gordon (Sittingbourne and Sheppey)

Hendrick, Mark Phillip (Preston)
 Hendry, Andrew Egan Henderson (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey)
 Hepburn, Stephen (Jarrow)
 Herbert, Rt Hon. Nick (Arundel and South Downs)
 Hermon, Sylvia Eileen (North Down)
 Hillier, Meg (Hackney South and Shoreditch)
 Hinds, Damian Patrick George (East Hampshire)
 Hoare, Simon James (North Dorset)
 Hodge, Rt Hon. Margaret Eve (Barking)
 Hodgson, Sharon (Washington and Sunderland West)
 Hoey, Kate (Vauxhall)
 Hollern, Catherine Malloy (Blackburn)
 Hollingbery, George Michael Edward (Meon Valley)
 Hollinrake, Kevin Paul (Thirsk and Malton)
 Hollobone, Philip Thomas (Kettering)
 Holloway, Adam James Harold (Gravesham)
 Hopkins, Kelvin Peter (Luton North)
 Hopkins, Kristan Frederick (Keighley)
 Hosie, Stewart (Dundee East)
 Howarth, Rt Hon. George Edward (Knowsley)
 Howarth, James Gerald Douglas (Aldershot)
 Howell, John Michael (Henley)
 Howlett, Benjamin John (Bath)
 Hoyle, Rt Hon. Lindsay Harvey (Chorley)
 Huddleston, Nigel Paul (Mid Worcestershire)
 Hunt, Rt Hon. Jeremy Richard Streynsham (South West Surrey)
 Hunt, Tristram Julian William (Stoke-on-Trent Central)
 Huq, Rupa Asha (Ealing Central and Acton)
 Hurd, Nicholas Richard (Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner)
 Hussain, Imran (Bradford East)

I

Irranca-Davies, Ifor Huw (Ogmore)
 [*Resigned, March 2016*]

J

Jackson, Stewart James (Peterborough)
 James, Margot Cathleen (Stourbridge)
 Jarvis, Dan (Barnsley Central)
 Javid, Rt Hon. Sajid (Bromsgrove)
 Jayawardena, Ranil Malcolm (North East Hampshire)
 Jenkin, Bernard Christison (Harwich and North Essex)
 Jenkyns, Andrea Marie (Morley and Outwood)
 Jenrick, Robert Edward (Newark)
 Johnson, Rt Hon. Alan Arthur (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle)
 Johnson, Boris de Pfeffel (Uxbridge and South Ruislip)
 Johnson, Diana Ruth (Kingston upon Hull North)
 Johnson, Gareth Alan (Dartford)
 Johnson, Joseph Edmund (Orpington)
 Jones, Andrew Hanson (Harrogate and Knaresborough)
 Jones, Rt Hon. David Ian (Clwyd West)
 Jones, Gerald (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney)
 Jones, Graham Peter (Hyndburn)
 Jones, Helen Mary (Warrington North)
 Jones, Kevan David (North Durham)
 Jones, Marcus Charles (Nuneaton)
 Jones, Susan Elan (Clwyd South)

K

Kane, Michael Joseph Patrick (Wythenshawe and Sale East)

Kaufman, Rt Hon. Gerald Bernard (Manchester, Gorton)
 Kawczynski, Daniel Robert (Shrewsbury and Atcham)
 Keeley, Barbara Mary (Worsley and Eccles South)
 Kendall, Elizabeth Louise (Leicester West)
 Kennedy, Seema Louise Ghiassi (South Ribble)
 Kerevan, George (East Lothian)
 Kerr, Calum Robert (Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk)
 Khan, Rt Hon. Sadiq Aman (Tooting) [*Resigned*]
 Kinahan, Daniel De Burgh (South Antrim)
 Kinnock, Stephen Nathan (Aberavon)
 Kirby, Simon Gerard (Brighton, Kemptown)
 Knight, Rt Hon. Sir Gregory (East Yorkshire)
 Knight, Julian (Solihull)
 Kwarteng, Kwasi Alfred Addo (Spelthorne)
 Kyle, Peter John (Hove)

L

Laing, Eleanor Fulton (Epping Forest)
 Lamb, Rt Hon. Norman Peter (North Norfolk)
 Lammy, Rt Hon. David Lindon (Tottenham)
 Lancaster, John Mark (Milton Keynes North)
 Latham, Pauline Elizabeth (Mid Derbyshire)
 Lavery, Ian (Wansbeck)
 Law, Christopher Murray Alexander (Dundee West)
 Leadsom, Andrea (South Northamptonshire)
 Lee, Phillip James (Bracknell)
 Lefroy, Jeremy John Elton (Stafford)
 Leigh, Edward Julian Egerton (Gainsborough)
 Leslie, Charlotte (Bristol North West)
 Leslie, Christopher Michael (Nottingham East)
 Letwin, Rt Hon. Oliver (West Dorset)
 Lewell-Buck, Emma Louise (South Shields)
 Lewis, Brandon Kenneth (Great Yarmouth)
 Lewis, Clive Anthony (Norwich South)
 Lewis, Ivan (Bury South)
 Lewis, Rt Hon. Julian Murray (New Forest East)
 Liddell-Grainger, Ian Richard Peregrine (Bridgwater and West Somerset)
 Lidington, Rt Hon. David Roy (Aylesbury)
 Lilley, Rt Hon. Peter Bruce (Hitchin and Harpenden)
 Long-Bailey, Rebecca (Salford and Eccles)
 Lopresti, Giacomo (Filton and Bradley Stoke)
 Lord, Jonathan George Caladine (Woking)
 Loughton, Timothy Paul (East Worthing and Shoreham)
 Lucas, Caroline Patricia (Brighton, Pavilion)
 Lucas, Ian Colin (Wrexham)
 Lumley, Karen Elizabeth (Redditch)

M

McCabe, Stephen James (Birmingham, Selly Oak)
 McCaig, Callum (Aberdeen South)
 McCarthy, Kerry Gillian (Bristol East)
 McCartney, Jason Alexander (Colne Valley)
 McCartney, Karl Ian (Lincoln)
 McDonagh, Siobhain Ann (Mitcham and Morden)
 McDonald, Andrew Joseph (Middlesbrough)
 McDonald, Stewart (Glasgow South)
 McDonald, Stuart Campbell (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East)
 McDonnell, Alasdair (Belfast South)
 McDonnell, John Martin (Hayes and Harlington)
 McFadden, Rt Hon. Patrick Bosco (Wolverhampton South East)
 McGarry, Natalie (Glasgow East)
 McGinn, Conor Patrick (St Helens North)

McGovern, Alison (Wirral South)
 McInnes, Elizabeth Anne (Heywood and Middleton)
 Mackinlay, Craig (South Thanet)
 McKinnell, Catherine (Newcastle upon Tyne North)
 Mackintosh, David James (Northampton South)
 McLaughlin, Anne (Glasgow North East)
 McLoughlin, Rt Hon. Patrick Allen (Derbyshire Dales)
 McMahon, Jim (Oldham West and Royton)
 [*By-election, December 2015*]
 Mc Nally, John (Falkirk)
 MacNeil, Angus Brendan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar)
 McPartland, Stephen Anthony (Stevenage)
 Mactaggart, Rt Hon. Fiona Margaret (Slough)
 Madders, Justin (Ellesmere Port and Neston)
 Mahmood, Khalid (Birmingham, Perry Barr)
 Mahmood, Shabana (Birmingham, Ladywood)
 Main, Anne Margaret (St Albans)
 Mak, Alan (Havant)
 Malhotra, Seema (Feltham and Heston)
 Malthouse, Christopher Laurie (North West Hampshire)
 Mann, John (Bassetlaw)
 Mann, Scott Leslie (North Cornwall)
 Marris, Rob (Wolverhampton South West)
 Marsden, Gordon (Blackpool South)
 Maskell, Rachael Helen (York Central)
 Maskey, Paul John (Belfast West)
 Matheson, Chris (City of Chester)
 Mathias, Tania Wyn (Twickenham)
 May, Rt Hon. Theresa Mary (Maidenhead)
 Maynard, Paul Christopher (Blackpool North and Cleveleys)
 Meacher, Rt Hon. Michael (Oldham West and Royton)
 [*Died, October 2015*]
 Meale, Joseph Alan (Mansfield)
 Mearns, James Ian (Gateshead)
 Menzies, Mark Andrew (Fylde)
 Mercer, John Luther (Plymouth, Moor View)
 Merriman, Huw William (Bexhill and Battle)
 Metcalfe, Stephen James (South Basildon and East Thurrock)
 Miliband, Rt Hon. Edward (Doncaster North)
 Miller, Rt Hon. Maria Frances Lewis (Basingstoke)
 Milling, Amanda Anne (Cannock Chase)
 Mills, Nigel John (Amber Valley)
 Milton, Rt Hon. Anne Frances (Guildford)
 Mitchell, Rt Hon. Andrew John Bower (Sutton Coldfield)
 Molloy, Francis Joseph (Mid Ulster)
 Monaghan, Carol (Glasgow North West)
 Monaghan, Paul William (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross)
 Moon, Madeleine (Bridgend)
 Mordaunt, Penny Mary (Portsmouth North)
 Morden, Jessica Elizabeth (Newport East)
 Morgan, Rt Hon. Nicola Ann (Loughborough)
 Morris, Anne Marie (Newton Abbot)
 Morris, David Thomas (Morecambe and Lunesdale)
 Morris, Grahame Mark. (Easington)
 Morris, James George (Halesowen and Rowley Regis)
 Morton, Wendy (Aldridge-Brownhills)
 Mowat, David John (Warrington South)
 Mulholland, Greg (Leeds North West)
 Mullin, William Arthur Roger (Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath)
 Mundell, Rt Hon. David Gordon (Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale)
 Murray, Ian (Edinburgh South)
 Murray, Sheryll (South East Cornwall)
 Murrison, Andrew William (South West Wiltshire)

N

Nandy, Lisa Eva (Wigan)
 Neill, Robert James MacGillivray (Bromley and Chislehurst)
 Newlands, Gavin Andrew Stuart (Paisley and Renfrewshire North)
 Newton, Sarah Louise (Truro and Falmouth)
 Nicolson, John MacKenzie (East Dunbartonshire)
 Nokes, Caroline Fiona Ellen (Romsey and Southampton North)
 Norman, Alexander Jesse (Hereford and South Herefordshire)
 Nuttall, David John (Bury North)

O

O'Hara, Brendan (Argyll and Bute)
 Offord, Matthew James (Hendon)
 Onn, Melanie (Great Grimsby)
 Onwurah, Chi (Newcastle upon Tyne Central)
 Opperman, Guy (Hexham)
 Osamor, Kate Ofunne (Edmonton)
 Osborne, Rt Hon. George Gideon Oliver (Tatton)
 Oswald, Kirsten Frances (East Renfrewshire)
 Owen, Albert (Ynys Môn)

P

Paisley, Ian Richard Kyle (North Antrim)
 Parish, Neil Quentin Gordon (Tiverton and Honiton)
 Patel, Rt Hon. Priti Sushil (Witham)
 Paterson, Rt Hon. Owen William (North Shropshire)
 Paterson, Steven Alexander (Stirling)
 Pawsey, Mark Julian Francis (Rugby)
 Pearce, Teresa (Erith and Thamesmead)
 Penning, Rt Hon. Michael Alan (Hemel Hempstead)
 Pennycook, Matthew Thomas (Greenwich and Woolwich)
 Penrose, John David (Weston-super-Mare)
 Percy, Andrew Theakstone (Brigg and Goole)
 Perkins, Matthew Toby (Chesterfield)
 Perry, Claire Louise (Devizes)
 Phillips, Jessica Rose (Birmingham, Yardley)
 Phillips, Stephen James (Sleaford and North Hykeham)
 Phillipson, Bridget Maeve (Houghton and Sunderland South)
 Philp, Chris Ian Brian Mynott (Croydon South)
 Pickles, Rt Hon. Eric Jack (Brentwood and Ongar)
 Pincher, Christopher John (Tamworth)
 Plunkett-Ernlé-Erle-Drax, Richard Grosvenor (South Dorset)
 Poulter, Daniel Leonard James (Central Suffolk and North Ipswich)
 Pound, Stephen Pelham (Ealing North)
 Pow, Rebecca Faye Clark (Taunton Deane)
 Powell, Lucy Maria (Manchester Central)
 Prentis, Victoria Mary Boswell (Banbury)
 Prisk, Michael Mark (Hertford and Stortford)
 Pritchard, Mark Andrew (The Wrekin)
 Pugh, John David (Southport)
 Pursglove, Thomas Christopher John (Corby)

Q

Quin, Jeremy Mark (Horsham)
 Quince, William James (Colchester)
 Qureshi, Yasmin (Bolton South East)

R

Raab, Dominic Rennie (Esher and Walton)
 Rayner, Angela (Ashton-under-Lyne)
 Redwood, Rt Hon. John Alan (Wokingham)
 Reed, Jamieson Ronald (Copeland)
 Reed, Stephen Mark Ward (Croydon North)
 Rees, Christina Elizabeth (Neath)
 Rees-Mogg, Jacob William (North East Somerset)
 Reeves, Rachel Jane (Leeds West)
 Reynolds, Emma Elizabeth (Wolverhampton North East)
 Reynolds, Jonathan Neil (Stalybridge and Hyde)
 Rimmer, Marie Elizabeth (St Helens South and Whiston)
 Ritchie, Margaret (South Down)
 Robertson, Angus Struan Carolus (Moray)
 Robertson, Laurence Anthony (Tewkesbury)
 Robinson, Gavin James (Belfast East)
 Robinson, Geoffrey (Coventry North West)
 Robinson, Mary Josephine (Cheadle)
 Rosindell, Andrew Richard (Romford)
 Rotheram, Steven Philip (Liverpool, Walton)
 Rudd, Rt Hon. Amber (Hastings and Rye)
 Rutley, David Henry (Macclesfield)
 Ryan, Rt Hon. Joan Marie (Enfield North)

S

Salmond, Rt Hon. Alex (Gordon)
 Sandbach, Antoinette (Eddisbury)
 Saville Roberts, Liz (Dwyfor Meirionnydd)
 Scully, Paul Stuart (Sutton and Cheam)
 Selous, Andrew Edmund Armstrong (South West Bedfordshire)
 Shah, Naseem Akhter (Bradford West)
 Shannon, Richard James (Strangford)
 Shapps, Rt Hon. Grant (Welwyn Hatfield)
 Sharma, Alok Kumar (Reading West)
 Sharma, Virendra Kumar (Ealing, Southall)
 Sheerman, Barry John (Huddersfield)
 Shelbrooke, Alec (Elmet and Rothwell)
 Sheppard, Thomas (Edinburgh East)
 Sherriff, Paula Michelle (Dewsbury)
 Shuker, Gavin (Luton South)
 Siddiq, Tulip (Hampstead and Kilburn)
 Simpson, Thomas David (Upper Bann)
 Simpson, Rt Hon. Keith Robert (Broadland)
 Skidmore, Christopher James (Kingswood)
 Skinner, Dennis Edward (Bolsover)
 Slaughter, Andrew Francis (Hammersmith)
 Smeeth, Ruth Lauren (Stoke-on-Trent North)
 Smith, Rt Hon. Andrew David (Oxford East)
 Smith, Angela Christine (Penistone and Stocksbridge)
 Smith, Catherine Jane (Lancaster and Fleetwood)
 Smith, Chloe Rebecca (Norwich North)
 Smith, Henry Edward Millar (Crawley)
 Smith, Jeffrey (Manchester, Withington)
 Smith, Julian Richard (Skipton and Ripon)
 Smith, Nicholas Desmond John (Blaenau Gwent)
 Smith, Owen (Pontypridd)
 Smith, Royston Matthew (Southampton, Itchen)
 Smyth, Karin (Bristol South)
 Soames, Rt Hon. Nicholas (Mid Sussex)
 Solloway, Amanda Jane (Derby North)
 Soubry, Rt Hon. Anna Mary (Broxtowe)
 Spellar, Rt Hon. John Francis (Warley)
 Spelman, Rt Hon. Caroline (Meriden)
 Spencer, Mark Steven (Sherwood)

Starmer, Keir (Holborn and St Pancras)
 Stephens, Christopher (Glasgow South West)
 Stephenson, Andrew George (Pendle)
 Stevens, Joanna Meriel (Cardiff Central)
 Stevenson, Andrew John (Carlisle)
 Stewart, Robert Alexander (Beckenham)
 Stewart, Iain Aitken (Milton Keynes South)
 Stewart, Roderick James Nugent (Penrith and The Border)
 Streeter, Gary Nicholas (South West Devon)
 Streeting, Wesley Paul William (Ilford North)
 Stride, Melvyn John (Central Devon)
 Stringer, Graham Eric (Blackley and Broughton)
 Stuart, Gisela Gschaider (Birmingham, Edgbaston)
 Stuart, Graham (Beverley and Holderness)
 Sturdy, Julian Charles (York Outer)
 Sunak, Rishi (Richmond (Yorks))
 Swayne, Rt Hon. Desmond Angus (New Forest West)
 Swire, Rt Hon. Hugo George William (East Devon)
 Syms, Robert Andrew Raymond (Poole)

T

Tami, Mark Richard (Alyn and Deeside)
 Thewliss, Alison Emily (Glasgow Central)
 Thomas, Derek Gordon (St Ives)
 Thomas, Gareth (Harrow West)
 Thomas-Symonds, Nicklaus (Torfaen)
 Thompson, Owen George (Midlothian)
 Thomson, Michelle Rhonda (Edinburgh West)
 Thornberry, Emily (Islington South and Finsbury)
 Throup, Margaret Ann (Erewash)
 Timms, Rt Hon. Stephen Creswell (East Ham)
 Timpson, Anthony Edward (Crewe and Nantwich)
 Tolhurst, Kelly Jane (Rochester and Strood)
 Tomlinson, Justin Paul (North Swindon)
 Tomlinson-Mynors, Michael James (Mid Dorset and North Poole)
 Tracey, Craig Paul (North Warwickshire)
 Tredinnick, David Arthur Stephen (Bosworth)
 Trevelyan, Anne-Marie Belinda (Berwick-upon-Tweed)
 Trickett, Jon Hedley (Hemsworth)
 Truss, Rt Hon. Elizabeth Mary (South West Norfolk)
 Tugendhat, Thomas Georg John (Tonbridge and Malling)
 Turley, Anna Catherine (Redcar)
 Turner, Andrew John (Isle of Wight)
 Turner, Karl (Kingston upon Hull East)
 Twigg, Derek (Halton)
 Twigg, Stephen (Liverpool, West Derby)
 Tyrie, Rt Hon. Andrew Guy (Chichester)

U

Umunna, Chuka Harrison (Streatham)

V

Vaizey, Edward Henry Butler (Wantage)
 Vara, Shailesh Lakhman (North West Cambridgeshire)
 Vaz, Rt Hon. Keith Anthony (Leicester East)
 Vaz, Valerie Carol Marian (Walsall South)
 Vickers, Martin John (Cleethorpes)
 Villiers, Rt Hon. Theresa (Chipping Barnet)

W

Walker, Charles Ashley Rupert (Broxbourne)
 Walker, Robin Caspar (Worcester)
 Walker-Lynch, Holly Jamie (Halifax)
 Wallace, Robert Ben Lobban (Wyre and Preston North)
 Warburton, David John (Somerton and Frome)
 Warman, Matthew (Boston and Skegness)
 Watkinson, Angela Eileen (Hornchurch and Upminster)
 Watson, Thomas Anthony (West Bromwich East)
 Weir, Michael Fraser (Angus)
 West, Catherine Elizabeth (Hornsey and Wood Green)
 Wharton, James Stephen (Stockton South)
 Whately, Helen Olivia Bicknell (Faversham and Mid Kent)
 Wheeler, Heather Kay (South Derbyshire)
 White, Christopher Mark Francis (Warwick and Leamington)
 Whiteford, Eilidh (Banff and Buchan)
 Whitehead, Alan Patrick Vincent (Southampton, Test)
 Whitford, Philippa (Central Ayrshire)
 Whittaker, Craig (Calder Valley)
 Whittingdale, Rt Hon. John Flasby Lawrance (Maldon)
 Wigg, William David (North Herefordshire)
 Williams, Alun Craig (Cardiff North)
 Williams, Hywel (Arfon)
 Williams, Mark Fraser (Ceredigion)
 Williamson, Rt Hon. Gavin Alexander (South Staffordshire)
 Wilson, Corrairie (Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock)
 Wilson, Philip (Sedgefield)
 Wilson, Robert Owen Biggs (Reading East)
 Wilson, Samuel (East Antrim)
 Winnick, David Julian (Walsall North)
 Winterton, Rt Hon. Rosie (Doncaster Central)
 Wishart, Peter (Perth and North Perthshire)
 Wollaston, Sarah James (Totnes)
 Wood, Michael Jon (Dudley South)
 Woodcock, John Zak (Barrow and Furness)
 Wragg, William Peter (Hazel Grove)
 Wright, Iain David (Hartlepool)
 Wright, Rt Hon. Jeremy Paul (Kenilworth and Southam)

Z

Zahawi, Nadhim (Stratford-on-Avon)
 Zeichner, Daniel Stephen (Cambridge)

House of Commons

Alphabetical List of Members

[Returned at the General Election, 7 May 2015]

A

Abbott, Diane (Hackney North and Stoke Newington)
Abrahams, Deborah Angela Elspeth Marie (Oldham East and Saddleworth)
Adams, Nigel (Selby and Ainsty)
Afriyie, Adam (Windsor)
Ahmed-Sheikh, Tasmina (Ochil and South Perthshire)
Aldous, Peter James Guy (Waveney)
Alexander, Heidi (Lewisham East)
Ali, Rushanara (Bethnal Green and Bow)
Allan, Lucy (Telford)
Allen, Graham William (Nottingham North)
Allen, Heidi Suzanne (South Cambridgeshire)
Amess, David Anthony Andrew (Southend West)
Anderson, David (Blaydon)
Andrew, Stuart James (Pudsey)
Ansell, Caroline (Eastbourne)
Argar, Edward John Comport (Charnwood)
Arkless, Richard Lambert Thomas (Dumfries and Galloway)
Ashworth, Jonathan Michael Graham (Leicester South)
Atkins, Victoria Mary (Louth and Horncastle)
Austin, Ian (Dudley North)

B

Bacon, Richard Michael (South Norfolk)
Bailey, Adrian Edward (West Bromwich West)
Baker, Steven John (Wycombe)
Baldwin, Harriett Mary Morison (West Worcestershire)
Barclay, Stephen Paul (North East Cambridgeshire)
Bardell, Hannah Mary (Livingston)
Baron, John Charles (Basildon and Billericay)
Barron, Rt Hon. Kevin John (Rother Valley)
Barwell, Gavin Laurence (Croydon Central)
Bebb, Guto ap Owain (Aberconwy)
Beckett, Rt Hon. Margaret Mary (Derby South)
Bellingham, Henry Campbell (North West Norfolk)
Benn, Rt Hon. Hilary James (Leeds Central)
Benyon, Richard Henry Ronald (Newbury)
Bercow, Rt Hon. John Simon (Buckingham)
Beresford, Alexander Paul (Mole Valley)
Berger, Luciana Clare (Liverpool, Wavertree)
Berry, James Jacob Gilchrist (Rossendale and Darwen)
Berry, Michael James Ellwood (Kingston and Surbiton)
Betts, Clive James Charles (Sheffield South East)
Bingham, Andrew Russell (High Peak)
Black, Mhairi (Paisley and Renfrewshire South)
Blackford, Ian (Ross, Skye and Lochaber)
Blackman, Robert John (Harrow East)
Blackman, Kirsty (Aberdeen North)
Blackman-Woods, Roberta Carol (City of Durham)
Blackwood, Nicola Claire (Oxford West and Abingdon)
Blenkinsop, Thomas Francis (Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland)
Blomfield, Paul Christopher (Sheffield Central)
Blunt, Crispin Jeremy Rupert (Reigate)
Boles, Nicholas Edward Coleridge (Grantham and Stamford)
Bone, Peter William (Wellingborough)

Borwick, Victoria Lorne Peta (Kensington)
Boswell, Philip John (Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill)
Bottomley, Peter James (Worthing West)
Bradley, Karen Anne (Staffordshire Moorlands)
Bradshaw, Rt Hon. Benjamin Peter James (Exeter)
Brady, Graham Stuart (Altrincham and Sale West)
Brady, Michael (Newry and Armagh)
Brake, Rt Hon. Tom (Carshalton and Wallington)
Brazier, Julian William Hendy (Canterbury)
Brennan, Kevin Denis (Cardiff West)
Bridgen, Andrew James (North West Leicestershire)
Brine, Stephen Charles (Winchester)
Brock, Deidre Leanne (Edinburgh North and Leith)
Brokenshire, James Peter (Old Bexley and Sidcup)
Brown, Alan (Kilmarnock and Loudoun)
Brown, Lyn Carol (West Ham)
Brown, Rt Hon. Nicholas Hugh (Newcastle upon Tyne East)
Bruce, Fiona Claire (Congleton)
Bryant, Christopher John (Rhondda)
Buck, Karen Patricia (Westminster North)
Buckland, Robert James (South Swindon)
Burden, Richard Haines (Birmingham, Northfield)
Burgon, Richard (Leeds East)
Burnham, Rt Hon. Andrew Murray (Leigh)
Burns, Conor (Bournemouth West)
Burns, Rt Hon. Simon Hugh McGuigan (Chelmsford)
Burrowes, David John Barrington (Enfield, Southgate)
Burt, Rt Hon. Alistair James Hendrie (North East Bedfordshire)
Butler, Dawn Petula (Brent Central)
Byrne, Rt Hon. Liam Dominic (Birmingham, Hodge Hill)

C

Cadbury, Ruth (Brentford and Isleworth)
Cairns, Alun Hugh (Vale of Glamorgan)
Cameron, Rt Hon. David William Donald (Witney)
Cameron, Lisa (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow)
Campbell, Rt Hon. Alan (Tynemouth)
Campbell, Gregory Lloyd (East Londonderry)
Campbell, Ronald (Blyth Valley)
Carmichael, Rt Hon. Alexander Morrison (Orkney and Shetland)
Carmichael, Neil (Stroud)
Carswell, John Douglas Wilson (Clacton)
Cartlidge, James Roger (South Suffolk)
Cash, William (Stone)
Caulfield, Maria Colette (Lewes)
Chalk, Alex (Cheltenham)
Champion, Sarah Deborah (Rotherham)
Chapman, Douglas (Dunfermline and West Fife)
Chapman, Jennifer (Darlington)
Cherry, Joanna Catherine (Edinburgh South West)
Chishti, Atta-Ur-Rehman (Gillingham and Rainham)
Chope, Christopher Robert (Christchurch)
Churchill, Johanna Peta (Bury St Edmunds)
Clark, Rt Hon. Greg (Tunbridge Wells)
Clarke, Rt Hon. Kenneth Harry (Rushcliffe)

Clegg, Rt Hon. Nicholas William Peter (Sheffield, Hallam)
 Cleverly, James Spencer (Braintree)
 Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey Robert (The Cotswolds)
 Clwyd, Rt Hon. Ann (Cynon Valley)
 Coaker, Vernon Rodney (Gedling)
 Coffey, Margaret Ann Wishart (Stockport)
 Coffey, Thérèse Anne (Suffolk Coastal)
 Collins, Damian Noel Thomas (Folkestone and Hythe)
 Colville, Oliver Newton (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport)
 Cooper, Julie Elizabeth (Burnley)
 Cooper, Rosemary Elizabeth (West Lancashire)
 Cooper, Rt Hon. Yvette (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford)
 Corbyn, Jeremy Bernard (Islington North)
 Costa, Alberto Castrenze (South Leicestershire)
 Cowan, Ronnie (Inverclyde)
 Cox, Charles Geoffrey (Torrington and West Devon)
 Cox, Helen Joanne (Batley and Spen)
 Coyle, Neil (Bermondsey and Old Southwark)
 Crabb, Rt Hon. Stephen (Preseli Pembrokeshire)
 Crausby, David Anthony (Bolton North East)
 Crawley, Angela (Lanark and Hamilton East)
 Creagh, Mary Helen (Wakefield)
 Creasy, Stella Judith (Walthamstow)
 Crouch, Tracey Elizabeth Anne (Chatham and Aylesford)
 Cruddas, Jonathan (Dagenham and Rainham)
 Cryer, John Robert (Leyton and Wanstead)
 Cummins, Judith Mary (Bradford South)
 Cunningham, Alexander (Stockton North)
 Cunningham, James Dolan (Coventry South)

D

Dakin, Nicholas (Scunthorpe)
 Danczuk, Simon Christopher (Rochdale)
 David, Wayne (Caerphilly)
 Davies, Henry Byron (Gower)
 Davies, Christopher Paul (Brecon and Radnorshire)
 Davies, David Thomas Charles (Monmouth)
 Davies, Geraint Richard (Swansea West)
 Davies, Edward Glyn (Montgomeryshire)
 Davies, James Michael (Vale of Clwyd)
 Davies, Miriam Jane Alice (Eastleigh)
 Davies, Philip Andrew (Shipley)
 Davis, Rt Hon. David Michael (Haltemprice and Howden)
 Day, Martyn (Linlithgow and East Falkirk)
 De Piero, Gloria (Ashfield)
 Debbonaire, Thangam (Bristol West)
 Dinenage, Caroline Julia (Gosport)
 Djanogly, Jonathan Simon (Huntingdon)
 Docherty, Martin John (West Dunbartonshire)
 Dodds, Rt Hon. Nigel Alexander (Belfast North)
 Doherty, Patrick (West Tyrone)
 Donaldson, Rt Hon. Jeffrey Mark (Lagan Valley)
 Donaldson, Stuart Blair (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine)
 Donelan, Michelle Emma May Elizabeth (Chippenham)
 Dorries, Nadine Vanessa (Mid Bedfordshire)
 Double, Stephen Daniel (St Austell and Newquay)
 Doughty, Stephen John (Cardiff South and Penarth)
 Dowd, James Patrick (Lewisham West and Penge)
 Dowd, Peter (Bootle)
 Dowden, Oliver James (Hertsmere)
 Doyle-Price, Jacqueline (Thurrock)
 Dromey, Jack Eugene Joseph (Birmingham, Erdington)
 Drummond, Felicia Jane Beatrix (Portsmouth South)

Duddridge, James Philip (Rochford and Southend East)
 Dugher, Michael Vincent (Barnsley East)
 Duncan, Rt Hon. Alan James Carter (Rutland and Melton)
 Duncan Smith, Rt Hon. George Iain (Chingford and Woodford Green)
 Dunne, Philip Martin (Ludlow)
 Durkan, John Mark (Foyle)

E

Eagle, Angela (Wallasey)
 Eagle, Maria (Garston and Halewood)
 Edwards, David Jonathan (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr)
 Efford, Clive Stanley (Eltham)
 Elliott, Julie (Sunderland Central)
 Elliott, Thomas Beatty (Fermanagh and South Tyrone)
 Ellis, Michael Tyrone (Northampton North)
 Ellison, Jane Elizabeth (Battersea)
 Ellman, Louise Joyce (Liverpool, Riverside)
 Ellwood, Tobias Martin (Bournemouth East)
 Elmore, Chris (Ogmore) [*By-election, May 2016*]
 Elphicke, Charles Brett Anthony (Dover)
 Engel, Natascha (North East Derbyshire)
 Esterson, William Roffen (Sefton Central)
 Eustice, Charles George (Camborne and Redruth)
 Evans, Christopher (Islwyn)
 Evans, Graham (Weaver Vale)
 Evans, Nigel Martin (Ribble Valley)
 Evennett, Rt Hon. David Anthony (Bexleyheath and Crayford)

F

Fabricant, Michael Louis David (Lichfield)
 Fallon, Rt Hon. Michael (Sevenoaks)
 Farrelly, Paul (Newcastle-under-Lyme)
 Farron, Timothy James (Westmorland and Lonsdale)
 Fellows, Marion (Motherwell and Wishaw)
 Fernandes, Sue-Ellen Cassiana (Fareham)
 Ferrier, Margaret (Rutherglen and Hamilton West)
 Field, Rt Hon. Frank (Birkenhead)
 Field, Rt Hon. Mark Christopher (Cities of London and Westminster)
 Fitzpatrick, James (Poplar and Limehouse)
 Ffello, Robert Charles Douglas (Stoke-on-Trent South)
 Fletcher, Colleen Margaret (Coventry North East)
 Flint, Rt Hon. Caroline Louise (Don Valley)
 Flynn, Paul Phillip (Newport West)
 Foster, Kevin John (Torbay)
 Fovargue, Yvonne Helen (Makerfield)
 Fox, Rt Hon. Liam (North Somerset)
 Foxcroft, Victoria Jane (Lewisham, Deptford)
 Francois, Rt Hon. Mark Gino (Rayleigh and Wickford)
 Frazer, Lucy (South East Cambridgeshire)
 Freeman, George William (Mid Norfolk)
 Freer, Mike (Finchley and Golders Green)
 Fuller, Richard Quentin (Bedford)
 Furniss, Gill (Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough) [*By-election, May 2016*]
 Fysh, Marcus John Hudson (Yeovil)

G

Gale, Roger James (North Thanet)
 Gapes, Michael John (Ilford South)
 Gardiner, Barry Strachan (Brent North)

Garnier, Rt Hon. Edward Henry (Harborough)
 Garnier, Mark Robert Timothy (Wyre Forest)
 Gauke, David Michael (South West Hertfordshire)
 Gethins, Stephen Patrick (North East Fife)
 Ghani, Nusrat Munir (Wealden)
 Gibb, Nicolas John (Bognor Regis and Littlehampton)
 Gibson, Patricia (North Ayrshire and Arran)
 Gillan, Rt Hon. Cheryl Elise Kendall (Chesham and Amersham)
 Glass, Patricia Mary (North West Durham)
 Glen, John Philip (Salisbury)
 Glindon, Mary Theresa (North Tyneside)
 Godsiff, Roger Duncan (Birmingham, Hall Green)
 Goldsmith, Frank Zacharias Robin (Richmond Park)
 Goodman, Helen Catherine (Bishop Auckland)
 Goodwill, Robert (Scarborough and Whitby)
 Gove, Rt Hon. Michael Andrew (Surrey Heath)
 Grady, Patrick John (Glasgow North)
 Graham, Richard (Gloucester)
 Grant, Helen (Maidstone and The Weald)
 Grant, Peter (Glenrothes)
 Gray, James Whiteside (North Wiltshire)
 Gray, Neil Charles (Airdrie and Shotts)
 Grayling, Rt Hon. Christopher Stephen (Epsom and Ewell)
 Green, Chris (Bolton West)
 Green, Rt Hon. Damian Howard (Ashford)
 Green, Katherine Anne (Stretford and Urmston)
 Greening, Rt Hon. Justine (Putney)
 Greenwood, Lilian Rachel (Nottingham South)
 Greenwood, Margaret (Wirral West)
 Grieve, Rt Hon Dominic Charles Roberts (Beaconsfield)
 Griffith, Nia Rhiannon (Llanelli)
 Griffiths, Andrew James (Burton)
 Gummer, Benedict Michael (Ipswich)
 Gwynne, Andrew John (Denton and Reddish)
 Gyimah, Samuel Phillip (East Surrey)

H

Haigh, Louise Margaret (Sheffield, Heeley)
 Halfon, Rt Hon. Robert Henry (Harlow)
 Hall, Luke Anthony (Thornbury and Yate)
 Hamilton, Fabian (Leeds North East)
 Hammond, Rt Hon. Philip (Runnymede and Weybridge)
 Hammond, Stephen William (Wimbledon)
 Hancock, Rt Hon. Matthew John David (West Suffolk)
 Hands, Rt Hon. Gregory William (Chelsea and Fulham)
 Hanson, Rt Hon. David George (Delyn)
 Harman, Rt Hon. Harriet (Camberwell and Peckham)
 Harper, Rt Hon. Mark James (Forest of Dean)
 Harpham, Robert Harry (Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough) [*Died, February 2016*]
 Harrington, Richard Irwin (Watford)
 Harris, Carolyn (Swansea East)
 Harris, Elizabeth Rebecca Scott (Castle Point)
 Hart, Simon (Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire)
 Haselhurst, Rt Hon. Alan Gordon Barraclough (Saffron Walden)
 Hayes, Helen Elizabeth (Dulwich and West Norwood)
 Hayes, Rt Hon. John Henry (South Holland and The Deepings)
 Hayman, Susan Mary (Workington)
 Heald, Oliver (North East Hertfordshire)
 Healey, Rt Hon. John (Wentworth and Dearne)
 Heapey, James Stephen (Wells)
 Heaton-Harris, Christopher (Daventry)
 Heaton-Jones, Peter (North Devon)
 Henderson, Gordon (Sittingbourne and Sheppey)

Hendrick, Mark Phillip (Preston)
 Hendry, Andrew Egan Henderson (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey)
 Hepburn, Stephen (Jarrow)
 Herbert, Rt Hon. Nick (Arundel and South Downs)
 Hermon, Sylvia Eileen (North Down)
 Hillier, Meg (Hackney South and Shoreditch)
 Hinds, Damian Patrick George (East Hampshire)
 Hoare, Simon James (North Dorset)
 Hodge, Rt Hon. Margaret Eve (Barking)
 Hodgson, Sharon (Washington and Sunderland West)
 Hoey, Kate (Vauxhall)
 Hollern, Catherine Malloy (Blackburn)
 Hollingbery, George Michael Edward (Meon Valley)
 Hollinrake, Kevin Paul (Thirsk and Malton)
 Hollobone, Philip Thomas (Kettering)
 Holloway, Adam James Harold (Gravesham)
 Hopkins, Kelvin Peter (Luton North)
 Hopkins, Kristan Frederick (Keighley)
 Hosie, Stewart (Dundee East)
 Howarth, Rt Hon. George Edward (Knowsley)
 Howarth, James Gerald Douglas (Aldershot)
 Howell, John Michael (Henley)
 Howlett, Benjamin John (Bath)
 Hoyle, Rt Hon. Lindsay Harvey (Chorley)
 Huddleston, Nigel Paul (Mid Worcestershire)
 Hunt, Rt Hon. Jeremy Richard Streynsham (South West Surrey)
 Hunt, Tristram Julian William (Stoke-on-Trent Central)
 Huq, Rupa Asha (Ealing Central and Acton)
 Hurd, Nicholas Richard (Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner)
 Hussain, Imran (Bradford East)

I

Irranca-Davies, Ifor Huw (Ogmore)
 [*Resigned, March 2016*]

J

Jackson, Stewart James (Peterborough)
 James, Margot Cathleen (Stourbridge)
 Jarvis, Dan (Barnsley Central)
 Javid, Rt Hon. Sajid (Bromsgrove)
 Jayawardena, Ranil Malcolm (North East Hampshire)
 Jenkin, Bernard Christison (Harwich and North Essex)
 Jenkyns, Andrea Marie (Morley and Outwood)
 Jenrick, Robert Edward (Newark)
 Johnson, Rt Hon. Alan Arthur (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle)
 Johnson, Boris de Pfeffel (Uxbridge and South Ruislip)
 Johnson, Diana Ruth (Kingston upon Hull North)
 Johnson, Gareth Alan (Dartford)
 Johnson, Joseph Edmund (Orpington)
 Jones, Andrew Hanson (Harrogate and Knaresborough)
 Jones, Rt Hon. David Ian (Clwyd West)
 Jones, Gerald (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney)
 Jones, Graham Peter (Hyndburn)
 Jones, Helen Mary (Warrington North)
 Jones, Kevan David (North Durham)
 Jones, Marcus Charles (Nuneaton)
 Jones, Susan Elan (Clwyd South)

K

Kane, Michael Joseph Patrick (Wythenshawe and Sale East)

Kaufman, Rt Hon. Gerald Bernard (Manchester, Gorton)
 Kawczynski, Daniel Robert (Shrewsbury and Atcham)
 Keeley, Barbara Mary (Worsley and Eccles South)
 Kendall, Elizabeth Louise (Leicester West)
 Kennedy, Seema Louise Ghiassi (South Ribble)
 Kerevan, George (East Lothian)
 Kerr, Calum Robert (Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk)
 Khan, Rt Hon. Sadiq Aman (Tooting) [*Resigned*]
 Kinahan, Daniel De Burgh (South Antrim)
 Kinnock, Stephen Nathan (Aberavon)
 Kirby, Simon Gerard (Brighton, Kemptown)
 Knight, Rt Hon. Sir Gregory (East Yorkshire)
 Knight, Julian (Solihull)
 Kwarteng, Kwasi Alfred Addo (Spelthorne)
 Kyle, Peter John (Hove)

L

Laing, Eleanor Fulton (Epping Forest)
 Lamb, Rt Hon. Norman Peter (North Norfolk)
 Lammy, Rt Hon. David Lindon (Tottenham)
 Lancaster, John Mark (Milton Keynes North)
 Latham, Pauline Elizabeth (Mid Derbyshire)
 Lavery, Ian (Wansbeck)
 Law, Christopher Murray Alexander (Dundee West)
 Leadsom, Andrea (South Northamptonshire)
 Lee, Phillip James (Bracknell)
 Lefroy, Jeremy John Elton (Stafford)
 Leigh, Edward Julian Egerton (Gainsborough)
 Leslie, Charlotte (Bristol North West)
 Leslie, Christopher Michael (Nottingham East)
 Letwin, Rt Hon. Oliver (West Dorset)
 Lewell-Buck, Emma Louise (South Shields)
 Lewis, Brandon Kenneth (Great Yarmouth)
 Lewis, Clive Anthony (Norwich South)
 Lewis, Ivan (Bury South)
 Lewis, Rt Hon. Julian Murray (New Forest East)
 Liddell-Grainger, Ian Richard Peregrine (Bridgwater and West Somerset)
 Lidington, Rt Hon. David Roy (Aylesbury)
 Lilley, Rt Hon. Peter Bruce (Hitchin and Harpenden)
 Long-Bailey, Rebecca (Salford and Eccles)
 Lopresti, Giacomo (Filton and Bradley Stoke)
 Lord, Jonathan George Caladine (Woking)
 Loughton, Timothy Paul (East Worthing and Shoreham)
 Lucas, Caroline Patricia (Brighton, Pavilion)
 Lucas, Ian Colin (Wrexham)
 Lumley, Karen Elizabeth (Redditch)

M

McCabe, Stephen James (Birmingham, Selly Oak)
 McCaig, Callum (Aberdeen South)
 McCarthy, Kerry Gillian (Bristol East)
 McCartney, Jason Alexander (Colne Valley)
 McCartney, Karl Ian (Lincoln)
 McDonagh, Siobhain Ann (Mitcham and Morden)
 McDonald, Andrew Joseph (Middlesbrough)
 McDonald, Stewart (Glasgow South)
 McDonald, Stuart Campbell (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East)
 McDonnell, Alasdair (Belfast South)
 McDonnell, John Martin (Hayes and Harlington)
 McFadden, Rt Hon. Patrick Bosco (Wolverhampton South East)
 McGarry, Natalie (Glasgow East)
 McGinn, Conor Patrick (St Helens North)

McGovern, Alison (Wirral South)
 McInnes, Elizabeth Anne (Heywood and Middleton)
 Mackinlay, Craig (South Thanet)
 McKinnell, Catherine (Newcastle upon Tyne North)
 Mackintosh, David James (Northampton South)
 McLaughlin, Anne (Glasgow North East)
 McLoughlin, Rt Hon. Patrick Allen (Derbyshire Dales)
 McMahon, Jim (Oldham West and Royton)
 [*By-election, December 2015*]
 Mc Nally, John (Falkirk)
 MacNeil, Angus Brendan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar)
 McPartland, Stephen Anthony (Stevenage)
 Mactaggart, Rt Hon. Fiona Margaret (Slough)
 Madders, Justin (Ellesmere Port and Neston)
 Mahmood, Khalid (Birmingham, Perry Barr)
 Mahmood, Shabana (Birmingham, Ladywood)
 Main, Anne Margaret (St Albans)
 Mak, Alan (Havant)
 Malhotra, Seema (Feltham and Heston)
 Malthouse, Christopher Laurie (North West Hampshire)
 Mann, John (Bassetlaw)
 Mann, Scott Leslie (North Cornwall)
 Marris, Rob (Wolverhampton South West)
 Marsden, Gordon (Blackpool South)
 Maskell, Rachael Helen (York Central)
 Maskey, Paul John (Belfast West)
 Matheson, Chris (City of Chester)
 Mathias, Tania Wyn (Twickenham)
 May, Rt Hon. Theresa Mary (Maidenhead)
 Maynard, Paul Christopher (Blackpool North and Cleveleys)
 Meacher, Rt Hon. Michael (Oldham West and Royton)
 [*Died, October 2015*]
 Meale, Joseph Alan (Mansfield)
 Mearns, James Ian (Gateshead)
 Menzies, Mark Andrew (Fylde)
 Mercer, John Luther (Plymouth, Moor View)
 Merriman, Huw William (Bexhill and Battle)
 Metcalfe, Stephen James (South Basildon and East Thurrock)
 Miliband, Rt Hon. Edward (Doncaster North)
 Miller, Rt Hon. Maria Frances Lewis (Basingstoke)
 Milling, Amanda Anne (Cannock Chase)
 Mills, Nigel John (Amber Valley)
 Milton, Rt Hon. Anne Frances (Guildford)
 Mitchell, Rt Hon. Andrew John Bower (Sutton Coldfield)
 Molloy, Francis Joseph (Mid Ulster)
 Monaghan, Carol (Glasgow North West)
 Monaghan, Paul William (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross)
 Moon, Madeleine (Bridgend)
 Mordaunt, Penny Mary (Portsmouth North)
 Morden, Jessica Elizabeth (Newport East)
 Morgan, Rt Hon. Nicola Ann (Loughborough)
 Morris, Anne Marie (Newton Abbot)
 Morris, David Thomas (Morecambe and Lunesdale)
 Morris, Grahame Mark. (Easington)
 Morris, James George (Halesowen and Rowley Regis)
 Morton, Wendy (Aldridge-Brownhills)
 Mowat, David John (Warrington South)
 Mulholland, Greg (Leeds North West)
 Mullin, William Arthur Roger (Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath)
 Mundell, Rt Hon. David Gordon (Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale)
 Murray, Ian (Edinburgh South)
 Murray, Sheryll (South East Cornwall)
 Murrison, Andrew William (South West Wiltshire)

N

Nandy, Lisa Eva (Wigan)
 Neill, Robert James MacGillivray (Bromley and Chislehurst)
 Newlands, Gavin Andrew Stuart (Paisley and Renfrewshire North)
 Newton, Sarah Louise (Truro and Falmouth)
 Nicolson, John MacKenzie (East Dunbartonshire)
 Nokes, Caroline Fiona Ellen (Romsey and Southampton North)
 Norman, Alexander Jesse (Hereford and South Herefordshire)
 Nuttall, David John (Bury North)

O

O'Hara, Brendan (Argyll and Bute)
 Offord, Matthew James (Hendon)
 Onn, Melanie (Great Grimsby)
 Onwurah, Chi (Newcastle upon Tyne Central)
 Opperman, Guy (Hexham)
 Osamor, Kate Ofunne (Edmonton)
 Osborne, Rt Hon. George Gideon Oliver (Tatton)
 Oswald, Kirsten Frances (East Renfrewshire)
 Owen, Albert (Ynys Môn)

P

Paisley, Ian Richard Kyle (North Antrim)
 Parish, Neil Quentin Gordon (Tiverton and Honiton)
 Patel, Rt Hon. Priti Sushil (Witham)
 Paterson, Rt Hon. Owen William (North Shropshire)
 Paterson, Steven Alexander (Stirling)
 Pawsey, Mark Julian Francis (Rugby)
 Pearce, Teresa (Erith and Thamesmead)
 Penning, Rt Hon. Michael Alan (Hemel Hempstead)
 Pennycook, Matthew Thomas (Greenwich and Woolwich)
 Penrose, John David (Weston-super-Mare)
 Percy, Andrew Theakstone (Brigg and Goole)
 Perkins, Matthew Toby (Chesterfield)
 Perry, Claire Louise (Devizes)
 Phillips, Jessica Rose (Birmingham, Yardley)
 Phillips, Stephen James (Sleaford and North Hykeham)
 Phillipson, Bridget Maeve (Houghton and Sunderland South)
 Philp, Chris Ian Brian Mynott (Croydon South)
 Pickles, Rt Hon. Eric Jack (Brentwood and Ongar)
 Pincher, Christopher John (Tamworth)
 Plunkett-Ernlé-Erle-Drax, Richard Grosvenor (South Dorset)
 Poulter, Daniel Leonard James (Central Suffolk and North Ipswich)
 Pound, Stephen Pelham (Ealing North)
 Pow, Rebecca Faye Clark (Taunton Deane)
 Powell, Lucy Maria (Manchester Central)
 Prentis, Victoria Mary Boswell (Banbury)
 Prisk, Michael Mark (Hertford and Stortford)
 Pritchard, Mark Andrew (The Wrekin)
 Pugh, John David (Southport)
 Pursglove, Thomas Christopher John (Corby)

Q

Quin, Jeremy Mark (Horsham)
 Quince, William James (Colchester)
 Qureshi, Yasmin (Bolton South East)

R

Raab, Dominic Rennie (Esher and Walton)
 Rayner, Angela (Ashton-under-Lyne)
 Redwood, Rt Hon. John Alan (Wokingham)
 Reed, Jamieson Ronald (Copeland)
 Reed, Stephen Mark Ward (Croydon North)
 Rees, Christina Elizabeth (Neath)
 Rees-Mogg, Jacob William (North East Somerset)
 Reeves, Rachel Jane (Leeds West)
 Reynolds, Emma Elizabeth (Wolverhampton North East)
 Reynolds, Jonathan Neil (Stalybridge and Hyde)
 Rimmer, Marie Elizabeth (St Helens South and Whiston)
 Ritchie, Margaret (South Down)
 Robertson, Angus Struan Carolus (Moray)
 Robertson, Laurence Anthony (Tewkesbury)
 Robinson, Gavin James (Belfast East)
 Robinson, Geoffrey (Coventry North West)
 Robinson, Mary Josephine (Cheadle)
 Rosindell, Andrew Richard (Romford)
 Rotheram, Steven Philip (Liverpool, Walton)
 Rudd, Rt Hon. Amber (Hastings and Rye)
 Rutley, David Henry (Macclesfield)
 Ryan, Rt Hon. Joan Marie (Enfield North)

S

Salmond, Rt Hon. Alex (Gordon)
 Sandbach, Antoinette (Eddisbury)
 Saville Roberts, Liz (Dwyfor Meirionnydd)
 Scully, Paul Stuart (Sutton and Cheam)
 Selous, Andrew Edmund Armstrong (South West Bedfordshire)
 Shah, Naseem Akhter (Bradford West)
 Shannon, Richard James (Strangford)
 Shapps, Rt Hon. Grant (Welwyn Hatfield)
 Sharma, Alok Kumar (Reading West)
 Sharma, Virendra Kumar (Ealing, Southall)
 Sheerman, Barry John (Huddersfield)
 Shelbrooke, Alec (Elmet and Rothwell)
 Sheppard, Thomas (Edinburgh East)
 Sherriff, Paula Michelle (Dewsbury)
 Shuker, Gavin (Luton South)
 Siddiq, Tulip (Hampstead and Kilburn)
 Simpson, Thomas David (Upper Bann)
 Simpson, Rt Hon. Keith Robert (Broadland)
 Skidmore, Christopher James (Kingswood)
 Skinner, Dennis Edward (Bolsover)
 Slaughter, Andrew Francis (Hammersmith)
 Smeeth, Ruth Lauren (Stoke-on-Trent North)
 Smith, Rt Hon. Andrew David (Oxford East)
 Smith, Angela Christine (Penistone and Stocksbridge)
 Smith, Catherine Jane (Lancaster and Fleetwood)
 Smith, Chloe Rebecca (Norwich North)
 Smith, Henry Edward Millar (Crawley)
 Smith, Jeffrey (Manchester, Withington)
 Smith, Julian Richard (Skipton and Ripon)
 Smith, Nicholas Desmond John (Blaenau Gwent)
 Smith, Owen (Pontypridd)
 Smith, Royston Matthew (Southampton, Itchen)
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 Solloway, Amanda Jane (Derby North)
 Soubry, Rt Hon. Anna Mary (Broxtowe)
 Spellar, Rt Hon. John Francis (Warley)
 Spelman, Rt Hon. Caroline (Meriden)
 Spencer, Mark Steven (Sherwood)

Starmer, Keir (Holborn and St Pancras)
 Stephens, Christopher (Glasgow South West)
 Stephenson, Andrew George (Pendle)
 Stevens, Joanna Meriel (Cardiff Central)
 Stevenson, Andrew John (Carlisle)
 Stewart, Robert Alexander (Beckenham)
 Stewart, Iain Aitken (Milton Keynes South)
 Stewart, Roderick James Nugent (Penrith and The Border)
 Streeter, Gary Nicholas (South West Devon)
 Streeting, Wesley Paul William (Ilford North)
 Stride, Melvyn John (Central Devon)
 Stringer, Graham Eric (Blackley and Broughton)
 Stuart, Gisela Gschaider (Birmingham, Edgbaston)
 Stuart, Graham (Beverley and Holderness)
 Sturdy, Julian Charles (York Outer)
 Sunak, Rishi (Richmond (Yorks))
 Swayne, Rt Hon. Desmond Angus (New Forest West)
 Swire, Rt Hon. Hugo George William (East Devon)
 Syms, Robert Andrew Raymond (Poole)

T

Tami, Mark Richard (Alyn and Deeside)
 Thewliss, Alison Emily (Glasgow Central)
 Thomas, Derek Gordon (St Ives)
 Thomas, Gareth (Harrow West)
 Thomas-Symonds, Nicklaus (Torfaen)
 Thompson, Owen George (Midlothian)
 Thomson, Michelle Rhonda (Edinburgh West)
 Thornberry, Emily (Islington South and Finsbury)
 Throup, Margaret Ann (Erewash)
 Timms, Rt Hon. Stephen Creswell (East Ham)
 Timpson, Anthony Edward (Crewe and Nantwich)
 Tolhurst, Kelly Jane (Rochester and Strood)
 Tomlinson, Justin Paul (North Swindon)
 Tomlinson-Mynors, Michael James (Mid Dorset and North Poole)
 Tracey, Craig Paul (North Warwickshire)
 Tredinnick, David Arthur Stephen (Bosworth)
 Trevelyan, Anne-Marie Belinda (Berwick-upon-Tweed)
 Trickett, Jon Hedley (Hemsworth)
 Truss, Rt Hon. Elizabeth Mary (South West Norfolk)
 Tugendhat, Thomas Georg John (Tonbridge and Malling)
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 Turner, Karl (Kingston upon Hull East)
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 Twigg, Stephen (Liverpool, West Derby)
 Tyrie, Rt Hon. Andrew Guy (Chichester)

U

Umunna, Chuka Harrison (Streatham)

V

Vaizey, Edward Henry Butler (Wantage)
 Vara, Shailesh Lakhman (North West Cambridgeshire)
 Vaz, Rt Hon. Keith Anthony (Leicester East)
 Vaz, Valerie Carol Marian (Walsall South)
 Vickers, Martin John (Cleethorpes)
 Villiers, Rt Hon. Theresa (Chipping Barnet)

W

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 Walker, Robin Caspar (Worcester)
 Walker-Lynch, Holly Jamie (Halifax)
 Wallace, Robert Ben Lobban (Wyre and Preston North)
 Warburton, David John (Somerton and Frome)
 Warman, Matthew (Boston and Skegness)
 Watkinson, Angela Eileen (Hornchurch and Upminster)
 Watson, Thomas Anthony (West Bromwich East)
 Weir, Michael Fraser (Angus)
 West, Catherine Elizabeth (Hornsey and Wood Green)
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 Whiteford, Eilidh (Banff and Buchan)
 Whitehead, Alan Patrick Vincent (Southampton, Test)
 Whitford, Philippa (Central Ayrshire)
 Whittaker, Craig (Calder Valley)
 Whittingdale, Rt Hon. John Flasby Lawrance (Maldon)
 Wigg, William David (North Herefordshire)
 Williams, Alun Craig (Cardiff North)
 Williams, Hywel (Arfon)
 Williams, Mark Fraser (Ceredigion)
 Williamson, Rt Hon. Gavin Alexander (South Staffordshire)
 Wilson, Corrairie (Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock)
 Wilson, Philip (Sedgefield)
 Wilson, Robert Owen Biggs (Reading East)
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 Wishart, Peter (Perth and North Perthshire)
 Wollaston, Sarah James (Totnes)
 Wood, Michael Jon (Dudley South)
 Woodcock, John Zak (Barrow and Furness)
 Wragg, William Peter (Hazel Grove)
 Wright, Iain David (Hartlepool)
 Wright, Rt Hon. Jeremy Paul (Kenilworth and Southam)

Z

Zahawi, Nadhim (Stratford-on-Avon)
 Zeichner, Daniel Stephen (Cambridge)

HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

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(FORMED BY THE RT HON. DAVID CAMERON, MP, MAY 2015)

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SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION AND MINISTER FOR WOMEN AND EQUALITIES—The Rt Hon. Nicky Morgan, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT—The Rt Hon. Justine Greening, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE—The Rt Hon. Amber Rudd, MP
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LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS AND LORD PRIVY SEAL—The Rt. Hon. Baroness Stowell of Beeston, MBE

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Joseph Johnson, MP (Minister for Universities and Science)

Edward Vaizey (Minister for Culture and the Digital Economy) §

Lord Price (Minister for Trade and Investment) §

Nick Boles, MP (Minister for Skills) §

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George Freeman §

Baroness Neville-Rolfe, DBE, CMG §

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MINISTER FOR THE CABINET OFFICE AND PAYMASTER GENERAL—The Rt Hon. Matthew Hancock, MP

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Rob Wilson, MP (Minister for Civil Society)

John Penrose, MP §

Lord Bridges of Headley

MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO—

The Rt Hon. Robert Halfon, MP

Communities and Local Government—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Greg Clark, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

The Rt Hon. Mark Francois, MP (Minister for Communities and Resilience)

Brandon Lewis, MP (Minister for Housing and Planning)

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Marcus Jones, MP

James Wharton, MP

Richard Harrington (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Refugees) §

Baroness Williams of Trafford

Culture, Media and Sport—

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 MINISTER FOR CULTURE AND THE DIGITAL ECONOMY—Edward Vaizey, MP §
 PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
 Tracey Crouch, MP
 The Rt Hon. David Evennett, MP
 Baroness Neville-Rolfe, DBE, CMG §
 Baroness Shields (Minister for Internet Safety and Security)

Defence—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Michael Fallon, MP
 MINISTERS OF STATE—
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 Philip Dunne, MP (Minister for Defence Procurement)
 The Rt Hon. Earl Howe
 PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
 Mark Lancaster, MP
 Julian Brazier, MP

Education—

SECRETARY OF STATE AND MINISTER FOR WOMEN AND EQUALITIES—The Rt Hon. Nicky Morgan, MP
 MINISTERS OF STATE—
 Nick Boles, MP (Minister for Skills) §
 Nick Gibb, MP (Minister for Schools)
 Edward Timpson, MP (Minister for Children and Families)
 PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
 Sam Gyimah, MP
 Lord Nash
 PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WOMEN AND EQUALITIES AND FAMILY JUSTICE—Caroline Dinenage, MP §

Energy and Climate Change—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Amber Rudd, MP
 MINISTER OF STATE—Andrea Leadsom, MP
 PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth

Environment, Food and Rural Affairs—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Elizabeth Truss, MP
 MINISTER OF STATE—George Eustice, MP
 PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Rory Stewart, MP

Foreign and Commonwealth Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Philip Hammond, MP
 MINISTERS OF STATE—
 The Rt Hon. David Lidington, MP (Minister for Europe)
 The Rt Hon. Hugo Swire, MP
 Lord Price (Minister for Trade and Investment) §
 The Rt Hon. Baroness Anelay of St Johns, DBE
 PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
 James Duddridge, MP
 Tobias Ellwood, MP

Health—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Jeremy Hunt, MP
 MINISTER FOR COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL CARE—The Rt Hon. Alistair Burt, MP
 PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
 Ben Gummer, MP
 Jane Ellison, MP
 George Freeman, MP (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Life Sciences) §
 Lord Prior of Brampton

Home Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Theresa May, MP
 MINISTERS OF STATE—
 The Rt Hon. Mike Penning, MP (Minister for Policing, Crime and Criminal Justice) §
 The Rt Hon. John Hayes, MP—(Minister for Security)
 The Rt Hon. James Brokenshire, MP (Minister for Immigration)

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Karen Bradley, MP
 Richard Harrington (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Refugees) §
 Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon §

International Development—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Justine Greening, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

The Rt. Hon. Desmond Swayne, MP

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Richard Harrington, MP (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Refugees) §
 Nick Hurd, MP
 Baroness Verma

Justice—

LORD CHANCELLOR AND SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Michael Gove, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

The Rt Hon. Mike Penning, MP (Minister for Policing, Crime and Criminal Justice) §
 Lord Faulks, QC (Minister for Civil Justice)

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Caroline Dinenage, MP (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Women and Equalities and Family Justice) §
 Dominic Raab, MP
 Shailesh Vara, MP §
 Andrew Selous, MP §

Law Officers—

ATTORNEY GENERAL—The Rt Hon. Jeremy Wright, QC, MP

SOLICITOR GENERAL—Robert Buckland, QC, MP

Leader of the House of Commons—

LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—The Rt Hon. Chris Grayling, MP

DEPUTY LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—Thérèse Coffey, MP

Northern Ireland—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Theresa Villiers, MP

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Ben Wallace, MP

Scotland Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. David Mundell, MP

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Lord Dunlop

Transport—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Patrick McLoughlin, MP

MINISTER OF STATE—Robert Goodwill

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Claire Perry, MP

Andrew Jones, MP

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon §

Treasury—

PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—The Rt Hon. David Cameron, MP

FIRST SECRETARY OF STATE AND CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—The Rt Hon. George Osborne, MP

CHIEF SECRETARY—The Rt Hon. Greg Hands, MP

FINANCIAL SECRETARY—David Gauke, MP

EXCHEQUER SECRETARY—Damian Hinds, MP

ECONOMIC SECRETARY—Harriett Baldwin, MP

COMMERCIAL SECRETARY—Lord O'Neill of Gatley

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY—The Rt Hon. Mark Harper, MP

LORDS COMMISSIONERS—

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John Penrose, MP §

Charlie Elphicke, MP

Mel Stride, MP

George Hollingbery, MP

Guto Bebb, MP §

ASSISTANT WHIPS—

Andrew Selous, MP §
 Guy Opperman, MP
 Julian Smith, MP
 Margot James, MP
 Sarah Newton, MP
 Stephen Barclay, MP
 Simon Kirby, MP
 Jackie Doyle-Price, MP

Wales Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Alun Cairns, MP

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Guto Bebb, MP §
 Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth §

Work and Pensions—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Stephen Crabb, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

The Rt Hon. Priti Patel, MP (Minister for Employment)
 The Rt Hon. Lord Freud (Minister for Welfare Reform)
 Baroness Altmann (Minister for Pensions)

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Justin Tomlinson, MP (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Disabled People)
 Shailesh Vara, MP §

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LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS AND LORD PRIVY SEAL—The Rt. Hon. Baroness Stowell of Beeston, MBE

DEPUTY LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—The Rt Hon. Earl Howe

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LORD STEWARD—The Earl of Dalhousie

MASTER OF THE HORSE—Lord Vestey, KCVO

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LORDS IN WAITING—Lord Ashton of Hyde, Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth §, Viscount Younger of Leckie, The Earl of Courtown

§ *Members of the Government listed under more than one Department*

SECOND CHURCH ESTATES COMMISSIONER, REPRESENTING CHURCH COMMISSIONERS—The Rt. Hon. Caroline Spelman, MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

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SECOND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Natascha Engel, MP

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SECRETARY—Matthew Hamlyn

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ASSISTANT SECRETARY—Helen Wood

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SECRETARY OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE—Lloyd Owen

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 SPEAKER'S CHAPLAIN—Rev. Rose Hudson-Wilkin

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PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSIONER FOR STANDARDS—Kathryn Hudson
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 FINANCE: CLERK—Helen Wood

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 PRINCIPAL CONSTRUCTION SAFETY ADVISER—Greg Brown

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 DEPUTY NATIONAL PARLIAMENT REPRESENTATIVE, BRUSSELS—Fraser McIntosh

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OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT OF THE
UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 18 MAY 2015]

SIXTY-FIFTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES

VOLUME 611

FIRST VOLUME OF SESSION 2016-2017

House of Commons

Wednesday 18 May 2016

*The House met at twenty-five minutes past
Eleven o'clock*

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

MESSAGE TO ATTEND HER MAJESTY

*Message to attend Her Majesty delivered by the Gentleman
Usher of the Black Rod.*

*The Speaker, with the House, went up to attend Her
Majesty; on their return, the Speaker suspended the
sitting.*

Speaker's Statement

2.30 pm

Mr Speaker: The House has directed the Speaker to make a statement at the beginning of each Session about the duties and responsibilities of hon. Members.

I begin by reminding Members of their duty to observe the code of conduct agreed by the House, and to behave with civility and fairness in all their dealings. The House asserts its privilege of freedom of speech. It is there to ensure that our constituents can be represented by us without fear or favour. It is an obligation upon us all to exercise that privilege responsibly. It is enjoyed by Members of Parliament only in their work in this House: as private individuals we are equal under the

law with those whom we represent. In our proceedings, every Member should be heard courteously, whatever their views.

Parliament should be open to those whom it represents. We should seek to explain its work to those who elect us, and make them welcome here. The security of this building and those who work and visit here depends upon all of us. We have a duty to be vigilant, and to assist those whose job it is to maintain this place as a safe place to work.

In this new Session of Parliament, I will be enforcing more closely the convention of Ministers taking up to 10 minutes when delivering an oral statement to the House. The official Opposition spokesperson may make a contribution of up to five minutes, and the third party spokesperson a maximum of two minutes. For urgent questions, the Minister may speak for up to three minutes; the person asking the urgent question and the official spokesperson, where different, a maximum of two minutes each; and the third party spokesperson a maximum of one minute. Members wishing to take part in statements, urgent questions and business questions must be in the Chamber, in accordance with very long-established convention, before they begin, and colleagues should not expect to be called to ask a question if they are not in their place as the statement, the urgent question or business questions begins.

Before moving to the first business of the new Parliament, I would like to express my very best wishes for the 2016-17 Session to all hon. Members and all those who work here.

OUTLAWRIES BILL

*A Bill for the more effectual preventing Clandestine
Outlawries was read the First time, and ordered to be read
a Second time.*

Queen's Speech

Mr Speaker: I have to acquaint the House that this House has this day attended Her Majesty in the House of Peers, and that Her Majesty was pleased to make a Most Gracious Speech from the Throne to both Houses of Parliament, of which I have, for greater accuracy, obtained a copy.

I shall direct that the terms of the speech be printed in the Votes and Proceedings. Copies are already available in the Vote Office.

The Gracious Speech was as follows:

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons

My Government will use the opportunity of a strengthening economy to deliver security for working people, to increase life chances for the most disadvantaged and to strengthen national defences.

My Ministers will continue to bring the public finances under control so that Britain lives within its means, and to move to a higher wage and lower welfare economy where work is rewarded.

To support the economic recovery, and to create jobs and more apprenticeships, legislation will be introduced to ensure Britain has the infrastructure that businesses need to grow.

Measures will be brought forward to create the right for every household to access high speed broadband.

Legislation will be introduced to improve Britain's competitiveness and make the United Kingdom a world leader in the digital economy.

My Ministers will ensure the United Kingdom is at the forefront of technology for new forms of transport, including autonomous and electric vehicles.

To spread economic prosperity, my Government will continue to support the development of a Northern Powerhouse.

In England, further powers will be devolved to directly elected mayors, including powers governing local bus services.

Legislation will also allow local authorities to retain business rates, giving them more freedom to invest in local communities.

My Government will support aspiration and promote home ownership through its commitment to build a million new homes.

Following last week's Anti-Corruption Summit in London, legislation will be introduced to tackle corruption, money laundering and tax evasion.

My Government will continue work to deliver NHS services over seven days of the week in England. Legislation will be introduced to ensure that overseas visitors pay for the health treatment they receive at public expense.

New legislation will be introduced to tackle some of the deepest social problems in society, and improve life chances.

A Bill will be introduced to ensure that children can be adopted by new families without delay, improve the standard of social work and opportunities for young people in care in England.

To tackle poverty and the causes of deprivation, including family instability, addiction and debt, my Government will introduce new indicators for measuring life chances. Legislation will be introduced to establish a soft drinks industry levy to help tackle childhood obesity.

Measures will be introduced to help the lowest-income families save, through a new Help to Save scheme, and to create a Lifetime ISA to help young people save for the long-term.

My Government will continue to reform public services so they help the hardest-to-reach.

A Bill will be brought forward to lay foundations for educational excellence in all schools, giving every child the best start in life. There will also be a fairer balance between schools, through the National Funding Formula.

To ensure that more people have the opportunity to further their education, legislation will be introduced to support the establishment of new universities and to promote choice and competition across the higher education sector.

My Government will legislate to reform prisons and courts to give individuals a second chance.

Prison Governors will be given unprecedented freedom and they will be able to ensure prisoners receive better education. Old and inefficient prisons will be closed and new institutions built where prisoners can be put more effectively to work.

Action will also be taken to ensure better mental health provision for individuals in the criminal justice system.

My Government will continue to work to bring communities together and strengthen society.

Legislation will be introduced to prevent radicalisation, tackle extremism in all its forms, and promote community integration.

National Citizen Service will be placed on a permanent statutory footing.

My Government will continue to safeguard national security.

My Ministers will invest in Britain's armed forces, honouring the military covenant and meeting the NATO commitment to spend two per cent of national income on defence.

They will also act to secure the long-term future of Britain's nuclear deterrent.

My Government will continue to play a leading role in world affairs, using its global presence to tackle climate change and address major international security, economic and humanitarian challenges.

My Government will continue to work to resolve the conflict in Ukraine. It will play a leading role in the campaign against Da'esh and to support international efforts to bring peace to Syria through a lasting political settlement.

Britain's commitment on international development spending will also be honoured, helping to deliver global stability, support the Sustainable Development Goals and prevent new threats to national security.

Prince Philip and I look forward to welcoming His Excellency the President of Colombia on a State Visit in November.

My Government will continue with legislation to modernise the law governing the use and oversight of investigatory powers by law enforcement, security and intelligence agencies.

Legislation will strengthen the capability and accountability of the police service in England and Wales.

My Government will hold a referendum on membership of the European Union. Proposals will be brought forward for a British Bill of Rights.

My Ministers will uphold the sovereignty of Parliament and the primacy of the House of Commons.

My Government will continue to work in cooperation with the devolved administrations to implement the extensive new powers in the Scotland Act and establish a strong and lasting devolution settlement in Wales. My Government will work in Northern Ireland to secure further progress in implementing the Stormont House and Fresh Start Agreements.

Members of the House of Commons

Estimates for the public services will be laid before you.

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons

Other measures will be laid before you.

I pray that the blessing of Almighty God may rest upon your counsels.

Debate on the Address

[1ST DAY]

Mr Speaker: Before I call the mover and seconder of the Address, I can inform the House of the proposed subjects for the remaining days of debate on the Loyal Address: Thursday 19 May—transport and local infrastructure; Monday 23 May—defending public services; Tuesday 24 May—Europe, human rights and keeping people safe at home and abroad; Wednesday 25 May—education, skills and training; Thursday 26 May—economy and work. I shall first call Mrs Caroline Spelman to move, and then Dr Phillip Lee to second, the Address.

2.35 pm

Mrs Caroline Spelman (Meriden) (Con): I beg to move,

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

Most Gracious Sovereign,

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

It is an honour to be asked to propose the Loyal Address, especially in Her Majesty's 90th year. When I was asked to see the Chief Whip, my first thought was: what have I done? The relief in discovering that it was for a good reason was followed almost immediately by the angst of how to do it well. I looked carefully at how my right hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Sir Simon Burns) tackled it last year. Unfortunately, he cannot be with us today as he has to attend a funeral. We all now know of his unswerving admiration for Hillary Clinton. We have shared with him the anxieties of the primaries, so I put all colleagues on alert that if they are standing next to him when the news of the presidential election comes through, be prepared to provide moral support whichever way it goes, but especially should Hillary be trumped.

First, may I say to my constituents in Meriden how grateful I am to them for electing me to Parliament? I am always proud to represent them. A lot has changed since my first day here 19 years ago. I was often the only woman in meetings. I was one of very few women around the Cabinet table with school-age children. This could prove awkward, such as at the shadow Cabinet meeting interrupted by the news that one of my sons had fallen off a drainpipe at school.

In 1997, only 18% of MPs were women. This has now risen to a total of almost 30%—not yet parity, but we are heading in the right direction. It has also been a great privilege to help mentor newcomers, and in return I have been especially grateful to Baroness Shephard for her mentoring down the years.

The Chamber now looks more like the electorate at large. *[Interruption.]* On all sides! Better decisions are made when those who make them are more diverse. For example, when assessing the priorities for public transport, men rate reliability and cost as the most important factors, but women put something else first—their personal safety. Put the two perspectives together and a better outcome is achieved.

[Mrs Caroline Spelman]

I hope that by now the nearly new Members are beginning to make friends in all parties and discover that they can have allies across the Floor. In fact, the work of Parliament is often enhanced by the friendships that transcend party lines. When I was party chairman, the right hon. Member for Birkenhead (Frank Field) asked me to organise a debate with him on the subject of dying well, as we each had a parent with a poor experience of that in hospital. The Whips did not bat an eyelid at that. The only objection was to the title: dying was considered far too controversial, and we had to call it end-of-life care.

I also worked with the right hon. Gentleman on the Modern Slavery Bill, as we both served on the Joint Committee of both Houses. If ever there was an outstanding example of a cross-party approach to tackling a terrible injustice, this is it. The Home Secretary deserves the credit for securing a piece of landmark legislation, which is a world first in this area. The legal expertise of Baroness Butler-Sloss forced us all to think very hard how to get this absolutely right, and I felt that it was my red letter day when the noble Lady uttered these magic words to me: “I think the right hon. Lady has a point.”

I have been in a cross-party prayer fellowship all the time I have been here. It consists of two Conservative MPs, two Labour MPs, one Liberal MP and one Democratic Unionist MP. We could not have done that better by using proportional representation if we had tried. We and our families met up in each other’s constituencies, and my children were initially perplexed by the fraternisation until I explained that it was like when your friend supports Aston Villa and you support Coventry: you think he is misguided, but you are still friends.

We will shortly face a big decision about our membership of the EU. Whichever way the vote goes, we will need to ensure good relations with our neighbours. I commend to the House the recent concert by the Parliament Choir in Paris to show our solidarity with the people of France after the terrorist attacks last year. There are often opportunities for soft diplomacy, and we should take them. My hon. Friend the Member for Harwich and North Essex (Mr Jenkin) and I may not see eye to eye on Europe, but his rich baritone and my alto voice have produced delightful harmony.

I welcome the clear references in the Gracious Speech to the life chances agenda, and I am pleased that this is to be a key theme in the year ahead. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr Duncan Smith) pioneered this approach, and the new Secretary of State for Work and Pensions has the life experience and the ability to drive it forward. My constituency has a council estate of nearly 40,000 people, and I have seen how the life chances of my constituents have improved through the regeneration of housing and schools by Solihull Council. When I took a Minister on a visit there recently, two tenants emerged from one of our 37 refurbished tower blocks to express their delight that their energy bills had halved as a result of the new energy-saving features. The Minister turned to me and asked, “How much did you pay them to say that, Caroline?”

Buildings can be regenerated but it is the life chances of the human beings within them that really make the difference, so I am delighted that so many of our young

people are getting apprenticeships as engineers, including many young women, in the great tradition of those women who built the Spitfires in the last world war. All of this is made possible by the renaissance of manufacturing and the economic recovery that we have seen.

Parts of my constituency are rural, and despite being at the very centre of England, we have mobile and broadband not spots, so I am glad to hear that a renewed effort is being made to address the digital divide. With my Church Estates Commissioner’s hat on, may I remind the Government of the offer of church spires and towers to help to crack this problem? They may bring us closer to God, but a proper signal can feel like heaven on earth to those who have had none.

Prison reform is well overdue. We know that reoffending can be dramatically cut with the right kind of help. The Justice Secretary and the Education Secretary know how important it is to improve the life chances of school children, as far too many prison inmates are unable to read and write. I am glad that the Justice Secretary is now using his reforming zeal to give prisoners a better chance to turn their lives around. I have witnessed at first hand how this can be achieved. I helped to set up a charity called Welcome to tackle drug and alcohol abuse and to get people free of addiction and into work. We started with just one employee in a community hall; now we employ more than 20 and we do the triage for the NHS in our borough of 200,000 people. Some of the best advocates are our volunteers who have achieved this themselves and are role models for others.

No party has a monopoly on compassion, and Members on both sides of the House have sought to help the vulnerable. On entering politics, it was my personal resolution to speak for those who were unable to speak for themselves. Few people in our country are more vulnerable than a child leaving care. The state has not often proved to be a great parent, and knowing how hard it is to be a parent, we should not be surprised. But I take my hat off in particular to the parents who adopt. We need more parents to come forward to foster and adopt, so I welcome the Government’s intention to speed up adoption—indeed, this was the objective of my private Member’s Bill on the subject—but children can still be left too long in care and the damage can be irreparable. So let us improve the follow-up care and keep it going until a young adult is fully fledged. Eighteen may be the notional age of adulthood, but, in my experience, it takes a good few more years of parental support before young adults’ wings can take life’s turbulence.

New measures are clearly needed to prevent sections of society feeling alienated, but I appeal to the Government not to take a hammer to crack a nut. Good role models and moderate voices are what are needed, and I have high expectations of the new Mayor of London, who is not only an excellent cricketer, as the Lords and Commons cricket team will testify, but uniquely well placed to help. Good luck, Sadiq—no pressure!

Let me return to my opening theme of making friends across the House. Over the years, there have been a good few Members whom I have sought to encourage after they had suffered setbacks in their parliamentary careers. My key piece of advice has been, “Don’t give up! Get stuck back in and fight for the causes you know and care about, and this House will ultimately respect you for it.” May I therefore say a heartfelt thank you for the way the House has helped me rediscover the fulfilment

of being an elected Member of this mother of all Parliaments. As long as you have the chance to make a difference, there is no such thing as having had your day. We are elected to change things for the better and to take up the issues that confront us, so seize the day! I commend the motion to the House.

2.46 pm

Dr Phillip Lee (Bracknell) (Con): It is a privilege to second the Loyal Address, and I am honoured to follow my right hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Mrs Spelman) this afternoon. This is not the first time I have done so. Among her many achievements, one of her proudest must be that she is captain of the parliamentary ski team, of which I am a junior member. In that role she has responsibility for leading a team of large egos and hidden talent, some with little sense of balance or direction, navigating up peaks and down slippery slopes. I cannot imagine where she gained the experience, but such skills make her an extremely valuable member of this Chamber and of her party.

I was surprised to have been given the privilege of seconding the Loyal Address this afternoon. I am not, for example, the son of a bus driver, although my father did once drive a milk float in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr Baker). Just as an aside, why is it always the case that we have to wait so long for these sons of bus drivers, and then two come along at once?

It might be my education. I am, like the Leader of the Opposition, an ex-grammar school boy and like him, I gather, I rather screwed up my A-levels, so perhaps there is hope for me yet. Or it might be my extensive experience of PR before entering politics. As the House knows, I am a practising doctor. Unfortunately, in a medical context, PR does not stand for public relations, but is shorthand for the type of examination that involves putting on rubber gloves, applying gel and asking a man to cough. May I give my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister a little advice? If, in the future, he finds himself speaking at a medical profession dinner, under no circumstances should he tell the audience that in his life before politics he was into PR, and that he found the work very stimulating.

Many of my predecessors in this role have had a reputation for humour, so I think that it was courageous of the PM to ask a doctor to second the Loyal Address. As the House can already tell, medical humour is a famously acquired taste, and it would be all too easy to share some of the stories of which every doctor has an infinite supply—many may not be appropriate for this place and its refined audience. However, I can perhaps report on the lady who complained of, as she put it, a history of “erotic” bowels. I resisted the temptation to ask whether her erotic symptoms were erratic in nature. Or the elderly man who said that his secret for looking so healthy was to do Kama Sutra exercises every morning, only to be corrected by his wife: “Gareth, I think you mean Tai Chi!” If colleagues do not think that I deliver this speech very well today, just be grateful that we are not holding this debate at a weekend, when I understand from some that doctors do not perform as well.

I had hoped that my medical background would be an advantage in politics, but I have been disappointed. My first disappointment came when I stood for election

as the Conservative party’s candidate in Blaenau Gwent. I am not sure that the current hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Nick Smith) is with us today, but I am sure he would agree that sporting a blue rosette outside the Tredegar Kwik Save takes a certain type of character: mostly delusional, and perhaps even masochistic. In fact, the president of my constituency association, Mr Rob Stanton, was elected to Wokingham Borough Council with more votes than I received at that election. However, I was able to comfort myself with the fact that my modest 816 votes nevertheless represented the biggest swing to the Conservative party of any candidate in Wales that night. In retrospect, I should have taken more note of the lady in Abertillery market who, when I asked her why she supported Labour, replied, “Don’t you get complicated with me!”

Delivering this speech is, of course, really an honour for the constituency of Bracknell, which I am privileged to represent. It is a particular honour in this year of Her Majesty’s 90th birthday. The constituency has long-standing royal links. It is proud to host the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, which celebrated its bicentenary in 2012 and has trained successive generations of British, Commonwealth and international officers serving in Her Majesty’s Army and elsewhere around the world. My constituents also enjoy access to the extensive woodland of Swinley forest, which is wonderfully maintained by the Crown Estate. With its vibrant economy and town centre regeneration, the Bracknell constituency has a very bright future.

This is the 63rd Gracious Speech that Her Majesty has given since her accession to the throne. On this occasion, it is apt to look back to Her Majesty’s first Gracious Speech and at the changes that there have been since. The preservation of peace was the first emphasis in 1952. Our country was still recovering from war. The grandfather of my right hon. Friend the Member for Mid Sussex (Sir Nicholas Soames) was Prime Minister. The nationalisation of iron and steel was the subject of heated debate. Slums had to be cleared and people housed. This led to the creation of new towns, of which Bracknell was one. Communicable diseases such as tuberculosis challenged our young health service. Abroad, closer unions were foreseen to cement the ties on which peace depended: with the United States of America, with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, with the Commonwealth and with a recovering Europe.

The vision of the post-war political generation was a big vision: of a country that would never again suffer the insecurity and hardship experienced by those who had to pick up arms and fight for our existence; of every person being able to get a chance in life—of health, education and employment; and of a society that is fair, just and free, in which freedoms are earned because we value our country, our environment, our world, and in which rights are balanced by responsibilities, for each other and for ourselves; and, most importantly, to prepare for the future. Variations of this vision have guided successive Governments ever since, with varying degrees of success.

The generation Her Majesty addressed in 1952 had fought for that vision, displaying a deep consciousness throughout our nation that individual lives are fleeting: that we must take care of the world we inherit—conserve it—so that we pass something better to our children;

[Dr Phillip Lee]

that we achieve more by coming together with our neighbours, with our friends and with our former enemies by respecting our riches, and each other; and that humanity is the vital bond without which our society, globally and nationally, our communities and our families will disintegrate.

On a personal level, I am humbled by the experiences of that wartime generation. My grandfather was under fire at the age of 20, in the tail end of a Halifax bomber. I also recall caring for an 89-year-old Polish patient who was short of breath and experiencing angina. He had taken the time to put on a tie and a suit adorned with military ribbons, and he apologised for taking up my time. I asked him about his military experience. He told me that his village in eastern Poland had been overrun by the Soviets in 1939. He was deported to a Siberian work camp and, in his own words, wore the same socks for two years. He was handed over to the British in 1942 in Baghdad, and fought with Montgomery's 8th Army across north Africa and up the spine of Italy via Monte Cassino. When reflecting on his heroic story, I humbly ask whether my generation would display the same values, the same stoicism, the same modesty, the same courage, and the same respect for others, and I recall his loyalty to his adopted country.

The closest I have come to fighting has been as a doctor battling ageing, obesity and the challenges of cultural dislocation. In the course of Her Majesty's reign, life expectancy has increased by a decade. The percentage of people aged over 85 has grown by a factor of five. The world's population has virtually trebled, and our own has gone up by a third. The proportion of our population of foreign birth has more than trebled, albeit from a low base. It is clear that we must not only treat the symptoms of the challenges that come with such marked change, but strive to cure their causes. That is why this Government's commitment to helping to improve the life chances of those who have the misfortune to be born or raised in circumstances over which they have no control is admirable and right.

The generation Her Majesty addresses today must rediscover the values of the past to face an ever-accelerating pace of change. It is a world that is more connected and more conscious of its differences, but also more conscious of what we have in common than ever before. This time, we have the opportunity to rediscover those values peacefully, and the important legislation outlined in this Gracious Speech will help us to do so. The challenge of overcoming extremism without compromising our humanity is one that deserves the support of the whole House. My right hon. and good Friend the Home Secretary knows that dealing with our society's failure to integrate some communities will be integral.

The space industry received the attention it deserves as one of Britain's most successful industries with a power to inspire that is unmatched. I am sure that all members of the previous Parliament recall that I mentioned the UK space industry in my maiden speech in 2010. As British astronaut Tim Peake was a graduate of Sandhurst, I am shamelessly going to claim him as having been educated in my constituency. As such, I am concerned for his welfare. Tim is due back from the international space station just before the EU referendum vote, but if he is slightly delayed, and the country votes to leave in

June, he need not worry about getting home, since the European Space Agency sits outside the European Union. Seriously, though, the Government's support of the space industry will help to secure Britain as a globally recognised centre for high technology, whether we are inside or outside the European Union.

Finally, some hon. Members will know that I have kept my own counsel on June's big European event, but the time is fast approaching when I feel I should make my position clear, if only to deal with the alarming possibility that as time moves on, I and other hon. Members who have taken a similar approach will have to deal with the advances of two charming men, one with blond hair and one with spectacles, approaching us in the Members' Lobby to ask when we are coming out. I can see no good reason why we should exit—at least not before the semi-finals, and preferably not after the pain of extra time and a penalty shoot-out.

Keeping up with change is a tough enough job for any Government. Conservative Governments do not just want to keep up; they want to do better. That is why I am not only privileged to represent the good people of the Bracknell constituency, but proud to second this motion on the Gracious Speech.

3.1 pm

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab): I am pleased that we have dispensed with the Outlawries Bill, which will ensure that we have civility and freedom of speech in this Chamber. I intend to adhere to the civility part of it; it is up to others to decide on the freedom of speech.

July will mark the centenary of the battle of the Somme, an episode of needless carnage and horror. This week marked the centenary of the Sykes-Picot agreement, in which Britain and France divided up the Ottoman empire into spheres of influence, arbitrarily establishing borders that have been the cause of many conflicts ever since. Those two events should remind us in this House of two things: first, the decisions that we take have consequences, and secondly, it is our armed forces that face the consequences of failed foreign and military policy. Our duty to our armed forces is to avoid the political mistakes that lead to their being sent unnecessarily into harm's way. As the hon. Member for Bracknell (Dr Lee) pointed out, the effects of war go on for the whole lifetime of those who take part in it.

By tradition, at the beginning of each parliamentary Session, we commemorate the Members of the House we have lost in the last year. In October, we lost Michael Meacher. He was, as all who met him knew, a decent, hard-working, passionate and profound man. He represented his constituency with diligence and distinction for 45 years. He was a brilliant Environment Minister, a lifelong campaigner against injustice and poverty, and a brilliant champion of the rights of this House and of Parliament. We remember Michael for all those things.

Harry Harpham sadly had only a few months to serve this House. He represented his constituency and the concerns of the steel industry in Sheffield with incredible diligence. My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough (Gill Furniss), who now represents the constituency, told me at his passing:

"We have admired the bravery and courage he showed in his life, which was formed during the miners' strike and carried him forward for the rest of his life."

Harry and Michael were incredibly decent and honourable men who were absolutely dedicated to serving their communities and standing up for strong socialist principles. We commemorate them both.

I congratulate the mover and seconder of the Queen's Speech motion. It is a job I have never had to do myself—it is one of those powers of patronage. First, I congratulate the right hon. Member for Meriden (Mrs Spelman) on her excellent speech, which I attribute to the excellent training she received early in her career. It is possible that many members of her own party are unaware that sister Spelman, or comrade Spelman, was, like me, a full-time union official before entering Parliament. While industrial strife raged across the country during the early 1980s—I was part of it—[HON. MEMBERS: "Was?"] They are just too fast, Mr Speaker. While that was happening, the right hon. Lady was travelling the whole country defending sugar beet workers from disreputable and exploitative bosses. At least, that is what I think the National Farmers Union was doing at that time. Alas, time changes things, and she and I now sing from a slightly different hymn sheet.

Talking of which, I understand that the right hon. Lady has been a stalwart of the parliamentary choir for many years. Perhaps she will find time to give me some singing lessons. Given her background, perhaps together we could sing "The Red Flag" as a duet. [AN HON. MEMBER: "Or the national anthem."] We will sing from the widest hymn sheet, don't you worry.

The right hon. Lady has an excellent reputation for her outstanding work in international development, both in opposition and then in government. She steered her party—some might ungraciously say kicking and screaming—into delivering the pledge that 0.7% of our GDP would be spent on international aid. I pay a huge tribute to her for the way in which she championed the rights of women and young girls in the developing world. She stood up for their needs and their rights and ensured that our aid budget, correctly, went disproportionately to help them, and I thank her for that.

I think that underneath it all, the right hon. Lady is a bit of a closet radical, actually—so we will talk later. After some research, I can exclusively reveal to the House the roots of her radicalism. Her constituency includes the town of Dorridge, and the waters of Dorridge are very important. In the early 18th century—long before she was elected, I should add—her constituency was a nest of rebellion and sedition, led by a local landowner, George Frederick Muntz. A refugee, Muntz was one of the founders of the Birmingham Political Union, an organisation that was pivotal in the introduction of the 1832 Reform Act. The union later became part of the Chartist movement, to which we trace the origins of socialism in this country and the Labour party. Naturally, I hugely admire the Birmingham Political Union for what it did.

A member of the parliamentary choir, the right hon. Member for Meriden was in fine voice today, and I am sure the whole House will join me in thanking her for her speech.

I turn to the seconder of the Loyal Address, the hon. Member for Bracknell. Before joining the House, he worked as a doctor. Today, he has lanced the myth that doctors are bad communicators. In his maiden speech, he said:

"I am often asked why I...moved away from being a doctor to being a Member of Parliament. To my mind, people who come in here should want to make this country a better place."—[*Official Report*, 16 June 2010; Vol. 511, c. 913.]

The hon. Gentleman and I come from absolutely opposite sides of the political spectrum, but we are both sincere in sharing the same goal: to make our country a better place for those who live here.

Researching the hon. Gentleman's career, I thought I had uncovered yet more evidence of the deep fractures that exist within the Government today. I was informed that he was a leading member of an organisation known as the Grumblers. However, we have been into this in some detail, and further research indicated that this was not another group of malcontents on the Government Back Benches—that is already full—but a cricket club of which he would have us believe he is a leading light. I did not want to leave any of that research undone, so I approached the club to get a sense of the hon. Gentleman's character before making today's speech. [*Laughter.*] Yes, it's definitely coming.

The House will be eternally grateful for the words of Mr Anton Joiner, the chairman of the Old Grumblers cricket club, for his insightful and helpful response to my request. If I may quote from Mr Joiner's letter, the House will be all the better informed. He wrote:

"Dear Sir,

We are glad you have established contact with our team, as we are desperately seeking recovery of several seasons' overdue match fees by our hon. Friend. Please communicate our willingness to waive penalty interest in return for prompt payment."

The letter goes on:

"In an undistinguished and tragically all too long career as a top order batsman, the good doctor managed an average of just 11.2 runs with the bat. His efforts with the ball yielded a solitary wicket—that of a French farmer's wife during a tour match in Brittany in 2008."

The hon. Gentleman's generosity knew no bounds:

"As a Doctor, Mr Lee advised on numerous sporting injuries to club players. The misdiagnosis of many led to a string of unnecessary early retirements and an acute player availability crisis, from which the team has only recently recovered.

As Captain of the Old Grumblers Cricket Club, I rarely had to handle as obstinate and disruptive a character as the Doctor, who stubbornly refused to stand in any conventional field placement and very openly demonstrated a disdain for team sport, command structures... Presumably this led him to the logical career choice of Tory backbencher."

The letter concludes:

"Please pass on my regards...and the attached invoice."

I very much hope that the hon. Gentleman is a good sport as I understand that he is an equally distinguished rugby player, but those stories were beyond my research capabilities and must be saved for another occasion. I thank him for his more acceptable exploits in the House today.

The Opposition will judge the Government's legislative programme against three tests. Will it deliver a more equal society, an economy that works for everyone and a society in which there is opportunity for all? Sadly, it appears that many proposals in the Queen's Speech militate against those aims, as have the proposals in previous years. Still this Government do not seem to understand that cuts have consequences. When they cut adult social care, it has an impact on national health service accident and emergency departments. When they saddle young people with more debt, it impedes their

[Jeremy Corbyn]

ability to buy a home or start a family. When they fail to build housing and cap housing benefit, homelessness and the number of families in temporary accommodation increase. When they slash local authorities' budgets, leisure centres, libraries and children's centres close. When they close fire stations and cut firefighters' jobs, response times increase and more people are in danger of dying in fires.

This austerity is a political choice, not an economic necessity. It is a wrong choice for our country, made by a Government with the wrong priorities. Women have been hit hardest by the cuts. More than 80% of cuts fall disproportionately on women. As the Women's Budget Group has pointed out, all the cuts mean that opportunities for women are systematically reduced and diminished in our society. The Government are failing to deliver an economy that meets the needs and aspirations of the people who sent us here—a Government who are consistently failing to meet their own economic targets. They have failed on the deficit, failed on the debt, failed on productivity and failed to rebalance the economy.

Once again, the northern powerhouse was announced—if only the rhetoric matched the reality. In March we discovered that the northern powerhouse has 97% of its senior staff based in London—a northern powerhouse outsourced to the capital. For all the Chancellor's rhetoric, there has been systematic under-investment in the north, and only 1% of projects in the Government's infrastructure pipeline are currently in construction in the north-east.

Much could be said in a similar vein about housing. The Government claim to aspire to build 1 million new homes, but housebuilding has sunk to its lowest level since the 1920s. So out of touch are those on the Government Benches that they think that £450,000 is what people can afford for a starter home. The announcement today about Britain's digital infrastructure is welcome. Perhaps this time it will become a reality—I hope it does. Perhaps the Chancellor—sadly, he is not here today—is a convert to our fiscal rule. It is a rational rule, backed by leading economists, which allows for borrowing on capital spending.

I point out to the Prime Minister that whether on the northern powerhouse, building homes or investing in digital infrastructure, simply saying things does not make them happen. It takes commitment to fund them. This Government are failing to deliver even on their own proposals, although often that is for the better. The Prime Minister said two weeks ago:

“We are going to have academies for all, and it will be in the Queen's Speech”.—[*Official Report*, 27 April 2016; Vol. 608, c. 1423.]

Just a fortnight later, there is no sign of that. Parents, governors, pupils, teachers and headteachers will be relieved to get final confirmation today that the wrong-headed proposals to impose forced academisation have finally been dumped.

The Government have been forced to back down on a number of issues in recent months: on tax credits, the Saudi prison deal, police cuts, cuts to personal independence payments for disabled people, the solar tax, the tampon tax, freedom of information, Sunday trading, and aspects of the Trade Union Bill and the Housing and Planning Act 2016. To call that “disarray” would be generous, and that is without discussing the resultant black hole in the Government's finances.

Perhaps the most worrying proposal of all is the decision to try to redefine poverty and deprivation. Apparently, it is all about instability, addiction and debt—all things that can be blamed on individuals about whom Governments like to moralise. Well, no! It is about 1 million people in our country using food banks, record levels of in-work poverty and the fact that absolute child poverty, after housing costs, is up by half a million. Poverty is up in disabled households on the same basis. Homelessness has gone up every year since the Prime Minister took office, and 100,000 children spent last Christmas in temporary, insecure accommodation. The causes of that are cuts to welfare benefits, cuts to employment and support allowance, the bedroom tax, the benefit cap, wages being too low, insecure jobs, and housing—whether to rent or to buy—being too expensive. We will not tackle poverty by moving the goalposts. Poverty and inequality are collective failures of our society as a whole, not individual failures.

On current form, much of what Her Majesty announced today will not require her signature. I very much hope that the Government's proposals announced today to consign into ever deeper debt those seeking to learn will be rejected.

I hope there will be a cross-party consensus on one element of the Government's proposals—[*Interruption.*] The hon. Member of all people should understand what I am about to say. I am talking about the proposal to repeal the Human Rights Act, which was introduced at the very start of the Labour Government. It brought the European convention on human rights into British law, thus empowering British citizens and giving rights to everybody in our society. We will defend our Human Rights Act as we defend the human rights of everyone in this country, and indeed all those who benefit from the European convention on human rights.

I understand—this is quite bizarre—that the Home Secretary is the driving force behind tearing up the Human Rights Act and leaving the convention, which is strange because she has very strong European credentials. What it shows is this: whether we are in or out of the EU, the main obstacle holding back the people of this country is not the EU, but the Conservative Government—a Conservative Government who are displaying a very worrying authoritarian streak.

The primacy of the House of Commons is not in doubt. We are committed to replacing the House of Lords with a democratic Chamber, but we will scrutinise sceptically any proposals that seek to weaken the ability to hold the Government to account, as the other place rightly does. Democracy requires accountability for the decisions that are made.

The national health service is in record deficit, yet there is no legislation in the Queen's Speech to improve it. Perhaps the Prime Minister can belatedly adopt the central medical principle of first doing no harm. Unfortunately, pending legislation will affect the NHS—the decision last year to cut nurses' bursaries. Will the Prime Minister confirm that that decision will be put to the House and voted on in this Chamber? It is opposed by all the unions involved in the NHS and the royal colleges representing nurses and midwives.

The move to dissuade people from taking up nursing is all the more bizarre coming as it does at a time when the Government are planning to train nurses to take on more responsibilities from doctors.

We welcome the Government's proposals to support driverless cars in our society, but can they address a Secretary of State for Health who appears to be asleep at the wheel in control of the NHS?

With regard to the sugar tax, we have made it clear previously that we will look favourably on proposals to tackle childhood obesity.

We welcome the Government's U-turn on forced academisation.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Jeremy Corbyn: I will continue my speech, if I may, Mr Speaker.

As with schools, we would like to see all Ministers being good or even outstanding, but they need the freedom to listen to the public and the people who understand services best, so we look forward to scrutinising the surviving proposals in the Government's education Bill to ensure that they are better thought through. Just as we have opposed the increase in unqualified teachers in our classrooms, we hope that the Government will get to grips with the £800 million being spent annually on supply teachers because of the recruitment and retention crisis in schools. With school budgets scheduled—*[Interruption.]* We just agreed to behave with civility in this Chamber. Some Government Members have very short memories. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg (North East Somerset) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker, am I not right in thinking that it is a customary courtesy in this House for people, though they do not have to, to give way in speeches that last over 20 minutes?

Mr Speaker: The essence of the hon. Gentleman's point was encapsulated in that first sentence: customary, but it is not required. There is no obligation. Members may want the right hon. Gentleman to give way, but he is not obliged to do so. I gently say to the hon. Members for Winchester (Steve Brine) and for Sherwood (Mark Spencer) that they can have a go, but if the right hon. Gentleman does not want to give way they will not advance their cause by shouting. That, in itself, is uncivil, of which the hon. Member for North East Somerset (Mr Rees-Mogg) is never guilty.

Jeremy Corbyn: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

School budgets are scheduled to receive their biggest real-terms cut since the 1970s. Education is actually quite important in our society. The Government can therefore ill afford to be spending so much on supply teachers. We have to move away from agency Britain. We will look at the proposals for a national funding formula that would encourage the Government to look, for example, at the school meals and breakfast policies that have been introduced in Labour Wales, which help young people in Wales.

We welcome moves to speed up adoption. That is in the interests of both children and those families committed to adoption, but the priority has to always be the welfare and safety of the child. But at a time when social services and children's services are being slashed, we have to ask whether the funding will match that desire. We should also put on record—I am sure all of us can agree on this—our thanks to all those

families who foster, adopt and give children the very best lives they possibly can. They are heroes in our society.

Students today are in more debt than ever. I make it clear to the Prime Minister that he will not get any support from the Labour Benches on raising tuition fees. The Government are penalising students, announcing the abolition of maintenance grants last year and now announcing that fees will be raised even further. This is a tax on learning—as the Chancellor of the Exchequer called it in 2003—from a Government that cut taxes on capital gains. What message does that send about the economy they want to create? It is that wealth generates more wealth with minimal tax—that and effort and hard work land you in a lifetime of debt, with no support while you make that effort. What an insult to the aspirations of young people wanting an education. We are deeply concerned too about the implications of a free market, free-for-all in higher education.

The Government have committed to more apprenticeships. We welcome that if it means more high quality apprenticeships and if it inspires young women to become engineers and young men to become carers. Apprenticeships give opportunities to every young person in our society. But they should not be seen by any employer as a means of circumventing paying a decent wage, while offering little training. We all hear too many cases of that.

We will scrutinise carefully proposals to give prison governors more freedom. It seems the policies of this Government have been to give greater freedoms to prisoners. That is the consequence of overcrowding prisons and cutting one third of dedicated prison officer positions. We welcome proposals to give greater time for education and reform and to reduce reoffending rates. When I was a member of the Justice Committee, I visited young offender institutions in Denmark and Norway. Their approach works. *[Interruption.]* The prison crisis is one that does not require laughter to solve its problems. The approach adopted in those two Scandinavian countries requires more funding and more staff, but it has a very good effect on reoffending rates.

There is, equally, an urgent need to invest in the care of prisoners suffering from mental health conditions. The alarming rise in the number of prison suicides in recent years means that two prisoners every week are taking their own lives, which is a truly horrifying statistic but only part of the disarray in our prisons. Last year, emergency services were called out 26,600 times, or every 20 minutes on average, to incidents in UK prisons. The tide of violent attacks in prisons is rising and has to be addressed. That is the House's responsibility.

Mark Spencer (Sherwood) (Con) *rose*—

Jeremy Corbyn: No.

Many more of our public services are under threat. The Land Registry is threatened with privatisation—a move considered and then rejected in the last two Parliaments. Those Governments listened to the concerns of public and expert opinion. I hope and trust that this Government will consult and come to the same conclusion and that, rather than selling off the family silver, they will retain the Land Registry in public ownership and administration.

[Jeremy Corbyn]

We are very clear that the BBC is a valued national institution, but its success is anathema to this ideological Government. Labour will continue to stand up for the licence fee payer and will fight any further Government attacks on the BBC and its independence. Whether it is the NHS, good and outstanding schools, the east coast main line in public operation or the BBC, the Government just cannot stand the threat of a good example of popular, successful public services. We will stand up for them against the Government.

The Opposition have long highlighted the injustice of the unequal funding allocations to local authorities. I hope that a local government finance Bill will provide an opportunity to address the disgraceful situation in which the poorest areas, mainly in the inner cities of this country, suffer by far the greatest cuts to expenditure. The cuts imposed on local authorities have had a devastating impact on services for both young and old. Just this week, despite the protestations of some local residents, Oxfordshire Council, the Prime Minister's favourite county council, announced that it was closing half of its children's centres. In the past five years, £4.5 billion has been cut from the adult social care budget, which has taken away dignity from elderly and disabled people. Again, the effects of those massive cuts in the adult social care budget fall disproportionately on women in our society.

We will scrutinise very carefully the devolution of business rates, which, if not handled correctly, has the potential to exacerbate inequalities between areas of this country. We have a deeply unbalanced economy, and we will oppose plans that widen regional inequalities, rather than narrow them.

On a positive note, we wholeheartedly welcome moves to devolve powers to re-regulate bus services, and we will look to expand those provisions more widely. Whole areas of the country, particularly in rural Britain, have no bus services at all, and they should be provided with them, particularly where people do not have access to their own cars.

We are very sceptical about competition in the water industry, which actually goes against the trend in much of the rest of Europe, which is of re-municipalising water and giving it back to communities—a Government committed to devolution might consider that, but this Government want competition. Perhaps we can have competition in reservoirs, pumping stations and mains pipes. We could even have three standpipes on every corner. Imagine the vision of Tory Britain: one for Evian, one for Perrier and one for Malvern water.

Christopher Pincher (Tamworth) (Con): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Jeremy Corbyn: No, I will not give way. We have no objection—

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Jeremy Corbyn: Mr Speaker—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. I am well aware that there are Members who want to intervene, and it is perfectly reasonable of them to want to intervene. Equally, there

is no obligation on the Leader of the Opposition to give way. [*Interruption.*] Order. Somebody mutters from a sedentary position, “Too long.” The hon. Gentleman is entitled to his opinion; I am telling the House what the factual position is, however uncomfortable, which is that the right hon. Gentleman is in order. What is not in order is for Members to shout and barrack, in total violation of what has been set out at the start of our proceedings. I urge Members who may be irritated to behave with dignity.

Jeremy Corbyn: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Jake Berry (Rossendale and Darwen) (Con): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Jeremy Corbyn: No, I am not going to give way.

We have no objection to reviewing the franchise with regard to overseas citizens, but I hope the Government will take this point seriously and will be minded not only to look at those who have lived abroad for several decades, but to look at 16 and 17-year-olds in this country—old enough to marry, old enough to work, old enough to join the Army and rightly allowed to vote in the Scottish referendum, but not able to vote in our elections. There is something perverse in a Government enfranchising thousands of people who have not lived in Britain for years when they are disfranchising hundreds of thousands of British residents through their individual voter registration plan. That is why, as part of the EU referendum campaign, many of us are spending a lot of time encouraging young people to ensure that they are registered to vote. It is their future that is at stake.

Everyone in this House understands the risks posed by terrorism. This city, London, has experienced it before, as have other cities here and around the world. We will of course support strong measures to give the police and security services the resources they need, but we will also support checks and balances to ensure that powers are used appropriately. We would welcome any proposals from the Government to reform the Prevent strategy and instead to emphasise the value of community-led work to prevent young people from being drawn into extremism in any form.

In foreign policy, we must put our promotion of human rights at the centre. We cannot continue to turn a blind eye and, worse, sell arms to those countries that abuse human rights either within or beyond their borders. I welcome the forthcoming visit of President Santos of Colombia and I look forward to meeting him to discuss human rights in what is hopefully on its way to becoming a post-conflict society.

The Government's legislative programme spoke of “humanitarian challenges”. We are grateful to Lord Dubs for taking on the challenge of making the Government more humanitarian. Just a few weeks previously, this Prime Minister was referring to refugees fleeing persecution as “a bunch of migrants” and “a swarm”. I have to say this: those words were wrong. I hope the Prime Minister will think again about them and recognise, as everyone should, that refugees are simply human beings, just like any of us in this Chamber, who are trying to survive in a very dangerous and very cruel world. We need to solve their problems with humanity, not with that kind of language.

All parts of the House will have been heartened by the increased turnout in the elections for police and crime commissioners—particularly welcome in Cheshire, Gwent, Humberside and Leicestershire—and we welcome any moves that will give them the powers to improve accountability for their communities. Our police forces mostly do an excellent job, but the recent Hillsborough inquest and the results of it showed that they must never be above scrutiny, to ensure that they do their jobs properly.

We Opposition Members know that decent public services are necessary for a good society, but also that they depend on tax revenues. We welcome any measures designed properly to tackle tax avoidance and evasion, but this Government's record on this subject is one of continuous failure. Just a month ago, the Prime Minister welcomed here EU proposals on country-by-country tax transparency, but on 26 April Conservative MEPs yet again voted against these same proposals. Did they not get the memo from the Prime Minister? That same Prime Minister continues to allow UK tax havens not to issue public registers of beneficial ownership and he opposes wholesale the introduction of beneficial ownership registers for offshore trusts. People expect companies that trade in this country and people who live in this country to pay their tax in this country—it funds our public services. Aggressive tax avoidance and tax evasion are an attack on our NHS, on our schools, on care for elderly and disabled people and on our social security system that prevents poverty, homelessness and destitution.

Mr Speaker, if you want to deliver a more equal society, an economy that works for everyone and a society in which there is opportunity for all, it takes an active Government, not the driverless car heading in the wrong direction that we have with the present Government. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Government Back Benchers should calm themselves; they have the moment they have been waiting for. I call the Prime Minister.

3.41 pm

The Prime Minister (Mr David Cameron): Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I think we have just witnessed a parliamentary record of a 41-minute speech without a single intervention. I have been taking part in debates on the Queen's Speech for the last 10 years and I have never seen a Minister or Opposition leader refuse to take them. Was there really no question from any Labour MP? Did Scottish National party Members have anything to say? I know that SNP Members have other things on their minds—actually, it is mostly the same thing on their minds—but there was a not a single question from them.

This Queen's Speech builds on strong foundations—the deficit cut by almost two thirds as a share of GDP; the highest employment rate in our record; and our long-term economic plan means our economy is over 13% bigger than at the start of 2010. We have 900,000 more businesses; 764,000 fewer workless households; and poverty at its lowest rate in three decades. I am the first to say, however, that there is far more to be done to entrench our strong economic performance. We want more exports; we want higher productivity; we need better infrastructure. That is why one of the key measures in this Queen's

Speech is for the first time a universal service obligation to deliver broadband to every home and every business in our country. With this Government, economic security always comes first.

This Queen's Speech uses the strong economic foundations to make a series of bold choices that will deliver opportunity for all at every stage of life. For children, we make the choice to rebalance the system in favour of faster adoption, so more children get a loving and stable home. For care leavers, we choose to put them first for training and jobs so that the most disadvantaged get a better chance to make a good life for themselves.

Mark Spencer: Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: I will give way a lot, but I am going to make some progress first. I shall deal with the proposers and seconders, and then I will be happy to give way a lot. I predict at least 500% more than my principal opponent.

For all our young people, we offer the chance to do National Citizen Service. For school leavers, we make the choice to extend educational opportunity and allow the creation of new universities. For low-income families, we choose to offer new support to build up their savings through the first ever help to save scheme. For those who want to get on the housing ladder, we are choosing to build a million new homes. We choose to deliver, too, the biggest reform of our prisons system for a century, knocking down the old outdated prisons and radically reforming education and rehabilitation of offenders. This is a Queen's Speech that combines economic security with extending life chances for all. It is the Queen's Speech of a progressive, one nation Conservative Government.

Her Majesty's Gracious Speech was brilliantly proposed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Mrs Spelman). Her speech was powerful, it was compassionate, and it included, I thought, some excellent advice. As the Leader of the Opposition said, she has a background in food and farming, and a union background too: she was in charge of sugar beet for the National Farmers Union, and was a consultant on food and biotechnology. So, Mr Speaker, you can imagine the shock among those in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when, in 2010, they began to get Secretaries of State for agriculture who actually knew what they were talking about. My right hon. Friend stripped away unnecessary burdens and bureaucracy for farmers, she produced the first natural environment White Paper for 25 years, and she secured not one but two separate United Nations agreements, taking huge steps forward to protect our environment.

My right hon. Friend referred to her work as Church Estates Commissioner, and everyone in the House knows that she is a deeply committed Christian. That would have come in handy during her time at DEFRA, when she had to deal with floods, droughts, food shortages, and even disease—indeed, everything short of a plague of locusts, which, of course, I will be predicting in my next speech on Europe.

While chairing the Conservative party, my right hon. Friend did a massive amount to encourage more women to stand for Parliament. I am the first to say that there is still more to be done, but the change on the Benches

[*The Prime Minister*]

around me is a significant tribute to her efforts. She talked about her charity work, and it seems as though, in pursuit of such causes, she is prepared to do almost anything with almost anybody. During her time in the House she has sung the “Flower Duet” with Sarah Teather, performed “The Vagina Monologues” with Jerry Hall, and, more recently, launched Environmentalists for Europe with Stanley Johnson; I now need to set her to work on other members of the family. Her speech was in the finest traditions of the House.

The Gracious Speech was brilliantly seconded by my hon. Friend the Member for Bracknell (Dr Lee). He was witty, self-deprecating and thoughtful. Given his description of his medical examinations, and, indeed, his explanation of the true nature of PR, I will shortly be recommending him for a role in the Whips Office, where he could presumably carry out a number of important pieces of work.

As my hon. Friend said, he began his political life canvassing in Beaconsfield, where he was also the local GP. I am sure that he will welcome our record spending on health, and the progress that we are making towards a seven-day NHS. I am also sure that the quality of the speeches that he makes on Sundays is just as good as the quality of the one that we heard today. We look forward to hearing more.

Every time my hon. Friend goes canvassing, he is besieged not by political issues but by the medical problems of his patients and constituents, this bringing a whole new meaning to the concept of the MP’s surgery. He is also, I understand, a romantic supporter of lost causes. He told us in his speech about standing in Michael Foot’s old seat of Blaenau Gwent, and he told us that he got 816 votes. He did not point out that, at the time, he had 1,500 patients, which means that it was not that good a result! I am told that the seat is now a Plaid Cymru marginal, so things have changed.

I am told that my hon. Friend is an ardent fan of Queens Park Rangers, but we will not say too much about that, as at least one of my teams is joining him in the championship next season. He is also a passionate member of the England Supporters Club. He travelled with the England team to Japan in 2002, to Portugal in 2004, and to Germany in 2006. Of course, England lost on all those occasions. The House will be pleased to hear that we will be exercising our firm border controls, and not letting him anywhere near France this summer.

My hon. Friend and I have both benefited from your decision, Mr Speaker, to establish a nursery on the parliamentary estate. We thank you for that, as do our daughters, Florence and Tabitha. My hon. Friend has made his own contribution to the House—to which he referred—not least in his role as Vice-Chair of the Parliamentary Space Committee. He told us about his passion for the issue, and, indeed, for Tim Peake, whom we all wish well. The modern transport Bill, which was announced in today’s Gracious Speech, will bring about something for which he has long campaigned: the first British spaceport, which gives the opportunity for people to be sent into orbit for prolonged periods, thousands of miles away from this place. We may have different candidates who we think should qualify for that honour, but I am grateful for the fact that we will both be supporting the Bill.

My hon. Friend told us that he is one of the few MPs who has not yet decided which way to vote in the EU referendum. He kept us guessing today, but I know that he, like everyone else, particularly on the Conservative Benches, will welcome the fact that we are keeping our promise to hold an in/out EU referendum. His thoughtful speech was also in the finest traditions of our House.

Let me join the Leader of the Opposition in paying tribute to two great Members of this House who passed away over the past year. Harry Harpham was only in this place a short time, but quickly became a very popular Member. He earned great admiration from all sides for the way he continued to carry out his work throughout his treatment for cancer. His widow, the new hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough (Gill Furniss), is already continuing his great work of standing up for the constituency that he loved so much. Michael Meacher represented his Oldham constituents in this place for a staggering 45 years. He was sometimes known as Tony Benn’s vicar on earth. He was a passionate campaigner for equality and on climate change. This House is a poorer place without those two Members, and we miss them greatly.

Let me welcome the Leader of the Opposition to his first Queen’s Speech debate. I was not entirely sure whether he would actually turn up. After all, he once described it as a “ridiculous...18th-century performance” and he has even suggested that the monarchy “call it a day” when the Queen completes her reign. I have to say that I think there is more chance of the Labour party calling it a day when he completes his reign. I have been doing my researches, too, and that may come a little sooner than people think. He recently placed an advert for a job in his office. It said:

“Fixed term contract for the period only that Jeremy Corbyn is the Leader of the Labour Party, or until 31st December 2016, whichever is sooner”.

Is there something we are not being told? I wondered what the cause was. Having done the job of Leader of the Opposition, I thought perhaps it was the long and draining hours. So in preparing for this speech, I asked my office to ring his office to find out. I promise I am not making this up. This is the answerphone message we got:

“Thank you for calling the office of Jeremy Corbyn MP, the Leader of the Opposition. Our phone lines are open between the hours of 2pm and 4pm every week day.”

I know he wants a shorter working week, but there are limits, presumably even for him. There were rumours that at one point he would be challenged for the leadership by the former Chair of the Public Accounts Committee. Obviously, I was thrilled by the prospect of making jokes about Labour moving from Islington to Barking. But I have a feeling that after today’s performance they will be moving to Barking without a leadership contest.

We face an extraordinary Opposition team. The shadow Business Secretary is anti-business. The shadow city Minister does not speak to the City. The shadow farming Secretary, who should be responsible for encouraging Britain’s livestock industry, is actually a vegan. The shadow Defence Secretary does not believe in defence and they are led by a proud republican who now has to call himself the Leader of Her Majesty’s Loyal Opposition. [*Interruption.*] Does he want me to give way? He does not. If one were to propose all that for a script of “The Thick of It”, even with the entreaties of my right

hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport about the importance of diversity and innovation, the BBC would have to reject it as utterly far-fetched.

Tom Blenkinsop (Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland) (Lab): Will the Prime Minister give way?

Hon. Members: Hooray.

The Prime Minister: I will give way.

Tom Blenkinsop: Will the Prime Minister remind the House when either he or the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills actually went to meet Tata during the steel crisis? The Labour Front-Bench team, my hon. Friend the Member for Aberavon (Stephen Kinnock) and the general secretary of Community went when no Government Front Bencher was available—they were in Australia on holiday. Can the Prime Minister remind us when he actually met Tata?

The Prime Minister: I was at Port Talbot two weeks ago meeting Tata. Let me give Labour Members a tip. It is all right not intervening on their own leader, but if they are going to intervene on the other guy, try to think of a question that he will find difficult. However, to be fair to the Leader of the Opposition, he made an inspiring speech after the local elections. He said:

“Across England we had predictions we’d lose councils. We didn’t. We hung on.”

That will surely go down as one of the great rallying cries of Opposition leaders down the ages—“Go back to your constituencies and prepare to hang on!” To be fair, I have to say that there are days when I know exactly how he feels.

You can say what you like about the right hon. Gentleman, but he has never hidden his beliefs. While I may disagree with most of them, he has been totally consistent in his opposition to market economics, to choice in public services and to Britain maintaining strong defences, so I am not surprised that he opposes this Queen’s Speech almost in its entirety. But no one can say that the British people are not being offered a choice, and the first half of his speech was something that we all thoroughly enjoyed listening to, and I welcome him again to his place.

We want to see true equality of opportunity in our country. That is why we are reforming our schools, creating 3 million apprenticeships, establishing new universities, boosting entrepreneurship, cutting taxes for businesses and creating a dynamic economy in which people can make the most of their talents. But if we really want to make a true difference to people’s life chances, we have to go further in tackling the barriers to opportunity. We have to help those who get left behind, those who are stuck in poverty and those who grow up without the advantages of a strong family.

Debbie Abrahams (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab): Will the Prime Minister explain why he is going back on his promise to introduce a White Paper on supporting disabled people into employment, given that he has cut £1,500 a year from sick and disabled people?

The Prime Minister: We are not going back on that promise. We want to do more to help disabled people

into work. What we have seen in the last year is well over 100,000 disabled people get into work, and we will continue with that excellent work.

If we really want to help people’s life chances, we really need to help those who need help the most. That is why there is such a strong emphasis in this Queen’s Speech on adoption and care. When I became Prime Minister, some social workers were refusing to place black, mixed race or Asian children with white adoptive parents. I think that that was profoundly wrong and we changed the law to prevent it. As a result of that change and the other things we have done, adoption is today up 72%, but there is still a lot more to do. In a system that still favours foster parents or distant relatives, we choose to promote adoption which will provide more permanent and stable homes. To make sure our social workers get proper real-life training on the job, we are reforming training and raising professional standards for every social worker by 2020.

Young people in care already get the first choice of which school they go to, but we do not give them sufficient advantages when they leave care. It is time that we did so. So, in this Queen’s Speech we are saying to care leavers: you will get guaranteed entitlements to local services, funding for apprenticeships and a personal mentor up to the age of 25. All this will be included in our care leavers covenant, so that our most disadvantaged young people get the opportunities they deserve. These are the choices of a progressive one nation Conservative Government.

Mark Spencer: Can the Prime Minister assure the House that, whatever someone’s background and wherever they were born, if they have aspirations they will be given not only the inspiration to succeed but the education to allow them to get to where they want to be?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is no good just talking about opportunity in terms of giving people the chance to get on; we have to unblock those who are stuck in poverty, in troubled families or in care, or who are stuck because they cannot get adopted or have mental health problems. That is the modern agenda of this Conservative Government. Yes, there are the economic opportunities we have always talked about, but let us unblock the opportunities that have been blocked for too many in our country.

Neil Gray (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP) *rose*—

The Prime Minister: I want to make some progress, but I will give way to the Scottish National party now that its Members have woken up.

Neil Gray: Further to the intervention by the hon. Member for Oldham East and Saddleworth (Debbie Abrahams), I must point out that during his last appearance at the Dispatch Box, the right hon. Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr Duncan Smith) gave me a commitment that the White Paper on health and work would be published “well before the summer”. What has changed?

The Prime Minister: What has changed is that we are getting more disabled people into work. We want to make more progress with that, and we have a new

[The Prime Minister]

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions who is absolutely committed to continuing that development. That is exactly what the hon. Gentleman will see in the months to come.

After a strong family, the greatest driver of opportunity is a good school. Under the last Labour Government, the number of pupils studying core academic subjects at GCSE halved and, according to the OECD, the generation educated under that Government is among the least literate and numerate in the developed world. This Government are determined to turn around that shameful legacy.

Already we have 1.4 million more pupils being taught in good or outstanding schools. The number studying the core academic subjects at GCSE has gone up. There are more teachers with degrees and more pupils studying maths and science. In this Queen's Speech we will help to make that educational excellence available to all in our country. A national funding formula will ensure that schools get the money they need. Local authorities that are not delivering will be intervened on at once. Failing and coasting schools will be turned into academies without delay. We should be clear about the choice that we are making—rigour in standards, discipline in the classroom, excellence in teaching, autonomy in our schools and no tolerance of failure. Again, this is the policy of a progressive one nation Conservative Government.

Geraint Davies (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op): How is equal opportunity consistent with allowing the best universities to raise their fees so that instead of the brightest getting access to those universities, the richest do?

The Prime Minister: I am coming on to precisely that point. What we have seen since the introduction of fees is not only record numbers going to our universities, but record numbers from poorer backgrounds going to our universities.

A real Opportunity Britain will offer school leavers apprenticeships and a choice of a good university and a good job, and our Queen's Speech helps deliver on all three. We are providing funding for 3 million new apprenticeships. We have uncapped numbers at universities so that everyone who could benefit from a university education can get one. Now we are legislating to make sure that degrees are of high quality and, crucially, that new universities can be established. None of this would be possible without that bold decision to reform fees, which demonstrated that bold reform and value for money do not hold back opportunities in our country, but can help create them.

Rebecca Pow (Taunton Deane) (Con): I am sure the Prime Minister would agree that one of the best things we can do for our children is to give them a university education. I welcome the announcement in the Queen's Speech that more universities will be enabled to open. I would love one in Somerset and in Taunton Deane. It is the best thing we can do for our young people.

The Prime Minister: I will look at what my hon. Friend says. When we look at economic growth and development, all the evidence is that having universities

of a high quality in all our regions is a massive driver for growth and for retaining talent in those areas, as the contribution of the Manchester universities to the northern powerhouse shows so clearly.

Christopher Pincher: My right hon. Friend is being typically generous in giving way. All the secondary schools in my constituency are academies, a process begun by the Labour county council before it was booted out in 2009. I welcome the national funding formula that will help all schools, I hope, in Staffordshire. Will my right hon. Friend make sure that the academies in Tamworth are protected and are never abolished, as the Leader of the Opposition would like?

The Prime Minister: We are committed to academies and free schools. We want to combine that autonomy with the national funding formula and make sure that more of the money goes to the school itself. All these reforms go together to drive change in our education system.

On jobs, today's figures show unemployment falling, employment rising and a new record for the number of people in work in our country. This Queen's Speech builds on this record with more help for small businesses, further improvements to infrastructure, and measures to make Britain a world leader in the digital economy and in new industries, such as autonomous vehicles. We are determined to deliver a recovery that is rich in jobs. With the national living wage, no one paying tax before they earn £11,000, in-work training, learning through life and all the steps that we are taking to boost productivity, our ambition should be for a Britain with the best paid, best trained workforce anywhere in Europe.

George Kerevan (East Lothian) (SNP): I apologise for being semi-comatose during the speech from the Leader of the Opposition—most of us were. The Prime Minister mentions the economy and productivity. Will he tell us why the word “productivity” does not appear in the Gracious Speech? Is it because the productivity record of the Prime Minister and this Government is so appalling?

The Prime Minister: It is because everything in the Queen's Speech is about enhancing our productivity. If we make those digital investments, improve our transport system, build new universities and introduce certain changes in our schools, all those things will help to drive productivity, which is vital to our success.

Opportunity for all also means continuing to make sure that every part of our country shares in rising prosperity, so in this Queen's Speech we continue to support the development of a northern powerhouse and the midlands engine. In the next year we want to have elected metro Mayors in six of our largest cities, and with our plans, local authorities will have complete control over revenue raised from the business rates. For the first time, the decisions they take to attract businesses to their area will help grow their economies and benefit their bottom line. It is a huge change in our country.

Alec Shelbrooke (Elmet and Rothwell) (Con): Between 2000 and 2010, £350 million was removed from the city of Leeds Supertram and put into Crossrail. Since 2010, over half a billion pounds has been invested in Leeds, showing that we really do believe in the northern powerhouse.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes an important point. We could add the plans for the M62, HS2 and electrification of the TransPennine line, which will all make the promises that we have spoken about a reality.

Believing in opportunity means never writing anyone off. For too long the young offender institutions and prisons in our country have not been working. They give the public the security of knowing that offenders are locked in, but they are not doing enough to turn around the lives of people who will one day be let out. So in our prisons we are going to apply the lessons learned in other public service reforms: publishing results; giving the people who run the services proper control over them; encouraging innovation; rewarding success; and not tolerating persistent failure.

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): If the Prime Minister is serious about prison reform, why have prison budgets been slashed by a third since 2010, at exactly the same time as the prison population has been growing? Given that 47,000 prisoners are currently incarcerated for offences linked to drug use, is not it time to review a policy that treats drug addicts only as criminals, rather than as people who need our support as well?

The Prime Minister: I would make a number of points to the hon. Lady. First, I really think that we need to get away from the idea that we only measure progress in public services by the amount of money that is spent. The whole aim here is to try to do more with less. That is what we have done with so many parts of the public sector. The point about drugs is important. The first thing we have to do is ensure that our prisons are drug-free; not just free of drugs, but free of so-called legal highs, about which the Leader of the House made such a powerful case on the radio this morning.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

The Prime Minister: I am going to make a little progress, but I promise to give way a lot more.

For decades we have been cramming people into crumbling prisons that were built for a different age, many of which, frankly, are now unfit for human habitation. These buildings do not help rehabilitation. Indeed, they are rife with bullying, intimidation and violence. So we have made a £1.3 billion commitment to get rid of ageing prisons and build nine new prisons with modern, fit-for-purpose facilities. Once again, this is bold reform from a progressive, one nation Conservative Government.

Mr David Hanson (Delyn) (Lab): Can the Prime Minister explain to the House why figures for suicides in prison, attacks on prison staff and contraband going into prison have gone up? Could it be anything to do with the fact that there are 7,000 fewer prison officers than there were in 2010?

The Prime Minister: As we were discussing this morning, one of the reasons for these problems is the availability of legal highs in our prisons, which we need to deal with, but I do not think that it is right simply to lay this at the door. What we need is prisons that are run well, where the management are in control, and where they are able to turn around the lives of the people who are

there. It is all very well for Labour to ask questions, but they had 13 years to reform our prisons. It took a reforming Tory Government to put it on the agenda.

We cannot extend life chances unless we also tackle the menace of extremism. In our country there is still discrimination that we must fight, opportunity that is blocked and glass ceilings that need to be smashed. But I think that we should all be proud of the fact that when we look around the world, we see that Britain is already one of the most successful multiracial, multi-faith democracies anywhere on earth.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

The Prime Minister: I am going to make some progress, because I want to make this argument. Then I will happily take interventions.

Extremists hate that fact, because it challenges their whole world view—the preachers who say that Christians, Jews and Muslims cannot live together; the so-called community leaders who say women cannot travel more than a few miles beyond the city in which they live; the activists who insist on segregation at political meetings; and the religious schools that teach children not to mix with those from different religions, and that sometimes teach that Jews are the enemy. To those who say that pointing this out is somehow illiberal, intolerant or Islamophobic, I say, “Nonsense.” It is not real liberalism to walk on by and pretend that this is not happening, or to say that it is just part of someone else’s culture. Real liberalism means standing up for our liberal values, and that is what we need to do in our country.

I want to make one last point before giving way. It is certainly not the preserve of one party to make this point. Whether it is my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham and Rainham (Rehman Chishti) on the Government side of the House or the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr Mahmood) on the Opposition Benches, I have heard powerful speeches on this from right across the House. So when it comes to our Queen’s Speech proposal for a counter-extremism and safeguarding Bill, whether we are disrupting the activity of the extremists or protecting young people in unregulated schools, I hope there will be all-party support to tackle the poisonous ideology that is at the heart of the extremist threat.

Keith Vaz (Leicester East) (Lab) *rose*—

The Prime Minister: I give way to the Chairman of the Home Affairs Committee.

Keith Vaz: I am most grateful to the Prime Minister. It is very clear that one of the areas that is used by the jihadists to recruit British citizens, especially young British citizens, is the internet. Does he agree that more should be done, and perhaps enshrined in legislation, to ensure that the internet companies do much more to take down these websites and to pursue those responsible for this hate?

The Prime Minister: I absolutely agree about that. It is fair to say that over 170,000 pages have been taken down under this Government because of the work we have done with the internet companies. I have great hope here, because the internet companies originally said that they could not work with us on tackling online

[*The Prime Minister*]

child pornography, and then they did, and a huge amount of change has come about. They are now beginning to see that whether it is beheading videos, jihadist videos, or the rest of it, they need to act and demonstrate their own responsibilities. I am hugely hopeful that if we are clear in this House about what needs to be done and we work with internet companies, we can make a huge amount of improvement.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

The Prime Minister: I give way to the leader of the Liberal Democrats.

Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): I am extremely grateful to the Prime Minister for his generosity. He will know that David Anderson, his own reviewer of terrorist legislation, who has seen the proposed extremism Bill in the Queen's Speech, has said that it ran the risk of "playing into the hands of those who, by peddling a grievance agenda, seek to drive people further towards extremism and terrorism."

Will the Prime Minister listen to his adviser and not simply give a propaganda victory to those who wish to do us harm?

The Prime Minister: I will of course listen to everyone about this Bill, but I do say to the leader of the Liberal Democrats that our liberal values in this country are being stamped all over by people saying, "You can't travel out of the city you live in", or, "You can't mix with Jews and Muslims." That is what is happening in our country. It is no good saying, as the Liberal Democrats sometimes do, "Let's just focus on the violent extremists; everyone else is just exercising their freedom of speech." That is not good enough in a liberal democracy; we have got to stand up and fight for liberal values.

Nusrat Ghani (Wealden) (Con): Extremists are adept at grooming and brainwashing our young people. Does the Prime Minister agree that we should be even bolder in offering greater support and encouragement to the brave Muslims in our community who seek to stand up and challenge the intolerance and hatred that is exported by Daesh?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. That is why what she says is so important: if we give in to the idea that spokesmen who are extremist but not violent can somehow represent their communities, we completely disempower the moderate voices who want us to stand up for the liberal values that we should champion in this House. That is very important.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

The Prime Minister: I give way to the hon. Gentleman who serves on the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Mike Gapes (Ilford South) (Lab/Co-op): Will the Prime Minister have an early meeting with the Mayor of London in which he can discuss the issues of London and its security, and how we combat extremism in our capital. Will he then take the opportunity to apologise for his candidate's racist campaign against Sadiq Khan?

The Prime Minister: Once again, let me congratulate the Mayor of London and say how much I am looking forward to meeting him to discuss this issue, because he can do a huge amount, working with the Government, with Labour colleagues, and with Liberal Democrats and others, to pursue this agenda about standing up for the liberal democratic values that we hold so dear.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

The Prime Minister: Let me give way to the hon. Member I mentioned—[*Interruption.*] Let me say something: I am not going to take any lectures from Labour Members about giving way. We are not allowed to drop the H-bomb of hypocrisy in this House—of course we are not—but for heaven's sake: have a go at your own Front Benchers, matey!

Mr Speaker: Order. Just before I call Mr Chishti, the Prime Minister did not say this, but I am going to say it: Members should not shriek at the Prime Minister, or indeed at the Opposition, for that matter. If Members want to try to intervene, they should do so with civility. I call Mr Rehman Chishti.

Rehman Chishti (Gillingham and Rainham) (Con): Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the Prime Minister for giving way. On extremism, Government efforts to tackle hate preachers who poison individual minds and destroy our communities have to be welcomed, and I applaud what the Prime Minister is doing in tackling non-violent extremism. Will he clarify how the Bill will define when an individual has crossed the threshold of what is and what is not acceptable, so that our enforcement agencies and communities know when to take action?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend raises the absolutely crucial point that will be at the heart of the debate. I expect it to be a difficult debate, because we are trying to balance two things: our profound belief about free speech in this country and our need to stand up for the liberal democratic values that I have spoken about. It is not good enough to say that this is too difficult and therefore we cannot take any action to try to stop the people who are poisoning minds, particularly those of young children.

Let me make the point about the importance of being able to go into unregulated education settings and to check whether extremism is being taught or promoted. If that is happening, walking by on the other side and saying, "That's part of someone's culture and we just have to put up with it," is not good enough. That is what needs to change.

Above all, in this Queen's Speech we are using our economic strength to choose to invest in the national security of our United Kingdom—England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. We are legislating on the police, intelligence powers and human rights, and we are meeting our NATO commitment to spend 2% of our GDP on defence.

This Government will also make a further choice. To disarm unilaterally in the hope that others would follow would be an act of supreme naivety. It would be the ultimate false economy—an act of weakness, not of wisdom—so we will hold a vote in this House to secure the long-term future of Britain's nuclear deterrent.

Britain has come a long way since the depth of Labour's recession. We are building homes again, with over 700,000 more since 2010. We are creating jobs again, with over 2 million more people in work. We are investing in our NHS again, with almost 10,000 more doctors and over 10,000 more nurses on our wards than in 2010. We are building a greater Britain again, with a sound economy, strong defences and opportunity for all. These are the actions of a progressive, one nation Conservative Government, and I commend the Queen's Speech to the House.

4.16 pm

Angus Robertson (Moray) (SNP): May I begin by echoing the tributes of the Leader of the Opposition and the Prime Minister to Members who passed away in the last year? Given that today is a day of heightened security, may I also take the opportunity—I do not think this has happened yet—to pay tribute to the great number of police, parliamentary staff and other agencies that have been working very hard, often behind the scenes, to make sure that everybody in this place, including visitors and the general public, are safe?

I can start by assuring everybody, on both sides of the House, that I have absolutely no intention of speaking for 41 minutes without taking any interventions. It is appropriate to give other Members the opportunity to speak in today's proceedings.

It is also appropriate to commend the mover and seconder. I pay tribute to the right hon. Member for Meriden (Mrs Spelman) for her long-standing interests, particularly in European issues, which are close to her heart. We are fellow German speakers and have found ourselves at a number of European events. I look forward to her contributions over the next five weeks, especially on the subject of why it is important that we remain part of the European Union.

The seconder, the hon. Member for Bracknell (Dr Lee), also has a significant interest in European issues and has worked with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. We have a shared interest, because my great uncle worked for Chancellor Adenauer after the war. The hon. Gentleman has considerable experience as a medical general practitioner and has been prepared to make difficult decisions on issues in Parliament. For example, he joined the Scottish National party and others in voting against the Government's intervention in Syria.

Last year's Queen's Speech followed immediately after the general election when, in Scotland, the SNP won almost every single seat in the country. This year's Queen's Speech follows shortly after the Scottish parliamentary elections, when the SNP won an impressive majority of constituencies right across Scotland. I congratulate everyone of all parties who was returned and those who ended their parliamentary public service at Holyrood at the election, such as my right hon. Friend the Member for Gordon (Alex Salmond). SNP Members are delighted by the clear mandate as First Minister for Nicola Sturgeon, who is currently forming her Government.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the outgoing Scottish Cabinet Secretaries, Alex Neil and Richard Lochhead. Richard was the longest-serving and most experienced rural affairs and fisheries Minister anywhere in the European Union. Given the circumstances

of his wife's brave battle with cancer, I am sure that Members across the House will join me in sending him and Fiona our best wishes.

The Queen's Speech was clearly drafted with the ongoing EU referendum campaign and our impending decision looming large and overshadowing proceedings here. We in the Scottish National party will make the positive case in the next five weeks and beyond for Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom to remain in the world's largest single market, which provides crucial social and equalities safeguards.

Much of the Queen's Speech relates just to England and Wales, including the flagship prison reform Bill. It is understandable that that is an issue that needs to be tackled. The Scottish Government have increased spending significantly on modernising and improving the prison estate north of the border, and recently passed the Community Justice (Scotland) Act 2016, which supports the reform of penal policy to reduce reoffending and tackle crime at source. We therefore understand why colleagues in the rest of the UK wish to emulate the kind of changes we have introduced in Scotland. Quite a number of other major pieces of legislation will impact largely on England and Wales—those that relate to education, adoption and reforms to democratic processes—so when the Prime Minister talks about this being a one nation Queen's Speech, we on the SNP Benches know which nation he is talking about.

I know that it is perhaps not fashionable in political discourse to point out things that we agree on, but I would like to break that convention because it is important to acknowledge it when there is a need for legislation. With the usual caveat that we have not actually seen the legislative proposals, I and my colleagues will be very interested in scrutinising and supporting the measures in the Queen's Speech that are worthy of support. We are especially interested in proposals on combating tax avoidance and keeping up with rapid technological developments that will have a transformative economic and societal impact, such as 100% broadband access, to which the Scottish Government are already committed, and driverless cars and drones.

The SNP is the only major Opposition party in the House of Commons that has bothered to prepare an alternative to the Queen's Speech. It behoves serious Opposition parties not only to hold the Government to account, but to propose alternatives. The SNP's alternatives prioritise strong action to encourage productivity and export growth in the economy, to support the most vulnerable through progressive action on work and pensions, and to deliver meaningful further devolution to Scotland.

At the top of our list of proposals in advance of today's Queen's Speech was an emergency summer Budget. Why? Because it would give the Government an opportunity to put an end to austerity. It could bring about an inclusive, prosperous economy through a modest investment in infrastructure and vital public services. Our proposals are detailed. They would boost investment and halt the austerity programme that has strangled economic progress. They would increase spending on public services by a modest 0.5% a year in real terms between 2016-17 and 2019-20, which would release more than £150 billion during that period for investment in public services, while ensuring—no doubt this will be important for Government Members—that public sector debt and borrowing fall over the Parliament.

[Angus Robertson]

It is a choice for the Government whether they pursue those proposals or not; we believe that they should do so. Such a Budget would stimulate GDP growth, support wage growth and tax receipts, and, by transforming productivity and innovation, act as a major signal of confidence in our economy. It would, of course, also do much for an inclusive economy. The modest increase in expenditure would stop the cutbacks that disproportionately burden the most disadvantaged groups, causing widespread suffering and inequality, and denying so many opportunities. It would also support trade and exports, which are important for all parts of the UK. The figures should worry all of us, because they are moving in the wrong direction. The UK is likely to fall short of its target to double exports to £1 trillion this decade by some £300 billion—an enormous shortfall. A summer Budget could contain measures to stimulate the type of investment needed to improve the dire UK trade and export figures.

If the Government were to follow our proposals, they could introduce a fair tax Bill. Incidentally, I know the Prime Minister is listening, so I should say that it is not too late for him and his officials sitting in the Box, should they hear a good suggestion, to take down some notes and include it in their legislation, and I would encourage them to do so. Perhaps that could be a fair tax Bill to simplify the tax system in the UK and deliver greater tax transparency. How about a moratorium on Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs office closures so that there is a network of tax advice offices to support local businesses in navigating the tax system?

How about committing the Treasury to establishing an independent commission to report back in two years following a comprehensive consultation on the simplification of the tax code? How about strengthening tax transparency by guaranteeing that the beneficial ownership of companies and trusts will be made public? On that point, I have listened to the Prime Minister adopting a tone of concern over recent weeks, which I endorse. I have no reason to doubt his genuine intention to deal with corruption and tax avoidance, which is a scourge that means that the Government and Ministers do not have the resources at their disposal to support the public services that we all depend on. However, I just do not understand why, if we are to have a list of beneficial owners, it should be shared only by prosecuting authorities. It seems to me that the more public information we can have on all forms of beneficial ownership, the more it will be to the benefit of all.

On the issue of Scotland and the constitution, the Scotland Act 2016 was welcome progress in Scotland's devolution journey, but Government Members will not be surprised when I say that it does not go nearly far enough. That was why Scottish National party Members, having been elected by the people of Scotland to raise these points in the Chamber, tabled 100 amendments to the Scotland Bill. It is interesting to note that the UK Government accepted not a single amendment. The people sent to this Parliament to represent the people of Scotland, and elected on a manifesto, presented those amendments to this House, but not a single one was accepted.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald (Glasgow South) (SNP): Is not the reality that this Queen's Speech was not for viewers in Scotland—so much so that the Scotland

Secretary has been nowhere to be seen on the Front Bench? I think that even my predecessor, Sir Teddy Taylor, had more to say about Scotland. Perhaps my right hon. Friend could encourage the Prime Minister to tell us what new plans he has to embolden our national Parliament in Edinburgh.

Angus Robertson: Of course, the Prime Minister had an opportunity, didn't he?

Stewart Malcolm McDonald: He still has.

Angus Robertson: Well, he does. He could of course intervene on me and outline the plans that he did not give earlier. I see that he does not want to take the opportunity—that is fine. We do of course have the right to take interventions, although I will be happy to follow your guidance, Mr Speaker.

Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Angus Robertson: May I make a little progress? I will be happy to come back to the hon. Gentleman.

The SNP's alternative Queen's Speech would deliver a Scottish home rule Bill, which would involve a strong package of powers for the Scottish Parliament. The wording is quite important, because of course the people of Scotland were promised home rule and near federalism. My degree is in politics, and I have had a look at federal systems around the world. There are a number of parties in the House that favour federalism, but we do not live in a federal state in the UK, and nothing in the Scotland Act comes remotely close to "near federalism". That was not in the Queen's Speech. It would have been good to see it there; perhaps the Government might think about it, but I hae ma doots—"I have my doubts," he says, looking at the poor *Hansard* writers.

The Government are unlikely to deliver a Scottish home rule Bill, but perhaps, given the unhappiness on the Treasury Bench about the House of Lords for the first time in a long while, the time has come for even the Conservative party to realise that there is a need for parliamentary reform. Let us be serious. We work in a Parliament where the second Chamber is not elected by anyone. Let me say that again: the second Chamber of the Parliament described as the mother of all Parliaments is made up of people elected by nobody. This is the 21st century. Please let us get on with replacing the House of Lords.

Mr Hanson *rose*—

Angus Robertson: I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will support our proposal.

Mr Hanson: Absolutely. However, the right hon. Gentleman is wrong because some Members of the other place are elected. The former Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross, Lord Thurso, was recently elected by three Members of the House of Lords.

Angus Robertson: I stand corrected, but I still think that that is totally unacceptable.

Martin Docherty-Hughes (West Dunbartonshire) (SNP): I am delighted that my right hon. Friend has raised this matter. Is it not right that we inform the Prime Minister, given that he has appointed more Members to that unelected, unaccountable House of Lords than Margaret Thatcher, Tony Blair and John Major put together?

Angus Robertson: I am delighted to speak today on behalf of a parliamentary party that has never nominated a single person to the House of Lords and never will. However, if we wished to have a second Chamber with the oversight responsibilities that many people argue are necessary, why not have a Chamber made up of representatives of the nations and regions? This is the 21st century—why don't we get on with it?

While we are doing that, why not consider electoral reform? The Leader of the Opposition raised that issue. He has clearly rowed in behind the changes that the SNP proposed for the independence referendum, which proved that giving the vote to 16 and 17-year-olds—the issue on which I made my maiden speech—is a sensible move forward. Sixteen and 17-year-olds should be fully enfranchised.

The time has also come to establish an independent commission on proportional representation to report on possible models for the Westminster Parliament, and I say that as a member of a political party that might do worse under proportional representation. It was our policy when we were under-represented and it is our policy when we represent almost every seat in the country. In my speech last year, I made the point that the SNP does not represent everybody in Scotland and that we are mindful of that. It is important for all of us as democrats to ensure that the electoral systems that we use properly reflect in Parliament every strand of opinion that has support, and this place should be no different.

Steve Brine (Winchester) (Con): I realise that SNP Members like to discard referendum results, but we had a referendum early in the last Parliament on changing the Westminster voting system. My constituents voted 2:1 and the country overall voted to keep first past the post. End of the matter.

Angus Robertson: Right. I noticed that the body language was a bit hostile. There is a debate to be had about what form of electoral system should be used. Some favour single transferrable vote and others favour the additional member system. Let us just agree that surely first past the post has had its day. It is long past its sell-by date.

Let me move on to issues that were not but should have been in the Queen's Speech. I want to consider justice and home affairs. The UK Government's approach to immigration has been heavy-handed and one size fits all, and has only fuelled the misconceptions about migrants. The Government had to be dragged, kicking and screaming, by public opinion on issues such as unaccompanied children on the European continent. The Prime Minister needed to be reminded of the UK's role in the 1930s in taking in unaccompanied children from the European continent, and I commend him for thinking about that issue again. I hope that those changes can be brought about quickly so that those children

arrive in the UK as soon as possible, and I reiterate that I hope he does not see 3,000 children as the height of his ambition.

Putting the Human Rights Act in danger is a matter of great concern to a great number of us—indeed, I would go so far as to say that I do not think the idea has a majority in the House of Commons. The Scottish National party will be happy to work with Members across the House, and we may even have started discussions with some right hon. and hon Members on that subject. We will work together to ensure that human rights are not undermined in the UK, and we will always seek to protect the national and transnational legislation that underpins human rights in our country.

The SNP's alternative Queen's Speech would deliver a more measured approach to migration and reaffirm the importance of human rights. Why not have a migration Bill to ensure that the UK maximises the benefits of migration and that people who come to the UK are treated with respect? Why do the Government not report annually on migration forecasts, and produce a strategy that includes plans to maximise the benefits of migration? How about reversing changes to immigration laws that prevent UK citizens from living here with their partners and children from overseas? Those laws deprive businesses and public services of key staff, and prevent universities from competing for the brightest international students. How about reversing cuts to support for asylum seekers, and adopting a strategy of providing integration opportunities from day one? How about reintroducing a post-study work visa? All that could have been in the Queen's Speech. Sadly it was not, but—I am looking at those on the Treasury Bench—there is still time.

Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): If we had a post-work study visa, families such as the Brains in my constituency, who are being forced out by this Government, would be able to stay in the highlands and make a valuable contribution to our economy.

Angus Robertson: My hon. Friend makes a good point—[*Interruption.*] I notice the Foreign Secretary shaking his head because he thinks that is a bad idea, but I ask him to please consider that case, that family, and their qualifications. Those are the kind of people we need. Scotland's problem has never been immigration; it has been emigration. People have come to our shores from all kinds of countries, and they have contributed in all kinds of ways that have made Scotland the country it is today. I appeal to the Prime Minister and the Home Office to consider that case and reverse the ruling.

On human rights and enhancing equalities law, what about preventing the revocation of the application of the Human Rights Act 1998 to any devolved nation, without the express consent of the Parliament or Assembly of that nation? How about modernising the Equality Act 2010 to strengthen the rights and liberties of citizens across the UK? How about affirming and protecting the role of the European convention on human rights in the UK through entrenchment? The SNP is in favour of that, and we would welcome the Government thinking likewise, although unfortunately that is unlikely.

On social justice, the Government have orchestrated truly devastating cuts that have destroyed the safety net that social security should provide, and any of us who hold regular surgeries know that to be true. Instead of

[Angus Robertson]

“business as usual” the Government should return to the drawing board on social security and abandon their austerity agenda. The cuts have butchered the aspects of universal credit that might—might—have created work incentives, and instead they have hammered low-paid workers. The time is up for universal credit, and the Government need to find a fairer solution and an alternative for children, for working, low-income families, and for disabled people.

Dr Eilidh Whiteford (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the life chances—we have been hearing those words all day from the Government—of children in the 4 million families who are set to lose out because of cuts to work allowances will be severely disadvantaged because of those changes?

Angus Robertson: My hon. Friend has fought a good fight on this subject and she will continue to do so. I hope that the Prime Minister was listening, because her point was extremely powerful.

At this point, I should like to bring up a pensions issue, because the Government are not acting on measures voted on in this House. The issue of those affected by the rapid pace of increases in the state pension age—the Women Against State Pension Inequality Campaign women—is not simple, but the Government should look at it. There is no debate about the need for changes in pensions—everybody acknowledges that. Privately within the Government, there is an appreciation that there is an unfairness.

There is also an unfairness and a similar inequality—those who represent constituencies with significant communities of people from the armed forces will know of it—for widows. Among other things, that should surely be looked at as part of a universal pensions Bill. We should have a commission to investigate the inequalities in current and future pensions policies. We should also develop access to automatic enrolment to incentivise pension saving. All of that matters tremendously.

Before concluding, I should like to address two other important issues. First, on defence, the UK has suffered a squeeze in many respects in conventional defence capabilities in recent years. Bases have been closed, including the ending of flying operations from two of Scotland’s three airbases. Crucial capability gaps have been exposed, including the absence of a single maritime patrol aircraft—not a single one is currently operational for the United Kingdom.

The Government have committed to bridging that gap, and I urge them to do so as quickly as possible. I urge them to look at co-locating the training of defence personnel with the maritime fleet. That makes perfect sense, and I can see that the Foreign Secretary, the former Defence Secretary, is thinking about it. It is ludicrous that a maritime state has been without maritime patrol aircraft for year after year.

Another important defence issue for people in Scotland is nuclear weapons. This Prime Minister, and unfortunately too many Labour Members, intend to vote for a replacement for the Trident system of weapons of mass destruction when the lifetime cost is more than £200 billion. Scottish National party Members will vote against, but how about a nuclear weapons consent Bill

that would require the UK Government to seek the consent of the Scottish Parliament for basing the Trident nuclear weapons system in Scotland? How about respecting the views of the people of Scotland on that subject?

Chris Stephens (Glasgow South West) (SNP): There is another defence issue. The workers in the Clyde shipyard have been told that 800 jobs are under threat because of delays to the Ministry of Defence procurement programme?

Angus Robertson: My hon. Friend is a doughty campaigner for his constituents on that and makes his case well. The Prime Minister is sitting on the Treasury Bench and I hope he was listening because, given what was promised in 2014 in the run-up to the Scottish referendum, it would be intolerable if he went back on the commitments made at that time.

On foreign affairs, I would like a return to something that was said not that long ago: that the UK should have an ethical foreign policy. I am profoundly troubled by the way in which the United Kingdom sells weapons that are used in armed conflict. The people who use the weapons are trained by the UK military, fly planes produced in the United Kingdom, and fire weapons made in the United Kingdom. Currently, that is being done by Saudi Arabia in Yemen. The time has come better to regulate weapons trading. The Government should have brought forward a weapons trading Bill but they have not. We should end our existing arms deals with Saudi Arabia, following the example of our European neighbours. We should have an ethical foreign policy and the Government should pursue it. Sadly, they do not.

Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Angus Robertson: I made a commitment that I would not emulate the leader of the Labour party by speaking for 41 minutes, and I am running the risk of doing so.

Mr Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman will be as expert in maths as he is in many other matters, but he has 13 minutes to spare.

Angus Robertson: Thank you for your correction, Mr Speaker. In that case, I am delighted to give way to the right hon. Gentleman.

Dr Julian Lewis: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman, who is, as always, very courteous in these matters.

The right hon. Gentleman began by talking about some of the areas where he might agree with the Prime Minister. Before he concludes, will he answer this question? Does he agree with the Prime Minister on the question of extremism and indoctrination in our country? The Scottish National party has a very good record in opposing Daesh and everything it stands for. Does he agree that what the Prime Minister said was encapsulated by the late, great philosopher, Sir Karl Popper, in the paradox of tolerance? He said that we must tolerate all but the intolerant, because if we tolerate the intolerant, the conditions for toleration disappear and the tolerant

go with them. Can the right hon. Gentleman reach across the party divide to support the Government on that, because it is important for all of us?

Angus Robertson: There are things in politics about which there should be no disagreement between mainstream political parties. Very much in the spirit of what the right hon. Gentleman says, I would hope the proposals the Government bring forward can garner the maximum support. That is why, only a few short weeks ago, I raised with the Prime Minister the death of an Ahmadiyya Muslim in Glasgow. That is why I went to visit the Ahmadiyya Muslim community here in London—incidentally, the oldest mosque in London is an Ahmadiyya Muslim mosque—and why I am meeting the British Jewish community next week. This is not just about issues of intolerance towards or between different parts of the Islamic community; it impacts on the UK Jewish community. Sadly, there are a whole range of other forms of intolerance for which we should have no tolerance. I hope the Prime Minister and his colleagues bring forward something that can command support across the House. We will look as closely at that as possible. A Conservative Member asked a very difficult question earlier, one with which we would all grapple: at what point does the radicalisation process become so problematic that the law is tripped?

There is also a really big challenge for all of us in this age of modern technology. There are many examples—this is a matter of public record—of people becoming radicalised very, very quickly. We know our security services are having to grapple—as, unfortunately, security services in Belgium and France have had to recently—with the dangers of terrorist group operations. The difference between flash and bang—between the thought and the terrorist act—is extremely short. These are very difficult questions for all of us. I hope this is an area on which we can find cross-party agreement.

I would like to conclude, Mr Speaker, without reaching the 41-minute mark. Sadly, the Queen's Speech is in many respects anaemic. It contains many pre-announced proposals for measures that have been carried over. There is a very strong focus on legislation for England and Wales. Of itself, that is not a bad thing—we wish our colleagues in England, Wales and the rest of the United Kingdom success—but it has crowded out alternatives, many of which have been proposed by the SNP.

Sammy Wilson: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Angus Robertson: I am concluding.

Surely what the UK requires is strong action on encouraging productivity and export growth in the economy; surely what the UK requires is support for the most vulnerable through progressive action on work and pensions; and surely what Scotland requires is the meaningful devolution we were promised. That is what the SNP's alternative Queen's Speech proposes. I commend it to the House.

4.48 pm

Mr Christopher Chope (Christchurch) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Moray (Angus Robertson) and to hear about his alternative

Queen's Speech. I was particularly interested in his proposal for a real home rule Bill for Scotland. What concerned me was that he made no reference to control by the Scottish people and the Scottish Parliament over their own fishing grounds or agriculture policy. Surely the logical position for those in Scotland who want home rule is that they want control over their own fishing and agriculture, which can be delivered only by voting leave on 23 June.

I was very much with the right hon. Gentleman on the concerns he expressed about maritime patrol aircraft. I have raised this issue in the House on a number of occasions. I do not think we have had a satisfactory explanation for how we are going to protect our borders against intruders, whether they are people traffickers, drug smugglers or whoever. It was a great mistake by the Government to disband the very effective maritime patrol system operating out of Hurn airport in my constituency.

I also congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Mrs Spelman). It is great to hear she has really dug into the idea of being a Back Bencher. "Don't give up the chance to make a difference", she says, "Seize the day". Indeed, that is exactly what I intend to do on 23 June.

At the heart of the Gracious Speech is the statement: "My Ministers will uphold the sovereignty of Parliament".

In my humble submission, that can be delivered only by leaving the EU, because our very membership undermines the sovereignty of Parliament. That is why my right hon. Friend the Lord Chancellor is so much in the Brexiteer campaign: he realises that only by leaving the EU can we truly retain our sovereignty and have control over our own laws.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bracknell (Dr Lee) on his speech, but he omitted to say that one of the great benefits of the referendum has been that the Government have been forced to come to an accommodation with the British Medical Association and the junior doctors over weekend working. The Government, understandably, are trying to clear the decks of obstacles in the run-up to the referendum.

I am delighted that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is still on the Front Bench. I congratulate and thank him for the joke against himself about the plague of locusts. It shows he has taken on board the very serious criticism, in a leader in *The Daily Telegraph*, over the way he had allowed his capacity for invective to extend to suggesting, through exaggeration, that the whole of our destiny was at stake in the referendum. This time last year, he was saying he could envisage our leaving the EU at his request. He said he would be quite prepared to do that if he did not get a sufficient deal. He went out to get a deal and he thinks the deal was sufficient, but in any event it was quite a marginal situation.

Some of the hyperbole coming from the people who want to remain in the EU—I say this with the greatest of respect to my right hon. Friend—suggests that at no time could it have been in the interests of the people of the UK to leave the EU. That must be manifestly absurd in the light of the fact that he was telling his 27 colleagues in the EU that he would be quite prepared to recommend that we leave the EU, with all the consequences that would flow. That is still one of the big unanswered questions in this referendum campaign. If he thinks it

[Mr Christopher Chope]

would so obviously be doom and disaster if we left the EU, why did he call a referendum or ever let it be thought he might support the leave campaign?

The Government's credibility has been damaged by a cavalier misuse of statistics designed to mislead the public in the referendum campaign. This time last year, I was arguing for an independent audit of the economic costs and benefits of the EU. In successive Sessions of Parliament, I have had a Bill providing for such a thing, and I put down a parliamentary question last June asking whether such an independent audit could be brought forward, but I did not get any substantive reply from the Treasury. Yet now we are told that the cost of leaving the European Union would be £4,300 per annum in terms of GDP per household. That rather good programme that the BBC is running at the moment poured scorn on that statistic—on Saturday, I think—when it said that GDP per household is not the same as income per household. In fact, GDP per household is some £66,000 per annum—and would every household not love to have £66,000 per annum on average? GDP per household is not the same as income per household, but it was being suggested that by 2030 every single household would have incurred a loss of that amount.

Then I looked at the leaflet that is part of the Electoral Commission brochure being circulated to every household as part of the referendum campaign and I saw, right at the top of the remain campaign propaganda, the assertion, quoting a CBI figure, that it would cost £91 billion if we were to leave the European Union. Because I was speaking last night to a group of accountants, I went and checked the origins of the figure produced in the remain leaflet. I found that, in March, PricewaterhouseCoopers did indeed do a study at the behest of the CBI. It is quite a substantial study, running to many pages, and is called "Leaving the EU: Implications for the UK economy". That document makes it clear that if we remain in the European Union, real UK GDP in 2030, the date chosen by the Treasury for these exemplifications, will be about 41% higher than it is at the moment and that if we leave, it will be about 39% higher: a marginal difference of about 1% or 2% in 2030—not tomorrow or the next day, but 15 years out. It is therefore absurd for the remain campaign to use scaremongering, fear-creation tactics by trying to present to the people a totally different picture, which contrasts with data that the CBI itself commissioned from an independent firm of chartered accountants of international repute.

It is against that background that this Gracious Speech must be addressed, because the people are pretty cynical and sceptical. They are pretty sceptical about the Government's claims that if we remain in the European Union, we will be able to retain control over our borders—implying that we have control at the moment over who comes to our country and who leaves from the European Union, which we manifestly do not. Even if those people have criminal convictions, we cannot deport them or prevent them from coming because of their human rights and the European Union's freedom of movement rules.

When we have assertions in the Gracious Speech that the Government are going to do lots of wonderful things, including building another 1 million houses, one has to ask the question: if we are that short of houses,

why are we contemplating having 3 million more migrants from the European Union by the year 2030? How will we be able to deliver on our manifesto pledge to reduce net migration to the tens of thousands when all the figures show that every year we get more than 300,000 coming in from the European Union? My challenge to my right hon. Friend—I would be happy to give way to the Prime Minister if he wishes to intervene on this point—is: how will we ever be able to deliver on that solemn manifesto promise unless we leave the European Union? I accept that when that promise was made, my right hon. Friend thought he would be able to get a much better deal from his 27 counterparts in the European Union, but having failed to secure that deal, how does he think we will ever be able to meet that important manifesto promise?

The Queen's Speech refers to more and fairer funding for schools. Speaking as a Member representing a constituency in Dorset, I know how unfair the current funding system is. Surely, we know that the tremendous pressure on our public services is caused by high levels of net migration, and the same is true for infrastructure. The Gracious Speech refers to improving infrastructure for businesses. When my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister visits Dorset, as he does on many occasions, he will know that the traffic conditions are dire—again because of the pressure of population and traffic on the roads, leading to high levels of congestion.

That feeds into pressure on the green belt. My constituents share the Conservative vision of the green belt being sacrosanct, but the erosion of the green belt through pressure from housing and industrial development is very great at the moment, and there is nothing in the Gracious Speech about fishing and agriculture, which are two important parts of the economy of the south-west of England.

A great deal in the Queen's Speech is premised on the fact that we are going to leave the European Union after the vote on 23 June. I am grateful to the Government for ensuring that it appears in the Gracious Speech. I have already referred to the issue of sovereignty, but the only way to improve the number and quality of housing is to ensure that we do not experience this incredible pressure on our public services—forced on us by uncontrolled immigration.

Let me make a few further points. The Queen's Speech says that

"further powers will be devolved to directly elected mayors".

Let me say to the Prime Minister that there is no appetite in Dorset for directly elected Mayors, although there is an appetite for genuinely devolved powers. The Government need to start to think about differentiating large urban areas where an elected Mayor may be appropriate, from largely rural areas where there is no appetite at all for such directly elected Mayors.

The reference in the Queen's Speech to "powers governing local bus services",

is rather vague. If the consequence will be the unravelling of the 1985 legislation—I was a member of the Standing Committee considering the Bill dealing with buses—that introduced choice and competition into this country's bus services, I would be extremely concerned. My constituents find that bus services are becoming less frequent, which is a real problem. They are prepared, they tell me—even if they are pensioners—to contribute something towards the cost of buses, so that they can

retain a service. A free bus pass is no use if there is no bus on which to use it. I hope we will be able to look at that issue when the buses Bill is debated.

There is considerable scepticism about the assertion that local authorities will be allowed to retain business rates. Does that mean that all the business rates raised in a local authority area can be retained by that local authority? The advice I have been given suggests that it does not mean that, and that if a high resource is coming in from business rates in one area, there will be an equalisation system to ensure that not all those business rates will accrue to the local people. That needs to be made clear.

The Queen's Speech also mentions provisions relating to our prisons. During the last Parliament, the current Leader of the Opposition and I were on the same trip to Denmark, when the Justice Committee visited Danish prisons. We noted that the regime there was so liberal that prisoners received a higher income than they would have received in their home countries in eastern Europe, whence they had come in order to commit crimes in Denmark. There is absolutely no deterrent for people who come to Denmark from another EU country where wage levels are much lower. The number of burglaries being committed by people from eastern Europe is a big issue in Denmark, but there is no deterrent, because, even when those people are incarcerated, the penalties they pay are low, and the income they receive for working in prison is greater than the income they would receive at home.

We talk about the need to get more resources into our prison system and reduce the pressures on our prisons. Why can we not do more to ensure that foreign offenders can be deported rather than filling up our prisons? We have tried to make progress in our negotiations in the European Union, but so far we have failed. When we look at the small print in the Gracious Speech, we see a great deal that will be able to blossom and flourish when the people vote to leave the European Union on 23 June.

5.6 pm

Meg Hillier (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/Co-op): I did not intend to be drawn on the issue of Europe, but I feel provoked by the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr Chope) first to declare my firm support for remaining in Europe, and secondly to make it clear that remaining will protect the security of citizens. I spent three years negotiating on home affairs for the then Labour Government, and, in particular, on security and safety issues. I firmly believe that if countries are at the table, they can make a difference, as we have done and continue to do, but that if a country is not there, it cannot exert influence. If we vote "out", the very next day we will be out of all the discussions that are necessary.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the work done by the National Audit Office at the behest of the Public Accounts Committee, and to the Committee's subsequent work in examining the costs. That is, perhaps, close to the audit that he was seeking. It clearly shows that the net cost of the United Kingdom's contribution to the European Union is the equivalent of 1.4% of the UK Government's total departmental spending. I believe that that is a small price to pay for the benefits of being part of a wider community, including the peace and security that that brings.

I believe that, as a whole, the Gracious Speech is rather short on detail. I hope to outline some of the issues that I think Ministers and Departments should consider as they flesh out their plans. There are, of course, headlines when Her Majesty reads out her speech, but what worries me, on the basis of my five years as a member of the Public Accounts Committee and one year as the elected Chair, is that there is often not much more in the speech behind the headlines. I hope that the Government will heed our concerns about good policy planning, because all too frequently we have seen policy built on sand. A political pledge may be made in a press release, for instance, containing no detail and, crucially, no proper cost and impact assessments.

Let me deal with some of the specifics in the speech. If the Government finally get it right with their pledge to provide high-speed broadband throughout the country, I shall welcome that, but I must confess to a slight weary cynicism, because we have heard it all before. The Public Accounts Committee has expressed concern about the use of taxpayers' money to fund, in particular, rural broadband. The low-hanging fruit was taken first, and many innovative technologies were priced out of the market. There are numerous "not spots" all over the country. The policy has been so successful that the Government have had to include it again in the Gracious Speech. Like the Public Accounts Committee, I shall be watching the position closely—both nationally and in my Shoreditch constituency, the home of Tech City and Silicon Roundabout, where, believe it or not, there are still so many "not spots" and problems with speed that businesses relocate to gain access to faster speeds, especially for uploading purposes. It is striking that the former editor of *Tech City News*, the web news vehicle for that area, had to use his home address to upload the video he recorded each week to round up the local news because his office, just off Old Street, did not have the broadband width to allow it to be uploaded there. It is important that, as the Government roll out the measure, they ensure that alternative providers get a look-in. Therefore, I welcome the access to land and buildings that seems to be indicated in the publicity, but we will be watching and we will no doubt look at the issue more closely.

Unsurprisingly—it was well heralded—the Queen's Speech included measures on devolution and directly elected mayors. As a Member for the borough of Hackney in London, I fully recognise that a directly elected mayor can be a very good thing. I pay tribute to my colleague, the Mayor of Hackney, Jules Pipe, who was directly elected mayor for the first time in 2002 and who has overseen stability and good public service delivery in our borough. However, in the rush to devolution—it is going very fast—it is vital that it be properly thought through.

We heard from the hon. Member for Christchurch, and we hear it from other Members, that there is concern in some areas about the need, or not, for a directly elected mayor. Although I recognise that the Government, as they are devolving power, money and responsibility, need to have someone accountable for that, other models may work in different places. Perhaps one size does not fit all.

The question remains: what powers will be passed down? We had a hearing recently with the permanent secretary at the Department for Communities and Local Government, who indicated strongly that, once mayors

[Meg Hillier]

are elected with a manifesto, the negotiations over the powers they have may be reopened. How will that devolution be properly funded? Who will watch taxpayers' money? We know that in the tri-boroughs—Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea and Hammersmith and Fulham—there was a discussion about having a local public accounts committee. That sounds like a great idea—I am in favour of public accounts committees, as you may understand, Mr Speaker—but we know that, for example, in Oxfordshire, the Prime Minister's own county, when the council sought external auditors for its audit committee, it could find only one person. If in the whole of Oxfordshire, with the talent pool there, it could find only one person willing to be a lay person on the audit committee, that is a concern. There is also concern about resourcing and how we watch how taxpayers' money is spent.

There is the issue of the retention of business rates. How will that work? In my area, we stand to gain quite a lot, but there is concern about redistribution to the areas where there are not businesses that would be able to accrue the business rates for the local tax payer. However, watching taxpayers' money is key. Who decides what amount of money is right, for example, for Manchester? Once the Treasury has decided on the amount, it is for Manchester to come back and say it needs more. Who is to be the arbiter of that? It cannot be the National Audit Office in every case—it just does not have the capacity to look at that local level. We have lost the Audit Commission. Those of us who took part in the pre-legislative scrutiny warned that a lot was being thrown out when the commission was abolished. We have concerns and we will return to the issue as a Committee.

The Gracious Speech mentions mental health and the criminal justice system. My constituency hosts the John Howard Centre, a medium secure unit for people with serious mental health issues. I have spoken to patients in the unit who fear going back to prison because of the lack of mental health support in the mainstream prison service. Therefore, I wish the Government's reforms of the prison service well. I also represent the Howard League for Penal Reform. I know that it will want the reforms to succeed, too. Again, the devil is in the detail and in the funding, of course. There has been a cut of about 20% in the budget of the Ministry of Justice. Eighteen per cent. of that 20% cut has been in prisons. We also know that there is a shortage of prison officers, so I will watch that one with caution.

The northern powerhouse is again mentioned in the Queen's Speech. The Government heralds that, but we know from our work on the Committee that the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills is planning to move its policy team from Sheffield to that well known northern powerhouse—Victoria Street SW1. The team will join the 97% of civil servants working on the northern powerhouse who are already based in London. I may be a London MP but I know that that does not make sense. It is vital that the Government get the best input from around the nations and regions of the UK to ensure that policy is not London-centric.

David Rutley (Macclesfield) (Con): I understand the point that the hon. Lady is making, but does she not appreciate that the whole point of the devolution thrust

is to give more power back to the combined authorities and to local partnerships? That is what we are delivering, regardless of what happens to a small policy team or strategy team.

Meg Hillier: My point is that this is a litmus test for how seriously devolution is being taken. Whenever senior civil servants appearing before the Committee talk about devolving powers down, we always ask them how many civil servants will move from Whitehall to the regions. We ask them what the total percentage will be of the Whitehall civil servants who are going to shift, even if this does not involve the same people. If Whitehall is shrinking as a result of devolving powers and responsibilities to local regions and nations, we should see a reduction in the civil service. If not, we should seek an explanation for why that is not the case. We have seen some very fuzzy thinking on this, and the Committee is watching the situation closely.

The Investigatory Powers Bill has once again been mentioned in a Gracious Speech, as it did not make enough progress in the last Session. I strongly believe that we need to keep up with technology in order to keep citizens safe. In principle, therefore, I support the Bill, but I sincerely hope that the Home Secretary will listen and respond to calls from all the Opposition parties for appropriate governance and safeguards so that this legislation can gain cross-party support. We must unite against terror and those who wish our country ill, and we need to work together in that spirit to ensure that the Bill is the best bit of legislation it can be and that it achieves all its aims.

Talking about security brings me to the issue of tackling extremism and radicalisation. I do not believe that this can be done from Whitehall. It is important that Whitehall should set the framework, but the best way of doing this is to work at grassroots level. We have had the Prevent strategy in the past, but we need to ensure that we really work hard to deliver this, this time round. We need to do this in a spirit of unity, and it has been shocking to me over the past few weeks and months that senior Government Ministers—even the Prime Minister himself, from the Dispatch Box—have been casting aspersions on the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan. That is beyond the pale. It is unacceptable that someone in his position has been pilloried in such a way when he is part of the solution and certainly nothing to do with the problem. I therefore hope that we can now move forward in a spirit of greater unity, because we need to tackle these issues as part of our long-term strategy to make our country secure.

The three main issues in the Gracious Speech that I wish to talk about are housing, health and education. Obviously, I am as concerned about what has not been included as I am about what has been included in the sketchy details. In the Gracious Speech, the Government are making a commitment to building 1 million homes, but let us replay what happened in the last Parliament. At the beginning of the last Parliament, the Government committed to releasing public land to build new homes. When the Public Accounts Committee looked into this matter five years on, however, the Government could not say how much the land had been sold for, how many homes had been built on the land or whether there had been any appreciable value for money for the taxpayer. You really couldn't make it up.

The Public Accounts Committee remains concerned about the pledge in this Parliament to release public land for home building. It is interesting that there is such a definite figure in the Gracious Speech, given that Ministers do not consider it necessary to count such numbers as an outcome. One of my colleagues on the Committee has pointed out that none of our constituents wants to live in a potential home; they want to live in real ones. We should not only count the homes that are being built but ensure that they are the right ones, and that means allowing local authorities to determine what is necessary in their own areas.

The Gracious Speech mentions tackling poverty and the causes of deprivation in order to give every child the best start in life. I represent a borough that is in the top 11% for child poverty and I believe strongly that the main foundation for tackling poverty and giving people the best start in life is housing. A stable home is a basic right. The recently passed Housing and Planning Act 2016 will do huge damage to my city and my constituency. It pulls the rug out from under Londoners on low and moderate incomes. It takes social housing away from local authorities to pay for the right to buy. In my own borough, 700 such properties will have to be sold in the next five years to pay for the right to buy for housing association tenants.

I do not begrudge people wanting to own their own home or having the opportunity to do so, but that must not happen at the expense of others who need affordable quality homes that are permanent and secure to live in. There is also pay to stay, which was introduced to push up rents for people on a household income of £40,000 a year. To some hon. Members, that might sound like a lot of money, but in London it does not stretch very far at all. The average property price in London is now £691,969. It has gone up about £7,000 since I last raised the matter in the House a few weeks ago. There has been an 85% increase in the past six years.

As of February this year, the median rent for a one-bedroom property in my borough was £1,399 per calendar month. To afford that, people would require a gross household income of £48,000. I do not know where people who are expected to pay and stay are supposed to go. They could not afford to buy their own home and they could not afford to rent privately. That particularly affects a number of pensioners in my constituency. There is also the problem of overcrowded households. Adult children who cannot leave because of those prices keep the household income ticking over. They are paying not for huge palaces, but often for overcrowded accommodation.

Under the Housing and Planning Act 2016 there is a proposal to replace, one for one, homes sold under right to buy, but that is not necessarily like for like. The replacement homes could be of a different size, in a different location or even in a different city, and of a different tenure. It is not good enough for the Government to sit back and allow that to happen. I hope they will work with Sadiq Khan, the Mayor of London, to come up with a work-around—a London solution—because the Act will not work as it is. I am fed up with hearing Ministers and the Prime Minister talk about starter homes being the solution. Starter homes in London would need a household income of £71,000 on average to be affordable. The average household income in my constituency is £33,000 and there are many households

with an income much lower than that. Government policies are fuelling house prices, but not providing a solution.

The figures underline the crucial need to sort out housing in my borough, where 11,000 people are on the council housing register. In 2014-15, 1,338 social rented homes were allocated. At that rate people will have to wait a very long time. There are 2,286 households in temporary accommodation. My surgeries are the busiest they have ever been in the 20 or so years since I was elected. I thought the situation could not get worse when I was visiting people in bed-and-breakfast accommodation twenty-something years ago. It is worse now. There are people living in hostels for a year or 18 months and others being relocated a long way away from schools and family, increasingly having no hope and no security. I do not know where people will go.

I speak also for people in private sector accommodation. I meet people in good jobs but not well-paid jobs—people in their 40s who have rented privately quite happily all their lives, and who suddenly find themselves priced out. They cannot buy and they cannot rent. Heaven forbid that they are on any housing benefit. People on low incomes in London require some housing benefit to pay the rent, but landlords do not want to look such people in the eye. Where do those people go? We are hollowing out London. People on low and moderate incomes cannot afford to remain in London. That must be tackled. The Gracious Speech could have and should have included a clear outline of how the Government will work with London. I hope the Housing Minister will take the matter up.

In the Gracious Speech there is the promise of a seven-day NHS, but in a series of reports the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee have concluded, on a cross-party basis, that the NHS budget is far too squeezed. It is like a balloon—if it is squeezed in one place, the bulge moves somewhere else. Earlier this year we saw acute trusts nearly bursting, with three quarters of them in deficit. The proposal for a seven-day NHS has not been costed. NHS commissioners and providers in 2014-15 had a deficit of £471 million and the Public Accounts Committee concluded:

“There is not yet a convincing plan in place for closing the £22 billion efficiency gap and avoiding a ‘black hole’ in NHS finances.” There are not enough GPs to meet demand and NHS England does not have enough information on demand, activity or capacity to support decisions on general practice—another conclusion from the PAC—and a target of 4% efficiency savings for trusts is unrealistic and has caused long-term damage to trusts’ finances.

Workforce planning is dire, with a 5.9% shortfall in clinical staff nationally. That masks a number of regional variations. There is a vacancy rate of more than 7% for nurses, midwives and health visitors, and a vacancy rate of 7% for ambulance staff. We have seen the fiasco of the handling of the junior doctors contracts. If the Government are planning to legislate on a seven-day NHS, they must do the maths, which are pretty basic. It is about time somebody gave the Health Secretary a simple calculator. We see from a number of reports that GP services are being squeezed and acute trusts are bursting. Increased demand for specialist services will squeeze acute trusts even more. There is an over-reliance on expensive agency staff and locums. The basic maths is not being done and much more needs to be done to ensure that this proposal is deliverable.

[Meg Hillier]

Currently, the seven-day NHS is a notion, a promise, a hope, but the evidence shows that it is not planned, it is not funded and it is not realistic. The Government must address these fundamentals. I think that there is cross-party support on both sides of the House for our national health service. It is something we all treasure and love, and that we all know is there for us when we need it. But it is not going to be there if we allow this approach to continue. There has to be a better approach.

Education was mentioned in the Gracious Speech. My borough needs no lessons in educational excellence. Thanks to the London Challenge, decent funding, committed teachers and headteachers, and the vision of our mayor, Jules Pipe, we have some of the best schools in the country, and a number that are ranked in the top 1% nationally. When I was selected to run for the seat 12 years ago, I was asked what I thought about university tuition fees. I pointed out that so few pupils in Hackney went to university that it really was a bit of an academic question in my borough. Now we see scores of young people going to Oxbridge and Russell Group universities. It has been a major success.

But I really worry now. It is easy for the Government to talk about raising excellence for all, but London is under threat. When they talk about fair funding, what they really mean is reducing funding in London. That is unjust, foolish and short-sighted, and it risks putting back the progress made by and for London's young people. Nationally there are lessons to be learnt from London, but we must not hammer London while trying to resolve issues in the rest of the country.

There is a lot to look at in this Queen's Speech, and my Committee will be busily examining it, but I really hope that the Government will learn lessons from some of their policies, particularly on housing and the funding of the health service, and that they will work out a better way of having a stable financial footing for these policies, so that where policies are good, they are deliverable, and where they are not good, we get a chance to amend them, and not just through secondary legislation, but in primary legislation that is debatable and amendable in this House, and the Lords must not be so neutered. The penultimate paragraph in the Queen's Speech talks about the primacy of the House of Commons, but it is really vital that the experts in the Lords get their say too, to ensure that these policies are better. It is no proud thing for a Government to introduce policies that increase poverty, deprivation and inequality. I fear that, without proper scrutiny and detail, that is what will happen as a result of this Queen's Speech.

5.27 pm

Sir Edward Garnier (Harborough) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Hackney South and Shoreditch (Meg Hillier). I might not agree with her commentary on the Queen's Speech or the conclusions she reached, but I think that the thoughtful way in which she approached the several subjects she discussed was commendable. It was a commendable way to debate the Queen's Speech, particularly from the Opposition Benches, because people tend to listen to Opposition Members when they speak carefully, calmly and without hectoring. She certainly was listened to by me, and I am grateful and very happy to follow her.

I am also happy to take this opportunity to thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Mrs Spelman) and my hon. Friend the Member for Bracknell (Dr Lee) for starting our deliberations this afternoon with two first-class speeches. The speeches were different in style, but both were hugely amusing and insightful. They are to be congratulated on what they had to say and the manner in which they said it.

All Queen's Speeches can be something of a curate's egg; they tend to include a bit of detail, a bit of general aspiration and a bit of

"Other measures will be laid before you."

I do not suppose that this Queen's Speech is an exception to that rule. However, I am keen to highlight three areas that appeal to me and that I think will be of interest to the country as a whole. It does not matter to me that the Bills on which I want to concentrate have a bearing only on England and Wales, because I think that the theory and public policy behind them should be of interest right across the United Kingdom.

The first issue that I want to deal with is the anti-corruption summit in London and the follow-on legislation that will tackle corruption, money laundering and tax evasion. There is absolutely no question but that for far too long the police and public policy commentators have not given enough attention to white-collar crime, as it is sometimes called. Nobody dies, there is no blood and guts, and there are no obvious victims in so many cases of corruption, money laundering and tax evasion, but none the less these are serious crimes. If somebody went into a bank with a sawn-off shotgun and stole £10 million, we would all get rather exercised about it, and in the event of a prosecution and a conviction, we would expect the offender to be given a pretty handy sentence. Yet there seems to be a rather perverse sort of admiration for people who, through computer crime or through other clever tactics, launder money, evade tax or commit acts of corruption, in this country or abroad.

All these financial and economic crimes need to be borne down on with a sense of purpose, because they not only produce victims in this country—we see pension funds ripped open and lives ruined as a consequence—but damage the developing economies in countries where corruption is, to some extent, endemic. It was interesting for me to attend the Marlborough House talks last week. I did not go to the main summit addressed by the Prime Minister but to the event the day before addressed by the noble and learned Baroness Scotland, now Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, at which a whole host of people, including the President of Nigeria, spoke with one voice about the need to tackle corruption, not only because it is wrong in itself, but because corruption in their countries damages their development, damages their economy, and makes the lives of their people, particularly poorer people, altogether more difficult. I welcome the onset of this new legislation, not least because it ties into something that I did when I was briefly in government, which was to introduce deferred prosecution agreements that allowed corporate malefactors to be dealt with pragmatically and effectively.

I am not so happy about the second thing that I want to draw attention to, which is the sentence in the Queen's Speech that reads:

"Proposals will be brought forward for a British Bill of Rights."

This idea of a British Bill of Rights has been knocking around the lampshade like a demented moth for some little while, and it may well be that if it has an armour-plated head, it can carry on knocking itself around the lampshade for a good while longer. I really do think it is a waste of intellectual and political energy for this—to mix my metaphors—dead horse to be revived. Of course the European convention on human rights and its application in our own courts, and in the Strasbourg Court, can occasionally be rather annoying, but that is not the point. The point of the convention, the point of the Strasbourg Court and the point of applying the convention law in our own courts, right across the United Kingdom, is to ensure that the courts can protect the interests of the people—the citizens.

I am not going to get too apoplectic about this, because I find that life is far too exciting already without getting apoplectic about a British Bill of Rights, and I will wait until the consultation is over—perhaps my obituary will have been written by then—before I deconstruct it. However, I urge the Government to make the consultation very thorough and to consider long and hard whether this is worth the political damage and in-fighting that it may well cause. I think it was the right hon. Member for Moray (Angus Robertson) who said that there is no majority in this House, let alone in the other place, for a wholesale attack on the structure of human rights in this country. I suspect that he is right, but let us see what the Government come up with when they have finished consulting. I wish them all the best in their endeavours.

To come on to the meat of what I want to say—I promise to take just a little time, not far too long—I congratulate the Government on their prison reform proposals. One of the things in which I have become interested in the past 11 years is prison reform. When my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister became Leader of the Opposition in 2005 and rearranged the Opposition Front Bench, he invited me to become the shadow Minister for prisons, then shadowing the Home Office. I think that the right hon. Member for Delyn (Mr Hanson), who is in the Chamber, was the then Minister for prisons; if not, he certainly took on that role shortly after I became the shadow Minister.

The Prime Minister asked me to find out what was going on in the prisons of England and Wales, because the prisons world is, except to the few enthusiasts about such issues, an entirely secret world. Over the course of the next three or four years, I set about visiting about 65 of the 140 prisons, young offender institutions and secure training units in England and Wales. In all those prisons and places of custody, I found dedicated prison officers and hard-working senior management teams, including prison governors. They were all interested in doing a good job, but unfortunately the good things that went on in some prisons were not replicated in others. There was no general pattern of a sensible application of policy.

The inevitable problem that one saw as one went from prison to prison—this was quite easy to see whether one visited the big Victorian prisons of Manchester, Leeds, Wandsworth, Pentonville or Wormwood Scrubs, or more modern prisons such as Gartree in my constituency or Glen Parva, a YOI that straddles the border of my constituency and that of South Leicestershire—was that of overcrowding. Although the Government's proposed

measures are entirely laudable and welcome, nothing of lasting value seriously can be done to reform and improve the condition of our prisons and prisoners—and thus to make them fitter to come out into the community and lead sensible and straight lives so that they can look after their dependants and themselves, get a job and become tax-paying members of society—unless we stop overcrowding our prisons.

Overcrowded prisons lead to churn. Someone sentenced in Canterbury Crown court for a particular offence might go straight to Canterbury prison, but probably not if it still specialises in overseas prisoners, in which case they will probably go to a relatively local prison. If Canterbury Crown court sends 10 or 15 people to prison every day and the local prison does not have sufficient space to house the inflow of just-sentenced prisoners, they have to be moved from Canterbury to Lewes or Maidstone, but how do those prisons fit in the 15, 30 and 45 prisoners that have been sent there? They remove 15, 30 and 45 of their own prisoners and shove them down the line, so there is a metaphorical jumbo jet of prisoners going around England, moving from prison to prison. One could say, "Well, that's just bad luck." However, their records and education certificates do not move with them, so when Prisoner Jones goes from Canterbury to Lewes to Exeter to Bristol to Birmingham, his medical and educational records are three or four prisons behind him. It is bananas, it is incompetent, it is inefficient, and it is a waste of life and public money.

We do that because in the past, we had Governments who were good at talking about prison reform, but did not get round to doing it. Now we must, and I think we have a Government who will, because the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Justice are genuinely interested in this issue. If the Prime Minister, who has said that he will not serve another term after this Parliament, leaves nothing behind him other than real proof that what we do to prisoners and what we do within prisons can allow our prisoners to emerge from prison as better citizens—off drugs, able to read and write, having received the mental health treatment they required and fit for a job—he will have done a really wonderful thing.

I am biased. First, as I said a moment ago, in 2005 I became the shadow prisons Minister and went on a literal and metaphorical journey to find out what was going on in prisons. I also researched and wrote a paper called "Prisons with a Purpose", which I hope has informed, to some extent, the discussion we are now having on prison reform. It is inevitable that, as Front Benches change, other people come in and want to do things their way, rather than the way of their predecessors, but I like to think, in a rather self-regarding way, that the paper I wrote has proved to be valuable. If, unconsciously or consciously, my successors have drawn on it to produce good policy, that is a good thing.

The other reason I am biased is that when I came out of government in September 2012, I was fortunate enough to be invited to become a patron of Unlock, a prisons charity, and a little while later I became a trustee of the Prison Reform Trust. It is a happy coincidence that my hon. Friend the Minister for Children and Families is sitting on the Front Bench, because his brother James has just become the chairman of the Prison Reform Trust, and the name Timpson and doing good things for prisons and prisoners run together. In a

[*Sir Edward Garnier*]

number of prisons—possibly in Liverpool and Manchester, and certainly in Wandsworth—Timpson workshops train guys who can then go out and work.

As General Ramsbotham, the unlikely but marvellous inspector of prisons, said, the three things that a released prisoner needs are a strong relationship—whether with their family, wife, husband or partner—somewhere to live and a job. The Timpson trick is to allow ex-offenders and ex-prisoners to set up shop, run it on their own and handle money. The business trusts those people and, in return, they pay back by earning money, supporting their families and providing a service to their customers. Yes, of course, the odd one fails, but the risk is worth taking. I hope the Government will feel encouraged by that example, and that they will feel that the public attitude towards prisons, prisoners and prison reform is not as conservative, with a small c, as old-fashioned or as ill-considered as many would have us believe. There is a fund of enthusiasm for good work in prisons, and I urge the Government to push hard for it and not to be upset by the occasional recidivist or the occasional disaster, because the overall direction of travel is good.

Barry Gardiner (Brent North) (Lab): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman take this opportunity to pay tribute to the mother of the Minister for Children and Families? I believe that she recently passed away. She was the primary driving force behind the amazing things that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has just talked about.

Sir Edward Garnier: Of course I will—I do not want to make this a Timpson-fest, but I am happy to pay tribute to the Minister's mother. I was fortunate enough to meet her, and I was very sad when she died, as I know my hon. Friend the Minister obviously was.

That family's story, which goes beyond the fostering of a lot of disadvantaged children and the setting up of workshops in prisons, demonstrates what private enterprises, charities and individuals can do to turn things around. If the Government can harness that work and borrow the enthusiasm and spirit of volunteers, charities, professionals in the probation world and so on, they can produce an understanding that going to prison is not the solution for a prisoner but part of a much longer journey. I have been a Crown court recorder and sentenced people to prison, and from reading their histories I know that they are often the children of prisoners or from broken families. They are often mentally ill, and they are largely illiterate and unable to function. I have sentenced people to community sentences who do not even know how to tell the time. They are told, "You are required to be at such-and-such a place at 10 o'clock next Friday, where you will meet the probation officer," and they ask, "How many sleeps is that?" It is as rum as that.

I hope that the Government will push this agenda on with great enthusiasm. There are charities that do good work for the mentally ill and for prisoners, but we need to join things up so that ex-servicemen, for example, who are under the care of the Ministry of Defence and get into trouble when they leave the Army, can be properly treated by that Department and by the Department of Health, and do not fall through the gaps between the

departmental budgets. As I have said, we have to deal with overcrowding and stop the churn, and we must be braver and have more releases on temporary licence—that issue was spoken about over the weekend.

I commend my hon. Friend the Member for Bromley and Chislehurst (Robert Neill), the Chair of the Select Committee on Justice, for the Committee's report. It sounds the alarm bells and tells a story, but that story has been told and told and told. Now it must stop being told and something must be done. I hope that when the next Queen's Speech is given this time next year, Her Majesty will not need to say:

"My Government will legislate to reform prisons and courts to give individuals a second chance",

because that work will already have started.

I will speak finally about another pet subject of mine. The law on sentencing in this country is incredibly complicated—I would say impenetrable. I resigned as a Crown court recorder because when I went on a judges' refresher course last October at Warwick University, I discovered that three pieces of legislation were passed at the end of the 2010 to 2015 Parliament that I had never heard of—and I follow criminal justice legislation carefully. Ludicrous. Ludicrous of me, one may say. We must stop treating this place as a criminal justice sausage machine, concentrate, and pass sensible legislation that does not repeat itself, and allows the courts to do justice, protect the public and enable wrong to be set right. I hope that one way in which we can do that is by codifying the criminal sentencing law in one easy, though no doubt big, volume so that judges can see what the law is, what has been amended, what has been repealed, what is still there and what is not yet in force, rather than having to look at 25 different books or internet sites to find out the correct sentence. That is not much to ask of the Government, and perhaps they could start.

5.51 pm

Mr David Hanson (Delyn) (Lab): I appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the Gracious Speech debate. Like the right hon. and learned Member for Harborough (Sir Edward Garnier), I pay tribute to the right hon. Member for Meriden (Mrs Spelman) and the hon. Member for Bracknell (Dr Lee) for their contributions. It is a tough gig to undertake, but they did so with aplomb.

Today's debate is very general, so I want to make some general comments before focusing on the same issues that the right hon. and learned Member for Harborough raised about prisons. As ever with a Gracious Speech, there are things on which we can agree. I look forward to the measures on tackling radicalisation in prison and generally. I think that they will contribute to putting in place a framework to reduce radicalisation and to stop young people from all communities turning to warped views of the Muslim faith, or indeed, as happened in Mold in my constituency, radical activity based on a national socialist view of the world. It is important to consider those measures in detail and to support them.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney South and Shoreditch (Meg Hillier), I have a lot of time for the Investigatory Powers Bill, not least because I have spent three months considering the draft Bill in detail with several hon. Members and putting in place measures to ensure that the state can have access to the information

that it needs to stop paedophilia, terrorism, money laundering and other criminal activities, but also building in protections. The Bill was before the House in the previous Session and I look forward to its progressing with some amendments in this Session.

I cannot argue—nobody could—with measures to support and honour the military covenant. As a former Northern Ireland Minister, I look forward to further progress on the Stormont House agreement. The Prime Minister's activities on anti-corruption and money laundering are welcome. We will see the proof of the pudding in due course, but there is broad support in the House for tackling tax evasion and corruption.

Although I am an Opposition Member, I will not dismiss all aspects of the Gracious Speech, because there are things in it that we should examine. However, some issues leap out about which we have real concerns. The right hon. and learned Member for Harborough coined a phrase, which will become welcome across the House: the current British Bill of Rights is “a demented moth” banging its head against a light.

Sir Edward Garnier: Lampshade.

Mr Hanson: The right hon. and learned Gentleman corrects me. I want to ensure that the facts are correct, so I take his point. I share his concern that we will throw away the Human Rights Act, which a Labour Government passed in the 1997-2001 Parliament, and replace it with a British Bill of Rights, which throws away our commitments to the European Court in Strasbourg. That does not just throw away our commitment to being part of the wider European Union; the European Court of Human Rights covers countries that are currently not in the European Union, such as Russia, where we face potential challenges. We are sending the wrong signal by ditching the Human Rights Act.

Hywel Williams (Arfon) (PC): I agree with the right hon. Gentleman and the right hon. Member for Moray (Angus Robertson) that ditching the Human Rights Act would be a comfort to would-be tinpot despots throughout Europe. It should be resisted, and this party will certainly do so.

Mr Hanson: On this occasion—and on the day Plaid Cymru supported the Labour First Minister in Wales—I am grateful for Plaid Cymru's support. The issue jumps out of the Gracious Speech as one that will cause political controversy. The voice of the right hon. and learned Member for Harborough is therefore valuable because it sends a signal to the Government that the Bill will not have an easy passage.

The Gracious Speech also covers strengthening the economy to deliver security for working people, increasing the life chances of the most disadvantaged and supporting the development of the northern powerhouse. The Government have support on all three issues, but I ask them to consider what they mean in practice. In my part of the world, we have a claimant count of 2.8% of the population; 23.6% of the population are deemed as being incapacitated, and unemployment is 4.8%. We have major challenges in the steel industry, and with zero-hours contracts and second bedroom occupancy—the so-called bedroom tax. We still have 690,000 people living in poverty in Wales. If the Government are serious

about some of the issues that they claim to be serious about in the Gracious Speech, they need to consider some real policy changes to support business and industry, work with the National Assembly and tackle poverty, which is partly caused by current Government policy. In my constituency and elsewhere, poverty is increasing because of Government policy on benefits and unemployment, while taxes for some of the richest people in our society are cut.

If the Government are serious about the northern powerhouse, they need to work closely with the Mersey Dee Alliance in north-east Wales and north-west England to ensure that we get the benefits from whatever the northern powerhouse means. I am pleased to see the Minister for Children and Families in his place. He knows the importance of Crewe and HS2 to north-east Wales. He knows the importance of electrification of the line from Crewe to Chester and onwards to north Wales. He will also know the importance of direct links to Manchester airport to ensure that not only Cheshire but north Wales benefits from the northern powerhouse, and he knows that it is important to reopen the Halton curve quickly to link north Wales to Liverpool airport and Liverpool. Those are all infrastructure projects that are technically badged “the northern powerhouse”. I am still not sure what the northern powerhouse means to the people of Cheshire and north Wales, particularly Flintshire in my constituency, but if it is to mean something, the Government need to flesh out carefully the finances and the long-term infrastructure projects that benefit Cheshire and north-east Wales and contribute to supporting the cities of Manchester, Liverpool, Sheffield, Leeds and others that are critical to the economic success of the north.

If the decision goes wrong on 23 June and we leave the European Union, the north will be particularly hit by that loss of European influence. I am pleased that the referendum is mentioned in the Gracious Speech and I hope that there will be a yes vote on 23 June.

Louise Haigh (Sheffield, Heeley) (Lab): The decision to close the BIS office in Sheffield and move it to central London has already been mentioned, and my right hon. Friend talks about the infrastructure projects necessary for the northern powerhouse to succeed. Does he agree that senior civil servant and policy-making jobs must be in the north and across the regions, so that they can be the eyes and ears of the northern powerhouse and deliver those vital projects?

Mr Hanson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that point, and it is important that the northern powerhouse is not just about the Chancellor of the Exchequer in Tatton. That appears to be the northern powerhouse, but in my view it must be backed up and supported by civil servants, and I support my hon. Friend's wish to maintain a strong presence in Sheffield and the north. North-east Wales looks to Liverpool and Manchester as much as it does to Cardiff for economic growth and activity, and we need cross-regional support on infrastructure projects, and people on hand to work with that.

Those are my initial observations on important issues, but I wish to focus on the points about prisons that were raised by the right hon. and learned Member for Harborough. He was gracious enough to acknowledge that for two years and one month I was prisons Minister

[Mr Hanson]

when he was the shadow Minister, so I hope that I speak with some experience of dealing with what are difficult challenges in the prison system.

In the Gracious Speech the Justice Secretary indicated that there will be a prisons Bill, and I look forward to that—perhaps I may even make a bid for pre-legislative scrutiny by the Justice Committee, on which I sit. The Bill as trailed so far suggests that there will be a lot of discussion about the autonomy of prison governors to consider a range of issues, and six prisons have been identified by the Government to pilot and trail those reforms. We have prisons with “potential for reform”—whatever that might mean—and the potential for new-build prisons. That comes on a day when the Coates review has announced two statistics that put into context the points made by the right hon. and learned Member for Harborough. For example, today’s review shows that 42% of adult prisoners were excluded from school, and 24% of adult prisoners currently in the prison estate spent some or all of their time as young people in care before they reached the prison system.

Long-term, deep-seated issues have been highlighted by the Coates review and need to be examined by the Prison Service as part of the prisons Bill, but that raises some questions. I will not rule out support for the Bill—I do not yet know what my hon. Friends on the Opposition Front Bench will think about it—but we must test what it will mean in practice, and now is as good a time as any to do that. What real autonomies will prison governors have at a local level? Will they have autonomy over pay and conditions? If so, that would be a matter of great concern. Will they have autonomy over procurement, education and employment practices? What autonomies will they have, and how will they exercise them in the Prison Service when the Ministry of Justice in central London is managing the prison population and sector as a whole—the hon. and learned Gentleman mentioned many of the pressures on prison population movements.

Who will judge prison governors and monitor their activity? What benchmarks will we set on that prison service, and how will we judge and monitor them? What will be the relationship with the chief inspector of prisons? What outcomes are expected from the six potential reform prisons? How will we judge whether prison governors have made a difference, particularly given that many prisoners in many prisons—I will speak about Wandsworth prison in a moment—have mental health problems or long-standing drug or alcohol problems. Many prisoners had long-standing unemployment problems before being imprisoned, and perhaps do not spend sufficient time in prison to benefit from schemes such as the Timpson scheme in Liverpool, which I had the pleasure of opening in 2006 or 2007 with the brother of the Minister for Children and Families, the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Edward Timpson). It is a great scheme—I cannot walk past a Timpson establishment without wondering whether the person working there has been trained and supported by the family and firm. [Interruption.] I do go in sometimes as well.

Mr Stewart Jackson (Peterborough) (Con): The right hon. Gentleman speaks with great expertise and eloquence on these issues, about which he knows a great deal.

Notwithstanding the correct decision of the previous Labour Government to move to a social investment bond at HMPs Doncaster and Peterborough, in 13 years his Government failed to tackle recidivism among prisoners serving short sentences. Why was that?

Mr Hanson: I do not wish to get into too much of a party-political debate with the hon. Gentleman, but recidivism and reoffending did fall. It did not fall to the extent I would have wanted, but it did fall. The key point is to find employment prospects for those who are in prison, and deal with their drug and alcohol problems. We spent considerable extra resources on drug treatment projects, unemployment, schemes such as the Timpson training academy at Liverpool and other prisons, and on trying to make connections with outside employers. However, there is still a hard cohort of people, and one problem that the current Prison Service will face concerns those who are in prison for more violent offences and have longer sentences. We must consider how to deal with that.

What are the measures on which prison governors will be judged? For example, Wandsworth prison is a category B prison that currently holds 1,877 prisoners. Some 45% of sentenced prisoners currently in Wandsworth are imprisoned for less than one year, and 15% are in for less than three months, 6% for under a month, and 11.9% for less than six months. They will not be in prison for very long or so that a prison governor can make an impact on the recidivism of that prisoner. When the Bill is introduced, the Government need to give real thought to what happens in prisons such as Wandsworth, where 45% of the 54% of sentenced prisoners spend less than a year in prison, and the majority are there for under six months.

How do we judge a prison governor when an individual in that prison has mental health problems, or needs housing or employment outside prison? I worry that the Government are considering setting up a reform project for six prisons, at a time when some of the pressures on prisons are of their own making. For example, when I was prisons Minister, there were 7,000 more prison officers in prisons than there are today. Over six years this Government have reduced the number of officers, and assaults on prison staff have risen by 41%. Incidents of suicide and self-harm in prison have increased, and there are pressures on education and employment services.

One might expect a Labour MP to say those things, but as the right hon. and learned Member for Harborough mentioned, the Justice Committee—on which I sit, and which is ably chaired by the hon. Member for Bromley and Chislehurst (Robert Neill)—last week produced a report on prison safety. I would like the Government to consider and respond to these points. The report’s conclusions state that

“overall levels of safety in prisons are not stabilising as the Ministry of Justice and National Offender Management Service had hoped, let alone improving. This is a matter of great concern, and improvement is urgently needed.”

It goes on to state—this is key to today’s Gracious Speech—that

“it is imperative that further attention is paid to bringing prisons back under firmer control, reversing the recent trends of escalating violence, self-harm and self-inflicted deaths, without which we firmly believe the implementation of these wider reforms will be severely undermined.”

There is a real challenge for the Government to consider not just a reform prison programme for the future, but also what needs to be done now. I commend the cross-party report, and I look forward to the Government's response. It also states that prison staff are not being retained, that recruitment is not matching the number of people who are leaving, and that there are fewer prison officers than are needed for an effective Prison Service. It is not sufficient for the Government just to put their wishes in the Bill and hope to reform prisons. The Under-Secretary of State for Justice, the hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire (Andrew Selous), knows that, and he needs to work with the Justice Secretary to deliver on those issues.

I intervened on the right hon. Member for Moray (Angus Robertson) from the Scottish National party on reform of the House of Lords, which we need to look at. The former Deputy Prime Minister and former leader of the Liberal Democrats, the right hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr Clegg), raises his hands in frustration, but many of us wish to change the House of Lords. I say this to the right hon. Gentleman, but it also goes to the hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Tim Farron): the spectacle two weeks ago of a hereditary peer place being filled by three votes from the Liberal Democrat Benches filled me with horror.

Tim Farron: The right hon. Gentleman is not the only person who thinks that that was a comical and outrageous spectacle, but does he not realise that his party's failure to back the Liberal Democrats in the coalition Government to abolish and then reform the House of Lords is why we still have that outrage?

Mr Hanson: Let us put that to one side—we can revisit that. [*Interruption.*] No, I have always voted to abolish the House of Lords. I am simply suggesting that there could be common currency on looking at elements of reform. If the Government are to make changes to the Lords in this Parliament, let us get cross-party consensus on, for example, abolishing hereditary peers. If we do not abolish them, we could stop their elections. My noble Friend Lord Grocott has said that, when a vacancy occurs, we should no longer have elections. This House of Commons is being reduced to 600 Members, yet membership of that House is being increased, and hereditary peers are replaced by an electorate of three—the hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale thinks as I do that that is ridiculous—so let us try to make changes.

Mr Jackson: I find myself uncharacteristically agreeing with the right hon. Gentleman—I am speeding on the road to Damascus. My worst vote in the previous Parliament was to oppose House of Lords reform, but let us remember for the record that a ludicrous proposal was put to the House without consensus—the proposal was for one 15-year non-renewable term. That obviously was not acceptable, but there is a basis on both sides of the House for further discussion on House of Lords reform.

Mr Hanson: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's support and I agree that it is uncharacteristic for us to agree. Having said that, if the Government are introducing a Bill to change aspects of the House of Lords, let us look at changing aspects of it that are blatantly ridiculous.

Hereditary peers are one such aspect. If the Government do not include that in any Bill, I give notice now, for what it is worth, that I will table an amendment to stop that practice and make changes. I am sure that that will put the Government and the business managers in a state of trepidation, but it is worth giving that notice now.

My final point is on Wales. There was no specific mention in the Gracious Speech of the Wales Bill, which was in draft form in the previous Session. It fell apart for a range of reasons that we do not need to go into, but that has caused a vacuum that is yet to be filled.

In the Gracious Speech, the Government say that they will

“establish a strong and lasting devolution settlement in Wales.”

I do not know whether that means that a Wales Bill will be forthcoming—I hope there will be so we can examine it—but I would be grateful if, in the next five or six days of debate, the Government and the Secretary of State for Wales confirmed that a Wales Bill will be considered in this Session.

Hywel Williams: The wording in the Gracious Speech is ambiguous, but I am given to understand by other channels that the Bill will be simpler and hopefully much better. The previous draft was described by a well respected academic in Wales as the very worst devolution Bill he had ever seen. That was one of the milder comments on the Bill.

Mr Hanson: I look forward to that Bill with excitement, but I want to add one new idea—it is revolutionary in many ways—arising from the recent elections to the National Assembly for Wales. My idea is that people who stand for Assembly elections should be registered to vote in Wales at the time of the nominations.

If I wish to stand for Flint Town Council, I have to live within its boundaries, as I do; if I wish to stand for Flintshire County Council, I have to live or work within its boundaries; if I wish to stand for the UK Parliament, as I have on every occasion since 1983, I have to be registered in the UK to vote; if I want to stand for the European Parliament, the same is true; and if I want to stand for police and crime commissioner in my area, I have to be registered in that area. On 5 May this year, some individuals—I count 21, but there may be more—did not register to vote in Wales and did not live in Wales but were on the ballot paper. Although there are arguments about it, it is worth exploring how an individual gets on the ballot paper when they do not live within that area.

For me, this is not a nationalist argument. My argument is that the arrangements for elections to Flint Town Council, Flintshire County Council, the UK Parliament, police and crime commissioner and the European Parliament are reasonable. A few people stood for the Monster Raving Loony party who lived, for example, in Malpas in Cheshire, Manchester, Ashbourne in Derbyshire, Belper in Derbyshire, London, Kent and Lincolnshire. We had Conservatives who lived in Leicester, the Wirral, Kent and Oswestry, and Liberal Democrats who lived in Northampton. One member of the United Kingdom Independence party, Neil Hamilton, a former Member of this House, lives in Wiltshire and he was elected.

[Mr Hanson]

As far as I am aware, he will stay in Wiltshire. Mr Reckless, who also served in this House, recently found a property in Wales prior to standing.

I simply make the point that some of those individuals were elected when they could not have stood for the town council, the county council or Parliament. That does not seem right and I hope the Government consider it as part of their proposals.

Overall, some parts of the speech I welcome, but some parts I will violently oppose. I want explanation of some parts of it, and I want additions to other parts, particularly on hereditary peers and Wales.

6.17 pm

David Rutley (Macclesfield) (Con): It is an honour always to speak in the debate following Her Majesty's Gracious Speech, and today is no exception. We have heard thoughtful speeches from the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee, the hon. Member for Hackney South and Shoreditch (Meg Hillier), and from my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir Edward Garnier), and it is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Delyn (Mr Hanson). I was a bit worried by his potentially violent opposition to some of the Bills—perhaps the word “violent” was an exaggeration. He made important points about the northern powerhouse and how north Wales needs to be linked to it. As a Cheshire MP, I feel very strongly about that.

The right hon. Gentleman should be reassured that the Government have a strong commitment to the northern powerhouse. Others have mentioned the movement of a small strategic planning team to Whitehall, but there is a much broader strategic plan of infrastructure devolution and of supporting key industries to ensure that we fundamentally rebalance our economy. That is what I will focus my remarks on.

Macclesfield's history is as a powerhouse of the silk trade. It is key that we think through our future to play a full part in weaving new economic threads into the northern powerhouse, through the excellence, in Macclesfield's case, in life sciences and astrophysics. Other constituencies have other skills and expertise, whether it is automotive engineering in Crewe and Nantwich, or aerospace or nuclear engineering elsewhere. We need to use those strengths to rebalance the economy, as the Government have ambitiously set out to do. They will be ably assisted in delivering the northern powerhouse by the local growth and jobs Bill, and by the bus services Bill, to name just two of the Bills in the Queen's Speech, with the enthusiastic support of Government Members, and hopefully of Opposition Members.

There are many reasons to be cheerful in the Queen's Speech: the education for all Bill for better schools, which my hon. Friend the Minister for Children and Families will be passionate about driving forward; a higher education and research Bill to remove barriers to new universities; a neighbourhood planning and infrastructure Bill for housing and to put the National Infrastructure Commission on to a statutory basis; and a digital economy Bill, which will legislate for a universal service obligation for broadband. For anybody who represents harder-to-reach communities, this is vital proposed legislation. It will enable broadband speeds to be improved in rural communities.

Last year, I said that this majority Conservative Government had hit the ground running. This year, I am delighted to see that the momentum continues apace. I notice that not all Labour Members are happy when I mention the word momentum—I cannot understand why. Indeed, it is interesting that while we on the Government Benches are taking the agenda forward, determined to be a Government for the 2020s, those on the Labour Benches are driving themselves backwards, determined to be an Opposition fit for the 1980s. That may well be a comfort blanket for them, but it is a great shame for the wasted talent on the Labour Benches.

Mr Robin Walker (Worcester) (Con): My hon. Friend makes a very good point. In fairness, having listened to the debate, there are some very thoughtful Labour Members who are making very sensible and constructive points. Is it not a shame that they are all on the Back Benches at the moment, rather than on the Front Bench?

David Rutley: As always, my hon. Friend hits the nail on the head. It is quite interesting that that is the case. Very often, we see an array of talent behind the Labour Front Bench—not on this occasion, of course—who could serve their party better. The key thing to point out, however, is that that is their choice. That is the choice they made. We are making choices in government that will take the nation forward. If they want to take their party backwards, that is up to them.

On the Conservative Benches, we want to focus on priorities that will take the Government and the country forward. We want to focus on rebalancing the economy, improving life chances, achieving aspirations and ambitions for all, and to grasp the nettle of Britain's long-standing productivity challenge. Politicians across the House rightly want to support and encourage hard-working people and hard-working families. However, productivity in the UK has lagged for decades and has struggled to rebound after the financial crisis. The Government are right to put a greater focus on how the energy of British workers can be better aligned with more productive outcomes.

To their credit, the Government have been clear about the challenge we face. As this ambitious Government know, the continued successful delivery of the long-term economic plan requires an increase in the longer-term trend rate of productivity growth. By working towards a more balanced, open and trading economy, the Government have signalled their intent to leave no stone unturned in ensuring our activity improves our productivity. I therefore welcome the Bills on education for all, and on higher education and research, which will have a positive impact on productivity, and the Bills to improve connectivity in transport and in the digital economy. All those Bills, and the wide range of initiatives being put forward by the Government and set out in the Red Book, will help us to move forward to promote a more dynamic economy and improve productivity. It is this context that highlights the key action being taken on infrastructure projects, not least on railways and not least in the north of England, but also on the roads, with the largest investment since the 1970s.

There will be action on skills, investing to deliver 3 million apprenticeships during this Parliament, building on the 2 million in the previous Parliament. There will be action on science, protecting spending in real terms

until the end of the decade. The network of catapult centres will be expanded. There will be support for the life sciences, particularly in the Cheshire corridor that I am proud to represent, placing high value-added science, including space science at Jodrell Bank, at the heart of the northern powerhouse.

I particularly welcome the announcement of several Bills that will embrace technological change and seek to keep the United Kingdom at the leading edge of science and technology, not least the modern transport Bill. The Queen's Speech points to the possibilities and opportunities for commercial space travel, drone technology, driverless cars, and small and micro-satellites. I want the north-west to play its full part in realising for the 21st century many of what were just 20th century science fiction dreams.

We are well placed to build on our superb science base. Look at Jodrell Bank, now home to the world's largest radio telescope project and permanent host of the international headquarters of the ambitious Square Kilometre Array initiative. To achieve that at Jodrell Bank, the University of Manchester and its supporters, including the Government, had to face down fierce competition from international bids. It is truly a world-class centre of excellence now, just as it has been a centre of excellence for radio astronomy since 1957, as host of the world-famous Lovell telescope.

That excellence extends to life sciences. Nearby Alderley Park, now owned by Manchester Science Partnerships, is home to a medicines technology catapult and leads research into anti-microbial resistance. There is advanced manufacturing at AstraZeneca's Macclesfield site, with its 3,000 highly skilled staff who are truly local heroes. Their work is vital to our local economy and helps to underpin AstraZeneca's presence at what is now the UK's largest pharmaceutical site, one that, incredibly, accounts for 1% of our country's exported goods.

When the Bills on education for all and on higher education and research are published and debated, I hope we will see clear policy opportunities for supporting science and technology. They will be a key driver of economic opportunity in the north-west and a source of the productivity gains that are not necessarily as evident elsewhere. In Cheshire East, we have among the highest rates of productivity in the country. They are higher than those in Bristol and in Edinburgh, as I am always keen to point out—not that I am competitive or anything. I want to see other parts of the northern powerhouse achieve high productivity levels too. Indeed, the productivity challenge goes hand-in-hand with the Government's vision for the northern powerhouse. As the Institution of Civil Engineers puts it, effective infrastructure drives growth and supports job creation.

Alex Cunningham (Stockton North) (Lab): The hon. Gentleman talks about catapults and productivity. Does he support the Teesside bid for a materials catapult, which would help to drive new steel products, one of our basic industries that could create more jobs in the longer term?

David Rutley: I am not too familiar with the particular catapult the hon. Gentleman talks about, but I believe passionately that we need catapults in place to help us to move forward with technology advancement, certainly in areas where there is transitional change in an industry,

such as in Teesside. It is vital that they are located in such areas. He should push hard for that initiative. We need catapults in the north to take us further forward.

The ICE believes passionately that we need to have effective infrastructure to move things further forward. It calls for key enablers to ensure we are successful in our transfer of power from Whitehall to town halls and strategic local partnerships. The priorities are: effective local leadership, fiscal devolution and devolved infrastructure strategies. The Queen's Speech makes provision for all three, not least—but not only—in the local growth and jobs Bill.

There are measures for transport improvements in the north, for example with the publication of a bus services Bill. I look forward to bus and coach transport playing its full part in Transport for the North's strategic improvements to physical connectivity in the northern powerhouse, with plans for smart ticketing across the north. We need to work on seamless journeys from train to bus to tram. Buses should also be remembered in the ambitious plans for a trans-Pennine tunnel. There is a great need for connectivity in other areas, in particular broadband. That is what makes the digital economy Bill in the Queen's Speech so welcome.

For me and for the Government, enterprise is not just about increased productivity. Just as crucially, it is about social mobility and enhanced life chances in Macclesfield, in the northern powerhouse and across the country. Life chances featured prominently in Her Majesty's speech today. I want to ensure that we enable more young people to achieve what I call the four Es of the enterprise economy: entrepreneurs, employers, exporters and employees. We need to help more people to achieve their ambitions, ambitions that may never have been achieved before in their families. I believe the Bills set out in the Queen's Speech—the children and social work Bill, the education for all Bill, the prison and courts reform Bill and the lifetime savings Bill—will help us to make sure, as a one nation Government, that we leave no one behind.

The Queen's Speech shows that the Government have a full agenda extending well beyond the EU referendum debate, which many of us are involved in. That said, I believe that opportunities to deliver on productivity, to strengthen our position in life sciences, and science more generally, and to build on the northern powerhouse will be best served by a vote to remain. Coming to that decision was not easy—there are legitimate arguments on both sides of the debate—but for me the economic arguments for staying part of the EU, particularly the single market, have been the main factors in helping me to make this decision.

Prior to becoming an MP, I worked for 20 years as a senior executive with companies such as PepsiCo International and Asda Walmart.

Alex Cunningham: The northern powerhouse Minister himself is on the leave side in the EU campaign. The hon. Gentleman has made a great case for the north—for infrastructure, transport and education—but we are seeing a shift of investment from the north to the south and a great concentration in London and the south-east. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the northern powerhouse could be much more than the slogan it is if there was a fairer distribution of the investment moneys available to local government?

David Rutley: The northern powerhouse is not a slogan; it is a clear, strategically thought through narrative for the north and a concept supported on both sides of the House, but we want to take these initiatives further forward. It is not a slogan but a clear set of strategies around devolution, supporting key industries and taking forward infrastructure initiatives. We have taken those forward and that narrative goes far wider and is far better thought through than anything—again, I do not want to be party political but the hon. Gentleman raised the point—proposed under the previous Labour Government. In fact, Peter Mandelson himself said that the Labour party missed a trick on these issues. I think that that is the case. Given, however, that the hon. Gentleman is so keen on the issue, I am sure he will join the Government in helping to take forward these Bills, which will enable us to achieve our ambitions for the north.

I wish to return briefly to my reasons for siding with the remain campaign. As I said, the choice was finely balanced, but I believe that there will be more opportunities to export if we remain. Export opportunities outside the EU are obviously important and the north-west would be able to realise some of those initiatives and opportunities outside the EU, but let us bear it in mind that more than 50% of the region's exports go to the EU. We need not only to seek to extend our global reach but to secure and strongly underpin our access to the single market. It is in our economic interest so to do.

This long-term Government have once again built on their long-term agenda for long-term success. I welcome the Bills in the Queen's Speech that will consolidate our long-term economic plan, boost productivity, enhance life chances and add fresh momentum to the exciting development of the northern powerhouse. That is why I commend the speech to the House.

6.33 pm

Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): I start by commending the right hon. Member for Meriden (Mrs Spelman) and the hon. Member for Bracknell (Dr Lee) for the grace and humour with which they moved and seconded the Humble Address. These occasions can show the House at its best and worst, and I think we would all agree that their speeches were examples of the former. As the Prime Minister did, I also pay tribute to Harry Harpham and Michael Meacher, whose contributions here are very sadly missed.

I hope you will permit me, Mr Speaker, also to remember our former colleague, David Rendel, who has died in the last couple of days and whose by-election victory in 1993 was transformational for our party's fortunes. Those of us who knew him will remember his absolutely phenomenal hard work for the constituency of Newbury, which he continued long after he ceased to be its MP. We will also remember his dignity, decency and grace to so many people, whatever their background or political persuasion. He will be sadly missed by many of us, and we wish to send our condolences to all his family at this desperately sad time.

I was most excited to learn that the modern transport Bill will enable the development of the UK's first commercial spaceport, not least because it means that the right hon. Member for Wokingham (John Redwood) will be able to go home more often.

Despite the opening line of today's speech, there is no "strengthening economy". Economic growth has slowed, construction output has fallen, the CBI has downgraded its forecast, sterling has plummeted and foreign investment is collapsing. This is the first time in six years that the Queen's Speech has not mentioned the deficit, so where has the Government's credibility gone and where is the long-term plan? The Liberal Democrats helped the Chancellor to balance the books, but the backward steps in the last 12 months are entirely of the Government's own making: a Budget with a £7.5 billion black hole, a colossal, self-inflicted constraint on public spending and a referendum born of internal Tory management threatening our country with economic instability. Instead of looking at the politically difficult situation immediately in front of them, Ministers should have been looking to the future. There were some futuristic ideas in today's speech, but while driverless cars point the way to the future, a driverless Government do not. It could have been a speech for the next generation, but sadly it was a speech devoid of vision.

The Liberal Democrats will not follow the Leader of the Opposition in simply reading out an extraordinarily lengthy list of criticisms of the Queen's Speech; we will be constructive and propose alternatives. Let me, therefore, offer the Conservative party a vision for an ambitious, modern, liberal Britain that celebrates all of Britain's communities, fights for equality of opportunities and delivers future prosperity through world-class education, creativity and innovation. It is through education that we can give the biggest boost to people's life chances: it sits right at the heart of what Liberal Democrats stand for; it is the key to freedom and opportunity for all, not just some; it is the essential investment. We are concerned that the curriculum focuses too much on meeting targets and passing exams, rather than giving children the practical skills, confidence and creativity they need to meet the challenges of the future economy.

The Government's policies are only making things worse. Teachers are demoralised and school budgets are stretched to breaking point. Children are missing out, as subjects such as music, art and sport are cut. So let us use our opportunity here to make a difference and leave a lasting legacy for future generations: an education system where everyone can aspire to be the best they can be; an innovative economy powering us through the 21st century; a properly funded NHS; properly funded social care and mental health services; a commitment to desperate refugees fleeing violence and terror and begging for our help; radical plans to make our country carbon neutral by 2050; investment in skills; and an ambitious plan for housing that builds homes that are genuinely affordable.

Furthermore, rather than tinkering with Parliament, let us replace the other place with a fully elected second Chamber, as the right hon. Member for Delyn (Mr Hanson) pointed out moments ago. Governments sometimes get tired and clapped out and run out of ideas, but it usually takes 12 years, not 12 months. This programme is so sparse and vacuous it is positively Blairite, which is probably why the right hon. Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn) was so opposed to it.

Mr Jackson: I admire the hon. Gentleman's chutzpah, but it is ironic that the 100 or more Liberal Democrat peers, completely unelected and unaccountable, are

disregarding the Salisbury convention and the legislative precedent of the Parliament Acts of 1911 and 1949 and circumventing the programme of this elected Government, which we won a mandate for last May.

Tim Farron: The hon. Gentleman earlier described himself as a convert to reform of the House of Lords. It is a pity he was not so in the last Parliament, when we could have done something about it. I will not take any lectures from him on Lords reform, given that the Liberal Democrats are the only people who have doggedly stuck with it for the best part of a century. We do not agree with first past the post for this place, but we still stand. It is the system we have, and rather than take notice of an old convention between two establishment parties, I will take the side of the people, and if we can stop tax credit cuts by using the other place, we will jolly well use it, and if he wants to reform the House of Lords, we will be with him in the Lobbies. We heard the Leader of the Opposition's response earlier on. I worked out that it lasted 30 seconds longer than the entirety of "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band", the album by The Beatles. He did not take any interventions from either the Government Benches or from those behind him. Maybe he was scared of a little help from his friends.

With this utterly threadbare Queen's Speech, it seems as though the Government are running out of steam before anyone has even bothered to fill the kettle. Of the 30 announcements in the Government's legislative agenda, we have heard 28 of them before. I am especially delighted that the Government have announced the Cultural Property (Armed Conflicts) Bill, which has been waiting to get on the statute book since December 1954. It would be easy for Opposition politicians to stand up and say everything is terrible, but it is not, so I will not. I welcome the better markets Bill, for example, just as I did when Ed Davey announced it two years ago, as well as the criminal finances Bill announced by Danny Alexander in February last year, the national citizen service piloted by the coalition in 2011, the pensions Bill announced by Steve Webb in 2014, the soft drinks levy announced in the Budget and the commitment to build 1 million homes, as featured in last year's Queen's Speech. Just in case we did not hear them the first time, they clearly needed to be said twice.

The Prime Minister has my support on much of what he says about boosting education in prisons, adoption and transparency on mobile phone and broadband speeds, although a universal service obligation for broadband, for which I have been calling for many years, will only be any good if the speed designated is quick enough to help rural communities in particular. I understand that 10 megabits per second is being talked about. A 10-megabits-per-second download speed probably means a 1-meg upload speed, and that is no good for rural communities or business. But mostly, this is a Queen's Speech with more repeats than ITV3—more repeats, indeed, than Dave. The higher education Bill was in November's Green Paper. The education Bill has already been a White Paper. Broadband was announced last November. The NHS charges are already happening.

The right hon. and learned Member for Harborough (Sir Edward Garnier) mentioned the Government's obsession with scrapping the Human Rights Act, an idea that has now made its third appearance in the Queen's Speech. He said it was akin to a demented moth flitting about a lampshade. I wonder whether

I can stretch his analogy and say that now is the time we got a nice big copy of "Erskine May" and squashed that moth. The Human Rights Act enshrines fundamental liberties such as the right to free speech, protest and assembly, and the right to live a life free of torture. Which of those freedoms does the Conservative party want to oppose? The devolved settlements for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland all have the European convention and the Human Rights Act hardwired into them. This Tory Government seem obsessed with unravelling the Union by their actions, all for the sake of appeasing their Back Benchers.

Sammy Wilson: Does the hon. Gentleman also accept that human rights legislation has been used to protect some of the worst criminals and allow them to walk the streets, which has angered many people across the United Kingdom? That is why it needs reform.

Tim Farron: There will always be outcomes that displease people. If there is a process of adjudicating against the Human Rights Act, it is right that it should be left to the judiciary. It is wrong for politicians to meddle, because the reality is that for every person we read about on the front page of a tabloid newspaper having been exonerated in some way because of the Human Rights Act in a way that people would perhaps disagree with, there are hundreds upon hundreds of less glamorous cases, which we never hear of and which nobody writes about, involving people who have been protected by the Human Rights Act. Let us ask ourselves this question: when we stand up to Vladimir Putin and others who threaten human rights in their own countries and others, what leg do we have to stand on if we undermine human rights here at home? The Government should ditch these ill-thought-out plans or risk them falling flat on their face when they are introduced in Parliament.

Mr Jackson: It seems to me that those advocating against reform of human rights in this country want to have it both ways. Surely the hon. Gentleman understands that we have the Human Rights Act by leave of this House. When the House votes, as it did in October 2011, by 228 to 22 on prisoner voting rights—when the sovereign Parliament of this country has made a decision, notwithstanding the decisions of a supranational legal entity—does that not mean anything to the hon. Gentleman?

Tim Farron: First, that is not in the Human Rights Act. Secondly, the critical thing in all of this is that, whatever one's position on the European Union, the reality is that in this world we all pool our sovereignty, whether it is in the European Union, or through an international court, the United Nations, NATO or what-have-you. The question is, what is the purpose of pooling that sovereignty? In this case, it is about us saying that we are part of an international community that puts human rights at the centre of everything we do. We must not forget that people fought and died in two world wars in the 20th century to enshrine and defend the concept of human rights. It is not for us to decide to put a line around ourselves and say that our human rights are of a lesser standard to somebody else's. Our human rights are shared because we are all human, not just because we are British.

[Tim Farron]

Beyond the Human Rights Act, we have the snooper's charter, which apparently refuses to go away—another repeat introduction. This should be its final outing. It must be dropped once and for all. We all want a Bill that keeps us safe and keeps the Government in check, but trying to fight terrorists by gathering more and more irrelevant information is a losing battle. Access to Facebook messages, medical records or even a child's baby monitor is completely the wrong approach. The Government must reconsider.

The Liberal Democrats will take no lessons in liberalism from a Prime Minister who has tried to bring forward the most intrusive snooping legislation in the western world. He is absolutely no liberal, and when he is attacked by the right hon. Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr Duncan Smith) for advantaging the rich at the expense of the poor and those living with disabilities, he is no one nation Tory either. The Prime Minister is certainly no liberal, and to accuse those who recognise that we cannot legislate away ideas of somehow being complacent or complicit in the challenges we face is utterly outrageous. The solution to extremism and radicalism is not to be found in more pages of ill-considered, ill-informed legislation; it is found by supporting communities to challenge the agendas that threaten the liberal freedoms that we all value.

While all Front Benches in this place can unite on Europe—mostly—this Queen's Speech was nothing but a stopgap to give the warring factions of the Tory party a couple of day's respite from their civil war. My party sees 23 June as an opportunity to cement Britain's position in Europe as a leader on the world stage, because by remaining in together, Britain can be the most relevant it can be—the most prosperous, the most powerful, the most like the Britain we know: outward looking and decent, building peace and partnership. But it is clear that the Prime Minister sees 23 June as a moment he will be lucky to survive.

This Queen's Speech did nothing to address the key issues at stake; it was just re-runs and repeats. An opportunity to put forward a radical, new, invigorating, innovative, creative and ambitious programme for Government has been missed.

6.47 pm

Sir Peter Bottomley (Worthing West) (Con): The first reference I want to make to a referendum is to the words of Dr Johann Malawana, the junior doctors' leader, who has said he is going to put forward the agreed proposals from ACAS in the referendum for junior doctors, hoping that they will agree them.

I pay tribute to Sir Brendan Barber of ACAS, to the British Medical Association leaders and to the national health service employers, together with the Secretary of State for Health and his Ministers, for finding a way forward that will be good and better for doctors in training and for patients, and that will help to make the national health service work in a way that people want it to. It will not abolish all the problems, but it is a great way forward.

As I understand it, some of the adaptations that have come forward during the last 10 days' negotiation will be even better for doctors who have caring responsibilities.

It seems to me that we lost sight of that in the years since my wife was Secretary of State for Health. It is a good idea if people can become fully qualified no matter what their caring responsibilities are at any one time. If they have had to hold back because of taking time out, they could then come forward and catch up with the rest. I pay tribute to that.

I will not say much more about the referendum coming up on 23 June because, as I have tried to explain to some of my people before we start having meetings about it, it is not a clash between two things in total. If we come out, we will still almost certainly be part of the Common Market, and we will almost certainly be contributing our money and having free movement of labour. If we stay in, we will not be proposing to join the euro or the Schengen area, so it is a question of how we move forward.

On balance, my personal view—I agree with the majority of the population about this—is that it is better to stay in and to help Europe to do things that are good for Europe and good for us, rather than saying that we are concerned about only ourselves, not our near neighbours.

I shall speak about general issues facing Members of Parliament. I look on being a Back Bencher—that was the reason I came into Parliament; I did not come in to try to become a Minister or a Cabinet Minister—as rather like being a general practitioner in politics. A large aspect of that is trying to reduce avoidable disadvantage, distress and handicap, and to improve wellbeing—it is a mixture of wealth and welfare. What really matter are such issues as getting better education and training, and a better start in family life, and getting better support for those whose families go through deformation and reformation.

The role also involves looking at issues of the day with two eyes. I represent junior doctors and their patients. I also represent rail workers and rail travellers. To those involved in the disputes in the Southern and Govia Thameslink rail services at the moment, I see no reason to justify the interruption to services, whether that be through organised sickness absence or strikes.

Many people who have caring responsibilities, and the many people travelling on the railways whose jobs bring in less than rail workers, need a reliable service. This is a public service. Obviously, some issues can be so great that they justify a strike, but the fact is that about 40% of Southern services are driver controlled all the way through—drivers operate the doors and everything else, although there may be other staff on the train. Moving further on that approach is not a convincing reason to justify an all-out strike.

Sometimes I suspect operators do not use the right language. If they propose that ticket office staff should be operating in a ticket office without walls, that would be a better way of putting it than saying that they are going to close ticket offices during certain hours of the day. They need to find the language, as Sir Brendan Barber and his team have with ACAS, that will allow people to come together and find out what they can do together that will be good for those they serve, as well as for themselves.

Let me turn to other issues that come up for Back Benchers. I pick up causes, one of which came about as a result of an incident in my constituency regarding leasehold, when some elderly, frail and poor people

found themselves paying for something they should not have paid for. They tried to go to the lower-level property tribunal, but found that those representing the freeholders managed to spin the issue between different courts, keeping the case away from low-cost dispute resolution. With the help of the Bar pro bono unit, it took one barrister one day to cut through all that, and my elderly people were paid a rebate of £70,000 without further court action.

That case led me to meet people in Leasehold Knowledge Partnership, now a charity, which was created, and is mainly supported and led, by Martin Boyd and Sebastian O’Kelly, who I think give more advice to more leaseholders in trouble than most people who do the same thing professionally—and they do it without pay. What they have achieved is remarkable.

We need to respond by making sure that Parliament recognises the 6 million residential leaseholders in this country, who can often find themselves exploited. Why is it that people who buy a retirement flat find that when they try to sell it, or their executors do so after they have died, it is worth so much less? There is something wrong with the system. As it happens, the Chancellor loses out because lower property values mean that less is obtained through stamp duty when new buyers come in.

Another problem is caused by court-created law. I cannot explain this issue off the cuff because it goes beyond me, but I can refer to a recent upper tribunal lands chamber decision, whose neutral citation number for 2016 is UKUT 0223 (LC), case Nos. LRA 20, 21 and 35/2015. The case was between the trustees of the Sloane Stanley estate and Adrian Howard Mundy; between the trustees of the Sloane Stanley estate and Arnaud Lagesse; and between Sophie Nathalie Jeanne Aaron and the Wellcome Trust Ltd. A decision of 160-odd clauses was reached about the value that applies when people are trying to get a leasehold extension.

We all know that George Thomas—Lord Tonypany— a former Speaker, came to public notice when he fought for leasehold rights for south Wales residents. We now need to do the same thing again. As I understand it, the judgment has transformed the valuations of expiring leases. No consideration was undertaken in Parliament, yet this upturns what was believed to be the way to approach these valuations for the last 10 years, so it is time that we got Departments—whether that is the Ministry of Justice or the Department for Communities and Local Government—to come together and, perhaps after putting it before a Select Committee first, assess whether Parliament needs to take formal action on this issue. Otherwise, we are letting a judgment go forward regarding three cases that have been argued by lawyers at great length in a way that few of us would understand. Indeed, I challenge most people to look through the document and find the actual judgment—I tried to do so in 10 minutes but could not; it took me 20 minutes. This is wrong.

When it comes to leasehold, we need to say what is right, what is wrong and what we can do about it. Martin Paine has interests in leasehold at a different scale—not the high-value area. That relates to the Wellcome Trust buying the Henry Smith properties and turning them into an investment trust. The Wellcome trustees should start looking to see whether what they have done is fully justifiable. I am not making an accusation, but asking for their interest.

Returning to the Martin Paine issue, it applies where a young person or couple buy a low-valued flat and have the lease checked by their lawyers, but later on discover that Martin Paine has informally rewritten the terms of the lease—extending it but, for example, doubling the ground rent every 10 years. That situation might be difficult in itself, but the greatest difficulty comes from the way the lease is written, as lawyers do not normally spot that the ground rent has been doubled back to the time when the lease was originally granted.

Let us say the lease was originally granted in 1959. The first ground rent demand could be not the expected £15 but, say, £2,000. That would mean that the rent would increase to £4,000 in 10 years’ time, and then later to £8,000, £16,000 and so on, so the flat becomes worthless. I understand that if enough fuss is made or enough publicity issued, Martin Paine will offer to buy the property back. He sometimes appears to remarket it without drawing the attention of the potential auctioneers or the potential purchasers of what those buying it will be letting themselves in for.

It is not for me to judge whether that is criminal, but doing this on an organised basis certainly demands attention. I ask the Competition and Markets Authority, the Office of Fair Trading or the police to check this and stop it. I warn the solicitors that their indemnity societies mean that they should be looking to see why this is going on.

I could provide a number of other examples that I would not suggest are necessarily criminal, but they are certainly odd. I mention embedded management companies, and I would ask some of the major developers to check whether there are clauses in their leasehold agreements that make clear the right of leaseholders to come together to buy their properties or to take over the management company. They need to make sure they are effective, and if they are defective, they should be made to put it right at their own cost. We should not ask the victims to pay all the costs and take all the risks—especially of going to court—to get things put right.

Let me turn briefly to medical cases. I shall shortly meet two of the people I most admire in the medical world. One is Dr Kim Holt, who suffered persecution by her trust when she warned about the baby P case, before it acknowledged that it did not have the right staffing. The other is Dr Peter Wilmshurst, who had to face a crooked company that threatened him with defamation when he pointed out that its research was wrong. There are other examples.

I am waiting for the result of an Manchester employment tribunal case involving Mr Aditya Agrawal. I shall make no further comment, because we have not yet seen the result, but when it comes out, I hope to ask Mr Speaker whether we can have a debate on why the hospital trust had had over 100 confidentiality agreements over the last five years—and a compromise agreement that is a secret as well. This is the sort of pattern that we should not have in our national health service.

Then there is the police and the case of Gurpal Viridi. He is still waiting for the police to accept his case when they prosecuted him for a week and a half unsuccessfully—it was obviously going to be unsuccessful—in Southwark Crown court, when he was said to have assaulted somebody 28 years ago.

The police did not interview the officer recorded as arresting the complainant. When Mr Viridi arrested the

[*Sir Peter Bottomley*]

complainant six months later, the police did not interview the officer with him, who could have given evidence about the relationship, if any, between the complainant and the police officer.

Our job in Parliament is to stand up, without making wild accusations, and to be persistent about issues until either the law or practice changes. Anyone in our constituencies who feels they have suffered an injustice should be told, “Do come to a Member of Parliament or a caseworker, and if it is serious and if it matters, we will work at it.” We may not always be successful, but it is our duty to try to help.

6.59 pm

Mr Nigel Dodds (Belfast North) (DUP): Let me, on behalf of my right hon. and hon. Friends, echo the expressions of gratitude to the right hon. Member for Meriden (Mrs Spelman) and the hon. Member for Bracknell (Dr Lee) for proposing and seconding the Gracious Speech. I am sure that they do not expect any media or press coverage of their speeches, and I am sure that none of us who are left in the House at this stage expect that either. The part has already been taken, and is always taken in these proceedings, by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr Skinner), who gets in early and is therefore guaranteed a prime spot.

It is indeed a pleasure to take part in the debate. As was mentioned earlier, this was the 65th Gracious Speech made by Her Majesty the Queen. I am sure that, as ever, others will point out on her behalf that she is not responsible for the contents of any of her speeches, but given that she recently celebrated her 90th birthday, it was a remarkable achievement. Once again, we pay tribute to Her Majesty for her long service to this country of ours.

I want to deal with a couple of general issues that affect the United Kingdom as a whole before turning to issues affecting Northern Ireland, which was referred to in the Gracious Speech. Let me begin by talking about the security of our country. Security is one of the most important issues facing any nation today. Given the uncertain world in which we live and all the threats that are out there, this is probably one of the most dangerous times in our history, so I am pleased to note that the Government have once again committed themselves to meeting the NATO defence expenditure target of 2% of national income.

Unless we step up to the plate, along with our partners in NATO and other international partners, we will simply fall further and further behind when it comes to protecting our citizens. Currently, five members of NATO meet the 2% threshold: the UK, the United States—which pays three quarters of the NATO bill—and only three other European countries, Poland, Estonia and Greece. That points to a very important fact. As we consider the Brexit debate, and the importance of partnership with our European neighbours and other countries in the context of Europe, I sometimes feel that the United Kingdom’s contribution to international aid, the defence of Europe and, indeed, the defence of western values is taken for granted, and that other countries that speak a great deal about the need to be part of the European Union fall down in that respect. Big countries that talk a lot about the need for European

solidarity do not exhibit the same solidarity and commitment when it comes to the defence of Europe and of western democracy.

Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con): I thank the right hon. Gentleman, who is indeed a friend of mine, for allowing me to intervene. When he and I were in the United States last week, it came to our notice that many NATO members are paying only one quarter of what American citizens are paying to defend their own country. That is shameful. We really must encourage NATO members—particularly those further east—to pull their finger out.

Mr Dodds: As members of the NATO parliamentary assembly, the hon. Gentleman and I participated in meetings with our American colleagues to discuss that very issue. I look forward to the NATO summit that will take place in the summer, and to seeing other countries contribute more to defence spending and defence budgets. Unless more is done, we shall be in danger of seeing, particularly in the United States, growing support for those like Donald Trump who ask, “Why should we pay the bill when people in Europe are not prepared to make a contribution that is modest in comparison with ours?”

I welcome the Government’s commitment to bringing forward the decision on the UK’s nuclear deterrent, which needs to be made soon. My colleagues and I will certainly support a decision to seek renewal of that deterrent. In the context of security and the military, my party and I also welcome the commitment to full implementation of the military covenant. In a year that marks the centenary of the battle of the Somme, and in view of all the more recent conflicts in which men and women from Northern Ireland have served in great numbers and with great gallantry and courage, the military covenant is more salient than ever, and we in Northern Ireland want to it to be implemented in full in our part of the kingdom as well as elsewhere.

There are issues with which we in Northern Ireland are grappling. We look forward to continuing engagement with the Prime Minister and the Government with a view to ensuring that where there are gaps—through no fault of ours—they can be filled by action either here at Westminster or in Northern Ireland. We need to ensure that none of our brave men and women who have served in the armed forces miss out on entitlements that they are given, as of right, in the rest of the United Kingdom.

Strong views have been expressed about the introduction of a British Bill of Rights on this side of the House—although, I hasten to add, not on the behalf of my party—and equally robust remarks have been made by Conservative Members. I think it worth reminding the House that that was a manifesto commitment on which the current Government were elected. I find it somewhat odd to hear Government Back Benchers decry it and describe it as terrible, given that they stood for election on the basis of a manifesto that explicitly included that commitment.

My view is simple. As I understand it, we are not talking about the withdrawal of this country from the European convention on human rights; we are talking about an assertion by the House that the final arbiter in decision making will be this sovereign Parliament. We are saying that this sovereign Parliament cannot be overridden,

especially when it comes to decisions that are clearly and utterly opposed by the vast bulk of the people of the United Kingdom, not on a party political basis but across the board. We are talking about the injection of a bit of common sense into the issue of human rights.

We shall want to discuss further with the Government the modernisation of the law governing the use and oversight of investigatory powers by the police and others. Given our background in Northern Ireland, we are all too well aware of the importance of enabling the security forces to tackle terrorism and deal with other threats that emerge out there. We know that the law has not always been able to keep up with the advancement of the digital age, the internet and so on, and we are keen to ensure that the security forces are not deprived of any useful and necessary tool that they may require to combat terrorism. However, it is clear that we need adequate safeguards, and we need to be careful about the extent to which outside bodies and third parties are able to access information and data. As I have said, we will discuss the issue further with the Government when the legislation is introduced, but we are concerned about the range of organisations that may be given access to information and data. We are in favour of the principle, but we need to look at the details very carefully.

In the context of legislation to prevent radicalisation and tackle extremism, I thought that the right hon. Member for New Forest East (Dr Lewis) made important and pertinent points about the balance between tolerance and intolerance. It is important for us to tackle intolerance, but, as a number of Members have said, we need to be able to judge when we have overreached the point at which it is a question of tackling extremism on the one hand and denying free speech on the other. We have to be very careful that we do not end up in a situation where there is an accepted norm, an accepted expression of views, and anyone who deviates from the accepted politically correct norm is seen to be an extremist. If we do not deal with the matter carefully, we will go down a worrying and dangerous path. Again, we will give the proposals serious consideration. We do not disagree at all with the main aim of the Government. We support it, but we need to see details of how the proposals will operate before we can give them total support.

Many of the Members who have spoken have referred to the EU referendum. I am on record as saying that the Government's ability to govern is somewhat hampered at the minute by their concentration entirely on the referendum. I welcome the fact that we are having a referendum. It was an issue that I and colleagues pushed strongly for many years. We wanted a referendum on the Lisbon treaty, which unfortunately was denied to us by the Labour Government, and then the cast-iron guarantee of the incoming Government was not followed through.

On the referendum and Brexit, there are arguments on both sides, but it is dangerous in the context of Northern Ireland for people to go around saying that if we leave the EU that will result in violence coming back to Northern Ireland, and a destabilisation of the political institutions to the extent that we will have trouble on the streets again. All these "leading economists"—99% of whom did not predict the biggest single economic shock of the past 150 years—tell us that leaving will lead to a united Ireland, trying to scare people in the most outrageous way. In the debate on Brexit and

Northern Ireland, I appeal to people to use careful and considered arguments and not to engage in that kind of language because, whatever the outcome of the referendum, I am convinced that Northern Ireland's political institutions will endure. They have come through far worse than this and they will be stable. It is important to put that on the record.

The Gracious Speech talks about support for "implementing the Stormont House and Fresh Start Agreements." I welcome that. Those agreements were forged primarily at the direction and the behest of the Democratic Unionist party, along with others. I pay tribute to our former leader and First Minister, Peter Robinson, who did an enormous amount of excellent work to bring those agreements about. I also pay tribute to the other parties that stuck the course and finalised those agreements, as well as the Government, particularly the current Secretary of State.

There have unfortunately been a number of setbacks on the security front. We have seen the elevation of the security risk in recent days. There is a more serious risk of attack on the British mainland by dissident republicans. Just yesterday, we had a significant find of arms and ammunition in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for East Antrim (Sammy Wilson). In my constituency, we had the tragic and awful murder of a young father, Michael McGibbon, who was killed in the most atrocious circumstances. Again, I pay tribute to his widow, who has spoken eloquently about peace and moving forward in Northern Ireland and has spoken out against paramilitarism. In the implementation of the Stormont House and Fresh Start agreements, one of the key elements is the combating of paramilitarism.

On the negotiations to set up a new Northern Ireland Executive, we had elections just last week, and I am glad to say that our party was returned with an overwhelming mandate to be the leaders of the Executive. Last week, Arlene Foster, our new First Minister, was elected, along with Martin McGuinness as Deputy First Minister. Issues such as paramilitarism and violence have bedevilled Northern Ireland in the past and are still being pursued by a tiny minority of people on both sides of the community. It is important, as we set out on another Assembly term, that we continue to forge ahead and demonstrate to people in Northern Ireland that politics is working—and it is, as the Assembly elections last week showed. We are now moving into the third full term of uninterrupted devolved government—cross-community partnership government—in Northern Ireland. That is an enormous achievement, but the message must go out that, in implementing the Fresh Start and the Stormont House agreements, with the support of the Government here, the people who want to drag us back and inflict violence and darkness on many people in their communities will not succeed.

We are determined in Northern Ireland, with the new Executive being set up, to major on the issues of health, education, jobs, infrastructure and keeping household bills down. That is what our five-point plan was about. That is what the election was about. It is important that we spend the next five years in Northern Ireland making sure that that happens.

There are some people who unfortunately have decided to walk away from government in Northern Ireland. It is sad that the Ulster Unionists have decided, albeit after a poor election result, the worst in their history, not to take their seat in the Executive. It is sad that the

[Mr Dodds]

Social Democratic and Labour party is debating whether to take its seat in the Executive. However, I believe that the people of Northern Ireland want an inclusive Government. They want leaders who will stand up and take Northern Ireland forward. If others are not prepared to grapple with that task and to take on the mantle of leadership, we and others who stand with us will not be found wanting.

7.16 pm

Sir David Amess (Southend West) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Belfast North (Mr Dodds) and I agreed with everything he said.

The state opening of Parliament serves as a timely reminder to all of us of just how fortunate we are to have a monarchy, rather than a presidency, and how well we are served by Her Majesty the Queen. She is above party politics and we all rejoice in that fact. It also serves as a timely reminder of how hard fought democracy is. That is why it is such a tragedy that there continues to be a low turnout in our local elections, and in our elections for police and crime commissioners. I just hope that there will be a big turnout for the referendum on 23 June.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Mrs Spelman) and my hon. Friend the Member for Bracknell (Dr Lee) on the splendid way in which they proposed and seconded the motion. Their speeches were thoughtful, measured and struck the right chord with the House. It was a big event for both those colleagues and I congratulate them on how they fulfilled their duties today. There was also a contest between the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. I would simply say that I thought that the Prime Minister won that contest by a short head.

A number of comments have been made about the Gracious Speech being rather thin. I am not at all surprised that it is somewhat cautious. Just a year ago, we assembled in this place following the general election. If we believed all the pundits, it was a surprise that a Conservative Government with a majority were elected. It has probably taken my colleagues a year to get to grips with what it is like to manage a very small Conservative majority; it has been some time since we had such a majority. I am sure that the Government have learned—it has been a difficult year—that, if they want to get measures through this House, they need to take colleagues with them.

I am proud to have a Government delivering security for working people, increasing life chances for the most disadvantaged and strengthening our national defences. I am glad that the Government will continue to ensure that the public finances are kept under control so that Britain can live within its means and invest in the infrastructure that business needs. I am also delighted to tell the House that, according to the latest Government statistics, the number of unemployed people in the constituency that I represent has fallen to 754 and the claimant rate is down to 1.7%.

I welcome the legislation that will allow local authorities to retain business rates. We have not had the full details yet, but I would have thought that all businesses would

welcome that, as those in Southend West will certainly do. This will provide more freedom to invest in local communities. I very much hope that, at a council meeting tomorrow night, it will be agreed that we will once again have a minority Conservative council in Southend under the excellent leadership of Councillor John Lamb.

I am also pleased that the Government will support aspiration and promote home ownership through their commitment to building 1 million new homes. This will ensure that Britain is a strong property-owning democracy. Unfortunately, I do not think many of those properties could be built in the constituency that I represent. Unless we are going to build on our parks, there is just no room for any building in the constituency. However, I dare say that many of my colleagues will be delighted with the announcement.

Conservatives are often portrayed as being in favour of hanging and flogging and wanting the most severe punishment for criminals. I was rather taken by the speech by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir Edward Garnier) on prison reform, and I certainly welcome the measures in the Gracious Speech on that matter. I served on the Health Select Committee for 10 years, during which time we visited a number of prisons, which was rather depressing. I have been most influenced in this regard by my former colleague and very good friend, Ann Widdecombe, who was the Minister with responsibility for prisons. Unlike my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Harborough, she actually visited every one of the 140 prisons in this country; she was determined to do so. There were some tricky occasions, but after she had done her tour, she left me in no doubt that our prisons needed reform. However, no Government have tackled this issue until now.

It is absolutely right that we should protect British citizens from dangerous criminals, but sending people to prison and teaching them how to commit further crimes is crazy. It is also crazy to send people to prison so that they can fuel their drug addiction. The purpose of prison should be to turn people's lives around. I therefore support the idea in the Gracious Speech that prison governors should be given greater independence in their own operations and management. I support freeing prison governors working in the public sector from centralised state control to enable them to run their prisons more efficiently and professionally. This is a positive step. I know that some people might say, "Oh dear, this is a step towards privatisation and there have been one or two glitches along the way", but this is a measure that the House should support.

I particularly welcome the rules on sanctions relating to how long inmates can spend outside their cells. One of my constituents recently had a terrible experience. He was affected by a breakdown in communication in prison following a request for compassionate leave to attend his mother's funeral. He was a low-category prisoner but through a terrible miscommunication he was unable to attend the funeral. Things like that just should not happen.

These measures are also much needed in the light of the concerns raised by the Chairman of the Justice Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Bromley and Chislehurst (Robert Neill), which we have heard a lot about this afternoon. The Committee's report has described an escalation in prison violence, disorder,

self-harm and the smuggling of contraband. I hope this Bill will mean that prisons will be able to deal effectively with the new and inventive ways that prisoners have found to smuggle drugs and weapons into prisons, including the use of drones. That is absolutely crazy. I also welcome the Government's proposed action to achieve better mental health provision in prisons. Many of the people who are sent to prison come from broken homes. They have not been set a good example and many of them suffer from mental health problems, often due to drug addiction. I hope that the whole House will unite behind this legislation.

I absolutely rejoice that we are having a referendum on the EU. I voted no in 1975 because I did not want a united states of Europe with one Government and one currency, and I am even more convinced now that we should leave the European Union. I shall deal with my reasons a little later in my speech.

Mr Jackson: Was my hon. Friend a bit puzzled, as I was, by the rather carping tone of the leader of the Liberal Democrats when he complained that the referendum was all a function of Tory indiscipline and civil war? Am I wrong in remembering a leaflet that came out at the end of the 2000s depicting the right hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr Clegg) saying that the Liberal Democrats were committed to an in/out EU referendum?

Sir David Amess: My hon. Friend is spot on. He is absolutely right to remind the House about that disgraceful leaflet. He illustrates yet another broken promise from that dear party.

I am reassured by the Gracious Speech telling us that the Government will uphold the sovereignty of Parliament and the primacy of the House of Commons. I hope that that will continue to be the case. I very much agreed with the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough (Mr Jackson) made earlier. The two of us, among others, were dead against any reform of the House of Lords, and the reform that was being proposed was absolutely ridiculous. I am now of the view that the present make-up of the House of Lords is unsustainable. Physically, there are far too many of them. It is ridiculous, for example, that there should be a huge number of Liberal peers when there are only eight Liberal Members of Parliament. It is also ridiculous that the Lords have somehow convinced themselves that it is democratic to hold up legislation.

I am not pretending to have a magic solution for reforming the House of Lords, but we must achieve that by the time this Parliament finishes in 2020. We are going to look absolutely ridiculous if more and more people are put into the other place and it ends up with 1,000 Members, most of whom cannot even get a seat. I love the other Chamber—I think the trappings are very attractive—but the fact that it does not reflect the political make-up of this place is absolutely ridiculous.

I am glad that the right hon. Member for Belfast North (Mr Dodds) mentioned the British Bill of Rights. What he said was absolutely spot on. The proposed measures will curb the influence of the European Court of Human Rights over British law, which must surely be right. No legal institution should be higher than our Supreme Court. For too long, we have allowed the European Court of Human Rights to overrule our own perfectly capable legal institutions in regard to the

sentencing of dangerous individuals charged with terrorist or criminal offences. I hope this consultation on human rights law to make the Supreme Court more supreme will mean an end to fiascos such as the blocking of the deportation of radical extremists such as the cleric Abu Qatada on the ground that their human rights would be affected if they were sent back to their own countries. That is absolutely ridiculous.

I also support the proposals on adoption in the Gracious Speech. The Bill will—*[Interruption.]*

Mr Robin Walker (Worcester) (Con): I very much agree with where my hon. Friend is coming from on the British Bill of Rights. Does he agree that it was particularly absurd for the Liberal Democrats to talk about the major parties at the time of the 1911 Salisbury convention when they were of course one of those major parties, in their previous incarnation as the Liberal party? On the Bill of Rights, does my hon. Friend not think it absurd that the famous ruling in which this House was overruled on the question of votes for prisoners was presided over by a Russian judge?

Sir David Amess: I agree with everything my hon. Friend says. The House will be disappointed—I was not about to choke. I have hay fever. I was told about 50 years ago that I would grow out of it, but it gets worse each year. Nevertheless, I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Jackson: My hon. Friend is making a superb case. Does he agree that the issue at the heart of the debate is the right of the House of Commons to decide on legislation, and the interpretation of those laws by our own judiciary, rather than by an unaccountable and remote supranational legal entity?

Sir David Amess: I absolutely agree. I am relieved to tell the House that there was no arsenic in the water that I have just drunk: I am still standing.

I welcome the adoption Bill. It is much needed to give children in care the chance to be adopted by new families. I pay tribute to our hon. Friend the Minister for Children and Families. Reform is necessary to improve the standard of social work and opportunities for young people in care in England. I am sure that the provision for joint arrangements for carrying out local authority adoption functions in England will serve Southend Borough Council's adoption and fostering service well. I have any number of constituents who want to foster and adopt children. The Government are right to tackle poverty and the causes of deprivation, including family instability.

I am a former vice-chairman of the all-party parliamentary group on childhood obesity and I will be interested to see how the tax on soft drinks works in practice. It is a step in the right direction. I hope we can reduce the 19.1% of children aged 10 to 11 who are obese in the UK. When I was on the Health Committee, on which I served for 10 years, the inquiry into obesity was my idea and a number of colleagues in the House served on that, but I get frustrated because, although we produced a wonderful report, we could not get joined-up Government thinking, we could not get the supermarkets to agree to the traffic light proposal, and we could not

[*Sir David Amess*]

get the food and drink manufacturers to agree to use less sugar, salt and fat in the products that we eat and drink, so I am slightly sceptical about how the proposal will work out, but I wish it well.

I welcome the higher education Bill. I very much approve of the Government's proposals to ensure that universities provide value for money, reward high-quality teaching and encourage diversity and choice for students. I further welcome the ranking of universities to determine whether they are eligible to raise tuition fees or not. I commend the creation of a new regulator, the office for students, and the introduction of the teaching excellence framework, which will make it fairer for students to choose which university is best for them, and will monitor the performance of universities as well. As the Bill will allow new universities to open, I hope consideration will be given to granting such status to South Essex College Southend Campus, which was recognised as providing one of the most innovative and exciting learning and working environments in the country. Many of my constituents are enrolled as students there.

I know that what I am about to say will upset Scottish National party Members. I firmly support the Government's determination to keep our nuclear deterrent. At a time when the world as a whole is pretty unstable, it would be madness not to renew Trident so I am glad to see that in the Queen's Speech.

I was glad to see mention of climate change. I have the honour of being chairman of the all-party parliamentary group on the Maldives. Anyone who travels there can see the serious effect of climate change on that country. A few years ago its President held a famous Cabinet meeting underwater.

On the transport Bill, I am in favour of the Government promoting electric cars. I am told that we have a new electric connector in Derby Gate, which I understand two or three of our colleagues will use. Electric cars are a clean form of transport, if only their energy lasted longer than 250 miles or whatever their capacity is at present, and they are much quieter than conventional petrol or diesel cars. However, I am not a fan of driverless cars on our roads. I might have misunderstood this proposition, but I will need a lot of convincing about that.

From a safety perspective, I can see the presumed logic: since 81% of car crashes are the result of human error, self-driving cars might be a solution. But nothing is infallible, and self-driving cars do not completely eliminate the likelihood of a car accident, which would give rise to the question who holds responsibility for an accident—the driver, the car manufacturer or the software developer. Driverless cars would not be able to guarantee safety in all weather conditions, and given that self-driving cars heavily rely on GPS, how can we be sure that this new technology will be proof against hackers? This move to popularise driverless cars would undermine the skills that are needed to drive a car manually. Drivers and passengers would be helpless in the event that something went wrong in the driverless car they were in. In a wider context, driverless cars might make a large part of the workforce redundant, including driving instructors. I was fortunate to be able to pilot the Driving Instructors (Registration) Act 2016 successfully through Parliament, so I worry about that aspect.

I welcome the proposal for the regulation of civilian drone aircraft. The Government are right to ensure the safety of all aircraft from trespassing drones, including those at Southend airport, which is used by my constituents.

I look forward to the publication of the Chilcot report. The Gracious Speech always ends with the statement that other measures will be laid before us. This House must never, ever allow an inquiry to drag on for seven years. That is ridiculous and has cost the British taxpayer a huge amount of money. The report is to be published on 6 July. We should not draw a line under it; we should look at the way that inquiries are held in the future. In 2004 I and a group of MPs laid a measure to impeach the then Prime Minister, Tony Blair. I intend, through negotiation with the Clerks of the House of Commons, to see if we can use that procedure again if the Chilcot report finds that the then Prime Minister was guilty of misleading the House about the weapons of mass destruction reaching this country in 45 minutes.

Although I was on the Opposition Benches at the time, I was one of the colleagues who came to the House determined to vote against the intervention. I listened to the then Prime Minister and he could not have been clearer about the dossier and the weapons of mass destruction reaching us in 45 minutes. If the Chilcot report concludes that the then Prime Minister misled us, the families of those service personnel who lost their lives will expect Parliament to deal with the issue. Once the report is published, the Government need to decide how we deal with the people who misled us.

There is a further measure that I hoped would be in the Queen's Speech. The way that the Government have spent money in the EU referendum campaign. We are told that the Government support our remaining a member of the European Union. As half of my party does not support that, I am puzzled about the veracity of that claim. The rules supplied by the Electoral Commission dictate that Vote Leave and Britain Stronger in Europe have a grant of £600,000 and a spending limit of £7 million, along with campaign broadcasts, free access to meeting rooms and free mailshots.

Even though both sides are allowed the same amount of money, there has been significant Government spending which is totally wrong, including the money spent on leaflets, with the remain campaign using civil service funds and other public funds. A leaflet was published by the Government in April containing 14 pages of absolute rubbish about the reasons for remaining members of the EU. Why are we having a referendum if the person heading the negotiation has suggested that leaving would be so dangerous that we would practically face a third world war? That is crazy.

Mr Jackson: It is actually worse than that, because although the Government ostensibly support remaining in the European Union, that was on the basis of a comprehensive renegotiation of our relationship with it, which most people agree has not happened. In fact, neither the Conservative party nationally, nor the parliamentary Conservative party, has ever been consulted on whether we should be campaigning as a Government to remain in the European Union.

Sir David Amess: I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend. It was quite wrong to spend £9.3 million on that leaflet and to send it to 27 million households. I have

also learned that the Government have been using civil service funds to boost their campaign, and Vote Leave is not allowed the same opportunity. That tells the country and Parliament that the Government as a whole are not neutral on this issue, which they jolly well should be. Therefore, at this very late hour, with only five weeks left, I urge the Government to allow both campaigns to have access to Government funds and civil service offices, or to disallow either campaign from accessing the civil service or public funds. I strongly encourage the Government to enact legislation specifically to stop Government intervention in any future referendums.

Therefore, I do welcome the Gracious Speech. I am not surprised that it is cautious, because it is quite difficult to manage Government business when there is a small majority. Above all else, I hope that the House will unite to support the measures on prison reform.

7.41 pm

Hywel Williams (Arfon) (PC): I join other Members in congratulating the right hon. Member for Meriden (Mrs Spelman) and the hon. Member for Bracknell (Dr Lee) on their speeches today, which were an adornment to this occasion. I also think that the Leader of the Opposition did rather well, at least for the first few minutes of his speech—it rather fell away after that. A very long time ago I was on the staff of the University of Bangor and, as such, sometimes had to recycle some very old lectures, but at least I took the care to preface them with the phrase, “Same old lectures; all new jokes.” That might be a strategy for the Leader of the Opposition next time.

I am afraid that the Queen’s Speech provided pretty thin fare. One might even suppose that the Prime Minister and his friends are occupied with something else. So as not to disappoint the Welsh media, and particularly the BBC, I should repeat the traditional Plaid Cymru response to a Queen’s Speech: “A bit of a slap in the face for Wales; and not a lot in it for Wales.” Having done that, I can now explain myself.

On the claim that it is a bit of a slap in the face for Wales, if one looks at the prisons Bill, one sees that there will be profound changes to the prisons system, but as far as I can see we will still have no provision at all for women prisoners in Wales. They are very small in number, but they all have to travel to prisons in England, which causes great difficulties for their families. I am sure that many Members will agree that many of those women are wrongly imprisoned anyway. I was very glad to hear other right hon. and hon. Members make similar points with regard to prison reform. By the way, we still have scant provision for young people in Wales. We are just about to have a new super-prison open in Wrexham, HMP Berwyn, but that huge institution—it will hold 2,000 prisoners—will apparently be unable to guarantee that a Welsh-speaking pastor will be available, even though it is serving largely Welsh-speaking north Wales. There is therefore a great deal that could be done.

With regard to the claim that “there is not a lot in it for Wales”, it has been widely trailed that the spaceport will be in Newquay. I want to pay tribute to the excellent case for Llanbedr made by my hon. Friend the Member for Dwyfor Meirionnydd (Liz Saville Roberts). I am sure that the Members representing the other five potential sites will say the same thing, but Llanbedr stands out, to me at least, as the obvious choice.

Of the Bills set out in the Queen’s Speech, by my count there were three that apply to England and Wales and a further five that apply to England only. That is devolution for England, I suppose. It is little noted, but it is devolution by default. That is not a bad thing, but I think that we really should be planning all of this, rather than falling into it by accident. England-only Bills also have implications for Wales, of course, because Welsh people access services in England, particularly health services, so changes to provision on Merseyside, in Manchester and in London do have direct and indirect effects on health in Wales. The funding of England-only policies sometimes has profound implications for funding for Wales through the Barnett formula. No mention was made of that particular elephant in the room today, of course. Barnett staggers on even though clearly it needs to be reformed.

As has already been mentioned, of the 30-odd announcements made today, significantly, 28 have already been trailed in some form or other. That is the case with the only Wales-only Bill, which I will come to in a moment. Looking at the 37 paragraphs of the Gracious Speech, I see that Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland rate just one specific mention, although that mention could have great significance for Wales, for we are to have yet another stab at a Wales Bill. This will apparently be simpler than the previous draft Bill, which was panned by nearly everyone involved. As I noted in an earlier intervention, a prominent Welsh academic called it “much the worst devolution bill that I have seen”, and that was one of the milder responses.

We could have great expectations of the Wales Bill. There are many examples of things that I would like to see in it, but just two will suffice this evening. It needs to be recognised that we now have a body of Welsh law that is growing and will continue to grow, because the Welsh Assembly is passing laws—that is another elephant in the room. We need recognition of that fact, and that could be achieved, at least in my opinion, by recognising a distinct Welsh jurisdiction. Now, what that would actually look like is a matter of considerable discussion, and some of it is extremely obscure legal discussion that I am entirely unqualified to participate in. However, the plain fact is that we now have Welsh law but an England and Wales jurisdiction, and that must be addressed in some way. Another point relating to the Wales Bill is the devolution of policing to the Welsh Government. There is now great support for that across Wales, not least from the four police commissioners, two of whom have been Plaid Cymru nominees.

We in Plaid Cymru worked constructively with the previous Secretary of State, putting forward quite positive proposals, none of which was realised because the draft Bill was withdrawn. By now we have a new Secretary of State, and indeed a new Labour shadow. I hope that they will be able to work together, and with us, to realise that next step in the process of Welsh devolution. A former colleague of ours, Ron Davies, famously said in 1997 that devolution is a process, not an event. We have had several attempts at that process. I think that now is the time for a substantial leap forward in Welsh devolution through this Bill.

One thing that I think we really do need to have in the Bill is a change to the electoral system. We have in Wales and in Scotland—I am not sure about Northern Ireland—something called the d’Hondt system, which

[Hywel Williams]

is an additional member system. I do not intend to go into the theology of the matter this evening—I might leave myself—but I will say that we really do need a different system. That system delivered a less proportionate result in Wales than the first-past-the-post system did in May last year in the elections for this place, with Labour getting 28 of the seats on something like 35% of the vote, even under a system of proportional representation. I might as well say now that I and my party are in favour of STV—the single transferable vote. I will say no more about that now, but I will certainly be trying to impress that point on the Secretary of State and the House when the opportunity arises.

Like the SNP, Plaid Cymru has an alternative Queen's Speech in which we put forward our own measures—the House will forgive me if I indulge in a bit of sloganeering here—to make Wales stronger, safer and more prosperous. I have been saying that for the past six weeks in preparation for the Welsh elections, so it is rather difficult to get it out of my head, like an irritating pop song. It includes plans for an EU funding contingency Bill to safeguard vital EU funds in the event of Brexit, a specifically Welsh issue that we need to address; a UK finance commission Bill to put an end to the historic underfunding for Wales; a north Wales growth fund to deliver genuine infrastructure and investment for the north; a policing Bill to make good on recent independent and cross-party recommendations to devolve policing, a Severn bridges Bill to enable the Welsh Government to put an end to the bridges tax on economic growth; and a broadcasting Bill to devolve powers over broadcasting to Wales. Those are just six of the points in our alternative Queen's Speech. I will expand briefly on some of them later.

That is Plaid Cymru's positive alternative: not preoccupied with our economic decline, though that is real enough, I am afraid; not obsessed with the City of London at the expense of the rest of the UK; not, like some in other parties, hanging on the nail over Europe or at each other's throats on the fundamental course their party should take; and not rejected by the voters and shunted into a siding. Clearly, those people are not in their places this evening. Rather, we are looking to the future of our country—to supporting Wales's interests and delivering policies needed to make Wales a stronger, safer and more prosperous country.

Unfortunately, Wales is still at or near the bottom of league tables across Europe on economic performance. The Government here should be doing everything they can to promote growth in Wales, making Wales an attractive place to do business, investing in roads and railways, and upgrading the digital infrastructure. The headings of the digital economy Bill read well enough, and I am glad to see them: a legal right to fast broadband, a universal service obligation, and automatic compensation when things go wrong. We would be very happy to support such measures. However, I am afraid that my constituents, and indeed people throughout rural Britain, may be excused a hollow laugh at this Bill, because I am afraid we have heard it all before. I hope that the Government succeed, but one must be slightly sceptical.

I hope you will allow me, Madam Deputy Speaker, to recount a short story to do with the digital economy. It is about mobile phones, not broadband. I have abandoned the use of a smartphone in my constituency, because there is no point in most parts of it. I now carry one of

those flip-top, oyster-type phones that were all the rage, I think, in 1997—but it works well enough. The other day my office had a phone call from one of the leading digital phone companies announcing to us that the city of Bangor in my constituency would have 4G. There was general rejoicing around the office, and we were just about to put out a press release welcoming this wonderful development when my colleague, Alun Roberts, said, “We'd better phone them up, just to check.” That is what he did, and the company then confessed that it was Bangor, Northern Ireland, not Bangor, north Wales.

Mr Dodds: Great news!

Hywel Williams: Yes, indeed—wonderful news, but wrong Bangor, unfortunately. I am afraid that sort of thing happens rather often.

Let me turn to some of the detail that I wanted to put on the record. I referred to our EU funding contingency Bill, which would introduce statutory contingency alternative funding arrangements should we leave the European Union. A couple of weeks ago, the Prime Minister confirmed to me at Question Time that the Government could not say now that regional funding under the convergence funding would continue if we left. That funding is extremely important to west Wales and the valleys, because we have intense economic problems. There are also questions around the common agricultural policy. It is imperative that plans are put in place to safeguard businesses, farmers, communities and projects in west Wales and the valleys. We have already sunk to the economic level of parts of former communist eastern Europe, and it is really important that these funds are not held up in any way in the event of Brexit.

I mentioned the problems around Barnett. There are ways out of this, although I concede that it is a complicated area. We would want to see the establishment of a commission to resolve funding disputes between the UK Government and the devolved national Governments. Barnett has been roundly condemned over many years, not least by the independent Holtham commission set up by the Government over five years ago. Establishing an independent commission is essential in the context of the emerging debate over the fiscal framework. If the Welsh Government started levying taxes and varying income tax, how would we figure that out? How much should we lose in our grant from London, and how do we ensure that this sort of settlement is fair? We want to look at a fiscal framework within the tax-sharing arrangements between the UK and the Welsh Governments. The commission would also adjudicate on the appropriate deduction method that is employed so that Wales does not miss out on potentially extremely large amounts of money as a result of inappropriate or unjust methods being used, or of so-called cannibalisation of the Welsh tax base. I will not go into that now.

There is a highly respected academic institution at Cardiff University called the Wales Governance Centre. In one of its recent reports, it concluded:

“An independent adjudication commission should therefore be an essential component in the UK's emerging fiscal framework”

as a way of solving the problem all round. It continues:

“A 2015 report by the Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law recommended the establishment of an independent body to advise HM Treasury about devolution finance and particularly about

grant matters. This body could be modelled on the Australian Commonwealth Grants Commission and named the UK Finance Commission. The Bingham Centre report also proposed that this body or another independent body be responsible for adjudication in the event of disputes between governments that cannot be resolved through joint ministerial processes.”

That is the way out that I commend to the Government and that we will be proposing.

Much has been said today about the northern powerhouse. We would want to see a north Wales growth deal looking at matters such as electrification of the north Wales main line. We still, unfortunately, have not an inch of electrified rail in north Wales. It would also lead to the inclusion of Welsh rural areas on the UK’s list for the EU fuel duty rebate, which is another important matter in rural areas. There are several other matters that we would like to see dealt with, such as a major upgrade for the A55.

As I said, we would want a broadcasting Bill establishing a BBC trust for Wales and dealing with other matters regarding the responsibility for S4C, the world’s only Welsh language television channel: in fact, the universe’s only Welsh language channel; there is no other. We believe that that responsibility should be transferred to the National Assembly, as should the funding for the channel, which is currently with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, and that the Welsh Government should appoint a board of members for S4C.

I have already mentioned police devolution, so I will conclude with the Severn bridges Bill. We will introduce a Bill in this place to transfer responsibility for the Severn bridges to the Welsh Government when the bridges revert to public ownership in 2017. This will enable the National Assembly for Wales to decide on the appropriate level at which to set a charge, if it sets a charge at all. At its current high rate, it is a tax on the Welsh economy.

Those are some of the very ambitious measures that Plaid Cymru will promote. No doubt some people, both here and in Cardiff, are willing to trundle along on a “business as usual” basis, but as the Labour party discovered in Cardiff last week when we were choosing a First Minister, “business as usual” is not Plaid’s business.

7.59 pm

Mr Robin Walker (Worcester) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Arfon (Hywel Williams). I do not support his party or the SNP, but it is striking that they have both come to this House with alternative Queen’s Speeches and set out an alternative vision, which was sadly lacking in today’s speech by the Leader of the Opposition.

I want to join the tributes paid by Members on both sides of the House to Her Majesty the Queen on the occasion of her 63rd Gracious Speech. Hers is a remarkable example of service to our nation. Given that I am following the Plaid spokesman, perhaps I should also say how good it was to see the Prince of Wales in his place in the House of Lords today.

I also want to join the tributes paid to my right hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Mrs Spelman) and my hon. Friend the Member for Bracknell (Dr Lee). My right hon. Friend showed, as ever, that she is passionate, caring, thoughtful and generous to her colleagues and friends on both sides of the House. She delivered a fantastic proposing speech. My hon. Friend, with whom

I occasionally have been known to disagree, was hilariously funny and deeply insightful. His deeply serious point about the post-war consensus and the values that underpinned it was one of the most eloquent descriptions of that era in our politics that I have heard in this House.

We should be looking to build consensus. I support the Gracious Speech because it is deeply ingrained with the values of one nation conservatism, which are among the reasons why I went into politics. Members on both sides of the House should be able to come together and support its opening lines, which mention using

“the opportunity of a strengthening economy to deliver security for working people, to increase life chances for the most disadvantaged and to strengthen national defences.”

It was disappointing that the Leader of the Opposition delivered a political tirade that was more a rerun of his response to the Budget statement than a response to the Gracious Speech. Labour Back Benchers have made much more intelligent and engaged speeches. The Queen’s Speech focuses on prison reform and I pity some Labour Members for the prisoner’s dilemma that their party continues to face. I hope that they will be able to emerge from it in due course. The hon. Member for Walsall North (Mr Winnick), who is still in the Chamber and waiting to speak, is one of the very few Labour Back Benchers who enthusiastically supports the new leadership. I am sure we will hear a different argument from him.

Many of the measures in the Queen’s Speech, including on moving to a higher wage and lower welfare economy, should be supported by Members on both sides of the House. On rewarding work, I am glad that national statistics show that wages have risen by about 2% year on year ahead of inflation and that the rate of increase is even faster in my own constituency. I am also very pleased that unemployment in Worcester is back below 1,000. When I stood for election in May 2010, the figure was 2,545, so by my calculations, there has been a 60% fall in unemployment since Labour left office and Worcester last had a Labour MP. Youth unemployment has also fallen by 69%—more than two thirds—since then.

I want to continue that work, and one of the crucial ways in which we can do so is through creating more apprenticeships. Hon. Members have already spoken about the Government’s drive to create 3 million apprenticeships, and I welcome the fact that that featured in the Queen’s Speech. I have seen in my own constituency how apprenticeships can not only give people the chance to earn and learn, and to start their careers, but transform small businesses and help them to realise that, by harnessing the youth, vigour and ideas of young people, they can themselves grow and learn new things.

I want to compliment three businesses that have contacted me in the past few days. Rock Power Connections and Instant Scenery told me in the past couple of days that they are taking on their first apprentices, while Green Lighting Ltd is a Worcester firm that recently won a Queen’s award for innovation and received the apprentice of the year award from the Herefordshire and Worcestershire chamber of commerce. Those small businesses are taking people on, giving them a chance and enabling them to earn and learn. We want to see more of that.

The Gracious Speech mentions giving business the infrastructure it needs to grow, which is crucial. It also mentions access to high-speed broadband. Like Members on both sides of the House, I welcome that ambition

[Mr Robin Walker]

and hope to see it better achieved in the years to come. Great strides have been made on access to high-speed broadband in my rather urban constituency, but I acknowledge that there is a long way to go in other parts of the country, including in areas such as those represented by my rural neighbours and the hon. Member for Arfon. I remember serving on the Welsh Affairs Committee during our inquiry into broadband. There is clearly a greater distance to travel in rural Wales, and I hope that the Government can help to deliver it there, as well as in the rest of our United Kingdom.

The Gracious Speech mentions making Britain a world leader in the digital economy, which is hugely important in the fast-changing and fast-developing world in which we now live, including in Worcester, which has a growing and ambitious cyber-security cluster. Businesses such as Open GI and PCA Predict are exporting UK technology to the world. The UK has a crucial opportunity to provide leadership in the digital economy, which is one of the reasons why, when we come to the European referendum, I will argue that we should stay in and fight our corner to get the best deal possible so that such businesses can thrive and export all over the world.

My hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (David Rutley) made a plea for a catapult in his area. Worcestershire has a very strong claim to host the sensors catapult, which would be based not in my constituency—I am being altruistic—but in that of my hon. Friend the Member for West Worcestershire (Harriett Baldwin), in Malvern, where radar was invented and firms such as QinetiQ are leading the world in the science of sensors. Such a development in that excellent location would certainly contribute to jobs and growth in my constituency.

Beyond that, we need physical infrastructure for transport, and I am pleased that the Queen's Speech mentions that. In Worcester, that comes down to roads and rail. I will keep pushing in this Parliament, as I did in the last Parliament, for investment in our crucial southern link road and the dualling of the Carrington bridge. I will badger the Transport Secretary about that until it happens.

We also want a faster train service. The Prime Minister spoke eloquently about the benefits of investing in infrastructure. His constituency and mine are served by the same lovely, scenic and devastatingly slow train service currently run by Great Western Railway on the north Cotswolds line. He has previously responded positively to questions asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid Worcestershire (Nigel Huddleston) about getting upgrades for that line. We must keep driving for that. My constituents live less than 120 miles from London and it is absurd that it takes them two and a half hours to get there by train. The journey really ought to take under two hours.

I was intrigued to hear the suggestion in the Queen's Speech of devolving new powers to govern local bus services. I share the concerns raised by a couple of hon. Friends. I do not just want those powers to be given to directly elected mayors; I want the proposal to empower our county councils and to help them to deliver better support for bus services. Worcester has some very good bus services run by First, but there are not enough of them. The need to get better and more regular bus services to those areas that need them comes up time and again on the doorsteps. That is vital.

The detail of the proposed Bill includes apps and technologies, and it mentions bus companies opening themselves up to better use of technology. That has been pioneered fantastically in London and Transport for London has done some really good work on it. Indeed, I take the bus to Westminster every morning and it is incredibly convenient to be able to look up on an app when the bus will arrive and whether it is worth walking to the next bus stop. I would like such a service to be made available to my constituents. Worcester City Council has plans and I would like to see them delivered.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Southend West (Sir David Amess), I am delighted to welcome the retention of business rates by local authorities. I campaigned throughout the last Parliament for business rate reform, and I was pleased with some of the Budget's measures on that front, but I want to go even further, because the task has not been completed. I want to see more incentives in the business rate system for growing businesses that take people on.

Alex Cunningham: We all know that the tremendous development and investment in the south-east of England, which are worth billions of pounds, can really drive business rates, whereas in the north of England, things are a bit slower and there is not that extent of development. There needs to be some sort of balance to ensure that we can drive the economy. Perhaps the northern powerhouse will actually mean something in the future.

Mr Walker: Absolutely; the hon. Gentleman is right that we need to create balance in the system. Speaking for my midlands constituency, we are somewhere in the middle and we face that issue. We want to ensure that the Government fund our local authorities properly and that the business rates base is not eroded. That is an important point that we need to consider as we devolve more business rates. I support the strong bid from Worcestershire, combined with all the district councils, for greater devolution of business rates. I think that it could deliver well for my constituents if that bid was listened to.

I am delighted to welcome the focus in the Queen's Speech on supporting aspiration and promoting home ownership, and I support the ambitious commitment to build 1 million homes. Unlike my hon. Friend the Member for Southend West (Sir David Amess), who said that he could not see any scope for more homes in his constituency, I welcome more affordable homes in Worcester. There have been some great developments in recent years on brownfield sites and record numbers of affordable homes have been delivered in the past year in Worcester under a Conservative council.

A lot of people have talked about the local elections. As has been widely spread about by the media, we were not as successful in the local elections in Worcester as I would have liked. The Greens won a seat and Labour regained a seat in which its councillor had defected. The Conservatives remain the biggest group on Worcester City Council but, unfortunately, we have seen similar shenanigans to what has gone on in Wales. Instead of being propped up by Plaid, in Worcester Labour is propped up by the Green party. I worry about that, to be honest, but I will work with whoever is in control of our city council, as I have in the past. When the Liberal

Democrats reneged on a deal with the Conservative party and went in with Labour a few years ago, I worked very effectively with the Labour leadership on the council.

I was disappointed, however, that when Labour took the leadership of the council at that time, 100 affordable homes were being delivered every year, yet it managed to reduce the number of affordable homes built in Worcester during its one year in office by a third. That was terribly disappointing and it went against the party's manifesto commitments that it was elected to carry out. I hope that it does better this time around, because, as I said, with the Conservatives in control of the council over the past year, there has been record delivery of affordable homes. This issue matters. As the hon. Member for Hackney South and Shoreditch (Meg Hillier) said, this is something that comes up regularly at our constituency surgeries. It is essential for any Government to deliver new homes. I am very happy to compare the record of this Government on delivering new homes with that of the last Labour Government.

On houses and homes, I hope that we will take further measures in this Parliament to prevent homelessness. I welcome the launch of the all-party group on ending homelessness, which was set up by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton South (David Mackintosh), and the widespread cross-party support it has received.

We have heard a lot about the prison reform aspects of the Gracious Speech and I could not describe them better than my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir Edward Garnier). I agreed with everything he said about that point, even if I disagree with him about the case for a British Bill of Rights. We need to see the sort of cross-party consensus that is driving prison reform forward on many more issues in the years to come.

The Gracious Speech talks about tackling

“poverty and the causes of deprivation, including family instability, addiction and debt”.

In the last Parliament, I joined colleagues from both sides of the House, including many Labour Members, in campaigning for more action against high-cost debt providers—the likes of a certain firm beginning with W. The Under-Secretary of State for Disabled People, who is on the Front Bench, was very involved in those campaigns. I was pleased that after much campaigning, we moved the needle and more action was taken to support greater financial education, to support financial advice services such as Citizens Advice through a levy on high-cost lenders, and to regulate some of the bad practice that was going on. I hope that that work continues.

I am pleased to welcome measures to help the lowest income families to save through help to save and the creation of the lifetime ISA. I have asked before—I take the opportunity of the Queen's Speech to ask again, on behalf of Members on both sides of the House—that we look at how we can involve credit unions in that process. Credit unions have immense support across the House and do incredibly valuable work in all our constituencies. As chairman of the all-party group on credit unions, I am keen for them to play a central role in the delivery of help to save.

As a Parliamentary Private Secretary, I cannot say much about the parts of the Queen's Speech on education, but I look forward to working on their implementation. All I would say is that, having spoken about the need for

a national funding formula in every year of the last Parliament, I would be delighted to meet Ministers from other Departments to educate them about how that could be applied, particularly in health and social care.

It is, of course, good news that the Gracious Speech refers to a seven-day NHS. It is very good news from my perspective, having spoken to concerned constituents and junior doctors, that an agreement has been reached. I hope that the agreement holds and that, as happens so often in this place, through talking we can take relations to a better place.

I was interested to note the focus in the Gracious Speech on

“mental health provision for individuals in the criminal justice system.”

We have discussed in this House over the past few years how there needs to be a greater focus on mental health across the whole NHS and beyond. I hope we can continue that progress in the years to come.

One thing that I would have liked to have seen in the Queen's Speech—I have asked for this to be included in previous Queen's Speeches, but I am afraid that we have not seen it yet—is delivery on the Dilnot reforms. I recently wrote to the Secretary of State for Health about a tragic case from my constituency in which somebody lost all their family assets as a result of an elderly relative needing care. That is unfinished business, frankly, and I will push for greater delivery on that front, as well as on the Government's response to the Choice review on end-of-life care.

Like other Members, including the right hon. Member for Belfast North (Mr Dodds), who spoke for the Democratic Unionists, I welcome the decision to invest in our armed forces to honour the military covenant and meet the NATO commitment to spend 2% on defence. I welcome the fact that we balance that with our investment in the wider world through the development budget. It is vital that that money is spent well and that we have the right goals when investing in international security, and in economic and humanitarian challenges.

I am pleased that the Gracious Speech spoke about bringing peace to Syria and a lasting political settlement. I hope that we can also make progress, although much of this it is not within our power in this House, on the other great issues of contention in the middle east. In this anniversary year of the Balfour declaration, I hope that we can meet all its obligations, including those to the Palestinian people.

I welcome the upcoming visit of the President of Colombia. Having chaired the British Argentine all-party group in the last Parliament and having been involved in Latin American affairs, I think that our country neglects its Latin American relationships at its peril. There is much that we need to do to build them up and to engage with everyone in Latin America. We must build on the amazing legacy of Canning and of our being the first country to recognise and support the Latin American republics. There is huge good will towards this country across Latin America, particularly among business people.

Mr Jackson: My hon. Friend is making a fine speech, but he tempts me in a way that I cannot resist. He will know that a senior politician in Mexico, which has a population of 120 million, said recently that it would be

[Mr Jackson]

delighted to enter into a bilateral trade agreement, should Britain leave the European Union. That would help greatly in cementing our relations with Latin America and other countries.

Mr Walker: I am delighted to have that reassurance from my hon. Friend. I just hope that he could offer the same reassurance in respect of the President of the United States and the Prime Ministers of Canada, Australia and New Zealand. I fear that some of those people value us more as a member of the European Union that can get them access to a market of 500 million people than they would if we were outside it. I think we ought to be friendly with all our friends around the world. I respect the arguments that are made about the European Union by my hon. Friends who want to come out, but I have concluded that it is in the interests of my constituents for Britain to remain in and to continue to fight our corner.

Hywel Williams: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will welcome the renewed and extended contacts between Wales and Patagonia in the southern part of Argentina, where there is a Welsh settlement. Those contacts have been strengthened immeasurably this year, which is the 150th anniversary of the sailing of the *Mimosa* to Porth Madryn, as we call it in Welsh, or Puerto Madryn, as it is called in Argentina. I just say to him that this has nothing to do with the European Union at all.

Mr Walker: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's intervention. In my role with the all-party group and my all-too-brief role on the Welsh Affairs Committee, I was involved in some of the discussions on setting up that visit, so I am delighted about the progress that has been made. There really is a strong bond between Patagonia and Wales, not least through their language which, until a certain Walker made Welsh language education compulsory, was dwindling rather faster in Wales than in Patagonia. I am pleased to see that connection being built on and strengthened. It is just one example of Britain's, and indeed Wales's, soft power around the world, which we should celebrate.

I particularly welcome the measures in the Queen's Speech to

"uphold the sovereignty of Parliament and the primacy of the House of Commons."

As someone who spoke out to get a European referendum, I am delighted that we are delivering it and that all my constituents will have their say on the issue. We in the House are big enough and grown-up enough to have our disagreements about it and then to come back and work together in the interests of our country.

On the British Bill of Rights, I echo some of the comments of the right hon. Member for Belfast North in saying that Britain gave the world the concept of a Bill of Rights. In fact, the former MP for my constituency, John Somers, drafted the original 1689 British Bill of Rights, and I am proud of that fact. As we walk into Parliament through the Lower Waiting Hall, we pass his statue opposite that of Robert Walpole. I only recently discovered his deep connection with Worcester. It is disappointing to hear the Liberal Democrats, who are the heirs to the Whig tradition, arguing against the

concept of a British Bill of Rights. John Somers was one of the founders of the Whig party, and he drafted the first British Bill of Rights, which is still iconic for the whole world and which we can learn from. The SNP and Plaid Cymru will be less happy to hear that he went on to be one of the drafters of the 1707 Act of Union, another great piece of legislation that we should all celebrate.

As the Member for the faithful city, it is always a pleasure to be able to respond to the Gracious Speech. We have had an interesting and positive debate today, with a lot of engagement from Members of all parties, and I am grateful to have had the opportunity to take part.

8.22 pm

Mr David Winnick (Walsall North) (Lab): I hope that I will not be put in the category of "extremist" when I say, as I have in many years, that I believe we could somehow reduce the ceremonial aspects of the state opening of Parliament. Indeed, I find it difficult to understand why we need a state opening except after a general election. I hope that my remarks will in no way be interpreted as any form of disrespect to the Queen—they are not meant to be, as I am sure hon. Members will recognise. If I may say so, too much spit and polish and not enough essential work is undertaken in the House, and in the building as a whole, on a daily basis. I will leave it at that—it will be clear that my views have not changed.

The Queen's Speech mentions improving life chances. One of the best things to have happened in recent months was the way in which opposition in the House from Labour Members and other Opposition Members—and, let it be said, to some extent from a few Conservative Members—prevented the Government from going ahead with the reduction of the personal independence payment for a number of disabled people. The row we had in the House at Question Time on 14 March led, within a few days, to the resignation of the Secretary of State.

Michael Meacher has rightly been praised today. He served for 45 years and is a good example to those who say, "A few years in the House of Commons and you soon change." There was no change in Michael Meacher; he remained as committed and dedicated to the people he represented and the causes he believed in as when he first came to the House in 1970. Had Michael been here on 14 March, he would have been in the forefront of the opposition to what the Government intended to do. Let me make it quite clear that if Ministers propose further actions against disabled people and the most vulnerable, Labour Members—and other Opposition Members, I am sure—will be as strenuously opposed as they were in March. Let there be no misunderstanding about that.

It is hardly likely that there will be improvements in the life chances of my constituents, who have faced a number of cuts as a result of the substantial reduction in revenue support from central Government to local government. There has been a cut of over 40% since 2010, and that money is the mainstay of local government funding, not council tax or other revenues raised locally. Such a cut, which I am sure is the same as those up and down the country—except in a few Tory-controlled local authorities that seem to have been compensated in some way—has undoubtedly caused a great deal of difficulties, particularly for those who are in need of help from the council and social workers.

One of the cuts in my borough has been the closure of a unit dealing with domestic violence, which had been established in my constituency for some time. It gave an excellent service that was recognised nationally as well as locally, and I well remember making representations over the years about funding for it, to central Government and locally. I regret the fact that it has now closed its doors.

The Queen's Speech refers to bringing communities together. That is an excellent objective, and I am all for it. No one could be more in favour of bringing communities together. However—I know this has been said before, but I should nevertheless make the point—the campaign that the Tories waged for their candidate to become London Mayor hardly brought communities together. It was a disgraceful campaign, which I am sure many Conservative Members deplored. Indeed, one or two have already made that clear. The campaign even involved trying to encourage people of Asian origin who happen to be Hindus or Sikhs to be rather suspicious of what the Labour candidate, a Muslim, intended to do about jewellery and such matters. It was so silly, and it was unfortunate. It is not the way to achieve community cohesion. I hope that that will not be repeated. It reminded me in some respects of the by-election campaign at the beginning of 1983, which the Liberal party waged before they were Liberal Democrats.

I support what the Queen's Speech states about tackling extremism. We are faced with certain dangers, not only from terrorism, but from fellow travellers or apologists for terrorism. We must be on our guard. The Prime Minister was right to say that gender segregation on religious grounds at meetings and so on cannot be justified. We should take pride in the fact that we live in a democracy where everyone, whatever their religion or background, has equal rights. There are few countries outside Europe of which one could say the same.

There has been a good deal of comment about anti-Semitism. Obviously, I oppose all forms of racism. I oppose anti-Semitism no less than I oppose prejudice against anyone else—Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, Buddhists, Christians; I make no difference. To the extent that a few people with such poisonous views have come into my party, I welcome the fact that they have mainly been turfed out. I also welcome the committee that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition has set up to look into anti-Semitism in the party. That is the right position to take. I should state, in case Members do not know—there is no particular reason why they should know what goes on in Select Committees if they are not members—that the Home Affairs Committee will conduct an inquiry into anti-Semitism.

We should not forget for one moment the millions of lives that were destroyed—those who were murdered—in the last war for no other reason than they happened to be of Jewish origin. They were not Zionists. Most of them would not have had the slightest understanding of Zionism. Mr Livingstone's remarks were certainly inappropriate, but—I may be wrong—I do not consider him to be an anti-Semite in any normal sense. However, he seems to have, shall we say an unhealthy obsession about Jews.

If it is right to condemn anti-Semitism, as I hope we all do, it is no less right to condemn prejudice against other groups. I come back to the campaign that the Tory party waged that seemed to arise because Sadiq Khan

happened to be a Muslim. I do not accuse the Conservative party of being anti-Muslim—there is no justification for that—but there was a tendency in that campaign to emphasise his origin and so on. One aspect amused me. My hon. Friend the deputy leader of the Labour party tweeted Sadiq Khan, asking, "Could you remind me again? What did your father do?" I think we all know what his father did.

Let me consider the sovereignty of Parliament. I do not understand how it is achieved by reducing the Commons from 650 to 600 Members. At the same time as the House of Commons is to be reduced, if the Government can get the legislation through, the House of Lords will reach a total far in excess of the membership of the House of Commons. How can the Government justify reducing the elected House of Commons while at the same time increasing the membership of the House next door, which is not elected in any way, shape of form, and is subject to patronage?

There is another aspect of the reduction to 600, which is not always mentioned. The governing party, whichever it happens to be, will have fewer members. When one considers Ministers, Parliamentary Private Secretaries, those who aim, as they do in all political parties, to climb the political ladder, far fewer Members will be left on the Back Benches. Far fewer Members will be in a position to oppose or criticise their own Government. That does not fit the Government's aim to uphold the sovereignty of Parliament. I hope that Conservative Members here and there might have the courage—I see the hon. Member for Peterborough (Mr Jackson) nodding—to oppose the proposal.

Mr Jackson: I warmly endorse the hon. Gentleman's comments, particularly given that, in our system, the Executive are recruited from the legislature. If the number of people in the legislature in the lower House—the elected Chamber—is reduced, the pool from which talent can be taken is reduced. That has an impact when there is also such a large unelected Chamber.

Mr Winnick: It is likely that the hon. Gentleman and I hardly agree on a single thing, but we believe in Parliament and in respecting Parliament. The remarks that he just made are appropriate and I hope that other Conservative Members share those views.

Politically, the Speech overall was predictable and against the interests of many of my constituents. It is a reactionary Speech, which outlines policies that in my view—and I am sure in that of my hon. Friends—will not advance the interests of ordinary people. I look forward to opposing it at the appropriate time.

8.34 pm

Mr Stewart Jackson (Peterborough) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Walsall North (Mr Winnick), who was elected to this House for the first time on 31 March 1966, when I was one year old—I am sorry about his blushes. He has served with distinction since then, with a slight interruption in 1970.

It is a pleasure to contribute to this debate, and to make observations about the legislation proposed in the Gracious Speech. It would, however, be remiss of me not to mention that overshadowing the Government's programme is the momentous decision that 44 million

[*Mr Stewart Jackson*]

electors in the United Kingdom will make about our relationship with the European Union. The referendum was a manifesto commitment, and while other parties such as the Liberal Democrats systematically reneged on that solemn undertaking to the British people, the Conservative party put it in its manifesto with the important caveat that the plebiscite would be brought forward before the end of 2017, on the basis of a fundamental renegotiation of our relationship with the European Union. That clearly has not taken place in many respects, whether welfare reform, the accrual of more powers to the European Commission and Council of Ministers vis-à-vis this Parliament, immigration and border control, or a wide range of other areas that the Government, and particularly the Prime Minister, enunciated as his objective, especially in his 2013 Bloomberg speech.

I am usually predisposed to be a loyal but perhaps candid friend to the Government, but I feel disappointed that the Prime Minister has not been good to his words in the 2013 Bloomberg speech. We went to the electorate on the basis that the Conservative party had a settled consensus in the run-up to the general election and the Government's renegotiation, and I say gently to the Prime Minister that we all have to live with each other after 23 June. In one of my more mischievous social media interventions yesterday, I suggested that he was in danger of becoming like Colonel Nicholson at the conclusion of "The Bridge on the River Kwai", with the Conservative party as the bridge that ends up getting blown up. Colonel Nicholson asks, "What have I done?", and I say to the Prime Minister that we must unite as a party and a country, and that the schisms that have occurred as a result of the debate on the European Union may take some time to heal.

Ultimately, however, I trust the good judgment of the British people to make the right decision, albeit, as my hon. Friend the Member for Southend West (Sir David Amess) said, that the cards have been heavily stacked with public money and propaganda from the Government and the civil service. I urge Labour voters to think carefully about their vote on 23 June. The International Monetary Fund, multinationals, and big investment banks are supporting the remain campaign with lots of cash because a remain vote suits their narrow interest, with unlimited immigration, low wages, and squashing down the conditions of working people. Labour voters should think about that when they go to vote.

I have overstayed my welcome on the primrose path of the European Union, Madam Deputy Speaker, so I shall return to the Gracious Speech. I welcome parts of the Speech, although it missed opportunities to include legislation that would have been apposite at this juncture.

I respectfully disagree with my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir Edward Garnier), as does my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr Walker). It was a manifesto commitment that we fundamentally reorder our human rights legislation. We should not forget that the European convention on human rights, which was created by British jurists and of which we can be proud, in the wake of the second world war in reaction to the despotism of the Nazi regime and the holocaust was incorporated into UK

legislation only as a result of the sanction of this House. It therefore follows that it must lie within the purview and bailiwick of this House to make a decision.

John Hirst, the axe murderer—he was convicted of manslaughter—brought the test case way back in 2005 that he should have the right to vote, and that the Forfeiture Act 1870 should effectively be updated. As the House will know, the Act precludes convicted felons, meaning those not on bail, from being able to exercise the franchise. The ability to vote in an election is not a human right but a civil right. That is a fundamental difference, although I accept that some would disagree. A much more fundamental point is that the House, having reflected on the fact that the Forfeiture Act was many years out of date, came to a settled position in October 2011 that we should not give the vote to convicted felons. Supranational bodies such as the European Court of Human rights should take due cognisance of that decision. It is a difficult balance—I do not advocate our setting our face against international treaty obligations—but we must strike a proper balance between the will of the people elected to represent their constituents in this House and an unaccountable, supranational body which, incidentally, does not have the standard of legal expertise and jurists that we have in this country.

I regret that there is no Bill for House of Lords reform. The hon. Member for Walsall North and the leader of the Liberal Democrats, the hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Tim Farron), made a fair point, although the latter over-egged the pudding. Proper reform could have won a consensus in the House in the previous Parliament had there been a sensible proposal. However, the proposal for a one-off, 15-year term, with competing primacy, autonomy and authority with Members of the House of Commons, was clearly unacceptable to a majority of MPs. It was incumbent on the Liberals—they had a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity—to propose something that could win the support of a majority of Members of this House, and they failed to do so.

I have been mildly disobliging about the House of Lords in the past few months—I called them unelected panjandrums. I have had a volte face on their role. It is unacceptable and indefensible that the upper House is unelected. It is the second-largest unelected legislative body in the world after the National People's Congress of China, and that is unacceptable in a modern, mature democracy. Conservatives who set their face against any discussion of reform do a disservice to their constituents. We need a proper debate and, by the end of this Parliament, we need workable proposals. I await the Strathclyde report and proposals for legislation for the Lords. At the very least, the Lords offends the spirit of the post-war Salisbury convention, and of the Parliament Act 1911, which circumscribed precisely the role of the House of Lords in relation to the House of Commons in the wake of the debacle over the people's Budget of 1909.

A sovereignty Bill should have been brought forward in greater detail to defend the role of this House. Politics is always in a state of change and right now it is a state of flux. We have seen the Trump phenomenon, and uprisings of the left and right across Europe. The House of Commons and the Palace of Westminster is a symbol of stability. It has survived over so many years because it has been able to change, but we need to protect and nourish this House in its role as the fulcrum of national political debate.

If I may say so, I think we missed a trick by not bringing forward a corruption Bill. My right hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Sir Eric Pickles) was appointed anti-corruption tsar by the Prime Minister last year in the wake of the general election. I am interested to see the work he brings forward when it is published. I am still very concerned—I have raised my concerns with the Electoral Commission over a number of years—about the misuse of postal votes, in particular the coercion of women behind closed doors in some minority ethnic communities. Those votes are effectively stolen. Because it happens in Birmingham, Peterborough, Oldham and Blackburn, people seem to turn a blind eye. If it was happening in Tunbridge Wells, Leatherhead, Andover or Exeter, they would not be doing so. I do not think any malfeasance, malpractice or illegality in postal votes is acceptable. This issue needs to be taken much more seriously. If I am fortunate enough to win a prominent place in the private Member's Bill ballot, I will put forward a Bill to return to the previous regime of postal votes for people who are away working, or who are ill and have a doctor's certificate. The essential premise of the liberalisation of postal votes in 2001 was that it would drive up turnout. That has not happened and the system is still open to too many abuses. That was not in the speech.

I am pleased the Government have backtracked on compulsory academisation. My hon. Friend the Member for Worcester skated gracefully over the issue, but it is fair to say that the Secretary of State listened to the misgivings of many Members, in particular those representing rural areas with primary schools that are maintained. My views are well known: ideologically, I am not against academies, but I believed the compulsory element was fundamentally un-Conservative. I did not like effectively giving carte blanche to academy chains to throw off parent governors. I did not like the idea that academy chains were the panacea of provision, when we know there is not the capacity for those academy chains to deliver educational improvements, particularly in failing schools, some of which are in my constituency. I applaud the Government for their pragmatism and their practical approach.

Another issue that I have to say will probably hit the buffers in the not-too-distant future is East Anglian devolution. For those who are particularly interested in this somewhat niche subject, I have a remarkably concise and readable article in *The House* magazine this week on why it is a complete dog's breakfast. I will not say any more than that, but it has the fingerprints of a well-known, prominent and recently quite noisy former Deputy Prime Minister all over it. I do not think it will work. I support the northern powerhouse and devolution for Greater Birmingham and Greater Manchester, but it just does not stack up for East Anglia. It is not wanted. It is unpopular, expensive and uncoded, and the Government should drop the plans.

I warmly welcome the prison reform proposals. I have always been interested in prisons, not least because I have an almost-unique prison in my constituency. It is effectively two co-located prisons—a women's prison and a men's prison—built and opened under the auspices of the Labour Government in 2005. Jack Straw said that if only one prison was to be built in England, it would be the one at Peterborough. It is a private prison, of course, and pretty successful. I have no problem with private prisons, but the Government need to build on

the experience across the world of tackling recidivism and rehabilitation in particular. The key area is prisoners on that conveyor belt of crime serving very short sentences.

Mention has been made of women, people with mental health problems and drugs, but we have to get it right on education and work in prisons. Our prison system is greatly criticised, but, compared with some of the prisons I have been invited to and visited in central America, ours are like holiday camps, as my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley (Philip Davies) already thinks. I once visited San Miguel prison in Santiago, Chile, where 81 prisoners had been killed in a riot after a fire. The experience has never left me. It was like something from a Dickens novel. On a recent trip to Honduras, we were taken to a high-security prison so dangerous they would not even let us in, because they could not guarantee that the inmates did not have revolvers or other weapons with which to murder us. So we could not offer tea and sympathy at that high-security prison. We are doing absolutely the right thing, therefore, in trying to tackle the endemic issues of poor education and the lack of life skills and, in particular, a sense of civic obligation. Given that nothing else has solved the enduring problem of persistent crime, it is worth our giving these new plans an opportunity.

Along with prison reform and in line with the life chances strategy, I strongly welcome the focus on children in care and leaving care. We have failed so many of those children over the years and treated them, shamefully, as second-class citizens, yet they desire the love, kindness and warmth of a decent family life, like all other children. They have just been unlucky. As corporate parents, even good local authorities, such as mine, Peterborough City Council, have stood by and, through omission rather than commission, let those children down very badly. It is time we had a revolution to focus on those children and young people. It is wrong that, having left care, they have been thrown out on the streets, ignored and pushed on to the conveyor belt of crime or poorly paid jobs, without a family to care for them, nurture them and look out for them. So I welcome that focus too.

On the soft drinks industry levy, I say again that I am not a liberal: I am not a social or an economic liberal; I am a social conservative. I think that we have a duty and a responsibility to enact legislation that helps people and, at the same time, sometimes challenges vested commercial interests. We are facing a diabetes time bomb. In the absence of any other solutions to this societal problem, we have to look at the soft drinks sugar levy. Last October, I went to Mexico, which, as some will know, is attempting to use its tax system to tackle its very serious and worsening childhood and adulthood obesity issue.

I will not take too much longer, because I know that others want to speak. Let me end on two other issues, one of which is the Land Registry. I have a Land Registry office in Peterborough. In 2010, I led a campaign to save the office, which was then subject to an arbitrary decision by the then Labour Government to close it that seemed to have little or no business case. We saved it, but technological and other changes have come along in the intervening six years. My view is simply this: if I can protect the work opportunities, employment conditions and quality of life of some or a majority of the people who work in that and other Land Registry offices through a different governance model, I will do that, rather than opposing privatisation of the Land Registry on ideological grounds. That may not be a welcome

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message to the unions that represent the workforce there, but it is the most practical and sensible way forward if it saves those jobs.

Finally, many hon. Members will have visited National Citizen Service schemes. I am delighted that they are now being put on a statutory footing and that schools will have a duty to promote the National Citizen Service. Many of the children and young people involved, teenagers in particular, come from quite difficult and dysfunctional families, where work is itinerant, people are low paid and there is not really a tradition of involvement in community activities, altruistic work, charity work and that kind of thing. To see the faces of some of the young boys and girls who come along and are treated as equals—as decent and articulate human beings who can contribute something to help other people, whether it is litter picking or work with older people—is absolutely fantastic. It is elevating, uplifting and great for the local community, so I pay tribute to the Government for bringing forward those proposals.

To be fair, this is a holding Queen's Speech. It is not one of the finest reforming Queen's Speeches we have ever seen, but it consolidates some of the excellent work that the Government have done on housebuilding, apprentices, phonics and wider education issues, reforms in the health service and other key areas. I have to say, without being too unkind, that although he started well, the Leader of the Opposition somewhat queered the pitch with a 25-minute rant, which failed, really, to put forward a coherent and comprehensive alternative programme from the Labour party, as charming, witty, engaging and emollient as he was in the first 10 minutes of his speech.

It has been a pleasure—for me, maybe not for everyone else—to have the opportunity to speak in this debate on the Queen's Speech. I finish by paying tribute to Her Majesty the Queen—what grace, what dedication and what hard work she has shown over all these years—and of course to the Duke of Edinburgh. Long may they go on. Thank you for this opportunity, Madam Deputy Speaker; I will continue to be a candid friend to this Government.

8.58 pm

Deidre Brock (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP): This has been a very interesting debate. It has been quite lengthy, but some interesting points have been made. It has almost been cuddly at times and quite consensual, but I am afraid to say that I will not be so consensual in my speech. It is the duty of those of us on the SNP Benches to make points where we see them that need to be raised.

The longer I spend in this Chamber looking at the Conservative party, which pretends to be a Government, and at many in the Labour party, on the Benches to my right, which pretends to be the official Opposition, the more I deeply regret our failure to take Scotland out of this Union in 2014 and the more I worry about the kind of shambles we might be tossed into if we are ripped out of the European Union in June.

We heard today a Gracious Speech focused on driving Conservative prejudices down the throats of English voters, ploughing ahead with privatising school education, turning five-year-olds into commodities. That is not

something we have to care about very much if tuition fees for private schooling are paid out of daddy's offshore accounts, but it is something we have to be concerned about if we want our local community to carry on having schools for children whose parents do not have offshore trusts or family companies that do not pay tax.

Prisons are getting the same privatisation treatment as those schools, too. It is as if the private sector has fairy dust to sprinkle everywhere and there is no record of failure in private enterprise. That is not true. It cannot be denied that many private enterprises get ahead by saying, "Devil take the hindmost", or that many private enterprises fail. That is a process of attrition that I think is singularly unsuited to public services—and I know that that view is shared by my hon. Friends. It winnows itself down by allowing the less successful to die, and no one should ever be doing that with schools and prisons—not if we want to protect society. We cannot just close a school because it is struggling, and we cannot just close a prison because it is not an income generator—not that that is a consideration of this Government.

The move to abolish the Human Rights Act suggests a Government intent on delivering an ideological change, rather than making for a better country. I know that the intention is to have a British Bill of Rights, but I have found myself scrolling back and forwards through the Human Rights Act, trying to see which bits are not British, and which bits most upset the stiff upper lips. Is it the right to life; the right to a fair trial; the right not to be tortured; the prohibition of slavery and forced labour? Would it be the improvements to the treatments of the disabled while in police custody that upset them?

A leader in Scotland, who won an election a couple of weeks ago, puts human rights at the centre of her politics. I would like to quote from a speech Nicola Sturgeon gave in September last year:

"Human rights aren't always convenient for Governments—but they're not meant to be. Their purpose is to protect the powerless, not to strengthen those in power. That's why if you weaken human rights protections—and this is contrary to how things are sometimes portrayed—you're not striking a blow at judges in Strasbourg, lawyers in London or politicians in Scotland. You're striking instead at the poor, the vulnerable, and the dispossessed."

She was right then, and she is right now: the protection of human rights is vital.

Bob Stewart *rose*—

Deidre Brock: I know that some Members think that the human rights of criminals or suspected terrorists are far too often protected when they should not be. Those Members are wrong, and I will tell them why. Unless the human rights of criminals and terrorists are protected, and unless the human rights of the weak are protected, along with those of the infirm, the different, the odd, the outsider, the radical, the truth is that no one's human rights are protected. If the human rights of, say, Abu Hamza are not protected, neither are mine, neither are yours and neither are those of people calling for his protection to be withdrawn.

Human rights are not divisible; they are not negotiable, and they cannot be given to one human and not to another. Any human being has those human rights. That same consideration should be extended to the refugees fleeing Syria—they are human beings and they

have human rights. We should treat them with respect and reach out to help them. We should greet them with blankets and food, not with the cold stare of a bureaucrat demanding to see passports and to take fingerprints. We should be sending aid to Greece, treating the flood of refugees as the humanitarian disaster that it is. If the much-vaunted role of the UK as a world leader is to mean anything, it should surely mean compassion, humanity and respect. Unfortunately, these do not seem to be the driving impulses of this Government. There does not, in fact, seem to be much driving this Government.

The high-speed rail Bill appears to have returned for an encore in this Session. If the speed of that Bill is an indication of the speed of the trains, I think the Bill is badly named—it is more Thomas the Tank Engine than the Flying Scotsman! On that note, I see that high-speed rail, if such it is, will not reach Scotland. Perhaps it would be better to start building it where it is actually wanted—in Scotland.

On the digital economy Bill, there is the fantastic news that every household will have a legal right to a fast broadband connection, with the kicker that anyone living in a remote area will have to pay a chunk of it themselves. There is great news from the UK Government: “You have a legal right to things that you can afford to pay for.” Broadband is just another addition to a long list that includes access to justice, access to medicines when people are ill, and, of course, access to higher education. Tuition fees will rise again while the higher education sector is deregulated. Some would say, “Get a degree from the university of Starbucks, and pay through the nose for the privilege. No taxes involved.” Some Conservative Members seem to believe that they have to think in this way because they are Tories, but that plan suggests that they are sending England’s universities down the same paths that the banks took before the 2008 crash.

I am sure that there will be some degree of welcome for the turning of the screw on visitors who come here on holiday and have the cheek to get ill and need treatment. Charging more for treating them, cutting out some visitors from the European economic area and recovering the full cost of treatment is a wizard wheeze which I am sure was expected to be very popular—except among constituents who discover that the arrangements are reciprocal, and find themselves abroad in need of medical treatment but without the means to fund it.

As has already been pointed out, the move towards driverless cars in the transport Bill may come to be seen as a metaphor for a driverless Government, transfixed by the oncoming headlights of the EU referendum. Never let it be said, however, that a nationalist would come here armed only with criticism and with no suggestions. I would never do such a thing. Indeed, my party has already presented an excellent alternative Queen’s Speech, which, as was pointed out earlier by the hon. Member for Arfon (Hywel Williams), focuses a little more closely on the needs of Scotland than the original.

Let me offer the Government some small ideas for improving their programme: some pointers with which to up their game. Instead of focusing on their small and mean proposals, let us focus on what will really matter to the people whom they are supposed to be governing. Let us think about reforming welfare so that the poorest, most vulnerable, weakest members of society do not

have to rely on food banks to feed their children—and, while we are there, let us go the whole hog, and provide a bit of support for disabled people instead of a cold heart.

The Government could listen to the Black Triangle campaigners in my constituency while there is still time. Those campaigners have noted that it is an offence under Scots law for a holder of public office to neglect his or her duty, and have reported the right hon. Members for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr Duncan Smith) and for Epsom and Ewell (Chris Grayling) to the police for actions that they took when they were Work and Pensions Secretary and Employment Minister respectively. I understand that Police Scotland is considering the evidence with which it has been presented, and will form a view in due course. It could be that the actions of Black Triangle will commend the ingredients of the Government’s poisoned chalice to their own lips; that would be even-handed justice.

The Public Accounts Committee, of which I am a member, listens week after week as the incompetences of the Government are laid bare before us. Week in week out, we hear about the most appalling failures to control Government spending—not on social security or welfare benefits, but on the pet projects that Governments and Ministers pursue. The electronic system for controlling the UK’s borders, which began under the Blair Government, has cost tens of millions of pounds, and still does not work. The costs of Trident are spiralling out of control, this time into the billions, and the renewal has not even been agreed upon.

The Home Office told the Committee that it had reviewed the details of the highly paid consultants and temporary specialist staff on its books, and found that it was buying in skills that its permanent staff already had. Other Departments did not bother to check. The estimate of the cost of electrifying the great western railway main line tripled to £2.8 billion, a cost overrun that puts other rail projects in doubt. HMRC indicated that tax fraud was costing about £16 billion a year. It also indicated that there was a gap of about £13 billion between the VAT that should be collected and what it was actually collecting, and a tax gap of £34 billion a year.

I believe that the Government’s efforts should be directed towards putting their own house in order and collecting the moneys that are due, rather than squandering billions on in-house incompetence. It is not the poorly paid, the disabled or the unemployed who are causing the problems; it is the Government. As has already been said many times today, austerity is not a necessity; it is a choice, a preference, of this Government.

The UK is being failed by this Government and failed badly. This Queen’s Speech is merely the latest example and it is time the record was changed. Stop what you are doing and do something else instead. Develop a vision for the UK, at least. Make it, though, a vision where the weakest are protected, where children can go to school and learn about evolution, science and religion without someone else’s prejudices being the guiding factor. Do not sell the education of those children—invest in it instead. Make decent people proud of what the Government are doing. How about a Bill to formalise good treatment of refugees, of asylum seekers, of human beings fleeing here in fear of their lives? How about a human rights Act that says that we recognise

[Deidre Brock]

that human rights are universal? UK foreign policy should include provisions to promote human rights, to stand against violence against women and girls and work towards equality?

There could be so much more than this small and narrow vision of what the UK is and can be. I urge the Government to lift up their eyes, set their sights higher, inspire the next generation—inspire this generation—and work towards a better world. It does not have to be delivered this week—God knows, we will be debating this fairly poor example of a Queen’s Speech for the foreseeable future so it will take a while—but surely we can start now.

9.11 pm

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): Today has been an important day in our country’s democracy. A woman who commands great respect across the political spectrum fulfilled her constitutional duty to allow the process of government to begin—Nicola Sturgeon was sworn in as First Minister of Scotland. She went on to appoint her Cabinet. I extend my congratulations, and I am sure those of my colleagues, to all the new ministerial team up the road, particularly to my good friend Derek Mackay, the new Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Constitution, Fergus Ewing, the first politician I campaigned and voted for, who is the new Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy and Connectivity, and my old employers Jamie Hepburn and Aileen Campbell, who have been reappointed as junior Ministers in Nicola Sturgeon’s Government.

But it is true that there was another woman who had an important constitutional role to play today that we all respect because, in Wales, Leanne Wood became the Leader of the Opposition in the Welsh Assembly and, in consenting to Carwyn Jones leading a minority Government in Wales, achieved agreement on a number of key points from the Plaid Cymru manifesto that will now be taken forward for the benefit of the people of Wales. Although I sit in this House as a Scottish National party member, I am a proud card-carrying member of Plaid Cymru, too, so I am delighted by the progress that our friends are making. What a refreshing change the experience of devolved democracy makes to the pomp and ceremony that we have seen today, although I think we should congratulate Her Majesty on at least making what was probably the shortest speech of the day, as it is nearly quarter past 9 and a relatively small number of Members have spoken. I want to be brief so that the remaining Member also gets to speak. I want to look at three key things that emerge from the debate and the Queen’s Speech. It is a tale of two Governments, and the distinction between democracy as we are experiencing it in Westminster and the democratic renaissance that is being experienced in the devolved Administrations. I want to look more broadly at the role of this country in the world, particularly in Europe and from an international development perspective, and to reflect on some of the constitutional, procedural and democratic lessons that there are for all of us.

A major theme that has come out in most of the speeches today has been human rights. Earlier this evening, Cardinal Bo, Burma’s first Catholic Cardinal, celebrated mass in the crypt. He is a staunch defender

of human rights and religious liberty. Rightly, we welcome such champions regularly to this place and give them a platform to speak up for human rights and against human rights abuses throughout the world, but we then have to live up to those standards. We diminish ourselves, and this Government diminish this country, by undermining human rights here. How can we preach human rights elsewhere in the world if we are seeking to undermine well-established human rights in the UK?

More broadly, the Queen’s Speech represents a failed opportunity on many levels, as has been observed by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow South (Stewart Malcolm McDonald) and others. It will definitely be badged as “not for viewers in Scotland”. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Arfon (Hywel Williams) observed that the Bills set out today represented English devolution by default. So much of what has been debated today is of absolutely no relevance to us. On the high-level issues, no amount of the kind of social reform that simply tinkers around the edges will undo the damage of the Government’s austerity programme or the desperation, if not the destitution, that thousands of people who are already the poorest and most vulnerable in our society are being forced into. That is the reality of the Government’s programme that has been outlined in the Queen’s Speech and that has been implemented since the election last year.

We on the Scottish National party Benches have provided an alternative vision in the alternative Queen’s Speech outlined by my right hon. Friend the Member for Moray (Angus Robertson). That is underpinned by the straightforward proposal in our manifesto for a modest increase in public spending of 0.5% a year to release more than £150 billion-worth of investment, while continuing to pay down the debt and bring the books back into balance. No one is questioning that that should be done, but it should not be done on the backs of the poorest and most vulnerable.

Of course, this is not just a vision, because we are delivering in Scotland. That was why we were re-elected for a third consecutive term with the highest number of votes ever received by party in Scotland and the biggest electoral mandate of any Government in western Europe. The SNP manifesto proposed to protect the poorest and most vulnerable, to protect benefits for the elderly, such as free transport and personal care, and to abolish the pernicious bedroom tax in Scotland. It also proposed the progressive reform of council tax to increase resources for councils while minimising the impact on the least well-off. So an alternative vision not only exists, but has been demonstrated to be possible. That applies equally to the role that we can play in the world.

The European debate has dominated today’s discussions and continues to dominate political debate across the country as a whole. Of course, much of this is to do with the internal politics of the Conservative party, but our plea from these Benches is that we drag the European debate up to the level that is needed: the gold standard of political debate and engagement that we experienced during the Scottish independence referendum. It is time to ditch the “Project Fear” rhetoric and to focus on the positive. It is time to make the social and historical case for a European Union that has protected the rights of workers and citizens for 70 years and that has established peace on the continent of Europe for that length of time. Those are the arguments that we need to continue to hear.

Next week, there will be a full day of debate on our role in the world and on creating a safer world, and of course the SNP fully supports that. Our nationalism and our vision of Scotland are defined by our internationalism and by the kind of relationship that we want to build with our fellow nations around the world. That has always been based on an approach that involves peace and diplomatic solutions, which could not be in greater contrast to the policies of this Government, who are bombing the people of Syria and steadfastly continuing to take forward their proposals for Trident.

This is also an important year for international development. We heard in the Queen's Speech that the President of Colombia is to visit us, and we look forward to the opportunities that his visit will provide to discuss the peace process in his country. At the end of this month, there will be a global humanitarian summit to discuss how the world community can come together to address the serious humanitarian crises around the world, and I hope that the Government will consider inviting the new Europe and International Development Minister in the Scottish Government, Alasdair Allan, to be part of the UK delegation to that summit. I also pay tribute to his predecessor, Humza Yousaf, who has moved on to the transport remit. The UK Government will be asked to commit to replenishing the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and it will be interesting to hear their plans for a sensible commitment that will enable them to live up to their ambitions and promises. The same applies to their commitments on the sustainable development goals.

Much has been made by the Prime Minister and others of the Government's commitment to meeting a target of 0.7% of GNI to be spent on overseas development assistance and a target of 2% of GNI to be spent on achieving the military spending levels set out by NATO. What Ministers do not boast quite so much about from the Dispatch Box is the amount of double-counting that takes place in regard to both those targets. While that might be within the OECD rules, it is not what people expect when they hear the Government say that they are meeting those targets. They really should commit to meeting both those targets through completely independent, not overlapping, budgets.

Of course, the biggest decision that we expect to come our way will be on Trident. As I said in my maiden speech—many of us were making our maiden speeches this time last year—Trident is symbolic of so much. At a time when the austerity agenda continues and when we are told that there is no money for the WASPI women pensioners, there nevertheless remain the funds for military adventurism in foreign policy and the waste of millions of pounds on weapons of mass destruction. When will that vote finally take place? Will the Government commit, as proposed in the SNP's alternative Queen's Speech, to give the Scottish Parliament a say and to listen to the voice of Scotland's elected representatives in Holyrood? Trident is symbolic of the squandering of money, the undermining of public services and the projection of military power, and it is an example of how Scotland's voice needs to be heard on these matters.

That is why the Government should urgently re-examine the procedures for English votes for English laws that they introduced in this House. If observers were scratching their heads watching the pomp and ceremony in the

House of Lords earlier today, how much more must they be bemused by the procedures that take place in this House when EVEL kicks in, with the hokey cokey in and out of the English Legislative Grand Committee, which is effectively an English Parliament by any other name, except for the fact that not once has there been any kind of serious debate or Division as a result of that procedure. It is simply a waste of parliamentary time.

More importantly in terms of the way that EVEL has been introduced, we were given clear assurances about the opportunities that would remain for Scottish Members to scrutinise Government legislation, and they have not stood up. We were told that the estimates process was how we would make sure that our constituents' voices could be heard, and that we would vote on the consequences of Government legislation that had an impact on Scotland. Last week, Professor David Heald of the University of Glasgow told the Procedure Committee that the estimates process was completely "irrelevant" to the operation of the Barnett formula, so what we said at the time when EVEL was introduced has come to pass.

It is interesting to note that EVEL was introduced under Standing Orders, yet reform of the House of Lords apparently needs legislation. Again, there is a double standard when it comes to constitutional reform and the opportunities afforded to us as Scottish Members of Parliament.

The Procedure Committee has also been looking at the operation of private Members' Bills which, for the past 12 months, has been a complete and utter farce for those of us who are new Members and had to sit through those procedures. I hope the Government will make time early in the new Session to allow a full debate and vote on the Procedure Committee's report. If they do not, they are living on borrowed time. If the Government do allow private Members' Bills the time and scrutiny that they deserve, perhaps there will be an opportunity to debate some of the other constitutional issues that have been raised in the debate, not least on extending the franchise to 16 and 17-year-olds.

On so many issues, true and further reform is needed. That is why, in the SNP's alternative Queen's Speech, we have proposals for a genuine home rule Bill for Scotland. It would devolve employment law, broadcasting, and the comprehensive ability to tax not only income, but wealth and capital, including corporation tax—in essence, what was promised in the vow and has not been delivered.

Today a young friend of mine, David Patrick Donald Mackay, the son of Craig Mackay and Jennifer Dunn, who came so close to beating the Tories in Ayr a couple of weeks ago, celebrates his fourth birthday. He is a big fan of electric cars, at least as they are immortalised in a song of that name by They Might Be Giants. I hope that by the time he is old enough to vote, or perhaps would have been old enough to drive if we were not all going to be in electric driverless cars, Gracious Speeches from the Throne will have even less relevance to his life than much of what we have heard today.

I hope that Scotland will one day soon be independent, because independence remains the biggest and best idea in Scottish politics, described by our current First Minister as a "beautiful dream," and by our former First Minister as a dream that will never die.

9.23 pm

Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP): I know that the hour is late, but the previous speaker, the hon. Member for Glasgow North (Patrick Grady), brought more energy into the debate. I agree with very little of what he said, but I want to start in the same vein as he did, by welcoming the election of the First Minister in Northern Ireland, who also happens to be a woman—it seems that women are taking over that position in the devolved Administrations—although she is very different from the two women to whom the hon. Gentleman referred, in the sense that she wants to strengthen the Union, not break it, and to take back powers from Europe, not hand more over. That is the kind of woman I want to see leading Northern Ireland.

One significant point about this Queen's Speech is that it contained no reference to preparing for terrorist outrages, economic meltdown, firms fleeing the United Kingdom, mass unemployment, huge movements in our export trade, or even world war three. I think that is an indication that the Prime Minister, despite the hysterical rhetoric we have heard from him, knows that after 23 June none of those things will happen, even though the people of the United Kingdom seem to be moving towards deciding that that will be the day on which we regain our independence. There were no such preparations in the Queen's Speech, so those who listened to it today ought to take some comfort from the fact that even the Government do not believe their own rhetoric on the consequences of the UK voting to leave the European Union.

The Scottish nationalists have talked about this almost being a Queen's Speech for English devolution. It contained a lot of Bills that do not apply to Scotland or Northern Ireland, but the reason—I would have thought that the Scottish nationalists rejoiced about this—is that the powers have been devolved to Scotland and Northern Ireland. Many Bills applying to Scotland and Northern Ireland, on which we would have had a direct input here, are no longer going through this place, and some of the legislation applies only to England and Wales. That should be a cause for rejoicing by those who believe in devolution and want to see more of it, not a cause for further complaint. At the same time, of course, the Scottish nationalists are arguing that they want to see more of these things done not in Scotland, but in Europe. I am confused. They want to see more Bills about Scotland here, but they also want more devolution. They want more devolution for Scotland, but they also want to give powers to Europe. Where indeed do they stand on the issue of where sovereignty should rest?

It has been reported that one of the measures that will not apply to Northern Ireland is the one on driverless cars. We seem to be the only part of the United Kingdom that will not have legislation for driverless cars, so we will not be able to make telephone calls or read our newspapers while driving—well, not without getting penalty points, as I have found out on occasion. We will not be able to be backseat drivers; we will have to drive our own cars. That is no bad thing, as far as I am concerned, so I am not particularly worried about whether or not Northern Ireland will have legislation on driverless cars.

Some Government Members have been honest that this is probably a holding Queen's Speech, because the Government's attention is taken up with other issues.

However, I think that there are big issues that needed to be addressed in this Queen's Speech but have not been—at least, no serious attempt has been made to do so. One of the issues that I would like to have seen addressed is: what do the Government intend to do to ensure that there is more even economic growth, activity and development across the United Kingdom? Yes, of course we have devolved some of the economic powers to the Assembly in Northern Ireland and the Parliament in Scotland, but the fact remains that even with those powers being devolved many of the macroeconomic decisions that are made here then have an impact on the regions of the United Kingdom.

There needs to be a greater recognition by the Government that far too much economic activity is concentrated in one area. That is to the detriment of the country as a whole. It wastes resources. It means that infrastructure is left working to less than full capacity. It means that there have to be movements of people from Northern Ireland and the north-east and north-west of England to the south-east of England, causing the kinds of pressures that we discuss in this House almost every week—house prices and so on—and money needing to be spent on infrastructure to facilitate all this. Serious consideration needs to be given to how we spread economic growth more evenly. As other Members have pointed out, some of the policies that the Government are following exacerbate the problem by concentrating some public services here in the south-east of England and taking them away from places like Northern Ireland, to the extent that that sometimes conflicts with other Government objectives. For example, the closure of tax offices in Northern Ireland means that criminals will be able to get away with more tax fraud. Something needs to be done about that.

The second big issue that is not dealt with is energy policy. The better markets Bill will enable people, through competition, to lower their energy bills. However, the whole issue of energy costs is caused not just by the lack of competition but by the Government's bigger policy of decarbonising energy and greater use of renewables, and the cost that that imposes on industry. I sympathise with many of the points that Labour Members have made about the decline of the steel industry and many of the other high-energy industries that have been lost in Labour heartlands, but this is partly due to an energy policy that is designed to chase those very industries out of the United Kingdom and towards places where the same policies are not in place. That is another area where I would like to see more imagination and the Government doing more.

On infrastructure, we still have no indication from this Queen's Speech of when we are going to know the future of air transport and the air hub for the United Kingdom. That holds up many of our exporters and affects our trade.

I welcome the commitment to improving broadband provision. I represent an area that is 40% rural, and almost every week I have people with me who want to operate businesses from home in rural areas who are now required, if they are farmers, to submit many of the forms that are required by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs using the internet, and cannot get a signal. Despite the massive amounts of money that have already been put into improving broadband and the vast sums given to BT, which have

not always been used well—in fact, one sometimes wonders whether they have been used at all for that purpose—we are still struggling. We are not scrutinising these proposals in detail this evening, but I want to see a timescale for this commitment and an indication of how the Government intend to meet it. Is the commitment to 10 megabytes sufficient?

What help will be given to those who cannot access fibre-optic broadband? What contribution will they be expected to make? Will they be penalised for living in rural areas? Are the Government prepared to find ways of introducing new competition and new technologies? Many technologies are being held up by the existing provider simply because it does not want that degree of competition. This is about having a dynamic economy. It is not just about people having the internet in their houses so that they can download music; this is vital for small businesses across the whole of the United Kingdom. Not all the businesses in question are in rural areas. My constituency has two industrial parks in the middle of urban areas that do not have the access to fast-speed broadband that businesses depend on.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Belfast North (Mr Dodds) has already mentioned counter-extremism. In Northern Ireland we understand the way in which terrorism works. It is not just about physically stopping people with guns and bombs; it is also about ensuring that a community does not have a mentality that encourages people to give them cover, protect them, hide them, lie for them and provide them with the kind of community support they require.

We fully understand the need for an approach that changes people's minds and ensures that they are not poisoned by those who wish to engage in terror. We must also acknowledge, however, that such legislation can have unintended consequences. We will look very closely at any proposals relating to how authorities deal with unregulated education settings. They should not include the work that goes on in churches, as suggested by the head of Ofsted. If people are unable to express and teach the tenets of their faith because of interference by the authorities, we will move away from counter-terrorism to a society in which political correctness stifles people's real religious beliefs and their faith.

It is good that the Government are considering how those on low incomes can be encouraged to save. Nevertheless, it is one thing to encourage and give people incentives to save, but if other economic actions are making it impossible for them to do so, the proposed legislation will not have the desired effect. That is one of the failings of this Queen's Speech: how do we ensure that the economic growth we are experiencing is spread not just across regions, but across different income bands? Many actions are hitting the poorest.

The Government's objective of prison reform is commendable. No one wants to see people who leave prison recommitting crimes and going back again. We have to give consideration to the impact of that not just on the individuals, but on society. However, I do not think that the proposed reforms will be possible without considerable expenditure. When people commit horrendous crimes, society expects them to be punished properly. The balance between trying to rehabilitate those who have committed crimes and ensuring that they are punished properly is a delicate one, and the Government must tread carefully.

There are many things in the Queen's Speech, such as looking after and providing for children in care, prison reform, the digital economy, the infrastructure developments and creating better markets, that will cost money at a time when the Government are trying to find ways of saving money. I make one suggestion to Members of the House who are sceptical about how they should vote on 23 June. On 23 June, there is an opportunity to release to the public purse in the UK £10 billion that could be used to deliver those kinds of reforms and to destroy the influence of Europe on our affairs. If the Government are serious about defending the sovereignty of Parliament and the primacy of the House of Commons, the way to do it is to encourage people to vote leave on 23 June. It will release money for the reforms contained in the Queen's Speech and deliver sovereignty back to Parliament.

Ordered, That the debate be now adjourned.—(*Simon Kirby.*)

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

Aviation Noise

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

9.41 pm

Hannah Bardell (Livingston) (SNP): This is a debate about noise, but it will not be a noisy debate, going by the number of Members left on the Benches.

On 25 June 2015, Edinburgh airport commenced the trial of a new flightpath. It was the first flightpath trial that had taken place in Scotland for nearly 40 years. The impact on my local community and the challenges that Edinburgh airport faced as a result of an outdated structure for implementing flightpath trials have shone a light on the issue of aviation noise and airport expansion that has led to this evening's debate. I am grateful to have secured this Adjournment debate on the establishment of what I will call IANA—an independent aviation noise association—not only for my constituents in Livingston, particularly those in the communities of Broxburn and Uphall, who have been affected recently, but for the constituents of many colleagues across the House who are affected by aviation noise and for airports that are trying to navigate their way through the myriad regulations.

When I entered Parliament last year, I had my own ideas about the issues on which I wanted to campaign on behalf of my constituents and the people of Scotland. I did not imagine for a moment that aviation noise would be one of them. However, as an MP with a constituency in close proximity to Edinburgh airport, I have become increasingly interested in the matter of aviation, its contribution to the economy and the impact of the additional flightpath, as have my constituents.

I thank the Minister for staying so late this evening to respond to the debate. I look forward to working closely with him and colleagues across the House on this issue. I also thank my hon. Friend the Member for Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey (Drew Hendry), who is the SNP transport spokesman, and other colleagues for staying late this evening to take part.

It is important to recognise the members of the Environmental Audit Committee and its former Chair, the former Member for Ogmire, for their work on "The Airports Commission Report: Carbon Emissions, Air Quality and Noise", which was published in December last year. It is an excellent holiday read if anybody is looking for something to get on with. I and many Members across the House urge the Government to consider and implement the recommendations of that report.

I also thank my constituency team, in particular Stephanie McTighe who has worked with me tirelessly on this issue, and the House of Commons researcher, Louise Butcher. What the public do not always appreciate is that to get to the stage I am at today often requires a significant amount of research and many briefings, which we receive from Library staff. I am sure that Members will agree that they do an incredible job in supporting Members of this House and the democratic processes of this Parliament.

I also want to express my gratitude to my local MSP colleagues, Angela Constance MSP and Fiona Hyslop MSP, both of whom were reappointed today to another gender-balanced Scottish Cabinet; to the Labour MSP

Neil Findlay; and to Derek Mackay MSP, who is the former Transport Minister and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow North (Patrick Grady) mentioned in the previous debate, has just been appointed Finance Secretary in the Scottish Government. Their combined campaigning, actions and negotiations with Edinburgh airport, which listened and learned a lot from the recent experiences, helped bring an early end to the flightpath trial over my constituency.

Over a number of months, Fiona Hyslop and her local team delivered a grassroots survey to thousands of homes to get a full understanding of how people on the ground felt. The Labour MSP Neil Findlay raised the issue in the Scottish Parliament, because, as you will know, Mr Speaker, members of the Scottish Cabinet cannot raise debates as individuals. None the less, my local MSPs have been steadfast in their engagement and support, and I would like to think that we have had, and will continue to have, a good cross-party approach to the issue.

I also thank Edinburgh airport itself for listening to the concerns of my constituents and the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow and East Falkirk (Martyn Day), who has stayed on this evening in support of the debate.

Most importantly, I commend and pay tribute to the local residents who were impacted by the flightpath trial at Edinburgh airport and mobilised into action. They deserve credit for their grassroots organisation, "Stop Edinburgh Airport Trial"—SEAT, as it became known. I would specifically like to mention George Woods, who led the group. George and his team have become familiar, welcome and friendly faces at my constituency surgeries and have worked tirelessly to represent and engage with people across the constituency. Together, they have turned their justified individual concerns into a necessary wider campaign about how we can better balance the needs of business with the rights of citizens.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the hon. Lady for giving way—I asked her before the debate whether it would be okay for me to intervene.

Does the hon. Lady agree that Heathrow's announcement that it would go above and beyond the conditions set by the independent Airports Commission for reducing noise levels and the number of flights coming in is an example of the potential for independent agencies and airports to work positively together so that we can have connectivity not only in Scotland but in Northern Ireland?

Hannah Bardell: I could not agree more, and that reinforces the need for an independent aviation noise association.

Before the flightpath trial started, I saw occasional stories in the press about the fact that it would take place, but there was not a great deal of information about what that meant for folk on the ground. I should declare an interest: I grew up living under one of Edinburgh airport's current flightpaths, and I use and enjoy aircraft travel for both work and pleasure.

Almost immediately after the trial started, the local MSPs and my neighbouring MP, my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow and East Falkirk, started to receive complaints from constituents about the noise

levels. The airport had stated that Civil Aviation Authority guidelines said that until the trial was live and aircraft started using the route, it would be unable to record the noise levels. It was suggested that noise monitors would be placed at various points along the new route to capture data and information.

One example of the complaints that were made was from my constituent David Jenkins, who wrote:

“This change to the flight paths has turned our outdoor garden experience into an incessant noisy environment and recently they have been passing every few minutes and their elevation is much lower and therefore much louder, than we have experienced in the past 32 years.”

Another was from Andy Marshall, who wrote:

“Very disappointed to be advised by the CAA aircraft noise is not covered by the environmental protection act nor the noise act. It seems the airport themselves deem what level of aircraft noise is acceptable!”

By mid-September, Edinburgh airport had said that it was gathering all feedback and concerns, which the CAA would review as part of the trial. However, it is fair to say that the airport was overwhelmed with communications from constituents and simply could not cope. In my view, that was largely because the CAA guidelines and its engagement structure are not set up for modern communications or the community engagement that people expect.

As you can imagine, Mr Speaker, significant attention was given to the issue, and there was significant action. The trial was due to last six months, but it ended in December as a result of numerous complaints and direct intervention from the then Transport Minister, Derek Mackay. It is therefore clear to me that the current system of managing and mitigating aviation noise is outdated, unsuitable for modern times and in urgent need of reform. Furthermore, as recent airspace trials in Edinburgh and Gatwick have shown, there is a troubling disconnect between airports and local residents when it comes to aviation noise.

The balance at the core of today’s debate is how we turn an outdated, complex, often little understood system for managing the noise impact of aviation into an opportunity for better engagement between our vital international transport businesses and local communities.

My overall goal in highlighting this issue is to draw together our collective experience and learnings so that we can prevent future communities and airports from having the challenging and difficult experience that mine have had. I think that Edinburgh airport was doing its best to work within the CAA’s “Guidance on the Application of the Airspace Change Process”—CAP725—with which I have become increasingly familiar. It is specific published guidance on changing airspace.

Essentially, the guidance requires that any intention to make a new route permanent requires a full community consultation only when and if an airport trial is found to be a success following its completion. It is not until that point that constituents affected by the trial are entitled to take part in a consultation process. To me, the guidance and processes are more than a little out of date. In Scotland, and I am sure across wider parts of the UK, people expect and indeed welcome proper public consultation and engagement.

I know from several meetings that I have had with Edinburgh airport that it understands and accepts that there should have been greater engagement, and it is my

observation that it was caught between balancing the rules and regulations of the CAA and what the local public need and want. To that end, I am pleased to say that Edinburgh airport has confirmed to me earlier today that it plans to set up its own local noise board, which will have members of the local community involved. While all the details are not yet in place, it advises me that it absolutely sees the value in doing this and will actively work with the CAA on its recent experiences and plans.

I appreciate that more passengers travel through our airports, and as a result, airports have to increase airspace capacity to cater for this growth. I care deeply about Scotland’s connectivity to other parts of the UK and the world for the growth of business and trade, as well as the huge number of people who benefit from the 8,000 jobs at Edinburgh airport. I am also mindful of the fact that air travel is generally on the increase and, to that end, I think that it would be best for business and local communities to engage positively and see this debate as an opportunity to begin that discussion.

The “Policy for the Conduct of Operational Airspace Trials” on “Consultation” states:

“Due to the short term nature of temporary airspace changes and airspace trials, it will usually not be necessary or appropriate for the airspace change sponsor to consult on their proposals or to undertake the airspace change approval process.”

It goes on to say:

“Whilst consultation may not be required the Guidance places an onus on both the sponsor and the CAA to consider the environmental impact of an operational trial and establish the level of consultation/engagement required... The CAA will confirm to the sponsor the level of engagement/consultation considered appropriate in the circumstances.”

With regard to impact studies, the policy states:

“It is accepted that some trials will have an unavoidable environmental impact; however the CAA will require trial sponsors to mitigate that impact as far as practicable and limit the scope of the trial to that which is strictly necessary commensurate with its aims”.

It means mibbes aye, mibbes naw will we have proper guidelines.

Apart from the policy’s requiring neither consultation nor an impact study up front, that raises the question of whether the CAA can be truly independent in looking at noise complaints. The CAA’s functions are wide ranging. No one suggests that it does not do a good job in many areas, but its functions include: regulating civil aviation safety; advising and assisting the Secretary of State on all civil aviation matters; determining policy for the use of the UK airspace to meet the needs of all users; economic regulation of the designated airports, and licensing of air travel organisers.

As that list suggests, the CAA’s remit is vast. I find it difficult to see how the CAA can effectively manage noise issues and maintain neutrality when balancing its other functions. In January 2013, the CAA published a literature review on aircraft noise, sleep disturbance and health impacts. It concluded that findings were

“not conclusive and are often contradictory, highlighting the practical difficulties in designing studies of this nature”.

That highlights how conflicting the information is.

Furthermore, the Airports Commission’s final report stated:

“The CAA carries out a number of functions targeted at ensuring aircraft noise is taken into account, not only within the airspace change process, but also within planning applications,

[*Hannah Bardell*]

and aims to improve the transparency associated with monitoring and reporting aircraft noise. However, as the *Interim Report* highlighted, there are still real issues to resolve around the manner in which communities are engaged in processes which impact aircraft noise (most notably the airspace change process), and in holding those involved in these processes to proper account.”

Drew Hendry (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey) (SNP): My hon. Friend is making excellent points. On holding people to account for noise, does she agree that one benefit of being in the European Union is that we have two directives, the rather cumbersome named D2002/30 (European Parliament, 2002a), which is devoted to air traffic noise and inspired by the “balanced approach” concept, and D2002/49 (European Parliament, 2002b), which is on environmental noise and specifying noise metrics? Is there a benefit to having European standards to which people must adhere?

Hannah Bardell: My hon. Friend is a great expert in this area, and I could not agree with him more. That is why we need a unified approach across the UK, and local consultative bodies.

A further interesting point—well, interesting to me and my constituents—is that flightpaths in the UK are designed and drawn up in consultation with the local airport, the CAA, and predominantly the National Air Traffic Services. As I understand—the Minister will correct me if I am wrong—NATS manages airspace above 3,000 feet, and under a previous Government it was part privatised. NATS is a public-private partnership between the Airline Group, which holds 42%, NATS staff who own 5%, UK airport operator LHR Airports Limited with 4%, and the Government who hold 49%. The Airline Group comprises a number of private companies, including leading companies and airlines, and its website is open and informative. I will not list all those private companies, but some are airlines. Call me a conspiracy theorist, Mr Speaker, but I cannot help finding it a little odd first that our airspace is part privately owned, and secondly that that part privately owned company has a significant hand in designing our flightpaths. I would be interested in the Minister’s views on whether NATS will remain part public, and on whether data on the design of flightpaths and future flightpaths could be made public. Indeed, if the new noise association is set up, it will have a key role in future designs.

The Edinburgh trial last year was merely the latest in a number of instances in which local residents have felt helpless in the face of airspace change and general airport operations that have had a severe and detrimental impact on their quality of life. The Airports Commission’s July 2013 aviation noise discussion paper stated that in terms of health effects from aviation noise, the link between noise and hypertension is “fairly well” established.

Except for airports where there is direct regulation from the Secretary of State for Transport—Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted—it is for airports to decide whether and how best to control noise impacts from their operations. I do not believe that that is in keeping with the spirit of public engagement, and it could be detrimental to our other airports and their business. At the UK’s major airports the Secretary of State may prescribe “noise preferential routes” to minimise noise disturbance, but

it is the responsibility of airport operators to ensure that those routes are used, and there are no statutory powers to penalise poor track-keeping. I think that people across the UK will find that unsatisfactory, and it is imperative that the UK Government, their agencies and our airports, are more open, transparent and consultative.

I am not alone in that opinion. My hon. Friend the Member for West Dunbartonshire (Martin Docherty-Hughes), who sadly could not be with us this evening, is a passionate and determined advocate for his constituents, and he represents a large number of people who live under the flight path to Glasgow airport. He has been contacted by a large number of residents, many of whom have been fighting for years to get support to install sound proofing in those houses that are adversely affected, to counter the impact of noise. He advises me that those calls have not been met with the most positive of responses, and he argues that a misconception and lack of understanding lies at the heart of the matter, and that if we are fully to combat the effects of aircraft noise, the establishment of an independent aviation noise association will be an important step.

In recent years the independent Airports Commission, chaired ably by Sir Howard Davies, the Environmental Audit Committee, and others, have called on the Government to create a new independent aviation noise authority as part of their recommendations, including a levy that could be used by local households—such as those in the constituency of my hon. Friend—to spend on noise protections such as sound proofing.

The Airports Commission said:

“An independent aviation noise authority should be established with a statutory right to be consulted on flight paths and other operating procedures. The authority should be given statutory consultee status and a formal role in monitoring and quality assuring all processes and functions which have an impact on aircraft noise, and in advising central and local Government and the CAA on such issues.”

10 pm

Motion lapsed (Standing Order No. 9(3)).

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(Simon Kirby.)

Hannah Bardell: The Environmental Audit Committee reiterated the call from Sir Howard and urged the Government to establish IANA in the next year, “whether or not it proceeds with expansion at Heathrow.”

Indeed, in the Committee’s view, there is no reason why the two recommendations—the establishment of IANA and Heathrow expansion—cannot be mutually exclusive.

We do not know the Government’s thinking on IANA. The Secretary of State said in 2014 that the Government would need to wait on the commission’s report before considering IANA. However, in the light of the report, and despite being asked, including in a letter I wrote in October last year, he has not subsequently addressed the matter even though it has cross-party backing.

Like all hon. Members, I accept the need for co-ordinated, UK-wide policy making on broad aviation strategy, but an independent aviation noise authority could put certainty and accountability closer to my constituents in Livingston and others around the UK. What are the Minister’s views on supporting regional noise committees either

airport by airport or in a hub structure, such as the one proposed by Edinburgh airport? Perhaps it will be the trailblazer.

We know from bodies such as the Aviation Environment Federation that many communities report diminishing levels of trust with their airport operators and with airspace change sponsors, which impedes progress on reducing the health burden of aircraft noise on communities. It is clear from the recent trial at Edinburgh that the Civil Aviation Authority and NATS neither have nor foster direct access for local residents, which is required when it comes to informing residents and resolving issues about noise controls. The work of the Airports Commission showed that an independent noise authority would not only forge new relationships between local residents and airports over noise disputes, but could play a vital role in noise monitoring and management, which the CAA and NATS currently lack.

Finally, it is my firm belief that establishing an independent aviation noise authority sooner rather than later would benefit the whole UK and all our constituents, and would help to establish confidence in local communities between airports and local residents.

I have asked a lot of the Minister this evening, but he is more than equal to the task of answering those questions, of being bold, and of bringing forward the proposals into statute. I hope he can answer my various questions, but also that he will meet me and some of my local representatives and the airport to understand how we can make a noise association work for business and communities such as mine in Livingston and those around the UK. We have an opportunity to do the right thing for business and our communities. Let's get on and do it.

Mr Speaker: To reply to the debate, I call the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department for Transport, Mr Andrew Hanson Jones.

10.3 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Andrew Jones): Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is not very often that my middle name gets a mention—good research.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Livingston (Hannah Bardell) on securing this debate on an independent aviation noise body, and on the work that has clearly been going on locally by so many different people and bodies involved in the process. She will have noticed that I am not the Minister with responsibility for aviation—the Minister of State, Department for Transport, the hon. Member for Scarborough and Whitby (Mr Goodwill), is away representing the Government at an international aviation conference—but she has asked to meet him and, on his behalf, I am quite sure I can guarantee to put that in his diary. While he is away representing our country in a noble fashion, I am happy to fill his diary.

The hon. Lady has asked many detailed questions, and the answers to some of them will be clear from my speech this evening. If there are other questions, I will ensure they are picked up from *Hansard*, and the Department will write to her so that she can have detailed answers.

The Government are acutely aware that noise is a major environmental concern around airports. We also understand that aviation noise is an issue of trust between

communities and the aviation industry. As a result, we are considering policies very carefully. We acknowledge that there is growing evidence that exposure to aircraft noise can adversely affect people's health. We closely monitor research in this field and relevant robust evidence is incorporated into the policy appraisal process. As set out in the aviation policy framework published in 2013, our overall policy is:

“to limit and, where possible, reduce the number of people in the UK significantly affected by aircraft noise.”

The creation of an independent aviation noise body was recommended by the Airports Commission in its report on new airport capacity in the south-east of England. The commission made this recommendation in its interim report and then reaffirmed it in its final report published in July last year. It recommended that the noise body should provide statutory advice to the Secretary of State regarding: proposed changes to noise preferential routes, the proper structure for noise compensation schemes, and that it should work with communities affected by development to create a balance between aviation growth and noise control.

I will make this point regarding balance now and then come back to it later. The Government are committed to ensuring that a proper balance is struck between the development of the aviation industry, the legitimate and valid concerns of the communities that are affected, and the environmental concerns that arise from a growing and strengthening industry. I understand, and the Government recognise, that the levels of trust from communities in industry bodies such as airports and NATS differs considerably across the country. It is important that any proposed noise body focuses on enhancing and bolstering those relationships, but does not introduce any unnecessary bureaucracy. It is clear to me that a noise body, as proposed by the Airports Commission, could indeed help to facilitate the strengthening of relationships between communities and industry. However, a noise body should not attempt to interfere where strong and trusting relationships between communities and industry already exist. It would need to make sure that it struck the right balance between community concerns and the legitimate needs of industry.

As hon. Members will be aware, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport made a statement to the House on 14 December last year on airport policy and the Government's response to the commission's report. In the statement, he set out the Government's acceptance of the need for additional runway capacity in the south-east. However, before making a decision on the preferred option at either Heathrow or Gatwick, he made it clear that a package of further work is required. In addition, as I mentioned earlier, we have been considering our policies in the area of noise and airspace more generally. My Department plans to publish a consultation on national airspace and noise policy, which will include the potential role of a noise body. Department for Transport officials have engaged with stakeholders and are working through the details of the functions envisaged for a noise body. It is expected that this will be consulted on by the end of this year. The creation of a noise body is among one of the most important things that needs to be considered. The Government are fully aware of calls from MPs, the public and aviation stakeholders on the establishment of such a noise body. We will consider carefully the arguments put forward before making a final decision.

[Andrew Jones]

The use of UK airspace is not a devolved matter and the Civil Aviation Authority is the UK's aviation independent regulator. However, we will continue to engage fully with the Scottish Government in developing proposals on national noise and airspace matters, and a possible noise body. The use of airspace is a UK matter, but environmental issues, including noise, are devolved matters. Edinburgh airport's noise plan, required under European Commission legislation that sets how the airport will minimise the impact of noise, is required to be adopted by Scottish Ministers. The hon. Lady's constituency, Livingston, lies approximately seven miles west of Edinburgh airport and will be impacted mainly by departure noise. As she is well aware and made clear in her speech, the airport, in conjunction with NATS, carried out a departure trial last year at Edinburgh airport. The trial was one of a series that airports, with the support of the CAA, have been undertaking to assess the practicable implications of the use of the primarily satellite-based navigation, known as performance based navigation. PBN has been mandated for use across the EU by 2024 because it offers significant benefits, including reduced emissions and delays compared to conventional ground-based navigation.

The trials were important to understanding the typical level of track-keeping accuracy and how different aircraft types and operators react to the use of new procedures. I understand that the trial involved a new standard instrument departure route to allow the airport to encourage and maintain safe and sustainable growth, while ensuring that punctuality was unaffected. I also understand that it ended early, on 29 October last year, as the hon. Lady detailed, following complaints from the public and local representatives.

The routes used by aircraft and the heights at which they fly are two significant factors that affect noise experienced by people on the ground. The departure trials in 2014 at Heathrow, Gatwick and Edinburgh airports and the public response, indicated by the number of complaints received, showed that very clearly. Trials are important, however, because the information gained from them is vital to gaining the knowledge necessary for future airspace change, as driven by the CAA's future airspace strategy.

Change is required. The basic structure of UK airspace was developed more than 40 years ago, and since then there has been a dramatic increase in demand for flights. The future airspace strategy is the plan to modernise

UK airspace to take account of the European Commission's single European sky strategy and modern technology with more precision based navigation, as well as the increase in the number of flights. The environmental aims will be savings in fuel, which will cut carbon emissions, and a reduction in noise impacts, with considerations to share the benefits of noise reductions more widely.

Edinburgh airport is now considering the data from the trial, with a view to updating its plans, and I understand that the results of the trial are to be published later this year. Once the airport has revised its plans, we expect it to present the CAA with an airspace change application. The airport, now the fifth-busiest in the UK, proposes to update its airspace to cater for the increasing demand and to enable aircraft operators to benefit from PBN. It is important that all trials be publicised and communicated beforehand and that local politicians and local authorities in the vicinity of the airport be alerted so that the public are aware of them. I reassure the House that any permanent change to airspace in the vicinity of an airport will require public and transparent consultation. That was an important point the hon. Lady made, and I am happy to provide that reassurance.

Put simply, the Government want to see growth in aviation. It is good for the economy, bringing investment and employment to the UK and wider benefits to society and individuals, including around travel for leisure and visiting friends and family. It is imperative, however, that this be balanced against the costs to the local environment that more flights bring, noise being the prime example. It is vital that those affected by the changes can trust the information provided by those wanting the changes and making the decisions. The Airports Commission's proposal for a new noise body might well help with that.

In concluding, I reiterate to the hon. Lady and the House that the Government will carefully consider the need for setting up an independent aviation noise body and its proposed role and functions. The message that has come across loudly from local campaigners, not just in her constituency but around the country, indicates how important the matter is and how seriously the Government will therefore take it.

Question put and agreed to.

10.13 pm

House adjourned.

Petitions

Wednesday 18 May 2016

PRESENTED PETITION

Petition presented to the House but not read on the Floor

Community Pharmacies

The petition of residents of the UK,

Declares that local pharmacies are a vital frontline health service, forming part of the fabric of health communities across England; further that they may be forced to close as a result of Government proposals; further that this could deprive people of accessible medicines advice and other valuable support from trusted professionals; and further that it may also put more pressure on GPs and hospital services; and further that a local petition on this matter has been signed by 386 individuals.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Department of Health to reassess their proposed plans and protect local pharmacies.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Mr Jim Cunningham.]

[P001695]

OBSERVATIONS

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Green belt land between Great Wyrley and Cheslyn Hay

The petition of residents of Great Wyrley and Cheslyn Hay in the South Staffordshire constituency, and others,

Declares that the current proposals to build 136 houses on Landywood Lane, Great Wyrley will lead to the erosion of the distinct identity of our individual villages and could cause substantial environmental damage and further notes that residents have already successfully fought these proposals at local council level in 2013.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to take all possible steps to encourage South Staffordshire District Council to reject these proposals, and if the proposals go to the Planning Inspectorate, to also encourage them to reject the proposals so that the green belt can be conserved for future generations.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Gavin Williamson, *Official Report*, 19 April 2016; Vol. 608, c. 888.]

[P001684]

Observations from the Minister for Housing and Planning (Brandon Lewis); received 17 May 2016:

Green Belts are created by local authorities, who are required to protect them in line with national policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. The Framework states that inappropriate development, including most forms of housebuilding, should not be approved there except in very special circumstances. It also makes it clear that a Green Belt boundary can be altered only in exceptional circumstances, using the Local Plan process of public consultation followed by rigorous independent examination of the revised Plan.

Local authorities, working with their communities, have to determine the best location for new homes. Our guidance reminds them to have due regard to national policies, such as Green Belt policy, which indicate that development should be restricted and which may restrain an authority's ability to meet its housing need. Moreover, the Framework asks local authorities to recognise the character and beauty of the countryside, and the benefits of the best and most versatile farmland. They should also insist on the highest standards of design when considering new development.

We want local authorities and their communities to be in charge of planning their areas. As Secretary of State, I intervene in the planning application process only in a very few, exceptional circumstances, where planning issues of more than local importance are involved. Each case is considered on its merits. If the local authority is minded to approve a proposal, but has not yet determined it, anyone may draw the application to the attention of the National Planning Policy Casework Unit (npcu@communities.gsi.gov.uk) and request that it be considered for call-in. NPCU advises the Secretary of State on such cases.

HEALTH

Ealing Hospital and the Shaping a Healthier Future programme

The petition of residents of the UK,

Declares that since 2013 there has been a programme of rationalisation and downgrading of health services across North West London as part of the Shaping a Healthier Future programme; further that this has led to the loss of a number of important local services; further that the programme is often depriving communities of some of their most important resources; further that the Accident and Emergency department at Ealing Hospital has been earmarked for closure; further that Ealing Hospital has already lost its maternity unit; further that Ealing Hospital is also due to close its paediatric unit in June; further that there are hugely concerning reports that Ealing will not now receive the new 'Local Hospital' promised under the programme, as the costs of the Shaping a Healthier Future programme have spiralled; and further that an online petition on a similar matter has been signed by 100,229 individuals.

The petitioners therefore request the House of Commons urges the Government to reconsider the impact of the Shaping a Healthier Future programme on Ealing Hospital, Ealing and the surrounding boroughs that rely on Ealing Hospital to deliver high quality emergency care 24 hours a day.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Mr Virendra Sharma, *Official Report*, 26 April 2016; Vol. 608, c. 1404.]

[P001686]

Observations from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Ben Gummer); received 16 May 2016:

The changes taking place in Ealing are being led by clinicians and are designed to improve the quality of care including maternity and paediatric care, for local people.

Plans for NHS services across north-west London, including those at Ealing Hospital, are being implemented by the local NHS under the reconfiguration programme Shaping a Healthier Future (SaHF).

The Government are clear that the reconfiguration of local health services is a matter for the local NHS. Services should be tailored to meet the needs of the local population and reconfiguration will only take place when it is clear that patients will benefit.

The changes taking place under SaHF are about improving healthcare for the residents of northwest London. The benefits include:

- improved consultant cover in A&Es;
- better access to GPs; and
- increased community services so more people can be treated closer to their homes.

Ealing hospital is to be redesigned as a new 21st century facility for the local community. The hospital will have a local Accident and Emergency and a 24/7 GP-led Urgent Care Centre with access to 24/7 specialist care, as well as a range of specialist services designed with and for the local community, such as a diabetes Centre of Excellence.

Changes to maternity services in North West London have already yielded benefits such as improved midwife ratios and 24/7 consultant availability, 365 days a year.

It is proposed that inpatient paediatric services will move from Ealing Hospital on 30 June 2016 into five other hospital sites in north-west London, all of which will significantly expand their capacity by either increasing their number of inpatient beds or increasing the size of their paediatric A&E units. There will also be more senior doctors on site for longer hours, seven days a week, and/or more paediatric nurses.

However, nearly three quarters of existing children's services will continue on the Ealing Hospital site and elsewhere in the borough.

It is also proposed that these changes will see new Paediatric Assessment Units in place at five receiving hospital sites by autumn 2016. The units will provide ambulatory care, which is care during the day for children who do not need to be admitted to hospital, but need a period of observation and treatment. This will provide better care and means less children will need to stay in hospital overnight.

On 14 January 2016, the North West London Clinical Board considered the Independent Healthcare Commission for North West London's final review of the SaHF programme. The unanimous conclusion of the NW London Clinical Board was the Commission's report offered no substantive clinical evidence or credible alternative to consider that would lead better outcomes for patients above the plans already in place.

PETITIONS

Wednesday 18 May 2016

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