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**HOUSE OF COMMONS  
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY  
DEBATES**

**(HANSARD)**

**Wednesday 6 July 2016**

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# House of Commons

Wednesday 6 July 2016

The House met at half-past Eleven o'clock

## PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## BUSINESS BEFORE QUESTIONS

### REPORT OF THE IRAQ INQUIRY

*Resolved,*

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, That she will be graciously pleased to give directions that there be laid before this House a Return of a Paper, entitled The Report of the Iraq Inquiry, dated 6 July 2016, and a Return of a Paper, entitled The Report of the Iraq Inquiry: Executive Summary, dated 6 July 2016.—(*Stephen Barclay.*)

## Oral Answers to Questions

### SCOTLAND

*The Secretary of State was asked—*

#### EU Referendum

1. **Nic Dakin** (Scunthorpe) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the potential effect on the economy in Scotland over the next five years of the outcome of the EU referendum. [905593]

6. **Ian Murray** (Edinburgh South) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the effect on the economy in Scotland of the outcome of the EU referendum. [905598]

**The Secretary of State for Scotland (David Mundell):** The Scottish economy faces a number of challenges as a result of the vote to leave the EU. Yesterday I began a process of direct engagement with Scottish business leaders to ensure that their voice is heard in the forthcoming negotiations.

**Nic Dakin:** I thank the Secretary of State for that answer. Now that the Brexit decision has been made, does he think that it will be easier for the Scottish and UK Governments to support the Scottish steel industry in tackling things like energy costs, procurement and business rates?

**David Mundell:** Regardless of the vote, the two Governments must continue to work together to support the industry. The Scottish Government have taken steps in relation to the two plants in Scotland, very much supported by me and the Scotland Office and the UK Government. We will continue that support, and the Scottish Government will play a part in the steel council that has been established.

**Ian Murray:** Standard Life, one of the largest private employers in Scotland, ceased trading in its UK property fund this week, and the Governor of the Bank of England has said that the consequences of Brexit are beginning to crystallise. Given that financial services are 7% of Scotland's GDP and employ tens of thousands of my constituents, what reassurances was the Secretary of State able to give businesses yesterday that not one job will be lost because of the Conservative gamble with this country?

**David Mundell:** May I begin by commending the hon. Gentleman for his service as shadow Scottish Secretary? No one knows better than me how difficult it is to be your party's sole representative from Scotland in this House and be shadow Scottish Secretary. He performed the role with great distinction, and I am particularly grateful for his work to ensure the passage of the Scotland Act 2016 in this place. He will be pleased to know that when I met business leaders yesterday Standard Life was represented. One point that its representatives made, which is important for discussions on the future of the Scottish economy, is how important the market outwith Europe is, as well as the market within Europe. Standard Life did not wish us to lose focus on the many business opportunities it pursues, in north America in particular.

**Bob Blackman** (Harrow East) (Con): When will my right hon. Friend lay out the exciting opportunities there are for Scotland as a result of leaving the European Union for the wider world?

**David Mundell:** Obviously when I met Scottish businesses I wanted them to address the opportunities for business. I have just referred to a leading Scottish company with significant interests outwith the EU, but businesses in Scotland are naturally concerned to understand the arrangements that will be put in place for our future relationship with the EU.

**Angus Robertson** (Moray) (SNP): In Scotland more than 62% of voters voted to remain in the European Union. Since then the Scottish Parliament has voted overwhelmingly to support First Minister Nicola Sturgeon in her efforts to protect Scotland's place in Europe. That was voted for by the Scottish National party, the Labour party, the Liberal Democrats and the Scottish Green party. The Tories abstained. Will the Secretary of State finally join the cross-party consensus to protect our economy and our place in Europe, or will he abstain like his colleagues?

**David Mundell:** The right hon. Gentleman omits one fact. My colleagues were unable to support his party's motion because the SNP would not take the toxic and divisive issue of a second independence referendum off the table. Anyone who wants to unify opinion in Scotland does not start talking about a second Scottish independence referendum. I hope the First Minister was listening yesterday to Scottish businesses when they said decisively in relation to discussions about the EU that they did not want to hear about Scottish independence.

**Angus Robertson:** Tens of thousands of European Union citizens play a massive role in our economy and society in Scotland. The Scottish National party wants

to do more than just pay tribute to them; we want them to have guarantees that they can stay in Scotland. Will the Secretary of State act in the Scottish and European interest, and guarantee the rights of fellow EU citizens to remain in Scotland, and end the intolerable worry and concern with which they are being confronted?

**David Mundell:** I share the right hon. Gentleman's view of the important role that EU citizens play in Scotland, and we want them to stay in Scotland and have their position guaranteed. We also want British citizens in the rest of Europe to have their right to stay there guaranteed, and I hope that it will be possible to issue both guarantees.

**Mr David Anderson (Blaydon) (Lab):** May I start by echoing the compliments paid to my predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh South (Ian Murray)? He will be a hard act to follow.

Sitting opposite the Secretary of State reminds me of the many good times that I have spent in his constituency in the great town of Moffat. Friends of mine from Moffat, John and Heather, live on the Old Carlisle Road, where they have a small family farm and a business. They want to know what guarantees have been given about the future of payments that they receive as part of the common agricultural policy, and what benefit they can expect from the £350 million a week that senior members of the Government promised we would get back from the European Union to fund the NHS. How much of that can we expect to go to Scotland and, crucially, when can we expect to see it?

**David Mundell:** I welcome the hon. Gentleman to his position, and he is welcome in Moffat any time he wants. I have performed his role in the past, but when I did so there were 41 Scottish MPs opposite me, and 15 months later it has come to this. CAP payments will be subject to negotiations, and as someone who argued for a remain vote, I made it clear to farmers in Scotland that there would be a degree of uncertainty if there was a vote to leave. As a result of our withdrawal from the EU, responsibility for agriculture will now rest directly with the Scotland Parliament.

**Mr Anderson:** I do not think that John and Heather will be reassured by the Secretary of State's response, and I note that he did not answer my question on the NHS.

The Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee was right yesterday to accuse our hapless Prime Minister of being guilty of a dereliction of duty for failing to set up withdrawal planning units until after the referendum. Will someone please tell the Prime Minister that the words to the song are not: "When the going gets tough, the tough do a runner"? With that in mind, does the Secretary of State believe that the Prime Minister's policy of placating fruitcakes and loonies has been a price worth paying for the economic crisis that is now upon us, and the risk of the break-up of the United Kingdom?

**David Mundell:** I am a democrat. I respect the democratic decision of the people of the United Kingdom, and that decision will be implemented.

2. **Andrew Stephenson (Pendle) (Con):** What discussions he has had with the Scottish Government on the outcome of the EU referendum. [905594]

3. **Martyn Day (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP):** What discussions he has had with the Scottish Government on the effect of the outcome of the EU referendum on Scotland. [905595]

4. **Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP):** What discussions he has had with the Scottish Government on the effect of the outcome of the EU referendum on Scotland. [905596]

5. **Chris Green (Bolton West) (Con):** What discussions he has had with the Scottish Government on the outcome of the EU referendum. [905597]

9. **Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP):** What discussions he has had with the Scottish Government on the effect of the outcome of the EU referendum on Scotland. [905601]

**The Secretary of State for Scotland (David Mundell):** Since the outcome of the EU referendum, both the Prime Minister and I have had discussions with Scottish Government Ministers, and we will continue to do so over the coming weeks and months. As the Prime Minister has made clear, we will fully involve the Scottish Government and other devolved Administrations as we prepare for negotiations with the European Union.

**Andrew Stephenson:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that we should respect the outcome of the democratic process, even if some do not agree with the result?

**David Mundell:** I am clear that the majority of people across the United Kingdom voted for the UK to leave the European Union, and that decision must be implemented. In doing so, we must secure the best possible deal for Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom.

**Martyn Day:** Will the Secretary of State confirm that it is the UK Government's intention to invite the Scottish Government to participate directly in the EU negotiations?

**David Mundell:** I confirm that the Scottish Government will be at the heart of the negotiation process. I can also confirm today that I and my Cabinet colleague, my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Mr Letwin), who is responsible for the European unit within the Government, will meet the First Minister next week to discuss how that might be achieved.

**Ian Blackford:** The Secretary of State says he is a democrat. Will he support the long-established position in Scotland that sovereignty rests with the people? Now that the Parliament has said that we wish to negotiate Scotland's remaining in the single market, will he stand up for those rights? Is he Scotland's man in the Cabinet, or is he, as we suspect, the Cabinet's man in Scotland?

**David Mundell:** I expect slightly more original lines from the hon. Gentleman. My position is clear: I very much welcome any initiative pursued by the First Minister

or by the Scottish Government that can be to the benefit of Scotland without being to the detriment of the rest of the United Kingdom. I look forward to hearing from the First Minister when I meet her next week how the various initiatives she is pursuing are going. We want to work together. Businesses in Scotland yesterday made it very clear that they want a Team UK approach: the Scottish Government and the UK Government working in tandem in the best interests of Scotland.

**Chris Green:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that, just as the Scottish referendum was binding for a generation, so too is the United Kingdom's decision on the European Union? Is it not incumbent on all politicians, including those in the devolved Administrations, now to come together to make this work?

**David Mundell:** I very much hope that that will be the case. I met Fiona Hyslop, the Minister responsible in the Scottish Government, within hours of the EU declaration being made. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Europe is in Scotland today. I am meeting Fiona Hyslop tomorrow, and, as I have already said, I am meeting the First Minister next week. We want to work as closely as we can with the devolved Administrations to get the best outcome for Scotland.

**Alan Brown:** On the previous question, I would point out that Scotland voted by a large majority to remain in the EU. As a self-confessed democrat, will the Secretary of State therefore confirm that he will support the Scottish Government's efforts to find a mechanism to keep Scotland in the European Union?

**David Mundell:** The hon. Gentleman may not have read the ballot paper, but the question was not about Scottish independence. It was about whether voters in Scotland wanted the United Kingdom to remain in the EU. I was a part of the 1.6 million people in Scotland who voted to remain in the EU, but I did not do so on the basis that Scotland would then be dragged out of the United Kingdom if I did not get the decision I wanted.

11. [905603] **Henry Smith** (Crawley) (Con): With over 1 million people in Scotland voting to leave the European Union last month, what is my right hon. Friend's assessment of the rush for a second independence referendum on the Union?

**David Mundell:** It is important that we respect the views of people we do not agree with. It has become evident that the Scottish National party cannot respect the views of the 2 million people who voted to remain in the United Kingdom in the 2014 referendum and it does not respect the people who voted to leave the EU. I do not agree with the people who voted to leave, but their views need to be respected.

**Ms Tasmina Ahmed-Sheikh** (Ochil and South Perthshire) (SNP): In the light of statements made by the Secretary of State for Justice and the new shadow Secretary of State for Scotland over the weekend, will the Secretary of State for Scotland give us an unequivocal confirmation

that the Barnett formula will not be changed or affected as a result of the EU referendum and that Scotland's budget will be protected?

**David Mundell:** The Government were elected on a manifesto that made it clear there would be no changes to the Barnett formula. The hon. Lady has been in several political parties over her political career. Perhaps she noticed earlier this week that there is a vacancy at the head of the UK Independence party; that might be her next destination.

12. [905604] **Mrs Sheryll Murray** (South East Cornwall) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend tell us what discussions he has had on the possibility of Scotland having to accept joining the euro if, as it claims, it wants to stay in the European Union?

**David Mundell:** Clearly the parameters have changed, and if any proposition were put forward for any prospective further independence referendum, it would be carried out on an entirely different basis from what we had with the 2014 proposition, and membership of the euro might well be part of that.

**Wayne David** (Caerphilly) (Lab): A close relationship between Scotland and the European Union is obviously in the best interests of Scotland. Has the Secretary of State any specific suggestions about how that relationship might be made real in the future?

**David Mundell:** I think I have set out clearly how I see the way forward on these matters, and it lies with the Scottish Government and the UK Government working as closely as they possibly can together. That is the way we will get the best possible arrangements for Scotland. The message from business leaders I met yesterday was that we need a Team UK approach to get that deal for Scotland.

7. **Helen Hayes** (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab): What discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and Ministers of the Scottish Government on the devolution and implementation of social security powers. [905599]

**The Secretary of State for Scotland (David Mundell):** I am committed to working with the Scottish Government to ensure a safe and secure transfer of welfare powers. I met Scottish Ministers in the joint ministerial working group on welfare on 16 June. We had a constructive meeting and issued a joint communiqué about our discussions.

**Helen Hayes:** What assurances can the Secretary of State give that Scotland will be no worse off with the devolution of new social security powers?

**David Mundell:** I certainly hope that individuals in Scotland will be no worse off. Inevitably, the devolution of these powers means that specific decisions about their use will be made by the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Government. The amount of certain payments and their shape and nature will be matters for them.

14. [905606] **Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck** (South Shields) (Lab): Will the Secretary of State update us on discussions on the devolution of the social fund funeral payments?

**David Mundell:** I am hoping to move forward with a commencement order for those powers before this Parliament goes into recess. That effectively means the transfer of the arrangements to the Scottish Government.

**Margaret Ferrier** (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (SNP): I have asked the Scottish Secretary twice via written questions when he last visited a food bank. The answer has been the same on both occasions—he has not visited a food bank in his capacity as Secretary of State for Scotland. Will he therefore today agree to visit a food bank with me in my constituency so that he can see at first hand the devastating effect of Tory sanctions and welfare policies?

**David Mundell:** The hon. Lady is very well aware that I have visited a food bank and understand the issues that surround them.

**Mr David Anderson** (Blaydon) (Lab): The agreement between the United Kingdom Government and the Scottish Government set out exactly how the new Scottish welfare budget will be agreed. Will the Secretary of State explain what would happen in the event of the UK Government abolishing a specific benefit that has been devolved to Scotland? In that circumstance, will the Scottish Government retain the budget or will they lose it?

**David Mundell:** The financial arrangements for the transfer of powers were dealt with in the fiscal framework, and that circumstance was contemplated in it. There are two sets of benefits that are subject to transfer: one is a set of benefits for which the Scottish Government will have full responsibility and can therefore shape and make a new benefit or change benefits; and the other set involves powers to top-up existing UK benefits. Clearly, if an existing UK benefit did not exist, the power to top it up would not exist either, but the power to create an equivalent might well do.

### Womenomics Report

8. **Mr Alistair Carmichael** (Orkney and Shetland) (LD): What progress the Government are making on implementing the recommendations of the Womenomics report on the role and contribution of women in the Scottish economy, published in March 2015; and if he will make a statement. [905600]

**The Minister for Small Business, Industry and Enterprise** (**Anna Soubry**): I thank the right hon. Gentleman for commissioning the Sawers report. The Government have published their response, and, following the elections in May, a ministerial group is being put together from all the Administrations in the United Kingdom—it will include my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Women and Equalities and Family Justice—so that we can begin to make progress. Meanwhile, the gender pay gap is diminishing to an all-time record low.

**Mr Carmichael:** As we tackle the economic challenges that face Scotland as a result of Brexit, removing barriers to the full economic contribution of women to Scotland's economy becomes more important than ever. Professor Sawers's report offers the Government a road map. Will the Minister ensure that someone in the Scotland Office blows the dust off it, and implements some of the very good, solid recommendations that it contains?

**Anna Soubry:** As I have said, the report is very good, and it is critical for everyone to work together. The Scottish Parliament now has more devolved powers specifically to address the problems of gender equality, which, of course, includes any disadvantage for women.

### Steel Industry

10. **Tom Pursglove** (Corby) (Con): What assessment he has made of the future prospects for the steel industry in Scotland. [905602]

**The Minister for Small Business, Industry and Enterprise** (**Anna Soubry**): I was delighted to be present at the Dalzell plant in April for the handover of that plant and Clydebridge from Tata to the Liberty Group. I think that if we continue the excellent process of working together, the prospects for the steel industry in Scotland must be good, and I am going to be positive about its future.

**Tom Pursglove:** I thank the Minister for that encouraging answer. What discussions is she having with the First Minister and with other Departments to ensure that the Scottish steel industry receives all the help and support that it needs?

**Anna Soubry:** We work together hand in glove, which I think is very important. It is also important to note that the Steel Council, which the Government established, contains a number of representatives of both the Scottish and the Welsh Governments. Together, we can ensure that throughout the United Kingdom we have a strong and sustainable steel industry.

**Mr Peter Bone** (Wellingborough) (Con): Brexit will be helpful to the British steel industry, including the steel industry in Scotland. It was a good day when we came out. Will the Minister welcome it?

**Anna Soubry:** What I will say is this: I think that we must all work together now, however we voted and whatever our views, to ensure that we do the very best for our country. We should be under no illusions about the fact that we face some very big challenges and some very difficult months and years, not just days. What is important now is coming together and putting the past behind us.

### Public Procurement: Small Businesses

13. **Sir Henry Bellingham** (North West Norfolk) (Con): What plans he has to work with the Scottish Government on ensuring that more public procurement is directed towards small businesses; and if he will make a statement. [905605]

**The Minister for Small Business, Industry and Enterprise (Anna Soubry):** Procurement has been an important part of the Government's work. We are determined to deliver our target of central Departments spending 33% of their budgets with small and medium-sized enterprises by 2020. The last set of results showed that we were increasing the proportion to 27.1%.

**Sir Henry Bellingham:** Does the Minister agree that rather than setting specific percentage targets for small business procurement, the Scottish Government should follow best practices in counties such as Norfolk, and also work in close co-operation with the United Kingdom Government?

**Anna Soubry:** The short answer—I know you enjoy those, Mr Speaker—is an emphatic yes.

### North Sea Gas and Oil Industry

15. **Mr Alan Mak (Havant) (Con):** What steps the Government are taking to support the North sea oil and gas industry. [905607]

**The Minister for Small Business, Industry and Enterprise (Anna Soubry):** In the 2015 Budget, the Government introduced a £1.3 billion package of tax measures to help our oil and gas industry. Today I am launching the inter-ministerial group's oil and gas workforce plan, which sets out how we can retain talent in this sector and opportunities for workers in other sectors.

**Mr Mak:** The North sea oil and gas industry supports a range of supply chain partners, including businesses on the south coast. Will the Minister continue to support those businesses as they diversify by exporting their expertise?

**Anna Soubry:** Yes, because we fully understand the difficulties in the oil and gas sector at the moment. That is why we have launched this plan. By working together we can improve the lot, but these are difficult times for the oil and gas sector.

**Mr Speaker:** I am extremely grateful to the hon. Member for Havant (Mr Mak), who posed the question succinctly but comprehensively, and to the Minister for succinctly but comprehensively answering it, so that it is now time for Prime Minister's questions.

### PRIME MINISTER

*The Prime Minister was asked—*

#### Engagements

Q1. [905679] **Chloe Smith (Norwich North) (Con):** If he will list his official engagements for Wednesday 6 July.

**The Prime Minister (Mr David Cameron):** I know the whole House will want to join me in wishing Wales luck ahead of the Euro 2016 semi-final this evening. They have played superbly and we wish them all the best.

This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others, and in addition to my duties in this House I shall have further such meetings later today.

**Chloe Smith:** I am a Conservative because I believe it is not where you are coming from, it is where you are going that counts. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the opportunity to succeed no matter what your background is what we want for Britain?

**The Prime Minister:** I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend. Making sure that all our citizens have life chances to make the most of their talents should be the driving mission for the rest of this Parliament. Yesterday at Cabinet we were discussing the importance of boosting the National Citizen Service, which will play a key role in giving young people the confidence and life skills to make the most of the talents that they undoubtedly have.

**Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab):** I think today it would be appropriate if we paused for a moment to think of those people who lost their lives in the bombings in Baghdad and Medina in recent days—the people who have suffered and their families at the end of Ramadan; it must be a terrible experience for them, and I think we should send our sympathies and solidarity to them.

I join the Prime Minister in wishing Wales well, and I will be cheering for Wales along with everybody else. It is quiet, isn't it. [Interruption.] Ah, there is life after all.

Thirty years ago the Shirebrook colliery employed thousands of workers in skilled, well-paid unionised jobs digging coal. Today thousands of people work on the same site, the vast majority on zero-hours contracts, with no union recognition, where the minimum wage is not even paid. Does Shirebrook not sum up "Agency Britain"?

**The Prime Minister:** First, let me join the Leader of the Opposition in giving our sympathies and condolences to all those who have been the victims of these appalling terrorist attacks, as he says, in Baghdad and Medina, and also in Istanbul.

On the issue of what has happened in our coalfield communities in order to see new jobs and new investment, we have made sure that there is not only a minimum wage, but now a national living wage. The Leader of the Opposition talks about one colliery. I very recently visited the site of the Grimethorpe colliery; there is now one business there—ASOS, I think—employing almost 5,000 people. We are never going to succeed as a country if we try to hold on to the jobs of industries that have become uncompetitive; we have got to invest in the industries of the future, and that is what this Government are doing.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** The problem is that if someone is on a zero-hours contract, the minimum wage does not add up to a living weekly wage; the Prime Minister must understand that. May I take him north-east of Shirebrook to the Lindsey oil refinery? In 2009, hundreds of oil workers there walked out on strike because agency workers from Italy and Portugal were brought in on lower wages to do the same job. Just down the road in Boston, low pay is endemic. The average hourly wage across the whole country is £13.33. In the east midlands, it is £12.26; in Boston, it is £9.13. Is it not time that the Government intervened to step up for those communities that feel they have been left behind in modern Britain?

**The Prime Minister:** We have intervened with the national living wage. We have intervened with more fines against companies which do not pay the minimum wage. We have intervened, and for the first time—this is something Labour never did—we are naming and shaming the companies involved. Those interventions help and can make a difference, but the real intervention that we need is an economy that is growing and encouraging investment, because we want the industries of the future. That is what can be seen in our country and that is why record numbers are in work—2.5 million more people have a job since I become Prime Minister—and why the British economy has been one of the strongest in the G7.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** This Government promised that they would rebalance our economy. They promised a northern powerhouse, yet half of 1% of infrastructure investment is going to the north-east and London is getting 44 times more than that. Is it not time to have a real rebalancing of our economy and to invest in the areas that are losing out so badly?

**The Prime Minister:** The right hon. Gentleman is talking down the performance of parts of our economy that are doing well. The fastest growing part of our economy has been the north-west, not the south-east. Exports are growing faster in the north-east, not in London. There is a huge amount of work to do to make sure that we heal that north-south divide, and for the first time we have a Government with a proper strategy of investing in the infrastructure and the training and the skills that will make a difference. For years, regional policy was about just trying to distribute a few Government jobs outside London. We now have a strategy that is about skills, training and growth, and it is delivering.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** The idea of redistribution is interesting, because investment in London is more than the total of every other English region combined. Does the Prime Minister not think that such issues should be addressed? In March, Government investment was cut in order to meet their fiscal rule. How can the economy be rebalanced when investment is cut and when what little investment remains reinforces the regional imbalances in this country?

**The Prime Minister:** Again, I think the right hon. Gentleman is talking down the north in the questions that he asks. The unemployment rate in the north-west is lower than the rate in London, so I think his figures are wrong.

As for investment, we of course need to have Government investment, and we have that in HS2 and the railways. We have the biggest investment programme since Victorian times and the biggest investment in our roads since the 1970s, but we can invest only if we have a strong, growing economy. We know what Labour's recipe is: more borrowing, more spending, more debt, and trashing the economy, which is what they did in office. That is when investment collapses.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** The Chancellor finally did this week what the shadow Chancellor asked him to do in the autumn statement and what I asked the Prime Minister to do last week—he abandoned a key part of the fiscal rule. The deficit was supposed to vanish by 2015, but we now know it will not even be gone by 2020. Is it not time

to admit that austerity is a failure and that the way forward is to invest in infrastructure, in growth and in jobs?

**The Prime Minister:** What the right hon. Gentleman says is simply not the case. The rules that we set out always had flexibilities in case growth did not turn out the way it did. I would take his advice more seriously if I could think of a single spending reduction that he supported at any time in the past six years. The fact is that this Government and the previous one—the coalition Government—had to take difficult decisions to get our deficit under control. It has gone from the 11% of GDP that we inherited—almost the biggest in the world—to under 3% this year and that is because of difficult decisions. If he can stand up and tell me about one of those decisions that he has supported, I would be interested to hear it.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** Concerns about the fiscal rule and investment are obviously spreading on the Prime Minister's own Benches. The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills have seen the light and now agree with the shadow Chancellor about backing the massive investment programme that we have been advocating. Is it not time that the Prime Minister thanked my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell) for the education work that he has been doing in this House? Will the Prime Minister confirm that the Chancellor's fiscal rule is dead and that he will invest in the north-east, in Lincolnshire, and in Derbyshire? They are all places that feel, with good reason, that they have been left behind and that investment is going to the wrong places. They are ending up with few jobs on low wages and insecure employment to boot.

**The Prime Minister:** If the investment was going to the wrong places, we would not see 2.5 million more people in work and we would not see a fall in unemployment and a rise in employment in every single region in our country.

The only area where I think the right hon. Gentleman has made a massive contribution is in recent weeks coming up with the biggest job-creation scheme that I have ever seen in my life. Almost everyone on the Benches behind him has had an opportunity to serve on the Opposition Front Bench. Rather like those old job-creation schemes, however, it has been a bit of a revolving door. They get a job—sometimes for only a few hours—and then they go back to the Back Benches, but it is a job-creation scheme none the less and we should thank him for that.

Q3. [905681] **John Glen** (Salisbury) (Con): On a day when significant questions have been levelled at the collective decision making of politicians, military leaders and intelligence services, many of our constituents will be seeking reassurance that the lives of their loved ones were not given in vain, and that the mistakes that were made will never happen again. Will the Prime Minister ensure that the lessons learned will be fully examined and acted upon so that the tragic mistakes made over a decade ago can never be repeated?

**The Prime Minister:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his question. I can certainly give that assurance. I am sure that we will have plenty of time this afternoon to discuss the Chilcot report. Sir John Chilcot is on his

feet at the moment explaining what he has found. I think that the most important thing we can do is really learn the lessons for the future, and he has laid out the lessons quite clearly. We will obviously want to spend a lot of time talking about the decision to go to war and all the rest of it, but I think that the most important thing for all of us is to think, “How do we make sure that Government work better, that decisions are arrived at better, and that legal advice is considered better?” I think that all those things are perhaps the best legacy we can seek from this whole thing.

**Angus Robertson** (Moray) (SNP): Today is hugely important for Muslims, both at home and abroad, as it is the end of Ramadan, and I am sure we wish them all Eid Mubarak. Today is also a day when our thoughts are with all those who lost loved ones in Iraq and all those hundreds of thousands of families in Iraq who also mourn their loved ones. The Chilcot report confirms that on 28 July 2002 Tony Blair wrote to President Bush, stating:

“I will be with you, whatever”.

Does the Prime Minister understand why the families of the dead and the injured UK service personnel and the hundreds of thousands of Iraqis feel that they were deceived about the reasons for going to war in Iraq?

**The Prime Minister:** First, I join the right hon. Gentleman in wishing Muslims in this country and around the world Eid Mubarak at the end of Ramadan. We will discuss the report in detail later and I do not want to pre-empt all the things I am going to say in my statement, but clearly we need to learn the lessons of the report, so we should study it very carefully—it is millions of words and thousands of pages. I think that we should save our remarks for when we debate it in the House following the statement.

**Angus Robertson:** The Chilcot report catalogues the failures in planning for post-conflict Iraq and then concludes that:

“The UK did not achieve its objectives”.

That lack of planning has also been evident in relation to Afghanistan, Libya, Syria and, most recently, with no plan whatsoever, to Brexit. When will the UK Government actually start learning from the mistakes of the past so that we are not condemned to repeating them in future?

**The Prime Minister:** The right hon. Gentleman is absolutely right that what Sir John Chilcot says about the failure to plan is very clear. In the statement that he has given, he says:

“When the invasion began, UK policy rested on an assumption that there would be a well-executed US-led and UN-authorized operation in a relatively benign security environment.

Mr Blair told the Inquiry that the difficulties encountered in Iraq after the invasion could not have been known in advance.”

He then says:

“We do not agree that hindsight is required.”

Sir John Chilcot is very clear on that point.

What I will say to the right hon. Gentleman about planning is that the things I put in place as Prime Minister following what happened in Iraq—a National Security Council, proper legal advice, properly constituted

meetings and a properly staffed National Security Secretariat, including proper listening to expert advice in the National Security Council—were all designed to avoid the problems that the Government had had in the case of Iraq. The only other point I will make is that there is no set of arrangements or plans that can provide perfection in any of these cases. We can argue whether military intervention is ever justified; I believe that it is. Military intervention is always difficult, as is planning for the aftermath. I do not think that we in this House should be naive in any way about there being a perfect set of plans or arrangements that could solve these problems in perpetuity, because there is not.

**Q4.** [905682] **Sir David Amess** (Southend West) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating Southend Council, which is once again under the control of the Conservative party, on swiftly acting to sort out the mess left by the previous, hopeless administration? Does he agree that Southend-on-Sea being the alternative city of culture next year will produce a considerable boost to the local economy?

**The Prime Minister:** Let me pay tribute to my hon. Friend for his long-standing efforts to promote Southend and all it has to offer. Although Hull is the official city of culture next year, I am sure that Southend will benefit from the tireless campaign that he has run. I certainly join him in encouraging people to go and see this excellent seaside town for themselves.

**Q2.** [905680] **Mr Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover) (Lab): Is the Prime Minister aware that, two miles north of Shirebrook, which has already been mentioned, is a town called Bolsover and that, at the same time as local people were seeing notices on the bus saying, “£350 million for the NHS”, the Government decided, with the help of the local people, to close the hospital at Bolsover? We need the beds—I am sure that he understands that. When the hospital is closed, it is gone forever. I want him today to use a little bit of that money—not very much—to save the Bolsover hospital, save the beds and save the jobs. The press might have a headline saying, “The Prime Minister—Dodgy Dave—assists the Beast to save the Bolsover hospital.” What a temptation! Save it!

**The Prime Minister:** I do not have the information about the exact situation at the Bolsover hospital; I will look at it very carefully and write to the hon. Gentleman. What I will say is that we are putting £19 billion extra into the NHS in this Parliament. As for what was on the side of buses and all the rest of it, my argument has always been, and will always be, that it is a strong economy that we require to fund the NHS.

**Q6.** [905684] **Seema Kennedy** (South Ribble) (Con): Last week, I held my first apprenticeships fair in my constituency. Does my right hon. Friend agree that apprenticeships are an absolutely vital part of economic development in our proud northern towns and cities?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right, and that is why we have set the target of 3 million apprentices during this Parliament. I think that is achievable, just as we achieved the 2 million apprentices trained

during the last Parliament. I wish her well with what I hope is the first of many apprenticeship fairs in her constituency.

**Q5.** [905683] **Yasmin Qureshi** (Bolton South East) (Lab): Before I ask my question, may I thank the Prime Minister for the support he gave my campaign to get an inquiry into a drug called Primodos, which was given to pregnant women in the 1960s and '70s and resulted in thousands of babies being born with deformities?

Our universities are global success stories, outward looking and open for business with the world, and attracting the brightest and the best students and researchers to produce ground-breaking research in areas from cancer to climate change. In the last year, UK universities received £836 million—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I need a single-sentence question. Forgive me, but there are a lot of other colleagues who want to take part.

**Yasmin Qureshi:** What assurances can the Prime Minister give that, in the light of the fact that we are now out of the European Union, that money will be safe?

**The Prime Minister:** First, let me thank the hon. Lady for her thanks. She has raised the case of Primodos many times. The Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency has been gathering evidence for a review by an expert working group on medicines, and it has met on three occasions. I think we are making progress.

On universities, until Britain leaves the European Union, we get the full amount of funding under Horizon and other programmes, as we would expect. All contracts under them have to be fulfilled, but it will be for a future Government, as they negotiate the exit from the EU, to make sure that we domestically continue to fund our universities in a way that makes sure that they continue to lead the world.

**Q7.** [905685] **Kevin Foster** (Torbay) (Con): As my right hon. Friend will know, the potential closure of the BHS store in Torquay town centre with the loss of more than 100 jobs has again raised the need for major regeneration of town centres across Torbay. Will he outline what support will be made available by the Government to ensure that plans can be taken forward?

**The Prime Minister:** First, it is worth making the point that it is a very sad moment for those BHS staff who have worked so long for that business. For them, it was not simply a high street brand; it was a job, a way of life and a means of preparing for their retirement and their pensions, and we must do all we can to help them and find them new work. There are many vacancies in the retail sector, and we must ensure that there is help for them to get those jobs. As for our high streets, we have put around £18 million into towns through a number of initiatives, and we should keep up those initiatives, because keeping our town centres vibrant is so vital. This sits alongside the biggest ever cut in business rates in England—worth some £6.7 billion in the next five years—and we need to say to those on our high streets that they should make the most of that business rate cut.

**Q8.** [905686] **Mhairi Black** (Paisley and Renfrewshire South) (SNP): One of my constituents who I have been working with for some time has had her mobility car removed after falling victim to a flawed personal independence payment assessment by Atos. After the involvement of my office, Atos has since admitted its error, yet my vulnerable constituent still remains housebound and without a suitable car. Will the Prime Minister offer his full assistance to rectify this cruel situation, and will he look again at the regulations that allowed this situation to occur in the first place?

**The Prime Minister:** Let me congratulate the hon. Lady on taking up this constituency case. Many of us have done exactly the same thing with constituents who have had assessments that have not turned out to be accurate. If she gives me the details, I will certainly look at the specific case and see what can be done.

**Q9.** [905687] **Kevin Hollinrake** (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): A report recently commissioned by Transport for the North, a body created by this Government, highlights the opportunity to halt the growing divide between north and south and to create 850,000 new jobs and £97 billion of economic growth by 2050. Does my right hon. Friend agree that, to build on our economic prosperity, we need to continue to rebalance infrastructure spending from London to the regions, particularly to the north of England?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The report shows that, if we do not take the necessary actions, we will see a continued north-south divide, which is why we are committed, for instance, to seeing increased spending on transport infrastructure go up by 50% to £61 billion in this Parliament. In his area, for example, we are spending £380 million on upgrading the A1 from Leeming to Barton, which will be a big boost for the local economy.

**Q10.** [905688] **Chris Law** (Dundee West) (SNP): I recently met Yemi, whose husband, Andy Tsege, a British citizen, has been on Ethiopia's death row for over two years. Andy was kidnapped while travelling and illegally rendered to Ethiopia. He was sentenced to death six years ago at a trial that he was neither present at nor able to present any defence whatsoever to, in direct contravention of international law. He has been denied access to his wife and children, has spent a year in solitary confinement and has had no access to legal representation. Recent reports suggest that he is suicidal. Prime Minister, in your final weeks in office, will you finally demand the immediate release of Andy Tsege and bring him home to be reunited with his wife and children?

**The Prime Minister:** I can reassure the hon. Gentleman that we are taking a very close interest in this case. The Foreign Secretary was in Ethiopia recently. Our consul has been able to meet Mr Tsege on a number of occasions and we are working with him and with the Ethiopian Government to try to get this resolved.

**Mr David Burrowes** (Enfield, Southgate) (Con): One report that perhaps will not get so much attention is the Care Quality Commission's report into North Middlesex University hospital, which confirms that the emergency

care there is inadequate. Why has it taken so many years and why does it need regulators to tell us what many of my constituents know: for too long, there has been inadequate care and too few doctors and consultants? Will the Prime Minister assure me that we now have in place the right plans and the right numbers of doctors and consultants to ensure that my constituents get the care that they deserve?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend raises an important point, which is that the CQC is now acting effectively at getting into hospitals, finding bad practice and reporting on it swiftly. In some cases, that bad practice has always been there, but we have not been as effective as we should have been at shining a light on it. North Middlesex University hospital has one of the busiest emergency departments in the country. Its practice was unacceptable. We now have a new clinical director at the trust, additional senior doctors in place at A&E and a change in governance. Under this Government, we set up the role of the chief inspector of hospitals, to have a zero-tolerance approach to such practice and to ensure that things are put right.

Q11. [905689] **Martyn Day** (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP): The Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills has stated that he wants the UK to borrow tens of billions of pounds to create a Growing Britain fund worth up to £100 billion. Is this a formal plan, or is it merely an attempt to conjure up a plan amid a leadership vacuum in the UK Government?

**The Prime Minister:** We are spending billions of pounds on the British economy and on investment, as I have just shown, and that has clear consequences under the Barnett formula for Scotland. Clearly, my colleagues, during a leadership election—at least we on this side of the House are actually having a leadership election, rather than the never-ending—[*Interruption.*] I thought you wanted one? You don't? Hands up who wants a leadership election. [*Laughter.*] Oh, they don't want a leadership election! I am so confused: one minute it is like the eagle is going to swoop, and the next minute it is Eddie the Eagle at the top of the ski jump not knowing whether to go or not. Anyway, in case you hadn't noticed, we are having a leadership election.

**Mr Robin Walker** (Worcester) (Con): Right from the start, this United Kingdom has been an outward looking international trading nation. I am glad to see that the Trade Minister, Lord Price—[*Interruption.*]

**Mr Speaker:** Order. The hon. Member for Worcester is entitled to be heard and his constituents are entitled to be represented.

**Mr Walker:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am glad to see the Minister for Trade and Investment out in Hong Kong today talking up the prospects for investment in the British economy, but what steps can the Prime Minister take to bolster the resources available to UK Trade & Investment and the Foreign Office to make sure we attract as much trade and investment in the wide world as possible?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend makes an important point. A clear instruction has gone out to all our embassies around the world and to UKTI, and Ministers are very clear that we should be doing all we can to

engage as hard as we can with other parts of the world and to start to think about those trade and investment deals and the inward investment we want in the UK. Businesses have been clear to us as well: whether they agree or disagree with the decision the country has made, they know we have to go on and make the most of the opportunities that we have.

Q12. [905690] **Rachel Reeves** (Leeds West) (Lab): With the real prospect of a recession on the horizon, the offer from the Chancellor is to cut corporation tax, yet companies worry whether they will make a profit in the UK, not how much tax they will pay on it. Can the Prime Minister tell us what immediate action his Government will take to protect people's jobs and livelihoods right now?

**The Prime Minister:** Immediate action has been taken, not least the Bank of England decision to encourage bank lending by changing the reserve asset ratios it insists on. That is important because it is a short-term measure that can have some early effect. The Chancellor was talking about how we need to make sure that we configure all our policies to take advantage of the situation we are going to be in. That means changes to taxes and the way UKTI works, and a change in focus for the Foreign Office and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. We can make a start on all those things, irrespective of the fact that the hon. Lady and I were on the same side of the referendum campaign.

**Sir Gerald Howarth** (Aldershot) (Con): Further to the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr Walker) about UKTI, may I remind the Prime Minister that next Monday the greatest airshow in the world takes place at Farnborough in my constituency, which all right hon. and hon. Members are expected to attend? Last time, two years ago, deals worth \$201 billion were signed at the Farnborough airshow, so may I prevail on my right hon. Friend, who may have a little more time on his hands, to come and open the show on Monday and encourage all other Ministers to attend?

**The Prime Minister:** I am one of the first Prime Ministers in a while to attend the Farnborough airshow and I am happy to announce that I will be going back there this year, because it is very important. We have, I think, the second-largest aerospace industry in the world after the United States, and it is a brilliant moment to showcase that industry to the rest of the world and to clinch some important export deals, both in the military and in the civilian space. I will always do everything I can, whether in this job or in the future, to support British industry in that way.

Q13. [905691] **Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP): The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recently joined the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in expressing serious concerns about this Tory Government's brutal welfare cuts. How much more international condemnation will it take before the Prime Minister drops his regressive two-child policy and scraps his rape clause?

**The Prime Minister:** What we have seen under this Government is many more people in work, many fewer households where no one works, and many fewer

households with children where no one works; all those have been a huge success. Of course, the hon. Lady and her party have an opportunity, now that we have made some huge devolution proposals, including in the area of welfare: if they do not think that what we are doing on a UK basis—*[Interruption.]* I do not know why you are all shouting. You are getting these powers; instead of whinging endlessly, you ought to be starting to use them.

**Mike Wood** (Dudley South) (Con): As Sir John Chilcot finds that the only people who came out of the 2003 invasion of Iraq well were servicemen and civilians, will the Prime Minister look at how he can make sure that the precedent that he set last autumn for transparency and scrutiny ahead of military action becomes the norm for his successor?

**The Prime Minister:** I think we have now got a set of arrangements and conventions that put the country in a stronger position. I think it is now a clear convention that we have a vote in this House, which of course we did on Iraq, before premeditated military action, but it is also important that we have a properly constituted National Security Council, proper receipt of legal advice and a summary of that legal advice provided to the House of Commons, as we did in the case of both Libya and Iraq. These things are growing to be a set of conventions that will work for our country, but let me

repeat that even the best rules and conventions in the world do not mean that we will always be confronted with easy decisions, or ones that do not have very difficult consequences.

Q14. [905692] **Margaret Ferrier** (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (SNP): The Prime Minister will no doubt be aware of my constituent Pauline Cafferkey, a nurse who contracted Ebola in Sierra Leone in 2014, when she was there as part of the response that the Department for International Development organised to the outbreak. She and around 200 other NHS volunteers acting through UK-Med have not received an equivalent to the £4,000 bonus awarded to 250 Public Health England staff. Will the Prime Minister agree to meet me to discuss how DFID can rectify that?

**The Prime Minister:** I am very pleased that the hon. Lady raises this issue, because Pauline Cafferkey is one of the bravest people I have ever met, and it was a great privilege to have her come to No. 10 Downing Street. I am proud of the fact that she—and many others, I believe—have received a medal for working in Sierra Leone, which is something Britain should be incredibly proud of. We took the decision to partner with that country to deal with Ebola, and it is now Ebola-free. I will look specifically into the issue of the bonus—I was not aware of it—and I will get back to the hon. Lady about it.

## Report of the Iraq Inquiry

12.32 pm

**The Prime Minister (Mr David Cameron):** This morning, Sir John Chilcot has published the report of the independent Iraq inquiry. This is a difficult day for all the families of those who lost loved ones. They have waited for this report for too long, and our first thoughts today must be with them. In their grief and anger, I hope they can draw at least some solace from the depth and rigour of this report and, above all, some comfort from knowing that we will never forget the incredible service and sacrifice of their sons, daughters, husbands and wives—179 British servicemen and women and 23 British civilians who gave everything for our country. We must also never forget the thousands more who suffered life-changing injuries, and we must pledge today to look after them for the rest of their lives.

This report would have been produced sooner if it had been begun when Conservative Members and others first called for it back in 2006, but I am sure that the House will join me in thanking Sir John and his Privy Counsellors, including the late Sir Martin Gilbert, who sadly passed away during the work on this report.

This has been a fully independent inquiry. Government Ministers did not even see it until yesterday morning. The Cabinet Secretary led a process that gave Sir John full access to Government papers. This has meant an unprecedented public declassification of Joint Intelligence Committee papers, key Cabinet minutes, records of meetings and conversations between the UK Prime Minister and the American President, and 31 personal memos from the then Prime Minister, Tony Blair, to President George W. Bush. The inquiry also took evidence from more than 150 witnesses, and its report runs to 2.6 million words, in 13 volumes. It cost over £10 million to produce. Clearly the House will want the chance to study and debate it in depth, and I am making provision for two full days of debate next week.

There are a number of key questions that are rightly asked about Iraq. Did we go to war on a false premise? Were decisions taken properly, including the consideration of legal advice? Was the operation properly planned? Were we properly prepared for the aftermath of the initial conflict? Did our forces have adequate funding and equipment? I will try to summarise the key findings on these questions before turning to the lessons that I believe should be learned.

A number of reasons were put forward for going to war in Iraq, including the danger that Saddam posed to his people and to the region, and the need to uphold United Nations resolutions. However, as everyone in this House will remember, central to the Government's case was the issue of weapons of mass destruction. Sir John finds that there was an "ingrained belief" genuinely held in both the UK and US Governments that Saddam Hussein possessed chemical and biological capabilities, and that he wanted to redevelop his nuclear capabilities and was pursuing an active policy of deceit and concealment.

There were some good reasons for this belief. Saddam had built up chemical weapons in the past and he had used them against Kurdish civilians and the Iranian military. He had given international weapons inspectors the run-around for years. The report clearly reflects that

the advice given to the Government by the intelligence and policy community was that Saddam did indeed continue to possess and seek to develop these capabilities.

However, as we now know, by 2003 this long-held belief no longer reflected the reality. Sir John says:

"At no stage was the proposition that Iraq might no longer have chemical, biological or nuclear weapons or programmes identified and examined by either the"

Joint Intelligence Committee

"or the policy community."

And as the report notes, the late Robin Cook had shown that it was possible to come to a different conclusion from an examination of the same intelligence.

In the wake of 9/11, the Americans were also understandably concerned about the risk of weapons of mass destruction finding their way into the hands of terrorists. Sir John finds that while it was reasonable to be concerned about the potential fusion of proliferation and terrorism, there was

"no basis in the JIC Assessments to suggest that Iraq itself represented such a threat."

On the question of intelligence, Sir John finds no evidence that intelligence was improperly included, or that No. 10—or Mr Blair personally—improperly influenced the text of the September 2002 dossier, but he does find that the use of Joint Intelligence Committee material in public presentation did not make clear enough the limitations or the subtleties of assessment. He says that the assessed intelligence

"had not established beyond doubt either that Saddam Hussein had continued to produce chemical and biological weapons or that efforts to develop nuclear weapons continued",

and he says that the Joint Intelligence Committee

"should have made that clear to Mr Blair."

Sir John also finds that public statements from the Government conveyed more certainty than the Joint Intelligence Committee assessments. There was a lack of clarity about the distinction between what the JIC assessed and what Mr Blair believed. Referring to the text in Mr Blair's foreword to the September 2002 dossier, he finds

"a distinction between"

Mr Blair's

"beliefs and the JIC's actual judgements."

But in his words Sir John does not question Mr Blair's belief or his legitimate role in advocating Government policy.

Turning to the question of legality, the inquiry has "not expressed a view as to whether or not the UK's participation in the war was legal." However, it does quote the legal advice which the Attorney General gave at the time and on which the Government acted—namely, that there was a legal basis for action. Nevertheless, Sir John is highly critical of the processes by which the legal advice was arrived at and discussed. He says:

"The circumstances in which it was ultimately decided that there was a legal basis for UK participation were far from satisfactory."

I am sure hon. Members will want to study that part of the report carefully.

Sir John also finds that the diplomatic options had not at that stage been exhausted, and that

"Military action was therefore not a last resort."

[The Prime Minister]

Sir John says that when the second resolution at the UN became unachievable, the UK should have done more to exhaust all diplomatic options, including allowing the inspectors longer to complete their job.

Turning to the decision making, the report documents carefully the processes that were followed. There was a Cabinet discussion before the decision to go to war. A number of Ministers, including the Foreign and Defence Secretaries, were involved in much of the decision making. However, the report makes some specific criticisms of the process of decision making. In particular, when it came to the options for military action, it is clear that these were never discussed properly by a Cabinet Committee or Cabinet. Arrangements were often informal and sporadic, and frequently involved a small group of Ministers and advisers, sometimes without formal records.

Sir John finds that, at crucial points, Mr Blair sent personal notes and made important commitments to Mr Bush that had not been discussed or agreed with Cabinet colleagues. However, while Sir John makes many criticisms of process, including the way information was handled and presented, at no stage does he explicitly say that there was a deliberate attempt to mislead people.

Turning to operational planning, the initial invasion proceeded relatively rapidly, and we should be proud of what our armed forces managed to achieve so quickly. This was despite the fact that the military did not really have time to plan properly for an invasion from the south, because they had been focused on the north until a late decision from the Turkish Government to refuse entry through their territory. It was also in spite of issues over equipment, which I will turn to later.

But a bigger question was around the planning for what might happen after the initial operation, and we mentioned this briefly at Prime Minister's questions. Sir John finds that

"when the invasion began, the UK government was not in a position to conclude that satisfactory plans had been drawn up and preparations made to meet known post-conflict challenges and risks in Iraq."

He adds that the Government

"lacked clear Ministerial oversight of post-conflict strategy, planning and preparation and effective co-ordination between government departments"

and

"failed to analyse or manage those risks adequately."

The Government—and here I mean officials and the military, as well as Ministers—remained too fixed on assumptions that the Americans had a plan, that the UN would play a significant role, with the international community sharing the burden, and that the UK role would be over three to four months after the conflict had ended. Sir John concludes that the Government's failure to prepare properly for the aftermath of the conflict

"reduced the likelihood of achieving the UK's strategic objectives in Iraq."

And Sir John concludes that anticipating these post-conflict problems—and I quote, as I did at Prime Minister's questions—

"did not require the benefit of hindsight."

Turning to equipment and troops, Sir John is clear that the UK failed to match resources to the objectives. Sir John says categorically that

"delays in providing adequate medium weight Protected Patrol Vehicles and the failure to meet the needs of UK forces...for ISTAR and helicopters should not have been tolerated",

and he says that

"the MOD was slow in responding to the developing threat in Iraq from Improvised Explosive Devices."

The inquiry also identified a number of moments when it would have been possible to conduct a substantial reappraisal of our approach to the whole situation in Iraq and the level of resources required. But despite a series of warnings from commanders in the field, Sir John finds that no such reappraisal took place. Furthermore, during the first four years, there was

"no clear statement of policy setting out the acceptable level of risk to UK forces and who was responsible for managing that risk."

Sir John also finds that the Government—and in particular the military—were too focused on withdrawing from Iraq and planning for an Afghan deployment in 2006, and that further drew effort away.

Sir John concludes that although Tony Blair succeeded in persuading America to go back to the UN in 2002, he was unsuccessful in changing the US position on other critical decisions, and that

"in the absence of a majority in the Security Council in support of military action at that point, the UK was undermining the authority of the Security Council".

While it is right for a UK Prime Minister to weigh up carefully the damage to the special relationship that would be done by failing to support the US, Sir John says that it is questionable whether not participating militarily on this occasion would have broken the partnership. He says there was a substantial gap from the outset between the ambitious UK objectives and the resources that Government were prepared to commit, and that even with more resources, the circumstances surrounding the invasion made it difficult to deliver substantive outcomes.

While the territorial integrity of Iraq remained, deep sectarian divisions opened, and thousands of innocent Iraqi civilians lost their lives. While these divisions were not created by the international coalition, Sir John believes they were exacerbated, including through the extent of de-Ba'athification, and they were not addressed by an effective programme of reconciliation. Overall, Sir John finds that the policy of Her Majesty's Government fell far short of meeting its strategic objectives and helped to create a space for al-Qaeda.

Of course, the decision to go to war came to a vote in this House, and Members on all sides who voted for military action will have to take our fair share of the responsibility. We cannot turn the clock back, but we can ensure that lessons are learned and acted on. I will turn to these in a moment and cover all the issues around machinery of government, proper processes, culture and planning, some of which we discussed in Prime Minister's questions, but let me be the first to say that getting all of these things right does not guarantee the success of a military intervention.

For example, on Libya, I believe it was right to intervene to stop Gaddafi slaughtering his people. In that case, we did have a United Nations Security Council

resolution. We did have proper processes. We did have comprehensive advice on all the key issues. And we did not put our forces on the ground. Instead we worked with a transitional Libyan Government. But getting these things right does not make the challenges of intervention any less formidable. The difficulties in Libya are plain for everyone to see today.

As the Prime Minister for the last six years, reading this report, I believe there are some lessons that we do need to learn and, frankly, keep on learning. First, taking the country to war should always be a last resort and should only be done if all credible alternatives have been exhausted.

Secondly, the machinery of government does matter. That is why, on my first day in office, I established the National Security Council to ensure proper co-ordinated decision making across the whole of government, including those responsible for domestic security. This council is not just a meeting of Ministers; it has the right breadth of expertise in the room, with the Chief of the Defence Staff, the Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee, the heads of the intelligence services, and relevant senior officials. The Attorney General is now a member of the National Security Council.

I also appointed the UK's first national security adviser, with a properly constituted team in the Cabinet Office to ensure that all the key parts of our national security apparatus are joined up. The national security machinery also taps the experience and knowledge of experts from outside Government. This helps us to constantly challenge conventional wisdom within the system and avoid, hopefully, group-think. It is inconceivable today that we could take a premeditated decision to commit combat troops without a full and challenging discussion in the National Security Council, on the basis of full papers, including written legal advice, prepared and stress-tested by all relevant departments, with decisions formally minuted.

Thirdly, I would argue also that the culture established by Prime Ministers matters too. It is crucial to good decision making that a Prime Minister establishes a climate in which it is safe for officials and other experts to challenge existing policy and question the views of Ministers, and the Prime Minister, without fear or favour. There is no question today but that everyone sat around the NSC table is genuinely free to speak their mind.

Fourthly, if we are to take the difficult decisions to intervene in other countries, proper planning for what follows is vital. We know that the task of rebuilding effective governance is enormous. That is why we created a conflict, stability and stabilisation fund, and beefed up the cross-government stabilisation unit, so that experts are able to deploy in post-conflict situations anywhere in the world at short notice. Frankly, none of this would be possible without the historic decision that we have taken to commit 0.7% of our gross national income on overseas aid. A lot of that money is spent on conflict-affected and fragile states, not only assisting with post-conflict planning but also trying to prevent conflicts in the first place.

Fifthly, we must ensure that our armed forces are always properly equipped and resourced. That is why we now conduct a regular strategic defence and security review to ensure that the resources we have meet the ambitions of the national security strategy. We are

meeting our NATO commitment to spend 2% of our GDP on defence, and planning to invest at least £178 billion on new military equipment over the next decade. We have also enshrined the armed forces covenant in law to ensure that our armed forces and their families receive the treatment and respect they deserve. Sending our brave troops on to the battlefield without the right equipment was unacceptable, and whatever else we learn from this conflict, we must all pledge that this will never happen again.

There will be further lessons to learn from studying this report, and I commit today that that is exactly what we will do, but in reflecting on this report, and my own experience, there are also some lessons here that I do not think we should draw. First, it would be wrong to conclude that we should not stand with our American allies when our common security interests are threatened. We must never be afraid to speak frankly and honestly, as best friends always should. And where we commit our troops together, there must be a structure through which our views can be properly conveyed and any differences worked through. But it remains the case that Britain and America share the same fundamental values, that Britain has no greater friend or ally in the world than America, and that our partnership remains as important for our security and prosperity today as it has ever been.

Secondly, I think it would be wrong to conclude that we cannot rely on the judgments of our brilliant and hard-working intelligence agencies. We know the debt we owe them in helping to keep us safe every day of the year. Since November 2014, they have enabled us to foil seven different planned terrorist attacks on the streets of the UK. What this report shows is that there needs to be a proper separation between the process of assessing intelligence and the policy making that flows from it. And as a result of the reforms since the Butler report, that is what we have in place.

Thirdly, it would be completely wrong to conclude that our military is not capable of intervening successfully around the world. Many of the failures in this report were not directly about the conduct of the armed forces as they went into Iraq, but rather the failures of planning before a shot was fired. There is no question but that Britain's armed forces remain the envy of the world, and the decisions we have taken to ensure that they are properly resourced will ensure they stay that way.

Finally, we should not conclude that intervention is always wrong. There are unquestionably times when it is right to intervene, as this country did successfully in Sierra Leone and Kosovo. I am sure that many in this House would agree that there have been times in the recent past when we should have intervened but did not, such as in failing to prevent the genocides in Rwanda and Srebrenica.

Intervention is hard. War fighting is not always the most difficult part. Often, the state-building that follows is a much more complex challenge. We should not be naive to think that just because we have the best prepared plans, in the real world things cannot go wrong. Equally, just because intervention is difficult, it does not mean that there are not times when it is right and necessary.

Yes, Britain has to, and will continue to, learn the lessons of this report. But as with our intervention against Daesh in Iraq and Syria today, Britain must not

[The Prime Minister]

and will not shrink from its role on the world stage or fail to protect its people. I commend this statement to the House.

12.51 pm

**Jeremy Corbyn** (Islington North) (Lab): Before addressing the issues raised in the Iraq inquiry report, I would like to remember and honour the 179 British servicemen and women who were killed and the thousands maimed and injured during the Iraq war, and their families, as well as the hundreds of thousands of Iraqis who have died as a result of the invasion and occupation launched by the US and British Governments 13 years ago.

Yesterday, I had a private meeting with some of the families of the British dead, as I have continued to do over the past dozen years. It is always a humbling experience to witness the resolve and resilience of those families and their unwavering commitment to seek truth and justice for those whom they lost in Iraq. They have waited seven years for Sir John Chilcot's report. It was right that the inquiry heard evidence from such a wide range of people and that the origins, conduct and aftermath of the war were examined in such detail. However, the extraordinary length of time that it has taken for the report to see the light of day is, frankly, clearly a matter of regret.

I should add that the scale of the report, running to 6,275 pages, to which I was given access only at 8 o'clock this morning, means that today's response, by all of us, can only be a provisional one.

The decision to invade and occupy Iraq in March 2003 was the most significant foreign policy decision taken by a British Government in modern times. It divided this House and set the Government of the day against a majority of the British people, as well as against the weight of global opinion. As Sir John Chilcot says, the war was not in any way a "last resort". Frankly, it was an act of military aggression launched on a false pretext, as the inquiry accepts, and has long been regarded as illegal by the overwhelming weight of international legal opinion. It led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people and the displacement of millions of refugees. It devastated Iraq's infrastructure and society. As the report indicates, the occupation fostered a lethal sectarianism that turned into a civil war. Instead of protecting security at home or abroad, the war fuelled and spread terrorism across the region. Sunday's suicide bomb attack in Baghdad that killed over 250 people, the deadliest so far, was carried out by a group whose origins lie in the aftermath of the invasion. By any measure, the invasion and occupation of Iraq have been, for many, a catastrophe.

The decision to invade Iraq in 2003 on the basis of what the Chilcot report calls "flawed intelligence" about weapons of mass destruction has had a far-reaching impact on us all. It has led to a fundamental breakdown in trust in politics and in our institutions of government. The tragedy is that while the governing class got it so horrifically wrong, many of our people actually got it right. On 15 February 2003, 1.5 million people here, spanning the entire political spectrum, and tens of millions of others across the world, marched against the impending war. That was the biggest demonstration in British history.

It was not that those of us who opposed the war underestimated the brutality or the crimes of Saddam Hussein's dictatorship. Indeed, many of us campaigned against the Iraqi regime during its most bloody period, when the British Government and the US Administration were supporting that regime, as was confirmed by the 1996 Scott inquiry. But we could see that this state, broken by sanctions and war, posed no military threat, and that the WMD evidence was flimsy and confected. We could see that going to war without United Nations' authorisation was profoundly dangerous, and that foreign invasion and occupation would be resisted by force, and would set off a series of uncontrollable and destructive events.

If only this House had been able to listen to the wisdom of many of our own people when it voted on 18 March 2003 against waiting for UN authorisation for a second resolution, the course of events might have been different. All but 16 Members of the official Opposition at that time supported the war, while many in my party voted against it, as did others in other opposition parties. There are Members here today on all Benches, including dozens of my Labour colleagues, who voted against the war. But none of us should take any satisfaction from this report. [Interruption.] Instead, I believe that all of us—[Interruption.]

**Mr Speaker:** Order. We cannot have a running commentary on the statements made from the Front Bench. Members of this House know me well enough to know that I will allow all opinions to be expressed. If that means that the Prime Minister has to be here for quite a long time, he is accustomed to that. The right hon. Gentleman is entitled to be heard with courtesy. If people want to witter away, they should leave the Chamber. It is boring and we do not need you.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

We have to be saddened at what has been revealed, and we must now reflect on it. In addition to all those British servicepeople and Iraqis, civilians and combatants, who lost their lives in the conflict, many members of this House who voted to stop the war have not lived to see themselves vindicated by this report. First and foremost, it would do us well to remember Robin Cook, who stood over there, 13 years ago, and said in a few hundred words, in advance of the tragedy to come, what has been confirmed by this report in more than 2 million words.

The Chilcot report has rightly dug deep into the litany of failures of planning for the occupation, and the calamitous decision to stand down the Iraqi army and to dissolve the entire Iraqi state as a process of de-Ba'athification. However, the reality is that it was the original decision, to follow the US President into this war in the most volatile region of the world and impose a colonial-style occupation, that led to every other disaster. The Government's September 2002 dossier, with its claim that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction that could be deployed in 45 minutes, was only the most notorious of many deceptions. As Major General Michael Laurie told the inquiry:

"We knew at the time that the purpose of the dossier was precisely to make a case for war, rather than setting out the available intelligence".

Military action in Iraq not only turned a humanitarian crisis into a disaster, but it also convulsed the entire region, just as intervention in Libya in 2011 has sadly left the country in the grip of warring militias and terror groups. The Iraq war increased the threat of terrorism in our own country, as Baroness Manningham-Buller, former head of MI5, made clear to the inquiry.

There are many lessons that need to be drawn from the Iraq war and the investigation carried out by Sir John Chilcot in his inquiry; lessons for our Government, our country and this Parliament, as well as for my party and every other party. They include the need for a more open and independent relationship with the United States, and for a foreign policy based on upholding international law and the authority of the United Nations, which always seeks peaceful solutions to international disputes. We also need, and the Prime Minister indicated this, much stronger oversight of security and intelligence services. We need the full restoration of proper Cabinet government and to give Parliament the decisive say over any future decisions to go to war—based on objective information, not just through Government discretion but through a war powers Act, which I hope this Parliament will pass. As, in the wake of Iraq, our own Government and other western Governments increasingly resort to hybrid warfare based on the use of drones and special forces, our democracy crucially needs to ensure that their use is subject to proper parliamentary scrutiny.

There are no more important decisions a Member of Parliament ever gets asked to make than those relating to peace and war. The very least that Members of Parliament and the country should be able to expect is rigorous and objective evidence on which to base their crucial decisions. We now know that the House was misled in the run-up to the war, and the House must now decide how to deal with it 13 years later, just as all those who took the decisions laid bare in the Chilcot report must face up to the consequences of their actions, whatever they may be.

Later today, I will be meeting a group of families of military servicemen and women who lost loved ones, as well as Iraq war veterans and Iraqi citizens who have lost family members as a result of the war that the US and British Governments launched in 2003. I will be discussing with them, our public and the Iraqi people the decisions taken by our then Government that led the country into war, with terrible consequences.

Quite bluntly, there are huge lessons for every single one of us here today. We make decisions that have consequences that go on not just for the immediate years, but for decades and decades afterwards. We need to reflect very seriously before we take any decisions again to take military action. We should realise that the consequences of those decisions will live with all of us for many decades to come, and will often be incalculable.

**The Prime Minister:** Let me briefly respond to that, because I want to leave as much time as I can for colleagues to make their points. I think the right hon. Gentleman is right to praise the families for the dignity that they have shown. I understand the regret over the time taken, and I think we all feel that. The only point I would make is that when you have an independent report, you have to allow it to be independent and you have to allow the chairman to make his or her own

decisions in their own way. While it has been frustrating, I think that frustration has probably been better than intervention.

In terms of the time the right hon. Gentleman was given to read the report, I did not want politicians, including the former Prime Minister, to be given more time than the families themselves. That is why the 8 o'clock deadline was set. On the report itself, I think the right hon. Gentleman is right to say, and the report finds, that the intervention did create space for al-Qaeda. The only point I would make is that it is important to remember that violent Islamist extremism—al-Qaeda and all of that—started long before the Iraq war. It started long before 9/11, which was several years before the Iraq invasion. It is important to remember that.

In terms of the litany of failures, I have been able to read the executive summary and some other bits and pieces, as I am sure colleagues will. The right hon. Gentleman is right that there is a litany of failures: the disbanding of the army, the de-Ba'athification, the way the Coalition Provisional Authority worked and the failure to plan for the aftermath. There were very powerful points made by Sir John Chilcot.

In terms of the lessons to learn, many of the points the right hon. Gentleman made we have already put in place: proper Cabinet discussions, National Security Council discussions, parliamentary votes and the oversight of the intelligence agencies. Before coming up with even more ways to oversee our intelligence agencies, I would urge colleagues from right around the House to look at the way the beefed-up Intelligence and Security Committee works and at the other things that we have done, not least in the legislation going through both Houses. We do need to leave our intelligence services with a clear set of instructions and oversight arrangements, rather than changing them every five minutes.

A war powers Act can be discussed in the two-day debate. I have looked at it very carefully, and I have come to the conclusion that it is not the right thing to do. I think we would get ourselves into a legal mess. But the House should clearly debate it, as it will when it considers the report.

On the issue of the United States, the right hon. Gentleman calls for an open partnership. I do not believe that the United States is always right about everything, but I do believe that our partnership with the United States is vital for our national security. I rather fear that his approach is that the United States is always wrong. I do not think that they are always right, but I think that they are always our best partner, and we should work with them.

I urge the right hon. Gentleman and others to take the time to read the report—not in its entirety; I do not think any of us will have time for 3.8 million words—because it is very carefully judged and very carefully thought through. We should read it in conjunction with the statement that Sir John has given today, which is a very articulate distillation of what he says in his 200-page summary. I think that that is what we should be guided by.

**Mr Kenneth Clarke (Rushcliffe) (Con):** We will all need time to study the many damning conclusions in this report about how this catastrophic decision was reached in 2003, but the Prime Minister says that we

[Mr Kenneth Clarke]

should read it with an eye to future lessons for the machinery of government. Although I know from my own experience that the introduction of the National Security Council was a very valuable innovation, does my right hon. Friend agree that his successor should be recommended to look at whether we should return to the pre-Blair era of full collective Cabinet responsibility with proper time for meetings, proper information and studied conclusions? Does he agree that we should also look at whether proper parliamentary accountability for these things should be reconsidered so that there are full and properly informed debates here held in good time before, in cases such as this, the military are deployed, everything is set in hand and the position is irreversible? We really do need to go back to a much more collective and accountable form of government.

**The Prime Minister:** My right hon. and learned Friend makes good points. Let me respond. In terms of Cabinet responsibility, yes, before a decision such as this is made we need to have a Cabinet meeting and Cabinet discussion, but I would not try to substitute that for the work that the NSC now does, in which the head of MI5, the head of MI6 and the Chief of the Defence Staff are around the table. They sit there as equal members able to speak up and tell us what they think. That debate is frankly more valuable than simply listening to other Secretaries of State, although they are there as well. I still think that that is the best place to do that.

Yes, we should have parliamentary debates and it is good if we have them in reasonable time. One of the issues with the Iraq debate was that it was so close to the point of decision that many colleagues felt that to vote in a different way was somehow to let down our troops on the eve of a vitally important decision. Early debate is always good.

**Angus Robertson (Moray) (SNP):** May I begin by thanking the Prime Minister for advance sight of his statement and for a few short hours this morning to have a look at the millions of words in the report? Today we remember the hundreds of thousands of people who have died in Iraq—Iraqi civilians and, of course, the 179 UK service personnel who have lost their lives. Today is an important and sombre day for their families, and our hearts go out to them.

The report that we are considering now will be pored over in the days, weeks and months ahead, and it should be the first step in learning the lessons from the UK's most shameful foreign policy action in decades. Paragraph 409 of the executive summary of the Chilcot report confirms that on 28 July 2002, Tony Blair wrote to President Bush saying:

“I will be with you, whatever”.

Frankly, it is remarkable that the Prime Minister did not think that that was noteworthy enough to mention in his statement to the House. My first question to the Prime Minister is why he did not do so, given that much of the debate rests on the rationale of the Prime Minister of the time for signing up to whatever course of action the United States was prepared to pursue?

On intelligence, the report concludes at paragraph 807:

“The assessed intelligence had not established beyond doubt either that Saddam Hussein had continued to produce chemical and biological weapons or that efforts to develop nuclear weapons continued.”

I completely understand why the families of dead and injured UK service personnel, and hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, will feel that they were deceived about the reasons for going to war in Iraq. I completely understand why they also feel let down when it comes to the post-conflict situation, and the Chilcot report catalogues in graphic detail the failures in planning for post-conflict Iraq.

Paragraph 630 of the executive summary states that “when Mr Blair set out the UK's vision for the future of Iraq in the House of Commons on 18 March 2003, no assessment had been made of whether that vision was achievable, no agreement had been reached with the US on a workable post-conflict plan, UN authorisation had not yet been secured, and there had been no decision on the UN's role in post-conflict Iraq.”

The summary goes on to say at paragraph 814:

“Mr Blair, who recognised the significance of the post-conflict phase, did not press President Bush for definite assurances about US plans, did not consider or seek advice on whether the absence of a satisfactory plan called for reassessment of the terms of the UK's engagement and did not make agreement on such a plan a condition of UK participation in military action.”

In fact, the Chilcot report concludes, at paragraph 857:

“The UK did not achieve its objectives”.

Lack of planning has been evident since, in relation to Afghanistan, Libya and Syria; most recently there has been absolutely no plan whatever for Brexit. When will UK Governments of Tory or Labour hue actually start learning from the mistakes of the past so that we are not condemned to repeat them? I hope and expect that in the months ahead there will be the opportunity to hold to account those who are associated with and responsible for taking the UK to war in Iraq. It has not only caused hundreds of thousands of deaths; it has undermined people's faith in Parliament and Government in the UK and left an indelible stain on Britain's standing in the world.

**The Prime Minister:** I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his remarks. He rightly said that it is a sombre day—he is absolutely correct. He highlighted a number of the very serious mistakes that were made, not least on planning for the aftermath. He asked specifically why I did not mention the specific Tony Blair note to President Bush. I was trying to be very careful in my statement to accurately summarise what Sir John Chilcot has said. There was a whole section in my statement about the processes, and I said that Sir John had found that at crucial points Mr Blair sent personal notes and made important commitments to Mr Bush that had not been discussed or agreed with Cabinet colleagues. It is worth reading Sir John Chilcot's statement from this morning about that.

The right hon. Gentleman rightly focused on paragraph 630 of the executive summary. It is a powerful paragraph that says that

“when Mr Blair set out the UK's vision for the future of Iraq in the House of Commons on 18 March 2003, no assessment had been made of whether that vision was achievable, no agreement had been reached with the US on a workable post-conflict plan, UN authorisation had not yet been secured”

and so on. That is one of the most powerful passages in the report, and he is right to draw attention to it.

I do not accept that all the same failures are in some way apparent when it comes to planning in Afghanistan. In Afghanistan there was a very clear connection as a Taliban regime was playing host to al-Qaeda. The goal of Government policy, which I supported at the time and indeed put in place when I became Prime Minister, was to make sure that that country could not become a safe haven for al-Qaeda. There was some considerable success in pursuing that aim. There was a huge amount of planning on the post-conflict situation in Afghanistan, and we are still engaged in that. It is not right to say that there was no plan; there is a plan. There is a UK-run officer training academy to strengthen the Afghan army. But as I said earlier, you can have all the plans in the world, but these are still extremely difficult things to get right.

If the right hon. Gentleman is somehow saying that there is no point in ever taking part in any intervention or trying to help any of these countries, that is a different position, and he should be honest and say that. But I would argue that with Afghanistan and Libya—and indeed with Brexit—we have set out the alternatives. That does not mean they are easy.

**Crispin Blunt** (Reigate) (Con): The Foreign Affairs Committee has stayed its inquiry into our intervention in Libya in order to take into account the conclusions of the Iraq inquiry. Given that it could be claimed that the inquiry's central conclusions apply to some degree or other to Libya—not least as stabilisation planning for Libya was described by my right hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Sir Alan Duncan) at the time as “fanciful rot” and has been described to us since in evidence as “an unrealistic desktop exercise”—will the Prime Minister reconsider his understandable decision not to give oral evidence to us during the referendum campaign, so that the reach of the changes to the machinery of Government that he outlined earlier to the right hon. Member for Moray (Angus Robertson) can be properly assessed by the Committee?

**The Prime Minister:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks. The Foreign Secretary will be giving evidence to his Committee. The Prime Minister is always asked to give evidence to every Select Committee of the House. I try to stick to answering questions here in the Chamber, and at the Liaison Committee and the National Security Committee, which bring together members of a number of different Committees. I do not think what he asks will be possible but I always consider any request.

**Margaret Beckett** (Derby South) (Lab): May I first wholeheartedly endorse the Prime Minister's remarks about those who lost their lives? Does he agree that each of us, in Cabinet or in this House, are responsible and should take responsibility for our own individual decisions, albeit taken in good faith on the basis of evidence before us? Equally, does he agree that the men of hatred and death in al-Qaeda and Daesh/ISIL should take responsibility for their actions and for the blood and horror that they inflict on others?

**The Prime Minister:** The right hon. Lady is absolutely right. I was a relatively new Back Bencher who sat up there on the Opposition Benches listening to the arguments and coming to my own conclusions. Anyone who voted

for the conflict has to take their share of responsibility. I do not choose to go back and say, “Well, if I had known then what I know now,” and all the rest of it. I think you make a decision, you defend it at the time and then you have to live with the consequences and bear your share of responsibility. That is the position I take.

The right hon. Lady makes a very good point about the evil of violent extremists, whether al-Qaeda, Daesh or others. This problem in our world existed before the Iraq war. It exists and is worse today. We are doing all sorts of things in all sorts of ways to try to combat it. Although the debate about what happened in Iraq and the decisions that were taken is vital, we must not let it sap our energy for dealing with this cancer in our world, which is killing us in our own country.

**Mr David Davis** (Haltemprice and Howden) (Con): The Prime Minister referred to the cause or aim of the war as being weapons of mass destruction. I draw his attention back to the document sent from Tony Blair to the American President. After it says

“I will be with you, whatever”,

it goes on to say that the reason is that getting rid of Saddam Hussein is

“the right thing to do.”

The aim was regime change, not WMDs. That fact, and the fact that, as Sir John Chilcot says, Blair's commitment made it very difficult for the UK to withdraw support for military action, amount to a deception and a misleading of this House of Commons. It is not the only one. Sir John has been very careful about avoiding accusing the former Prime Minister of lying to the House, but a lot of the evidence suggests that he did. What action can this House take to deal with that?

**The Prime Minister:** My right hon. Friend makes an important point. I have had longer than anyone else to read the report, but I accept that trying to get to the bottom of that particular issue is difficult. Sir John Chilcot seems to be saying that the British Government had a policy of sort of coercive diplomacy—they wanted to use the pressure of the threat of military action to get Saddam to comprehensively disarm. Look, everyone is going to have to read the report and come to their own conclusions. From my reading of it, Sir John Chilcot is not accusing anyone of deliberate explicit deceit, but people will have to read the report and come to their own conclusions.

**Tim Farron** (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): Today, we stand alongside the families of the 179 British servicemen and women and 24 British civilians who died in the Iraq war. We also stand beside the many more who continue to live with injuries sustained while serving their country in Iraq. We are proud of them and we honour them.

The Chilcot report makes clear the absolute determination of the former Prime Minister Mr Tony Blair to pursue war in Iraq, no matter what the evidence. There is a stark contrast between that single-minded determination to go to war and the reckless and complete absence of any plan for what would come next. What came next was 179 British servicemen and women killed, as well as 100,000, or more, Iraqi civilians. What came next was the fuelling of what is now ISIS-Daesh, which threatens not only Iraq but the middle east and the safety of us all.

[Tim Farron]

In 2003, the much missed Charles Kennedy said in this House:

“The big fear that many of us have is that the action will simply breed further generations of suicide bombers.”—[*Official Report*, 18 March 2003; Vol. 401, c. 786.]

Will the Prime Minister now take the opportunity on behalf of his party and this House to acknowledge that Charles Kennedy was right all along in leading opposition across the country to a counterproductive war? Should not those who accused Charles Kennedy of appeasement—some of whom are still on these Benches—apologise to him, his family, our servicemen and women, our country, and the people of Iraq?

**The Prime Minister:** My recollection of the debates is that there were honest disagreements between colleagues who were listening to the arguments and making their decisions. I do not think that anyone should be accused of appeasement for voting against the war, and neither should those who voted in favour of it in good faith and on the evidence that they were given be subject to unfair criticism. People who voted for the war, like me, have to take their share of the responsibility. That is important, but I do not think it right to accuse people who voted against the war of appeasement.

**Mrs Caroline Spelman (Meriden) (Con):** I was shadow International Development Secretary at the time, and I asked 91 written questions of the Government, culminating in an Opposition day debate on 30 January 2003 because I had not received any satisfactory answers. For the sake of the many, many victims, will the Prime Minister please assure the House that we have truly learned the lessons of failure to plan for contingency?

**The Prime Minister:** I remember well how effective my right hon. Friend was in holding those many debates. People say that we did not debate the post-war reconstruction of Iraq, but actually we debated it endlessly in the House, and a lot of questions were put and a lot of debates held. It is clear from the report that there was a total planning failure, an assumption that the Americans had a plan when they did not, and that the UN would move in comprehensively when it did not. According to Sir John, there was an assumption that British troops would be out in three to four months, which obviously did not happen. That is one of the clearest areas of criticism; it is the area of failure that should be accepted most clearly, and for which we should plan most carefully in any future conflict.

**Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley) (Lab):** I thank the Prime Minister for summing up the main findings of the Chilcot report, although unlike him I have not had the opportunity to read even the summary. Does he agree that in 2003, when he, I, and many of our colleagues voted for the war, we did so on the basis of the knowledge that we had? Iraq was in breach of 17 UN resolutions in 2003. In 1988 Saddam Hussein had already killed half a million of his own people, and he went on to kill more and more, including the Shi'a and the Marsh Arabs in the south, and the Kurds in the north. In the mass graves at Al-Hillah lie 10,000 Iraqi bodies, many of them still undiscovered, and those of us who campaigned

for human rights in Iraq over many years—I have done so for more than 30 years—were well aware of the torture and horrors that were happening in that country.

I wish people would ask Iraqis what they think of the invasion, because many Iraqis are grateful that we took the action that we did at that time. I hope that we have a greater opportunity to discuss those matters, because there was some planning—not enough, I agree—part of which I was involved in and can speak about. The horrors of Saddam Hussein and what he did to his own people in Halabja and elsewhere were clearly documented, and I think we were right to take part in that invasion.

**The Prime Minister:** I well remember that when I was on the Opposition Benches and the right hon. Lady was on the Government Benches, she made very powerful speeches about the appalling things that Saddam Hussein did to his own people and the practices in that country, which is a fair point. I also think that when the case was made, people were acting on the knowledge in front of them. It was not just about weapons of mass destruction; there was a sense that we were trying to uphold the position of the United Nations, and the massive danger that Saddam Hussein posed to the region and to his own people. However, those of us who voted for the war must be frank that the consequences of what followed have been truly very poor. That is what Sir John finds, in the section of his report in which he writes about the Government's objectives not being met, and he states that far from dealing with the problem of regimes potentially linking up with terrorists, which Tony Blair talked about from this Dispatch Box, this action ended up creating a space for al-Qaeda. We must learn all those lessons, including the more painful ones.

**Mr Peter Lilley (Hitchin and Harpenden) (Con):** Does my right hon. Friend agree that there are lessons for every Member of the House, and every member of the media, regarding how we assess evidence? We can no longer take refuge in the pretence that we did not know the evidence about the non-existence of weapons of mass destruction. The reports states:

“The assessed intelligence had not established beyond doubt that Saddam Hussein had continued to produce chemical and biological weapons”

or that efforts to develop nuclear weapons continued. That evidence was set out in the dossier, and as I showed in evidence to the Chilcot report, someone who read the dossier line by line could not fail to reach the same conclusion as Robin Cook, which was that there were no weapons of mass destruction. The fact that largely we did not reach that conclusion is because we have ceased to look at evidence and we rely on briefings from spin doctors and those on our Front Benches. If the House is to get a grip on issues in future, it must go back to looking at the evidence, and so should journalists.

**The Prime Minister:** A lot of things have changed since that evidence was produced in the way it was, and one of the most important things is the renewed independence and practices of the Joint Intelligence Committee. Ministers still see individual pieces of intelligence, and one wants to have a regular update, but the process of producing JIC reports and assessments is incredibly rigorous. I do not think that what happened could happen again in the same way, because the reports that we get from that Committee are now much clearer

about what it knows, and what it thinks or conjectures, rather than anything else. I think we can avoid that situation. However, that does not solve the problem for the House of Commons, because it is impossible to share all that intelligence information widely with every Member of Parliament.

**Mr Nigel Dodds** (Belfast North) (DUP): May I join others in paying tribute to the servicemen and women, and the hundreds of thousands of civilians, who died in the conflict in Iraq? One of the greatest scandals of this whole episode is the lack of resources for our troops who were sent into battle without the equipment they needed, and that must never be allowed to happen again. Will the Prime Minister say why he believes that the national security machinery that he has established would have forestalled the evident mistakes made in Whitehall in the run-up to the commitment in Iraq?

**The Prime Minister:** I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for what he says. On the specific issue of equipment, money for our armed services is not infinite, but we have got rid of the black hole in the defence budget so that resources and commitments are more in balance. By having a security and defence review every five years—we have had two since I have been Prime Minister—we are matching what we are spending to the things that our forces and security require. That is a big improvement, but it depends on having the resources. I have tried to explain why the National Security Council architecture helps to solve some of those problems, but I am not standing here saying, “You can completely reduce any risk of mistake, planning, and all the rest of it”, because these things are by their nature very complicated.

**Mr Dominic Grieve** (Beaconsfield) (Con): Human institutions will never be perfect, and neither are they perfectible. The conclusions of the Chilcot inquiry into the way that legal advice and intelligence was processed, and intelligence used to inform policy, are pretty damning. My right hon. Friend has rightly highlighted that much has changed since then. I can certainly vouch for the fact that the processes by which legal advice is obtained—which I hope have been continued—are rather different from those that Sir John identified. The collation of intelligence is an extremely difficult skill. Is my right hon. Friend satisfied that it is subject to enough scrutiny and subsequent review to ensure that lessons can be learned when mistakes in intelligence assessment are made? That seems to be one of the key areas in which future decision making is capable of continuing improvement.

**The Prime Minister:** My right hon. and learned Friend is right that the way legal advice is produced and considered today is very different to then. We have the National Security Council, on which the Attorney General sits, and before such decisions are made a well-thought-through piece of written legal advice is produced. The Attorney General is not suddenly called on to do this; he is in the room while these vital meetings take place. That is something he did brilliantly and his successor is doing brilliantly.

My right hon. and learned Friend’s point on the collation of evidence and whether we are getting it right is a more difficult question to answer. There is no doubt

that, post-Butler, the Joint Intelligence Committee is incredibly rigorous about reaching judgments: testing them around the experts in Whitehall, confirming them often with the Americans and others, and not pretending to know things that it does not know. On how well we test that, there is a role for the Intelligence and Security Committee in thinking about whether we have got judgments right after they have been made, but perhaps more thinking can be done on that.

I would just emphasise that for all the intelligence, briefing and information in the world, at the end we still have to make a decision. We never have perfect information on which we make that decision: we are weighing up a balance of risks. That is often the case, whether we are going to take action against terrorists or to try to help secure a particular national interest. In the end, we have to decide and then defend in this House the decision we have made.

**Alan Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle) (Lab): The epitaph on Robin Cook’s headstone in the Grange cemetery in Edinburgh reads as follows:

“I may not have succeeded in halting the war, but I did secure the right of Parliament to decide on war.”

The Prime Minister is right in saying that, in these circumstances, Parliament cannot be involved in the decision and then simply try to duck responsibility for the ramifications of that decision. Does he agree that the main element in the debate in which Parliament decided, on 13 March 2003, was not the 45-minute claim, which was not mentioned anywhere in those hours of debate, but the fact that Saddam Hussein and his murderous sons had spent 13 years running rings around the United Nations, ignoring 17 UN resolutions, including resolutions calling for all necessary means to stop him? Was that not the main issue in that debate? Has the Prime Minister found any evidence whatever of any lies told to Parliament on that day?

**The Prime Minister:** My memory of the debate is that it was about the balance of risks between action and inaction. The case made by the then Prime Minister was that there was a real risk of inaction against someone who had been defying the UN, had done terrible things to his people and threatened his neighbours. The danger was of that coming together with a potential programme of weapons of mass destruction and the other instabilities in the world post-9/11. We have to remember that it was post-9/11 when we were considering all this. That is what I think I felt, as a relatively young Back Bencher, we were voting on. Weapons of mass destruction were a part of the picture, not the whole picture.

On the right hon. Gentleman’s question about deliberate deceit, I think we have to read the report very carefully. I cannot see in here an accusation of deliberately deceiving people, but there is certainly information that was not properly presented. Different justifications were given before and subsequently for the action that was taken, and there are a number of other criticisms about processes, but deliberate deceit—I can find no reference to it.

**Sir Edward Leigh** (Gainsborough) (Con): I do not think the Prime Minister or the right hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Ann Clwyd), who voted for this war, should in any way feel ashamed of what they did or indeed be apologetic. As usual, the Prime Minister has

[*Sir Edward Leigh*]

acted with honour and dignity, as he always does. The fact is that we believed the Prime Minister of the time—I was sitting on the Opposition Benches, too—about weapons of mass destruction. Frankly, with my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke), some of us walked into the No Lobby, but it was a narrow decision. I do not think there is any point in recriminations, because I think everybody in this House acted in good faith at the time. However, can we draw a lesson for the future? Surely, we must distinguish between unpleasant authoritarian regimes, such as those of Assad and Saddam, which we must deter and contain, and totalitarian terrorism movements, such as Daesh, which we must be prepared to seek to destroy?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend and I are not always on the same side of every argument, but on this I think he is absolutely right. There is a difference between deterrence and containment in some cases, and pre-emptive action when there is a direct threat to one's country. That is a very good framework on which to think of these sorts of interventions. I would also add that there is a third: when we think we need to act to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe, which was the reason I stood at this Dispatch Box and said we should take action with regard to Libya. That is a very good framework for thinking about these matters.

**Hilary Benn** (Leeds Central) (Lab): All of us who voted for the Iraq war must and will take our share of responsibility, but there are many of us who do not regret the fact that Saddam Hussein is no longer in power, for the reasons so powerfully set out a moment ago by my right hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Ann Clwyd). Does the Prime Minister recognise that one of the wider lessons from Iraq is that we need a United Nations that is capable of giving effect to the responsibility to protect, so that brutal dictators who murder and terrorise their own population can and will be held to account?

**The Prime Minister:** As so often, the right hon. Gentleman speaks with great clarity on these matters. Of course, we need a UN that can do that. That is why we sometimes end up in the situation of being absolutely certain that it is right to take a particular action, but because of a veto on the United Nations Security Council, it somehow becomes legally wrong. There is a question sometimes about how can something be morally right but legally wrong. We therefore need to make sure we keep looking at reforming the United Nations, so we can bring those two things together.

**Mr John Baron** (Basildon and Billericay) (Con): In the hope that we all accept that war should always be the measure of last resort once all other possible options have been exhausted and given the publication of the Chilcot report, will the Prime Minister now do something that no Government have done since 2003: finally and unequivocally admit that this intervention was both wrong and a mistake?

**The Prime Minister:** I think people should read the report and come to their own conclusions. Clearly, the aftermath of the conflict was profoundly disastrous in

so many ways. I do not move away from that at all. I just take the view that if we voted in a particular way, we cannot turn the clock back. We have to take our share of responsibility, but we learn the lessons of what clearly went wrong.

**Hywel Williams** (Arfon) (PC): I thank the Prime Minister for prior sight of the report this morning. Point 20 states that

“the diplomatic options had not at that stage been exhausted. Military action was therefore not a last resort.”

So despite the lack of evidence of weapons of mass destruction and despite any possible deficiencies in the advice from the Joint Intelligence Committee, point 22 states:

“Led by Mr Blair, the UK Government chose to support military action.”

Point 364 states that the UK Government held

“that it was right or necessary to defer to its close ally and senior partner, the US.”

Given that, the undermining of the UN and the disastrous and horrible consequences, is it not inconceivable that Mr Blair should not be held to account for his actions?

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Gentleman reads out some very important parts of the report. It is significant that Sir John Chilcot finds that this undermined the United Nations. Some of us felt at the time that the United Nations was being undermined by the actions of Saddam Hussein and the fact that he was not complying with so many resolutions, but we need to study that and take that into account. As for how people should account for themselves, it is for them to read the report and explain why they did what they did. My role here, on the publication of the report, is to allow the House to discuss it and set out the lessons I think we should learn. I am far more concerned about the future, and how we learn what is in here, rather than rerun the whole Iraq debate all over again.

**Sir David Amess** (Southend West) (Con): It may be unusual for anyone in this place to change the way they vote following a speech made here, and I cannot prove that I did so; but that is what I did on the night of the debate, because of what was said about weapons of mass destruction. I now have to listen and wrestle with my own conscience, and shame on me. The then Prime Minister must wrestle with his own conscience. Does my right hon. Friend agree with me that the then Prime Minister must take full responsibility for encouraging this House to take the decision it did, which had disastrous consequences that destabilised the world?

**The Prime Minister:** Of course it is right that the people who took the decision have to bear the responsibility. That is absolutely right.

**Mike Gapes** (Ilford South) (Lab/Co-op): I voted for the action in 2003. It was a difficult decision, but I do not apologise. I believe that we were right to remove the fascist regime of Saddam Hussein. The Prime Minister referred to what has happened in Libya and Syria. Can he speculate about what might have happened in Iraq if Saddam or Uday Hussein had been in power in 2011? Is it not likely that the Ba'athist fascists in Iraq would have

killed more than the 500,000 dead Syrians and created more than the 11 million refugees who have fled their homes and been displaced in Syria?

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Gentleman asks a question that it is impossible to answer. I can say only that just as there are consequences of intervention, there are consequences of non-intervention. We have discovered that with Syria, where there have been appalling numbers of deaths and displacements of people, along with the booming industry of terrorism. One could argue in many ways that that is the consequence of non-intervention rather than intervention, but I cannot answer his question.

**Bob Stewart** (Beckenham) (Con): I thank my right hon. Friend for pledging on behalf of this House that our soldiers who suffered life-changing injuries in the Iraq war should be looked after for the rest of their lives. May I remind the House that we have an equal duty to soldiers who suffered life-changing injuries in previous conflicts, including some of my 35 men who were so badly wounded at Ballykelly on 6 December 1982, as well as others in the Regular Army, the Territorial Army, the Ulster Defence Regiment and members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary who suffered so grievously in previous conflicts?

**The Prime Minister:** With his military background, my hon. Friend is absolutely right to make that point. Iraq and Afghanistan have proved to be an enormous change in tempo for the British Army. We have seen not only a large number of people tragically losing their lives, but a very large number of people suffering from life-changing injuries—people who lost limbs but want to live full and active lives. Just as after previous major conflicts, the country came together to help make sure that happened, so it is important that we continue to fund and support facilities such as Headley Court and all the work that charities do. That will help others who suffered life-changing injuries in other conflicts.

**Alex Salmond** (Gordon) (SNP): Chilcot has concluded that this country did not go to war as a last resort, that the authority of the United Nations was undermined and that the chaos and carnage that has ensued can partly be explained by the complete lack of planning for the aftermath. Given that we now know from Chilcot of the memo written by the then Prime Minister on 28 July to George W. Bush, saying,

“I will be with you, whatever”,

I do not understand how that is in any way compatible with what was said to Parliament and people at the time. Amid all this stuff about improving processes, which I acknowledge as fantastically important, is it not at the end of the day people who make decisions, and in our search for responsibility would it not help if individuals who were responsible were held to account?

**The Prime Minister:** The right hon. Gentleman is right to highlight those important aspects of the report. The war was not a last resort; we were not at that stage. According to Sir John Chilcot, the UN was undermined and a fundamental lack of planning led to so many of the subsequent problems. The right hon. Gentleman is also right that the people who took those decisions

should be held accountable—in this House and in the court of public opinion. They should be accountable, too, to those who might want to take action through the courts, as has happened, with respect to equipment failures and all the rest of it in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Clearly, the Government of the day and the Prime Minister of the day have to account for themselves. I understand that Mr Blair is doing that right now.

**Jack Lopresti** (Filton and Bradley Stoke) (Con): In respect of the structure of government, does my right hon. Friend agree that the national security adviser should, rather than being a civil servant, be a Cabinet Minister? That would help to bring all the different strands of government together, provide more accountability and transparency, and perhaps more focus and better decision making. While we develop the convention that we come to this place to debate, discuss and vote on taking military action, is it not the case that ultimately any Prime Minister needs to retain the authority to deploy military force and take the military into action? We do not know what the future holds, and there might be circumstances in which it is impractical for Parliament to do so or we do not have the time to do so.

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right on his second point. Prime Ministers do need to be able to deploy force or take action without parliamentary sanction if it is urgent and then to report to Parliament straight afterwards. Where there is a premeditated decision to take action, that convention has grown up, and I am happy to repeat it from the Dispatch Box.

As for the national security adviser, I think it is right to have an expert. It does not have to be someone who is currently a civil servant—an expert could be brought in from outside—but it does need to be an expert who is garnering together the military, civilians, the intelligence and all the different parts of Whitehall. It needs to be someone who is full time, rather than a politician who is also running a Department.

**Mr Ben Bradshaw** (Exeter) (Lab): Will the Prime Minister put on the record that he believes all those who voted for the action against Saddam Hussein did so in good faith? On the very important lessons to be learned, does he acknowledge that just as there are consequences, sometimes terrible, of military intervention, so there are consequences of non-intervention, as we are seeing at huge cost today in Syria?

**The Prime Minister:** I am happy to make both those points. I am sure everyone, like me, came here, listened to the arguments, wrestled with the difficult decision and then took it. We can look back now and see how we feel about all the things that happened subsequently. I am sure that everyone made their decision in good faith. The consequences of non-intervention can be seen clearly in Syria, as I said in response to the hon. Member for Ilford South (Mike Gapes). This is true, and it is worth mentioning other humanitarian issues, as I did in my statement with respect to Srebrenica and Rwanda.

**Dr Andrew Murrison** (South West Wiltshire) (Con): Our troops shouldered the burden of Mr Blair's disastrous Iraq war and paid the price in blood. On a gentler note and speaking as an Iraq veteran, I commend the Prime

[Dr Andrew Murrison]

Minister for the work he has done for our troops, our veterans and their families by improving their lot. Does my right hon. Friend share my hope and expectation that his successor will do the same?

**The Prime Minister:** I thank my hon. Friend for his kind remarks and for all the good work he has done, not least in commemorating the battles of the first world war 100 years ago. We have now set up, with the military covenant written into law and with the covenant support group, a mechanism in Whitehall so that every year we can try to go further in supporting armed forces, veterans and their families. This provides a mechanism for ideas to come forward. Whether by providing help through council tax, the pupil premium, free bus passes or better medical assistance, there is a forum for those ideas to be properly considered in a way that I do not think they were in the past.

**Caroline Lucas** (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): We have heard a lot of criticism of the former Prime Minister, Tony Blair, all of it justified. I ask the Prime Minister to reflect on his own role and that of his colleagues in the Conservative party who voted for war in Iraq. His party were the official Opposition; they heard Robin Cook's powerful speech demolishing the Government's case; the Prime Minister had voices in his own party arguing that the invasion would be a catastrophe—the evidence was there if people chose to look for it. Would it not be a step towards restoring public trust in this House to offer some form of apology for the decision to support the war?

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Lady wants to replay all the arguments of the day, but I do not see a huge amount of point in that. Members of Parliament came to this House, listened to the arguments and made the decisions in good faith. They can now reflect on whether they think the decisions they took were right or wrong. Instead of what she suggests, I think that we should try, as Sir John Chilcot does, to learn the lessons from what happened and find out what needs to be put in place to make sure that mistakes cannot be made in the future.

**Alex Chalk** (Cheltenham) (Con): The decision not to give Hans Blix more time to conclude his UN weapons inspections is surely one of the principal misjudgments of the pre-war period. Does my right hon. Friend feel that in the light of the changes he alludes to in the culture and practice of government, the scope for ignoring the UN in this way has been reduced?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend is right: one of the most powerful points in the report is that Blix should have been given more time. That argument was advanced at the time, but the way in which it is expressed by Sir John gives it even more force.

I do not think I can stand here and honestly say that all the changes we put in place make mistakes like that impossible. At the end of the day, Governments and Cabinets must make judgments on the basis of the evidence in front of them. The National Security Council, given the way in which it is set up, provides a better forum when it comes to making decisions, listening to

arguments and hearing expert advice. I think that that makes it more difficult to press ahead if you cannot take expert opinion with you, although, of course, in the end Cabinet Ministers can decide.

**Mr David Winnick** (Walsall North) (Lab): However wrong it was to take military action on the basis of false intelligence—and I accept my responsibility in that I voted for military action—were not many of us very much influenced by Saddam's notorious record? His aggression against the Iranian state, a war that lasted eight years, took the lives of hundreds of thousands of young people on both sides, but he was not satisfied with that, and two years later the aggression against Kuwait resulted in the first Gulf war. Would it not also be totally wrong to conclude that had it not been for this invasion—which, as I say, should not have taken place, because it was based on false intelligence—everything would have been fine in the middle east? Look at what is happening in Syria, where we did not intervene—rightly, I believe, and again I was influenced by what happened in relation to what we are discussing now.

**The Prime Minister:** I do not always agree with the hon. Gentleman, but I think he has put it very well. Saddam Hussein had an appalling record. He had gassed the Kurds, he had murdered his own people, and he had invaded his neighbour. He had used weapons of mass destruction in the past, we were being told that he was developing them again for the future, and we were being asked, on the basis of that, whether we could really risk leaving him in place and leaving those programmes in place, given the heightened risk post 9/11. Those were all very strong arguments, and I think it is worth recalling that.

It is also worth taking account of the hon. Gentleman's other point. Who knows what would have happened if Saddam had still been in place at the time of the Arab spring, but it is quite possible to believe that his reactions to his own people would have been rather like the reactions of President Assad to his own people, which, I would argue, have perhaps done more to foment terrorism and cause extremism than anything else in the last decade.

**Johnny Mercer** (Plymouth, Moor View) (Con): Today is a dark day for the United Kingdom Government, a tragic day for Iraq, and a desperate day for the families of our servicemen and women, who I know are watching today. War is not a sport. This should be a time for deep reflection and humility, throughout the Government and throughout the upper echelons of the military who advise the Government.

I pay tribute to those who fought, and to their families. They are the best of us, they are the true patriots, and they made the greatest possible sacrifice for the liberties that we enjoy in the House. Does the Prime Minister agree that we must ensure that how we say we want to look after these people and how we actually look after them are the same thing?

**The Prime Minister:** As ever on these matters, my hon. Friend speaks with great clarity. He is right to say that this is a moment for deep reflection. He is also right to say that as we think of our armed service personnel and those who serve, we should be proud of what they

did. We should be proud of their bravery and their courage. They were obeying the command of this House, and serving in the way in which we would expect them to. My hon. Friend is right to think of it like that. He is also right to say that we must ensure that the promises of the armed services covenant are kept in reality as well as on paper.

**Derek Twigg** (Halton) (Lab): May I say to the Prime Minister that we should remember that the real responsibility for the murder and killing of so many Iraqi civilians lies with Saddam Hussein, al-Qaeda and its offshoots, and, of course, Isis? May I also say this to him? Three main complaints were made about Tony Blair and the Government's decision at the time. The first was that he misled Parliament, or lied to Parliament. The Prime Minister has said that that has not been found in the Chilcot report, but perhaps he would like to confirm that again. The second was that intelligence had been doctored, and, as I understand it from my quick reading of the report, that has not been found either. The third was that the war had been illegal. Of course, Chilcot is not deciding on that, but we do not know that he makes very clear in his report that it relied on evidence from the Attorney General, Lord Goldsmith, that it was legal to go to war at that point.

**The Prime Minister:** I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman will have to read the report in order to answer those questions in full, but, in shorthand, let me say this. First, the report makes clear that No. 10 and the Prime Minister did not wrongly alter the dossier that was produced. I think that there are some comments about how the report did not necessarily reflect all the things that were in other papers from the Joint Intelligence Committee, but that is a different point.

On the issue of whether the war was legal or illegal, Chilcot does not take a stand. Perhaps I will read out later exactly what he says, but he says that there was legal advice, that the legal advice made a legal case for a war, and that that is how the Government proceeded. However, he is not saying that he is taking a position.

On the issue of misleading Parliament, there is nothing in the Chilcot report that I can see that points to deliberate deceit, but there were clearly occasions when more information, or better information, could have been presented. I think that the report must be read carefully, but those are my shorthand answers to the hon. Gentleman's questions.

**Richard Drax** (South Dorset) (Con): I thank my right hon. Friend for his statement. I gather from what I have heard so far that there will be no political recriminations, for reasons that I understand, but will he assure me that, as there will be no recriminations against those who sent our armed forces to war, there will be no recriminations against our armed forces who are being chased by ruthless lawyers for doing our bidding and looking after our nation?

**The Prime Minister:** I very much agree with what my hon. Friend has said. We are doing everything we can to get through and knock down these wholly unjustified inquiries, because by and large, as we would expect, British forces behaved entirely properly.

**Mr Pat McFadden** (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab): On this day, when we rightly reflect on our own intervention and our own responsibilities, it is important to remember that violence in Iraq did not begin in 2003. Among the Kurds in the north and the Shia in the south, the regime of Saddam Hussein killed hundreds of thousands of people.

The lessons that should be learned from the intervention are set out fully in the report, and they should be learned. It has also rightly been said that we should learn lessons from not having intervened in Syria, where there has been a humanitarian catastrophe. Does the Prime Minister agree that the conclusion from all the lessons learned should not be never to intervene? If that were the conclusion, it would result in the abandoning of oppressed people around the world, and the giving of a blank cheque to dictators and terrorist groups around the world.

**The Prime Minister:** I do agree with the right hon. Gentleman. I said in my statement that I thought there were lessons to learn but also lessons not to learn, and the lesson not to learn is that intervention is always wrong. There are occasions when it is right to intervene, because it is in the interests of our national security or because we are trying to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe. We should be very clear about the fact that there have been occasions when we have not intervened and when we have seen almost as much chaos and difficulty as we are seeing in Syria.

**Tom Tugendhat** (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement, but will he join me in expressing slight concern not only about the shape of the centre of government that was there at the time of the Blair Government, but about the Departments that supported it? The top of the pyramid cannot work unless the supporting pillars are in place. I have only read the executive summary, so I cannot comment in detail, but it seems clear to me that parts of the Ministry of Defence, including the chiefs of staff, were not delivering the advice that the Government needed, and that elements of the Foreign Office had succumbed to a form of group-think that leaves me deeply concerned about the structure and the advice that are available to Governments..

**The Prime Minister:** I am going to hesitate before replying to my hon. Friend, because there is not a huge amount about that in the executive summary of the Iraq inquiry. I think we will probably have to dive into the volumes to see exactly what Sir John has to say about advice from the MOD, advice from the Foreign Office, how much group-think there genuinely was, and all the rest of it. So I would hesitate. I think we need to study the report, and then we can discuss the matter during next week's debate.

**Mark Durkan** (Foyle) (SDLP): Those of us who come to the report scandalised anew by the duplicity of presentation and the paucity of preparation on such grave matters must nevertheless remember most those who are acutely burdened today by their cruel sense of futility of sacrifice in terms of lives lost, lives devastated and lives changed. The Prime Minister has rightly emphasised that lessons need to be learned, but we must be careful not to turn the report into a greywash by

[Mark Durkan]

converting it into a syllabus about foresight in government and oversight in Parliament. This is not a day for soundbites, but does the Prime Minister not agree that the hand of history should be feeling someone's collar?

**The Prime Minister:** I do not think it is a greywash or a whitewash or an anything elsewash. I think, from what I have seen so far, that this is a thorough effort in trying to understand the narrative of the events, the decisions that were taken and the mistakes that were made. I think there is a huge amount to learn and everyone who has played a part in it has to take their responsibility for it.

**James Heapey (Wells) (Con):** It has been sobering this afternoon to hear the reflections of those who took the decision here in 2003. I went to Iraq in 2007 to deliver on that decision; it was a difficult and dangerous time. During that summer and the rest of the campaign, many of my friends and colleagues were sent home dead or injured.

The Prime Minister has spoken about the SDSR process, which now addresses the armed forces equipment requirements, but the threat evolves more quickly than that on the battlefield, particularly in an insurgency. Can the Prime Minister reassure the House that the urgent operating requirement process is now quick enough so that we will never again send troops into battle in vehicles that are not fit for purpose?

**The Prime Minister:** May I thank my hon. Friend for his service, and thank all who served on operations after 2003 all the way through to when we withdrew? I will never forget going to Iraq and meeting some of the soldiers, some of them on their second or third tour, and their sense that the situation was extremely difficult.

One of the positive things that has come out of this and Afghanistan is that the urgent operational requirement system means we have commissioned some fantastic kit for our soldiers, sailors and airmen more quickly, and responded to their needs. By the time our troops were coming out of Afghanistan—I had been there, I think, 13 times over a period of six or seven years—they were saying that our equipment was now better than the Americans', that they had things more quickly and that new bits of kit could be produced for them. There are some positive lessons to learn from all of this, as well as, obviously, the negative ones.

**Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield) (Lab):** May I also ask the House to pause for a minute to remember Robin Cook, who had the courage to speak up against the orthodoxy of the day, and the courage to speak out as a voice of sanity in 2003? The sequence of events that led to the UK's participation in the invasion of Iraq shows that where the unshakeability of a political leader's self-belief so traps him or her in its own logic that he or she cannot see beyond it, the consequences can be catastrophic. As someone who voted against the war in 2003, I know that the Iraq war did not create from scratch the multiple problems that we see today in the middle east, but it has made them so much more intractable. Does the Prime Minister agree that at root what the

peoples of the middle east want is not so different from what people over here want? They want security, they want respect, and they want to know that they are not treated with double standards by the international community.

**The Prime Minister:** I very much agree with the hon. Gentleman that we should recognise that what people in the middle east want is what we want, in terms of, as he says, respect, the right to decent government, the rule of law and decent standards.

It is worth reading the parts of the report about the weapons of mass destruction. It says in paragraph 496:

"The ingrained belief that Saddam Hussein's regime retained chemical and biological warfare capabilities, was determined to preserve and if possible enhance its capabilities, including at some point in the future a nuclear capability, and was pursuing an active policy of deception and concealment, had underpinned UK policy towards Iraq since the Gulf Conflict ended in 1991."

It was wrong that he had weapons of mass destruction—we now know he did not—but it is worth recalling the sense that I think everyone in this House had that it was very deeply ingrained in policy makers and policy thinkers that he did. So, yes, it is right that Chilcot comes to the conclusion that Robin Cook—standing on the Benches over there—was right to say, "You could look at the evidence and come to a different conclusion," but it is important to remember just how many people and how many organisations were convinced that this was the basis of policy.

**Alec Shelbrooke (Elmet and Rothwell) (Con):** My right hon. Friend will attend the NATO Warsaw summit this weekend, and he will be acutely aware of the pressure that NATO and its member states feel from Russia right now. Is it not the case that President Putin will be examining very closely the action this Parliament takes moving forward? As Parliament knows, NATO can only act when its Security Council meets and decides to act, but article 5 says that an invasion of one country is an invasion of all. May I urge my right hon. Friend to make sure that this House does not move to a position whereby it has to approve that before we can take action, because otherwise we could find that the Iraq lessons, and Iraq as a whole, are used as another shield to never taking any military action?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend is right: we should not use this sobering moment of reflection, when we look at the mistakes that were made and the lessons to be learned, to think that somehow it is right for Britain to shrink away from international responsibilities and engagement. That would be the wrong lesson to learn from this.

**Mr Alistair Carmichael (Orkney and Shetland) (LD):** Like the Prime Minister, I remember the debates of February and March 2003; we were both elected for the first time in 2001. What I remember is that many of the Members then who asked questions and demanded evidence were heckled, barracked and shouted down. When we have our debate on this report, it is right that, as well as scrutinising the conduct of others, this House should turn some of that scrutiny on itself.

We now know that much of what was purported to be evidence in 2003 was obtained from people who had been tortured, having been illegally rendered. Will the

Prime Minister give me an assurance that this country will never again base its foreign policy judgments on evidence or information obtained in that way?

**The Prime Minister:** I can certainly give the right hon. Gentleman that assurance. That was something specifically addressed in the coalition Government: that we should not rely on, or use in any way, evidence delivered by means of torture.

**Oliver Colvile** (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Con): I thank my right hon. Friend for giving such an excellent statement on this war. As he knows, my Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport constituency includes 3 Commando Brigade, whose wives and families will have played a significant part in this whole conflict. Will he ensure that MPs representing other garrison cities are also given the names and details of the families so that we can communicate with them in order to talk to them about the impact this conflict will have had on their lives, too?

**The Prime Minister:** I am happy to give my hon. Friend that assurance. I think that work is in hand.

**Dan Jarvis** (Barnsley Central) (Lab): May I reiterate the comments about the loss of life in Iraq, and specifically take this opportunity to commemorate the service and sacrifice of our armed forces? They served in good faith, and we should be proud of them today, as we are every day.

It is critical that the public can have trust in the decisions we take in this place, and at no time is that truer than on a vote to take our country to war. Whatever we think about the judgment that was made, we should acknowledge that the bond of trust between the Government, this House and the public has been damaged by the decision that was taken in 2003, and we here in this place today now have an absolute need to put that right for the future. Will the Prime Minister consider reviewing how intelligence is shared with Members of this House before voting on military action, in addition to considering what steps could be taken to improve the ability of our MPs, armed forces and intelligence services to work together to take these most difficult decisions?

**The Prime Minister:** Let me join the hon. Gentleman, who himself served in our armed forces, in paying tribute to what our armed forces did in Iraq. They should be proud of the work they did; they were acting on behalf of this House of Commons and the Government who took that decision, and they behaved bravely and courageously, and we should remember that—and we should remember those who gave their lives and who were wounded.

On his question about how we share intelligence information with this House, I would just give him two reflections. One is that we have tried: in the case of Libya, and I think in the case of Syria, we tried to publish JIC-like assessments cleared for the House of Commons—and cleared, I might add, by officials rather than Ministers. The second point is to get the Chairman of the JIC to read the statement or speech made by the Prime Minister to make sure it accurately reflects the intelligence information. Those are two things we should try to do. Sometimes time is very short, and sometimes

the picture is changing—the intelligence is changing—but those are good things to try to do. But I say again that there is no perfection in all this: we can receive and share as much intelligence as we like, but in the end we have to make a decision and make an argument for that decision, and then defend it if it is right or if it is wrong.

**Ben Howlett** (Bath) (Con): Given that the Chilcot report found that the UK Government undermined UN Security Council's authority and given the result of the EU referendum, what plans do the Government have to reinforce the Foreign Office to restore our international reputation?

**The Prime Minister:** The Foreign Office has been restored in many ways. The former Foreign Secretary William Hague restored the language school and opened a number of embassies around the world, and the Foreign Office is once again seen as a great place to work, so I do not think that that is the problem. We just have to go on recognising that the combination of our 2% of GDP spend on the military, our 0.7% spend on aid and our proper funding of the Foreign Office actually enhance our soft and hard powers in the world.

**Danny Kinahan** (South Antrim) (UUP): I am always proud when we hear that we are not shrinking from our place on the world's stage, but the brunt of that always falls on servicemen. Many people have spoken today about how we should be looking after our servicemen, giving them the right kit, the right mental health and legal support, but no one has yet said that we must also ensure that we always look after their families. When we review what we are doing every five years, can we guarantee that we are putting enough resources in and keep considering how we look after servicemen's families?

**The Prime Minister:** I agree with the hon. Gentleman. I did mention service families, because it is important that we look after them, and the military covenant is partly about them.

**Kevin Foster** (Torbay) (Con): We have heard talk today about what a dreadful dictator Saddam was and how he had been ignoring UN rules, but the key question in 2003 was, "Why now?" That is why the intelligence around weapons of mass destruction was so crucial in trying to provide that "why now?" justification. Does the Prime Minister agree that the key thing about the special relationship is that it should be like any other relationship? The reason we are so close to some people is that they will tell us what we need to hear, not what we want to hear.

**The Prime Minister:** There is a good section of the report that is entitled "Why now?" because that was, I think, one of the sections of Tony Blair's speech in this House. It is also important to read the part of the report about what would have happened if Britain had not stood alongside the United States. Sir John Chilcot's view is that that would not have terminally damaged the special relationship, and I suspect that that view is probably correct.

**Brendan O'Hara** (Argyll and Bute) (SNP): As the right hon. Member for Haltemprice and Howden (Mr Davis) said earlier, John Chilcot today confirmed

[Brendan O'Hara]

the existence of a dirty deal between Tony Blair and President Bush to pursue regime change in Iraq months before the matter came to the Floor of this House. Given that, will the Prime Minister join me in demanding that Tony Blair apologise unreservedly to the families of the 179 UK service personnel killed and to the hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians who also died? Will the Prime Minister also join me in asking Mr Blair to apologise to the British public, whose faith in the democratic process has been fatally undermined by this whole sorry affair?

**The Prime Minister:** I think Mr Blair is probably speaking while we are here, so let us wait and see what he says in response to the report and whether it measures up to the level of events.

**Jason McCartney** (Colne Valley) (Con): The barbarity of Saddam Hussein is beyond doubt and my thoughts are with the thousands of Kurds murdered by chemical weapons in the genocide at Halabja in 1988. Despite that, I did not support the 2003 war. Can we just clarify that military action was being taken against Saddam Hussein before then? Will the Prime Minister acknowledge that Operation Warden and Operation Provide Comfort—the no-fly zones in northern and southern Iraq, of which he knows I have knowledge—meant that Saddam Hussein was a caged animal?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend, who served in at least one of those missions, has made this point before and it is set out in the report as well. There was a policy of deterrence and containment, and I think Sir John Chilcot argues quite persuasively that that situation should have continued for longer, with more UN action and more inspector action, before the last resort of military action. He makes that point very clearly.

**Chris Leslie** (Nottingham East) (Lab/Co-op): There are some practical constitutional lessons to be learned here, specifically for Parliament given its role in the process. For example, would it not be better if we had specific opportunity to scrutinise the Attorney General before such decisions are made? Should we not have better parliamentary scrutiny of the security services? On those occasions when we do have to come to a decision about military intervention, which is sometimes necessary, should there not be a better-equipped National Security Council, which somehow has a thread of accountability back to Parliament?

**The Prime Minister:** These are all interesting ideas and I am prepared to consider them. The Attorney General does answer questions in Parliament and is accountable to Parliament. The National Security Council's members are accountable to Parliament and now there is this Committee of both Lords and Commons, in front of which I have appeared, that scrutinises the national security strategy. As I have said, our intelligence services are far more accountable than they have ever been, including giving speeches, openly, about what they are doing and then answering questions at ISC meetings in some considerable detail. I am always happy to consider other things, but we have come a huge way on accountability.

**Dr Philippa Whitford** (Central Ayrshire) (SNP): I, too, pay tribute to the troops. Those who have ended up with broken lives because of the war should be looked after through the covenant for the long term, not just while they serve. We all know of cases of troops and their families who continue to suffer.

The two things that come out of this process are that, in essence, what was being carried out was regime change, which would not normally be considered a legal basis for going to war, and that the planning for the peace afterwards was inadequate. Does that not apply to Libya? What we predominantly got caught up with in Libya was getting rid of Gaddafi and we have invested on nation building a fraction of what was spent on the war.

The other thing is that Saddam Hussein was known to have attacked his own people, yet we still sold him weapons after that. We are still selling weapons to Saudi Arabia and have personnel involved. We are also getting involved in Yemen, yet there has been no decision about that.

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Lady is right to say that the bit of the report that deals with the issue of whether the Government were involved in coercive diplomacy to try to make Iraq go down a different path or whether this was regime change needs very careful reading, but I disagree with her on Libya. It was a humanitarian intervention to stop the slaughter of innocent people. We then assisted as forces in Libya strove to get rid of a man who was a brutal dictator and who had delivered Semtex to the IRA—Semtex is probably still available to some people in Northern Ireland today—so I defend that. However, as I said, we can put all the processes and procedures in place and put money in, as we have done with Libya, and it can still be difficult to get a good outcome.

**Kate Hoey** (Vauxhall) (Lab): Many of us who voted against the war, particularly those on the Government side, remember the day vividly. We remember the arm-twisting and the letters trying to tell us to go and see the Prime Minister or the Foreign Secretary. There was almost hysteria about getting the vote through. One lesson for Parliament and for Members of Parliament on both sides is that, sometimes, your country comes before your party.

**The Prime Minister:** I think your country should always come before your party. I am not a huge believer in arm-twisting, but there are sometimes occasions when you believe a course of action to be profoundly right and you want to try to persuade your colleagues. I persist in the view that it would have been better to take action with the United States against Assad after his use of chemical weapons—when he crossed that red line—and I attempted to persuade my colleagues. I do not think that I physically twisted anybody's arm—it was more mental persuasion. I was not successful on that occasion, but that does not mean that it was not worth trying.

**Pete Wishart** (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): Hundreds of thousands of deaths, a region destabilised, a generation radicalised, a House deceived by a fabricated case for war—all of that is indelibly linked with one

man, who may as well have “Iraq” tattooed on his forehead. Someone must be held to account for what has happened over the course of the past few years.

**The Prime Minister:** As I have said, everyone has to account for their actions, such as the people who voted for this and the people who proposed it, and for the failure to plan. There is a whole set of arguments in this document that people want to consider to see how best to hold people to account.

**Ian Austin** (Dudley North) (Lab): It is clear from these exchanges that the report will not settle questions about whether the war was right or wrong, but it should lay to rest once and for all allegations of bad faith, lies and deceit. The report clearly finds that there was no falsification or improper use of intelligence, no deception of the Cabinet and no secret commitment to war.

**The Prime Minister:** I think that everyone will have to study the report carefully. In an earlier answer I tried to give some shorthand answers to the question of deceit and the question of legality but, like the hon. Gentleman, I feel that many of these arguments will go on and on.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. Somebody has just moaned about not being called to ask a question. I try to call everybody, but although what each individual has to say is enormously important to him or her, it is not necessarily any more important than what anybody else has to say. [*Interruption.*] Order. I do not need any help in the discharge of my duties. I will call colleagues, but colleagues need to be patient, and I am sure that none of them, for one moment, would be self-important—that is unimaginable.

**Peter Kyle** (Hove) (Lab): I am very grateful, Mr Speaker.

From my early and hurried reading of the report, I can see no evidence that anybody acted in bad faith. However, I am very aware that the report refers to a war that started 13 years ago. There have been several conflicts since; we intervened in Libya with airstrikes but not ground troops, and in Syria we did not act for several years. Is there anything about those subsequent conflicts, in which the Prime Minister led, that leads him to disagree with some of the report’s conclusions? That would give us an updated view so that we do not base all our future actions on a report about a war 13 years ago?

**The Prime Minister:** Questions like that probably need to wait for the debate, because they need longer answers. The only point I will make now is that in the case of Libya obviously we decided not to put in ground troops. That had the advantage of ensuring that there were not UK military casualties, but of course it had the disadvantage that we were less able directly to put in place a plan on the ground. The point I have tried to make today—maybe not as clearly as I should—is that these things are very difficult, by their very nature. We can have the best military plan and the best post-conflict plan—those are definitely needed—but even then there is no certainty that we will ultimately be successful. We should not pretend that there is some perfection that we can achieve. We can do a lot better than was done in the past, but we will never be perfect.

**Tom Brake** (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): I commend Charles Kennedy for the leadership he provided to me and others on this issue. Members who were not in the House in 2003 might not be aware of quite how difficult that decision was and how much criticism Charles and my colleagues received at the time. Does the Prime Minister believe that there are any pointers in the Chilcot report, or indeed anything from his personal experience, that could help opposition parties faced with a similar decision in future to be better placed to scrutinise the decisions that a Government might be about to take?

**The Prime Minister:** That is a very good question. I think that all the advances that have been made, such as Select Committees having access to Government papers, scrutiny of the intelligence and security services, and the production of written summaries of legal advice, help, but in the end we cannot substitute for judgment.

**Ian C. Lucas** (Wrexham) (Lab): In March 2013 Hans Blix believed that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction, but he wanted more time. I voted on that day to give him more time, but the official Opposition did not, and in my view they failed in their duty to scrutinise properly. Does the Prime Minister agree that a lesson for today is that in order for a Government to work effectively, they have to have a competent and effective Opposition?

**The Prime Minister:** I am all for competent and effective opposition. On the job of the Opposition, I take both bits seriously: Her Majesty’s loyal Opposition. If you think the Government are making a decision in the interests of the country, you should support it. If you think they are making a mistake, you should oppose it. The job is not to oppose come what may.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): Prime Minister, thank you for your statement. You referred, in particular, to the lessons that need to be learned from the Chilcot report. You referred to assistance for veterans. We know that 179 brave service personnel gave their lives in the Iraq war, but the family support package at that time meant that only two welfare officers were left at the headquarters. I know that that has changed and that steps have been taken to ensure that veterans are not forgotten. The Government send the brave people to war and so should be more than willing to step up to the plate and deliver for them. Prime Minister, what will be done as a result of the Chilcot inquiry to address the family support criteria and the very high suicide rates among veterans?

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Gentleman asks an important question. The report states that huge improvements have since been undertaken to improve family support and liaison, but I suspect that we need to do even more in the area of mental health. That is one of the reasons why the Government have given that area such a boost.

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) is one of the most humane and, rightly, well-liked Members of the House—indeed, I think that he is almost loved in many parts. I say to him very

[Mr Speaker]

gently that my long-term ambition is to persuade him not to use the word “you” in exchanges in the House, but we will leave it there for today.

**Alan Brown** (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): With regard to lessons learned, may I ask the Prime Minister to reflect on the situation in Syria? The original proposal was for airstrikes against Assad, but later there was a vote for airstrikes against Daesh. Voices in the House today have said that it was the inaction the first time that left the chaos in Syria just now, which is just inconceivable. With regard to post-conflict planning, I urge the Prime Minister to ensure that there is a properly costed plan in place for post-conflict Syria, and one to which all foreign powers have signed up and pledged the right amount of financial support.

**The Prime Minister:** We have made some commitments to supporting a post-conflict reconstruction plan for Syria, but I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman about the two votes we had in this House. We won one of them, but I wish that we had won both. I think that taking action against Assad would have been a stronger response against his use of chemical weapons and a stronger response by the west. I think that it would have encouraged the legitimate opposition and that it could have helped bring the conflict to a more rapid closure. The second vote, which we did win, was right. Britain has played a very proud part in the progress that has been made in Syria, making sure that the people who directly threaten us in this country are being properly combated.

**Kevin Brennan** (Cardiff West) (Lab): Those of us who were here on 18 March 2003 will know that there were no moral certainties available that evening. As one of the 139 Labour MPs who voted against the war that night, I can say that I have always respected those who made a different decision based on what they had heard. What does the Prime Minister think is the lesson from Chilcot about our relationship with the United Nations and the way we acted on that occasion in relation to the United Nations Security Council?

**The Prime Minister:** I think the hon. Gentleman asks a very interesting question, because before now I always felt that one of the reasons for going to war was to try to uphold the authority of the United Nations, given that Saddam was in breach of so many of its resolutions. But Sir John Chilcot says very clearly that he thinks it undermined the United Nations, so I want to read that part of the report very carefully.

**Neil Gray** (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): I declare an interest, as my eldest brother served in both Iraq wars, and another still serves in our armed forces today. Above all else, we should today pay tribute to all those who served, whether they came home or sadly did not, and to their families.

I draw the Prime Minister’s attention to pages 121 and 122 of the executive summary, which relate to the delay in military preparation, a politically expedient decision by the then Prime Minister, and the subsequent deployment of forces earlier than anticipated and the

resulting lack of equipment. Does he agree that those decisions unnecessarily cost the lives of some of my brother’s colleagues, as there was insufficient time to overcome the shortfall in necessary war-fighting equipment?

**The Prime Minister:** First, I thank the hon. Gentleman’s family, through him, for their service in the past and currently. I cannot give him an answer now. I have read pages 121 and 122, but I want to study the report more carefully to see whether it really does say that the delay had the effect that he describes. Perhaps I can write to him about that.

**Alison McGovern** (Wirral South) (Lab): I join all those in the House in paying tribute to our armed forces. We owe them a huge debt of gratitude. I will quote from the resignation speech of Robin Cook:

“Our interests are best protected not by unilateral action but by multilateral agreement and a world order governed by rules.”—[*Official Report*, 17 March 2003; Vol. 401, c. 726.]

Does the Prime Minister agree that that statement is as true today as it was then, and that one response to this report must therefore be a deep commitment to the United Nations, to NATO and to somehow rebuilding our relationship with our European friends?

**The Prime Minister:** I agree with the hon. Lady that we should all want to be committed to a world of rules and strong institutions, but I think we all have to accept that there can be difficult occasions when—I am not referring here to Iraq specifically—if there is a veto by one Security Council member and we say, “We can only act when the UN sanctions it,” we are stuck with rules that lead us to take a potentially immoral decision not to act to stop a humanitarian catastrophe or suchlike. We have to be careful. Yes, we want institutions and rules, but we should reserve the ability to act when we think it is either in our national interest or in a humanitarian interest to do so.

**Dr Lisa Cameron** (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP): I must first declare an interest in that my husband has served in our armed forces. It is crucial for armed forces families to have the utmost faith in governmental procedures and in parliamentary scrutiny before they send their loved ones to war. Does the Prime Minister agree that the decisions made on Iraq have undermined their faith, and will he apologise to them for the failings highlighted in the report, in an effort to reach out and rebuild their trust?

**The Prime Minister:** I think that the best thing we can do is to make sure that when mistakes are made and when bad consequences follow, as was the case with Iraq and the failure to plan and the rest of it, reports such as this are commissioned, properly discussed and debated, and the lessons learned. That is the most important thing we can do, and that is something that this Government and the previous one, who commissioned the report, are committed to doing.

**Imran Hussain** (Bradford East) (Lab): As a newly elected councillor, my very first motion before my council was to oppose this unjust war, and I want to reaffirm that position strongly today. We have found out today that the war was based on legality that was far from satisfactory, and on flawed intelligence. It resulted in

the deaths of 179 British service personnel and more than 100,000 innocent men, women and children, the displacement of more than 1 million people, and greater instability in the region. We can never again have a situation where we go blindly into a war that results in the deaths of thousands of innocent men, women and children. What measures will the Prime Minister immediately put in place, given the lessons we have learned from Chilcot?

**The Prime Minister:** We are going to study the report very carefully to see what other lessons can be learned, but some of the early lessons are about processes, procedures, legal advice, national security councils and the use of intelligence information. A lot of those have been learned, but as I have said there are still more things to be discovered, and I commit to making sure that we learn those lessons.

**Stuart Blair Donaldson** (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (SNP): At 24 years old, I am the second youngest Member of this House. Many of the 179 service personnel who were killed in Iraq were under the age of 24, including 14 servicemen and women who were 19 or under. I commend their bravery and their sacrifice. What specific assurances can the Prime Minister give to the families of those brave young men and women that the disastrous decisions that led to their deaths will not be repeated and that those who made those decisions will be held to account?

**The Prime Minister:** First, I thank those families for the service and the sacrifice of their children. We should genuinely praise the work that everyone in our armed forces did. We have to separate some of the decision making, the lessons learned and the problems from the military action. These people were serving their country in a cause that had been sanctioned by this House of Commons, so we should not in any way denigrate their memory, because they were doing what they believed in, which was serving their country. The most important thing we can do for all their memories is to digest the report, learn the lessons and put in place better decision-making procedures for the future.

**Lisa Nandy** (Wigan) (Lab): It has been 13 years since Robin Cook returned to the Back Benches to campaign for a world order governed by rules. The worst possible tribute that this House could pay to him or, more importantly, to the very many servicemen and women and Iraqis killed and injured in this conflict would be to draw the wrong conclusions or, worse, to learn no lessons at all. As the Prime Minister prepares for his own departure to the Back Benches, what advice will he give to his successor to ensure that we restore to Britain a foreign policy with an ethical dimension?

**The Prime Minister:** I think that our foreign policy should always have an ethical dimension and always has. The advice I would give to my successor is to build on the processes and procedures that we have put in place, so that we better handle intelligence information and legal advice, better discuss and debate these things in the National Security Council, and listen to expert opinion in the proper way. The worst lesson to learn would be to say that, because these things are difficult, we should withdraw from the world, fail to intervene

when it is in our interests to do so and retreat in the way that I have set out. That would be the wrong thing to do, and I do not think it is what Robin Cook would have wanted.

**Owen Thompson** (Midlothian) (SNP): My constituent Ben Shaw is a veteran of the Iraq conflict, in which he was blinded. He will never be able to see his family again. Ben has been eagerly awaiting the publication of the Chilcot report, but he is concerned that the lessons will not be learned and that it might be brushed under the carpet. Will the Prime Minister give assurances to Ben as to what actions will be taken, including ensuring that veterans like him will be able to access the full report?

**The Prime Minister:** First, through the hon. Gentleman, may I thank Ben for his service to our country and for everything that he did? We must continue to help him throughout his life. Ministry of Defence Ministers have offered meetings with veterans, and they are going ahead. The assurance I can give is that I think we have already learned a lot of very important lessons. Whitehall is a very different place and the way in which decisions are taken is different, as is the use of legal advice. Do not underestimate the extent to which Whitehall has already taken on board so many of the lessons and changed its practices and culture. Clearly, there will be more to do, and that is why we should study the report and have a two-day debate.

**Greg Mulholland** (Leeds North West) (LD): I pay tribute to the 179 brave servicemen and women who lost their lives, including Corporal Matthew Cornish from Otley, whose loss is still felt today in Otley and Pool-in-Wharfedale.

We have heard the Prime Minister make some powerful and courageous statements, including on Hillsborough and Bloody Sunday, but I have to say to him, in response to his last major statement in his role, that today we have heard equivocation and we have not had the acceptance that this country needs and demands. There will be dismay, frankly, at some of today's contributions, which have sought, even now, to suggest that this was not a terrible mistake. Surely the first rule in politics is to accept when you have done something wrong. A Prime Minister, a Government and a Parliament should be prepared to accept a mistake, and if this House does not accept that the invasion of Iraq was a disastrous mistake, we have learned nothing whatsoever.

**The Prime Minister:** I have tried to be careful today to recognise that this was the act of a previous Government, and it is for them principally to explain why they took the decisions they did. I have also tried to be careful because this is not my report; it is Sir John Chilcot's report, and the first thing we have to do is to read it carefully and to take into account what it finds. I have tried very faithfully in my statement to reflect what he says and the way he says it, with all the nuances, rather than simply to rip out some punchy bits that either damn or praise the then Government, because I do not think that that is my responsibility. My responsibility is to handle the publication, to draw out the lessons, which I think I have done, and to let others who were responsible at the time account for themselves.

**Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): On a practical level, the report sets out that it is very difficult for intelligence to be assessed by Members of Parliament. Currently, intelligence is shared with the Intelligence and Security Committee only after the event; it is not shared during current operations. Two years ago, when the ISC was being reformed, the Opposition tabled an amendment to allow, in exceptional circumstances, intelligence to be shared with the ISC for current engagements and situations. In the light of today's report, does the Prime Minister think it would be worth revisiting that suggestion and giving the ISC the opportunity to have access to intelligence in exceptional circumstances such as this country being on the brink of war?

**The Prime Minister:** What the hon. Lady is asking for is quite difficult. The process should be that Ministers take action on the advice of officials and on the advice of intelligence that is carefully corralled by the Joint Intelligence Committee. Then we have to account to Parliament for the decisions that we take. On occasion, it would be right for the Joint Intelligence Committee or the Government to put some of that intelligence in front of Parliament, as I think we did in the cases of Libya and Syria. By its very nature, the idea of sharing secret intelligence on a much wider basis will be very difficult, and I do not want to promise to do that. The ISC is there to scrutinise decisions that have been taken, rather than pre-emptively to review a decision that is about to be taken, so we do need to get our ducks in a row. If we try to muddle that, we will get ourselves into a muddle.

**Chris Stephens** (Glasgow South West) (SNP): My thoughts today are with Mrs Rose Gentle whose son Gordon was killed in Iraq at 18 years of age. There was

a campaign for this inquiry and it has waited a long time for it to report. The Prime Minister said in his statement that sending

“our brave troops on to the battlefield without the right equipment was unacceptable.”

I agree with that, but, as the last Member to be called in this debate, may I join other hon. Members and ask the Prime Minister to reflect further? Does he not appreciate that the state should apologise to those military families for their sons and daughters being sent into a war without the correct equipment, and will he take this opportunity to apologise to those military families?

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right that providing the correct military equipment is an absolute obligation on Government, and huge steps have been taken in the past few years to make that happen. On the responsibility for apologies and all the rest of it, the people who were in Government who took these decisions are still alive and able to answer the criticisms in the report. This is slightly different from the situation over, for instance, Bloody Sunday or Hillsborough. This report is about a set of Government decisions that were taken, and the people responsible are still around. It is very easy for a Prime Minister to stand up and make an apology and all the rest of it, but it is not appropriate for me to do so today, because the people who made these decisions are still around. That is why I have chosen to speak in the way that I have.

**Mr Speaker:** I thank the Prime Minister and all colleagues who have taken part in these exchanges.

## Junior Doctors Contract

2.42 pm

### **The Secretary of State for Health (Mr Jeremy Hunt):**

In May, the Government and NHS employers reached an historic agreement with the British Medical Association on the new contract for junior doctors after more than three years of negotiations and several days of damaging strike action. That agreement was strongly endorsed as a good deal for junior doctors by the leader of the BMA's junior doctors committee, Dr Johann Malawana, and was supported publicly by the vast majority of medical royal colleges. However, it was rejected yesterday in a ratification ballot: 58% voted against the contract, so, on the basis of a 68% turnout, around a third of serving junior doctors actively voted against the agreement.

It is worth outlining key elements of the agreement that was voted on. The agreement does indeed help the Government to deliver their seven-day NHS manifesto commitment, but it also does much more. It reduces the maximum hours junior doctors can be asked to work, introduces a new post in every trust to make sure the hours asked of junior doctors are safe, makes rostering more child and family-friendly, and helps women who take maternity leave to catch up with their peers. The president of the Royal College of Physicians, who had opposed our previous proposals, stated publicly:

"If I were a trainee doctor now, I would vote 'yes' in the junior doctor referendum."

Unfortunately, because of the vote, we are now left in a no-man's land, which, if it continues, can only damage the NHS.

An elected Government whose main aim is to improve the safety and quality of care for patients have come up against a union that has stirred up anger among its own members that it is now unable to pacify. I was not a fan of the tactics used by the BMA, but, to its credit, its leader, Johann Malawana, did, in the end, negotiate a deal and work hard to get support for it. Now that he has resigned, it is not clear whether anyone can deliver the support of BMA members for any negotiated settlement.

Protracted uncertainty precisely when we grapple with the enormous consequences of leaving the EU can only be damaging for those working in the NHS and for the patients who depend on it. Last night, Professor Dame Sue Bailey, president of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, said that the NHS and junior doctors needed to move on from this dispute and that if the Government proceed with the new contract it should be implemented in a phased way that allowed time to learn from any teething problems. After listening to this advice and carefully considering the equalities impact of the new contract, I have this morning decided that the only realistic way to end this impasse is to proceed with the phased introduction of the exact contract that was negotiated, agreed and supported by the BMA leadership.

The contract will be introduced from October this year for more senior obstetrics trainees; then in November and December for foundation year 1 doctors taking up new posts and foundation year 2 doctors on the same rotas as their current contracts expire. More specialties such as paediatrics, psychiatry and pathology, as well as

surgical trainees, will transition in the same way to the new contract between February and April next year, with remaining trainees by October 2017.

This is a difficult decision to make. Many people will call on me to return to negotiations with the BMA, and I say to them: we have been talking, or trying to talk, for well over three years. There is no consensus around a new contract and, after yesterday's vote, it is not clear whether any further discussions could create one. However, the agreement negotiated in May is better for junior doctors and better for the NHS than the original contract that we planned to introduce in March. Rather than try to wind the clock back to the March contract, we will not change any of the new terms agreed with the BMA.

It is also important to note that, even though we are proceeding without consensus, this decision is not a rejection of the legitimate concerns of many junior doctors about their working conditions. Junior doctors are some of the hardest working staff in the NHS, working some of the longest and most unsocial hours, including many weekends. They have many concerns, for example, about rota gaps and rostering practices. In the May ACAS agreement, NHS employers agreed to work with the BMA to monitor the implementation of the contract and improve rostering practice for junior doctors. Last month, at the NHS Confederation's annual conference, I set out my expectation that all hospitals should invest in modern e-rostering systems by the end of next year as part of their efforts to improve the way that they deploy staff. I hope that the BMA will continue to participate in discussions about all these areas.

Furthermore, this decision is not a rejection of the concerns of foundation year doctors who often feel most disconnected in that period of their training before they have chosen a specialty. Again, we will continue to make progress in addressing those concerns under the leadership of Sheona MacLeod at Health Education England, and we will continue to invite the BMA to attend those meetings.

We will also continue with a separate process to look at how we can improve the working lives of junior doctors more broadly, which will be led by the Under-Secretary of State for Health, my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Ben Gummer). I very much hope that the BMA will continue to participate in that process as well.

We will not let up on efforts to eliminate the gender pay gap. Today, I can announce that I will commission an independent report on how to reduce and eliminate that gap in the medical profession. I will announce shortly who will be leading that important piece of work, which I hope to have initial considerations from in September.

Most importantly, this is not a decision to stop any further talks. I welcome Dr Ellen McCourt to her position as new interim leader of the junior doctors committee. I had constructive talks with her during the negotiations. Although we do need to proceed with the implementation of the new contract to end uncertainty, my door remains open to her or whoever takes over her post substantively in September. I am willing to discuss how the new contract is implemented, extra-contractual issues such as training and rostering, and the contents of future contracts.

[Mr Jeremy Hunt]

To me personally and to everyone in this House as well as many others, it is a matter of profound regret that, at a time of so many other challenges, the BMA was unable to secure majority support for the deal that it agreed with the Government and NHS employers, but we are where we are.

I believe the course of action outlined in this statement is the best way to help the NHS to move on from this long-running contractual dispute and to focus our efforts on providing the safest, highest-quality care for patients. I commend the statement to the House.

2.50 pm

**Ms Diane Abbott** (Hackney North and Stoke Newington) (Lab): The NHS is only as strong as the morale of its staff, and the rejection of this contract by the junior doctors sadly reveals that morale and trust in the Government are at rock bottom. Yesterday, to mark the 68th anniversary of the NHS, I visited my local hospital, Homerton University hospital, and met some of the wonderful nurses. One of their main concerns was the abolition of the bursary, but they were also genuinely worried that NHS staff were no longer valued. The Secretary of State must accept that his handling of the junior doctor dispute has exacerbated this feeling among all NHS staff.

I have sat in this Chamber and heard the Secretary of State say that junior doctors have not read the new contract, do not understand the new contract, or have been bamboozled by their leadership, but now that the junior doctors have rejected a renegotiated contract recommended by their leadership, he must begin to understand that his handling of this dispute has contributed to the impasse. There should be no suggestion that the junior doctors' decision is somehow illegitimate. The turnout in the ballot was higher than in the general election in 2015.

I welcome the fact that the Secretary of State will not let up on efforts to eliminate the gender pay gap and that he will commission an independent report on how to reduce and eliminate that gap, and look at shared parental leave as well. That is an important concern among doctors. I also welcome the fact that the imposition of the contract will be phased, but at this time of general instability I urge the Government to reconsider imposing the contract at all.

It has not helped for the Government to treat junior doctors as the enemy within. It has not helped junior doctors' morale that it was implied at one time that the only barrier to a seven-day NHS was their reluctance to work at weekends, when so many of them already work unsocial hours, sacrificing family life in the process. I am glad that the Secretary of State acknowledged today that junior doctors are some of the hardest working staff in the NHS, working some of the longest and most unsocial hours, including many weekends, but the vote to reject the contract is a rejection of the Government's previous approach.

The Secretary of State knows that the BMA remains opposed to the imposition of any contract, believing that imposing a contract that has not been agreed is inherently unfair and an indictment of the Secretary of State's handling of the situation. The junior doctors

committee is meeting today to decide how it will proceed. Labour Members look forward to hearing the outcome of that meeting and how we can best continue to support the junior doctors.

Public opinion is not on the Government's side. It is evident that the public will have faith in their doctors long after they have lost faith in this or any other Government. It is not too late to change course. The Government need urgently to address the recruitment and retention crisis and scrap the contract. Although I appreciate that the contract has been in negotiation for many years, the Government should give talks with the junior doctors one more chance. If they crush the morale of NHS staff, they crush the efficacy of the NHS itself.

**Mr Hunt:** I welcome the hon. Lady to her place for the first statement to which she has responded and welcome her on the whole measured tone, with one or two exceptions. I will reply directly to the points she made.

First, the hon. Lady maintains the view expressed by her predecessor, the hon. Member for Lewisham East (Heidi Alexander), who is in her place this afternoon, that somehow the Government's handling of the dispute is to blame. We have heard that narrative a lot in the past year, but I say with the greatest of respect for the hon. Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott)—I do understand that she is new to the post—that that narrative has been comprehensively disproved by the leaked WhatsApp messages that were exchanged between members of the junior doctors committee earlier this year.

We now know that, precisely when the official Opposition were saying that the Government were being intransigent, the BMA had no interest in doing a deal. In February, at the ACAS talks, the junior doctors' aim was simply to

“play the political game of...looking reasonable”—

their words, not ours. We also know that they wanted to provoke the Government into imposing a contract, as part of a plan to

“tie the Department of Health up in knots for...months”.

In contrast to public claims that the dispute was about patient safety, we know that, in their own words,

“the only real red line”

was pay. With the benefit of that knowledge, the hon. Lady should be careful about maintaining that the Government have not wanted to try to find a solution. We have had more than 70 meetings in the past year and we have been trying to find a solution for more than four years.

The question then arises whether we should negotiate or proceed with the introduction of the new contracts. Let me say plainly and directly that if I believed negotiations would work, that is exactly what I would do. The reason I do not think they will work is that it has become clear that many of the issues upsetting junior doctors are in fact nothing to do with the contract. Let me quote a statement posted this morning by one of the junior doctors' leaders and a fierce opponent of the Government, Dr Reena Aggarwal:

“I am no apologist for the Government but I do believe that many of the issues that are exercising junior doctors are extra-contractual. This contract was never intended to solve every

complaint and unhappiness, and I am not sure any single agreement would have achieved universal accord with the junior doctor body.”

The Government’s biggest opponents—in a way, the biggest firebrands in the BMA—supported the deal and were telling their members that it was a good deal, which got rid of some of the unfairnesses in the current contract and was better for women and so on. If the junior doctors are not prepared to believe even them, there is no way we will be able to achieve consensus.

If the hon. Lady wants to stand up and say that we should scrap the contract, she will be saying that we should not proceed with a deal that reduces the maximum hours a junior doctor can be asked to work, introduces safeguards to make sure that rostering is safe and boosts opportunities for women, disabled people and doctors with caring responsibilities—a deal that was supported by nearly every royal college. If the alternative from Labour is to do nothing, we would be passing on the opportunity to make real improvements that will make a real difference to the working lives of junior doctors.

The hon. Lady and I have a couple of the more challenging jobs that anyone can do in this Chamber. She has been in the House for much longer than I have, so she will know that. The litmus test in all the difficult decisions we face is whether we do the right thing for patients and for our vulnerable constituents, who desperately need a seven-day service. The Government are determined to make sure that happens.

**Dr Sarah Wollaston (Totnes) (Con):** I welcome today’s statement and thank the Secretary of State for dealing with many of the extra-contractual issues that have blighted the lives of junior doctors. I join him in regretting the outcome of the ballot. Like my right hon. Friend, I welcome Doctor Ellen McCourt to her post. I know that my right hon. Friend will work constructively with the junior doctors committee to try to resolve the outstanding issues. In proceeding in a careful, measured way with the imposition of the contract, will he work to reassure the public that if patient safety issues arise during that process, he will deal with them?

**Mr Hunt:** I thank my hon. Friend for her measured tone and for being an independent voice throughout the dispute. I spoke to Dr Ellen McCourt earlier this afternoon. I appreciate that she is in a very difficult situation, but I wanted to stress to her that, as I told the House this afternoon, my door remains open for talks about absolutely anything and that I am keen to find a way forward through dialogue. I had lots of discussions with Dr McCourt when we were negotiating the agreement in May, and I know that she approached those negotiations in a positive spirit.

We have set in place processes, and that is one of the reasons why Professor Bailey recommended phased implementation—so that if there are any safety concerns, we can address them as we go along. The Minister with responsibility for care quality, my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich, is leading a process that will keep looking at the issues to do with the quality of life of junior doctors. NHS Employers is leading a process that will look in detail at how the contract is implemented. Absolutely, the point of the changes is to make care safer for patients; we will continue to keep an eye on this to make sure that it does so.

**Dr Philippa Whitford (Central Ayrshire) (SNP):** I, too, am disappointed by the outcome of the ballot yesterday. It has to be recognised that it reflects a real desperation and unhappiness among junior doctors, who are dealing with increased demand and pressure. They have felt that, at times, the tone of the negotiations has left a lot to be desired. The threat of imposition was there from the start, and they felt that hanging over them.

I welcome several things in the statement, and I absolutely welcome its very measured tone. I welcome the attempt to tackle the gender pay gap, to deal with unhappy foundationers and to limit hours. I would say that junior doctors’ biggest concern is rota gaps. In some specialties, the rate is as high as one in four, so one doctor covers the role of two. That is a real patient safety issue, and patient safety is meant to be the whole point of the contract. I welcome the fact that the contract will be phased in, and I call on the Secretary of State to ensure absolutely that, as this goes forward, he will learn, because junior doctors’ concern is about how we spread a short-staffed workforce across more days. I called for the contract to be phased in through a trial, and it is being phased in, but in a different way. We need to recognise the pain that the vote represents.

**Mr Hunt:** I thank the hon. Lady for her constructive comments, which are born of her NHS experience. She is right: we are phasing in the contract carefully to make sure that we learn lessons. She is absolutely right to talk about rota gaps. Unfortunately, the problem of rota gaps cannot be solved at a stroke on signing a contract; it has to do with making sure that we have a big enough supply of doctors in the NHS to fill those rota gaps. We now have much greater transparency about the safety levels that are appropriate in different hospitals; that is one of the lessons that we learned post Mid Staffs. We are investing more in the NHS in this Parliament. We recruited an extra 9,300 doctors in the last Parliament and we are increasing our investment in the NHS in this Parliament, so that we can continue to boost the doctor workforce in the NHS. In the long run, that is how we will deal with the rota gap issue; but unfortunately, that cannot be done overnight.

**Mr Kenneth Clarke (Rushcliffe) (Con):** I congratulate the Secretary of State on taking the only responsible decision that he could take, in the interests of the service and patients, to bring this sad, extraordinarily long episode to an end. I also congratulate him on being conciliatory, because he made concessions in May to produce the final contract, and now he is phasing it in, in its negotiated form. I hope that we get back to a peaceful settlement. Does he agree that the surprising fact that so many dedicated junior doctors were prepared to take industrial action over rather ill-defined problems with the contract shows that there is a problem with morale in the service? Will he give an undertaking that the very welcome steps that he has announced today to try to address the wider issues will last not just a few months, until the dust settles on this dispute, but will be part of a continuous process to make sure that we restore to the service the morale and dedication on which we all know the NHS relies?

**Mr Hunt:** As ever, my right hon. and learned Friend speaks with great wisdom and experience. He is absolutely right to say that tackling the morale deficit in the NHS

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has to be a key priority. That is why we have to recognise that for doctors—particularly junior doctors starting out on their medical careers—the most depressing and dispiriting thing of all is when they cannot give the patients in front of them the care that they want to. That is why we are looking at a number of things to make it easier for doctors to improve the quality of care. One of the things that is particularly challenging and that we in this House have to think about and discuss a lot more is how difficult doctors and nurses find it to speak out if they see poor care, or if they or a colleague make a mistake, because they are frightened of litigation, a General Medical Council referral, or disciplinary action by their trust. The problem is that people then do not go through the learning processes necessary to prevent those mistakes from happening again. The key is creating a supportive environment, in which learning can really happen, in hospitals.

**Heidi Alexander** (Lewisham East) (Lab): If I believed that the benefits for patients of pushing ahead with this contract outweighed the impact that its imposition will have on junior doctor morale, recruitment and retention, I would support the Health Secretary, but I do not believe that. Can he tell the House which clause of which Act of Parliament gives him the power to force hospitals to introduce the contract? If he cannot tell us that, can he outline the legislative basis on which Health Education England could withhold funding from trusts that choose not to proceed with it?

**Mr Hunt:** Health Education England is absolutely clear that it has to run national training programmes, and that is why it has to have standard contracts across the country. As the hon. Lady knows well from her previous role on the Front Bench, in reality foundation trusts have the legal right to set their own terms and conditions, but they currently follow a national contract; that is their choice, but because they do that, I used the phrase “introduction of a new contract” this afternoon. I expect, on the basis of current practice, that the contract will be adopted throughout the NHS.

I enjoyed working with the hon. Lady when she was shadow Health Secretary, but on this issue, she was quite wrong, because she saw the WhatsApp leaks, which revealed that the British Medical Association had no willingness or desire for a negotiated settlement in February, precisely when she was saying at the Dispatch Box that I was the one being intransigent. She gave a running commentary on the dispute at every stage, but when those leaks happened, she said absolutely nothing. She should set the record straight and apologise to the House for getting the issue totally wrong.

**Dr Andrew Murrison** (South West Wiltshire) (Con): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the patience that he has shown on this matter, and on the deal that was agreed back in May—it is a good deal. Apropos of the remarks of the hon. Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott), who speaks for the Opposition, does the Secretary of State agree that it is indeed important to maintain morale in the health service? We need to be very careful about striking special deals for one particular part of the workforce, and the perception that that might be unfair. Would he

further agree that we need to avoid the temptation of addressing every single grievance of a particular workforce? That is more properly within the bailiwick of managers locally than national contracts.

**Mr Hunt:** My hon. Friend obviously speaks from experience and very sensibly on this issue. In this House, of course, we think about the actions of politicians, Ministers and so on, but for doctors in a hospital, the most important component of their morale is the way that they are treated by their direct line manager. One of the things that worries me most in the NHS, looking at the staff survey, is that 19% of NHS staff talk about being bullied in the last year. That is ridiculously high. We need to think about why that is. The reality is that it is very tough on the frontline at the moment. There are a lot of people walking through the front doors of our NHS organisations, and we need to do everything that we can to try to support doctors and nurses, who are doing a very challenging job.

**Paula Sherriff** (Dewsbury) (Lab): Instead of blaming the BMA, will the Secretary of State acknowledge that yesterday's result was indicative of the fact that a significant proportion of medical staff have lost confidence in him? More than ever, running the NHS requires the good will of its staff. How does he intend to restore that confidence?

**Mr Hunt:** Actually, in my statement I took the trouble to praise BMA leaders. Admittedly, at the outset I did not agree with their tactics at all, but they did then have the courage to negotiate a deal and try really hard to get their members to accept it. I respect them for doing that. Part of the problem was that in the early stages of the dispute, there was a lot of misinformation going around. There were a lot of doctors who thought, for example, that their salary was going to be cut by about a third. That was never on the table and never the Government's intention. A lot of doctors thought that they were going to be asked to work longer hours. That, too, was the opposite of what we wanted to do. I am afraid that that created a very bitter atmosphere. I simply say that, in the end, the best way to restore morale is to support doctors in giving better care to their patients, and that is what the NHS transformation plan is all about and what we are working on.

**Sir Peter Bottomley** (Worthing West) (Con): Around 10 years ago the mishandled introduction of MMC—modernising medical careers—and the medical training application service started some of the problems for junior doctors. I pay tribute to the BMA who, in the discussions up to May, helped to agree with NHS England employers changes to the proposed contract, which were to the benefit of doctors in training? I say to the Secretary of State and, through him, to the employers that I hope they will pay attention to the extra-contractual issues which are of concern to doctors, and that the BMA will catch up with the rest of us in saying that we rely on them and others in hospitals to give a good, safe service to patients. They need to work together with everybody else and we will support them in doing that.

**Mr Hunt:** I am absolutely prepared to give that assurance and I thank my hon. Friend for his comments. He is right. We can look at MTAS and such changes.

We can go even further back and look at the introduction of the European working time directive—strange to bring that up in the current context—and the shift system, which sensibly reduced some of the crazy hours that junior doctors were being asked to work, but unfortunately at the same time got rid of the “old firm” system which gave junior doctors a sense of collegiality, meant that there was a consultant whom they knew and related to, and made their training a lot more rewarding and satisfying. That was disrupted when we introduced the shift system and the maximum hours limits. We need to think about—and we are doing some very important work on this—how we could recreate some of that sense of collegiality, which is particularly missing for junior doctors in the first two years of their training, before they have joined a specialty.

**Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): With morale among junior doctors at rock bottom, and Hull having an historic problem with recruitment and retention, what particular initiatives is the Secretary of State going to use to allow the health service in Hull to have the number of doctors that we need to function properly and provide the high-quality care that we all want to see?

**Mr Hunt:** There is one very good doctor in the Hull A&E department, and that is Dr Ellen McCourt, who has taken over as leader of the junior doctors committee—at least, I imagine she is very good; I have been very impressed every time I have met her. There are particular pressures at Hull, and as the hon. Lady knows we have had management changes. So far we have not seen the improvement in performance that we would like. I am aware that there are big issues with the infrastructure—the physical buildings. We will continue to work with the NHS locally and with the trust to try to improve the situation. She is right to bring it to my attention.

**Sir Oliver Heald** (North East Hertfordshire) (Con): I join my right hon. Friend in expressing sadness at the decision of the vote. He will remember that on previous occasions I have raised with him some family-friendly aspects of the lives of junior doctors. Does he agree that it is important to look at the training situation, where a couple can be sent to different towns many miles apart; the rostering, which can make family life difficult; and some of the problems of returners to work, whose training perhaps needs to be properly considered? Will he confirm that he will continue to look at these issues and that, as the monitoring and phasing goes ahead, he will try to address them?

**Mr Hunt:** My hon. and learned Friend is correct to have raised that before and I can reassure him that we have subsequently started a very big piece of work to look at those exact issues. The difficulty is that throughout their training junior doctors are rotated every six months. That is particularly disruptive to family life or, for example, if they have a partner and one is sent to Sheffield and the other to Bristol. We are seeing what we can do to deal with that. The other issue that we are looking at is that of people who for family reasons discover that they have a caring responsibility, maybe for children or for a parent with dementia, and want to switch to a specialty that may not have quite so many

unsocial hours, and whether it is possible to novate their training across from one specialty to another, which does not happen at present.

**Liz McInnes** (Heywood and Middleton) (Lab): We are all congratulating each other on the measured tone of this debate, but Dr Johann Malawana has said in very measured tones:

“Given the result, both sides must look again at the proposals and there should be no transition to a new contract until further talks take place.”

Will the Health Secretary commit to hold further talks in order to avoid further conflict and the possibility that he may provoke further strike action if he does not? If he provokes further industrial action among the junior doctors, the blame will lie fairly and squarely at his open door.

**Mr Hunt:** Let me tell the hon. Lady the words that Dr Malawana actually said:

“I will happily state that I think this is a good deal.”

He talked about junior doctors benefiting from

“massively strengthened areas of safety precautions...equalities improvements, improvements to whistleblowing protection and appropriate pay for unsocial hours.”

He thought this deal was a big step forward. As I said, if I thought that there was any prospect of further negotiations leading to a consensus that could get the support of the BMA membership, that is what I would be doing, but my honest assessment of the situation—given that the people who most strongly opposed the Government recommended accepting this deal and still they were not listened to—is that there is no such prospect, and I therefore need to take the difficult decision that I have taken this afternoon.

**Helen Whately** (Faversham and Mid Kent) (Con): There has been a negotiation, the Secretary of State has listened to the concerns of junior doctors, we now have a better contract, and we heard today that there will be a phased introduction of it. Does my right hon. Friend agree that junior doctors now need to move forward and that they should take up the offer to be involved in work to improve the experience of junior doctors in training? We know that junior doctors do not feel valued. They should feel valued. They need to play their part in making sure that they are valued.

**Mr Hunt:** My hon. Friend is right to say that. One of the things that is clear to me is that the reason that the May deal is better than the deal that we were going to introduce in February is because of the involvement of the BMA and the BMA leaders in telling us the concerns of junior doctors at the coalface, and the specific niggles and annoyances, many of which we were able to sort out very straightforwardly. I strongly hope that junior doctors will remain in all the discussions that we have, so that we try to get even better solutions.

**Steve Rotheram** (Liverpool, Walton) (Lab): At the start of his statement, the Secretary of State used sophistry to try to call into question the result of the ballot, by implying that 58% did not provide legitimacy for the rejection of the Government contract offer. Does he regret using smoke and mirrors, and does he agree that if his flawed methodology were used for

[*Steve Rotheram*]

other electoral processes, he would not be sitting in this House, there would not be a Tory Government, and we would still be in the EU?

**Mr Hunt:** The hon. Gentleman has misinterpreted what I said. I am clear on this. I said in my statement that 58% voted against the contract, and I accept that that was a majority of BMA members. I stated the fact that on a 68% turnout, around a third of serving junior doctors actively voted against the contract. That is factually correct.

**Maggie Throup** (Erewash) (Con): I thank my right hon. Friend for all his efforts in agreeing a deal that was acceptable to the junior doctors' leaders. In effect, the junior doctors have now voted against their own trade union. I welcome the way forward that the Secretary of State has outlined, but will he reassure the House that patients and their safety will always be his No. 1 priority?

**Mr Hunt:** I am happy to give that assurance. One of the most exciting things in the NHS, despite a lot of the doom and gloom in the headlines, is that we are seeing a transformation in safety culture. Even though we are now doing about 4,500 more operations every day, the proportion of patients being harmed is down by about a third in just three years. I think there is a transformation, but of course there is a lot more to do, as I am no doubt going to hear.

**Andrea Jenkyns** (Morley and Outwood) (Con): I am shocked that we are here yet again. If we look at the history, 90% of the contract has been renegotiated. There have been years of negotiations. This contract is far safer for patients. Regardless of what the Opposition say, it cannot be laid at the Secretary of State's door if the junior doctors decide to take strike action. We should stop using patients as pawns and put patients first. I would like to thank the Secretary of State for his perseverance. Does he agree that, through its relentless pursuit of partisan politics, the BMA has backed itself into a corner and put patients at risk?

**Mr Hunt:** The way patients have suffered—there have been over 20,000 cancelled operations during this process—has been very disappointing. My hon. Friend is absolutely right to campaign on issues of hygiene and cleanliness, which lead to so many tragedies when they are not properly attended to. I hope we can move on now. I do believe that, despite the disappointing rejection of this deal in the ballot, some trust has been established between the leaders of the BMA and the Government, and we have had a productive dialogue. We have made a number of changes to the May contract since announcing it—things that they suggested and that we agreed to. I would like to continue that process and build that trust.

**Huw Merriman** (Bexhill and Battle) (Con): Having been somewhat of a burden on the NHS myself over the months as a result of playing football—unsuccessfully—with the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Justin Madders) in December, I spent an hour on the day of the all-out strike talking to the junior doctors who treated me. They asked me if I could tell the

Secretary of State and the BMA that there is a need and a desire for more talks. May I thank the Secretary of State for showing flexibility? He does a difficult job extremely well, and it is appreciated on the Government Benches. I am absolutely saddened that a deal on this contract has not been brokered in the way we thought it would in May. Will he ensure that those junior doctors who move on to this contract are made well aware of how unpopular the previous contract was in the medical profession and that this contract's terms are well sold so that junior doctors are reassured about them?

**Mr Hunt:** I am more than happy to do that. I think that the vast majority of junior doctors think that what has happened is a tragedy and are keen to move on. I hope they take seriously my assurances this afternoon that we will be monitoring every stage of the implementation of this contract, and if there are further things that we can improve, we will do exactly that, because we want a contract that is good for them and good for patients.

**Robert Jenrick** (Newark) (Con): Weeks like the ones we have just lived through put other matters into perspective. With that in mind, I am sure the Secretary of State will agree with me that it is absolutely right for patients and the country that this dispute ends now. I was delighted to hear that he is now reluctantly going to move to phase in the imposition of the contract. Will he, in his usual conciliatory manner, now turn a page on this dispute, end it completely and build a new relationship with junior doctors and the new interim head of the BMA's junior doctors committee?

**Mr Hunt:** My hon. Friend speaks very wisely. I would certainly very much like to do that. It does take two to tango, but the Government certainly want to do everything they can to work with all the leaders of the different bodies in the medical profession, partly for the reason my hon. Friend gave—that the country is very preoccupied with even bigger issues—but partly because there is so much pressure on the NHS frontline, and it is just counterproductive to exhaust so much energy on these disputes when we could talk our way around them and avoid them.

**Mrs Flick Drummond** (Portsmouth South) (Con): I am always last, but I am very grateful for being asked to speak. Does the Secretary of State have any indication of how many junior doctors actually read the contract, rather than relying on the BMA or rumours? The junior doctors I have talked to have not read it, and one said it was too long.

**Mr Hunt:** I thank my hon. Friend for her interest—it is last but not least, for sure, in her case. Many junior doctors are now aware of the bones of the contract. I am sure some of them have not read it, just as others have. However, I think the issue has been that a lot of them have read it and have felt that it does not answer every single problem they face today as a junior doctor. Unfortunately, there is no contract that can solve every single pressure they face at the stroke of a pen, and I suspect that that is why a number of them voted to reject the contract. What I would say to them is that we have a contract that is an improvement on what they had before, so let us go with that and try to address the other issues as best and as quickly as we can.

## Points of Order

3.24 pm

**Andy Slaughter** (Hammersmith) (Lab): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. On 9 May, I was granted an urgent question on safety in custody and violence in prisons, following a walkout by officers at Wormwood Scrubs prison in my constituency on health and safety grounds and assaults on two officers. I was assured by the Government that they took these matters very seriously, but I am told by the Prison Officers Association when I met it last week that the problems continue at Wormwood Scrubs. Today, the BBC has reported that there have been five walkouts over the past five months, three of which have been reported for the first time only today. I fully understand why the Government would not have made a statement today, given the other, pressing business, but what can you do to assist me in getting the Secretary of State or another Minister to come to the House to make a statement on this issue, which is not only very serious but now looks as if it is endemic in our prisons?

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Natascha Engel)**: I am sure the hon. Gentleman is aware that that is not a point of order, but he has put the matter on the record, and those on the Treasury Bench will have listened. I am sure he will be here at business questions tomorrow, when he can ask the Leader of the House for a statement.

**Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Earlier, in my question to the Prime Minister on tax credits, I specifically mentioned the two-child policy and the rape clause. I am sure he did not mean to mislead the House in his

answer, but he said that the Scottish Parliament would be getting specific powers on welfare to cover those particular issues. In fact, that is not the case. The Scottish Parliament is getting only 15% of welfare powers, and the power to modify the tax credit system is not among those. I wonder, Madam Deputy Speaker, whether you could obtain an answer from the Prime Minister to put the record straight.

**Madam Deputy Speaker**: I thank the hon. Lady for that point of order. Again, it is not, strictly speaking, a point of order, but she has put the matter on the record. I am sure, if the Prime Minister has heard and would like to correct the record, there will be a way of doing so.

## BILL PRESENTED

### TERMS OF WITHDRAWAL FROM EU (REFERENDUM) BILL

*Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)*

Geraint Davies, supported by Mr David Lammy, Helen Hayes, Sir Alan Meale, Mark Durkan, Chris Davies, John Pugh, Louise Haigh and Ann Clwyd presented a Bill to require the holding of a referendum to endorse the United Kingdom and Gibraltar exit package proposed by HM Government for withdrawal from the EU, or to decide to remain a member, prior to the UK giving notice under Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union; and for connected purposes.

*Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 21 October, and to be printed (Bill 46).*

# Opposition Day

[4TH ALLOTTED DAY]

## EU Nationals in the UK

3.26 pm

**Andy Burnham** (Leigh) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House notes that there are approximately three million nationals of other EU member states living in the UK; further notes that many more UK nationals are related to nationals of other EU member states; rejects the view that these men, women and children should be used as bargaining chips in negotiations on the UK's exit from the EU; and calls on the Government to commit with urgency to giving EU nationals currently living in the UK the right to remain.

This debate directly affects the lives of millions of people living in this country, so let me start by inviting the House to join me in sending a very clear message to the EU nationals living in the UK, which I think they need to hear right now from this Parliament: you are truly valued members of our society, and you are very welcome here.

Let us remember that the people affected are the mothers and fathers, aunts and uncles, and grandmas and grandads of British children such as mine. They are our friends and our neighbours; valued members of local communities; doctors and nurses who look after us when we are ill; teachers who educate our children; and people who run companies employing thousands of British workers. To throw any doubt over their right to remain here in the future is to undermine family life, the stability of our public services, our economy and our society.

But, sadly, that is what the Home Secretary has done. Instead of showing leadership and sending out an immediate message of reassurance in the aftermath of Brexit, she has added to the uncertainty that many people were already experiencing, and she has left them feeling like bargaining chips in the Brussels negotiations.

**Keith Vaz** (Leicester East) (Lab): I share my right hon. Friend's sentiments absolutely. The problem is that the Home Secretary has made certain statements, and other members of the Government have made other statements, and it is that uncertainty that is the problem. If there was a clear statement about the intent to keep EU nationals here without any further discussion, that would help to deal with the problems we have at the moment. It is that uncertainty that has led to a lot of problems in local communities, which we heard about in the debate last night.

**Andy Burnham**: I could not agree more with the Chair of the Home Affairs Committee. People have been left feeling uncertain. As I will say later, that has created a hostile climate on the streets of our communities, and this is not what people are looking for in someone who seeks to lead our nation. It will not be lost on people that, for the second time in three days, the Home Secretary has failed to come to the House to clear up the confusion. I think we were entitled to hear directly from her, having called this important debate.

**Sir Oliver Heald** (North East Hertfordshire) (Con): I join the right hon. Gentleman in paying tribute to all the European nationals who work in Britain and do such valuable jobs, 52,000 of them in the NHS. Does he agree that we need an orderly settlement as part of this negotiation with the EU? At the moment, there are 1.2 million British people out there in the EU, working in other parts of it, and, no doubt, doing valuable work as well. At the moment, there is no risk to those who are living there or here until the final agreements are reached.

**Andy Burnham**: I will come on to that point. However, I do not see why, in seeking to secure the position of British nationals overseas, we should undermine people living here, paying taxes here, and working here.

**Stella Creasy** (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op): Let us put some real people into this picture. In the past week alone, I have spoken to an Italian grandmother who has been here for 46 years and is devastated at the thought that she may have to return to her home country, a Dutch DJ who makes our street parties in Walthamstow swing, a Danish climate change scientist who is helping to tackle a problem that faces us all, and an Irish artist who makes beautiful but challenging sculptures for our community. At the same time, my community has faced a spike in hate crime. Today we need to send a message, do we not, that this hate crime—this division—is not orderly and has no place in our society, but these people do, and they are very welcome here.

**Andy Burnham**: My hon. Friend makes a very important point. I have read in *The Guardian* the views of some health professionals talking about how they feel. An Allied Healthcare professional—not a DJ—who is Dutch said this:

“Since the referendum, I wish I had not come to the UK. Half the population does not want me here. I am tearful at times. If I had the chance I would leave now.”

It is not true: half the population does not want these people to leave, but that is obviously how they have been left to feel.

**John Redwood** (Wokingham) (Con): I am very grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for bringing forward this motion, and I agree that we need to offer reassurance. Does he agree that, assuming the motion passes today—because I get the distinct impression that it will not be opposed—that is a great offer of reassurance from this whole Parliament?

**Andy Burnham**: I hope the right hon. Gentleman is correct. I do not know what the Government's intention is, but if we were to follow the logic of what we heard from the Immigration Minister at the Dispatch Box on Monday, they will oppose the motion. We will see. Tonight this House can remove the uncertainty from the people my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy) described, sending them a message that they are welcome here in our country, and that is precisely what we should do.

**Andy Slaughter** (Hammersmith) (Lab): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the comments that the Home Secretary has made outside the context of Brexit represent one of the most extreme statements made by any politician? They have caused fear not only among the 15% of my

constituents who are EU nationals, but the 46% of my constituents who were born outside the UK, on the basis that, “If they can say this about one group, they can say it about others.” I have had a bigger postbag on this issue than on any other issue ever. I hope that we get the result my right hon. Friend is asking for today, because this is very serious stuff.

**Andy Burnham:** It is an abdication of leadership for the Home Secretary not to be here to hear what my hon. Friend has said. One can only speculate that she made those comments in a bid to woo the grassroots of the Tory party. I do not know, because she is not here to contradict me. She could have done if she wanted to, but she is not here to do so. I do not know whether her comments were made with that in mind, but I do know that they have caused a lot of worry for people, as my hon. Friend says. They are in danger of making us look to the rest of the world like a very different country from the one that welcomed the world to London 2012 just four short years ago: a very different Britain from the decent, open-minded, fair country that we are perceived to be, or have been perceived to be, around the world.

**Ms Karen Buck** (Westminster North) (Lab): There are 36,000 EU residents living in the London borough of Westminster, and my postbag has also been flooded with correspondence on this. Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is hard to overstate how disappointed and worried many of these people are at the message that is being sent out and the lack of clarity? I hope he can reassure one constituent who wrote to me this week to say that she has lived in her “beloved London” for 14 years, educated herself, paid for herself, always worked, paid her taxes, supported local charities, and been involved with her community. She says:

“I am probably not the...immigrant everyone fears, but it doesn’t change the fact that I am an immigrant and I worry for my future.”

**Andy Burnham:** I find it terrible that that is how people in Britain in 2016 are thinking and feeling today as we have this debate. We should do something today to give my hon. Friend’s constituent some comfort and to send the message that she is indeed valued here.

**Boris Johnson** (Uxbridge and South Ruislip) (Con): I would like to put on record what I think has been said already—that countless times the Vote Leave campaign gave exactly this reassurance to everybody from EU countries living and working here, and it is very, very disappointing that that should be called into question. I think it is absolutely right to issue the strongest possible reassurance to EU nationals in this country, not just for moral or humanitarian reasons, but for very, very sound economic reasons as well. They are welcome, they are necessary, they are a vital part of our society, and I will passionately support this motion tonight.

**Andy Burnham:** I am pleased to hear it. Let us not rerun the arguments of the referendum campaign today, despite the fact that it has given rise to the situation that we are now in. To be fair to the hon. Gentleman, he and others did not argue that people should be sent back.

The leave campaign held the very clear position during the referendum that there should be no question of EU nationals having to return.

My worry is this: why have the Government—the hon. Gentleman’s Front Benchers—muddied the waters in the aftermath of the referendum? Why are they not providing a basic reassurance to millions of people living here? I say that because it was entirely predictable that this question would arise following a potential Brexit vote. The reason they cannot give a straight answer can be found in last week’s *Civil Service World*, which said:

“Downing Street on Monday reiterated that the civil service had not done separate contingency work for the wider process of withdrawal—something the new team will now lead on.”

I have a simple question for the Minister: why on earth did the Government not do any contingency planning so that they were in a position to give a straight answer to the people who are now worried about their status? Yesterday, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who is leading this work, told the Foreign Affairs Committee that the unit set up to deal with Brexit is still only looking at “options” for the next Prime Minister to consider. That is not good enough. May I remind Conservative Members that there is still a country to be run here? This will only add to the feeling that they have abdicated their responsibility to lead the country following the referendum and have plunged us into chaos.

**Catherine West** (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab): Does my right hon. Friend agree that this level of incompetence is frightening, and that it is causing genuine distress among our constituents, and also in areas such as construction, where 49% of construction workers building new homes are European? This could lead to real dangers for the economy and industry as well.

**Andy Burnham:** My hon. Friend puts her point very well.

If it were only Labour Members saying this, the public might think it is partisan or point-scoring—but it is not, is it? We have just heard from somebody as senior as the hon. Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson). Yesterday, the hon. Member for Reigate (Crispin Blunt) said that the failure to carry out any contingency planning in the event of Brexit amounted to “gross negligence” and a “dereliction of duty” on the part of the Prime Minister. He went on to say that there was not a majority in the Conservative party in support of the Home Secretary’s current position. We saw that for ourselves during the urgent question earlier this week. If there was ever a day for Parliament to do the right thing, surely it is today. I hope that Conservative Members will put their conscience and their constituents first and do the right thing.

**Kate Green** (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): Although the Government may be woefully unprepared for the consequences of the referendum outcome, my right hon. Friend will be interested to hear that a number of non-governmental organisations and charities, including Citizens Advice and groups that support Roma families, are already putting plans in place to support worried EU residents. Will my right hon. Friend join me in encouraging the Minister to meet these charities as

[Kate Green]

quickly as possible so that, at the very least, he can have meaningful discussions about the need for security and certainty for the people they represent?

**Andy Burnham:** In the absence of the Home Secretary, somebody needs to provide some leadership, don't they? Somebody needs to meet the community groups that are worried about the current situation. I hope that the Minister is listening to what my hon. Friend has just said, because the sheer lack of any direction at the moment is causing real difficulties on the streets of her constituency, mine and others.

**Robert Jenrick (Newark) (Con):** With 3,500 eastern European citizens living in my constituency, I have a huge amount of sympathy for this motion. However, with respect, the Home Secretary's position is simply that this issue requires a degree of consideration before proceeding. What is the right hon. Gentleman's position? Is it to give all the European citizens living in this country indefinite leave to remain tomorrow? Is it to make them British citizens? Surely this requires a degree of consideration.

**Andy Burnham:** That is precisely my position. Those people came here when they were legally entitled to do so and are contributing to our society. Absolutely, they should be allowed to stay. I am amazed that that is not the hon. Gentleman's position as well.

The clearest explanation of the Government's position came from the Minister for Immigration on Monday:

"It has been suggested that the Government could now fully guarantee EU nationals...the right to stay, but that would be unwise without a parallel assurance from European Governments regarding British nationals living in their countries".—[*Official Report*, 4 July 2016; Vol. 612, c. 607.]

I want to take the House through the logic of that position and what it means in practice. Effectively, the Government are saying that if, in the course of negotiations, Britain was unable to secure the rights of British nationals living abroad, it would consider sending home EU nationals in retaliation. Let me put it another way: the Government are willing to put the lives of millions of people living here in limbo, and also the lives of their dependants, to secure the position of people who have chosen to make their life elsewhere. How can that be right? I have to say to the Government that this is not good enough.

Yesterday, we had an expansion on the Government's position from a spokesperson, who said this:

"At last night's meeting of the 1922 committee Theresa was very clear about the position of EU nationals in Britain, and argued that it was equally important to consider the rights of British nationals living abroad".

I am all in favour of the UK Government doing all they can to secure the rights of UK nationals living in the rest of Europe, but it should not be at the expense of the security of families who are living, working and paying taxes here. The effect of this position is to prioritise British nationals living abroad at the expense of those living here, and I cannot defend that. I would argue that the best way for our Government to strengthen the position of British nationals living abroad is to make a decisive unilateral move now to secure the rights of

those from other countries who are living here. Surely that would build the trust and good will that have been sorely lacking in the aftermath of the Brexit vote.

There is no reason at all why this issue needs to get mixed up in the negotiations with Europe. It was this Government's decision to make these 3 million people an issue in the negotiations, and it is entirely within the gift of the UK Government to remove this uncertainty today and commit to changing the immigration rules. Although I understand the Minister's argument that giving status to anyone who is already here before the UK formally leaves the UK could be an incentive for others to come here, he could easily fix that by making it clear that those with the right to stay have to have been resident in this country before 23 June, referendum day. It is very simple; a national insurance number would prove it. According to international convention, people should not have their rights retrospectively eroded. Does it not follow that people who have made a life here, which was perfectly legal for them to do, should not have the rug pulled from underneath them?

There is another more serious implication of the failure to take away the uncertainty. It will create the conditions for the climate of hostility that we have seen since the referendum to continue, and with it the potential for abuse and violence. That is not something that any Home Secretary or Home Office Minister should put his or her name to. If the Government's formal position is that they might in due course ask people to go home, it can only give encouragement to those who wish to stir up division and hatred in our communities.

**Dr Eilidh Whiteford (Banff and Buchan) (SNP):** Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that it is quite wrong for the Government to use these people as pawns either in the Brexit negotiations or in the Tory leadership contest?

**Andy Burnham:** I could not agree with the hon. Lady more. That is exactly how these people feel. There have been quotes in the papers from people saying that that is the feeling they have been left with. Many of those who work in our NHS, our schools and our universities can go and work elsewhere, and some of them are highly sought-after individuals. If we do not send a clear message to them, others will.

**Tommy Sheppard (Edinburgh East) (SNP):** I agree entirely with the thrust of the right hon. Gentleman's argument. May I ask him to comment on one practical consideration? Many people in my constituency are deciding that they wish to apply for citizenship, as one of the options available to them, but they complain that it is very difficult. For example, my constituent Carmen Huesa, who has been here for 19 years, is a Spanish-born senior researcher at the University of Edinburgh. She has said that the application forms are very complicated; that they require information that, because she has been here for two decades, is not available any more; and that the fees are a bit of a barrier. Does the right hon. Gentleman think that while we are sorting out the mess, it would be a statement of intent from the Government if they at least committed to fast-tracking applications for British citizenship from EU citizens who have made their lives in this country, waiving the fees and putting additional support units in the UK Visas and Immigration offices to help with processing?

**Andy Burnham:** That would be something. If the Minister got up today and said that, perhaps these people would feel a little more valued than they do. We will have to wait to see whether anything is forthcoming. It is right for the hon. Gentleman to say that putting obstacles in people's way and making them pay fees just increases their sense of alienation from our country. I do not believe that any Labour or Scottish National party Member wants to see that; neither, I suspect, do Conservative Members.

I was talking about the climate. There continue to be attacks, and the Metropolitan police have received three reports an hour of abuse since the referendum—a rise of more than 50%. Yesterday in Torquay, graffiti that read “EU rats go home now” was sprayed on a health centre. This is not on. The Government could do something about this. If this climate carries on, it could have serious implications for the NHS and other public services. People who voted leave—I say this while looking at the hon. Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip—did not vote for this. They did not vote for their country to become a less welcoming, more hostile place, but in the absence of action and leadership from the Government, that is exactly what is beginning to happen. Only they can change it, and they need to do so now.

**Keith Vaz** *rose*—

**Andy Burnham:** I will give way a couple more times before I finish, and of course I will give way to the Chairman of the Home Affairs Committee.

**Keith Vaz:** I am most grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way a second time. Does he agree that it would help the Government's bargaining position with the other EU countries immensely if the next British Prime Minister went to Brussels for the negotiations and said that he or she had already granted the right to remain? The position of the 1.3 million British citizens would therefore be secured. That would help them; it would not hinder them, as the Home Secretary has suggested.

**Andy Burnham:** Of course. It is impossible to deny the simple power of what my right hon. Friend has just said. The generous, open-minded gesture of saying now that people are welcome here would not just improve our position in negotiations and strengthen the position of British nationals living abroad; it would say something very important about our country and how it has not changed after the referendum. That is why the Government should do it.

I want to end on a personal note. My wife, Marie-France, is a Dutch national, and she has been here for 26 years since we met at university. In that time, she has been a volunteer working with young people who have learning disabilities. She has been involved in our children's schools. She has run a business and employed people. Following the death of her sister Claire a decade ago, she has raised thousands and thousands of pounds through Race for Life for Cancer Research UK. I will be honest; she cried and cried after the Brexit result was announced. Although she has paid tax here for more than 20 years, she was not able to cast a vote in that momentous decision. She has never been able to vote for me in a general election, although she often threatens

that she would not vote for me if she could. As a result of Brexit, she and other EU nationals could even lose their right to vote in local elections—that is no longer guaranteed unless there is a change in the law. The old saying “No taxation without representation” does not currently apply to the 3 million EU nationals living among us. We could say that this country is already treating them as second-class citizens; they will be even worse off if we do not rectify the situation we are discussing today.

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald** (Glasgow South) (SNP): I can trace the alienation the right hon. Gentleman mentioned in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh East (Tommy Sheppard) back to the point when this House refused to give EU nationals the vote in this referendum. We gave them the vote for the independence referendum in Scotland. Does the right hon. Gentleman regret that decision by the Government?

**Andy Burnham:** It was entirely wrong. As I said, what happened to no taxation without representation? I cannot defend a situation in which British nationals had the vote in the referendum even if they were living abroad but people living and paying taxes here did not. There was a basic unfairness in that, which needs to be corrected.

We have got this the wrong way around, and I sincerely hope that the Government will act soon to confirm the legal right of EU nationals to be here. Rather than dragging it out grudgingly, should we not take this opportunity to do the opposite and show them how much we value them by giving them that right to have their say at elections? We could go further, as the Institute for Public Policy Research has suggested and the hon. Member for Edinburgh East (Tommy Sheppard) said a moment ago, and offer British citizenship for free to any EU national working in our national health service or other public services.

**Callum McCaig** (Aberdeen South) (SNP): I agree very much with what the shadow Home Secretary is saying. The fact that British expats—or immigrants to other countries, as they should perhaps be known—had the right to vote in the referendum, whereas EU nationals living here did not, really underlines the crass nature of using EU nationals living here as a bargaining chip in negotiations. That is despicable and should end.

**Andy Burnham:** I could not agree more. As I have been outlining, the thrust of Government policy is already to treat them as second-class citizens, because they do not have the same voting rights as other citizens. If they are now to be left in the lurch for two or three years, how will they feel at the end of that process? What will they think of our country? What will the countries that they come from think of us? I do not think any of us—certainly on the Opposition Benches—want that to happen.

Those are big questions and are perhaps for another day. Today, we have a very simple decision to make. We have an opportunity to do the right thing, take away our constituents' worries and improve the climate on the streets of our communities. It is no secret that I have a high regard for the Home Secretary, even going so far as to give her a backhanded endorsement via Twitter at

[Andy Burnham]

the weekend. I have seen her show leadership on difficult issues in the past, and I urge her to do so again tonight. Real leadership would be giving her MPs the chance to vote to take the uncertainty away and return a degree of stability to an uncertain and worried country. By passing the simple motion before us, we can send a simple message to those who have chosen to make their life here: we value you, and you are welcome here.

**Dr Alan Whitehead** (Southampton, Test) (Lab): EU citizens working in the health service are at this moment receiving abuse from patients with whom they are working, on the grounds that they should not be working in the health service and should be going home. Will my right hon. Friend invite the Health Secretary to give a very strong statement of support for all those EU citizens working in our health service, who should have the right to stay for as long as their services can be of good for this country?

**Andy Burnham:** My hon. Friend has raised a crucial point. I have read out some comments from health professionals that have been reported in *The Guardian*. I have another here, from a German GP:

“I have lived and worked here for 16 years. It feels as if 50% of the population in the UK doesn’t want me here any more. I feel as if a rug has been pulled out from under my feet.”

If people feel that they have no choice but to leave because they do not feel welcome, what will happen to our health service or to the time that people wait for a GP appointment? What would happen to the pressure on A&E, and to hospital waiting lists? Our NHS is utterly dependent on EU nationals who come to work here, and if they choose to leave, the NHS would be put at severe risk. That is why we should act. It is right for our public services and for those individuals and their families, but it is also right for us as a country to take this action tonight, so that we send a message from this Parliament to Europe and the rest of the world.

Yes, people have expressed frustrations with the EU, but our country and its people have not changed. We are still that same place that has been renowned the world over for doing the fair, right and decent thing. Amid all the chaos in our politics, let us take a step back today towards sanity and stability, and pass this motion overwhelmingly.

3.55 pm

**The Minister for Immigration (James Brokenshire):** The Labour party has called for a debate on the status of EU nationals, following the EU referendum less than two weeks ago and the decision by the British people to leave the European Union. I echo some of the words used by the right hon. Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham), who opened the debate by underlining that EU nationals in this country are truly valued members of our community and welcome here—I think those were the words he used, and I wish to share them at the outset of this debate.

As the motion makes clear, approximately 3 million European Union nationals currently live in Britain. There can be no doubt that in this country EU nationals make an invaluable contribution to our economy, our society and our daily lives.

**Dr Eilidh Whiteford** *rose*—

**Margaret Ferrier** (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (SNP) *rose*—

**James Brokenshire:** I would like to make progress and then I will give way.

Up and down the United Kingdom, people from European Union member states are caring for the elderly, tending the sick in hospitals, teaching our children, volunteering for our charities, setting up and working in businesses and providing important local services. There are nearly 250,000 EU workers in the public sector, and, as has been said, in September 2015, 9.4% of NHS doctors and 6.3% of NHS nurses in England were from an EU country. Almost 125,000 EU students study at UK universities. More than that, everyone in the House, and people up and down the country, will hold EU nationals dear as friends, family members and members of their communities. We all recognise the contribution made to this country by EU nationals, and they should be proud of that contribution.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**James Brokenshire:** I am spoiled for choice, but I will give way to the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Dr Whiteford).

**Dr Eilidh Whiteford:** More than 4,000 EU nationals live in my constituency and do essential jobs in our NHS and our schools. They also work in our private sector and play a critical role in our fish processing sector. The Government’s failure to offer reassurance on the future status of those EU nationals is causing not only distress but huge economic uncertainty. Will the Minister take this opportunity to guarantee that those already living and working here will have the right to stay?

**James Brokenshire:** I will come on to the points that the hon. Lady raises, but I recognise the contribution that so many EU citizens make to many aspects of our life and economy, as well as the issues that she highlighted such as the fishing industry in Scotland.

**Mark Pritchard** (The Wrekin) (Con): Do not the Government, Her Majesty’s loyal Opposition, the minority parties and particularly those listening to or reporting this debate have a responsibility at this time to realise that what we say and how we say it is vital? I welcome the fact that the Minister has not said that anybody needs to return home and that he has recognised the contribution made by EU citizens in the private and public sectors. I, for one, say that they are very welcome in Shropshire.

**James Brokenshire:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right to make that point about the contribution of EU nationals in his constituency. I will come on to make more points about the approach the Government are taking.

**Andrew Gwynne** (Denton and Reddish) (Lab): The Minister will know there has been a huge increase in hate crimes, not just against EU nationals but against other foreign nationals in the UK, mainly as a result of

the extreme views on the excesses of the political margins becoming regretfully more mainstream as a result of the fall-out from 23 June. Is not the right thing to do to quash this once and for all to say we will put the EU nationality issue to bed by saying these people are welcome in an open and fair United Kingdom?

**James Brokenshire:** I will go on to talk about some of the issues in our communities, but at this stage I want to give a very unequivocal message to those who perpetrate hate and division in our communities and in our societies: it is unacceptable that people should seek to cause division, to bully, to harass or to put graffiti on people's walls as a consequence of their nationality. That is why the police have taken very firm action. That does not represent the country I believe in. The Government will continue to take firm action against anyone who has been involved in that sort of activity.

**Huw Merriman (Bexhill and Battle) (Con):** In the week before the referendum vote, I spent time at 25 of my local schools. It was heartbreaking to hear the children saying, "Will my mum or my dad have to go back?" I never wanted this event to occur and I take it a little sorely from people on the other side of the camp who now proclaim the right to this. Will the Minister reaffirm the position of the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary, who have said there will be no immediate changes in the circumstances of European nationals currently residing in the UK? On that basis, nobody should be fearful right now.

**James Brokenshire:** My hon. Friend is right that there are no changes to the current situation. We remain a member state of the European Union. Therefore, those rights remain while we remain a member of the European Union.

Perhaps it will help the House if I respond very directly to the false claims that the Government in some way see EU citizens as bargaining chips. In the approach the Government take and the agreements we make, we will never treat EU citizens as pawns in some kind of cynical game of negotiation chess. That does not represent the values of this country or the values of the Government, which are to treat the people who come to this country with dignity and respect.

**Catherine West:** Will the Minister apologise for the Government being woefully inadequate and underprepared on this vital issue?

**James Brokenshire:** The Government are taking these issues into very careful consideration. I will come on to explain some of the challenges, some of the intricacies and some of the complexities that lie behind all this.

**Several hon. Members rose—**

**James Brokenshire:** If I may just make a little bit more progress, I will be generous with interventions, as I always am.

We will look to secure a fair deal for EU citizens, as we secure a fair deal for British citizens in the EU. That is the responsible approach, and that is what we will do. We want to be able to guarantee the legal status of EU

nationals who are living in the UK and I am confident we will be able to do just that. We must also win the same rights for British nationals living in European countries and it will be an early objective for the Government to achieve those things together. As the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary have made clear and as I stated on Monday, there will in any event be no immediate changes in the circumstances of EU nationals in the UK. Currently, they can continue to enter and live in the UK as they have been doing.

**Andy Burnham:** I am struggling to follow the logic of the Minister's position. He made a very angry statement a minute ago saying that they were not pawns, but he is saying explicitly that there is a negotiation here and that the Government will not make commitments to them until they have got commitments over there. That is precisely what they are. Why is he linking the two issues? Why does he not just say to people living here, working here and paying taxes here that they are welcome to stay, and deal with the British nationals issue another day?

**James Brokenshire:** As I said in response to the urgent question earlier this week, it is important to look at all these issues together. This is about ensuring that we look at these matters in this way. As I have said, I am confident that we will be able to work to secure and guarantee the legal status of EU nationals living here in conjunction with the rights of British citizens. It is important for the Government to fight for the rights of British citizens as well. I am genuinely surprised that the right hon. Gentleman is questioning that in some way. It is notable that his motion makes no reference to that at all.

It is important to put on record that those who have been continuously lawfully resident in the UK for five years qualify for permanent residence. It is an important point for those who have raised points about constituents and family members who have been in this country for a long time that those rights already exist, so they should have no fear about that. There is no current requirement for such people to apply for documentation from the Home Office to acquire this status.

**Mr Robin Walker (Worcester) (Con):** I am grateful for my right hon. Friend's efforts to fight for the interests of both UK citizens in the EU and EU citizens in the UK. I asked the Prime Minister a question about investment in this country. Two of the largest inward investors in my constituency, Yamazaki Mazak and Bosch, have asked me to push for the strongest possible negotiation on behalf of EU citizens already in this country being able to stay. Many of them, alongside thousands of local people, are their employees in Worcester. I am grateful for the Minister's assurances, but I urge him to continue to make this the absolutely first task of our negotiations.

**James Brokenshire:** I can certainly give my hon. Friend precisely that reassurance. The Government fully appreciate the importance of giving certainty to EU citizens when the UK exits from the European Union. Addressing this issue is a priority that we intend to deal with as soon as possible. [*Interruption.*] Let me finish the point.

[James Brokenshire]

As the Prime Minister has made clear, decisions on issues relating to the UK's exit from the EU will need to be made by a new Prime Minister.

**Crispin Blunt** (Reigate) (Con): I think this is the kernel of the problem. The Minister needs to reassure EU citizens in the United Kingdom long before the moment when we leave the European Union. The problem of linking the issue of British citizens in the EU is that a deal on our leaving the EU is unlikely until we actually leave it. Getting certainty about British citizens cannot be linked to the position of EU citizens. It is wrong in principle, and we would be much better off securing their position by making a generous statement of our position now. I understand that there are legal implications about EU citizens coming to the UK from now on, and perhaps that should be the issue to focus on and support the Minister to deal with in view of our understanding of the difficulties he faces. It is the link with British citizens that is causing him all these problems.

**James Brokenshire:** Is important for this Government to stand up for the rights of British citizens overseas. I am surprised if my hon. Friend is in some way questioning that. It is the Government's responsibility to fight for the rights of British citizens. As I have indicated, the Prime Minister has stated that this will be a matter for the new Prime Minister, but it will be an urgent priority for all the reasons that right hon. and hon. Members have given.

**Margaret Ferrier:** The Minister is generous in allowing interventions. My constituent Mrs Pearson is a Maltese national who has lived in the UK for 42 years. She has built her life in Scotland and has contributed not only economically, but socially and culturally. Does the Minister not agree that it is absolutely absurd that my 78-year-old constituent has to live in worry when the Government could sort this out now, so that she and others from Malta could have indefinite leave to remain?

**James Brokenshire:** I hope that the hon. Lady noted what I said earlier about the right to permanent residence for those who have been here lawfully for five years. I made that point very carefully and very firmly, as I did in response to the urgent question, because people have raised concerns about the issue. I wanted to be very specific and very clear, to give precisely the sort of reassurance that the hon. Lady's constituent needs, and I hope that what I have said has provided that reassurance.

**Jeremy Quin** (Horsham) (Con): The Minister has referred to European students. I have been contacted by a constituent who is about to embark on a medical degree in the Netherlands. I think that this issue is a priority, and I hope that we shall soon be able to reassure students that they will be able to continue their degree courses.

**James Brokenshire:** The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills has been actively involved in reassuring students who are about to embark on their studies. I was intending to deal with that point later.

**Stella Creasy** (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op): Will the Minister give way?

**James Brokenshire:** Of course I will give way to the hon. Lady. I will always be generous to her.

**Stella Creasy:** Is there not a cruel irony in what the Minister is saying? Many of those who fought for Britain to vote to leave the European Union did so on the basis of the concept that we would somehow retain sovereignty over our own decision making, yet at the very point when we could exercise that sovereignty—when we as a House could vote unconditionally to give the EU citizens who are currently in the United Kingdom security about their status here—the Minister is choosing to prevaricate and to link that to decisions in the European Union. If the House votes for the motion, will he not accept that it has made an unequivocal statement about the sovereignty of the UK Parliament, and will he therefore give those people the status that they deserve?

**James Brokenshire:** I reiterate that we will act fairly. It is important for us to take these steps with a cool head, in a calm way, to secure the best possible outcomes for EU citizens who are here, as well as for British citizens overseas.

Further considerations must be taken into account. As I said on Monday, it has been suggested by Members of Parliament and others—and it has been suggested again today—that the Government could fully guarantee EU nationals living in the UK the right to stay now, but where would the right hon. Member for Leigh draw the line? I think that he has drawn it in one place already by suggesting 23 June, but what about 24 June? What about the EU nationals who arrived later that week, or those who will arrive in the autumn to study at our world-class universities? Or should we draw the line in the future—for example, at the point at which article 50 is invoked, or when the exit negotiations conclude?

It must also be recognised that, as well as working to protect the rights of EU nationals in the UK, the Government have a duty to protect the rights of UK nationals who currently reside in countries throughout the EU. Just as EU nationals are making a tremendous contribution to life in the United Kingdom, UK nationals are contributing to the economies and societies of the countries that belong to the EU.

**Andy Burnham:** Surely 23 June was the moment when the position changed. Surely anyone who came here before that date came here in different circumstances. It is easy to trace everything to that day.

May I return the Minister to the issue of the link with British nationals? The Government have a responsibility to people who are living here today, are worried about their future, and are feeling insecure. Why is the Minister saying that people who have chosen, voluntarily, to make a life in another country are as important, if not more important, to the Government as those who are already here in our communities?

**James Brokenshire:** Do I understand that the right hon. Gentleman is suggesting that we should not be standing up for British citizens? They are British citizens, wherever they may be in the world. It is important for us to ensure that there are appropriate protections for British citizens, whether or not they are in the EU, and also for EU citizens who are here.

As for the timing issue, I repeat what I said about 24 June. We remain an EU member state until we leave, and we are therefore subject to all the existing EU laws and requirements in that regard. All I am saying to the right hon. Gentleman, very firmly, is that drawing up cut-off dates is not as straightforward as he is suggesting, because of the continuing rights that will exist in relation to EU citizens who have arrived since the referendum result, and the need to ensure that this issue is properly addressed.

**Yvette Cooper** (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): The Immigration Minister is right to say that we should be concerned about the interests of British ex-pats. Perhaps he can tell the House whether he has been in touch with the Spanish Interior Minister or other Ministers across the EU, or whether these are simply words and a delaying strategy. If he has been in touch with them, can he tell us whether any of those other Governments want to play a trading game with people's lives and other people's citizens, because I do not believe they do, and if they do not, why can he not just get on with this—listen to all Members in all parts of the House and give some guarantees now to the EU citizens who are settled here?

**James Brokenshire:** I understand the right hon. Lady's point about certainty, and we want to give certainty at the earliest possible opportunity, but it is not as straightforward as she suggests for the reasons I have already mentioned. Of course conversations have taken place at different levels of government with other member states, and clearly we want to see that this certainty is provided for British citizens in EU member states as well as for EU citizens here. That is why I make the point about this being a priority. But we should not pretend that this is a straightforward task. There is a range of practical, financial and legal considerations. As part of this work, the Government will need to consider the range of circumstances of those who could enjoy these protections, and the form of the protections. For example, an EU student who has embarked on a higher education course might have differing requirements to an EU student who has just graduated from university and is looking for work.

This issue is not simply about the immigration status of an individual. Under free movement law, EU citizens' rights are far broader than just the right to reside in the UK. There are employment rights, entitlements to benefits and pensions, rights of access to public services, and rights to run a business, which are so closely aligned with the right to provide cross-border services, as well as the ability to be joined by family members and extended family members, in some cases from countries outside the EU. Of course, under current arrangements these rights extend to European economic area and Swiss nationals, who are not in the EU. They all need to be considered, and we must remember that people do not have to register with the UK authorities to enjoy basic EU rights to reside. We will need to work out how we identify fairly and properly the people who are affected.

**Ms Gisela Stuart** (Birmingham, Edgbaston) (Lab): It is of course possible to make life exceedingly difficult, and that is what the Immigration Minister is trying to do. Will he listen to what my right hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham) said, which was

very straightforward: on EU citizens' rights to residency, we acknowledge that whatever rights they had on 23 June they have now, end of story?

**James Brokenshire:** Obviously, I hear the desire for that simplicity, but it is not as straightforward as the right hon. Lady would like to present. She might reflect on some of the themes I have highlighted, because it is important that we get this right, not just for now, but for the years to come. It is about getting the right deal—the fairest deal—for those who are here, and that is what we remain committed to doing. There will need to be detailed and painstaking work examining each of these rights and the different circumstances in which people find themselves, to ensure that there are no unforeseen or unintended consequences. That work will be led by the Europe unit based at the Cabinet Office, which will work in close consultation with all Departments with an interest.

It is important for the House today to underline to EU nationals that they continue to be welcome in the UK. Alongside the statements made by the Prime Minister that there will be no immediate changes in the circumstances of EU nationals, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills has published guidance for EU students to provide additional reassurance to those who are about to embark on a course.

**James Berry** (Kingston and Surbiton) (Con): As a fellow London MP, I am sure my right hon. Friend has received many letters from EU migrants working hard, earning money and starting their lives here in this country, but also from former residents and the families of former residents who live abroad. Does he agree that this whole issue of EU migrants living here and Brits living abroad should be hived off from the main negotiations and dealt with first, and as a priority, between Heads of State now, because we must all have an interest in preserving the status of EU migrants here and Brits abroad?

**James Brokenshire:** As I think I indicated in response to other interventions, this is a priority for the Government and we recognise the issues that have been highlighted, fairly, by colleagues across the House. That is why, for the reasons given by my hon. Friend, the matter is being given emphasis and priority within the Government. Despite some across the House having sought, unfairly, to sow doubt and create uncertainty, people should take a message of reassurance from the contributions to the debate and our statements that the intent is to solve the issues quickly.

In recent days, we have seen some appalling hate crimes perpetrated against EU nationals and others living in the UK, including damage to a Polish community centre in Hammersmith, hateful leaflets targeted at children in Cambridgeshire and abuse hurled at people walking in the streets. The Metropolitan police has said that 67 hate crimes are being reported every day. Hate crime of any kind has absolutely no place in our society. We will not stand for these attacks, which should be investigated by the police.

**Andy Slaughter:** I thank the Minister for mentioning the extremely sobering attack in Hammersmith. We are waiting to hear whether, like the hon. Member for

[*Andy Slaughter*]

Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson), the Minister will support the motion tonight, but it does not sound like it. Indeed, it sounds rather as though he is under instructions not to, which it makes it doubly bad that his boss the Home Secretary is not here to answer for herself—he probably agrees with that.

On the point about community, I spoke on this issue to one of my constituency schools in the education centre. Many of the pupils' parents were born outside the UK, and I saw real concern on their faces. That is what we are dealing with now and that is why we need an answer to the question today, not in two years' time.

**James Brokenshire:** As I have already indicated, this is a clear priority in relation to agreements with our EU partners. It is absolutely right that we condemn the activities of anyone involved in such incidents in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. Equally, and as I have said, there are no changes to existing EU rights while we remain a member of the EU. I believe that we will be successful in securing those rights and will seek to treat fairly the EU nationals who are here.

As I said, hate crime of any kind has absolutely no place in our society. We will not stand for these attacks, and they should be investigated by the police.

**Ian Blackford** (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): The Minister highlights hate crime and our responsibility to look after EU citizens who are here. Will he come and meet our constituents? A young French teacher in my constituency is living in fear and is alarmed about whether she will be allowed to stay here in the long term. Why do we not do the right thing collectively today and say that the people who are here are citizens of our country and deserve the full rights and support that we can give them? This is not about negotiating with Europe. Let us take that off the table and do the right thing for those who live in this country.

**James Brokenshire:** That is why, as I have said several times, we are working and will work to guarantee the rights of those who are here while also protecting the rights of British citizens. I remain confident that we will be able to do that, and people should therefore take a message of reassurance from this debate about the Government's intention to act fairly and appropriately. Those are the values that I stand for and that is the approach that we will take.

**Mark Pritchard:** I welcome the reassurances that the Minister has given to the House today. From what we have heard, I think there is a misunderstanding about the status of EU nationals in the minds of some Members. If that is the case here, it is more likely—or as likely—to be the case outside. As a practical step, has the Home Office put something on its website to say what that status is now and will be in the future?

**James Brokenshire:** We are clear as to the existing rights of EU citizens, and I have made the point in relation to the five-year residency issues. I am also convening a meeting with ambassadors of EU member states to explain the steps that we are taking in response to threats to communities, and to underline some of the

key messages I have given today so that they can reassure any of their citizens who contact them about this.

**Andy Burnham:** I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way once again; he has been incredibly generous. I just want to clear one thing up before he concludes his remarks: how do the Government propose to vote on the motion? One might have the impression, having listened to him, that they are getting ready to vote against it, but it has been suggested that they might abstain. Let us be clear that if the Government abstain, the motion will be carried and the message will go out from this House tonight that people are welcome here and that they will be able to stay.

**James Brokenshire:** My concluding remarks might be helpful in responding to the right hon. Gentleman's intervention.

As I said on Monday, EU nationals can have our full and unreserved reassurance that their right to enter, work, study and live in the UK remains unchanged. We value the tremendous contribution they make every day in towns, cities and villages up and down the country. We fully expect that the legal status of EU nationals living in the UK, and of UK nationals living in EU member states, will be properly protected. Given that both the UK and the EU want to maintain a close relationship, we are confident that we will work together and that both EU and British citizens will be protected through reciprocal arrangements. As part of the negotiations, we want to be able to conclude these matter as quickly as possible.

We therefore have great sympathy and alignment with the themes contained in the Opposition's motion—I do not think that we are very far apart in that regard. However, as I have set out, any decision to pre-empt our future negotiations would risk undermining our ability to secure those arrangements and protect the interests of EU nationals and British nationals alike and to get the best outcomes for both. That is why we are unable to support the motion tonight.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Natascha Engel):** Order. I give notice that there will a six-minute limit on Back-Bench speeches, although that does not apply to the Scottish National party's Front-Bench spokesperson, Stuart McDonald.

4.27 pm

**Stuart C. McDonald** (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP): The day after the referendum, Scotland's First Minister directly addressed nationals of other EU states, telling them,

"you remain welcome here, this is your home and your contribution is valued."

It was a simple but powerful statement, and one that was warmly welcomed. Indeed, it was echoed today by the shadow Home Secretary. Like that statement, this motion has our full support.

In contrast, the Home Secretary's comments were gravely misjudged, causing apprehension where there did not have to be any, and creating uncertainty when she has the power to provide clarity. What makes the

situation all the more frustrating and ridiculous, for reasons I will come to, is that it seems blindingly obvious that EU nationals will be able to remain here as and when—and indeed if—Brexit occurs. But people need to hear that loud and clear from the Home Secretary. She must put that beyond any doubt.

On Monday, Members on both sides of the House united to tell the Home Secretary to do just that, and I have no doubt that the same will happen today. The same arguments, based on both simple common decency and plain common sense, remain overwhelming and unanswerable.

We have heard already, as we will hear again today, about the friends and family, the colleagues and the constituents from other member states who are now uncertain about their future. We have also heard, as we will hear again today, about the valued staff, the key personnel and the vital public service workers from other EU countries whose future now seems uncertain. It is utterly unacceptable to expect people to live their lives with such uncertainty. It is a disgraceful way to treat our EU citizens.

On Monday the Minister expressed genuine sympathy with many of those arguments, and it is abundantly clear from what he has said that he wants to get us to a position whereby EU citizens can and will remain in the country. Sympathy and expressions of hope, however, are not enough. Clarity and reassurance now are essential, and they can and should be delivered.

The reasons offered by the Government for refusing to provide that clarity are absurd and bizarre. On Monday the Minister was unhappy—he is unhappy again today—at the use of terms such as “bargaining chip”, but he himself said that securing the status of EU migrants in the UK, alongside that of UK citizens in the EU,

“needs to be part of the negotiations.”—[*Official Report*, 4 July 2016; Vol. 612, c. 616.]

That sounds exactly like a bargaining chip, because that is what it is, as his own hon. Friends have said. It is because the rights of EU citizens are being used as bargaining chips that the Government are not guaranteeing them.

That is as absurd as it is wrong and unethical, because it is a rubbish bargaining chip. How credible is it for the next Prime Minister to tell EU states, “If you don’t give us what we want, we’ll cut off our nose to spite our face, and if we don’t get the deal we are demanding, we’ll attempt to destroy ourselves by withdrawing rights from friends and loved ones, colleagues and neighbours”? The shadow Home Secretary and, indeed, the Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee have already skewered the logic of that tit-for-tat approach.

**Dr Eilidh Whiteford:** Does my hon. Friend agree that the best way to protect the rights of British citizens living in other parts of the EU is to give a simple reassurance that EU nationals living here will have their rights protected?

**Stuart C. McDonald:** I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend. It is not a complicated matter. If we cannot persuade the Home Secretary on the grounds of common decency or common sense—that sometimes happens in immigration debates, unfortunately—perhaps we can

appeal to her self-interest by gently pointing out to her that she is, unusually, making a fool of herself by taking this approach.

I genuinely believe—I certainly hope—that I am not being naïve in saying that I do not for a minute believe that the Government are realistically even contemplating removing rights from millions of EU migrants. I think that all hon. Members know that and I think that the Minister knows it; he did everything he could on Monday to hint at it without saying so explicitly. What is more, the European Commission, other member states and everyone else involved in negotiations know it, too. Sadly, the only people who really matter in all of this—the EU nationals themselves—do not know it, because the Home Secretary is not saying it and the climate that they are living in tells them the opposite. The Home Secretary needs to fix that now.

**Joanna Cherry** (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): My hon. Friend has talked about us cutting off our nose to spite our face. I met the principal of Edinburgh Napier University in my constituency last Friday and she has been advised that potential staff members from other EU countries are withdrawing from job offers. Does my hon. Friend agree that if this uncertainty is allowed to continue, it will seriously damage the university sector in Scotland and across the United Kingdom?

**Stuart C. McDonald:** That is a perfect example of the uncertainty we are talking about and it has to be brought to an end. As my hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (Dr Whiteford) has said, this does not require a detailed statement on exactly what form of leave is required or the precise mechanisms for implementing it. It requires a simple statement that all EU nationals in the UK today will continue to enjoy leave to remain in the UK, regardless of Brexit, and, preferably, that they will enjoy such leave on conditions that are at least as favourable as those currently in place. A simple sentence from the Minister or the Home Secretary is all that is required.

As the Chair of the Home Affairs Committee has said, it is also absurd to argue that the UK’s position in Brexit talks would be undermined by such a move. On the contrary, it would show that we are approaching any negotiations in good faith, co-operatively, realistically and with integrity. The Home Secretary’s posturing, on the other hand, would engender nothing but ill-feeling and bad blood.

**Peter Grant** (Glenrothes) (SNP): My hon. Friend has said that EU citizens who live in the UK still feel uncertainty. Does he agree that another group who need to be told in no uncertain terms that those people are welcome are the racists who are carrying out racially motivated attacks on EU and other nationals, and that they need to be given an indisputable message that those EU citizens are welcome here and that they are here to stay for ever if they want to do so?

**Stuart C. McDonald:** My hon. Friend is absolutely spot on. I will come to that issue shortly. As I have said, the Home Secretary’s negotiating position is complete and utter nonsense. Sadly, that is not out of keeping with too much of her immigration policy and indeed with too much of what passes for debate on matters of immigration.

[Stuart C. McDonald]

Finally, since the referendum result Members have quite rightly gone out of their way to recognise the hugely positive contribution made by nationals of other countries, including other EU countries, to the UK's economy, society, communities and families. Members have condemned the xenophobia, racism and hostility that many are encountering.

There can be no shadow of a doubt that political discourse and rhetoric during, and for many years before, the EU referendum have been factors in legitimising and emboldening that very xenophobia. There has been intemperate talk of "swarms", "waves", "benefit tourists" and "NHS tourism" and an explicit Government goal of creating a hostile climate. Instead of tackling anti-migrant myths, there has been acquiescence. Instead of taking on the myth peddlers, too many have sought to ape their rhetoric. There has been empty policy after empty policy focused only on numbers, while the other major components of migration policy—integration and planning—are completely and utterly neglected.

Those failures precede the current Government by many years, but there can be no greater example than the net migration target, which is utter baloney. Every quarter we go through the same political pantomime of the Government wildly missing their net migration target, and the official Opposition demanding that something must be done, even though they have no idea what that something is.

Everybody in this Chamber knows that, whether or not we are in the EU, the net migration target is a complete myth. It has allowed the poisonous fiction to grow that the presence of EU nationals and others in this country is some sort of terrible problem that can be solved simply by turning off the migration tap without consequence, and that getting EU nationals to leave will therefore be a good thing.

**Andy Burnham:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. I just wanted to see whether his understanding is the same as mine. I think that we had an indication at the end of the Minister's speech that the Government are planning to abstain on this motion tonight. It is a motion that gives EU nationals a right to remain—that is what it talks of. Does he agree that, if they abstain and there are enough people on the Opposition Benches to carry the motion, that will be the position of the House of Commons? There will be a resolution that people can stay and, in the future, the Government will not be able to take that away.

**Stuart C. McDonald:** I certainly hope that that transpires and becomes the case. The message should go out loud and clear from here that it is Parliament's will that all EU nationals in this country will continue to enjoy the rights that they have just now and on the same terms and conditions.

I am also asking the House to think again about how we approach the debates on immigration. As I was about to say, it is absolutely no coincidence that what was an already desperate and ugly campaign went completely off the rails after 26 May when the latest net migration figures were published. Politicians have turned the net migration target into some sort of Holy Grail,

regardless of the fact that it is utterly unobtainable, and we have reaped the disastrous consequences in the weeks since those results.

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** I am very grateful to the other Stuart McDonald for giving way. I am not suggesting for a minute that this is Scottish National party policy, but something that has been on my mind for a number of years is that, given that we know the economic benefits of immigration, why do we not shift responsibility for it away from the Home Office to the Treasury? Would that not change the terms of the debate?

**Stuart C. McDonald:** My honourable namesake makes a very good point. My point is that it is time to do things very, very differently. A few months ago, I went to Edinburgh university to meet Professor Christina Boswell who had arranged a discussion about the dangerous disconnect between political rhetoric and reality when it comes to immigration. She highlighted the launch by the German Government, back in 2000, of a cross-party commission on immigration. The German Immigration Commission brought together the main political parties, as well as representatives of business, trade unions, religious and migrant groups and immigration experts. It allowed for evidence-based discussion on all aspects of immigration, and sought to build consensus around policy reform. It examined Germany's demographic and economic needs as well as challenges related to the social impacts of immigration and policies for integration. Perhaps more significantly, it changed the whole tenor of debate in Germany, normalising the idea that Germany was, and would need to remain, a country of immigration, and encouraged a more grounded and factually informed discussion of what that would entail.

We can perhaps learn too from the Government of Canada, who just yesterday launched a national conversation on immigration. Their starting point is:

"Although times and conditions may have changed, 21st-century newcomers to Canada have retained...innovative spirit, enriching the communities where they settle and helping to ensure the Canada of tomorrow remains as dynamic as the country of yesterday.

Canada's strength lies in its diversity. Indeed, the story of Canadian immigration is inseparable from the story of Canada itself." The conversation document seeks to engage all Canada's citizens in a grown-up discussion of all the key questions, from

"How many newcomers should we welcome to Canada in 2017 and beyond?"

to

"Is it important for Canada to continue to show leadership in global migration? If so, how can we best do that?"

**Ms Gisela Stuart:** Do I take it the hon. Gentleman is advocating an Australian-style points-based immigration policy?

**Stuart C. McDonald:** I do not know where the hon. Lady gets that idea. I have not mentioned Australia. What I am talking about is the Canadian national conversation.

By asking the questions I quoted and having that grown-up conversation, Canada is already showing leadership. It is time that politicians here followed that example. As well as using today's debate to praise EU

nationals and demand that the Government confirm their status, let us think too about how we can work together across parties to combat xenophobia in all possible ways and to ensure that migration policy and debates are based on evidence and honesty rather than political expediency. Anyone who wants to be Prime Minister should sign up to that approach and start by being absolutely straight about the safe and secure future of our EU nationals in this country.

4.41 pm

**Heidi Allen** (South Cambridgeshire) (Con): Thank you for calling me, Madam Deputy Speaker. I do not think I have ever been the first Back Bencher to be called. This is a record—I must be doing something right.

The emails I have received since the vote to Brexit have been like a tidal wave.

“We felt like a hurricane had hit our house”.

That was a statement made by one of the 200 of my constituents who came to a public meeting I held last Saturday to try to answer questions about the future. I say 200 because that was all we could squeeze in to the council chamber; unfortunately, another 300 or so had to be turned away.

My constituency is home to some of the best scientific and business brains in the country. The Genome Campus, the Babraham Institute, AstraZeneca, Alzheimer’s Research UK and Cambridge University colleges—what they all have in common is that their work and global reach is the result of the combined effort of EU and UK citizens, who have moved there for their brains to connect. Our local economy is a major contributor to the EU economy, not just to the UK’s. Our work is developing drugs to beat cancer, pushing medical advancement every single day. Our beloved and nationally famed hospitals, Addenbrooke’s and Papworth, rely on an international workforce making up 11% of the total, which is well above the national average of 6%. These brains have families. Their children learn in our schools, their families contribute to our local communities and they help to run our parish councils.

The irony of ironies is that on polling day I was speaking to a room full of female engineers, encouraging them to lead and inspire more young women to follow in their footsteps. Bright, young and compassionate, they are plugging our science, technology, engineering and maths skills gap, and many of them are Italian, Dutch or Spanish. These ladies—these people—are hurting. The EU is hurting. Everyone is hurting. If this is a divorce, we in this Chamber are the responsible adults and these people are our children. We have welcomed them into our family, they have enriched our family, and we now owe it to them to protect them while we find a route forward.

Not a single candidate for Prime Minister has described or treated those people as bargaining chips; nor will they allow our 1.2 million British citizens living in other EU countries to be pawns of the negotiators on the other side of the water. We must never forget that this works both ways. Our British citizens deserve to be a priority in our mind.

**Mr Alistair Carmichael** (Orkney and Shetland) (LD): The hon. Lady is taking a very human angle in this debate—an angle that it is important to remember.

Does she not agree, though, that we have an opportunity to set the tone of the negotiations—to say to our current EU partners, “This is the way that we approach this. We won’t let this have an adverse effect on your citizens”? Surely that will make myriad areas of discussion that much easier.

**Heidi Allen:** I thank the right hon. Gentleman. It is interesting, given that I am about to come to a point about lack of cross-party consensus, that what he says is almost exactly what is on my next page, so perhaps I am about to eat my words. I was about to say that I am disappointed that the cross-party consensus that led up to the referendum seems to have evaporated already, and we are back to the same old, same old. I feel that, here today, we are using these people for political point scoring, and I regret that. [*Interruption.*] It is how I feel.

Our new Prime Minister and Government will show clear leadership. The negotiations may be complex, the poker hand held close, but if we have learned one thing in the current refugee crisis, it is that people matter, and people must come before politics. I would like our new Prime Minister swiftly to establish negotiating terms of reference—a guiding principle that both Great Britain and the EU can sign up to. It should state very clearly that the lives of those disrupted by this momentous decision will be our collective priority. That would set the tone. That would be the first big test of leadership for our new Prime Minister, and I feel confident that they will rise to it.

Trust in politicians is even lower than it was when I became an MP just over a year ago, and I honestly did not think that was possible. To my Conservative colleagues, I say that our new leader must be someone who can reunite our country and lead the way back to trust. Now as never before in my lifetime, our great country must come together, but to do that, our people must have security, and certainty in their future, their family’s future, and their neighbours’ future. Without that, they will not have the strength to heal the rifts in their communities. My constituents want to play their part. They want to help, but they cannot do that on quicksand. Security is the first step back to trust. I will look to our new Prime Minister to lead by example.

4.47 pm

**Yvette Cooper** (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): I feel slightly sorry for the Immigration Minister, who has been sent out to defend the indefensible for the second time this week by his Home Secretary. I hope that he has got a very good promise of a very good job out of this. It is not the first time that he and I have debated in this House when he has been sent out while the Home Secretary has gone to hide.

The Minister’s position is still indefensible, though it has moved in the past few days alone. The Home Secretary said on Sunday that there could be no movement until the negotiations had started, and one of her aides said that the issue was a “negotiating point”, even though there was all that stuff about this not being a bargaining chip. The Foreign Secretary said that it was “absurd” to agree on the status of EU citizens before anything could be agreed in wider negotiations, and the Minister himself said that it would be “unwise” to agree the status of EU citizens before wider negotiations had taken place.

[ Yvette Cooper ]

Here is where I would probably disagree with the hon. Member for South Cambridgeshire (Heidi Allen), with whom I have agreed many times on other issues: I do not think that it is okay to leave this issue to become the first priority for a new Prime Minister in many weeks' time. It is not okay simply to leave this question to the process of EU negotiations, when we have no idea how long that will take, given that people are worried about their jobs, homes and kids' futures right now.

**Peter Kyle** (Hove) (Lab): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the issue is not just the terms that will need to be negotiated for people from the EU who are living here? The leadership that is needed is about the welcome that we give to people, who should be treated as equals in this country. She might be shocked to know that I spoke to the manager of a coffee chain recently, who was worried about the name badges that his staff wear because so many customers are making terrible comments to people serving coffee, such as "When are you going home?" Such comments have become regular now. Leadership is needed to set the tone that we have as a country, not just in relation to the nuts and bolts of people's status in this country. It is about the welcome and what kind of country we are now, after Brexit.

**Yvette Cooper:** My hon. Friend is right. This is an immensely sensitive period and all of us have a responsibility not to give succour to extremists who want to exploit it. That should mean giving confidence to people who have been settled here, often for many years, contributing to our public services or working setting up businesses.

**Mike Gapes** (Ilford South) (Lab/Co-op): May I draw to my right hon. Friend's attention to early-day motion 259, of which I am a co-sponsor, which raises exactly that point in respect of all the groups of migrants in this country, as well as the New Europeans group, with which I am pleased to be associated? Will all Members please add their name to early-day motion 259?

**Yvette Cooper:** My hon. Friend makes an important point. We all know that immigration has made a huge contribution to this country over very many centuries and that it will be important for our future.

As a result of the referendum I expect immigration rules to change for the future, and I have argued myself that free movement should be reformed even from within the EU, but there is a big difference between changing immigration rules for the future and suddenly ripping up the rights of people who are settled here, people who are living here now and have been doing so in good faith.

The Immigration Minister made three points today. First, he said that we would effectively guarantee only if the rights of British expats were also agreed. Secondly, he said that the matter was complicated because employment rules and benefit rules were also at stake. That suggests that he is saying that he might be considering ripping up the employment rules in respect of people who are here, so that they would be allowed to stay, but suddenly they might not be able to work. If he is not considering ripping up the employment rules or the

benefit rules, why does he suddenly throw that into the debate as a reason to delay securing the rights and the status of people who are here already? Thirdly, the Minister said that the matter would have to be looked at by the EU unit. As he knows, the EU unit is hardly set up at all. Staff are still being recruited. The unit has huge numbers of things to look at. It will not take any decisions until the new Prime Minister is in place and that is simply not fair on people.

Kids in the playground are being told that they have to go home. They are being bullied or teased at school and told that they might have to go home. Their parents cannot say to them, their teachers cannot say to them, and we as their MPs cannot say to them, "No. We can guarantee that you are not going to have to go home", because the Immigration Minister will not say it and the Home Secretary will not say it. Unless both of them and the whole House say it, how can their teachers and parents reassure those kids in school right now? That is why the Minister should do it. It is not a big step for him to give that reassurance now.

I agree with the Minister that he should also advocate for the rights of British expats. There are pensioners who have invested their life savings in homes in Spain or Italy. We should be standing up for them and for people who are working in France and Germany.

**Peter Grant** (Glenrothes) (SNP): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

**Yvette Cooper:** I will not, because of the shortage of time. I am sure the hon. Gentleman will have time to contribute.

By getting into what looks like a trading game of people's rights, the Minister is encouraging other Governments across Europe to get into the same trading game, and allowing them to think that this is something to be negotiated or a game to be played. Surely it would be simple just to say, "These are the rights that we are going to guarantee", and then other Governments will follow suit. Doing so would make the negotiation easier, not harder.

I know that the Minister has said very firmly that he objects to the race hatred, the repatriation campaigns and the vile things that extremists have been saying, exploiting the current uncertainty. He is right to condemn those things and I know that he believes that strongly. However, he is giving extremists succour by not resolving this and not providing certainty. He knows that the vast majority of leave voters and remain voters are appalled by this kind of extremism and believe that EU citizens who are here, as well as British ex-pats in other parts of Europe, should have their existing rights respected, so why not just sort it out now?

Let us all say together to the extremists, the bullies in the playground, those trying to attack people in the street or on the bus, and those spraying slogans on community centres: "We will not stand for this. Of course nobody is expected to go home as a result of this vote. Of course we value those who have made a contribution here." However, if we are all really to say that together, we need the Minister to say it, we need the Home Secretary to say it and we need the Prime Minister to say it. I really urge them to listen to the strong views on both sides of the House, to take a lead and to

exercise the sovereignty of this House, which we have debated for so long. Let us all just say that these people should be able to stay.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Natascha Engel):** Order. The speech limit is being reduced to four minutes.

4.55 pm

**Mrs Flick Drummond** (Portsmouth South) (Con): Like other Members of the House, I very much regret the increased reports of abuse and racism over the last two weeks. I represent a diverse and vibrant community in Portsmouth, which, as a port city, has always looked out to the wider world and welcomed people from everywhere.

As well as the traditional arrival of people as a result of trade and the Navy, we have a university with one of the fastest growing reputations in Europe. It takes in students from Europe and elsewhere, and I know how important universities' global reach is for their academic and financial wellbeing. We already hear concerns from the higher education sector that the immigration restrictions on students and academics are onerous, and that has been debated before—often in this House. Whatever happens as we negotiate our way out of the EU, we must make sure that the world-leading position of our universities is not threatened in any way.

Everyone in Portsmouth was horrified at the racist abuse against the Polish community that was daubed on a wall next to our civic war memorial last week. I hardly need to point out the contribution the Poles have made as our allies in the most tragic circumstances for their country. Anyone who listened to the Polish Member of the European Parliament who was speaking following the result of the referendum will have seen his anguish and anger at how we have been treating Poles.

Whether someone comes to the UK from Poland or any other part of the EU to learn or work, they have the right to fair treatment and to be secure against racism and hatred. I disagree that this extremism is happening because of the status of these people at the moment; immigration came up frequently during the referendum, including in that most disgraceful poster, and that is what is causing the racism at the moment—it is not people's status.

**Peter Grant:** Does the hon. Lady agree that a climate in which racism can thrive has actually been building up for years, largely thanks to the shamefully xenophobic headlines we have seen almost every day on the front pages of newspapers such as the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mail*?

**Mrs Drummond:** Yes, I totally agree, and that is also one of the reasons for the rise of UKIP because people saw it as being able to control immigration. It is something I completely abhor.

Those who come to the UK under a set of laws and immigration rules should be free to remain here under them for the duration of their stay. What happens in the future to people who want to come here after we have left the EU is a matter for the Government to look at, and that will be a discussion we have with the other

27 members in the coming years. However, basic notions of British fairness compel us to give the people who are already here a guarantee.

Most people in the UK who are from elsewhere in the EU are here for a limited time. One of the benefits of EU membership for people from recent joiners has been that it has helped their home countries to develop, and those people want to return to them. They are not coming here to escape permanent poverty, but to earn money to take home with them.

As we move on from the referendum decision, I hope we will be able to debate and decide these issues calmly and through consensus, rather than conflict. We have to set an example to the rest of the country, and if we fail we will just encourage the preachers of hatred and racism.

I am aware that this is complex and that it should be the first area of negotiation. In the meantime, however, we need to reassure our valuable EU taxpayers that we welcome them here.

4.59 pm

**Ms Gisela Stuart** (Birmingham, Edgbaston) (Lab): I think this House has to show leadership. People watching us today, from the United Kingdom and from mainland Europe, who have an interest in the decisions we make have a right to expect a clear statement from us. Some Members have mentioned the referendum campaign. There was an official referendum campaign, Vote Leave, which I was part of. The poster that has been mentioned was not part of our campaign, and we condemned it. There were other players who behaved in a way for which they have to be answerable. We were absolutely clear that we expected this Government to ensure, and to say clearly, that any immigration policy would have democratic consent, including respecting the rights of UK citizens abroad and EU citizens here up until the point that the country had made a decision.

I have to say to the Immigration Minister—with whom I too have a lot of sympathy, because he has been sent out to bat on a pretty sticky wicket—that he cannot pretend that people are not being treated as a bargaining chip and then say that we have to await the outcome of negotiations, which may be quite a long way off. In the interests of brevity and not repeating what others have said, my right hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham) made it absolutely clear what the Minister needs to do. My hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy) reminded him that as this is a question of British parliamentary sovereignty, he is perfectly capable of doing what my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) asked him to do—just to get up and say that anybody in this country who had residency rights acquired before 23 June will continue to have them. That would set the tone for the negotiations and send a signal to everybody in the rest of Europe as to how we expect them to treat UK citizens living abroad. May I invite him to do that?

5.1 pm

**Lyn Brown** (West Ham) (Lab): The Government's refusal to guarantee the status of our EU residents is, quite frankly, an utter disgrace. Last weekend, I spoke to an Italian woman who has lived and worked in Britain for 30 years. She has made Britain her home.

[Lyn Brown]

She has raised her family here. Her children were born here and they are working here. She was in tears when she told me of her worry that she and her family were about to be deported. It absolutely broke my heart.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Karen Bradley)** indicated dissent.

**Lyn Brown:** Intervene, then.

There are 3 million EU nationals living in the UK. Just like my constituent, they have jobs and homes, and are concerned about the future for their families. These are families who have entered the UK legally, made their homes here, paid their taxes, and have made a wonderful contribution to our country. The very least these families deserve is to have certainty about their future.

**Julie Cooper (Burnley) (Lab):** In this time of uncertainty post-Brexit, this is surely one area where the Government could act to give certainty immediately. Saying that EU citizens are not in any “immediate” danger of having their status changed is frankly not good enough. The Government have the power to act now and should do so.

**Lyn Brown:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right.

The Home Secretary has said that these people’s lives will be a “factor” in the forthcoming negotiations over our exit from the EU. She has implied that the rights of EU citizens living here cannot be guaranteed because the Government need to seek guarantees about the rights of UK citizens living on the continent. It is appalling; people’s lives should not be treated as a bargaining chip. The Government’s strategy is not only heartless—it is inept. We do not want the other 27 member states to threaten the rights of the 1.2 million British nationals living on the continent, so why are we starting negotiations by threatening the rights of EU nationals living here?

I can only presume that the Home Secretary’s focus is not really on negotiations with the EU. Her tub-thumping, I presume, is designed to court the votes of the right-wing Tory membership—an olive branch after, and I say this gently, her low-profile support for the remain campaign. Using people as bargaining chips in EU negotiations is one level of insult; using them as pawns in a Tory “Game of Thrones” is quite another. A Prime Minister with any sense of responsibility could have stopped this happening. By resigning from office before settling the most basic questions about leaving the EU, this Prime Minister has left our exit strategy to the vagaries of a Tory leadership contest. The rights of EU nationals, the speed of our exit, and our future relationship with the EU are all factors in the Tory leadership campaign. This leaves 150,000 Tory party members in a position of disproportionate influence.

The failure to make a commitment to EU nationals comes with grave consequences. Racists and xenophobes are feeling emboldened and are spreading poison within our constituencies. I am ashamed to say that, in my constituency, a residential block was sprayed with a swastika and the word “out” in large, bold letters. I know that Members across the country have had to deal with similarly vile incidents. There has been a 57% increase in hate crime since the referendum. A straightforward

and clear message that EU residents are valued and welcome to stay for as long as they like would put racists back in their place. The destructive idea that there may be forced deportations would be rubbish in an instant.

If the Home Secretary is too busy to act, the Prime Minister should do so. I know he wants to run away from the responsibility for our leaving the European Union, but it was his referendum. He should have made sure that plans were in place for the immediate aftermath, no matter what the result. By abdicating his responsibility, the Prime Minister has left us all at the mercy of a Tory leadership campaign that is making us lurch to the right. It is our neighbours and friends from elsewhere in the EU who are suffering the most. It is a national disgrace.

5.6 pm

**Keith Vaz (Leicester East) (Lab):** It is a pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for West Ham (Lyn Brown), who spoke with enormous passion about these issues. I am sorry that I was not able to be here for other speakers. The Select Committee is hosting a seminar on female genital mutilation, which is ongoing, but I wanted to contribute to this debate because it is of huge importance.

I was very pleased with the urgent question asked by my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Ms Stuart) on Monday. We disagreed with each other in respect of the referendum campaign but on this we are at one, as I think every other speaker so far has been, apart from the Minister. [Interruption.] Perhaps I am wrong, but I took it that the hon. Member for Portsmouth South (Mrs Drummond) also supported the view that EU citizens ought to be given the rights that we have talked about.

There are three issues here. The first is certainty. Immigration law has to be certain. To avoid legal proceedings being taken against the Government, breaches of the Vienna convention and any other uncertainties, it is absolutely vital that there is a strict adherence to the law of the land. That is why it is in the Government’s interest to allow for this certainty and to say that, from 23 June, anyone resident in this country who has come from any EU country ought to be allowed to remain here if they choose to do so. Some will and some will not, but that certainty is vital. It is extremely regrettable that, at the moment, different members of the Government are saying different things on immigration law. That cannot be right for our country and it cannot be right in respect of others who will come to this country.

Let me play devil’s advocate. The Minister and the Home Secretary might be fearful that now, after 23 June, people will suddenly arrive in the United Kingdom and then decide to remain here permanently. However, they can deal with that by giving a cut-off date now. They do not need to wait for the negotiations to begin. In fact, it would strengthen the hand of the future Prime Minister, whoever he or she may be—I do not have a vote in this leadership campaign, despite the wishes of some Members on this side—to be able to go to that first meeting, as they will have to do, and say that the United Kingdom has guaranteed the rights of EU citizens to live in this country. That would be a huge boost for whoever is the Prime Minister, and a huge amount of good will would flow from that decision.

I think it will be automatically accepted that the 1.3 million British citizens living in the EU will be allowed to stay. If the Minister needs a justification for that certainty, he just needs to read the brilliant speech made last night in this Chamber by his ministerial colleague, the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, the hon. Member for Staffordshire Moorlands (Karen Bradley), about what happens when social attitudes change as a result of a Government decision. We have all had examples of this. I heard it for myself when I went to a Polish church on Sunday, with my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing Central and Acton (Dr Huq). This is what will happen if we are not certain about our law.

The Minister has six days to change his mind before he appears in front of the Home Affairs Committee on Tuesday. I hope he will use those six days carefully to reflect on what the House has said and to do the right and decent thing. We are a good country and we are a decent country. Let us show what we are really made of.

5.10 pm

**Dr Philippa Whitford** (Central Ayrshire) (SNP): As I have done in previous debates on this issue, I declare an interest in that my husband is a German national who has lived here for 30 years and works in the NHS.

**James Brokenshire:** He can stay.

**Dr Whitford:** That is awfully good of the Minister. I will phone my husband and tell him.

We have already heard of very high-calibre people who are not coming to the UK because of this issue. I was at the graduation ceremony of the University of the West of Scotland last Friday. One of its senior lecturers was almost at the point of getting on the boat to come here, but because in less than two years he might have to move his family and children, sell the house and go back, he has decided that it is not worth it. However, we are focused not on what will happen to the people who are due to come—that will have to be looked at—but on the people who are already here. They are totally integral to our communities and our public services.

Obviously, my background is in the NHS. As we heard on Tuesday, 110,000 people from the EU work in our health and social care systems. About half of them are doctors and nurses, and half of them are careworkers. Although people, such as my husband, who have been here longer than five years and earn more than £35,000 will be able to stay, will that income limit apply to others? If it does, most nurses will not qualify and no careworkers will qualify. They will all have to go back, as will most ordinary teachers.

The Government need to think about that insecurity. The Government say, “Don’t worry about it. It might happen in two years.” Does the Minister really think that families sit there and say, “Don’t worry; I know we’re going towards a cliff edge, but we won’t fret about the house, the kids and the job until a month or so before it happens.” There is no reason to be so combative about this. The Minister talked about fighting for the rights of UK nationals, but it should not be a fight. If we set the example by treating EU nationals here properly and immediately giving them absolute right to remain, there will be a much greater likelihood of civilised talks and of UK nationals being well treated in the EU. If we

go in saying, “You do that and we will do this,” we will set completely the wrong tone.

The Minister talked about the fact that people who have been here for more than five years can stay, but we have to look at their rights and benefits. Will this undermine the right to be treated in the NHS, the right to claim benefits if they cannot work and the pension rights of people who have, like my husband, been here for 30 years, even though they may be approaching pension age and can do nothing about the situation? Some EU nationals have been here for years and years, contributing to the country, and to undermine what they have done for us is absolutely despicable. The Minister says that he hopes to be able to reassure them and give them certainty. He could do so now. Just do it.

**Several hon. Members rose—**

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Natascha Engel):** Order. I am going to have to reduce the time limit to three minutes.

5.14 pm

**Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP): That is challenging, Madam Deputy Speaker. In 2013, Glasgow adopted the slogan “People Make Glasgow”. That could not be more apt at present, because EU citizens—in my constituency and in those of my hon. Friends who represent parts of the city—make it the vibrant and wonderful city that it is. According to the 2011 census, 5.2% of residents in my constituency were born in EU countries; that is double the figure for the Scottish population as a whole.

In the academic year 2014-15 alone, more than 4,000 EU students enrolled at academic institutions across Glasgow. I heard during the week from Professor Philip Cooke, who is professor of Italian history and culture at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow. He says:

“Since I started teaching here I have seen a radical shift in the composition of the student body—at last week’s graduation ceremony there were students from Latvia and Bulgaria receiving degrees in Italian, as well as many young Scots. The free movement of students facilitated by the Erasmus program has meant that I have taught, for example, Italian to English translation to mixed groups of students who have all greatly benefited from the different linguistic backgrounds of their peers... All of this—and I am not even going to mention European funding for research—is at risk following the referendum.”

He speaks of his own young children, who want to have the opportunity that I and others have had of going to Europe to travel and work.

We must not lose sight of the fact that politics is about people. Among the messages I have received this week is one from Courtney, a Greek national living in Queen’s Park in the south side of Glasgow, who sums up the anxiety and bewilderment that many people face:

“I, like all the other EU immigrants that are here, have broken no laws by settling here. I have been here for five years and am proud to call Scotland my home, meanwhile others have been here for decades. Since settling here I have started a long term relationship, taken work, paid tax, and done volunteer work. Like so many others I am happy to contribute to the local community and overall economy.”

I received a message just this morning from a ward sister at Glasgow royal infirmary who says that nurses there who have come from Poland are deeply concerned

[Alison Thewliss]

about their future in the country. They are here, working and contributing, and they deserve to be able to stay.

**Gavin Newlands** (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP): Does my hon. Friend agree that it would not take much for the Minister to reassure the citizens she has just mentioned? A caseworker in my office is from Finland. She is extremely uncertain at the moment about her future. As her employer, I, like many other employers, would like to know whether these citizens will continue to have rights. It would be easy for the Minister to stand up and say that they will continue to have the rights that they have at the moment.

**Alison Thewliss:** Absolutely. It would be a very easy thing for this Government to do.

This issue is not simply about EU citizens who have come here; it is about people in Scotland who want to have future opportunities. I had an email from Jemma Brown, who says:

“I am a classical musician with a fledgling international career living...in your constituency and I can see everything I’ve painstakingly worked for caving in upon me if my right to live and work in the EU is no longer straightforward.”

I met the owner of a coffee shop across the road from my son’s school who came from Portugal originally. He lived through fascism. He has travelled the world and come to live in Glasgow. I spoke to him on the Friday after the referendum result. He was heartbroken. Nothing I could say could console him or give him confidence that his future in Scotland was assured. I would like Ministers to reflect on that and come up with a strong message that I can give to people I know in Glasgow who do not know what their future holds.

The testimony I have received underscores the reality of the feelings of isolation that Brexit has caused. It is shameful that the Government have not done enough to tackle that or reassure those people about their future. My Home Office casework tells me that the dignity and respect that the Minister spoke of earlier is not a feature of the immigration system. Constituents from all over the world cannot get a fair break even to get into the UK. I have no confidence that the Home Office could even cope with dealing with the immigration status of EU nationals from all round Europe.

In stark contrast is First Minister Nicola Sturgeon’s message to EU citizens living in Scotland following the referendum result. She made it perfectly clear that they are welcome in Scotland and that their contribution is valued. I unequivocally reject the notion that EU citizens could be considered as bargaining chips in any future negotiations. The Church of Scotland rejects that, too, and its representatives have been in touch to put that forward. I beg the Government to change their stance.

5.18 pm

**Chris Elmore** (Ogmore) (Lab/Co-op): One of the most depressing conversations I have had in my eight weeks and four days as a Member of Parliament was a phone call on the day after the referendum from a Polish national who has lived not just in Wales but in my constituency for the past 35 years. She is 75 years of age, disabled and living in a care home. She wanted to speak to her MP. She was in tears because she thought

she was about to be deported. Speaking to her care home again this week, I found out that she is now even more confused and worried, and sadly some residents have taken to making comments such as, “When are you going home?” That cannot be right in modern Britain.

On the morning following the referendum, the 3 million EU citizens living in the UK woke up to the news that their entire future had been cast into doubt. People who have built their lives, families and careers in our country suddenly, and without a voice in the matter, found themselves in fear of having to leave the UK. Those men, women and children, many of whom feel as British and you and I, found that they could no longer carry on as usual. In the weeks that followed, instead of offering solace to those 3 million people, some in the Government have treated them as bargaining chips.

Far too often, political debate descends into nothing more than talk of statistics and figures. Today, we should allow ourselves to think of EU nationals in our country not as simple numbers on paper, but as the people they are—the 3 million people who now fear for the future, due to the callous remarks of Government Members, are mums and dads, neighbours and friends, teachers and police officers.

The referendum is over, the people have spoken and the UK is set to leave the European Union. Whatever my personal views on that decision, it has been made and we must respect it. However, in the months and years that now follow, we cannot allow ourselves to treat EU citizens living in Britain as political pawns. Today, we are here to debate whether those people should have the right to remain, and in doing so I ask the House to think of the EU nationals in our lives—our friends, neighbours and colleagues—and to consider how their absence would worsen each of our communities.

Across the United Kingdom, particularly in Wales, there have been reports of many who now feel unwelcome in Britain, whether a councillor in Cardiff who was told to get out of the country, or a campaigner in Caerphilly who was told to pack her bags and go home. Let us make no mistake: there is a correlation between the way that some in the Government speak of EU nationals and the hate crimes we have seen on our streets. If the Government continue to treat EU nationals as they have done, we will see those despicable consequences time and again. I hope that the House comes together to send a strong, clear message to say, “You are welcome” to every person born in the EU who has since built their life in the United Kingdom, and that it votes in favour of the motion.

5.21 pm

**Roger Mullin** (Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath) (SNP): I wish to compliment the shadow Home Secretary on the way he opened this debate. He set the matter out in exactly the right tone, with precision, and suggested how it could be resolved, and I am extremely grateful. I wish I could say that the Minister approached the issue with some degree of certainty, but he was able to offer only a convoluted and equivocal speech that will have generated not certainty but uncertainty in the minds of many EU nationals living in this country.

For me, this started not after the referendum but before it, when during Prime Minister’s questions I mentioned two of my constituents of German nationality

who were so upset at the nature of the debate on immigration that they left Scotland and said that they did not want to live in the United Kingdom while the referendum was going on, such were their feelings about the way they were characterised. That issue went even deeper for them, because they had lived in Scotland at the time of the independence referendum when they were allowed a vote. For the EU referendum, however, they were denied the vote that this House should have given them and that would have helped to relieve some of their pre-vote anxieties.

Many Members have constituents who are caught in many different situations. Not only have those two constituents of mine already left—I am trying to persuade them to return to Scotland—but I heard yesterday from a local friend who is a mortgage broker and said that a couple who were due to buy their first home in Scotland withdrew at the last minute saying, “We’re EU citizens. We cannot take the risk of investing here when such uncertainty lies over us today.”

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** Does that put to bed the lie that the Government have a long-term economic plan?

**Roger Mullin:** I always thought that it was rather fanciful thinking on the Government’s part that they knew what a long-term economic plan might look like. We need not a long-term economic plan, but short-term and immediate action for every EU national who lives in this country.

One lady wrote to me in concern because her husband is from Denmark and is anxious about what will happen to them. She asked, “Will our family be split up?” These are anxieties and the Minister might say, “Well, some of those anxieties are ill-founded.” But the anxieties are not ill-founded if the Government lack clarity. If the Government decline to give the clarity and certainty they need, people’s uncertainty and their worries are perfectly legitimate. Minister, it is time to act. It is not too late: do the right thing, and do it now.

**Mr Alistair Carmichael (Orkney and Shetland) (LD):** On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I seek your reassurance. Resignations can come at a bewildering pace these days in Westminster, so can you tell the House whether we still have a Government Whips Office? For the bulk of the debate there has been only one Government Back Bencher in the Chamber. That used to be the job of the Government Whips Office. Have they given up?

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Natascha Engel):** That is not a point of order and we are running very short of time.

5.25 pm

**Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP):** As always, it is a pleasure to follow my old friend the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath (Roger Mullin). [HON. MEMBERS: “Young friend!”] He is young at heart.

The motion states that men, women and children should not be used as bargaining chips in negotiations on the UK’s exit from the EU. I want to associate myself with that statement. Many of us will have had conversations with worried citizens living in the UK who come from

Europe. Last Friday in my constituency, I arranged to meet a French national, a teacher in a secondary school, who, like so many of those who have come to live in our country, is making a valuable contribution within our communities. She wants to stay here, but now feels deeply unsettled and frightened that she may not be in a position to remain in the longer term. The conversation I had, with my constituent explaining her fears and anxieties, will be replicated by many of the 173,000 EU citizens living in Scotland.

Where is our humanity to those living among us—our friends, neighbours and colleagues who are fearful as to whether they will have the right to remain here? That is why my colleague, Nicola Sturgeon, the First Minister of Scotland, is right to call on the UK Government to guarantee the rights of all those who are living here who are EU citizens. We have a moral and ethical right to enshrine the rights of those who are here legitimately. The Government could do this today. They should have the courage to extend the hand of friendship to those who are here and call this place home. Why would any Government want to cause unnecessary fear and alarm to those who are here legitimately? We should be saying, “You are welcome to stay on a permanent basis.” To do anything less is unacceptable.

The Home Secretary, a future potential Prime Minister of the UK, must make it clear that we recognise the right to remain for all EU citizens who are here. She could have participated in this debate today, put the record straight and allayed the fears of many EU citizens in our midst. Where is the Home Secretary?

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** The hon. Member for Colchester (Will Quince) tweeted that the Home Secretary is at a food-tasting event somewhere else in the Palace of Westminster.

**Ian Blackford:** The Home Secretary may be at a food-tasting event, but she has certainly left a bad taste in the mouth of many of us. Her comments on television last Sunday fell way short of the moral leadership she should be taking. The Home Secretary said:

“We’re still a member of the EU and the arrangements still continue, so there is no change to their position currently. But of course as part of the negotiation we will need to look at the question of people who are here in the UK from the EU”.

If that is not a bargaining chip, I do not know what is. That is precisely what the Home Secretary put across last Sunday. That was an alarming statement: EU citizens by definition being used as a bargaining chip in negotiation. Home Secretary, we are talking about people living among us who do not want to be used as pawns in a negotiation. What a shameful position to take! That is not the position of a leader; it is an abrogation of responsibility from someone who aspires to leadership. In contrast to Nicola Sturgeon, who is providing leadership to EU citizens, the Home Secretary sees them as bargaining chips: leadership from our First Minister in Scotland, failure from Westminster.

Migrants make a valuable contribution to our country and are an important part of Scotland’s future, both in terms of contributing to sustainable economic growth and mitigating the effects of demographic change. I call on the Government to do the right thing today and give certainty to all our EU citizens. Fundamentally, from

[*Ian Blackford*]

those of us from Scotland, there is a very strong message: we voted to remain and the best way to protect the rights of our EU citizens is for Scotland to remain in the European Union.

5.29 pm

**Emily Thornberry** (Islington South and Finsbury) (Lab): We have had a full debate, albeit in a short period of time. We have heard a huge amount of passion, and the opinion of the House is quite clear.

We heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Chris Elmore) about a Polish care home worker being asked regularly by residents when they are going home. We heard from the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath (Roger Mullin) about EU citizens being afraid to invest in his constituency. We learned during the speech of the hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford) that the Home Secretary is not in her place for this debate because, as was tweeted, she was busy enjoying a taste of Colchester.

I think the technical term is a “stonking speech”, and we heard it from my hon. Friend the Member for West Ham (Lyn Brown), who talked about a swastika with the word “Out” being daubed on tower blocks in her constituency. We heard from my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) that if the Home Secretary will not provide a guarantee, my right hon. Friend cannot reassure kids in the playground who are being told to “go home”.

We heard an important speech from my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Ms Stuart), who said that the Vote Leave campaign was clear on this issue—that no one would be sent back—and asked why the Government had not honoured that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Westminster North (Ms Buck) said that 36,000 EU migrants live in Westminster and that it was hard to overstate those people’s concern. The hon. Member for Central Ayrshire (Dr Whitford) explained the contribution of EU migrants to the NHS, while the hon. Member for Glasgow Central (Alison Thewliss) mentioned Glasgow’s slogan, “People make Glasgow”, and told us that a high proportion of her constituents are from the EU.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Andy Slaughter) said that 46% of his constituents were born outside the UK. If the Home Secretary could say what she did about EU migrants, my hon. Friend wondered what might be said next about anyone else. My right hon. Friend the Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz) made it absolutely clear what we are calling for. He said that those here before 23 June must have certainty and he insisted that we cannot have different members of the Government saying different things.

We heard something from Conservative Members. I know that the hon. Members for South Cambridgeshire (Heidi Allen) and for Portsmouth South (Mrs Drummond) are both strong characters who are quite capable of making themselves clearly understood. It would be only fair to say, however, that while they made a contribution to the debate, they rather pulled their punches. They do not normally do so.

Great disappointment has been expressed about the Home Secretary’s rhetoric and the fact that she has not bothered to turn up yet again. She has effectively reduced 3 million of our friends and neighbours to little more than pawns in the negotiations. The Minister for Immigration has been called upon once again to deliver his services and to act as a shield for the Home Secretary. He has come here and done his best. He has provided a lot of rhetoric, claiming that the Government will work to guarantee the rights of EU citizens and that they are confident that the negotiations will be successful. However, he cannot say when these negotiations will happen or when people will be able to have their rights guaranteed. He says that he will guarantee those rights, but he wants to link them to the rights of British citizens living across the rest of Europe. That means that they are being used as bargaining chips. That is what it means.

Frankly, it is all very well for the Immigration Minister to say that these people can fully expect their legal status to be properly protected and that he is confident that it will be, but the problem is that he says this will happen only through reciprocal arrangements and that the Government could not support any attempt to pre-empt it. That is not enough for people to build their lives on. That is not enough for people to know that they can remain in the UK and be able to invest in our country, fall in love, work and continue to contribute to our country. That is not enough. We are ashamed, and the Minister should be ashamed. Three million people should not be treated in this way. They have come to this country in good faith.

It is quite simple. The Minister is able to get up today and clarify the position for those who have been here since before the referendum. It is wrong for the Government to say different things to all these people. We can see and we all know that there has been a rise in racism and attacks, so that people are feeling profoundly insecure. It is in the Minister’s hands to do something about it. He has a responsibility not only to fight back against the thuggish behaviour that we can see happening right now in our communities, but to provide more than just rhetoric. He can do something about this.

**Conor McGinn** (St Helens North) (Lab): Like me, my hon. Friend is both a British and an Irish citizen, and I think she understands the difficulty very acutely. Will she urge the Government to respect the reciprocal rights enjoyed by Irish citizens in the UK and British citizens in Ireland, and to make it clear that they, as well as the rights of all the other EU citizens who currently reside in the UK, will be absolutely guaranteed and protected?

**Emily Thornberry:** I thank my hon. Friend for making that point—and yes, I should declare an interest. I come from generations of EU nationals. Indeed, the Thornberry brothers built much of Camden. We have made a great contribution to this country, and of course we want the security of knowing that we can come into this country and remain here. We need that reassurance. The Irish need it, but the other EU citizens need it too. It is in the Minister’s hands to give us that reassurance, and he should do so.

This is not just an outrage in moral terms; it is also, in my view, a completely cack-handed negotiating strategy. Ministers suggest that they should not guarantee the rights of EU nationals in Britain until similar guarantees

have been provided by the rest of the EU. It shows poor judgment, to say the least, for a would-be Prime Minister to embark on negotiating an exit deal with such an apparent lack of trust in the good faith of our partners, or former partners. If, as has been promised, the UK can expect the best possible deal in the Brexit negotiations, we really must do better than that.

As has been said throughout the debate, it is fundamentally wrong to treat valued members of our society and our communities as mere bargaining chips. We must never forget the human faces behind the numbers. *[Interruption.]* The Minister says that they are not being treated as bargaining chips, but they are. By linking EU migrants in the UK with British citizens in the EU, he is putting them on the table and behaving just as he does when he negotiates agriculture subsidies and export regulations. That sends completely the wrong message.

These are people. They are people with real faces, whose children are in our playgrounds. They work all over our country, they invest in our country, and we need them. We have some of the best. They have come to our country, and they deserve to have some form of security, because they cannot build their lives without it. They should not be holding their breath until such time—the Minister is unable to tell us exactly when—as their future may or may not be secured.

After all, 3 million of our doctors, nurses, teachers and small business owners come from elsewhere in the EU. They are our neighbours and our friends, and many of them who are, like me—as was pointed out by my hon. Friend the Member for St Helens North (Conor McGinn)—second-generation EU migrants, are our kith and kin. They have the same inherent value as any one of us in the Chamber today, and it is incumbent on us to make that principle clear.

The Government have cast a shadow over the futures of millions, and that is a matter of huge regret. Why was it not considered in advance of Brexit? If the Government had decided to have a referendum, why was there no plan B? Why are they scrambling into a position at this stage? Why have the futures of so many people been made so insecure? How is it possible that a Government can go into a referendum without even thinking that the public might reach a different conclusion, and having a plan B as a result? This is the Government's fault, but they can do something about it, and they should do something about it today.

If the Conservatives do not vote against the motion, Parliament's position will be clear: we wish the 3 million people from the EU who are living here to stay, and we want their position to be clarified. Will that be of assistance to them? It is all that we can do to give them some security. However, with a click of his fingers, the Minister could make their futures properly secure by standing up now and saying that the futures of those who were here before the referendum are secure, that they are welcome, and that they will be able to live here.

5.39 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Karen Bradley):** I was not expecting to see you in the Chair now, Mr Speaker; it is a treat, and a great honour for me.

We have debated an extremely important issue today: the legal status of EU nationals following the EU referendum just under a fortnight ago and the decision by the British people to leave the EU. The people we are talking about—the 3 million EU nationals—are our friends. They are our colleagues, the people we work with, the people whose children are at school with our children, and we recognise that they are people and they have lives and they do need to have certainty as soon as possible. But it is also clear that once we leave the EU there is a whole range of issues that will need to be addressed, one of which is the status of British nationals elsewhere in the EU and the status of EU nationals here.

**Zac Goldsmith (Richmond Park) (Con):** Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Karen Bradley:** I am afraid I will not give way as I have very limited time and I do want to make sure there is time for the next debate. I apologise to my hon. Friend.

As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said, those are the consequences of the decision to leave the EU. It is not something we have shied away from; we were clear in advance of the referendum that it was an issue. The Prime Minister has also made it clear that decisions on issues relating to the UK's exit from the EU will need to be made by a new Prime Minister.

Having listened to this debate today, there are three key points I want to make and on which we can all strongly agree. First, there is absolutely no question of EU nationals' status or circumstances changing while the UK remains a member of the EU. I have heard Members' contributions and the concerns of EU nationals about their status, including EU nationals in my constituency.

**Zac Goldsmith:** Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Karen Bradley:** My hon. Friend has not been in the debate and I need to make sure there is time for the next debate.

Let me be clear: EU nationals can live, work and study here in the UK under the existing arrangements. They are able to be accompanied, or joined by, family members, and after five years' lawful residence they automatically acquire and benefit from a permanent right of residence in the UK. Once they have resided here for six years, they are also eligible to apply for citizenship. I know all will agree that it is vital that we make this clear and provide reassurance in our constituency surgeries and wherever else we are asked this question. May I also ask that we do not use this for party political point scoring? We should not be frightening people. They have a right to remain, and after five years' lawful residence they automatically acquire and benefit from a permanent right of residence in the UK.

We are an open and welcoming nation and we do not want to create an air of uncertainty, but this is complicated and wider than just the right to live here, and as the hon. Member for Central Ayrshire (Dr Whitford) said, it is about the rights acquired under the EU treaties. This is a complicated point and it will take time to address.

This brings me to my second point. Hate crime of any kind must be confronted and tackled. It has absolutely no place in our society. I have been appalled to hear about some of the incidents that have taken place in the

[Karen Bradley]

last couple of weeks, and I am clear that nobody should be made to feel unwelcome in the country they call their home. I encourage all victims of hate crime to report it to the police, either at a police station, by phoning the 101 hotline or online through the True Vision website.

As I made clear in my statement to the House last week, we are taking steps to boost the reporting of hate crime and support victims, and we are providing a new fund for protective security measures at potentially vulnerable institutions and also offering additional funding to community organisations so they can tackle hate crime.

Our country is a strong multicultural and diverse nation. The rich coexistence of people of different backgrounds, faiths and ethnicities makes it the thriving and successful country it is. This is something we must treasure and strive to protect, and we must not allow those who seek to promote hatred and division in our communities to succeed.

Finally, I am pleased to note that we all agree that steps must be taken to guarantee the legal status of EU nationals, as the motion says, “with urgency”. This House feels strongly about this issue and that is testament to the invaluable contribution made by EU nationals to the UK economy and our communities. This is welcome and to be embraced now and in the future.

**Zac Goldsmith:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker. My hon. Friend is making some strong points about the rise of racist incidents over the last few weeks, but it is important to emphasise that there is absolutely no prospect at all of any Government of any party repatriating European migrants who are living and working in this country. I beg the Government to provide the reassurance that millions of people are looking for—if not today, then soon. It really is a very simple point.

**Mr Speaker:** That is not a point of order, but the hon. Gentleman has put his point on the record and the Minister is welcome to reply if she wishes and not if she does not.

**Karen Bradley:** I will just say that if my hon. Friend had heard the opening statement from my right hon. Friend the Minister for Immigration, he would have heard that point at that stage.

We fully expect that the legal status of EU nationals living in the UK and of UK nationals in EU member states will be properly protected, but we must not forget our duty to UK citizens who have chosen to build a life in an EU member state. Addressing that issue is a priority that we intend to deal with as soon as possible. As my right hon. Friend and I have said, it is a complicated matter with a range of considerations and detailed work is needed to examine the full range of circumstances of EU nationals and to ensure that any decisions taken have no unforeseen or unintended consequences.

I want to give some examples from today’s debate. What I heard from the Opposition Front Bench was that anybody who was here on 23 June has automatic rights and that that will be the cut-off date. If someone arrived on 24 June, however, would the points-based system of the right hon. Member for Birmingham,

Edgbaston (Ms Stuart) apply to them? Would they be repatriated? Is it the case that somebody who arrived on 24 June is no longer attracted to staying in the UK? This is a really complicated matter, and we must ensure that we get it right.

**Emily Thornberry:** Will the hon. Lady give way?

**Karen Bradley:** I am sorry, but I want to make some progress. I did not intervene on the hon. Lady.

In conclusion, EU nationals can have our full and unreserved reassurance that, whether they arrived on 22 June, 23 June or 24 June, there has been no immediate change to their right to enter, work, study and live in the UK as a result of the EU referendum. I would like to reassure EU citizens up and down the country that we recognise the huge contribution that they make to our economy, our health service, our schools, our care sector, our communities and in so many other ways. We will act fairly towards them just as we expect other EU countries to act fairly towards our citizens living there.

However, as has been set out today, any decision to pre-empt our future negotiations would risk undermining our ability to protect the interests of EU and British nationals alike and to get the best outcomes for both. We will look to secure the best deal for EU citizens just as we will seek to secure the best deal for British citizens in the EU. That is the responsible approach and that is what we will do.

*Question put.*

*The House divided: Ayes 245, Noes 2.*

**Division No. 36]**

**[5.48 pm**

**AYES**

Abbott, Ms Diane	Cameron, Dr Lisa
Alexander, Heidi	Campbell, rh Mr Alan
Ali, Rushanara	Campbell, Mr Ronnie
Allen, Mr Graham	Carswell, Mr Douglas
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena	Champion, Sarah
Anderson, Mr David	Chapman, Douglas
Ashworth, Jonathan	Chapman, Jenny
Austin, Ian	Cherry, Joanna
Bailey, Mr Adrian	Coaker, Vernon
Barron, rh Kevin	Coffey, Ann
Beckett, rh Margaret	Cooper, Julie
Benn, rh Hilary	Cooper, Rosie
Betts, Mr Clive	Cooper, rh Yvette
Black, Mhairi	Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Blackford, Ian	Coyle, Neil
Blackman, Kirsty	Crausby, Mr David
Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta	Creasy, Stella
Blenkinsop, Tom	Cruddas, Jon
Blomfield, Paul	Cryer, John
Boswell, Philip	Cummins, Judith
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben	Cunningham, Alex
Brake, rh Tom	Cunningham, Mr Jim
Brennan, Kevin	Dakin, Nic
Brock, Deidre	David, Wayne
Brown, Alan	Davies, Geraint
Brown, Lyn	Day, Martyn
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas	De Piero, Gloria
Bryant, Chris	Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Buck, Ms Karen	Dodds, rh Mr Nigel
Burden, Richard	Donaldson, Stuart Blair
Burgon, Richard	Doughty, Stephen
Burnham, rh Andy	Dowd, Jim
Butler, Dawn	Dowd, Peter
Byrne, rh Liam	Dromey, Jack

Dugher, Michael  
 Durkan, Mark  
 Edwards, Jonathan  
 Efford, Clive  
 Elliott, Julie  
 Elliott, Tom  
 Ellman, Mrs Louise  
 Elmore, Chris  
 Evans, Chris  
 Farrelly, Paul  
 Fellows, Marion  
 Ferrier, Margaret  
 Field, rh Frank  
 Fitzpatrick, Jim  
 Ffello, Robert  
 Fletcher, Colleen  
 Flint, rh Caroline  
 Flynn, Paul  
 Foxcroft, Vicky  
 Fuller, Richard  
 Furniss, Gill  
 Gapes, Mike  
 Gardiner, Barry  
 Gethins, Stephen  
 Gibson, Patricia  
 Glindon, Mary  
 Godsiff, Mr Roger  
 Goldsmith, Zac  
 Goodman, Helen  
 Grady, Patrick  
 Grant, Peter  
 Green, Kate  
 Greenwood, Lilian  
 Griffith, Nia  
 Gwynne, Andrew  
 Haigh, Louise  
 Hamilton, Fabian  
 Hanson, rh Mr David  
 Harris, Carolyn  
 Hayes, Helen  
 Healey, rh John  
 Hendrick, Mr Mark  
 Hendry, Drew  
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen  
 Hillier, Meg  
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret  
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon  
 Hollern, Kate  
 Hollobone, Mr Philip  
 Hopkins, Kelvin  
 Hosie, Stewart  
 Howarth, rh Mr George  
 Hunt, Tristram  
 Huq, Dr Rupa  
 Hussain, Imran  
 Jarvis, Dan  
 Johnson, rh Alan  
 Johnson, Boris  
 Johnson, Diana  
 Jones, Mr Kevan  
 Jones, Susan Elan  
 Kane, Mike  
 Keeley, Barbara  
 Kendall, Liz

Kerevan, George  
 Kerr, Calum  
 Kinahan, Danny  
 Kinnock, Stephen  
 Kyle, Peter  
 Lavery, Ian  
 Law, Chris  
 Leslie, Chris  
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma  
 Long Bailey, Rebecca  
 Lucas, Caroline  
 Lucas, Ian C.  
 Mactaggart, rh Fiona  
 Madders, Justin  
 Malhotra, Seema  
 Mann, John  
 Marris, Rob  
 Marsden, Mr Gordon  
 Maskell, Rachael  
 Matheson, Christian  
 Mathias, Dr Tania  
 Mc Nally, John  
 McCabe, Steve  
 McCaig, Callum  
 McCarthy, Kerry  
 McDonagh, Siobhain  
 McDonald, Andy  
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm  
 McDonald, Stuart C.  
 McDonnell, John  
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat  
 McGovern, Alison  
 McInnes, Liz  
 McKinnell, Catherine  
 McLaughlin, Anne  
 McMahan, Jim  
 Meale, Sir Alan  
 Mearns, Ian  
 Miliband, rh Edward  
 Monaghan, Dr Paul  
 Morden, Jessica  
 Morris, Grahame M.  
 Mulholland, Greg  
 Mullin, Roger  
 Murray, Ian  
 Nandy, Lisa  
 Newlands, Gavin  
 Nicolson, John  
 Onn, Melanie  
 Onwurah, Chi  
 Owen, Albert  
 Paterson, Steven  
 Pearce, Teresa  
 Pennycook, Matthew  
 Perkins, Toby  
 Phillipson, Bridget  
 Pound, Stephen  
 Pugh, John  
 Rayner, Angela  
 Reed, Mr Jamie  
 Rees, Christina  
 Reeves, Rachel  
 Reynolds, Emma  
 Reynolds, Jonathan

Rimmer, Marie  
 Robertson, rh Angus  
 Rotheram, Steve  
 Ryan, rh Joan  
 Saville Roberts, Liz  
 Shannon, Jim  
 Sheerman, Mr Barry  
 Sheppard, Tommy  
 Sherriff, Paula  
 Shuker, Mr Gavin  
 Skinner, Mr Dennis  
 Slaughter, Andy  
 Smith, rh Mr Andrew  
 Smith, Angela  
 Smith, Cat  
 Smith, Nick  
 Smyth, Karin  
 Spellar, rh Mr John  
 Stephens, Chris  
 Stevens, Jo  
 Streeting, Wes  
 Stuart, rh Ms Gisela  
 Tami, Mark  
 Thewliss, Alison  
 Thomas, Mr Gareth  
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick

Thompson, Owen  
 Thomson, Michelle  
 Thornberry, Emily  
 Timms, rh Stephen  
 Trickett, Jon  
 Turley, Anna  
 Twigg, Derek  
 Umunna, Mr Chuka  
 Vaz, rh Keith  
 Vaz, Valerie  
 Watson, Mr Tom  
 Weir, Mike  
 West, Catherine  
 Whiteford, Dr Eilidh  
 Whitehead, Dr Alan  
 Whitford, Dr Philippa  
 Williams, Mr Mark  
 Wilson, Phil  
 Wilson, Sammy  
 Winterton, rh Dame Rosie  
 Wishart, Pete  
 Wright, Mr Iain  
 Zeichner, Daniel

**Tellers for the Ayes:**  
 Sue Hayman and  
 Jeff Smith

#### NOES

Elliott, Tom  
 Kinahan, Danny

**Tellers for the Noes:**  
 Holly Lynch and  
 Conor McGinn

*Question accordingly agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House notes that there are approximately three million nationals of other EU member states living in the UK; further notes that many more UK nationals are related to nationals of other EU member states; rejects the view that these men, women and children should be used as bargaining chips in negotiations on the UK's exit from the EU; and calls on the Government to commit with urgency to giving EU nationals currently living in the UK the right to remain.

**Mr Speaker:** Just before we proceed to the second of the Opposition day debates, I move to say to the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, the hon. Member for Staffordshire Moorlands (Karen Bradley), that it was typically gracious and kind of her to say that she was pleased to see me in the Chair. Perhaps I could say that the sentiment is reciprocated—I was highly delighted to see her at the Dispatch Box. I would of course be so in any circumstances, but especially now as I come to the Chamber having just celebrated with some enthusiasm the truly stunning comeback victory at Wimbledon of my all-time tennis hero, Roger Federer, who saved three match points before getting through to the semi-final for the 11th time. The hon. Lady will understand why I am in such good spirits.

## NHS Spending

6.2 pm

**Ms Diane Abbott** (Hackney North and Stoke Newington) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House notes that the Vote Leave group during the EU referendum campaign claimed that an extra £350 million a week could be spent on the NHS in lieu of the UK's EU membership contribution; further notes that senior figures who campaigned, including the hon. Member for South Northamptonshire, the hon. Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip and the Rt hon. Member for Surrey Heath have subsequently distanced themselves from that claim; and calls on the Government to set out proposals for additional NHS funding, as suggested by the hon. Member for South Northamptonshire on 4 July 2016.

It is a pleasure once again to face the Secretary of State for Health.

Nobody can doubt that much of the case that was made by the Vote Leave EU campaign was based on assertions that have since crumbled. For instance, within hours of the vote to leave the European Union, the Tory MEP, Daniel Hannan, said that taking back control of immigration did not necessarily mean cutting it. That will have been news to millions of people who voted to leave.

We also heard that there was no hurry to get on with leaving the EU. Why then the urgency of the campaign? The most striking reversal of all came from Nigel Farage. Within hours of the vote, he said that it was a mistake for the Vote Leave campaign to claim that leaving the EU would mean £350 million a week more for the NHS. Some of us were surprised by that, because this was no ordinary campaign slogan; it was painted on the side of the Vote Leave battle bus, which travelled thousands of miles up and down the country. It was emblazoned on the backdrop to speeches by the luminaries of the Vote Leave campaign. The British public is entitled to ask: where is the £350 million a week and when can we expect to see the Government start pumping that new money into our NHS? We all know about the financial and other pressures already facing the NHS.

**Mr Adrian Bailey** (West Bromwich West) (Lab/Co-op): Does my hon. Friend not think the public are also entitled to ask where the serried ranks of leave campaigners are today?

**Ms Abbott:** My hon. Friend makes an important point. I do not see a single solitary leave campaigner in the Chamber this evening. It makes me wonder what the whole campaign was about. Was it about their egos? Was it some elaborate Eton wall game? Are they not concerned that the public may have been misled?

As I was saying, we know about the financial pressures already facing the NHS. A survey by the Healthcare Financial Management Association of 200 NHS finance directors in hospitals and clinical commissioning groups reveals that no fewer than one in five believe that the quality of care will worsen in 2016-17, and even more of them—one in three—fear that care will deteriorate in 2017-18 as a result of financial pressures. Waiting times, access to services and the range of services offered were seen to be among the most vulnerable areas. There is no doubt that those pressures will be made worse when we leave the European Union.

**Keith Vaz** (Leicester East) (Lab): I begin by congratulating my hon. Friend most warmly on her appointment as the shadow Secretary of State for Health. We miss her on the Back Benches, but we are delighted that she has reached the dizzy heights of the shadow Cabinet.

One place where we are feeling the pinch is in diabetes. We have had a number of reports that the DESMOND and DAFNE—diabetes education and self-management for ongoing and newly diagnosed, and dose adjustment for normal eating—schemes to provide structured education for type 1 and type 2 diabetics, are being cut. Does my hon. Friend agree that prevention is so important that we should ring-fence resources to deal with the crisis affecting diabetics?

**Ms Abbott:** I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for making that important point. We are seeing pressures on public health services and expenditure across the piece. What he says about ring-fencing money for diabetes is very important and I support him.

The Health Foundation think-tank says that

“Leading economists are... unanimous in concluding that leaving the EU will have a negative effect on the UK economy”.

As a result, the NHS budget could be fully £2.8 billion lower than currently planned by 2019-20. In the longer term, the NHS funding shortfall could be at least £19 billion by 2039, equivalent to £365 million a week—and that assumes that the UK is able to join the European economic area. If that does not happen, the shortfall could be as high as £28 billion, or £540 million a week.

Those figures are not just numbers in a ledger. We know what poor care means in practice. Today's Care Quality Commission report on North Middlesex University Hospital revealed a series of terrible incidents: an evening when only one commode was available for more than 100 patients; a patient left sitting on a bedpan for more than an hour; and a patient who lay dead in A&E for four and a half hours before being found. We can foresee similar consequences in other hospitals if pressures bear down on the NHS budget, not only because of all sorts of externalities, but because of our leaving the EU.

We know about the endemic problems in the NHS. Earlier today, we discussed the junior doctors rejection of the Government's new contracts. We know that nurses and midwives are in uproar because of the Government's plan to scrap the bursaries that would-be nurses and midwives rely on when they are studying. A fresh injection of cash, as promised by the Vote Leave campaign, could not be more timely.

While we are talking about the implications of Brexit for the NHS, I remind Members that any restrictions on freedom of movement—a subject that is being discussed extensively in the wake of the Brexit vote—will be little less than disastrous for the NHS; 55,000 men and women in its workforce originate from the EU. It would be completely catastrophic for social care; 80,000 men and women out of 1.3 million workers in that field are EU nationals.

I represent a constituency that voted strongly for remain—I think that Hackney had the second highest remain vote in the country—and I believed that a remain vote was in the best interests of the UK, but as we heard earlier today in the House, there has been a horrifying upsurge in racist abuse and hate crime, triggered by the Brexit vote. It is as if people now have permission

to be openly racist. It is interesting that Vote Leave supporters are now distancing themselves from anti-immigrant politics, but the unpleasantness unleashed by the Brexit campaign is already poisoning public discourse. However, I believe strongly in democracy, so I believe that we have to respect the referendum vote. In many cases, it was a cry of pain and rage against Westminster elites, on which we all have to reflect.

The late Member for Chesterfield, the right hon. Tony Benn, who was an opponent of the EU to his dying day, said:

“My view of the EU has always been not that I am hostile to foreigners but I am in favour of democracy.”

I respect those people who voted to leave. My experience of the EU campaign is that people wanted information, were trying to compare competing claims, and were doing their best to exercise their right to vote responsibly. The turnout was high. Nobody wants to think that the Vote Leave campaign peddled deliberately bogus slogans. I speak on behalf of not just Labour Members, but the British voting public as a whole. At a time when money was never more needed for the NHS, when can we expect to see the £350 million a week extra for the NHS that the Vote Leave campaign promised would be a consequence of the Brexit vote—or was it deceiving the public?

6.12 pm

**The Secretary of State for Health (Mr Jeremy Hunt):** Perhaps I will cut down my speech a bit. I give a particularly warm welcome to all my Back-Bench colleagues here; it is wonderful to see them coming out in support in such numbers. I thank the shadow Health Secretary for calling this debate. She is right to talk about the issues of NHS funding—though not particularly through this motion, which I will come on to speak about. I welcome her to her first Opposition day debate, as I welcomed her earlier to her first statement. This is a brief that she knows well, having been shadow Public Health Minister, and having campaigned on a lot of very important topics, including plain paper packaging for cigarettes. She has done a lot of work with the all-party sickle cell and thalassaemia group as well. I wish her luck in two areas. The first is with her parliamentary questions, after last week’s question to the Department for International Development about a drought in Indonesia, when it was in fact in the Philippines. Secondly, I wish her luck finding some Front-Bench colleagues, just as I need luck finding some Back-Bench colleagues in these debates.

We are in agreement on Brexit; we were both on the remain side, and I campaigned strongly with the hon. Lady. I agree with her that however much we may have disagreed with the vote, it is very important that we respect it. She and I both worried about the damage that it might do to our economy and society if we left, but we also agree that it would do incredible damage to something even more important than them—to our democracy—if the British people were to think that the Westminster establishment was trying somehow to ignore their decision.

From the reasonable tone of her comments, I know that the hon. Lady understands that Vote Leave was not speaking for the Government when it said that there would potentially be an extra £350 million for the NHS.

In fairness to the Vote Leave campaigners, at various points they clarified downwards that slogan on the side of the bus and said that they were really talking about a net figure of more like £100 million that could potentially go to the NHS, rather than £350 million.

**Ms Abbott rose—**

**Dr Philippa Whitford (Central Ayrshire) (SNP) rose—**

**Mr Hunt:** I will give way first to the shadow Health Secretary, then to the Scottish health spokesperson.

**Ms Abbott:** If the Vote Leave campaigners brought down the figure that they thought could potentially be given to the NHS, why did they not repaint the wording on the bus?

**Mr Hunt:** That is, perhaps, not a question for me as a Government Minister to answer, but I take the hon. Lady’s point. I give way to the hon. Member for Central Ayrshire (Dr Whitford).

**Dr Whitford:** My question has already been answered.

**Mr Hunt:** The point that many of us made in the referendum campaign is that even the net figure—the more like £100 million net contribution that we make to the EU—is not a figure that we can bank on with any certainty because, even if it did materialise after an exit from the EU, it would be negated by the very smallest of contractions in the economy, which would itself reduce the tax base and the amount of public spending available. The Institute for Fiscal Studies said that that £100 million a week would be negated by a contraction in the economy as small as 0.6%. I do not think any of the economic forecasts said that the contraction would be as small as that; all of them said that it would be much bigger than that.

**Mr Jamie Reed (Copeland) (Lab):** I share the right hon. Gentleman’s concerns about—with your permission, Mr Speaker—the lie on the side of the bus. As Secretary of State for Health, will he now, on behalf of the whole country, and particularly on behalf of people who were deceived and let down by that claim, take up with the Electoral Commission why that lie was allowed to stand for so long?

**Mr Hunt:** I understand the hon. Gentleman’s concerns. Let me give him a challenging reply. The trouble that we have—those of us who disagree with the outcome—is that that issue was exhaustively debated and, for whatever reason, people chose to disbelieve our concerns or decided that they were not worried about it.

I understand why the shadow Health Secretary has brought the motion before the House, but the reason it is a difficult one to debate is that essentially the argument about the £350 million, or the £120 million, or the £100 million is dependent on the state of the economy. That is something that we cannot know now, only 12 days after the Brexit vote result. However worried we are about the impact of that vote, in discussions about the economy we have to be careful not to talk it down, because in the end we have a responsibility to recognise that there may be opportunities and we need to make the most of the ones that exist.

**Mr Bailey:** I understand the point that the right hon. Gentleman is making. On the other hand, I believe the Treasury has downgraded our prospective growth rate from 2% to 0.5%. Presumably, future spending plans will be based on that revised future growth rate. Is it not reasonable, therefore, to start making the assumptions that he has been wary of making so far?

**Mr Hunt:** It is perfectly reasonable to make the assumptions that the hon. Gentleman mentions, and there are plenty of reasons why we could look at some of the early impact on the economy even in the past 12 days and be concerned about the potential impact on the tax base and public spending more broadly. My nervousness as a Minister about talking those things up is that I do not want to talk down the British economy. Even though, as I say, I campaigned against the Brexit vote, I recognise that we are now going to leave the EU, I want the economy to be successful and I want us to make the most of the opportunities that face us.

On the broader issue of NHS funding, this debate indicates that there is some consensus—the Prime Minister mentioned this earlier today at Prime Minister's questions—on the umbilical link between the health of the economy and the amount we are able to spend on the NHS. We are proud of the fact that we were able to protect spending in the last Parliament and to increase it by £10 billion in this Parliament on the back of a growing economy. Given that Health is the second biggest spending Department, we must recognise that it is vital to the NHS that we maintain that growth, despite the choppy period we are possibly about to go through.

**Mike Weir (Angus) (SNP):** I understand what the Secretary of State is saying about the health of the economy, but this debate also links to the previous debate because of the number of EU nationals who work in the health service. Has he made any estimate of the cost to the health service if all these EU nationals were forced to leave the UK in the course of this Brexit?

**Mr Hunt:** We are currently doing the analysis the hon. Gentleman is concerned about, but I should just say to him that I accept the Home Secretary's assurance and confidence that we will not end up in a situation where EU nationals, upon whom we absolutely depend in the health and social care system, and who do an absolutely outstanding job, would not be allowed to remain in the UK. She has said she is very confident that we will be able to negotiate a deal whereby they are able to stay here as long as they wish and to continue to make the important contribution they do, and I accept that assurance.

**Mr Gareth Thomas (Harrow West) (Lab/Co-op):** Further to the point made by the hon. Member for Angus (Mike Weir), will the Secretary of State give the House an assurance that he will release that analysis and that it will be sufficiently comprehensive to allow us to see a regional breakdown of the significance of EU nationals working in our health service?

**Mr Hunt:** I will take away the hon. Gentleman's request, and I will, of course, try to be as transparent as possible with Parliament about all the analysis and research we do on these topics.

**Mr Jamie Reed:** On the point my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow West (Mr Thomas) has just made about having an assessment if we do end up, essentially, forcibly repatriating EU citizens in the United Kingdom, there will of course be a flip side: something like 3 million British expats in the EU would have to return to the UK as well. Many of them are, to put it politely, of pensionable age, with challenging health demands in many regards. Will the Secretary of State also provide an assessment of what effect that would have on the national health service?

**Mr Hunt:** I am sure that that is analysis we can do, but I cannot do it at the Dispatch Box as a direct response to the hon. Gentleman. However, as I am sure he is well aware—we made this point during the whole Brexit referendum debate—we have reciprocal health arrangements with other EU countries at the moment. Those are immensely convenient to people travelling to and visiting other European countries, because they mean those people can access healthcare completely free of charge. The bill is actually sent to the Government, and that arrangement includes pensioners who have retired to Spain and France and Italy as well. It would be very sad if, as a result of the new relationship with the EU, we lost that convenience. That is one of the reasons why I am confident that other EU countries will be happy for British pensioners to remain in them. As long as those countries are able to charge us for the healthcare costs, the burden to them should be minimal.

**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan (Tooting) (Lab):** The Secretary of State spoke about NHS spending. Does he agree that cuts to local government spending on social care are putting increased financial pressures on the NHS? At St George's hospital, a cost of £1.3 million has been attributed to inefficient discharges.

**Mr Hunt:** First, may I welcome the hon. Lady to her place as a doctor and as someone who knows a great deal about NHS matters? Although I am sure we will not agree on every health matter, it is always valuable and a great asset to have someone with medical experience in the House, and I am sure she will make a huge contribution in that respect. She is absolutely right to say that what happens in the social care system has a direct impact on what happens in the NHS, and that we cannot—as, in fairness, happened under Governments of both colours over many years—look at the NHS and the social care system as completely independent systems when we know that inadequate provision in the social care system has a direct impact on emergency admissions in A&E departments. She is right to make that point.

Let me make a broader point in concluding my comments. I think that there would be agreement across this House on the huge pressure on the NHS frontline at the moment, and that there is recognition of some fantastic work being done by front-line doctors and nurses to cope with that pressure. I shall give a couple of examples of the extra work that is happening, compared with six years ago. The A&E target is to see, treat and discharge people within four hours. Every day, we are managing to achieve that, within the four-hour target, for 2,500 more people than six years ago. On cancer, we are not hitting all our targets, but every single day we

are doing 16,000 more cancer tests, including 3,500 more MRI scans, and treating 130 additional people for cancer. There are some incredible things happening.

However, we all recognise, and this perhaps lies behind the Opposition's concerns in bringing this motion to the House, that in healthcare we now deal with the twin challenges of an ageing population, in that we will have 1 million more over-70s within the next five years—a trend that is continuing to grow—and of the pressure of scientific discovery, which means we have new drugs and treatments coming down the track. They are exciting new possibilities but also things that cost money. I for one, as Health Secretary, believe that as soon as economic conditions allow, we will need to start looking at a significant increase in health funding. That is why it is incredibly important, as we go through the next few years negotiating our new relationship with Europe, that we work very hard to protect the economic base that we have in this country, the economic success that we have started to see, and the jobs that do not just employ a lot of people but create tax revenues for this country. It is incredibly important that we pilot the next few years with a great deal of care, because what happens on the economy will have a huge impact on the NHS.

**Mr Gareth Thomas** *rose*—

**Mr Hunt:** I have almost concluded, but I will give way one last time.

**Mr Thomas:** I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way, and, if he will forgive me for saying so, temporarily fond of him as a result, because he is allowing me to raise a particular constituency concern. Northwick Park hospital, which serves my constituents, currently has a deficit of almost £100 million and is having to axe 140 staff posts as a result of the lack of funding for my local clinical commissioning group, by comparison with other parts of London. Will he undertake to look specifically at the issues facing Northwick Park hospital and Harrow clinical commissioning group as his further analysis of the need for additional spending in the NHS is taken forward?

**Mr Hunt:** I am very happy to do so. I have visited that hospital, where the challenges very much reflect what the hon. Member for Tooting (Dr Allin-Khan) said about links to the social care system. It was clear to me that the staff in the A&E department are working incredibly hard getting people through it, but struggling to discharge people from the hospital, which is why they were not hitting their target.

I have just been handed a note by a ministerial colleague, Mr Speaker, which I hope you will indulge me and let me read out, because I have never been handed such a note before. It says: "Apparently everyone wants to go and watch Wales play, so Whips happy if you felt you wanted to shorten your remarks." On that basis, I will conclude by thanking the shadow Health Secretary for bringing this motion to the House and for her comments in support of it.

**Mr Speaker:** The right hon. Gentleman is not only an experienced member of the Cabinet but a very seasoned parliamentarian, and I think he is well attuned to the feeling in the House, as I am sure that other colleagues will now also be—not that I am hinting or anything.

6.30 pm

**Dr Philippa Whitford** (Central Ayrshire) (SNP): God, the pressure.

We recognise that this figure of £350 million a week chimed with people in the country, because people are concerned about the funding of the NHS. The Secretary of State for Health talks about an extra £8 billion going forward, plus the additional £2 billion that was added to that, which was for bailing out massive debts. However, that is a change of description. Normally, funding is described as being for the Department of Health, but that is just NHS England. Public Health England and Health Education England were facing cuts of £3.5 billion. Therefore, the extra money going forward is only £4.5 billion. We have heard Members talk about their local trusts being in deficit. This is now so widespread, it cannot be blamed on management.

Despite the fact that the NHS somehow always managed to come out just in the black up to April 2013 and has been careering into the red ever since, the Secretary of State never seems to accept that this is to do with the Health and Social Care Act 2012 changes and the huge administration costs of outsourcing and fragmentation. The Secretary of State lays the blame for all this with agency staff.

Given the debate that we have just had on EU nationals working in this country, particularly in our public services, I have to say that we could be facing an absolute meltdown. We have 50,000 nurses and doctors from the EU in the NHS, and almost 80,000 careworkers. The Minister for Immigration hinted that those who have been here for over five years can stay, but that their benefits and rights may not be quite the same. So my husband, who is from Germany, can stay, but is his pension going to disappear? He has worked here for 30 years, but what protections will he no longer have? What about the people who have been here for less than five years—the high-flying researchers, academics or medics—who could go somewhere else? Do the Government really think that these people are just going to sit at home with their families until the last possible minute? No, we are going to lose them, and agency costs for nurses and doctors will go through the roof. For social careworkers, it will not matter: they do not earn over £35,000, so they are unlikely to get to stay, and we are unlikely to be able to replace to them.

As well as the fact that the £8 billion we always hear about is not actually £8 billion, we know that local government has faced huge cuts and, as was referred to earlier, that social care is where the real problem lies. The NHS money is just going to haemorrhage out the back door.

The £350 million a week figure that was painted on that bus was a disgrace. The shadow Health Secretary, the hon. Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott), talked about it being an Eton game, but I think that it was an Eton mess. People were just playing with the facts. The rebate was not included. Public service payments, such as the common agricultural policy and regional funds, were not included. However, as the Secretary of State says, when we get down to the £110 million or so a week, that does not include all the other benefits that support the NHS and our economy. How much will it cost us to take part in Horizon 2020? How much does Switzerland have to pay to be part of this?

[*Dr Philippa Whitford*]

This is going to cost a lot of money. The Secretary of State said that it would take a 0.06% fall in GDP to negate the £100 million, but economists estimate that the fall will be between 1% and 3%. We do not want that to happen, but all the experts agreed that that was the likely outcome.

Like most people in Scotland, I absolutely believed in the remain campaign, but to me there was a poverty to the debate. Why are we having these two debates today instead of before 23 June? We had very little open discussion of the issues in this place. One of the problems is that we have never talked about anything good that we have got from the EU in the past 40 years. Of course, I have been lucky—I got my other half from the EU—but, to be honest, most of us have had many gains. We have cleaner air and cleaner water, and we have tackled acid rain. We have cleaner beaches. We have a single European medicines agency, so new drugs get to patients quicker. That agency is located here in London, but it is unlikely to remain here.

**Dr Andrew Murrison** (South West Wiltshire) (Con): I always listen very carefully to what the hon. Lady says, but is she not being a little unfair on the United Kingdom? I seem to remember that the Clean Air Act 1956 set the bar for the European Union in the regulation of one of the areas that she has identified—namely, the cleanliness of the air that we breathe.

**Dr Whitford:** I was not on the planet in 1956, so I do not quite remember. We know from the recent cheating that there is a lot more work to be done on the control of car emissions, which cause a lot of ill health, but some of the progress in that area has come from EU regulation. Problems such as poor air quality and climate change cannot be dealt with by one country alone; we need to work together. In a health sense, we have had massive gains in the past 40 years, but politicians have never talked about that.

The EU has been a great whipping boy. All that the public have heard about the EU in the last 40 years is, “It wasnae my fault; the EU made me do it,” or stories about straight bananas. That is the responsibility of everyone who has had access to a microphone or spoken in this place about the EU. We should not be surprised that when people had the £350 million figure drummed into them by it being on that bus and on the news every night, they would fall for it. The mainstream media have a lot to answer for in not challenging these figures and not asking, “Exactly what is your plan? Exactly where is that money going to come from?” We should not blame people who want extra money for the NHS for wishfully accepting those claims, even when the cracks appeared around the edges.

Part of the problem has been the quality of the debate. Several of my colleagues warned people who believed in remain not just to go for a “Project Fear” type campaign, and I think that running such a campaign was a mistake. People think that “Project Fear” worked in Scotland, but in actual fact Better Together support started, as a percentage, in the mid-60s and fell to 55%. We started at 27%, and we ended up at 45%. “Project Armageddon” clawed back a little bit in the last two weeks, when we were told that the supermarkets would

go and the banks would go, and that we would have no money and no food to buy, but a negative campaign of saying that the sky will fall does not lead to success.

**Mike Weir:** Does my hon. Friend agree that difference was that the yes campaign in Scotland came forward with a positive vision to combat “Project Fear”, but that was totally lacking in the EU referendum?

**Dr Whitford:** I thank my hon. Friend for that remark. If we had spent more time reminding people honestly of what the EU has brought us, which includes all the people who have been working in our health and social care services, we might have helped them to realise that we have been gainers, not losers.

**Andrew Gwynne** (Denton and Reddish) (Lab): The hon. Lady is absolutely right in the case that she is setting out. Is not part of the reason why people voted the way they did because they actually wanted to give additional money and resources to an NHS and social care system that has been badly starved of cash? That is particularly true of social care. People have seen their elderly relatives being unable to get the help, the aids and the adaptations that they need in the home, which piles pressure on to the NHS. They wanted the NHS to have that cash.

**Dr Whitford:** I totally agree. Of course, we all want the NHS to have more money. It is the United Kingdom’s single most prized possession and creation. The problem is that we did not counter the argument that it was struggling because people from the EU were taking up the appointments and the beds. EU nationals are much more likely to be looking after us than to be standing in front of us in the queue. There is an absolute responsibility on us all, particularly on the missing members of the leave campaign. This is very much a case of a big boy doing it and running away—very, very quickly.

**Andrea Jenkyns** (Morley and Outwood) (Con): As somebody who was in the leave campaign, I think it is important that we remember that we worked across parties on it, whichever side we were on. In Yorkshire, I worked with colleagues from the Green party, the Labour party and UKIP, although I did not work with the SNP, obviously. It is the responsibility of both camps. I have seen “Project Fear” in both camps.

We need to move on from this now. It is pure economics. If we are pulling out of the EU, as the public have voted to do and as I am personally happy that we are doing, we must make sure that we start talking Britain up; otherwise we will talk ourselves into a recession. Members on both sides of the House need to pull together and talk Britain up. At the end of the day, both sides could have handled this better.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing):** Order. Before the hon. Member for Central Ayrshire (Dr Whitford) answers the intervention, I must remind the House that this debate is not about the EU campaign. We are talking specifically about the NHS. I understand that the hon. Lady was—perfectly reasonably—using examples, but we must not stray any further.

**Dr Whitford:** I totally agree. It is just that the paucity of the debate has allowed such an inaccurate figure to endure.

We are where we are. Going forward, we need to look at the realities and what the economy will allow. But there are challenges. I ask the Secretary of State to speak to his colleague in the Home Office and try to deal with the issue of EU nationals working in the NHS. The cost of replacing them with agency staff will be absolutely crippling.

6.41 pm

**Joan Ryan** (Enfield North) (Lab): I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Central Ayrshire (Dr Whitford) and agree with many of her points.

I share concerns expressed about the misleading statements made on the national health service during the EU referendum campaign. Many of my constituents who voted to leave were swayed by the pledge that a future outside the European Union could result in £350 million extra every week being invested in our NHS—and if not £350 million, then £120 million would do very nicely at the moment and make a big difference. Whether they voted leave or remain, people feel very disillusioned with such misleading statements.

The breathtaking speed with which prominent figures from the leave campaign have backtracked on that promise shows how hollow their words really were. People on both sides of the debate are upset and angry about what has happened. They understand that our hospitals, doctors and nurses need better support and more investment. I therefore fully support the motion.

**Andrea Jenkyns:** I completely agree with the right hon. Lady that we need more investment, but does she agree that the Government are right to point out that we have invested an extra £8 billion in the NHS already?

**Joan Ryan:** If the hon. Lady looks at my constituency she will see a perfect storm when it comes to health funding. We are underfunded in public health, in social care, in primary care and in acute care. She can come up with whatever figure she likes, but the experience on the ground is that we are suffering very badly.

I will come on to talk about the Care Quality Commission report, out today, on our hospital. I do not know whether the hon. Lady has seen it, but if she wants to talk about increased spending, I suggest she look at that report. What it says about what is going on in an acute care hospital is unprecedented.

**Mr Jamie Reed:** Two of the prominent leave campaigners who endorsed the £350 million figure are now running to be leader of the Conservative party and our future Prime Minister. Does my right hon. Friend agree that those two people should be brought to this House and made to explain to the country just where they will get the £350 million from?

**Joan Ryan:** I absolutely agree. Nothing makes the public feel more disillusioned and separated from the political and democratic process than to be given promises by politicians who, once the public have given their vote to them, walk away from those promises. That is not acceptable.

**Karin Smyth** (Bristol South) (Lab): Does my right hon. Friend accept that as well as the £350 million promise, the issue of access to GP primary care appointments caused a lot of anxiety in many communities? That is the fault not only of the funding situation but of the way in which primary care has been run down in the past six years.

**Joan Ryan:** The lack of primary care—particularly in London but also elsewhere—is a key factor behind the huge pressures on our accident and emergency departments and urgent care. No wonder people go there when they cannot get an appointment.

**Philip Boswell** (Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill) (SNP): It takes four years to train a nurse and five years to train a doctor, but the divorce proceedings triggered by article 50 will be done in two years. It clearly presents a critical problem for NHS funding if staff leave when the UK leaves the EU.

**Joan Ryan:** As we have heard, Brexit will present us with many problems, particularly with health care provision. Not only are we not getting large sums of money, but we will actually be worse off. We will face many challenges because of that decision, and if the promise of £350 million led people to vote in a particular way that will undermine the funding we receive, that is a desperate state of affairs.

People feel badly let down by the leave campaign's empty pledges on the NHS over the past few months, and residents in Enfield are deeply disenchanted by the Government's failure to fulfil their recent promises to our local health service. Before the 2010 general election, the then Leader of the Opposition—actually, he was then Prime Minister of the coalition Government—stood outside Chase Farm hospital in my constituency and vowed to protect its A&E and maternity units. By 2013, his Government had shut both departments. Many of us warned at the time that closing Chase Farm's A&E department would put huge strain on other local health services, including North Middlesex University Hospital NHS Trust, which is the subject of the CQC report that I referred to earlier. We were right, and almost three years since the decision to close Chase Farm's emergency department, the NHS in Enfield has reached breaking point.

Earlier today the Care Quality Commission published its report into the standard of care at North Middlesex hospital, following a spot check by its inspection team in early April. It found that the closure of Chase Farm's A&E has led to significant increases in patient numbers attending the emergency department at North Mid. Despite being one of the busiest A&E departments in the country, North Mid's urgent and emergency services have been graded as "inadequate", and patient safety has been compromised. Patients who arrive at the emergency department are not seen quickly enough by clinical staff, and they are waiting too long to be seen by a doctor. Some blue-light patients are being brought in, and hard-pressed nurses are dealing with them because no doctor is free to treat them.

**Mr Gareth Thomas:** My right hon. Friend is making a strong case for her constituents and their hospital. Does she recognise that although the situation she

[Mr Gareth Thomas]

describes at North Middlesex hospital is particularly bad, such things have also been witnessed in many other parts of London, not least in north-west London where the London North West Healthcare NHS Trust has shut an accident and emergency department at Central Middlesex hospital? As a result, there has been a big increase in pressure at Northwick Park hospital, which serves my constituents.

**Joan Ryan:** Absolutely. North Middlesex is just the first hospital to reach absolute crisis point, but I am well aware that other hospitals, particularly in outer London, are heading down a similar path and facing real difficulties. If we consider A&E waiting times, we see that hospitals are sliding into that difficult scenario.

Junior doctors and trainees have been left unsupervised in North Middlesex hospital's A&E department at night, without competent senior support—in fact, no consultant has been available from 11 o'clock onwards. My hon. Friend the Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) referred to such cases. In one instance, one commode was available for 100 patients in the whole of the emergency department. Staff raised concerns about the lack of vital medical equipment, including missing leads for cardiac machines so they could not get an instant read-out. Trolleys in the resuscitation area lacked vital equipment. There was an oppressive, overbearing culture at the hospital that meant staff did not feel confident in raising concerns, and they even stopped reporting incidents of staff shortages, as management had not responded to them in the past.

The CQC report reinforces the findings of Health Education England and the General Medical Council. At a high-risk summit in May, the GMC threatened to withdraw junior doctor post-graduate trainees if the numbers of A&E staff and middle-ranking doctors and consultants were not increased. That would effectively close the busiest emergency department in London. This is an unprecedented situation. The future of North Mid A&E has been put at risk. Even medical trainees at the hospital are not prepared to recommend the A&E for treatment to their friends and family. In interviews with Health Education England, they said that that was "because they felt the department was unsafe."

My constituents have had to suffer the consequences of shocking mismanagement and a lack of leadership at North Mid. The chief executive is now on leave and I understand she is stepping down. Although there is a lack of leadership, she cannot be held solely responsible for what has happened. The Prime Minister and the Health Secretary have told us repeatedly that the NHS is safe in their hands, yet huge pressures have been placed upon North Mid due to a lack of central Government funding. Patient care has suffered further as a direct result of the hospital not having enough equipment, consultants, doctors and nurses. It has had to spend large parts of its budget on locums and agency nurses.

What is the Government's solution to ensuring that hospital departments, such as those at North Mid, do not remain dangerously understaffed? Is it to divert a large amount of funding to help to solve this situation and put patients first? No: they decide to go to war with junior doctors over their contracts and abolish NHS

bursaries for student nurses, while we have hospitals going abroad to try to recruit staff. That is an insult to dedicated professionals who deserve our admiration, respect and support. The Government's actions will discourage the future frontline staff we so desperately need.

The NHS is facing a huge financial challenge, so a commitment to spend an extra £350 million a week, or even £120 million a week, on the NHS in lieu of our EU membership was clearly a very attractive offer to our constituents. NHS England needs to plug a funding gap of £30 billion a year by 2021 and a few months ago it was revealed that nearly every hospital in the country was in deficit. We are obviously not going to get £350 million or £120 million a week and I think that that was always known by the leave campaigners. In fact, the Government are seeking to suck out £5 billion in savings through the sustainability and transformation programme. I know that savings and efficiencies, particularly in back-office services, can and must be found, but not at the expense of patient safety.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham East (Heidi Alexander), the former shadow Health Secretary, warned that the scale of savings required could

"not be delivered without putting patient care at risk... These 'efficiencies' will mean cuts to staff, cuts to pay, rationing of treatments. And it will be patients who suffer."

Her analysis is spot on. We have witnessed the disastrous effects of this course of action in Enfield. We need more investment in North Middlesex University hospital, and in the NHS in general, not less. I join my parliamentary colleagues on the Labour Benches in calling on the Government to increase spending on our NHS. It is most regrettable that, given the urgent need for more funding and the very real and justifiable concerns of people in Enfield, they should have been led to believe Brexit could possibly mean major new funding for the NHS.

In closing, I think I corrected myself wrongly. In the run-in to the 2010 general election, the current Prime Minister was, of course, the Leader of the Opposition, and he made a promise to keep our hospital open, which, when he became Prime Minister, he then closed. That kind of behaviour is very similar to what the leave campaigners did in promising money that does not really exist. It is hoodwinking the voter and it is not acceptable. It desperately undermines the voters' faith in politics and democratic processes.

6.55 pm

**Mr Jamie Reed** (Copeland) (Lab): Before I begin, may I apologise to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and the House authorities for posting a picture of this Chamber on the popular social media and networking site Twitter? Its purpose—it has now been removed—was purely to demonstrate that, at the point of taking the picture, only two Conservative MPs were in the Chamber and both were Ministers. The other point I would like to make before moving on is how much, as a bereft supporter of the English national football side, I am looking forward to cheering on Wales in what I hope will be a victory against Portugal this evening.

The Cumbrian health economy is experiencing the most prolonged period of intense pressure, strain and threat that it has ever faced.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing):** Order. Before the hon. Gentleman gets into the body of his speech—I do not want to interrupt his argument—I want to thank him for the point he made and for his immediate action in removing the picture that he had tweeted. For the avoidance of doubt, it is simply not allowed, but as soon as he realised that he had done something that was not allowed, he acted immediately, and I thank him for doing so.

**Mr Reed:** That is greatly appreciated, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Despite the dedicated and incredible efforts of local NHS staff in my constituency, I see health inequalities on a daily basis, and many of my constituents experience profound access challenges to health services in my constituency and elsewhere across Cumbria, caused in part by our inadequate transport infrastructure, but also by a clearly insufficient profile of investment in local services. So far, I am afraid to say, my calls for improvement have fallen upon deaf ears.

In north and west as well as east Cumbria, we are currently subject to the ongoing success regime process. Funding for the important second phase of the West Cumberland hospital has not yet been released by the Government, and the communities I represent are gravely concerned about the uncertain future facing our local health services, including beds not just at the West Cumberland, but at our local community hospitals in Keswick, Millom, Maryport and elsewhere—and that is before we even consider the profound challenges to primary care, too.

In spite of the challenges that we face and the strength of feeling in my constituency, the Health Secretary, who is no longer in his place, has paid not one visit to the West Cumberland hospital, or any of our community hospitals on whose behalf I speak tonight, in the four years in which he has held his position. Moreover, he has refused my invitation to visit West Cumbria to see for himself the unique challenges that we face in our part of the world. Without visiting the hospital, experiencing the transport inadequacies and seeing the vital work of consultant-led accident and emergency, maternity and paediatric services that the West Cumberland hospital provides, the Health Secretary cannot and does not understand the necessity for his immediate intervention in our troubled health economy.

Most recently, owing to the fact that the Health Secretary would not come to us, my constituents and I—health campaigners from across the piece—decided to go to him. West Cumbrian health campaigners, including Mike Bulman, Mahesh Dhebar, Rachel Holliday, Siobhan Gearing and the fantastic Pamela McGowan from the *News & Star* newspaper, planned to make a 700 mile round trip to London to meet the Health Secretary, to outline the challenges that our health economy faces and to put our case to him. However, at short notice, but coincidentally on the day after he announced his ambition to stand as leader of the Conservative party, the Health Secretary cancelled the meeting. The decision to cancel that meeting was seen by my community as the calculated insult that I am afraid it surely was.

I led the local campaigners instead to the Department of Health to meet the gracious and approachable Under-Secretary responsible for care quality—the Minister in

his place today. The delegation handed to him a confidential document containing the cases given to local campaigners by local mothers about babies who were likely to have suffered fatalities—and maternal fatalities, too—if consultant-led maternity services had been unavailable at the West Cumberland hospital in Whitehaven. The Government are well aware that consultant-led maternity services at that hospital are non-negotiable and absolutely essential—whatever the successor regime that comes forward in the immediate future. Any other option would compromise the safety of local mothers and their babies.

It is clear to me, to my community and to Simon Stevens, the chief executive of the NHS, who visited my constituency only a few months ago, that consultant-led services must be retained and improved at West Cumberland hospital. Removing those services from Whitehaven would be dangerous—

7 pm

*The debate stood adjourned (Standing Order No. 9(3)).*

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 41A(3)),*

That at this day's sitting the Motions in the name of the Leader of the Opposition may be proceeded with, though opposed, until 8.00pm; and Standing Order No. 41A (Deferred divisions) shall not apply.—(*Charlie Elphicke.*)

*Question agreed to.*

**Mr Reed:** As I was saying, the removal of those consultant-led maternity services would actively undermine the principle of a truly national health service, and will never be accepted by me or by my community. I am therefore deeply concerned by a recent report, based on a leaked e-mail, which suggests that the success regime is indeed considering the removal of maternity services from Whitehaven as one of the options on which it wishes to consult. That is appalling. If the success regime turns out to be a Trojan horse initiated by the Government to slash budgets and remove services, I have just one message to send to the Government today: my community will never accept that, and cannot and will never forgive it.

There is no doubt that consultant-led maternity services are what west Cumbrian women and their families need, want and deserve. Removing those services from the remotest constituency from Westminster in England, in terms of accessibility, would be not only unsafe, but without precedent in our country. It is clear that this move is being driven by the Government's determination to cut costs, and not by the safety of mothers and babies.

My community now calls on the Government and those responsible for the success regime to make the immediate, clear and unequivocal commitment to consultant-led maternity services at West Cumberland hospital—and other services—that communities in west Cumbria deserve. Without a clear commitment to our consultant-led services, including a fully functioning consultant-led maternity service at West Cumberland hospital, it will be impossible for us to support the work of the success regime in the future.

I have since urged the entire community of west Cumbria to join me, and our local campaigners, in fighting any proposals to remove essential consultant-led services from West Cumberland hospital. We are a

[Mr Jamie Reed]

community of campaigners, patients, families and NHS staff, united in our commitment to our local national health service, and we are determined to build a 21st century health economy, equipped to overcome the challenges that we face in my incredibly rural constituency. We will not allow the Government, by any means, to strip away our services, leaving a threadbare health service, unfit for purpose, to future generations in the community of west Cumbria. My community is determined; what we are missing is the immediate commitment, support and investment from the Government that we so clearly require.

Just two weeks ago the country voted to leave the European Union, and I regret that. Many of those voters, including a large number of my constituents, voted on the basis of their belief that a Brexit vote would result in an extra £350 million per week for the NHS. Since that vote, prominent members of the leave campaign have been quick to renege on a key promise that swung so many people behind their prospectus. As we observe the Conservative leadership contest, it appears likely that those prominent campaigners will wash their hands of the responsibility of delivering on the commitments that they made. In communities like mine, where people voted in the belief that their vote would help to fund the investments that we need in our health services, that is an unforgivable betrayal.

Now is the time for the Government to fulfil their responsibility to provide a truly national health service. My community needs and deserves no less than an immediate intervention to ensure the release of funding for the second phase of the redevelopment of West Cumberland hospital and a commitment to the retention and improvement of consultant-led services, including accident and emergency, maternity and paediatric services. We also require a commitment to the retention of beds at our community hospitals. Brexit campaigners in the Government, especially those who aspire to be not just the next leader of the Conservative party but the next leader of our country, have a particular responsibility to stand before the House and the country, and explain to all the people whom they knowingly deceived why they did it, where the money is coming from, and what they are going to do about it.

7.4 pm

**Julie Cooper** (Burnley) (Lab): I want to begin by speaking about the NHS as experienced by my constituents. Getting an appointment to see a GP can be very difficult because recruitment of doctors in Burnley and Padiham is an enormous problem and many posts remain unfilled. This is not a temporary situation; this is how it is all the time.

The fact is staff do their best, but they are not magicians. Too often patients requesting an appointment are told to phone back the following day at 8.30 am and hope for a cancellation, and heaven forbid that a patient should want to have some continuity of care. This is especially difficult for the elderly and those suffering with mental illness. I tell the Minister that they really need to see a familiar face, and to have access to a GP with whom they have an established rapport. Sadly, they are denied this.

Unplanned admissions to hospital are also difficult. Patients often wait for hours on trolleys in cubicles and draughty corridors until a bed is available. This bed

queue is the direct result of the fact that there is a shocking shortage of quality support for the elderly and mentally ill in need of care in the community.

The elderly and mentally ill really do bear the brunt of an NHS in crisis. Every week in my surgery I hear of their suffering at the hands of a poorly resourced and inadequately staffed NHS. One lady told me only a couple of days ago that she took her daughter, who is self-harming and threatening to hang herself, to the mental health crisis unit. The unit was so busy that she had to wait 23 hours for a diagnosis, after which it was decided that she needed to be sectioned and admitted. For the next four days, because no bed was available, she slept in an easy-chair. At that point a bed was found in Potters Bar, London. The family of this lady, including her five-year-old daughter, live in Burnley, at a distance of over 200 miles. They cannot afford the train journey to visit her.

I mention all of this not as a criticism of any of our NHS workers—far from it; they are at the sharp end doing their best in an impossible situation. They work in the health service because they care, and it pains them to see patients treated in this way. I mention all of this, none of which is untypical, because it is this misery that the Brexit campaign spoke to.

The leading Brexiteers, who have been mentioned in this place already today, played out the most cruel deception. They promised in their campaign that if the UK left Europe the NHS would receive a funding boost of £350 million per week. This untruth—that is what it was—was not a mistake or a miscalculation, although it was totally reprehensible; it was a deliberate attempt to deceive the British public. When deception of this magnitude is peddled by senior people, some of them Government members, who could blame people for believing that they would get a better NHS outside Europe?

Only hours after the referendum result was known the Brexit camp withdrew this promise of extra NHS funding because, of course, the fact is that it is this Conservative Government who starve the NHS of funding, not the EU.

7.7 pm

**Kirsty Blackman** (Aberdeen North) (SNP): Throughout this referendum campaign, there were numerous times when the campaigns were deceitful. There were numerous times when things that could not be promised were promised. Today, the Vote Leave official Twitter page still has a headline that says:

“We send the EU £350 million a week. Let’s fund our NHS instead.”

That is still on the Vote Leave Twitter page. In fact, they have not posted since the 23rd; I think they have screwed things up and run away.

I was a bit surprised that the Labour party’s motion did not mention the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Ms Stuart), because when I looked up the £350 million claim, the first quote that came up was:

“Every week we send £350 million to Brussels. I’d rather that we control how to spend that money, and if I had that control I would spend it on the NHS.”

That was said by the right hon. Lady, and it was patently untrue.

BBC Radio 4's "More or Less" looked at the statistics. For anyone who does not listen to the programme, I should say that it is rather excellent and tends to debunk what politicians say on a regular basis. It does not usually say something is actually false, however; it will say "It's not quite right." But with this claim, it said that it was false.

**Karin Smyth** (Bristol South) (Lab): I hear what the hon. Lady says about my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Ms Stuart), but she is not in the Government so does not have the power to transfer that money to the NHS budget, unlike those on the Conservative Benches. Does the hon. Lady agree?

**Kirsty Blackman:** I agree that the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston is not in the Government, but she was in the Vote Leave campaign and made those promises.

Going back to "More or Less", Tim Harford said:

"If we left the EU we wouldn't have an extra £350 million to spend on the NHS."

He also talked about the amount of money that we pay to the EU in comparison with the amount that comes back and said that the

"rebate is about £85 million a week. Unless you think we'd continue to get the EU rebate after we left the EU, it's impossible to make the claim that there would be £350 million a week to spend on the NHS."

He went on to say:

"We reckon that in the year 2014 the UK paid £280 million a week to the EU and received back £90 million a week in contributions to farmers and poorer regions and another £50 million in spending on British companies."

Therefore, the most that could possibly have been available is £140 million, and there was no way that anybody in the leave campaign was ever going to spend all that money on the NHS.

It is not unusual, however, for people to be disingenuous. The people of Scotland are actually quite used to people telling untruths during referendums. The article below the now-famous headline, "The Vow", stated:

"People want to see change."

Well, they certainly delivered that. The article also said:

"We will honour those principles and values not only before the referendum but after."

Ruth Davidson, leader of the Conservative party in Scotland, said on 2 September 2014:

"No means we stay in"

the EU. The Conservatives have completely failed to deliver on the promise they made to the people of Scotland. They are trying to drag Scotland out of the EU against our will.

This Conservative Government have a terrible record of making disastrous pledges, mostly because I think they did not expect to have a majority. They thought that they could write anything they wanted into their manifesto and then backslide on it because they were not going to have a majority. They had the fiscal charter, which was disastrous and condemned us to austerity. They had the removal of the subsidy for onshore wind, which was also disastrous. They had the pledge to have an EU referendum and they thought that they could avoid that one because they would not get a majority, but now look at what has happened.

There was also the disastrous, awful, horrendous migration cap. I am faced with constituents most weeks who sit in my office and explain to me what they do for their community and the work that they do in local government or the NHS. They talk about their volunteering and say to me, "Why does this Government want to send me back to another country?" The only answer that I can possibly give them is that this Government signed up to a migration cap and are therefore trying to reduce the number of people here based not on how hard they work, how much they give to their community or how much they put into NHS services, for example, but on trying to reduce the headcount. The Government's behaviour is absolutely ridiculous.

What does that mean for the future of political campaigning? People across the UK are looking at the pledges, such as the one that is still on the Vote Leave Twitter page saying that £350 million should be spent on the NHS, and their trust in politics and politicians is being eroded further than ever before. If we want to try to bring things back, we are going to have to work incredibly hard and be incredibly truthful. Our campaigning is going to have to be incredibly positive. The fear factor inspires nobody, and we are losing the trust of so much of the population. They do not believe what we say because we constantly present them with fear, which is not good.

The Health Secretary spoke earlier about having to be careful in what he said in case he further damaged the British economy. He did not want to talk down the economy, which I understand, but I hope that that does not mean that the Conservative Government will refuse to be positive about the benefits of migration. The people who come to this country to work in our NHS and in other services provide a huge economic benefit to the UK as a whole and Scotland in particular. It is important to our country's economy that people are willing to come here. If the Government are scared about damaging the economy and their ability to use people as bargaining chips and are unwilling to talk about the benefits to the British economy of migration, that is a major issue. Things are bad enough already; we do not want to make them any worse.

I want to mention a few other things that people have said. The hon. Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson) said that people would value NHS services more if they had to pay for them. He then said that the £350 million should go to the NHS. Those two things are mutually incompatible. It is a shame that such points were not highlighted a bit more during the campaign.

So many Westminster Governments over so many years, and indeed decades, have been unwilling to do anything other than take part in short-term politics, focusing on what will be of benefit in the next five years in order to try to win elections. The NHS is a prime example, because some of the health measures put in place by the Conservative Government avoid touching on some of the thorniest issues. For example, breast feeding counselling and support, access to which is being reduced, costs money now but will result in a financial benefit—a return to the Treasury—many years later. It would be good if the Government were willing to take such decisions, which may mean they have a smaller budget now, in order to give people health benefits in 20 years' time.

[Kirsty Blackman]

Earlier this week we had the main debate on the estimates. NHS and health budgets regularly go against HM Treasury guidance by transferring capital to revenue spend, which other Departments are not allowed to do. What I want to know is why that money is not being spent on capital projects. What capital projects on which the money should be spent are being avoided? Why are the Government not funding the NHS revenue spend to the levels they should be? Why does the NHS have to make these transfers between capital and revenue, rather than being adequately funded?

Madam Deputy Speaker, thank you for your indulgence in allowing me to speak in this debate. I really appreciate it.

7.16 pm

**Karin Smyth** (Bristol South) (Lab): The Public Accounts Committee, of which I am a member, has published seven reports since January on the workings of the Department of Health, including on diabetes, the cancer drugs fund, services for people with neurological conditions, access to GP services, acute hospital trusts, NHS clinical staff and personal budgets in social care. We have had two further hearings, for reports yet to be published, on discharging older people from hospital and specialised services.

I recommend those reports to those on the Government Front Bench—I have a few copies with me, just in case they do not wish to watch the football tonight. Taken together, they paint a bleak picture of a system under immense pressure, with commitments undelivered, a massive increase in complexity as a result of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 and, above all for the Public Accounts Committee, continuing poor data upon which to make decisions and manage performance, as well as a complete lack of clarity about accountability for delivery on the areas we have investigated.

The concerns outlined in our reports include: on staffing, that trusts have been set unrealistic efficiency targets, and that the shortage of nurses is expected to continue for the next three years; on funding, that the financial performance of trusts has deteriorated sharply, and that this trend is not sustainable; and that the data used to estimate trusts' potential cost savings targets are seriously flawed.

**Melanie Onn** (Great Grimsby) (Lab): Northern Lincolnshire and Goole NHS Foundation Trust has only just been taken out of special measures, but last week's Care Quality Commission report highlights a concerning dip in standards at Diana, Princess of Wales hospital. The bosses have said that that is because they struggled to recruit quality staff. Does my hon. Friend agree that removing the NHS nursing bursary is long-term pain for short-term gain?

**Karin Smyth**: I agree with my hon. Friend. In fact, one of the reports I have with me is the one we published in December about the work of the Care Quality Commission and some of the concerns that have already been issued about the work it does to uncover issues such as the ones she has highlighted in her constituency.

**Catherine West** (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab): Does my hon. Friend agree that a worrying number of trusts are now in deficit, whereas 10 years ago they were

simply bubbling along well—in fact, they were getting more money for their budgets? Even for North Middlesex hospital, which we have heard about extensively tonight, the situation is increasingly worrying, as it is now in deficit for the first time in 10 years.

**Karin Smyth**: I agree and I will talk about some of the issues with trusts.

Hon. Members have provided examples that highlight our concerns about how the Department is managing to do what Parliament intended with the funds voted to it. They highlight the importance of giving the Public Accounts Committee and Parliament the opportunity to review the departmental accounts properly.

The Department of Health annual accounts cover more than 20 arm's-length bodies and delivery partners, not only NHS England, but the Care Quality Commission, NHS Improvement, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, the Human Tissue Authority, Health Education England, the NHS Litigation Authority and—one of my and, I am sure, many hon. Members' favourite organisations—NHS Property Services Ltd.

Within NHS England, NHS trusts reported a record deficit of £2.45 billion in 2015-16—almost £500 million worse than planned, and triple the size of the 2014-15 deficit. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Catherine West) said, a record 121 out of 138 acute trusts ended 2015-16 in deficit. Analysis by the King's Fund and the Health Foundation has challenged the Secretary of State's claim that, in the 2016-17 Budget, the NHS will receive the sixth biggest funding increase in its history. The chief economist at the King's Fund concluded that this year's total real spend increase of 1.6% is the 28th largest increase since 1975-76.

The Health Foundation noted:

“The health budget has been protected from cuts but spending growth is substantially below the growing pressures on the service... In exchange for this protection, the NHS has been asked to absorb these pressures through improved efficiency. There are opportunities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the NHS but realising these savings is proving to be a huge challenge—particularly against a backdrop of staffing shortage.”

Given the size of the trust deficit and the implications for the budget of NHS England, which takes up by far the greatest part of the Department's budget, there are widespread concerns about how the Department might stay within its departmental expenditure limit. Failure to do so would be an exceptional breach of control. As my friend, the hon. Member for Aberdeen North (Kirsty Blackman) said, there are issues about the way in which capital has been transferred to revenue and so on.

The Public Accounts Committee understands that the accounts will be available before the recess—perhaps next week, which would be very welcome. We need to look at not only NHS England's spend, but that of the other 20 or so bodies that make up the Department of Health. I know that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and Parliament will take a dim view if the Department's accounts are not subject to proper scrutiny when the Committee, which had some additional training this year to review the accounts, is ready to undertake such scrutiny.

In addition to my concerns about last year's accounts and this year's departmental budget, I believe that Brexit now poses huge risks. My major concerns are about staffing, procurement and medicines, but there

are many others. In my NHS career as a non-executive director on a trust board and as a manager, I read and indeed compiled many a risk register. It is truly a joyful task. The Department requires all its bodies to identify, assess and mitigate risks. As anyone in any business knows, risk registers are an essential part of the planning process. Few if any risks to business could be greater than Brexit. I would expect the Department to have a robust Department-wide risk assessment process, and I would expect it to include Brexit.

Yesterday at Health questions, I asked what was being done across the Department, including the NHS, to assess and mitigate the risks to its current year budget of Brexit's huge impact on staffing, procurement and medicines. I received a far from satisfactory reply—although he tried to be helpful—from the Under-Secretary of State for Life Sciences. I therefore pose three key questions to Ministers: what are the risks of Brexit that the Department must surely have already identified through its risk register or by other means? How are they to be mitigated? When will they be debated and discussed in Parliament?

7.23 pm

**Mr Gareth Thomas** (Harrow West) (Lab/Co-op): It is a pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol South (Karin Smyth). I will be unashamedly parochial and pursue the point that I made in an intervention on the Secretary of State about the future finances of the Harrow clinical commissioning group and the London North West Healthcare NHS Trust. It includes Northwick Park hospital, which serves my constituents. I should declare an interest in that I have been operated on and indeed members of my family have been born at Northwick Park hospital, with which I therefore have a particular affinity, as do my constituents.

**Joan Ryan:** My hon. Friend is right to remain parochial and focused on his hospital. One of the scandals of North Middlesex is that all the local MPs have been kept in the dark about all the serious faults that were known to the hospital and to NHS officials. None of that was shared with the local MPs.

**Mr Thomas:** My right hon. Friend made a very powerful speech about North Middlesex hospital. I am pleased to say that I have a positive relationship with the managers at North West London Hospitals Trust as they have always made themselves open and available to answer my questions. I hope that they will read *Hansard* and see my right hon. Friend's warning in relation to the difficulties that she has had with previous managers at North Middlesex hospital and will do even more to provide transparency in our area.

Let me talk now about my concerns about the finances at Northwick Park. Back in 2014-15, North West London Hospitals Trust had a deficit of some £55.9 million. That had risen to £100 million by the beginning of this financial year. The trust management board is optimistic that it can get that deficit down over the course of the next financial year to just over £88 million, which is an enormous sum in its own right and will, if that figure is achieved, still be without question one of the biggest deficits in the NHS in England. To achieve that target, it has committed to axe 140 posts. My concern, and the concern of many of my constituents, is that services at Northwick Park and indeed in other parts of the trust will be affected despite the intentions of the management.

The situation at Northwick Park has been compounded by the decision to close a number of accident and emergency departments in north-west London in recent years. In particular, the decision to close Central Middlesex hospital has undoubtedly had an impact, increasing the pressure on the services at Northwick Park hospital. Although it was great to see some new investment at Northwick Park—we now have an upgraded accident and emergency department—no extra beds were created in the hospital, which is a major concern.

I recognise that time is a concern, so let me underline my last point, which is about the funding of Harrow clinical commissioning group. In the past three years for which parliamentary figures were available, it has received the lowest funding of any London CCG. The Secretary of State was very generous in offering to go away and review that situation. I ask the Minister who is due to reply to this debate whether he would be willing to receive a deputation of local general practitioners and me to discuss the funding of Harrow CCG, which is one of the causes of the difficult financial situation at Northwick Park hospital that serves my constituents.

7.28 pm

**Justin Madders** (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): In what has been a hugely significant day in a monumentally significant fortnight, we have been discussing issues that are also of huge significance, but I fear that the contributions will be lost amid the historic nature of the events are currently engulfing this place and the whole country.

Let me turn now to the contributions to this debate. The hon. Member for Central Ayrshire (Dr Whitford) rightly highlighted the uncertainty now facing our staff who have come from the EU. There is also a very real fear that agency costs will go through the roof as a result of the decision that has been made.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Enfield North (Joan Ryan) spoke with graphic clarity about the problems that a lack of funding has caused the health services in her own constituency. She also pointed to the promises to protect local services that have not been honoured. She talked about the scandal of junior doctors left unsupervised in the North Middlesex hospital A&E. I know that she has a debate in Westminster Hall on that issue next week, and I am sure that some of the matters that have been raised today will get a further examination then.

My hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Mr Reed), who, as my predecessor in this shadow role, has great knowledge of this area, spoke passionately about the challenges that his community faces in delivering an effective health economy. He is right to be concerned that the success regime could indeed turn out to be a Trojan horse.

My hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Julie Cooper) gave a personal and troubling story about a recent case involving one of her constituents. I agree with the hon. Member for Aberdeen North (Kirsty Blackman) that all of us as politicians will have to work much harder to restore and retain trust in what we say. My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol South (Karin Smyth) spoke with the benefit of her own great experience of the NHS and her more recent experiences as a member of the Public Accounts Committee and the many critical reports it has written. I assure her that I have already considered many of them, so I trust I have her permission to watch the football later.

[Justin Madders]

Finally, my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow West (Mr Thomas) spoke with great authority about the difficulties of his own local NHS trust. I think every Member who has spoken tonight has mentioned challenges in their own constituency, but more significant is the fact that every Member who has spoken tonight said that at least some of their constituents voted to leave the EU because they thought it would mean more money for the NHS.

Those are the Members who have spoken. Who have we not heard from? Where are the right hon. and hon. Members who have spent the last few months spearheading the campaign up and down the country claiming that there was £350 million a week just sitting there, ready to be spent on the NHS. Could it be that because it was a promise that could never be kept and should never have been made, we have seen a collective abrogation of responsibility by people who, frankly, should know better? Make no mistake: those who have associated themselves with such claims will be expected to account for their actions, but let us not allow those wild statements to distract us from the crisis in the NHS caused by this Government.

The challenges we already face in the finances, quality of care and the workforce put the NHS in a precarious position, but be in no doubt: those challenges were there before we voted to leave the EU. It has been clear for some time that the NHS does not have the resources needed to deliver the services that people expect. Only this week, we have heard where the Government's priorities appear to be, with the Chancellor talking about reducing corporation tax yet again. Is it not interesting that we only hear such extra-parliamentary statements about tax cuts, and not about the extra investment that the NHS patently needs? Indeed, the Chancellor's last big spending decision on the NHS was to cut £1.1 billion from this year's capital budget, which came to light only after a study by the House of Commons Library—an approach about as far removed from parading impossible pledges on the side of a bus as I can imagine, but to my mind just as dishonourable.

As we know, the overall deficit in the NHS last year was a record £2.5 billion—a record deficit despite pledges from the Government that the investment needed would be front-loaded now to ensure that the NHS could implement the service transformation needed before the middle years of this Parliament, when the funding increases already announced for the NHS are microscopic. What will the NHS look like a few years down the line if the money that is supposed to be preparing us for the rocky road ahead will in fact be used to plug the black hole in finances left over from the last year? Surely, whatever the implications of the referendum result, the Government must recognise that their existing financial plan for the NHS needs comprehensive re-evaluation.

Only yesterday, we had a report from the Healthcare Financial Management Association that revealed that 22% of the NHS finance directors in hospitals and CCGs surveyed said that quality of care will worsen during this financial year. It does not end there: one in three finance directors fear that care will deteriorate in the next financial year. They warn that waiting times, access to services and the range of services offered are all likely to suffer because of the inadequate funding

settlement. I know the Minister will try to reassure us that plans are in place to put the NHS back on an even keel, but I suggest that he listen to the 67% of CCG finance officers and 48% of trust finance directors who have said that there is a “high degree of risk” associated with achieving their organisation's financial plans for this year.

In addition, only 16% of finance directors have expressed confidence that NHS organisations in their area will be able to deliver the changes required by their local sustainability and transformation plans. Along with the challenges they anticipate in delivering planned efficiencies, finance directors say that continued high spending on agency staff and inadequate funding of social care are pressures that are not going away. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol South mentioned, the Minister will be aware of what the Public Accounts Committee said: that the 4% annual efficiency targets imposed are “unrealistic and have caused long-term damage”.

None of that will be news to the Minister. It is high time the Government acknowledged that within the current parameters, hard-working NHS staff are being set up to fail.

Across a whole range of indicators, the NHS is experiencing its worst performance since records began, but let me be clear: I do not for a second hold the people who work on the frontline in the NHS responsible for that. Indeed, it is only through their dedication that the health service keeps going, despite the best efforts of the Government to destroy staff morale. Be it the current generation of junior doctors alienated by botched contract discussions, the next generation of nurses deterred from entering the profession by tuition fees, or the thousands of EU nationals working in the NHS who fear for their future in this country, existing staff, who are at breaking point, see nothing from the Government that gives them confidence that the Government have a clue how to fix this mess.

Let us once and for all nail the myth propounded by Government Members that this Government have been generous in their funding for the NHS. The King's Fund and the Health Foundation looked into this claim. Despite the oft-repeated mantra that this year's funding increase is the sixth largest in the NHS's history, they said:

“We find that...this year it is in fact the 28th largest funding increase since 1975”.

That is the truth. That is the cruel deception at the heart of the Government's NHS plans.

NHS Providers, the organisation that represents NHS trusts, had this to say about the size of the deficit:

“the combination of increasing demand and the longest and deepest financial squeeze in NHS history is maxing out the health service”.

The fact is that the NHS is halfway through its most austere decade ever. It is getting a smaller increase this year than it got in any single year of the last Labour Government. Since the health service's creation in 1948, NHS demand and costs have risen by 3.5% to 4% a year, and on average funding has kept pace. Now funding will rise, on average, by only 0.9% a year between 2010 and 2020. That is a quarter of the historical average, and well below what is needed to provide the same quality of service to a growing, older population.

I return to my opening remarks. It has been a seismic few weeks for this country. Politicians have been exposed as cavalier with the facts, cynical in their actions and irresponsible about the future of this country. Let us not allow that approach to continue to pollute our politics. Let us have the courage to be honest about the challenges that lie ahead. Let us stop the pretence that the NHS can continue to be the service that most of us want it to be within current Government spending limits.

Let us also be clear that the answer is not to emblazon buses with cheap slogans and then run away from those slogans at the first opportunity. Instead, the challenge for all of us in this place who want the next generation to enjoy the same access to the NHS that my generation has taken for granted is to provide a coherent, credible set of policies and then actually deliver them. On that measure, this Government have fundamentally failed. I therefore commend the motion to the House.

7.37 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Ben Gummer):** First, may I apologise to the House for not being here at the beginning of the debate? I did, however, see the contributions of the hon. Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott), who set up a powerful case in support of the Opposition's motion, and of the hon. Member for Central Ayrshire (Dr Whitford).

I would not dispute the motion's central contention. We have just had an enormous public debate—as the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Justin Madders) made clear, a debate of a magnitude that this nation has not seen for decades. A central claim in that debate—a claim on which the referendum hinged—was that there would be an additional £350 million for the NHS to spend every week, were we to withdraw from the European Union. To be very clear about that claim, it is not one that any Member who supported Vote Leave can run away from. It was emblazoned not just on the bus, but in even more explicit language on a poster, which said:

“Let's give our NHS the £350 million”—  
not “some of” or “a part of”, but “the” £350 million—  
“the EU takes every week”.

Members will know my position in this debate. It is not my purpose to revisit the arguments for one side or the other, but Members on both sides of the House, of this great debate and of the referendum campaign have a duty to hold to account the people who made those claims, because the referendum was won partly on the basis of them, and people will expect results.

I would like to put on record the nature of our contribution to the European Union every week, so we can be clear not about the claims, but about the facts. The simple fact is that it is wrong to take one year's contribution as typical, because our contribution varies from year to year. Over the past four years, our gross contribution has in fact been £313 million a week. If we were to deduct the rebate, which is £69 million a week, and public and private sector receipts, which are a further £108 million a week, our net contribution per week is actually £136 million, worked out on a rolling average from 2010 to 2014. I would therefore suggest to those on both sides of the House, and on both sides of the campaign, that the figure needs to be challenged and challenged again.

Any money that might or might not be coming to the NHS needs to be seen within the framework of that claim. It is important for us at this stage not to move away from the claims made in the great referendum campaign. It is important that we bring the country together, but that does not mean that we should not bring some sort of scrutiny to those claims over the next few years, when the effects of Brexit will be played out and when our constituents will feel those effects in their pockets and in the security of their families, although some will say that that will be to the positive and others to the negative.

In the next few years, we will have to take consistent measures to bring scrutiny to the claims that were made. However, it is not just the money that is important in terms of Brexit. I, too, am concerned that we bring scrutiny to bear on the other issues facing healthcare, whether the regulation of medicines, research funding—universities have expressed real concern about that in just the past couple of days—or workforce supply. In that respect, I would like to reiterate the support that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health expressed for the migrant workers who have come to this country to serve our NHS. Many of them provide skills we cannot provide in our own country, and their dedication to our national health service is equal to that shown by those serving it who were born in this country, and I would like to personally thank them for their contribution and service.

On that issue, I think we can have some agreement across the House. Where, I am afraid, I part company from Opposition Members, however, is on their comments about the claim that was made by Vote Leave—as the hon. Member for Aberdeen North (Kirsty Blackman) made clear, it was also made by Labour Members of Parliament. That claim has not been made by Her Majesty's Government; nor is it one that can be attached to the Department of Health.

In addition, it has been said that the money released by Brexit, even if it were to materialise, would be backfilling what the Opposition claim to be a deficit in NHS funding. That description could not be further from the truth, and I would advise Opposition Members to look at the OECD's latest figures, which were released earlier this week. They clearly demonstrate that healthcare funding in this country is now just above the average for the EU15. It has moved up from being below average, and we are now achieving parity with countries such as Spain, which has a fantastic healthcare system that is much admired around the world, and indeed Finland. Given that position, we should surely praise this Government and the previous coalition Government, who protected healthcare funding, even when the Labour party suggested we do the opposite.

In 2010, the Prime Minister said healthcare funding would be protected, even though the Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer before the 2010 election suggested it should be cut. Under this Secretary of State and this Prime Minister, NHS spending has undergone its sixth biggest rise in the history of the NHS, despite the fact that we have been contending with the biggest financial crisis this country has faced in its peacetime history since the great depression in the 1930s. The financial environment of the NHS therefore bears positive scrutiny, compared with the situation in other leading countries in the European Union and with the history of Government funding for the NHS. Of that, the Conservative party is justly proud.

[Ben Gummer]

That does not mean, however, that there are no pressures within the NHS. I would like to pick up on some of the comments made by hon. Members, which I know they have made earnestly because they care very much for their local health systems. The hon. Member for Copeland (Mr Reed), who is a doughty campaigner for West Cumberland hospital and for healthcare provision in his area, knows that I will meet him again and again—I hope, soon, in Cumbria—to discuss the issues that he has in his locality. We are a receptive ear, but we must always pay attention to clinical advice as it pertains to his local area and not to the political exigencies that might exist. Rightly, we have removed political decision making from the disposition of services. That is precisely why the reconfigurations in the constituency of the right hon. Member for Enfield North (Joan Ryan) took place. It is always easy in government to try to make political decisions on matters that should be the preserve of clinicians, but that is the wrong thing to do, because one makes decisions for reasons of political expediency rather than clinical reasons. That is why we rely on the success regime in the hon. Gentleman's constituency and in the whole of Cumbria, as we do in other parts of the country, to provide a clinical consensus and the arguments for change that local clinicians will wish to see.

The hon. Member for Bristol South (Karin Smyth) has an expertise unrivalled in this House in the management of finances at a local area level. She is right to say that Brexit poses particular problems for staffing of NHS and social care services, procurement and medicines. As a member of the Public Accounts Committee, she has provided very good criticism of how the NHS has been running its finances, which has not been good enough over the past five, 10 or 15 years—indeed, for many years. This Secretary of State and this team are doing a great deal to correct that. She is right, for instance, to point out that NHS Property Services has not worked as well as it should have done in the past. I hope that in the months and years ahead she will see reforms that give her greater pleasure than dealing with NHS Property Services gave her in her previous role.

The hon. Member for Harrow West (Mr Thomas) described the problems at his local hospital, as did the right hon. Member for Enfield North in relation to North Middlesex hospital, which I have discussed with her. Both hospitals suffer similar problems to other hospitals on the outside rim of London—discernible

and discrete problems that we are endeavouring to correct and to provide solutions to. I hope that the right hon. Lady has seen, in the movement over the past few days, our determination to sort out the problems at North Middlesex. As the Minister responsible for hospitals, I do not want to leave this job without having given stability and certainty to the hospitals outside London that they have not had for many years.

**Mr Gareth Thomas:** I intervene merely to underline the request for a meeting with the Minister to discuss the finances of Northwick Park and, crucially, of the clinical commissioning group in my area.

**Ben Gummer:** Of course I will give the hon. Gentleman a meeting. If the issue is about general practitioners, I will refer him, if he does not mind, to my right hon. Friend the Minister for Community and Social Care. However, I will certainly meet him to discuss finances and hospitals. I will arrange both meetings on behalf of his constituents.

I thank hon. Members for this short but constructive debate. It is the first stage in the necessary scrutiny of the claims that were made by both sides in the EU referendum. We are now going to see, in the months and years ahead, who was right. I hope very much that I and the people on my side were wrong, because if so, it will be easier to deliver the spending commitments made by Vote Leave. I fear not, however, in which case we will have some very difficult years ahead. However, people can be sure that in this Government they have a Secretary of State, a ministerial team, a Prime Minister and a party that will continue to commit the funds that are necessary to the NHS, so that we improve on our position in the European averages. We will continue to fund it better than any previous Government to provide for the ambitious designs for this, our national health service, which we all care so much about.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House notes that the Vote Leave group during the EU referendum campaign claimed that an extra £350 million a week could be spent on the NHS in lieu of the UK's EU membership contribution; further notes that senior figures who campaigned, including the hon. Member for South Northamptonshire, the hon. Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip and the Rt hon. Member for Surrey Heath have subsequently distanced themselves from that claim; and calls on the Government to set out proposals for additional NHS funding, as suggested by the hon. Member for South Northamptonshire on 4 July 2016.

## Cross-examination of Vulnerable Witnesses

*Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(Julian Smith.)*

7.50 pm

**Ann Coffey** (Stockport) (Lab): Giving evidence can be a daunting process. A courtroom is not a hospitable environment for anyone but a lawyer. For most people, the surroundings are intimidating and the procedures strange. It is even harder for children and other vulnerable witnesses, who struggle with the stress of having to re-live difficult experiences in a room full of strangers.

We have repeatedly heard about vulnerable witnesses being subjected to courtroom trauma at the hands of over-zealous defence lawyers. Last year, a 13-year-old child was accused of lying during the trials of the so-called Banbury sex gang because it was “better to be a victim than a slag”. One young girl I spoke to in the course of preparing the report, “Real Voices: Child Sexual Exploitation in Greater Manchester”, told me that being cross-examined was one of the worst experiences of her life. She said:

“There is not a word to describe how bad it was. It was like one attack after another. One of the barristers was not even asking me questions; he was just shouting at me”.

In cases involving sexual offences in particular, we know that, too often, victims fail to report the incident or to pursue prosecution because they fear facing humiliation in court. In all kinds of cases, the testimony of vulnerable witnesses continues to be undervalued and ignored. Of course, there have been big strides in improving the situation for vulnerable witnesses in recent years, particularly though the use of registered intermediaries and other special measures, but we are still a long way from a situation in which all witnesses can give their best and most accurate evidence, no matter their vulnerabilities.

There is one part of the trial process in which vulnerable witnesses continue to be subjected to unnecessary and unjustifiable distress, namely cross-examination. We all agree that the right of the defendant to a fair trial and a robust defence is absolute and essential. However, research has repeatedly shown that traditional cross-examination techniques are not appropriate for vulnerable witnesses. A study conducted by Joyce Plotnikoff and Richard Woolfson suggested that at least half of child witnesses do not understand the questions put to them in court—a figure rising to 90% for those under the age of 10. How can these children possibly give their best evidence in these circumstances?

Building a justice system in which no one is disadvantaged is in the interests of everyone, including defendants. It is true that many judges are now trained to intervene when barristers ask questions that are beyond the cognitive ability of witnesses. This is all to the good, but it is not enough. Aggressive and disorientating cross-examination techniques are still widespread, despite repeated judgments from the Court of Appeal that they are not acceptable where vulnerable witnesses are concerned.

**Dr Lisa Cameron** (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP): It is extremely important that children are able to give good and reliable evidence.

Does the hon. Member agree that, as research indicates that children are suggestible, leading questions should not be used in the court process?

**Ann Coffey:** I entirely agree with the hon. Lady. She is quite right. What we want is credible evidence, not evidence extracted by bullying.

The recent spate of high-profile sexual exploitation trials have provided stark examples. One young victim giving evidence in the Telford sex gang trials was repeatedly accused of lying and being naughty, and one barrister even demanded to know whether she repented her sins. Overall, she spent 12 days being cross-examined by a series of defence lawyers. As it stands, judges have no real power to limit the duration of questioning or the number of lawyers who can cross-examine a highly vulnerable witness in court. Practice directions encourage judges to set limits, but despite this judicial practice remains very uneven. That is why the measures in section 28 of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999 are so important. This section provides for the cross-examination of vulnerable witnesses to be filmed at a pre-trial hearing and played to the jury at trial.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): This is a vital issue, and I am surprised not to see more Members in the Chamber to support the hon. Lady. There is a great need for young children involved in such cases to have parents or family members close by and to be screened off, so that the investigations and the questioning can be done from a distance. Does the hon. Lady agree—perhaps the Minister can touch on this in his reply—that that is something we should be considering? Helping those children to give their evidence clearly and honestly, with the support of their families, has to be the way forward.

**Ann Coffey:** I agree with the hon. Gentleman. We need to look at all the protective measures that we can employ to support vulnerable witnesses, particularly children, to give their best evidence in court. I entirely support that.

The witness need not attend the trial in person, thus avoiding the many pitfalls to pursuing justice that vulnerable witnesses currently face. It must be noted that pre-recorded evidence in the form of a film of a police interview can already be used in lieu of live examination-in-chief for vulnerable witnesses. There is no reason why that should not be extended to cross-examination, when we know that that is the most distressing part of the trial process.

This has all been recognised for decades. In 1989, the committee chaired by Judge Pigot QC recommended that provision be made for vulnerable witnesses to undergo pre-recorded cross-examination ahead of trial. It took 10 years for that to be written into law in the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999, and still, 17 years on from that moment, the relevant section remains unimplemented. That is despite the fact that victim support services, children’s charities and senior members of the judiciary have repeatedly emphasised the necessity and expedience of a roll-out.

The former Lord Chief Justice, Lord Judge, has been a tireless advocate for the implementation of section 28. Last Thursday he called, once again, in the other place

[Ann Coffey]

for us to bring our court system up to date. He has said before that when section 28 is finally implemented, we will all be

“astounded about what all the fuss was about.”

I am already astounded that it is taking so long.

Of course, a vital step forward was made in April 2014, when pilot schemes were introduced in the Crown courts of Leeds, Liverpool and Kingston-upon-Thames. That was almost universally welcomed, but we are now well beyond the six months that those pilots were intended to last, and the evaluation report has not yet been made public. In “Our Commitment to Victims”, which was published in September 2014, the Government promised the completion of a national roll-out by March 2017, subject to the evaluation report. The clock has been ticking for well over 18 months, and it is unacceptable that vulnerable witnesses across the country should be made to endure further delay.

Since the formal evaluation period ended in October 2014, pre-recorded evidence has continued to be used in the pilot areas, and that is clearly a mark of the pilot’s success. One judge involved in the pilots in Kingston-upon-Thames wrote to me of the marked difference made by the installation of improved IT facilities for playing the evidence to juries. That occurred only after the pilot period ended. I hope that the evaluation report, when it is published, takes full account of these developments.

**Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP): Is the hon. Lady aware of the Vulnerable Witnesses (Scotland) Act 2004, which has been in place for a short time in Scotland and which has already taken in some of these provisions? Are there things that could be learned from that process and brought in to help vulnerable witnesses in England?

**Ann Coffey**: I would be very interested in any evidence from the Scottish courts of the success of pre-recorded cross-examination. It would be very helpful to know a little bit more about that.

Last year I visited the honorary recorder of Liverpool, who informed me that their experience of the section 28 pilot scheme has been characterised not only by vast improvements in the experiences of vulnerable and child witnesses, but by better case management, leading to shorter trials and fewer delays for everyone. I have since spoken to members of the judiciary at each of the pilot courts, and the response has been overwhelmingly positive. His Honour Judge David Aubrey QC made it clear that there has been a cultural shift in the manner of cross-examination, rendering unnecessarily repetitive and aggressive cross-examination a thing of the past. Likewise, her honour Judge Sally Cahill QC told me that implementation of section 28 in Leeds has been a “great success”, enabling

“witnesses to give their best evidence in a way that is as good for them as it can be in an adversarial system”.

They both confirmed that there has been no detrimental effect on the fairness of trials. The Minister will know that such unanimous judicial enthusiasm is unusual, but we have, after all, an exceptional opportunity before us. Her honour Judge Susan Tapping told me that in her view

“national rollout of section 28 could be one of the single most beneficial improvements in delivering justice to some of the most vulnerable in society”.

We should also remember that the benefits of section 28 are not limited only to trials concerning sexual offences or to cases where the witness is the victim of the alleged crime. Section 28 applies to vulnerable witnesses giving evidence in all manner of cases. For instance, one judge involved in the pilot scheme told me that she had recently presided over a very serious armed robbery case where the only evidence linking the defendant to the crime was that of a child who happened to be sitting on a wall nearby and saw the whole thing. The child’s evidence was taken under section 28, and the defendant pleaded guilty a few days after the recording was made.

We often speak of the need to listen to the voices of vulnerable children and vulnerable people in this House, but rarely are we confronted with such a clear opportunity to put that belief into action. Where children and vulnerable individuals can contribute to the administration of justice, they have a right to do so without causing harm to themselves. Facilitating that participation makes everyone safer.

It is clear that in all cases the benefits of section 28 are extensive. I have repeatedly been told that in section 28 pilot cases more defendants are entering early guilty pleas, thus shortening victims’ suffering and, of course, saving police resources and valuable court time. In Leeds, the latest figures suggest that 51% of defendants pleaded guilty prior to the section 28 cross-examination. In normal circumstances, many guilty defendants do not plead guilty at the arraignment stage or until the day of the trial, in the hope that, for example, a witness may not turn up. But where the section 28 procedure is used a guilty defendant will know first that they are faced with a witness giving evidence at a much earlier stage, and secondly, that if they do not plead guilty before the recording of that evidence they will lose much of the credit available to them for doing so. That leads to early guilty pleas, early closure for the victim and huge cost savings, as once the plea is entered no further evidence gathering or case preparation is required.

In those cases where the trial moves forward, proceedings are much more time efficient because it is no longer necessary to wait for the witness to attend court. Pre-recorded evidence means that persistent interruptions—for example, because a vulnerable witness requires breaks in order to cope or to concentrate—can be avoided.

The overall time taken to conduct cross-examination has also been reduced in areas where the pilot scheme is operating. The judiciary has issued a protocol governing section 28 cases, under which there must be a ground rules hearing before the recording of the cross-examination can take place. That means that there is much greater scope for judges to review questions to be put to the vulnerable witness, so irrelevant, inappropriate or repetitious questions can be filtered out well in advance. Although that time saving must be balanced with the time required for such pre-trial hearings, it is reasonable to expect that as advocates become more experienced in the new style of cross-examination there will be less need for judicial correction and hearings will be shorter. That expectation has been borne out in Leeds where, as experience has grown, ground rules hearings in section 28 cases have sometimes been sufficiently dealt with electronically, without the need for extra time in court.

On average, the evidence provided to me indicates that the impact of section 28 is such that trials that were previously taking four to six days are now taking two to four days. That is obviously great news for vulnerable witnesses. It also has a knock-on beneficial effect for all other cases in the lists, by introducing greater flexibility in case management. A roll-out of section 28 could provide a real opportunity to reduce the existing delays in the criminal justice system. In the context of widespread court closures, the Government cannot afford to waste that opportunity.

One reason for hesitation in implementing section 28 has been the apprehension from some parties that vulnerable witnesses would often need to be recalled to attend trial as new evidence emerged, neutering any beneficial effect that the pre-recording of cross-examination might otherwise have. As I am sure the Minister is aware, no evidence suggests that that has in fact been a problem. I have spoken to and corresponded with judges from each pilot area, and between them they could identify just a single case in which a vulnerable witness had to come back for a second cross-examination. Early disclosure of evidence can be ensured through proactive judicial case management, with judges having the power to delay recordings if not everything is prepared. It should be remembered that if re-examination is necessary, it can be dealt with by a pre-recording.

If there must be a retrial for any reason, recorded evidence means there is no danger that a prosecution will collapse simply because a witness is reluctant to repeat the experience of giving evidence. The process of a retrial is also speeded up as a result. For example, a retrial of a section 28 case in Liverpool occurred within a fortnight, as soon as a new jury panel was in place. We can expect similar results where cases involve a number of defendants, requiring the trial to be split. Rather than requiring the witness to attend each trial, their cross-examination can instead be re-played as many times as necessary. That removes the need for vulnerable witnesses to be exposed multiple times to the adversarial process.

As I have said, pre-recorded evidence continues to be taken in three pilot areas, which means that there is now a postcode lottery for vulnerable witnesses. It cannot be right that only a small minority have access to those protective measures. Tens of thousands of children are called to give evidence each year, and they should all have the benefit of section 28. Such a transformation in the national criminal justice system will take time, but, given the Government's commitment to full implementation by March 2017, that decision can no longer be put off. As the Home Affairs Committee emphasised three years ago, section 28 represents the will of Parliament, and it is incumbent on the Ministry of Justice to implement it in a timely manner.

As the Minister will know, I have raised implementation of section 28 in this House, and through written questions, many times—today marks the 10th such occasion since 2013. I know that the Minister shares many of my concerns, and I thank him for the recent meeting that he held with me and Lord Judge on the matter. I look forward to hearing what steps he now intends to take.

8.7 pm

**The Minister for Policing, Fire, Criminal Justice and Victims (Mike Penning):** I congratulate the hon. Member for Stockport (Ann Coffey) on securing this debate.

What she says is no surprise to me, because in our meeting with Lord Judge the other day we discussed this issue in terms of what would be the right thing to do, and I praise her diligent work. She does not give up on these matters; she goes on and on. I also join her in praising Lord Judge—one could argue that he is brilliantly named because of his previous occupation.

Perhaps not many people are in the Chamber because on previous occasions other Ministers have not been able to say what I am about to say. As Minister with responsibility for the criminal justice system as well as for victims, this issue forms part of the package that I will announce in a moment. We seek to make more victims feel safe within the criminal justice system, and I have pledged to the House that we will publish a Green Paper on a victims law before the summer recess—I have worked on that extensively with Her Majesty's Opposition and other parties in the House.

I have also considered the Scottish system, but our provisions will possibly go a little further, meaning that we can learn from each other. That is always a good thing when trying to protect the most vulnerable people in society. This is not just about children; there are people with mental illnesses and those in other situations—particularly those under pressure—who are vulnerable in other ways, although I know we have been talking particularly about children.

Measures have been introduced over the last few years, and the criminal justice system has moved on enormously. In particular, the attitude of judges and those who deal with criminal law has changed. There are now screens in some courts, but we are not there yet.

It is regrettable—a very polite term for a Minister to use in the House—that section 28 of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999 was not rolled out sooner. I think everybody accepted that it had to be piloted. There was a degree of concern that there might be some cases where vulnerable people were recalled, but, as the hon. Lady said in her very articulate and factual speech, that has happened only once. All the other evidence shows that not only does it make a much better situation for the witness, but it is much better for the criminal justice system. It speeds up the criminal justice system, in particular in the courts, and there are a substantial number of guilty pleas.

There is no need to delay the House massively. As the hon. Lady knows—she met me only a couple of days ago—I agree with nearly everything she says. I have yet to receive full Government clearance. However, I intend to instruct my officials to work with the judges on a roll-out. The roll-out will start by the end of the year. It says in my notes it will start in January, but I think the end of the year would be better. I am sure we would all agree on that. We will start with the roll-out in the Crown courts for those under 18 and for witnesses with mental illness.

This needs to be rolled out. It is wrong to have a situation where my pilots are continuing as pilots when we know just how successful they are. The postcode lottery will end. I am not certain we will reach the full roll-out by March 2017. If I cannot do that, I will come back to the House to explain why that is the case. I have some technicalities within Government procedures to address in the meantime, but I cannot see any reason why we cannot start planning now to work with judges on how we are going to implement it. I spoke about this

*[Mike Penning]*

extensively with Lord Peter Gross, who has recently stepped down, and his replacement. I think we can go with this. The judges want it. It seems completely logical to me that if I have something new and the judges want it—as the hon. Lady said, that is quite strange—then let us get on and do it.

With that in mind, let us work together across the House to implement section 28 as soon as possible to protect vulnerable witnesses and victims, which we all came to this place to do.

*Question put and agreed to.*

8.12 pm

*House adjourned.*

# Westminster Hall

Wednesday 6 July 2016

[MR JAMES GRAY *in the Chair*]

## Artistic Remuneration for Online Content

9.30 am

**Mr James Gray (in the Chair):** Before commencing our first debate, may I remind hon. Members that reference to people in the Public Gallery, no matter how distinguished they may be, is out of order and should not be done during the debate?

**Nigel Adams (Selby and Ainsty) (Con):** I beg to move,

That this House has considered artistic remuneration for online content.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship this morning, Mr Gray. I thank my hon. Friends the Members for Somerton and Frome (David Warburton) and for Folkestone and Hythe (Damian Collins) for helping me to secure this important debate.

Everyone is aware that the creative industries are one of this country's greatest assets. The Government's own analysis shows that the gross value added of the creative industries in 2014 was in excess of £84 billion, which accounts for around 5.2% of the UK economy. Essentially, they have been a source of growth in recent years, increasing by 6% since 1997, compared with 4.6% for the UK economy as a whole. However, we would be doing the industry a disservice to consider its value in purely economic terms, because its impact is far wider.

Our creative industries are our voice to the world. Very little, if anything, contributes more to the UK brand around the world than our artists, writers and directors.

**The Minister for Culture and the Digital Economy (Mr Edward Vaizey):** Hear, hear.

**Nigel Adams:** Quite right.

Just a few weeks ago, the trade body, UK Music, published a report on the value of music tourism to the UK, which showed that direct and indirect spending in 2014 from music tourism was £3.7 billion. Some 38% of live music audiences are music tourists: music lovers from outside the UK. They come because they love our world-class artists and our fantastic venues and festivals. It might be easy to take our creative industries for granted and to assume that the country that gave the world Shakespeare, the Beatles, Harry Potter and Banksy will also be at the forefront of the global culture landscape, but that would be a massive mistake. Indeed, we in this House have a duty to ensure that our cultural sector has the tools to grow, including a copyright regime that is fit for purpose in a digital online market.

Members may have read about the recent public disagreement between songwriters and artists and YouTube over royalties paid by the service. In the last few weeks, 186 major artists in the US and over 1,000 in the UK and Europe have signed public statements of dissatisfaction

addressed to the US Congress and to Jean-Claude Juncker. Signatories range from Sir Paul McCartney and ABBA to Ne-Yo, Idina Menzel and deadmau5, and even includes the former French first lady, Carla Bruni, who is also a recording artist—although I do not have too many of her tracks on my iPhone.

Last month, I met members of PRS for Music and songwriters and composers whose music and songs are enjoyed around the world. I heard from them the dissatisfaction that millions of streams can result in just a few hundred pounds in royalties or, in some cases, no royalties at all. Most dramatically, I spoke to one songwriter who was entitled to 25% of the revenue from a song he wrote, but who had seen a mere £5.39 from almost 3.2 million plays of that song on YouTube by listeners who actively sought out that track. Meanwhile, the same songwriter saw several times that amount—a princely £87.79—from the 180 occasions on which the song was played in stadiums in the UK, despite those listeners being passive and hearing what others chose to play for them. That seems to be a pretty upside-down arrangement.

To show how far behind the law the balance is, Geoff Taylor of the British Phonographic Industry recently said that British artists saw more revenue in 2015 from the 2.1 million vinyl LP sales than from the 27 billion music video streams on YouTube and similar platforms. It is not difficult to understand the despair of a writer or artist who sees their life's work online with little hope of any financial reward now or in the future. This is particularly a problem for less high-profile producers, writers and creative people, who are less likely to have additional income streams from endorsements or touring.

High-profile artists are often very concerned about this problem and its impact on other members of the creative community and their teams. A big artist will often get little sympathy and, as we have seen recently, there may even be a backlash from the media and consumers for speaking out about the problem if they are perceived to be well off. Fair or unfair, this reaction just makes it harder to expose the problem and to support fair remuneration for those in the industry who are less famous.

The basis of the music industry's concerns is the so called "safe harbour" laws, which in the US, EU and UK give user upload streaming services the same protection from copyright as host providers, such as personal cloud locker services. This is despite the fact that they operate entirely differently and, more importantly, impact the market in different ways. Take, for example, a comparison between Spotify and the user upload site Dailymotion. Both sites allow users to search for and listen to Adele's track "Hello", one of the fastest-selling tracks of all time. Spotify is licensed to stream that track and thus pays the artist, songwriter, producers, musicians, publishers and labels that are so crucial to creation of the content, but Dailymotion does not. Due to ambiguity in the safe harbour framework, user upload services can claim to be mere hosts of their user's content and, as such, are not required to share with the creators the wealth they generate for themselves. That does not seem fair.

When a business model is based on making available to consumers creative content created by others, surely we as lawmakers must ask whether this is right. In fact, the very premise of copyright is to ensure that creators are paid when their work is exploited by others.

[Nigel Adams]

It may be easy to argue that the current framework is good for consumers. How can it not be, when music can be enjoyed more easily than ever before? However, I would add a note of caution to such assumptions and suggest that the user experience may not be as positive as it might first seem. When faced with piracy, it was universally agreed that creative content has an intrinsic value that must be protected if the future generation of creators are to be nourished for society's economic and cultural benefit. These principles remain true today and we must not replace one market failure with another.

Equally, there are impacts on the licensed streaming services to which many users pay a monthly subscription. These services are forced to compete on an unequal playing field with user-upload services that pay little or nothing to creators. They are forced to offer their own ad-funded services, which are often run at a loss or subsidised by income from the subscription service. The net result is less competition in the market for subscription pricing and ultimately consumers could lose out.

In March, the all-party parliamentary group on music, which I chair, hosted a dinner to discuss the growing music streaming market. The dinner was well attended by services such as Apple Music and Spotify, as well as representatives of the music industry. It was clear from the dinner that streaming presents many opportunities for the industry and that it is embracing them. However, there are challenges in ensuring the music industry captures this value, such as whether advertising revenue and ad-funded models are sustainable and the growth of ad-blocking and stream-ripping technologies that can have an impact on the amount of remuneration the industry receives in return. The legal position of safe harbours and how they interact with the market perhaps presents an even more fundamental problem, and this will continue unless action is taken.

The Creative Industries Council launched its strategy this week, with many recommendations to the Government and industry alike. The council is seeking legal clarity concerning the liability of platforms that actively host and market content. Specifically, it argues that to maintain an intellectual property framework fit for the digital age, such platforms should not benefit from safe harbours. The Government have indicated that they would support a clarification too. I would be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister said what plans the Government have to respond formally to that recommendation and what further steps they are taking to achieve that.

**Kevin Brennan** (Cardiff West) (Lab): I declare an interest, in that I earned £10.60 in royalties from PRS last year for my songwriting—and paid 40% tax on it. Will the hon. Gentleman address the role of search engines in all of this? I recall that a few years ago we did a search during a debate and found that most of the results that came up were from illegal sites. Is that an issue that he thinks the Government should also be doing more to address?

**Nigel Adams:** It is absolutely an issue that needs to be addressed. I have myself searched online and found that the results I get are from piracy sites. Something has to be done. There is a responsibility in this respect not just for Government, but for the search engines themselves.

Perhaps afterwards I can help the hon. Gentleman spend his £5.60 as we discuss what should come out of this debate.

We are in a unique place to address these issues and ensure that we are world leaders in striking the right balance between the promotion of technology and creative innovation. With the recent vote to leave the EU, the UK Government will have full control over policies related to digital streaming and artist remuneration. Will the Minister undertake to investigate whether provisions can be put in place so that once we eventually leave the EU, our UK industries can fully achieve the value in their rights?

**Mr Vaizey:** Hear, hear.

**Nigel Adams:** That is encouraging. Will the Minister investigate, for example, the possibility of introducing a sunrise clause into the Digital Economy Bill? That could ensure that active hosts of content do not benefit from safe harbour when legal systems have been transferred and the European Communities Act 1972 is repealed.

It will not surprise hon. Members to hear me say that the music industry has undergone tremendous change and readjustment in its business models over the past couple of decades. The latest Intellectual Property Office and Kantar Media online copyright infringement tracker, published yesterday, concludes that the top three sources of music are YouTube, with 52%, Spotify, with 30%, and the iTunes App Store, with 20%. Use of Spotify has increased by 5% since last year's tracker, while iTunes has fallen by 6%. The consumer trend is clearly moving away from music ownership. Copyright still reflects ownership for the creators of content and the infrastructure that supports it. We must ensure that those ownership rights are respected.

9.42 am

**Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab): It is, as ever, a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Gray. I congratulate the hon. Member for Selby and Ainsty (Nigel Adams) on securing the debate and on all the work that he has been doing with the all-party parliamentary group on music.

This issue is of real and growing concern to musicians and has been for some time. As an MP for Bristol, which a fairly recent survey showed had more musicians than anywhere else in the country, I thought it was important to speak in this debate, and I am pleased that my constituency neighbour and hon. Friend the Member for Bristol West (Thangam Debbonaire) is also here to speak. She will be joining me in supporting Bristol's bid to be capital of culture in a few years' time, and obviously the musical contribution that Bristol can make is a very important part of that.

I associate myself with the views expressed by the hon. Member for Selby and Ainsty on the need for further action to address piracy, and especially on how search engines facilitate piracy and the need to clarify the legal ambiguity of safe harbour provisions, which are allowing the development of parasitic digital platforms that leech value from this country's creative industries. I will be interested to hear what the Minister has to say and whether he plans to introduce clauses into the Digital Economy Bill to address that loophole, but

today I want to speak on behalf of artists and about the need for a more equitable distribution of digital royalties between them and their record companies.

For many years, artists have spoken out about the considerable difficulties that they face in trying to make a living from the royalties that they receive from streaming. Taylor Swift pulled her last album from Spotify to make that point. Clearly, Taylor Swift will not be short of money whether or not she sells material through Spotify, but it was important that she took a stand on behalf of the many musicians who rely on royalties to make a living. If they do not get sufficient revenues from digital streaming, they literally cannot afford to be professional musicians.

**Mr Gregory Campbell** (East Londonderry) (DUP): Does the hon. Lady agree that although an artist of the standing of Taylor Swift has considerable financial and musical clout across the globe, that is not shared by the hundreds and perhaps thousands of musicians who have not yet broken through and perhaps will never reach anything like the standing that she has? What we are trying to do today is represent those artists, as opposed to one who has made a breakthrough and can take a stand. We are representing the many who cannot do that.

**Kerry McCarthy:** I totally agree. A few years ago I went into BPI's offices and the staff there showed me the impact of illegal downloading on record sales, using Adele as an example. It was quite startling to see, by the second, how many hundreds if not thousands of illegal downloads there were. I said to them, "Yes, that does make a certain point, but I want to see what impact it has on the income of a struggling indie band that is on the verge of breaking through." It would be easy for people to say, "Well, Adele is selling millions." Yes, she is clearly very wealthy and perhaps can afford for people to access her content for free, but it is the principle, is it not? That principle should apply across the board. I have always said that it is up to artists whether they want to make their content free. If they see that making their content free online is a good move for their career, that is their choice, but it is equally their choice to be paid if they want to be paid, and people should not download illegally.

Going back to the legal streaming services, if we are to secure the future sustainability of the sector and encourage vibrant new acts to come forward, it is vital that artists can earn a decent living in the digital environment. The problem will only become more acute in the years ahead, as digital music revenues will continue to outstrip those from physical formats such as CDs and vinyl. There is a bit of a vinyl revival, but that will always be a niche area. It is illustrative that when I was talking to my teenage and early twenties nephews and nieces the other day, I found that they had never bought a CD. I think it is on the verge of becoming a redundant format.

There is an issue about how Spotify calculates payments to rights owners. It is too complex to go into detail about here, but it means that the money that we as individual consumers pay for streaming does not directly go to the bands and artists we are listening to the most, and it penalises bands with strong fan bases.

The primary cause of the problem that artists face with streaming royalties, though, lies in the contract that they have with their record label. Those contracts continue to pay artists royalties for streaming as though the stream were a physical sale of a product. They are continuing with a royalty rate from the pre-digital era, so things such as the manufacture, storage and distribution of a physical product such as a CD or vinyl album are factored into the contract. That simply cannot be justified when there is no physical product on the market.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): Is not the case that the artists now have to accept that they need to be part of the digital streaming process whether they like it or not, and perhaps be dragged screaming and shouting into a new age where they do not want to be? That is the information that I am getting back.

**Kerry McCarthy:** It is always the choice of an artist how they want to market their product. Some artists are quite happy to do it on a part-time basis and just put their stuff on SoundCloud or whatever, or are happy just to be on the live circuit. It is clear that online content and streaming services are the future of the industry, but my point is that at the moment the musicians get only about 10% to 15% of what the label receives from the streaming service, because the physical cost of a product is built in. There are some contracts that are far more favourable to musicians, but by and large they are not, which the Musicians' Union has been campaigning on.

In almost all cases, an artist will never see any of the online royalties at all, as their contract sweeps up the rights they have to royalties from the sale of recordings until they have paid back the advance they received from the label and any expenses incurred recording and promoting the artist. I argue that a fairer split of 50:50 would seem entirely reasonable, especially as this already exists for public performance and broadcasting income thanks to the equitable remuneration right. The Musicians' Union has argued that when performers transfer their assailable rights, 50% should be a non-assignable equitable remuneration right, with the other 50% being an exclusive right assignable to the record company, to ensure that performers receive income from digital sales and streaming whether or not they still have an outstanding balance with their record label. For their part, record labels would be able to recoup their investment from royalties assigned to them under the exclusive right.

The Fair Internet for Performers campaign is taking this issue forward Europe-wide by campaigning for an amendment to EU copyright legislation. The hon. Member for Selby and Ainsty has already mentioned what the impact of Brexit would be and whether in a few years' time we would be free to set our own rules. I would be grateful if the Minister clarified where we are in the limbo years, as we might call them. Will we adopt the EU copyright legislation as national legislation? Does he regard the EU legislation as a practical way of adequately rewarding artists in the UK for the streaming of their recorded performances?

It is vital to ensure that income streams actually reach creators, to ensure not only that performers can make a living from their art, but that corporations

[Kerry McCarthy]

continue to have that talent to exploit, and for the future of new music and art, which I think all of us in this room would agree is incredibly important.

9.51 am

**David Warburton** (Somerton and Frome) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship once again, Mr Gray. I too congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Selby and Ainsty (Nigel Adams) on securing the debate.

When Thomas Edison shouted “Mary had a little lamb” into his phonograph in 1877, he precipitated a musical earthquake, to use modern parliamentary language. By the time I was a teenager in 1977, buying albums and singles was not only the only way to get hold of the music we all wanted, but the primary way in which many of us defined ourselves. Artists then enjoyed an incredible boom. Someone might record an album on to cassette now and again, but that would usually result in a trip on the bus to Our Price Records—where I worked for five years—to get hold of the real thing: the 12-inch record, with all its magnificent gatefold glory, in all its splendour. When we got our hands on this object of desire, the artists would in turn get their hands on all the rewards for the joy that they had uncorked, but that is not so today. Now, the songwriting artist can uncork just the same degree of joy and deliver it to the world, which can receive it with the same degree of rapture but without paying a bean. We can click on YouTube and watch or listen to pretty much anything we like anytime and anywhere—unless we are in Somerset, where there is no internet or mobile signal—and do so for nothing.

**Kevin Brennan:** Is it not the case that people have always been able to listen to music for nothing? We could listen to music on Radio 1 for nothing when we were teenagers in the '70s. In a sense, streaming is the equivalent of that, in that it does not involve ownership. The issue is the lack of reward for the artist under this new way of listening to music for nothing.

**David Warburton:** Absolutely. The hon. Gentleman hits the nail with all of his head. He makes a perfect point, which I am just about to come on to; he is reading my mind.

When we click and listen, not only does the artist's music become more ephemeral, more fleeting, less substantial, less physical, less tangible, but it also becomes commoditised, losing its uniqueness, brand and differentiation. In the way of the digital world, the user feels it is only right that the content should be provided free of charge. So now we have artists who attract huge audiences and whose content is played and shared millions of times, but who receive just chickenfeed—nothing more than a trace of recompense, having entertained people across the globe.

This began perhaps 15 or more years ago with download sites such as Napster and Kazaa—for which, incidentally, my company in a previous life provided all the mobile content globally. The music industry was slow to pick up on this revolution, but having got to grips with the download model, and with sensible paying business models finally emerging through iTunes and so on, it is now facing a new assault from the online streamers.

**Jim Shannon:** If the streaming services become over-regulated, which is what this debate is very much about, it could well be the case that, as the *Financial Times* has said:

“It is just as likely that consumers would sate their appetites for free content by returning to piracy instead.”

Does the hon. Gentleman share that concern that the *Financial Times*, and many of us in this Chamber, have?

**David Warburton:** I not only share that concern but think there is a concern that the streaming sites where the content is available for free are, in effect, pirate sites; they are providing the service that pirate sites would otherwise provide. Just because users might be pushed to other pirate sites, that does not mean we should not address sites that seem legitimate and are also providing the service for nothing.

Since YouTube is protected and shielded by safe harbour, other streaming sites find it harder to encourage users to cough up and pay for a subscription. Why would anybody pay if the content is available for free? Fundamentally, there is a clear transfer of value taking place from the content creator to the online provider. If there is an obvious transfer of value, it must be made clear that the online provider has a duty to compensate the creator accordingly. This is not much like the last time the industry faced the digital world. That time the industry closed its eyes, covered its ears and pretended it was not happening, but this time there is little doubt that streaming music is likely to be the key destination for consuming the products of much of the music industry.

The emerging business model is, of course, the subscription service, because it is the ultimate business model—it has clear, definable revenues, near certain cash flows and transparent growth. But as the streaming services see subscription revenues surging and advertising revenues bulging, the artists—the fundamental source of all that—become pretty much forgotten. That is patently wrong, and we must address it.

Government have their part to play. If the concept of active and passive content hosting is included in the Digital Economy Bill—I am sure we all look forward to hearing the Minister's views on that later—that could well prove to be the answer, preventing active hosts from hiding behind safe harbour. Government must now work with the industry and the platform providers—the streaming services, the hosts and the content providers—to build a consensus and a model that is sustainable for all parties and that, crucially, allows those who uncork and create the joy, upon whose efforts the whole edifice is built and whose sound and fury draws us all in, to be properly rewarded and have proper control over all that they create for the rest of us.

9.58 am

**Thangam Debonnaire** (Bristol West) (Lab): Thank you for allowing me to speak, Mr Gray. I also give grateful thanks to the hon. Member for Selby and Ainsty (Nigel Adams) for securing this important debate, which is both necessary and timely. It is all the more timely for us to be discussing this issue now, when the country has voted to leave the European Union, as so much of the regulatory framework is currently set by the EU. I would be interested to know the Minister's thoughts about that.

First, I declare my interest as a former member of the Musicians' Union, which donated £6,000 to my campaign during the general election. I also recently visited part of YouTube's UK operation, and part of Google's massive UK operation, as part of a parliamentary visit last week to the creative industries that was organised by the Industry and Parliament Trust and the Advertising Association. I can report that Google does a good sandwich lunch and presented me with a very nice notebook. I can also report that it was from a YouTube channel "The Oma Way" that I learnt to do continental knitting from a German grandmother. As a former musician myself, I am very pleased that so many music lovers enjoy the ability to listen to music from the internet. I am also married to a musician and am close friends with a composer and other musicians.

Most importantly, Bristol West and Bristol generally is a very creative city, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) said. Many people work in my constituency in the creative industries. Musicians, composers and music lovers in Bristol West deserve and want a fair system for online remuneration—one in which musicians have much more control. So do I: that is why I am here, and I will be reviewing a couple of technical aspects of this knotty problem.

The situation with artists' remuneration online is very far from straightforward, although there are those who would like it to be seen as so. There are many stakeholders in the process, each of whom would like to be seen as innocent angels, because it is not only Google who aims not to be evil. However, there needs to be a balance of rights and responsibilities that is proportionate to the power held by each stakeholder. Google, as the world's No. 1 search engine, and YouTube, the dominant player in online video, both have far more power in this process than the consumer or the musician. The recording industry also has more power than the newest indie band or individual composer.

Within that process, there are search engines, file downloading sites, the recording industry, musicians, technical professions and, of course, the music lover. We owe it to everyone in that process to have a system that is not only transparent and fair, but relevant for our times.

Right now it is vital that the entire sector and Parliament are aware of what the results of the UK exit from the European Union will mean for the industry. The copyright directive, for example, which harmonises—to use an appropriately musical term—copyright law across Europe, including the application of copyright and control techniques on the internet, restricts the range of defences to copyright infringement. We do not yet know whether that area of UK law, directly derived from the EU directive, will be one of the pieces of so-called "red tape" that those who have campaigned for us to leave the EU will want to sweep away. Before I move away from Brexit, I would add that that would be a disaster for the UK's music industry. I would like to know what the Minister, who I know is a music lover, is going to do to protect the industry during the Brexit process.

It is not sufficient for the more powerful players to say, "We are just providing the platform," or, "We are only running our algorithm to give search results to consumers." If the less powerful players, such as the musicians or trade unions or the recording industry, can easily find examples of unlicensed products on a streaming

platform or in the results of an online search, so too can the search engines and the companies owning the streaming platform. They are the ones who are most in control of how the music is consumed and the options for performers and the recording industry to receive their fair share of advertising or subscription income, and they must be required to play fairly.

YouTube, for example, reports proudly that "the rights holder has total control over what happens to their content on YouTube".

That is simply not how performers experience it. As YouTube hosts user-generated content, it is the users generating the content and, jointly, the platform itself that have the most control. If an artist or recording company wishes to get their content blocked or monetised, they first have to know that it is there and then they have to contact YouTube to ask for it to be taken down or monetised. They can, and do, do regular searches of their name on YouTube or other streaming platforms, but if they can, so can YouTube.

YouTube has indeed invested \$60 million to build a fingerprinting technology called Content ID to allow rights holders to identify when their works are used in the user-generated content. That technology has helped to compare millions of media files and hours of video, but it is insufficient for the job and is still leaving the responsibility with the performer and the recording industry to take action once they discover that there is unlicensed product on the platform.

YouTube now represents such a large proportion of total music consumption. That is great, but as a consumer of YouTube, I want to know that every single piece of music consumption is providing proper remuneration for the artists who create it and for the recording industry that provides the means to record it. I do not have that certainty, despite being involved in and modestly knowledgeable about the music industry and being modestly well briefed. Despite the phenomenal growth in online streaming of music content, YouTube contributes only about 4% of total music revenues—less than that contributed by vinyl, as my hon. Friend said.

YouTube makes use of a safe harbour provision in copyright law, as has been said, which allows it immunity from copyright liability providing it responds to takedown notices. However, that still places the responsibility away from the company itself and is therefore insufficient. I would like to see host companies such as YouTube and others take full responsibility without being able to hide behind the safe harbour provision, which was created 15 or so years ago, without any idea of how widespread music content uploading would become. I would also like them to move from a system of "notice to take down" to one of "notice to take and stay down". Otherwise, the music industry continually has to play whack-a-mole, as new user-generated music content is uploaded.

Google is the world's most used search engine. That presents another challenge: for Google to take responsibility for the results of its search engine, which routinely directs consumers to links to unlicensed sites. The British Phonographic Industry has sent more than 200 million notices to Google requesting it to remove illegal links to their members' music. Again, that still places responsibility on the industry. Rights holders can supply machine-readable lists of sites that have been licensed to offer

[Thangam Debbonaire]

their content, so search engines could use those as a factor in their algorithms to improve the search visibility of sources of legal content. So far they do not. As my hon. Friend mentioned, the BPI can show how routinely search inquiries are returning links to illegal sites, on the first page, at the top. This matters: it is simply helping people—nay, positively directing them—to sites where performers' music is stolen from them without proper payment.

Google employs very smart people, as I saw last week on my visit. I simply do not believe they are incapable of reforming their search engine algorithm. We would not tolerate a billboard that directed people to buy music from a shop that was using only stolen CDs, nor would we tolerate a radio station or TV company advertising such a shop. The time has come to require search engines to act responsibly, and I would be grateful if the Minister responded to that request.

As has been mentioned, the Musicians' Union and the BPI both acknowledge that the development of online streaming has been a phenomenal success. For music lovers, it gives them access to an enormous catalogue of music. That is fantastic, but it is arguable that online streaming is equivalent to listening to the radio. Consumers do not possess that music and they know it. They cannot listen to it offline and the experience is more like a broadcast with curated playlists than iTunes or any of the download services. That suggests that the system of royalties for internet streaming should be closer to that for radio. I therefore support what my hon. Friend said about an equitable split of income—I think she may have said a 50:50 split—between musicians and the recording industry for online streaming, as well as an adequate “take and stay down” notice system for the online industry.

The equitable remuneration right was introduced in 1996 and ensures that performers enjoy royalty payments from the very first radio airplay of their recordings. Such a system also needs to exist for streaming. I believe it is both vital and possible to create a system whereby nobody in the process, from consumer to website owner, can hide behind the defence of “I did not know”, “I don't believe the illegal sites are treating artists unfairly”, or “It's not my problem: the way the artists are remunerated is up to the recording industry and nothing to do with us, the online industry”.

To sum up, I would like to know whether the Minister supports any or all of the following or whether he will consider them: a move from “notice and take down” to “notice and stay down” for notifying streaming services about unlicensed content; a shift in responsibility from the music industry to spot and notify search/streaming services to the services themselves, so that they take responsibility for what user-generated content is uploaded; a requirement for internet search engines to amend their algorithms to direct consumers to legal sites, not illegal sites, and also to co-operate fully with the music industry on this; and moving the licensing system to remunerate artists and composers fairly with the recording industry for online streaming, given that it is akin to radio in the user experience.

Reforming the licensing laws in any case for offline and online use and consumption may be a good idea, given that they are often seen as not simple to navigate

and not transparent. I would be interested to hear the Minister's thoughts on that point. Finally, we need to see that the music industry is protected throughout the process of leaving the European Union. The music industry deserves better than the situation we have at the moment for artists' remuneration. Musicians deserve better; composers deserve better; above all, music lovers deserve better.

10.9 am

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): I just want to make a small contribution to the debate. I congratulate the hon. Member for Selby and Ainsty (Nigel Adams) on presenting the case here in Westminster Hall and I am sorry I was not here at the beginning of the debate; I had another engagement at 9 o'clock and it went on a wee bit longer than I thought it was going to. However, I am adding this small contribution to support what he and other hon. Members have said.

According to the chief executive officer of Sony, streaming services such as Spotify are the “final destination” for the music industry, if it is to survive. Some artists are vehemently against Spotify and the like, but the reality is that, if they do not move with the times—this is the point that I tried to make in my intervention—they will be left behind. There are some concerns about that. I am not saying that we must accept the inevitability of everything in this world, swallow hard and move on, but sometimes the hard facts are in front of us and we have to look at them.

Global music sales slipped by some 0.4% in 2014 to £15 billion. The industry body, the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry, reports that download sales, largely through Apple's iTunes, slumped by 8%, which shows that there have been changes in the industry and to how music is delivered. Total digital revenues rose by some 6.9% to £6.9 billion, with streaming services such as Spotify and Deezer increasing by 39% and delivering £1.6 billion of revenues.

Artists who are unhappy with the development of digital streaming services will have to accept the reality sooner or later. They must—and I say this with great respect—get into the tent and influence their relationship with streaming services, rather than having no input from a position of protest. If the emerging streaming services become over-regulated, as the *Financial Times* said,

“It is just as likely that consumers would sate their appetites for free content by returning to piracy instead”.

The purpose of this debate—as it often is in Westminster Hall—is to get a balance and to see whether we can find a way forward. It is about solutions and not about negativity. Government statistics show that 26% of users have accessed content illegally. Those are the facts. It must be unbelievably easy to do so and it suggests that the *Financial Times*' prophecy would be fulfilled should those in the music industry, and in the new media and streaming services, fail to strike the right balance and find the right way forward.

It is only right that all people are compensated for their labour. Even the richest of artists deserve to have intellectual property and copyright rights respected under the law. It is important to strike the balance, for there is much to lose for either side if they fail to do so.

10.12 am

**Kevin Brennan** (Cardiff West) (Lab): I had not intended to make a speech, but the debate has been so stimulating that I have awoken and got to my feet. I just want to make a few general points because I have not prepared any remarks.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol West (Thangam Debbonaire), I have been doing some activities with the Industry and Parliament Trust, which is an excellent body that allows parliamentarians to get a more in-depth knowledge of business. In my case, that has been in relation to the music industry. Over the past 18 months or so, I have been visiting all sorts of different businesses and aspects of the music industry from collection societies right through to record companies and small, independent songwriters and producers. I have had the opportunity to see all the different aspects of the music industry, as many different industries are involved in the production of music, which is a fascinating eco-structure.

Having observed lots of different aspects of the music industry over the past couple of years, it is pretty clear to me that there is a trend towards streaming; it is the main way in which consumers listen to music now and it will be into the future. That has implications for the way in which artists are remunerated.

Despite what hon. Members have said about CDs disappearing and so on, a surprising trend in the music industry has been the growth of the compilation CD, which has gone against the trend of declining CD sales in recent years as people want somebody to curate the vast amount of music that is placed in front of them on their behalf. People purchase compilation CDs because that curation is done for them. Those consumers are, generally, of a certain age but, nevertheless, that has been a surprising area of growth reported by some record companies.

There will always be a demand for physical formats of music. The growth of vinyl sales in recent years is an indication that people are hankering after something real, physical and tangible—with a gatefold sleeve and a wonderfully high-quality vinyl record—that they can tuck under their arm and carry down the road before going through the wonderful ritual of putting it on to their turntable and playing at home.

The growth in vinyl sales is not just among people like me who are rebuying all the albums that they gave away when they thought vinyl was disappearing 20 or 30 years ago, rebuilding their record collections and buying new music. It is also among young people. When I go into real, independent record stores such as Spillers Records in Cardiff—the world's oldest record store and one of the finest establishments in the country—young people are at the head of the queue to buy vinyl. That physical format will remain because there will always be people for whom music is their ultimate passion and is much more than the wallpaper of their life. Music is actually tied into their identity as human beings in a powerful way.

**Kelvin Hopkins** (Luton North) (Lab): Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Kevin Brennan**: I will in a moment but I am just getting worked up.

There will always be a minority of consumers who fall into that category, but there are millions of other people for whom music forms less of an obsession but is, nevertheless, an essential part of their life, even if they are not as obsessed as some of us.

**Kelvin Hopkins**: I agree very strongly about CDs and vinyl. Does my hon. Friend agree that, as CDs are a physical form of music, sleeve notes, artwork and all sorts of other things add to the enjoyment of that music? It is not just about the sound through a set of headphones.

**Kevin Brennan**: Yes, I agree, but the point that I was about to make is that there are many millions of consumers for whom that is less important than it might be for my hon. Friend and I, who pore over such things. I am sure that he can remember, as I can, who played bass or slide guitar on which track, the exact length of each track, and who wrote the lyrics and the music—all the details that we store up.

The consumer model that is emerging is that the consumption of music will become part of most people's general consumption of creative content, which will include film, music, television programmes and so on. We are moving into a world where people can consume creative content of whatever variety any time, any place, anywhere. That will work as a general subscription model in which most general consumers will pay for their internet, television and music all wrapped up into one family package. People already do that with their broadband, television services and telephone services. It is sometimes a bit of a stretch for consumers to go from nought to £10 but it is less of a stretch—although times are tough—for some illogical human reason, to go from £60 to £70 when they are paying into a subscription service. The Government, in their policy development, need to think through the implications of that trend.

We need the right copyright structure, legal structure and penalties, where they are required, to ensure that the people who make creative content are appropriately rewarded, whether it is from physical sales—which will continue to be an important part of revenue to the industry—or when their work is part of a more general subscription service. We must deal with the illegal content and the legal loopholes such as safe harbour that allow content to be consumed online without creators getting the appropriate reward. The Minister is a thoughtful person and I hope that he has something to say about how the Government see a way forward.

10.19 am

**Pete Wishart** (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): It is a real pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Gray, so long as you promise never to do those Scottish accents. I congratulate the hon. Member for Selby and Ainsty (Nigel Adams) on securing this important, though short, debate. I commend him for his diligence in chairing the all-party parliamentary group on music. I have an interest as a former recording artist, and I refer to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests.

In my 15 years as a Member of Parliament, I have had the great pleasure of speaking in most debates on issues related to the creative industries and the remuneration of artists. I have a sneaking suspicion that, in the future,

[Pete Wishart]

I will be standing here once again to discuss the same issues and challenges that we have heard so eloquently described by Members on both sides of the Chamber this morning. At the heart of the matter is how we ensure that our artists and creators, and those who are prepared to invest in their talent and creativity, are properly rewarded for the fantastic works they produce. Rights holders and investors should be properly rewarded for all their commitment.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the success of our industry—we have always been world leaders in music. Our incredible success over the past few years is testament to the array of talent across the United Kingdom not only in music but in all our world-leading creative and cultural sectors. As legislators, it is our job to continue to create the best political environment to allow that talent and creativity to grow, thrive and develop. We cannot be the artists, although the hon. Member for Cardiff West (Kevin Brennan) and I attempt it on occasion with the world-renowned MP4. Our main job is to ensure that we do nothing that disrupts the wonderful creation of talent. More than that, we must see what we can do to create the best possible environment and conditions for talent to develop, grow and prosper. We must also ensure that this country remains one of the top exporters of music worldwide, as we have done pretty successfully over the past few years and decades.

I remember securing one of the House's first debates on the music industry, and at that point it was all about piracy and digitisation. Music was just about the first discipline to get involved in the tensions and difficulties of the move towards digitisation. We were the first creative sector to do so, and we blazed a trail for others. We challenged some of the things that were happening. In the early days of digitisation and the move online, a culture started to emerge that suggested that, because the internet was out there, everything should therefore be free and accessible. Political parties were created to foster that belief. Pirate politicians were elected in several European nations to serve and fulfil that strong political culture. All that was happening, and the music industry tried to find a way through and had to meet many difficulties and challenges as the first creative industry in that environment.

Over the years, music has been relatively successful in meeting some of the online challenges. Piracy is not the major issue, although it is still a big issue—I welcome some of the measures in the Digital Economy Bill, which will treat theft online in the same way as theft of physical products from a shop or supermarket. We have fired a shot across the bow of the good ship pirate over the past few years, and we are making steady progress. I congratulate successive Governments on their vigorous attention, and the availability of streaming services and safe harbours is a real attempt to address some of the illegal activity.

Even with that progress, artists, creators and rights holders still struggle to secure a just reward for their efforts. The hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) and others have mentioned that streaming has been a massive success. I am a massive user of Spotify, and I like the way that I am able to access music, as do millions of people across the country who buy into the service, which allows us to listen to music in the way we

want. There are all sorts of playlists, and the service is designed to be attractive to users. Such services have been successful, but we must secure a properly functioning digital market that enables creators and rights holders in the music industry to secure the true value of their works online. One of the most important things that we have to do is to address what can only be described as the value gap between rising music consumption and decreasing revenues, which both undermines the rights and revenues of those who create and invest in their own music and distorts the marketplace.

Someone is growing rich off the fat of the creative endeavours of our musicians and artists, and I assure the House that it is not the artists. Somebody is massively profiting from the proliferation of music, and we owe it to ourselves to examine what is happening. I suggest that those who seem to be making the tidiest of profits are the platforms and hosts. Such companies add next to nothing to this country's creative activity but somehow, because of their design, their algorithms, their marketing and their ability to provide access to this content, they seem to be making the largest profits.

**Kerry McCarthy:** Whenever I highlight the extent to which musicians rely on the income from their work, someone always answers, "Well, they can make money from touring and merchandise." The big artists can do that, because the people who go to their concerts are prepared to pay vast amounts of money—such artists attract people who have the income to buy the T-shirts—but most bands cannot survive on touring and merchandise alone.

**Pete Wishart:** The hon. Lady is right. Making records and producing albums seems to be a loss leader for all the other activity that musicians are now expected and ordered to do to try to ensure that they are able to make a living from music. She has seen the figures from the Musicians' Union that suggest just how depressed is the average musician's income. I cannot remember the figure, but I am sure she knows better than I do that it is significantly low. That is a real issue for so many struggling artists. I am an unrecouped artist. I sold about 1 million records, but I have never received a penny for any of the records I sold when I was signed to a major record label. There was an expectation that we would make money from all this other activity. I concede that we did relatively well, but we did not do well from record sales. There is something incredibly wrong with the marketplace.

Streaming might be an opportunity for us to consider how we properly reward musicians for the works they produce. I am attracted to the 50:50 concept of the Musicians' Union. Let us work towards recouping the investment that rights holders and record companies make in the artists, but let the artists start to earn a little from streaming services. Artists earn an absolute pittance from streaming services, and we should at least allow them to make that pittance a little more substantial.

**Thangam Debbonaire:** The hon. Gentleman is making some excellent points. Does he agree that the online industry's domination of the income—it is keeping so much of the income and allowing the artists so very little—is equivalent to the person driving the van full of CDs having most of the income and the artists having very little? The online platforms are the vehicle. They

are the last bit of the process between creation and consumption. Does he agree that it would be better if we tipped the balance back towards the creators, without whom the industry as a whole would be nothing? We need creative people and the creative industries that support them in getting their output recorded.

**Pete Wishart:** There is very little on which I would disagree with the hon. Lady. We must restructure that relationship, but I caution her and others. The music industry in this country has a successful business model, and we are world leaders. We produce the artists and ensure that they are supported. I have nothing against record labels and the music industry investing in that talent and bringing it on in the usual paternalistic way. That is what happened when I was a recording artist, and the model is still successful. Rights holders should be properly rewarded for their investment in artists.

That brings me to my next point, which is probably the most substantial point in all this. Several Members today have raised the issue of safe harbour, which we have to tackle; of all the things that the Minister takes away from today's debate, I hope that it will be that one. Safe harbour is a useful innovation, because it has encouraged a number of people who were tempted by piracy and illegal sites to come across to a legal framework where they are able to access some of the content.

The music industry's suggestion of distinguishing between active and passive safe harbours is a useful one. We all know what a passive safe harbour looks like: that is where people find a store of music, access it and do all the usual things. But when it comes to the manipulation of that music and to designing things in a particular way to try to create some sort of income for it, we get into the realm of an active safe harbour. At that point, royalties should be paid, to ensure that something comes back to rights holders and artists. I very much support copyright being extended to what could be considered as active safe harbours.

I am also attracted to the idea that streaming sites should be treated pretty much as a radio player—we heard about that from the hon. Members for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) and for Bristol West (Thangam Debbonaire), and it is a feature that we should be looking at. When I access Spotify, for example, I mainly use the radio services. I still do not see a distinction between listening to the radio in the morning and listening to the radio service on Spotify—I think they should be treated the same.

I am conscious of time and am obviously very keen to hear from the Minister, but I have a couple of things to say about where we find ourselves after the decision we made a couple of weeks ago about the European Union. The fact that we will not have access to the European Union is an absolute and unmitigated disaster for the musicians of this country. We will now be excluded from most of the debates about the digital single market, which is one of the biggest innovations in the placing of content online that we have ever seen in any part of the world. We have now taken ourselves out of that conversation about the structuring of the digital single market. That is a disaster for musicians in this country. I am not going to mince my words about this.

Another issue related to remuneration for artists that we will have to consider carefully is free movement of people in the music sector. One of the great innovations

in the music industry in London is that we can draw in so many creative people who have so much to offer our industry—

**Mr James Gray (in the Chair):** Order. I am reluctant to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, especially using my English rather than Scottish tones, but he really must restrict his remarks to the topic under discussion today, which is remuneration for musicians for online services, rather than the wider issue of the effects of Brexit on the music industry.

**Pete Wishart:** I am grateful for your comments, Mr Gray. I will restrain myself, but we have to acknowledge that at the heart of this there are significant issues and challenges for the remuneration of musicians because of the decision taken. The hon. Member for Bristol East mentioned the right to equitable remuneration. A huge conversation is going on in the European Union to ensure that that is progressed and, again, we are now denied access to that conversation. There are massive issues when it comes to online remuneration of artists. The massive challenge incumbent on the Minister is to see how we design things so that our musicians do not lose out in the online environment, given that we are now in a very difficult set of circumstances for the way our musicians operate.

I finish by reiterating that this issue is really important. Our job—our main function—is to ensure that we set the best parameters in an environment for our musicians to develop and thrive. We have a fantastic product and resource in this country: some of the finest musicians in the world. We have enriched the souls of populations throughout the world with the wonderful works our artists produce and we have to ensure that we do nothing to further disrupt their ability to make that wonderful music. I appeal to the Minister to look at where we are, to ensure we make the right decisions on behalf of our artists and to consider the strong points made by hon. Members today.

**Mr James Gray (in the Chair):** I call Kelvin Hopkins.

**Mr Vaizey:** Hear, hear.

10.34 am

**Kelvin Hopkins (Luton North) (Lab):** It is a great pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Gray—it is a great pleasure to serve opposite the Minister as well.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Selby and Ainsty (Nigel Adams) on securing this important debate and on his eloquent and well argued speech. I also congratulate all the other Members who have spoken on their eloquence and their erudition, which is rather more impressive than my own in this matter.

This area is clearly one in which further Government action is required to ensure that musicians, singers, songwriters, composers and producers receive their just financial reward—payment commensurate with their talents, creativity, hard work, popularity and need to make a decent living and receive appropriate rewards. As a former part-time jazz musician and a member of the Musicians' Union in my youth, I have some acquaintance with the music industry, although I never had to depend on playing music for a living—unlike at least two hon. Members present, who have been professional

[Kelvin Hopkins]

musicians and to whom I greatly defer. For 15 years I was a board member of the National Youth Jazz Orchestra and I am now an honorary member of that organisation, so I have a background in and current contact with music, although I have to say that popular music is not one of my areas of expertise.

As it happens, in my first Adjournment debate in this Chamber some 18 years ago, I called for better financial support for jazz from the Arts Council and the state sector in general. Many jazz musicians have always struggled to make a living from their music, despite their brilliance and their passionate and dedicated supporters and listeners. The audience for jazz is similar in size to that for opera, but the support it gets is a tiny fraction of that for opera—although I am an opera lover as well and do not want to see opera deprived of funding in any way. Famously, the great Ronnie Scott subsidised his jazz earnings by playing tenor saxophone on the hit recordings of Tommy Steele in the 1950s and '60s. Many other jazz musicians were also session musicians to sustain their primary artistic concerns.

Downloading and streaming were unimaginable in my youth. The music world is now infinitely more complex, with sophisticated techniques necessary to ensure that artists are properly paid and not simply exploited by the online industries. That is a particular problem for Britain and British artists, because of the sheer volume of brilliant music and musicians of all kinds that this country produces. In classical music we are one of the greatest of musical nations; in jazz we are second only to its original birthplace, the US; and in popular music we have had a dominant position in the world since at least the 1960s. It is therefore right that we take the problems raised by the hon. Member for Selby and Ainsty and other speakers in this debate with the utmost seriousness.

As we have heard, the BPI, the Musicians' Union and others, as well as some of our greatest artists, have made a number of proposals for the Government to include in the Digital Economy Bill. The sums of money made by Spotify, YouTube and others are huge, and far too little of that goes to the artists in the music industry. New legislation is absolutely vital to ensure that that happens. Securing proper payment has always been a problem for musicians and those in the music industry. Much music and many musicians through the ages have depended on subsidy and sponsorship from the rich, from rulers, from the Church and more recently from the state. We now have a sector that is commercially viable—modern popular music—but it, too, needs state protection to ensure that the industry's musicians, singers, writers and producers receive their just rewards. The Government must act to make that happen.

10.38 am

**The Minister for Culture and the Digital Economy (Mr Edward Vaizey):** It is a great pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Gray; it feels like normal service has been resumed. I thank the hon. Member for Selby and Ainsty (Nigel Adams) for securing this important debate. I saw him briefly on the television as the Tory leadership campaign got under way, and he looked a bit like a special branch officer as he held open the door for one of the candidates getting into their armoured vehicle.

But he has now returned to normal service, campaigning for the rights of artists as he has done since he became a Member.

The quality of the debate has been second to none, with fantastic contributions from the hon. Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy), my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (David Warburton), the hon. Members for Bristol West (Thangam Debbonaire), for Strangford (Jim Shannon), for Cardiff West (Kevin Brennan) and for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart), and of course the hon. Member for Luton North (Kelvin Hopkins), whom I have to formally welcome as the official Labour party spokesman on cultural matters. I gave my maiden speech just after he had spoken, so there will be a wonderful symmetry if I give my final remarks as a Minister with him sitting opposite me, before I get fired by the new Prime Minister in the coming fortnight. That would be a lovely bookend to my comet-like parliamentary career.

**Kelvin Hopkins:** The Minister is being modest. He stands to be promoted, rather than sacked.

**Mr Vaizey:** It is invidious of me to single out individual contributions, but I particularly welcome the contribution of the hon. Member for Bristol West. I did not get the chance to have debates with her while she was briefly the Opposition culture spokesman, but I thank her for her kind remarks about me in one of her speeches when she held that role. In that speech she showed what a huge contribution she would have made to debates on culture as a Front-Bench spokesman, and definitely will make as a Member of this House.

I do not want to be snarky, but I noticed that the spokesman for the official Opposition spoke for around four minutes, whereas the Scottish National party spokesman spoke for 15 minutes. Perhaps we are seeing the shifting sands in the SNP campaign to become the official Opposition, although sometimes brevity is the soul of wit. Before I am ruled out of order, Mr Gray—

**Mr James Gray (in the Chair):** You are close.

**Mr Vaizey:** Let me get on to the subject in hand.

This is an important debate about a very successful industry. It is important for us to recall just how successful the British music industry is. For example, in 2015, one in six albums purchased around the globe were by British artists. We are the second-largest source of repertoire in the US and one of the biggest music markets in the world, alongside the US, Japan and Germany. Last year, Adele once again released the world's best-selling album. Interestingly, that was the eighth time in 11 years that the global bestseller has come from the UK. Indeed, five of the world's top 10 best-selling albums in 2015 were by British artists.

As hon. Members noted during the debate—particularly my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome, who took us right back to the beginning of music streaming—the digital technology revolution in consumer behaviour, which is disrupting almost everything at varying speeds, has of course disrupted the traditional model for distributing music. In the decade or so that I have covered this brief, both as an Opposition spokesman and as a Minister, I have seen that change take place. Indeed, when I first became a Minister, we inherited the

last Labour Government's proposals to tackle piracy, which involved sending notices to individuals who were breaching copyright. At the time, I was sceptical about how effective that would be.

I do not want to prejudice matters, but I think the strategy we adopted has, to a certain extent, been successful. There has to be a combination of carrot and stick. We were successful—this is actually thanks to the music industry—in using existing fraud legislation in the courts to ensure that the most egregious pirate sites were blocked. Interestingly, because that was existing legislation, it did not provoke the kind of controversy that surrounds almost any attempt to “regulate the internet”. When such a measure was proposed in the United States, it resulted in a lively campaign, with people claiming that it would mean censoring the internet. Why anyone would accuse people who want to take down illegal content of censoring the internet is beyond me, but people somehow feel it is a legitimate point to make.

Alongside using legislation to block websites, the carrot, as it were, has been the rise of legal music services. I was particularly pleased to see the report issued yesterday by the Intellectual Property Office, which showed that the establishment of well-known music streaming services such as Spotify has helped to shift more people towards using legal sites. It is clear from reading the IPO report that we are not nearly out of the woods yet in terms of illegal downloading and listening, with some 7 million people in the UK apparently still accessing illegal content, but it is good that music streaming services have become more mainstream, even to the extent that I now use such a service. Some progress has been made.

Before Baroness Lucy Neville-Rolfe took over the intellectual property portfolio with such enthusiasm, I regularly held round-tables with Google and many others in the industry to discuss how they would help reduce access to illegal sites, with particular attention paid to searches that threw up such sites. I am pleased to say that the Minister in the other House has continued those round-tables. I have a huge degree of sympathy with those who say that Google could and should do more. Indeed, when it came to images of child sexual abuse, we were able to work with Google to ensure that something like 130,000 different search terms would result in a blank search return, so it is clear that Google can do work on its algorithm.

The Google argument is twofold. First, an image of child sexual abuse is clearly illegal and criminal, so Google feels it can act without the intervention of the courts. Secondly, Google likes to say that for material that infringes copyright there can sometimes be a grey area. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that it can do more. It has claimed that it has changed its algorithm, but any of us who go on Google every so often and type in the name of an artist to see what emerges will still see a list of illegal content websites coming up in the results. Google does work with some of the trade associations to ensure that links to illegal sites are taken down. As the hon. Member for Bristol West pointed out, the debate is shifting and Google is starting to take a more proactive attitude on such issues, in partnership with the music industry and artists.

We have also worked with the advertising industry. People put up websites with illegal content not as an act of altruism—if one can call it that when they are

stealing somebody else's property and giving it away—but to make money. We should not forget that. One way the people who run such sites make money is by having advertising on their websites, so we have worked closely with the UK advertising industry to ensure that legitimate advertisers do not see their advertising put on such websites. We lead the world in taking such action.

Before I address some of the substantial issues that have been raised, I should mention the Digital Economy Bill, which recognises the importance of tackling online infringement. We have extended the penalties for online infringement to match the penalties for physical infringement, as the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire mentioned, and the Bill will give us a chance to debate many of these issues again. I look forward to some of the brilliant contributions we have heard today being echoed in that debate. In congratulating hon. Members on their contributions earlier, I should have said how impressed I am by how many active musicians there currently are in the House.

On the issue of platforms, when we talk about safe harbour we are referring to the situation that has traditionally existed for the past 15 years. Intermediaries such as YouTube claim that they are passive recipients of content and that it is not necessarily their responsibility to police that content, although they claim that they do so voluntarily but do not have the resources to ensure that such content is not online. They claim simply to be a platform on which people can put their content.

As the hon. Member for Cardiff West said, the safe harbour legislation was introduced to encourage innovation. In many respects, it has been successful. When we debate these issues and look at the negatives, we should also remember the positives. A lot of platforms, and indeed the internet as a whole, have given an extraordinary opportunity to many artists who would potentially have remained undiscovered without them. Before the existence of the internet such artists had only one door to a successful career in the music industry, which was through the record labels. The internet has widened opportunities for artists as well as causing them considerable problems.

Obviously, what sits behind the idea of safe harbour is the e-commerce directive, but that is now quite legitimately a subject for debate, and it is perfectly appropriate for rights holders to argue that the hosting defence is being abused to allow copyright-infringing content to be hosted indiscriminately without their being remunerated. That is why the hosting defence creates a value gap, as it benefits intermediaries without compensating rights holders. The hosting defence also leads to a mismatch in negotiations, giving the whip hand to intermediaries rather than to artists themselves. There are also concerns about the different types of streaming business models, and about whether they provide the correct levels of remuneration to rights holders.

As a Government, we believe that businesses must act in a socially responsible manner. That applies to platforms, which should co-operate in the removal of copyright-infringing material without harming freedom of expression. However, as I said earlier, we must also recognise the role that platforms play in driving innovation.

**Kelvin Hopkins:** Too often we have heard Ministers just exhorting people to behave well. Is the reality not that we need strict, firm, strong regulation to make sure

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that things happen, so that we do not just have to rely yet again on warm words to help musicians when what they really need is legislation to protect them?

**Mr Vaizey:** The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point. Many hon. Members have asked what the position on the copyright framework will be going forward, given that as a member of the European Union we have sat within the EU copyright framework. They will know that the situation is currently being considered to ensure that the right balance is struck between providing the right incentives and having the right protections.

The European Commission is considering reform in this area as part of the digital single market package. Clearly, circumstances have changed in the last fortnight. The UK was a leading voice in the debate on the future of the digital single market, and the Government and individual Ministers have built strong relationships with the Commission and with leading nations such as France and Germany, which obviously also have strong voices in this debate.

It is my personal view that we will continue to have some influence on how things develop, because this is a very public debate and the UK, along with a number of other countries, submitted a letter a few weeks ago to make the point about platform regulation. We argued first that not all platforms are the same, so we cannot simply have one-size-fits-all regulation, and secondly that we must ensure that we do not throw out innovation. I have said consistently to the commissioners that the UK Government welcome a debate on platform regulation. We are not saying that the Commission should not examine the issue; at this stage, we are simply raising some of the concerns that exist.

**Pete Wishart:** People have suggested that we may be trying to use France and Germany as a proxy for our influence, to achieve our requirements in the digital single market. Is there any truth in that suggestion? If there is, is that not evidence of how we are being further reduced and diminished in our relationship with Europe, such that we expect others to do our bidding on our behalf?

**Mr James Gray (in the Chair):** I call the Minister to speak with reference to the subject under debate.

**Mr Vaizey:** I am sorry if I gave that impression; that was not the point I was trying to make at all. The point I was trying to make was that countries such as France and Germany clearly have very strong views on the issue, and their voices are heard. The situation pre-Brexit was that the UK, France and Germany had slightly different positions on some of these issues but were all influential voices, and I was engaging quite closely with both the French Government and the German Government about their attitude, as well as with the Commission.

It is my intention, particularly as we remain a member of the European Union for the foreseeable future, that the British voice—the voice of British artists and the voice of the British music industry—is heard in future negotiations. At the moment, however, we are at a relatively early stage when it comes to formulating principles and identifying issues.

**Kelvin Hopkins:** I appreciate what the Minister is saying, but Britain's interests in this area are far greater than those of the other nations he mentioned. We need to have national legislation that is at least as strong, if not much stronger, than what the EU proposes. Does he have any idea of the sheer volume of our interest in popular music compared with that of France and Germany? I would guess that the popular music industries in those countries are much, much smaller than ours.

**Mr Vaizey:** I accept that the British music industry is probably bigger than the music industries in France and Germany given the profile of British artists. However, a company such as the French firm Vivendi, which owns Universal, is a pretty big music company. I do not know what impact Brexit will have, but at the moment the projections are that we will overtake Germany in the overall value of our entertainment market. Nevertheless, the German market is currently bigger than the British one, and no one needs any lessons about how seriously the French take their own cultural offer and the work they will do to ensure that it is protected.

What I am really saying to the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire is that I see a partnership developing between France, Germany and the UK, in which we look for areas of agreement. However, I hope that at the heart of that partnership there will be an emphasis on protecting remuneration for artists and achieving a fair balance between the innovation that platforms have brought to the distribution of music, for example, and some of the issues that have been thrown up by trade bodies in particular. For example, it has been pointed out that the number of music videos on YouTube has doubled, yet the revenue for artists and labels has flatlined.

It is also important to remember that there are different emphases within the music industry itself. Clearly, the BPI does a fantastic job in representing the music industry and talking about issues such as safe harbour and copyright infringement, but of course the Featured Artists Coalition, the artists' organisation that is so ably led by people such as the brilliant musician Sandie Shaw, has its own proposals that we need to consider properly and seriously, for example about transparency in the value chain.

I want to talk briefly about the relationship between creators, their producers and the publishers, because that relationship is absolutely vital in helping creators bring their product to market. Nevertheless, as we have already heard from some hon. Members, there is a fear that authors and performers are missing out as a result of restrictive, imbalanced or opaque terms and practices. We take such issues seriously. We want to understand how we can make progress and what the impact of certain reforms might be in different sectors and scenarios. We want to ensure that there is a balance; we want creators and performers to receive fair remuneration, but we also want investment in innovation and resources.

Any proposals that would result in restrictions on freedom of contract would need to be subject to rigorous examination. Transparency is an important feature of well functioning markets, and I know that creators would welcome moves to make it easier for them to understand the value that their works have generated. Again, there is an opportunity for partnership in that

regard. For example, I welcome the BPI's introduction of a portal that allows an artist to measure the remuneration they are receiving from streaming services.

I have covered a lot of ground, and this has been a great debate, but we should have the opportunity to hear again from my hon. Friend the Member for Selby and Ainsty about what progress he thinks has been made in the past hour and a half.

10.58 am

**Nigel Adams:** I thank the Minister for his remarks, and I also thank all colleagues who have contributed to this debate; it is great to see such cross-party agreement on this important subject.

As hon. Members can imagine, I have been contacted by quite a few people from within the industry about this debate, many of whom are artists. I will wrap up the debate by quoting a couple of people who have been in touch with me. First, I will quote a gentleman called Brian Message, who works in artist management. He says:

"The advent of the digital era introduced an opportunity for those involved in the music business to pull together for the economic benefit of all stakeholders. To our collective detriment, this did not come to pass."

A songwriter, Rupert Hine, wrote to me to say:

"Put the world's most ubiquitous search engine together with the world's most ubiquitous noticeboard and you have created the one place on Planet Earth where you can view all the world's Art and Culture for absolutely nothing. Great for the 'Users'—but unsustainable for the 'Creators'.

Artists are all but giving up. All the digital arts...are given away for free via Google's YouTube. The world is not awash with Adeles and Coldplays or any fleeting product of broadcast talent shows. The world is full of artists trying to express themselves in a...way that moves us and makes us feel differently about the world and our place in it. For them, the meagre breadcrumbs collected from advertising revenue via YouTube is insulting—and more importantly unsustainable."

*Motion lapsed (Standing Order No. 10(6)).*

## Pension Freedoms

11 am

**Rachel Reeves (Leeds West) (Lab):** I beg to move,

That this House has considered advice and guidance on pension freedoms.

I am grateful for the opportunity to have this debate on the crucial issue of advice and guidance in the world of pension freedoms. In 2014, the Government announced one of the biggest shake-ups of the pensions industry in its history. Those changes will, as the Minister knows, affect millions of people. The reforms undoubtedly give people more choice over what to do with their pension pots—one of the most important decisions on their finances—but with those choices come great risks.

At the heart of the so-called pension freedoms is the idea that people with defined contribution pensions no longer have to buy an annuity. Instead, they have an unprecedented number of choices when it comes to making financial decisions. People are suddenly being asked to make an irreversible decision by weighing up how much to save; how long they will live; how much they need to live on; the risk of investments decreasing in value; how much they will be charged by pension providers; what tax they will have to pay; and what state pension they will receive. Let us not forget, they will have to live with the decision for the rest of their lives.

The Pensions Institute's "Independent Review of Retirement Income", which I commissioned from Professor David Blake when I was shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, warned that:

"The unifying thread that runs through funded pension scheme is the requirement to annuitise enough pension wealth, at the appropriate age, to provide an adequate lifelong income in retirement when combined with the state pension – which is the rationale for establishing a private-sector pension scheme in the first place. It is this requirement which makes a funded pension scheme different from any other type of savings scheme.

When annuitisation becomes optional, that unifying thread is no longer present and there is a real danger that the pension system begins to unravel. At best, it just becomes a tax-favoured arrangement for operating a multi-purpose spending pot and once the money has been spent for one purpose, it cannot be spent on another. At worst, it becomes a honey pot for thieves and other opportunists: while you cannot steal someone's pension, you can steal their pension pot, as a number of people are now discovering. Lying between these extremes are millions of people who are now in control of their pension fund and who will be trying to do the best for themselves and their families...many of these people could well find themselves in the same kind of control as a yachtsman in the middle of the Atlantic in a force nine gale."

When the pension freedoms were announced, we in the Labour party were clear that we would in principle support reform. We recognised that annuities did not work for everyone, but that reforms must be accompanied by the provision of guidance to help people to make important and difficult decisions about how to use their money. In response, the Chancellor committed to a new guarantee enforced by law that everyone retiring with defined contribution pensions would be offered free, impartial, face-to-face advice on how to get the most out of their choices. That commitment materialised to some extent—although it was guidance, not advice—in the form of Pension Wise, a single guidance service launched to coincide with the introduction of the pension freedoms in April last year.

[Rachel Reeves]

The Pension Wise service offers face-to-face or phone appointments to those aged 50 or over with a DC pension. In each appointment, impartial guidance is given on pension options and tax and there is a discussion of the options that may be most suitable for the client. The ratings from those who have used the Pension Wise website are positive. The gov.uk performance site shows user satisfaction at 89%. I pay tribute to all those who work at Pension Wise for providing an excellent service.

However, the problem, and the reason for the debate today, is not the effectiveness of Pension Wise; it is how few people are using the service. The Financial Conduct Authority estimates that fewer than one in five consumers are using it. In response to a recent parliamentary question I tabled, the Government revealed that there have been 61,000 completed appointments since launch. That represents only around 12% of DC pension customers who have accessed their pensions since the reform came in. That is deeply troubling, and I am interested in what the Minister has to say about improving the use and take-up of the service. Put another way, almost nine out of 10 people are not seeking advice or guidance from Pension Wise when cashing in their pensions. That figure is worrying and suggests that millions of people are not getting the impartial guidance they need. If that is the case, as it seems to be, we should be alarmed about the quality of financial planning guidance that some people are getting and the subsequent impact that could have on their standard of living in retirement.

The Government published their “Financial Advice Market Review” in March and their plans for a new comprehensive pensions guidance service. They have a shared objective of ensuring that all consumers can access the help they need to make effective financial decisions. As the review says:

“Both industry and consumer groups also felt that many people, even those who did not necessarily want or need regulated advice, would benefit from more support and guidance in financial decision-making.”

In addition to those efforts to bolster the pensions guidance offering, welcome regulatory scrutiny will also be applied to the evolving retirement market, with the FCA identifying pensions as a priority area in its 2016-17 business plan. Although those are welcome developments, the results will arrive too late to benefit the 1.5 million people expected to access pension savings before spring 2018.

Critically, evidence suggests that poor outcomes are likely for consumers who do not seek professional support with their retirement options. UK and overseas analysis shows that factors such as disengagement, underestimation of how long people will live and weak financial capability lead to poor outcomes. Although it is too early to say what the new pension freedoms will mean for outcomes, the FCA estimated the losses from failing to shop around when people were required to buy an annuity:

“The majority of consumers (60%) do not switch providers when they buy an annuity, despite the fact that we estimate 80% of these consumers could get a better deal on the open market, many significantly so.

We estimate that the aggregate benefits that consumers miss out on by not shopping around and switching is the equivalent of between £115m and £230m of additional pension savings.”

The OECD has suggested that, although the pension reforms might increase pensioners’ control of their money, which I welcome, they could be

“detrimental to both retirement income adequacy and incentives to work”

because of

“myopic behaviour and insufficient financial literacy”.

What is more, research from the International Longevity Centre-UK suggests that there is limited knowledge about relevant financial products and services. Only half of those with a DC pension said they understood what an annuity is “quite” or “very well”. Just one third said they understood what a joint life annuity is quite or very well. Most shocking of all, just 3% said they understood what income drawdown is quite or very well. These are people in DC schemes who have to make big decisions, yet they do not seem to have the knowledge about the products they have to choose between.

Research by the Pensions and Lifetime Savings Association found that 53% of people incorrectly believe drawdown products offer a guaranteed income. The majority of people believe that a drawdown product is a guaranteed income, which it most definitely is not, while one quarter believe that drawdown carries no investment risk at all, which is incredibly worrying.

Meanwhile, the Pensions Institute’s “Independent Review of Retirement Income” states:

“It is important to be aware of the risks involved in the generation of retirement income from pension savings”—

such as investment risk, inflation risk and longevity risk. It continues:

“Following ‘freedom and choice’, these risks are now borne directly by DC scheme members”

in a way that they were not when everyone had to annuitise. It continues:

“Even with improved financial education, it is unlikely that many people will fully understand some of these risks. This is because some risks have to be experienced before they can be genuinely understood, and often it is too late by that stage to do anything about them. In addition, many people will have problems understanding the full range of product choices that are now available. All this makes it difficult for many people to be in a position to make ‘informed’ choices.”

Demand-side weaknesses and lack of knowledge from people making decisions are compounded by the repeated failure of parts of the pensions industry to, in my view, treat customers fairly. Mis-selling in the UK retirement market has been catalogued at length by the FCA and its predecessor, the Financial Services Authority. Poor buying decisions have also been identified by some organisations and consumer groups to the National Audit Office, which in its report on mis-selling described the concerns as being centred on regulatory approaches that are

“based too much on monitoring and implementing detailed disclosure requirements, rather than assessing whether consumers truly understand what they are buying.”

If disengagement and low take-up of guidance remain the norm, it reduces competition and undermines confidence in the new pensions market. Again, I stress that this is a real concern when we have consumers without the information to make the best decisions, and a pensions industry that is not necessarily helping people to make the decisions that are best for them.

Pension Wise has run three national marketing campaigns across TV, radio, print and digital media, but take-up, as I said earlier, remains low at just over 10%. Such problems must be addressed. That is why I call on the Government to issue new guidance to make sure consumers seek proper guidance before drawing on their pension pots. At the moment, the so-called wake-up packs sent to DC pension customers ahead of retirement are often more successful in driving consumers to the providers' own product solutions than directing people to the Pension Wise guidance service, something that Baroness Altman has pointed out:

"I have seen the retirement packs from some of the better pension providers who are hiding away Pension Wise. They are doing this while promoting their own internal help lines."

The whole point of Pension Wise is to be readily available to the people who are making the decisions, but they are not directed there by their pension providers and will probably never find out about it. So what is needed is a new approach whereby customers who decide to cash in their pensions must either seek guidance from Pension Wise or actively opt out of doing so before progressing. That would not only improve outcomes for customers, but dramatically reduce the opportunities for mis-selling, cut the risk of savers falling foul of financial scams and other potential abuses, and help people to make the right decisions at such an important time in their lives. It would enable guiders to alert consumers to the existence of fraudsters who use techniques such as cold calls and text messages to con people into placing their savings into wholly inappropriate investments. The Government must take a number of additional actions to support that.

The Government must work with industry to introduce a system to allow pension providers to book guidance appointments directly for their customers, or to put them through, if they can make contact by phone, to the appointment booking service without a break in service. Such handovers should be based on ensuring that the customer journey is as smooth and continuous as possible and that as many people as possible get the right guidance. The Government should consider allowing providers to share certain data with each other, so that when a customer is passed from one service to another, the second engagement does not need to start from scratch, with the customer forced to repeat all the information that they had previously provided.

Looking further forward, the new pensions guidance body should also link with the pensions dashboard being developed by 2019. The dashboard will enable people to see all their pension savings in one place—that is welcome—help people to engage with retirement planning and prompt them to take action. It is critical, therefore, that there is co-ordination with the new guidance body, so that consumers are signposted and directed to access guidance when looking at their dashboard. Links to the guidance service should be embedded within the pensions dashboard from the start, and the Government should consider how to improve engagement as the dashboard is introduced. That will also encourage consumers to seek pensions guidance at an earlier stage.

Currently, people are prompted to seek guidance at the point of, or close to, making a decision on how to turn their pension savings into a retirement income—for example, when receiving a wake-up pack from their provider. Proactively contacting people at an earlier

stage in their working lives would also give people more time to make changes to their savings strategies if needed. As with other measures to improve the customer journey, solutions should be tested with consumers to ensure that they are effective and meet their needs. Although I believe all this is critical, we must not take our eye off the bigger picture. The Blake review makes excellent recommendations for the direction of pension reform, and that should be the focus of future Government policy making.

In conclusion, failure to address low guidance take-up is likely to lead to negative outcomes for those most at risk of making poor choices, reducing pensioner wellbeing, undermining competition in the retirement market, and having a toxic impact on confidence in the pension system just when good progress is being made through the roll-out of automatic enrolment. The guidance structure is already in place in the form of Pension Wise, which has received positive feedback, as I set out earlier, from those who have used it; it has the scale and budget to deliver guidance to the full range of consumers who need it. But without action from the Government, take-up looks set to remain low. That is why I am calling on the Government to introduce the default guidance approach. Crucially, that would in no way undermine or inhibit the central purpose of the pension freedoms. Consumers would retain complete freedom to draw down as much or as little of their pension pot as they wish at any time they want.

That change would provide a vital safeguard for millions of people when they plan for their retirement. It would give them the security of knowing they have had the benefit of impartial guidance before making a decision that could have a huge impact on how comfortable they will be in retirement. It would have a dramatic impact in helping people to use their pension pots, which they have saved for, wisely. I urge the Government to take that on board to help to ensure that as many people as possible can enjoy a secure income in their retirement.

11.16 am

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Mr Shailesh Vara):** It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship this morning, Mr Gray. I thank the hon. Member for Leeds West (Rachel Reeves) for setting out her case. She speaks with considerable experience, given that she was the shadow Work and Pensions Secretary. I am glad to see the right hon. Member for East Ham (Stephen Timms) also joining us for this debate.

Pension freedoms, which have been widely welcomed, have raised interest and engagement in pensions significantly. The freedoms give people the opportunity to take responsibility for their own retirement. In the first nine months we saw nearly 540,000 pensions being accessed. People are clearly taking control, but, as the hon. Member for Leeds West said, they need to do so after receiving the appropriate information at the right time so that they can make decisions that suit their circumstances.

The Government recognised that in order for people to make the most of the new freedoms they needed to equip them with the tools to make decisions that suit their circumstances, so Pension Wise was launched. This service provides free and impartial guidance to

[*Mr Shailesh Vara*]

those aged 50 and over to help them to understand what they can do with their defined-contribution pensions following the reforms. I am happy to say that it has been very successful. I hope to give some information to the hon. Lady during the course of this debate that will give her some comfort.

**Stephen Timms** (East Ham) (Lab): I agree that Pension Wise is providing a good service, but does the Minister acknowledge that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds West (*Rachel Reeves*) pointed out, take-up of the service has been very low? In my area there is certainly evidence of skilled advisers sitting around twiddling their thumbs quite a lot of the time because the demand has not yet come through.

**Mr Vara:** The right hon. Gentleman makes a good point. I accept that we have more to do. I hope my comments will give him and the hon. Lady some assurance that we are doing things and we recognise there is more to be done. The hon. Lady referred to the number of appointments—73,000 so far—but 2.7 million visits have been made to the Pension Wise website. It is important to look at the two together, rather than just the appointments, because the information provided in the appointments is all available on the website. Many people are accessing the website and finding that they do not need an appointment. That needs to be borne in mind.

I appreciate that, as the right hon. Gentleman said, there is concern about take-up. It is important to remember that the service is not compulsory for everyone who wants to access their pension pot. Using Pension Wise is a voluntary option and people should be given the choice to plan for their retirement in the manner they see fit. However—I emphasise this point—it is important that people know the service is there to support them if they wish to use it.

Pension Wise has already run three national marketing campaigns across TV, radio, print and digital media. Those campaigns complement the current requirement for all pension scheme providers to signpost to Pension Wise whenever a wake-up pack is sent out to a member.

**Stephen Timms:** I am grateful to the Minister for giving way again. As he said, Pension Wise is a voluntary service. Has he noticed the point made by the Association of British Insurers that guidance for people transacting in the secondary annuity market, where the pitfalls are particularly troubling, should be mandatory?

**Mr Vara:** The right hon. Gentleman raises another good point. This is something we are looking at, although he will forgive me for not making any instant decisions. The secondary market is a broad market, with a huge amount of rules and regulations. We started with the initial concept of providing access to pension pots. That is now leading to other issues that rightly need to be looked at, but he will forgive me if I do not comment on those right now.

We have had three national awareness campaigns and we are working on a fourth. This is not an area where we feel we have done enough. There is more to do and

we recognise that. The subject of pensions is complex and the Government recognise that there is more to be done.

Last year we consulted on how the provision of free, impartial financial guidance could be structured to make it more effective. The review confirmed that the current guidance offer can be confusing to the public. There is also an overlap in some services. That is why we have consulted on our plans to restructure the delivery of public financial guidance to make it more effective, by directing more funding to the frontline and providing more targeted support.

The latest consultation outlined our proposal for a new guidance model, which involves setting up a new pensions guidance body where individuals can get all their queries on private pensions answered in one place. There will also be a new, slimmed down money guidance body, to ensure people can access the debt advice and money guidance they need. The two bodies will work together to ensure that people who need both pensions and wider financial guidance are directed to the right place. The consultation ended last month and we are currently considering all the responses with a view to publishing our response this autumn.

Most people who seek information on pensions do not distinguish between guidance and advice; they simply want help. Regulated advice will be appropriate for some people, so there is still a need to make sure that affordable and accessible financial advice is available for those who want it. That is why the Government intend to consult, over summer 2016, on introducing the pensions advice allowance, whereby individuals will be able to withdraw up to £500 tax-free from their defined-contribution pension pot to redeem against the cost of financial advice before the age of 55.

Employees often look to their employers for help when it comes to pensions. To further encourage employer involvement, the Government will increase the current £150 tax and national insurance contributions relief to £500 for those employers who arrange pension advice for their employees. It is our view that that proposal and the pensions advice allowance could be complementary, so it would be possible for those who are able to use both to access up to £1,000 of tax-advantaged advice. Such initiatives can give people an understanding of their options, but no one knows their customers better than the pension providers themselves, and I know that organisations within the industry are starting to look at new and innovative ways of engaging with their customers. I hope we can work with the industry so that information and guidance is provided in a way that meets the individual's needs.

The hon. Member for Leeds West spoke eloquently of the need to increase the take-up of Pension Wise. As well as the fourth awareness campaign that we are working on, Pension Wise delivery partners also promote the service locally in businesses and libraries, for example. A concern was also raised about getting proper advice. Pension Wise offers guidance on how to spot a scam, how people can protect themselves and what to do if they think they have been scammed, on its website and in appointments. If someone suspects they have been scammed, the service will signpost them to the Pensions Advisory Service and Action Fraud. In addition, Pension Wise is a member of Project Bloom and works with other members to raise awareness of scams.

The right hon. Member for East Ham spoke about the secondary market. I can tell him that Pension Wise guidance will be available to those selling their annuity, once the market launches in April 2017.

**Stephen Timms:** I thank the Minister for that answer. May I raise one other issue with him? The ABI says that it

“would like to see the new guidance arrangements enhanced so that providers who want to block transfers to protect their customers (because of concern about the receiving scheme) can refer their customers to the new body to receive impartial guidance on the risks from transferring funds to potential scams and fraudulent investments.”

Is that proposal from the ABI also something that he is reflecting on?

**Mr Vara:** Let me assure the right hon. Gentleman that we are keen to make sure that this works. We are not in any way restricting the stakeholders with whom we speak. We are working with all of them, including the ABI and a whole host of other organisations and people, to make sure that whatever guidance and regulations we put in place are right. We want to get it right as best as possible first time round. I assure him that we are very much taking on board the views of others out there.

To conclude, the hon. Lady was right to raise this important issue. I thank and commend her for doing so.

*Question put and agreed to.*

11.26 am

*Sitting suspended.*

## Broadband in Wales

[STEVE McCABE *in the Chair*]

2.30 pm

**Mr Mark Williams** (Ceredigion) (LD): I beg to move,

That this House has considered broadband in Wales.

It is good to see the Minister here fresh from Colchester. He has had a busy day; he was in this Chamber first thing this morning. It is also good to see the shadow Minister, the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne Central (Chi Onwurah), in her place. We were looking forward to a contribution from the hon. Member for Newport West (Paul Flynn) in his elevated role as shadow Secretary of State, but it is genuinely good to see the hon. Lady here in his stead.

I am grateful for the opportunity to raise this matter in the House. Today is a very important day in this House, not least given the events in the main Chamber. It is also a very important day for Wales, with the football this evening. We have the best of Wales—and, I am sure, of Scotland—in this Chamber to debate this important issue.

As many hon. Members know, the issue of broadband and internet connectivity is a recurring problem. Not a week goes by without concerned constituents contacting us. It is not unique to my constituency. Despite genuine improvements—some would say vast improvements—and the Government’s genuine attempts to meet their targets, there is a feeling that we are falling behind in many rural communities and in Wales more widely.

I welcome the Government’s intention to introduce a broadband universal service obligation and their ambition to give people the legal right to a 10 megabits per second connection, no matter where they live, by the end of this Parliament. The Prime Minister said:

“Access to the Internet shouldn’t be a luxury; it should be a right—absolutely fundamental to life in 21st century Britain.”

I could not agree more, and I am glad that that was put into the tentative stages of legislation with the introduction of the Digital Economy Bill yesterday. I look forward to that principle being put into law, but targets have come and gone before, and the proof of the pudding will be in the proverbial eating.

I also welcome the Government’s recent target to connect 97% of premises by the end of 2019. The many communities that are currently underserved with bad or non-existent broadband connections are enthusiastically waiting to hear whether that target will be met, and whether they will benefit or will be among the 3% left out. My constituents are certainly hoping for good news. I will hear of the challenge in the contents of my inbox—or, more precisely, given the subject matter, in the representations I get from constituents who use more old-fashioned means of communicating their disquiet.

There is a feeling—I think this will be endorsed by other hon. Members—that the peripheral parts of the United Kingdom are often left out and forgotten. The principles of entitlement do not always seem to extend to all parts of the United Kingdom. That is the basis of many of our concerns. None the less, it is welcome that successive Governments have talked about the importance of connectivity and have recognised that it cannot simply

[Mr Mark Williams]

be left to the market to decide where we have access. Although in urban areas it is possible to rely on commercial businesses to fill the demand for high-speed broadband, the internet has become a necessity for everyone, including individuals trying to fill out Government forms online and business people such as farmers trying to do their taxes and apply for funding, some of which is an existential need. I have previously cited the example of the farmer in southern Ceredigion who had no broadband at all. He was forced to send a paper tax return to Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, and got fined for doing so. We managed to get the fine back for him, but he was told that next year he should pop down to the local library to submit his return online. There are not many libraries left in rural Ceredigion, and those that there are do not have sufficiently safe, secure or reliable broadband connections. That is the reality for many of our constituents.

We need only look at the comments made by figures in the technology industry and note our own experiences as constituency MPs to see how hugely the internet has changed our lives and how far we have to go to ensure that everyone has adequate access. The chief executive of Cisco, Phil Smith, said of Wales:

"I'm very surprised that broadband hasn't got to the level of penetration it should. To be honest, it's like saying you don't have a road now, or you don't have water. Companies, countries and individuals can't survive without broadband; it's not some optional nice thing to have; this is the way business is done."

In Wales, where our physical infrastructure is challenging, broadband is even more necessary. Its importance cannot be overstated. That view is shared by organisations as diverse as the Countryside Alliance, the Federation of Small Businesses, Ofcom, the National Union of Farmers and the Farmers' Union of Wales.

There have been improvements and substantial investment to improve the number of individuals and businesses able to access fast broadband speeds. Millions have been spent on improving the low figure of 55% superfast broadband coverage in Wales in 2014. Although we have failed to meet the aim of 96% coverage, I welcome the increase to 87%. The availability of superfast in rural areas of Wales increased to 50% last year thanks to the Superfast Cymru programme; yet, as a Member with a rural seat, I cannot help but be concerned that rural areas are still losing out most. Improvements are a good thing, but many of the 11% of premises in Wales that cannot receive the proposed USO broadband speed of 10 megabits per second are in my area. How can we improve the situation to ensure that those areas are not left behind? Surely areas that not only have some of the lowest speeds but contain some of the highest percentages of those without a connection altogether need to be prioritised.

The FUV noted recently, after its Meirionnydd branch visited a farm in Machynlleth—for those who are not geographers, Machynlleth is a town settled between the three historic counties of Montgomeryshire, Ceredigion and Meirionnydd—that the highest proportion of those with no broadband access are farm businesses. For farmers who have attempted to diversify their businesses by letting self-catering cottages and converting buildings into offices for use by others, connectivity is critical, yet many are at a significant disadvantage. Those who have

children at home—increasingly, more online homework is required—are struggling. As I said earlier, almost all of them have to keep up with changing agricultural rules and apply for services online. It can be costly, if not impossible. More and more services are going online, so digital inclusion is vital.

According to Ofcom, in June 2015, more than 67% of my constituents had slow internet connections of less than 10 megabits per second, and almost 20% had connections of less than 2 megabits per second. That situation was replicated in other rural constituencies throughout Wales. Carmarthen East and Dinefwr—it is good to see the hon. Member for Carmarthen East and Dinefwr (Jonathan Edwards) here—Montgomeryshire, and Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire join Ceredigion in the top 10 constituencies with the slowest broadband connections anywhere in the United Kingdom.

The issue of inadequate broadband connections affects not simply an isolated house here or there—the stereotypical cottage in a valley with roses around the front door. Whole communities lack adequate, or even usable, internet connections. For years, these issues have been plaguing Llangrannog in my constituency, which is a significant tourist community; the sizeable community of Llanfair Clydogau near Lampeter; and Synod Inn, down our main road between Aberystwyth and Cardigan—the most significant road in our constituency. There has been little progress. In Llanfair Clydogau, I am specifically dealing with broadband casework on behalf of not just individuals who write with concerns, but an entire community.

At this point, I want to place on record my appreciation for BT's parliamentary unit, who I think were in the Members' Dining Room earlier today. I was not there, but Clova Fyfe and her team in particular have been assiduous in responding to the individual concerns of Members of Parliament, and I genuinely thank the unit for that.

**Chris Davies** (Brecon and Radnorshire) (Con): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr Williams:** That is very timely. The hon. Gentleman has just walked in, but I will give way.

**Chris Davies:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for bringing forward this debate on a topic that I have spoken about on many occasions in this place. I was at the BT meeting, as was my colleague the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Albert Owen). The people from BT were very helpful, as always, but they leave many questions unanswered.

**Mr Williams:** There we are. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will shed some light on some of those unanswered questions a little later. I thank him for that intervention.

Communication with individual constituents is sometimes less satisfactory. Too many of my constituents have had template responses from BT and Openreach saying that they have absolutely no plans for the foreseeable future to improve the state of the broadband connection. That seems to be the case for large parts of the county. Even in some of our larger communities, such as Lampeter, which is an important university town, connections are at best poor. For many of the small businesses that I have visited there, the No. 1 request is for something to

be done to improve broadband speeds and provision. Options for businesses, although an improvement over those for some of my rural communities, are sometimes limited.

For struggling small businesses, the quality of the broadband connection can often be the difference between keeping afloat and going under. That seems like a dramatic statement, but our reliance on broadband and communication, and—this is where that rural point comes in again—the fragility of the rural economy and some of our rural businesses mean that it is very important that they get their marketing right and, for some, their internet booking systems right. I have in mind specifically some of our tourism businesses. For many growing businesses, the inability to invest in a fast and more reliable connection that is not extortionately priced can be a stumbling block. I am sure that the Minister will agree that the opportunities for our economy of getting broadband right are immeasurable. For the rural economy, that would mean a great deal more potential being realised.

**Jonathan Edwards** (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (PC): I hesitate to cut the hon. Gentleman off mid-flow; he is making a passionate and informative speech, as usual. He is totally right to note that broadband provision is an opportunity for economic salvation for rural areas, where our greatest assets are the beautiful landscapes and the social and leisure facilities that are available to people. In a world where leisure time is being compressed, adequate broadband infrastructure creates a huge economic opportunity. People who love horse riding, mountain climbing, mountain biking, rambling, surfing, coasteering and other such great activities are far better off living in areas like the constituencies that we represent than in the centre of London.

**Mr Williams:** I must say that I have not been on a horse for some time, I do not think I have ever been on a surfboard and I have a mountain bike that has remained in my porch for some time, but I take the hon. Gentleman's point. He is right: there is huge potential in the area of outdoor pursuits and tourism. We have to face the reality that connectivity, whether we get it through broadband or our mobile phones, is now an integral part of all that. We cannot separate the two.

It has also been brought to my attention that many commercial internet providers and individuals have concerns about the role that Openreach has played in providing the infrastructure and in some of the specifics of the national broadband scheme, such as how funding is spent. Some of us here have been concerned for some years about the conflict of interest in a commercial provider such as BT holding a near monopoly of the country's physical broadband infrastructure. I certainly welcome Ofcom's proposals, which it set out in its initial conclusions from its strategic review of digital communications, to open BT's ducts and telegraph poles to its rivals and for Openreach to be reformed to ensure a better service for customers and businesses. That should help to improve competition and the development of new technologies—something that those of us in rural areas, and indeed urban areas, would very much welcome. That is positive news, but issues still need to be addressed and many are concerned that BT has a limited incentive to invest in a fibre network and ensure

improved speeds for people in Wales, due to the huge revenue that it continues to make from the legacy copper Openreach network.

However, although there is little hope that broadband connections will be provided by commercial deployment in my constituency—the Minister made the point at a briefing that I attended two or three months ago that absolutely no premises in Ceredigion could be viewed as economic and covered in that way—there is rightly concern that some areas are being needlessly subsidised at the expense of those that really need subsidy. It will come as no surprise that my assertion is that my constituency, other parts of Wales and other rural areas are the communities that need that.

According to Virgin Media, the 90% rule that underpins the national broadband scheme defines an area as eligible for state funding where 90% or fewer households currently have access to superfast broadband. Virgin Media believes that that threshold is set too high. As an MP for a rural area in which that threshold is nowhere near reached, I think that that is probably correct. I believe strongly that where there is a genuine market failure, the Government need to intervene to help to ensure that everyone has access to something that I would argue is a necessity. What research have the Government done to ensure that areas where up to 90% of households receive superfast broadband are indeed unable to achieve the final 10% or more via commercial deployment rather than Government subsidy? I ask that because I recognise, as I think we all do, that the pot for ensuring adequate broadband for all is not unlimited and it is vital that it is used as effectively as possible. If there are areas with high levels of superfast broadband that can fill the gap through commercial deployment, so that the subsidy can instead be used for rural areas where provision cannot come in any other way, it is important that that happens.

I welcome the fact that much of the money from the UK Government is given to Cardiff Bay to spend as they feel necessary. I welcome a number of their schemes, which are focused on helping some of the hardest-to-reach areas. Access Broadband Cymru provides grants of between £400 and £800 to fund the installation of new fibre broadband connections for those who would not be covered by commercial roll-out or who have connections of less than 2 megabits per second and also funds satellite technology as an alternative in some areas. Although I am by no means uncritical of the Welsh Government for missing targets and failing to ensure that rural areas are prioritised, I would also say, as an MP representing a Welsh constituency, that the existence of this Assembly scheme has not always been very clear. If that is not clear to me as a Member of Parliament, it is certainly not clear to many of my constituents. The first time that I heard of that scheme was at the Minister's briefing in Portcullis House a few months ago. That speaks volumes about communication. He talked at that meeting about the millions of pounds that have been made available to the Assembly Government. It was alarming that many of us had not heard of that scheme.

**Chris Davies:** That matter was brought up with BT today. The fact that there are so many schemes available really is one of Wales's best-kept secrets. Perhaps the British Government could play a part in pushing the

[Chris Davies]

Welsh Government and working closely with them to ensure that where there are gaps, the public and our constituents know that those schemes are available. They are there to help people and they can improve broadband accessibility if people are told about them.

**Mr Williams:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising that. That is very true: hot off his meeting with BT, he brings useful information to the Chamber. I suggest that the point about collaboration between the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Assembly Government in Wales is important—all the more so as we proceed with the Digital Economy Bill. I have not yet looked in great detail at the Bill, which was introduced yesterday, but I wanted to ask the Minister about the relationship in meeting targets between setting them in London and delivery on the ground in Cardiff, which is really important.

I will conclude now. Thank you, Mr McCabe, for the opportunity to raise this important issue. I will not lambast DCMS for inaction because that is simply not the case. Significant progress has been made and the Government's intention—[*Interruption.*] I detect that the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Albert Owen) may usefully put on his boxing gloves in a moment or two. Where I will voice my deep concern, as befits the Member of Parliament for Ceredigion, is about the fact that many of my constituents are not realising the entitlements they are promised.

The National Farmers Union has spoken clearly—it also produced an excellent report, “NFU Spotlight on Farm Broadband & Mobile Networks”, which I commend—and campaigned energetically for the rights not just of its farmers, but of the broader community. Those considerations need to be taken on board. Many constituents in rural areas across the country are feeling let down and they expect a response from the Assembly Government and from the UK Government as well.

The Minister may be able to help us with this final, slightly more topical, point: the funding we have received from the European Union. Following the referendum decision to leave the European Union, I hope the Minister can tell us what impact it will have on Government schemes to provide broadband to rural parts of Wales. Since £90 million of the funding for the Superfast Cymru contract came from the European regional development fund, there is concern that areas such as mine in Wales will suffer unless funding is found from elsewhere. Has he considered that? Has he looked into that? Will he confirm that Wales will not lose out? Because the need is very much there.

2.53 pm

**Albert Owen** (Ynys Môn) (Lab): It is always a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr McCabe. I congratulate the hon. Member for Ceredigion (Mr Williams) on securing the debate, and I once again welcome the Minister, who has become an expert on rural Wales over the years from the broadband debates he has attended. I am sure that as all Members are doing, he will please the House by wishing the Welsh football team all the very best today. They are not just carrying the red dragon for Wales but carrying the flag for the whole of the British Isles.

I will not give the Minister a hard time, because he has moved towards many things that, when we used to argue about them, he said could never happen. I will not give a spin on that this time; instead, I will start by giving the Welsh dimension, which is what we are talking about. We had a timely meeting with BT today at which we were updated on many of its schemes. I will come on to how that links into the universal service obligation, because it is important that the gaps are plugged properly and that there is a co-ordinated plan. Although the Bill was published only yesterday, I will ask the Minister some questions about how the roll-out will be carried out.

In my north-west Wales constituency, 73% of properties have been connected through a scheme that, as the hon. Member for Ceredigion said, was funded by the Welsh Government, the United Kingdom Government and the European Union. As someone who believed, and still believes, in that partnership and has argued that the interests of Wales will be best served as part of both the United Kingdom and the European Union—[*Interruption.*] I see the Scottish National party representative nodding his head.

**Calum Kerr** (Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk) (SNP): Only about the second bit.

**Albert Owen:** I think I had a false sense of security there. But seriously, that money was targeted and redistributed by the European Union to the areas of greatest need, and we in Wales, particularly rural Wales, were some of the main beneficiaries of that money. It was identified at Brussels level that that funding was needed in certain areas that met the criteria set out, and it helped the scheme to be rolled out as effectively in Wales as anywhere in the United Kingdom. That is down to the partnership between, and moneys from, different levels of government.

Some 73% of properties in Wales have been covered by the roll-out of a 30 megabits per second superfast broadband initiative, and 76% of Anglesey has been covered by the scheme. The average speeds are in excess of those in some other parts of Wales, so there is a good news story there. However, as with all good news stories, there are people who are not benefiting. The date for 95% roll-out has slipped from July 2016 to 2017. To be fair, there have been negotiations under the contract between the Government and BT Openreach, leading to the Access Broadband Cymru scheme providing grants of up to £800, which have helped individuals get fibre to their hard-to-reach homes directly. That is good news, but we need to see that happening more quickly.

As the hon. Member for Ceredigion said, many of the areas in the last 5% are rural areas that rely on tourism. They are beautiful areas, and people want to locate there. I will give an example—I am sure the Minister will be interested in this. I travelled on a train a couple of years ago, and a businessman who lived in Rhoscolyn on Anglesey told me that he worked in three places: in Canary Wharf, here in London; in Hawaii; and in Rhoscolyn. If he had a choice and the broadband speed was there, he would stay in Rhoscolyn to do his work. Unfortunately, he has to go to Hawaii and suffer out there or come here to London to work. There is a serious point there: in many cases people want to locate

their business in the area in which they live, which helps the local economy. We need to have a level playing field when it comes to digital technology.

**Chris Davies:** It is interesting to hear that the hon. Gentleman is a great fan of the link between the Welsh Government, the British Government and the European Union, because the two of us were at the meeting earlier with BT at which it clearly stated that rural Wales is behind in dishing out and receiving broadband. It was told by Europe that there needed to be a lot of chimney pots to allow it to tick the boxes and “draw the money down” from Europe—that was its phrase. It is because of our connection with Europe that rural Wales is behind. I hope the Minister will now ensure that we go forward quickly and catch up from the mistakes made in the last few years.

**Albert Owen:** The hon. Gentleman and I were on different sides of the debate—I was a strong remainder and he was not—and I think he has misunderstood what BT said. It said that the Welsh Government wanted greater coverage in the contract, and that was the reason for the slow-up. Coverage was needed, so BT needed to get to as many properties as possible in urban areas. That was why the rural areas were left behind. Even with his anti-European ways, he is stretching it a little bit to blame the EU on this occasion. I am quite happy to lay blame, and on this occasion it lay with the contract between BT and the Welsh Government.

BT would have liked to roll the scheme out across the whole country. It advertised it by telling many people in rural areas of Wales that broadband would be rolled out to them by 2015 and 2016, but for a commercial reason that has not happened. They have been left at the back of the queue, and I do not think that is fair, because rural areas are already suffering in many ways. I keep saying, because it is true, that the areas where there are poor broadband services and speeds are those where there is poor mobile signal as well. In London, if someone cannot get broadband or is without it for a few days or weeks, they can rely on 4G. In many rural areas in Wales that is not possible. We want to get BT linked up with EE, and I know the Minister has been involved in that. There is the possibility of homes getting a TV, landline and mobile phone package, and such packages will improve in the future.

The issue I most want to raise with the Minister is the new Digital Economy Bill. I very much welcome it, as I did when I spoke in the Queen's Speech debate. In many arguments with me, the Minister used to say that a slow-speed universal obligation was a ridiculous idea and would not be needed, and that the Government were going for top-speed. All of a sudden that is now the Prime Minister's flagship policy, and to secure his legacy in history we are at last going to have a universal service obligation. Because he is a professional, the Minister has gone from arguing with me to taking full credit for that—he says that it was his idea all along. He was listening to us in those debates, arguing with us and then going away and putting pressure on the Prime Minister to ensure that we got a universal service obligation.

**Nia Griffith (Llanelli) (Lab):** Does my hon. Friend agree that the highest form of flattery is imitation? If he can convince the Minister that it really was the Minister's idea, it is far more likely to happen.

**Albert Owen:** I am not going to take credit for it, otherwise I would be as guilty as the Minister of saying that I influence things on my own. It was the idea of the shadow Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne Central (Chi Onwurah), and it was in our 2015 manifesto, that we would have a universal service obligation. The Government said it was a silly idea and that they would concentrate on getting even faster service in some areas and then other areas could catch up later, but I am pleased to say that we are now at the same place. It is very good that we are, but I want to ask some questions about that.

The Minister made a speech and quite rightly stuck to his words that we would have a Bill in June or July. He is as good as his word. A draft Bill has come out, and we have had a consultation. It talks about 10 megabits per second, which he rubbished earlier as being too slow. That was what the consultation said, but he was not encouraging that; he wanted twice, three times or four times that. How is that going to be delivered in Wales? What kind of roll-out programme does he envisage? It is true we have not had the Bill yet and have not debated it at different levels, but I would like to know.

For 95% of Wales, the Welsh Government are rolling coverage out in a contractual arrangement with BT, which seems to be working, albeit not as fast as we want it to. It is patchy in England, with different levels of roll-out and take-up in different counties. Is the Minister clear in his mind that there will be the same delivery plan as for the local authorities in England, or will the Welsh Government roll it out? It would be interesting to know that, because my constituents in areas that are now far behind feel that they could catch up.

I again offer the Minister my island constituency to be a pilot for the scheme. We could plug the 5% gap and then roll out that ideal Anglesey model to the rest of the United Kingdom. Hard-to-reach areas, semi-rural, rural and urban areas could be connected up. We could be the pioneers, as we were with comprehensive education, which the Minister will be aware of. The Isle of Anglesey was the first county in the whole United Kingdom to have comprehensive education, and I would like to see it as the pioneer of the digital economy with a universal service obligation across the island.

I make that serious point because I want to work with the Government and the Minister to ensure the Bill goes through smoothly, that we get the planning issues sorted and that we get the outdated telecommunications stuff up to date, which will be in the regulations of the Bill and the enhanced electronic communications code, so that we have seamless roll-out of a universal service obligation. I am sure the technology is there, and it may be that the minimum is 10 megabits per second and we will have extra capacity on stream very soon.

In pilot schemes in other areas of the United Kingdom, speeds of thousands of megabits are being talked about. We do not want to be that far behind and playing catch-up for the future. I hope the Minister will say how he intends to roll the scheme out and how it is going to be paid for. That is interesting—will the Welsh Government be making a contribution, or will it come from local authorities? We are unclear how that is going to work. Hopefully we will be able to get some European money

[Albert Owen]

during the Brexit negotiation period for areas that currently benefit from it. My constituents and industries in rural Wales want those certainties.

There are areas in my constituency that are without bus services, are seeing post office and bank closures and now have slow, almost non-existent broadband. That is not right in the United Kingdom. I am sure the Minister is a one nation Conservative and will want to see all parts of the United Kingdom benefit from this technology. I want that, and I know that colleagues who are here want to see rural areas become first-class areas. That is why I support what the hon. Member for Ceredigion says.

I know the Minister wants to achieve that and wants the notoriety of rolling it out. He has longevity in his job already; I am sure he is going to be the longest-serving Digital Economy Minister of all time. In doing that he will be doing a good service not just to his Government but to the country and the area I represent. We need assurances from the Government that they will work with the Welsh Government, BT Openreach and other providers to ensure we get 21st-century digital communications in rural areas of Wales, which deserve it. I hope the Minister is listening and that when he gets to his feet and congratulates the Wales football team he will be able to give us some answers as well.

3.6 pm

**Nia Griffith** (Llanelli) (Lab): I listened very carefully to the remarks of the hon. Member for Ceredigion (Mr Williams) and of my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Albert Owen) and will not repeat many of the excellent things they have said. I will concentrate on three aspects of the problem. First, I will talk about funding. Secondly, I will talk about the issues of Ofcom and, thirdly, I will talk about the electronic communications code.

First, as was pointed out by the hon. Member for Ceredigion, £90 million of European regional development fund money goes towards the superfast broadband programme in Wales. That is out of £231 million, so it is a large proportion. There have already been delays in that programme and, were there to be any more delays, the worry is that that source of money could be cut off before the programme is finished. Can the Minister give us an absolute guarantee that that money will be there? Clearly, that is money from the ERDF and, according to the Brexiteers, as that money originally comes from the UK Government it should be used for the same items as it was designated for before Brexit. That is over and above any funding the Welsh Government get. We need a guarantee that that is going to be the case.

Secondly, I refer to the issue of the opening up of what they call the BT dark fibre. Many of us have experienced the frustration of BT Openreach effectively being a monopoly, which has led to significant problems for some of our constituents. There seem to be enormous problems and delays in communicating with it and getting things done. I have spent many hours trying to chase things up on behalf of constituents when they are not able to get through.

I am pleased that, in its strategic review, Ofcom has set out plans to reduce the UK's reliance on Openreach by further opening up the network and that it has

confirmed its plans to require BT to provide access to its optical fibre network for providers of high-speed lines for businesses. BT will have to give physical access to those fibre optic cables and there will therefore be an opportunity for competitors to link in to those fibres and provide the services we want to see for our constituents—but hopefully providing a much better service. I hope that will in turn encourage BT to provide a better service as well.

Will the Minister tell us how effective he expects Ofcom to be in forcing BT to do this? We have seen in the past that Ofcom sometimes has not moved as quickly as it might to chase up on things, and I would like a clear indication from the Minister as to when he expects all this to happen and what he expects BT to find coming its way if it does not comply with Ofcom's requirements. So we really want a very firm Minister keeping a very strong watching brief on what happens there, so that we can be absolutely certain that the new opportunities for access are made available and that there is a better service provided to our constituents, many of whom have been waiting a very long time to see improvements to the facilities that they have.

I should like to turn to the electronic communications code, about which I wrote to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport in November 2005. The code matters because in Wales mobile coverage is also important in helping to provide internet access, but unfortunately disputes between landowners and mobile operators can lead to significant disruption. Now that the Government are planning to introduce a Bill to reform the code, I should like to ask the Minister what exactly the timetable is for that Bill and how long it will take before its measures are implemented and people begin to see a difference. What guarantees can he give about the precise content of that Bill?

In answer to a parliamentary question that I tabled, the Minister reiterated the Government's intention that the reformed code should be clear, fit for purpose and promote choice for consumers. It is essential that the code covers wholesale infrastructure providers, which make up a significant proportion of mobile networks. The draft code published last year excluded such providers and was therefore not fit for purpose. The issue of retroactivity should also be considered as mobile operators have expressed concern that unless the code applies to leases that have already been signed, its effect will be limited.

In conclusion, I want to reiterate what my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn and the hon. Member for Ceredigion have said. Nowadays broadband is as essential, if not more essential, than roads, water and electricity. We expect it to be universally provided and we want everything to be done to speed up the roll-out of the Superfast Cymru programme.

3.12 pm

**Calum Kerr** (Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk) (SNP): It is a pleasure to have a fellow Scottish voice in the Chamber this afternoon, Mr McCabe. I congratulate the hon. Member for Ceredigion (Mr Williams) on an excellent introduction in a balanced and measured speech. Quite often when we debate broadband in this House people are understandably emotive because, as he recognised, one of the biggest single items that hits our

mailbags is poor broadband. That leads to a lot of, “Blame BT, it’s everyone’s fault, isn’t it a disaster?”, but we have to work with the Minister, who has been praised highly this afternoon. I am certainly concerned by that, but he is a fine chap and I am sure he will come back with some banter about the Scots. He has already warned me about that, although now that he has seen who is in the Chair, he might change his mind slightly.

It is important that we discuss the issue in a rational and sensible manner and that we also try to be constructive, and I thought the hon. Member for Ceredigion made an excellent start. His speech was balanced and measured. He recognised the progress that has been made. He also touched on some of the areas where he recognised there are further improvements being brought forward by the Government both in Wales and at the UK level. His quote from the current Prime Minister that

“access...shouldn’t be a luxury; it should be a right”

is an important one. I think there is a gap between the rhetoric and the vision of where we want to go. We need to do a lot more to realise the vision. If we do not have a plan, our vision is essentially just a dream. That is something we need to look carefully at if we really aspire to lead the world in this area.

Some of the issues that the hon. Gentleman raised from a Welsh perspective—businesses and farmers—are things that echo with my own constituents in the Scottish borders. He touched on BT structure. Service levels are an important aspect. We need a lot more sophistication when it comes to looking at service levels. In the internet age it is no longer a binary: it is working or it is not working. We need to look at speed. Do we get what it says on the tin? We need to look at how that is performing over time and, because it is electronic, we should be able to do that in an efficient and automatic way.

The EU funding question is an excellent one, given that we are going to be awash with money shortly, we are told. Can we at least protect the not inconsiderable sum of £90 million? That is a huge percentage. The hon. Member for Llanelli (Nia Griffith) pointed out that that is out of £231 million, so it is a sizable percentage.

The speech by the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Albert Owen) was educational. He had me googling Scottish education to see whether I could challenge him on some of his claims; I might have to revisit them. He made an important point about partnership. What we are seeing in terms of the delivery projects that are out there and that will remain critical for future projects is that it is about partnership between the Welsh Government, the UK Government and the EU. In my constituency, the local authority has also put significant sums of money in. The last 5%—tourist areas—is also something that we need to be acutely aware of. There are other aspects in terms of safety and lone workers, but tourists increasingly expect to arrive in a place, use their device and decide what they are going to do and where they are going to visit. They look for offers based on connectivity, so it is critical that we have that. We should note the emergence of cars that will allegedly drive themselves, although they will not be coming near our constituencies if they cannae work.

I am slightly concerned about the constituent the hon. Member for Ynys Môn talked about, who has such a slow download speed that he flies to Hawaii. That sounds like the kind of story that I would try and

tell my wife and not get away with. He also mentioned the USO. I think there will be a lot of discussion on the USO. It is an excellent idea. We need to ensure that the programme put forward has a level of agility. My concern is that it will come in a one-size-fits-all satellite offer.

I am not sure—perhaps the Minister will clarify—whether a roll-out is envisaged. I think it will be something that constituents ask for. One of the things I discussed at length with Ofcom was how we can make the scheme more flexible so that it can be applied in lots of different ways.

The Wales first model is almost right—I would sign up to a rural first model, if that is okay with Members. I know that, when it comes to mobile coverage, that is something that happens elsewhere in Europe.

I loved the way in which the hon. Member for Llanelli summarised the issue in three points and gave me an easy job of summarising what she said. From a funding perspective, the £90 million is a staggering figure. She mentioned access to ducts and poles, including BT dark fibre. She asked an interesting question: how effective will this be and how effective will Ofcom be in regulating it? I am a little sceptical in all honesty about how much other providers really want to use BT ducts and poles. It feels something like a stick to hit BT with, but we must ensure that they are given a framework that enables them to do it, and then we will see whether they are really willing to.

There will have to be a lot of pressure on BT, because it is just about making that available; it has to be fit for purpose. There need to be design tools that enable other providers to come in with solutions. From an electronic communications code perspective, the hon. Lady made interesting comments. Mobile clearly is used for internet access in a lot of rural areas. We have to tread carefully in some of the matters she discussed. Rather than delve into them here I look forward to revisiting them, especially in relation to some of her comments about wholesale.

I recognise many similarities between Wales and Scotland, not least sporting prowess. As the Welsh football team leads the way as the best team in these isles, and Andy Murray blazes across the courts at Wimbledon—Scotland leading the way in tennis and Wales in football—I await the Minister’s telling us where England is leading the way. Something else that Wales and Scotland share is low population density. Most of our population tends to be concentrated and centralised over a small stretch of territory. Both nations also have some of the most stunning scenery, as we have heard—but that is also challenging geography. Those two common factors of population spread and geography are at the heart of the problem of broadband coverage. That means that we need distinctive policy approaches for matters such as connectivity. If we are to make rural superfast broadband a reality, a one-size-fits-all approach will clearly not work.

The Scottish Government set out a highly ambitious vision for the country’s digital future, but a world-class digital nation requires that people living and working in Scotland, or visiting it, should be able to communicate and connect instantly using any device, anywhere and at any time. We used to call that, in the networking world, the Martini network—“any time, any place, anywhere”, for those who do not know the advert. The Scottish Government have been working hard to meet the challenge.

[Calum Kerr]

The Digital Scotland superfast broadband programme, delivered via BT, is expected to deliver superfast broadband to about 95% of the premises in Scotland by the end of 2017. That programme is delivering more than £410 million of investment. On average it is connecting 7,000 new premises every week. On top of that, Community Broadband Scotland works with a budget of about £16.5 million to develop projects targeted at some of the harder to reach areas.

The reality, however, is that we need to go further. I am proud of the Scottish National party's manifesto commitment to go further and, during the course of the present Holyrood Parliament—up to 2021—push superfast broadband to 100% of premises in Scotland. We realise that that is a challenge, but all of us in the Chamber know that it is possible. The only thing that stops us is ambition and a willingness to look at the models that will fit and work. That is where much of my effort, and the Scottish Government's effort, is going at the moment.

The digital communications review from Ofcom has been welcomed, but it fell short in some areas—particularly in relation to rural remedies. The Scottish Government requested that consideration should be given to the simple fact that the market does not work in rural areas; we cannot rely on competition when it is uneconomical. We need to think about differentiation of approach for rural areas, in recognition of that. The Broadband Delivery UK scheme goes some way towards that, but we need to go much further. We also need to be careful that as we seek to push broadband further we do not end up putting little sticky plasters everywhere and finding we are back here in the same position in a couple of years, having put in a solution that has no future. We need to be careful that what we do has a future; and that, of course, means fibre, as far as possible.

As to the Digital Economy Bill, I shall be interested in whether the Minister finds there is an impact from the EU vote, and whether he thinks anything has changed. He is shaking his head, which is good news, because I am keen for us to push ahead with that measure. I have already mentioned the electronic communications code, but in relation to the universal service obligation I understand there are some rules and regulations and that there was a rationale for 10 megabits. I would like to understand whether that rationale is no longer valid. If the UK is leaving the EU, do we have freedom to set the USO at whatever level we want? I also think that, with the USO, upload is an issue as well as download, and that consideration should also be given to price and any data limits. Simply talking about download speed is a bit like looking at a car on the basis of how fast it can go. There is far more to it.

As we consider the new model, I thank the Minister for the level of engagement, and the approach that he has taken; I know I have done that once before. I find the Department for Culture, Media and Sport good to sit down and talk with, and to engage in proper, rational debate with. I believe that DCMS understands that the current model has limitations and was essentially a pragmatic roll-out. However, now there is no excuse. We know where the limitations are. We know about the 5%-plus—I suggest that it is significantly more than

that in the constituencies of Members present for the debate. We really need DCMS and Ofcom to focus on rural remedies.

I recently chanced to bump into the Minister at a certain coffee establishment here, and I fear I was slightly boastful about the Scottish Government's commitment to superfast broadband everywhere, which I contrasted with the measly 10 megabit USO. The Minister coined a phrase that I thought was fantastic—McBroadband. Given that Wales has raised the bar and shown the way when it comes to football, may I suggest that the Minister should not be ashamed to look at Scotland as we raise the connectivity bar, and to see McBroadband deployed across all these isles?

3.26 pm

**Chi Onwurah** (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab): It is an honour to serve under your chairmanship, Mr McCabe. It is a great pleasure to respond to the debate for the Opposition. I congratulate the hon. Member for Ceredigion (Mr Williams) on securing this debate on an increasingly important topic. Like the hon. Member for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk (Calum Kerr), I also congratulate him on the tone and content of his opening remarks, which were an excellent introduction to the subject and to the situation of many of his constituents, as well as many UK citizens in other rural areas. His opening comments were complimentary to the Minister; it would be churlish to suggest that that was in any way connected with the fact that his party was in government, if not in power, when many of the important decisions that are driving our current lamentable situation were taken.

I fear that I have already changed the tone of the debate from one of mutual agreement to one of division, so let me go back to something on which we can all agree—that we wish the Welsh football team every success this evening. Indeed, if the team can defy the odds and march through to the finals of the European championships, and then triumph, perhaps it is not too much to hope that the Minister will defy expectations today and give us some satisfactory answers as to why so many people in Wales—and England and Scotland, for that matter—cannot get a decent internet connection, which I assume the Minister can do on the smartphone that he is looking at so intently. It seems that anything can happen in these extraordinary times, but I must say that concrete answers from the Minister would be an extraordinary conclusion.

We face a period of uncertainty—I am talking about Brexit rather than the football now. As we start to think about our plans for negotiating to leave the European Union, which have already been mentioned—although, astonishingly, I understand that the Government have not thought about them until now—it is time for us to get serious about our infrastructure and productivity and make sure that we have an economy that works for everyone. The economic benefits of better digital infrastructure are well known. The hon. Member for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk and I share a background in telecommunications, I believe, and we can both be proud to call ourselves technology champions.

I think everyone would agree that the UK's productivity problem has been one of the biggest challenges for our economy in recent years. We have the second-worst

productivity performance in the G7. The Government's own broadband impact study states that

"it is now widely accepted that the availability and adoption of affordable broadband plays an important role in increasing productivity".

It is the Government's policy to increase productivity, and they recognise the role broadband plays in that. I hope that they recognise the importance of productivity to the Welsh rural economy, as well as throughout the United Kingdom.

Why do we find ourselves in a situation now where so many people cannot get a decent broadband connection? As well as the economic benefits, there are significant social benefits. I mean not simply online gaming but online shopping and new applications in mental healthcare that are supported through digital infrastructure to enable better engagement and improve citizens' wellbeing. It is unacceptable that some people cannot access those services.

Some people cannot access mandatory Government services and, worse, are penalised for not being able to access online services such as a mandatory job search. The internet opens up a world of education, social engagement and potential economic productivity—it is a window on the globe. All people across the United Kingdom should be able to expect that as a right, yet nearly 6 million people in the UK do not have access to decent broadband, and 130,000 businesses are struggling to make do with a connection of less than 10 megabits per second.

Wales is actually doing better than the rest of the UK for rural and business broadband—as well as in football. In Scotland, 50% of mid-sized businesses do not have access to superfast broadband, while in Wales the figure is "only" 38%. In England, 64% of rural premises are without superfast broadband, while in Wales merely—again, I use that word relatively—half of rural residents cannot access superfast connection speeds, which the European Union has said should be a universal minimum in just four years.

No doubt the Minister will tell us again of an unadulterated success, which is how he characterises the current broadband situation. As my hon. Friends the Members for Ynys Môn (Albert Owen) and for Llanelli (Nia Griffith) have mentioned, Wales lags far behind the other nations in mobile coverage. Only 20% of Wales is covered by all mobile providers, compared with 50% in England. I find that entirely unacceptable.

**Mr Mark Williams:** To allay the hon. Lady's concerns about any generosity I expressed to the Minister earlier, does she agree that the Government's mobile infrastructure project has been a complete failure, certainly in Wales?

**Chi Onwurah:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. Lamentable as I find the situation when it comes to fixed and universal broadband, the mobile situation shames us as a nation. I take the train from Newcastle to London twice a week, and I am lucky if I can maintain a conversation on a quarter of that journey. On the wonderful occasions when I have had the pleasure and honour of visiting Wales, I have noticed that the mobile coverage is generally unacceptable. As has been mentioned, a constituent going to Hawaii to improve their mobile coverage is testimony to a failure.

Since the Minister took office six years ago, we have seen a series of ad hoc funding announcements. The crown jewel of all of them—the mobile infrastructure

project certainly was not considered a jewel by anyone—was the £790 million rural superfast broadband programme, which has been handed entirely to one company. Whatever our criticisms of British Telecom, and I agree that it is unfair to hold BT entirely responsible for the current situation, the way in which the contracts for that tender were set out meant that we would end up in the current situation of monopoly provision. I certainly know that the Minister was informed, and indeed warned, of that possibility on more than one occasion.

It is true that the Government and the Minister are now finally waking up to the need to improve digital infrastructure. My hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn was very clear about where blame for the current situation lies. He was more modest about taking credit for the change in the Government's approach and tone. The broadband challenge is now becoming the issue for the Minister that it should have been in the previous Parliament. I am concerned about that, because many Tory MPs find their mailbags bulging with complaints, and he is responding belatedly to that criticism from his own side. While we have potential solutions to the problem today, there is no solution for the incompetence that preceded it. People in Wales and beyond still do not know when they can expect the much vaunted universal service obligation to cover them and what that means for them practically.

I would be grateful if the Minister addressed the many excellent questions raised by my hon. Friends the Members for Ynys Môn and for Llanelli, and by the hon. Members for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk and for Ceredigion. The Digital Economy Bill, published yesterday, is a real opportunity to address these issues and get Britain on the right track when it comes to infrastructure and digital rights for digital citizens. I am afraid that it will be a missed opportunity.

I would like the Minister to answer the following questions. Has he given up on hopes for competition—a word that appears only once in the Bill, in brackets—in the communications market? After the bungled attempts to reform the electronic communications code in 2015, why will this time be any different? What is his long-term vision for our digital infrastructure? We have heard about the importance of fibre. He seems to find it difficult to mention fibre, and certainly to set out when and how the UK will have universal fibre provision. How will the USO be funded? What talks is he in to ensure that that funding requirement does not fall disproportionately on rural areas?

Finally, will the Minister explain concisely exactly how the Digital Economy Bill will improve connectivity in Wales? The Bill will, I take it, be what passes for a vision for our digital society. That must include digital inclusion for rural areas in Wales and for my constituents in Newcastle who cannot afford the current superfast broadband provision. I hope he will set out his vision for ensuring that we have the digital infrastructure that we deserve and need in Wales and in the country as a whole.

3.40 pm

**The Minister for Culture and the Digital Economy (Mr Edward Vaizey):** I am grateful for the opportunity to speak under your superb chairmanship, Mr McCabe, and I thank the hon. Member for Ceredigion (Mr Williams) for this important debate about broadband.

[Mr Edward Vaizey]

Let me echo the words that were said about tonight's football match, which is an incredibly important game. Unfortunately, I will be at the Art Fund museum of the year dinner with the Duchess of Cambridge, but I know that her father-in-law is particularly keen on a Welsh victory tonight, as is the whole country. Gareth Bale sits firmly in midfield in my fantasy league team and Sam Vokes is a striker, so we are hoping for a good result tonight.

If the hon. Member for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk (Calum Kerr) thinks a Welsh sporting achievement and Andy Murray managing to make it to the quarter finals will rub English noses in it, let me remind him of the England rugby team and its 3:0 whitewash of Australia. It does not stop there either: perhaps we should talk about the test victory over Sri Lanka—I do not think Scotland plays cricket, but they may a bit. Of course, today Mark Cavendish won his 28th stage in the Tour de France, thus matching the record of the great cyclist, Bernard Hinault. [Interruption.] I see the Clerk leaning over to you, Mr McCabe, saying that I am out of order—that I have gone off the subject of broadband—but thousands of Welsh people tonight will be watching television and perhaps through a broadband connection, thanks to me.

**Chi Onwurah:** I admire the way the Minister has managed to segue from football back to broadband. Does he agree that it is to be hoped that all those in Wales watching the match tonight do not stream it from broadband connections, as their pleasure is likely to be interrupted regularly by the circle of death?

**Mr Vaizey:** No. I encourage them to watch it online. They can watch it online, on their iPads or on ITV Player.

Let me turn to the subject in hand. I have been in this job for six years and it may feel like wading through treacle, but when I hear someone as distinguished as the hon. Member for Ceredigion say those four words, “vast improvement in provision”, it makes those six years of hard labour worth it, because we have made a difference. I will come to some serious points, but I want to say that we have achieved a great deal and I will explain where we are.

I have always made the point that we had targets we wanted to achieve. We never said 100% of people would get superfast broadband under our programme. We said 90% would get it by the end of 2015 and we achieved that with 4 million additional homes and businesses, which will be 5 million by the time the programme effectively ends at the end of 2017. We have already completed 36 of the 44 phase 1 projects and we are well into phase 2, and on track to get to 95% by the end of 2017.

People seem to forget the baseline we started from when the programme was on the way. In Wales, fewer than one in three homes had access to superfast broadband in 2011, yet by the end of phase 2, which finishes this time next year, 96.7% will have been reached. This project alone will have provided access to superfast broadband for almost 750,000 homes in Wales. Half of all homes will have broadband because of this project. The figure is already almost 600,000 homes. The audited

figure is 582,300, so we have probably passed 600,000 because we are always three months behind in auditing the figures.

It is worth remembering that in the constituency of the hon. Member for Ceredigion, for example, no superfast broadband was provided commercially—he reminded the House that I had made that point previously. Even though his figures are below the national figures and therefore look poor, it is telling that 55% of homes—20,000—in his constituency that now have access to superfast broadband have it because of this programme. Another 10,000 will be added by the middle of next year, with 85% superfast coverage in 30,000 premises that would not have been covered. Coverage in constituencies of Members across the House ranges from a lowly 79% in that of my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnorshire (Chris Davies)—luckily he has left the Chamber, so I can mention that figure publicly—up to around 92% in Ynys Môn.

**Albert Owen:** I know that the Minister would not want to mislead the Chamber—he would not be allowed to—but when he says “to homes”, he means to the cabinet. There is a technical difficulty in getting broadband from the cabinet to many homes. The cabinets may have been upgraded to provide a signal to homes, but it may not reach those homes.

**Mr Vaizey:** I know that the hon. Member would not want to mislead the House, and the quotation I hope he would take from what I said was “have access to superfast broadband”. There is a lot of terminology in this debate, but basically, yes, it is called fibre to the cabinet—it goes to the big green box—and sometimes people in homes who think they will have access to superfast broadband do not get it, but it is important to stress that the numbers we use are audited and tested by Broadband Delivery UK. We do not simply say, “Here's a cabinet and therefore any home in the vicinity is going to get broadband.” We audit the figures and we are well aware that homes may be near a cabinet but do not get access to superfast broadband, because sometimes the circuit from the cabinet is confusing. [Interruption.] I am doing this for the benefit of *Hansard*, to see how they record it in the *Official Report*—perhaps it will say, “Minister waves his finger around in an odd way.”

The other good thing is that there is more money to be spent. The hon. Member for Ceredigion asked whether areas are being needlessly subsidised, so not only do I have to contend with colleagues; I have to contend with BT's competitors, who are always keen to get in the door and tell everyone how useless BT is because they are promoting themselves. They say BT is being needlessly subsidised. We saw that one coming and constructed the contract so that if areas effectively become quasi-commercial because more people than we expected took up broadband, we get money back.

As I am sure hon. Members are aware, we have already gained £130 million and it is important to point out that BT has made that money available now. Under the strict terms of the contract, it could have held back for another seven years. We are expecting around £250 million back when the contracts are completed.

We have had additional money committed from BT and from underspend. We believe that with the existing money we can get to 97% rather than 95% of homes,

albeit not by the end of 2017, but probably a little later. The underspend is around £150 million, to add to the gain share, so we are looking at about £400 million coming through. That will make a real difference and should help us to reach 97% of homes by the end of 2020.

Another of the points made—I think by the hon. Member for Ceredigion, although the Opposition spokesperson also talked about competition—was about the monopoly aspect. As we move to phase 2 and the contracts become smaller and a smaller number of premises are in play, we are able to bring in smaller providers—for example, we have got companies such as Gigaclear—who would simply not have had the capacity for the big phase 1 roll-out. As part of our market test pilots, to work out how to get to rural areas as cheaply as possible, companies such as AB Internet in Monmouthshire, for example, have already connected 1,500 premises as part of its pilot. The smaller players are now coming into play, and we are actively engaging with a wider supplier base. In total, five different suppliers from BT now have contracts under phase 2, and we have had approval for our new state aid national broadband scheme, which means we can power forward on phase 2.

Some other points were made. I want to reassure hon. Members that the ERDF funding is secure until the end of 2020. We want to put to bed the idea that somehow the European money will disappear. The hon. Member for Ceredigion said that Wales was left behind or left out. I really want to nail that one down. It is important to stress that no part of the United Kingdom was left behind. As I think was mentioned, the total amount of funding available to Wales was in the region of £220 million, and I talked about 750,000 premises being connected—some in very hard-to-reach areas. I think there was also mention of Wales being ahead of the game, in terms of broadband roll-out, compared with the rest of the country.

I want to turn to the future. We talked about the universal service obligation and we learned an important new fact, which is that that is not Government policy; it is the policy of the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Albert Owen). And it is not the universal service obligation; USO actually stands for “You’ve got service from Owen.” That is how it will be known from now on. In fact, he is such a genial-looking character that I think we might use him in the adverts when the universal service obligation comes to bear. I hope he will take part in the Second Reading debate on the Digital Economy Bill, because I think my second roll-out of that terrible joke might get a better reception if he is better prepared for it. The universal service obligation is there as a safety net. As I said, I think we are going to get very far with the roll-out, but just to give the hon. Gentleman and, indeed, the Opposition an open goal, we have not yet worked out the detail of how the universal service obligation will work. We are working with Ofcom on a range of options, which we will consult on. There is a range of ways in which the USO can be put together.

Of course, the hon. Member for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk, who knows his onions when it comes to this subject, made a point that really only the aficionados would have picked up on, which is about how flexible it is possible to be with a USO. As he rightly notes, to have simply a demand-led USO for one individual premise, with a cost cap if it reached over a certain amount,

would be potentially a very inefficient way of delivering broadband. We have to be more thoughtful and flexible about how we can deliver broadband to the lowest area.

The hon. Gentleman also talked about whether leaving the European Union might change our potential to increase the speed, but although we have left the European Union, we cannot change the laws of physics. The reason we have gone for 10 megabits is that it is the most realistic speed that we can get in a cost-effective way to the most hard-to-reach areas, but of course satellite connections, for example, could exceed that. Obviously we do not want to write the speed into the Bill, because we want to be flexible to ensure that the USO keeps pace in the future as average broadband speeds increase.

We are also bringing in the electronic communications code. I heard what the hon. Member for Llanelli (Nia Griffith) said about whether it should cover wholesale providers. We have rejected that because the wholesale providers are really on a par with the communication providers, with the mobile network operators, and we think it would be quite wrong to give the mobile network operators a commercial advantage over the wholesale providers that have built a business based on supplying the marketplace. We want the electronic communications code to be—a bit like the USO—a fall-back position whereby, in relation to an individual landlord who is not in the telecoms business but is providing land either for a wayleave or a mobile mast, there is a forum and a tribunal where any dispute can be worked out and worked out quickly. We want to bring the roll-out of broadband infrastructure into line with the roll-out of all other kinds of infrastructure, such as electricity, to try to bring down the costs.

I will make a serious point here. This may well prove to be controversial with some landowners, but we have dealt with a lot of the stakeholder groups in the landowning community, who are realistic and know that you can’t have your cake and eat it. People cannot charge relatively high rents and at the same time complain about rural coverage. I hope that hon. Members will see the bigger picture and support these important changes, because, as the hon. Member for Llanelli said, we have taken a pretty tortuous route to get here.

Those are the two main changes that will come forward in the Digital Economy Bill. Going back to where we are on broadband roll-out, I have been looking at some interesting international comparisons. For example, if someone says that France has 25% coverage for fibre to the premises, people think, “Well, that’s terrible; we’ve been left behind because we only have 2% coverage for fibre to the premises,” but what we should be looking at is the outcome. Then we discover that cable, fibre to the cabinet and fibre to the premises are all in effect in the same geographic areas in France, so actually about 75% of the country does not have access to superfast broadband, whereas 90% of the UK does have access to it.

In fact, we have been very British about this. We have been incremental in how we have rolled out technology; and now, as we come to the end of phase 1 and phase 2, we are about to introduce G.fast, for example. Virgin Media, as hon. Members know, is investing £3 billion or £4 billion for 4 million more homes. We are starting to bring forward what one could call the ultrafast speeds just at the point when the public are ready, as consumers and businesses, to invest in them.

[Mr Vaizey]

Again, we need to look at the outcomes. I was struck by another figure: how much data do people use in different countries? The average amount of data used in the UK is twice as much as the French use. In fact, the amount of data used by UK consumers has doubled in the last year while prices have remained the same, so arguably data for the consumer—the stuff we watch on the telly or the documents that we download—have halved in price. The UK consumer is actually getting a very good deal.

Obviously I do not want to underestimate the concerns of hon. Members, who have spoken very knowledgeably in the debate. As they rightly point out, broadband is a very big issue. It is a major issue in the rural MP's postbag, and every MP who has spoken has shown their extensive knowledge not just of the situation in their own constituency, but of the situation with national broadband roll-out. We are coming through to the end of this phase and people are now beginning to see the tangible benefits of the programme, but of course there is more to do.

**Albert Owen:** I will not quote the Minister directly, but he said that he has not thought through how the universal service obligation will work—he has not worked out the details—but is he looking at geographical areas? If we have not spots of 1% or 2%, it is easier to concentrate on that than to have a hit and miss across the country. That is the first point. Secondly, when will we see the consultation, and how will Members of Parliament be able to feed into that?

**Mr Vaizey:** We have already consulted once overall about this, but we will consult during the passage of the Bill or shortly after it is passed, because we want to pass the principle into law. The hon. Gentleman is right: there are a number of ways of looking at this. We could have, for example, regional providers. If we wanted a USO in Ynys Môn, we might have two or three local providers rather than simply having one or two or three national USO providers. To pick up again on the point made by the hon. Member for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk, we may want communities themselves to get a USO, rather than an individual. But as I said, I think the corner has been turned in terms of rural broadband roll-out. We are now looking forward to the publication of our digital strategy and the passage of the Digital Economy Bill, which will set out our plans to help the last 5%, but also be more ambitious for the whole country in terms of achieving a gigabit Britain.

3.59 pm

**Mr Mark Williams:** I thank all hon. Members for their speeches and interventions. We have reiterated the concerns that many of us in rural communities have. I am not going to defend anything I said, other than to say that I think it would be churlish not to acknowledge the improvements that have been made in broadband provision over the last six years during the Minister's tenure in office. However, expectations remain incredibly high. Those expectations to date have not been met fully, and they must be.

*Motion lapsed (Standing Order No. 10(6)).*

## Olympic Games: Doping

[MR ANDREW TURNER *in the Chair*]

4 pm

**Steven Paterson** (Stirling) (SNP): I beg to move,

That this House has considered doping and the Olympic Games.

It is a pleasure to have the opportunity to bring this matter before the House today and to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Turner.

The issue of doping in sport is extremely serious, and we have to face up to it. Recent years have demonstrated the scale of the challenge and the need to ensure that we are vigilant in ensuring that systems are in place to detect and punish doping in sport and to protect clean athletes and, ultimately, the long-term health of athletes. Professional athletes dedicate their lives to their sport, training rigorously and making significant personal sacrifices in order to reach peak physical condition and compete at their very best.

There are umpteen examples over the years of cheats who have used banned performance-enhancing drugs not only to reach their physical potential, but to exceed it—sometimes greatly. Those cheats betray and undermine the dedicated efforts of athletes who play by the rules and seek to compete to the best of their natural ability, on a level playing field, under rules that everyone is aware of. In the modern day, that means that the World Anti-Doping Agency takes expert medical advice and produces a list of banned substances that no athlete competing in a sport may use as part of their training or preparation for that sport.

On 13 April I raised this matter with the Prime Minister during Prime Minister's Question Time. He responded that it was to be discussed at the anti-corruption summit he was holding on 12 May. From the response to my follow-up letter on the subject following that summit, I was pleased to learn that the matter was indeed discussed and that a new international sport integrity partnership is to be launched next year, to better integrate the various international organisations and Governments in order to tackle corruption in sport. The response also mentioned the charter for sports governance, which was published on the day of the summit and outlines the main themes that will form a new UK governance code, which is currently being developed. I am sure the Minister will have more to say on that, and I look forward to those comments.

I turn to the context in which we find ourselves with regard to doping in sport. It is nearly 30 years since Ben Johnson failed a drug test after smashing the world record in the Olympic 100 metres. It is over a decade since Lance Armstrong was using performance-enhancing drugs to win the Tour de France, and four years since his offences were finally established and his titles stripped from him. We live in an age when the rewards in elite sports have never been greater, and thus the incentives to win at any cost have never been higher. In response to doping scandals such as those, the World Anti-Doping Agency was established in 1999 to promote and enforce a world anti-doping code, including a list of banned substances that is published annually. The responsibility for ensuring that an athlete does not take substances on the banned list lies with the athlete themselves.

The operation of the system is best exemplified by the recent failed drug test involving tennis player Maria Sharapova. Sharapova was the highest-paid female athlete in the world, but tested positive for a banned substance called meldonium. That drug is primarily used to improve blood circulation and is commonly used medically to combat heart disease. The substance was added to the list of banned substances on 1 January 2016, and Sharapova tested positive later that month at the Australian open tennis. Her defence was that she had been using the substance legally for 10 years and had not been aware that it had been added to the list of banned substances, having claimed not to have read several emails from tennis governing bodies advising of the addition of the substance to the list. She was banned from all competitions for two years, although an appeal is pending on the length of the ban.

The case raises important issues about performance-enhancing drugs in sport. First, given the constant evolution and development of pharmaceuticals, and medical and sports science more generally, it is inevitable that the list of banned substances will also evolve over time. Making additions once annually, at the beginning of each calendar year, and being absolutely clear that responsibility for compliance rests with the athlete is, I think, a reasonable way forward in order to be fair to all sides.

Secondly, however, the case raises the question of ethics. Sharapova did not need to take meldonium for any medical need; she took it because it enhanced her performance. I would argue that her actions in taking the substance purely to gain a competitive advantage justify the strict enforcement of the rules. If we accept that she was not aware of the rule change, it is difficult not to have sympathy for Sharapova, but she had ultimate responsibility for knowing what substances were banned and ensuring she complied with the rules. It may be tough on her, but those rules have to be applied evenly if we are to be fair to athletes who make the effort to ensure that they are clean and in compliance with the rules.

Andy Murray, the Olympic gold medallist, who hails from Dunblane in my constituency, is a model of sporting integrity and is on record as supporting the strict application of the rules. He stated earlier this year, on the news of Sharapova's suspension:

"I think taking a prescription drug that you don't necessarily need, but just because it's legal, that's wrong, clearly. That's wrong."

I am in full agreement with that sentiment, and the issue of prescription drugs may require further attention by the World Anti-Doping Agency when it considers what types of substances merit being banned in future years.

Turning specifically to this year's Rio Olympics, the countdown has been somewhat overshadowed by the scandal of doping and associated corruption that has seen Russian athletes banned from the games and questions hanging over the participation of several other nations.

**Marion Fellows** (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): My constituent Yvonne Murray, who is now Yvonne Mooney, came third in the women's 3,000 metres at the Seoul Olympics in 1988. She was beaten by a Soviet runner, Tetyana Samolenko, who five years later was found guilty of doping, and by a Romanian runner who had links to the Soviet doping programme. Ms Samolenko

has been allowed to keep her Olympic medals, despite attempts by Ms Mooney to encourage the International Olympic Committee to take action. It claims that there was no way to prove that Ms Samolenko was doping at the time. Does my hon. Friend agree that athletes found guilty of doping at any time in their career should have all their medals removed, and that the medals of those who were placed behind them should be upgraded?

**Steven Paterson:** My hon. Friend makes a very reasonable point. Yvonne Murray has been cheated, or may have been cheated, of a medal by athletes who were doping. For me, that goes to the heart of why we need a regime that can successfully and robustly test and challenge athletes to make sure that they are clean. That is exactly why we need an effective regime combatting this.

The investigation of Russian athletes was instigated following an investigative documentary aired on German TV channel ARD entitled "Top-Secret Doping: How Russia Makes its Winners". It alleged a systematic doping programme for the country's athletes and widespread corrupt practice to conceal it. Following the documentary, the World Anti-Doping Agency established an independent commission to urgently investigate the allegations. The report by the independent commission was damning and led to the suspension of the Russian athletics federation in November 2015. That has, in turn, led to Russian athletes being banned from competing under the Russian flag at the Rio Olympics.

I would like to quote from the report, because it makes the scale of the issue crystal clear. In the summary of findings, it states:

"The investigation has confirmed the existence of widespread cheating through the use of doping substances and methods to ensure, or enhance the likelihood of, victory for athletes and teams. The cheating was done by the athletes' entourages, officials and the athletes themselves."

It goes on:

"In addition, evidence exists that confirms that coaches have attempted to manipulate or interfere with doping reports and testing procedures. They are also the source and counselling of athletes' use of PEDs. The coaches are supported in their doping efforts by certain medical professionals."

If I may, I will list the specific findings because they lay the position out. First, under the heading "A Deeply Rooted Culture of Cheating", the report says evidence of

"cheating at all levels is widespread and of long standing."

It includes the remark that many of the "more egregious offenders" were coaches who were themselves former athletes, and that a common justification for cheating was that everyone else was probably doing it.

Secondly, under "The Exploitation of Athletes", the report states that as a result of that mindset, an open and accepted series of unethical behaviours and practices has become the norm. Even in cases where the athletes themselves seemed unwilling to participate in doping, they were threatened with not being considered for selection by the national federation. Thirdly, under "Confirmed Athletes Cheating", the report states that the central allegation was upheld, although the independent commission found that a high percentage of athletes were unwilling to participate in, or co-operate with, the investigation.

[Steven Paterson]

Fourthly, under “Confirmed Involvement by Doctors, Coaches and Laboratory Personnel”, the report found evidence that the doping programme was systemic and widespread. The investigators were deliberately inhibited in their work by what was described as

“the intentional and malicious destruction of more than 1,400 samples by Moscow laboratory officials after receiving written notification from WADA to preserve target samples.”

Fifthly, under “Corruption and Bribery within IAAF”, the report identifies

“corruption and bribery practices at the highest levels of international athletics.”

The report is damning and reveals the enormity of the challenge we face. Its scale and findings cannot be underestimated. There was a collective disregard for athletes’ current and future state of health, and it was clear that with the right resources, testing can be and has been circumvented, whether through athletes getting advance notice of supposedly random tests or through the manipulation of the biological passport.

What is to be done? The World Anti-Doping Agency was founded

“with the aim of bringing consistency to anti-doping policies and regulations within sport organisations and governments right across the world.”

That is its mission statement, yet as its former president Dick Pound told me when I met him at Stirling University in April, WADA is expected to achieve that despite having an annual budget that is less than Maria Sharapova earned personally in endorsements last year.

The budget for WADA in 2015 was \$29.5 million, with half the funding being supplied by states and half by the Olympic movement. Of that, the UK contributed \$745,870. However, it is sobering that the investigation into Russian athletics cost \$1.5 million—and that is only one sport in one country. According to Dick Pound, the WADA budget has been too low almost from the outset of its activities, and that example of the costs associated with pursuing just one investigation, which was clearly necessary given its findings, should be a wake-up call for anyone who shares the ideal of ridding sport of doping.

It is clear that WADA needs to be better resourced, and although I welcome the commitment and resources that the Government have put into the organisation, we as an international sporting community must collectively do more. There is a case for seeking more transparency and accountability from WADA. That is not meant as a criticism, but if we are to do what is necessary to beef up the role that it plays and commit the necessary level of resource, there needs to be an increased level of oversight.

For example, if the role played by WADA was better understood, it might be possible to increase and enhance the participation of stakeholders in efforts to challenge cheating in sport and improve policing and monitoring across a wider range of sports. Transparency would bring greater clarity to why decisions are made and why investigations are held, and it would force WADA to plan proactively for the long term to promote a culture change while changing conduct in the short term.

There is also a role for more education as a pre-emptive support and to help athletes avoid accidental doping, and I hope that that will be considered in future. Professional elite sports have never been more awash with money, and it is high time their representative organisations took greater responsibility for challenging the drug cheats. That means contributing more to the organisation that exists to do that work, with a code of practice that they have signed up to.

I hope that as the Government take forward discussions on a new governance code, they can bring their influence to bear on national sporting bodies and stress that as well as promoting and developing their particular sports, they have a shared responsibility to ensure that they promote and develop clean sport. We should also seek to encourage and protect whistleblowers in sport, including through anonymity, financial incentives or a faster and more effective mechanism within sports organisations to act swiftly and decisively on concerns raised.

A recent report in *The Sunday Times* regarding Mark Bonar raises important questions about the role of whistleblowers in the fight against doping, and about the accountability of UK Anti-Doping, which, according to the newspaper, was informed of Dr Bonar’s doping activities two years ago but failed to act. If that is true, how UK Anti-Doping is held to account is important, particularly in the light of the fact that it is taxpayer-funded to the tune of £6 million.

Given the Russian investigation, it is clear in which direction anti-doping efforts need to move: towards intelligence-led operations, which require greater involvement of stakeholders and whistleblowers. When WADA was set up, it provided global standardisation in the system of penalties and banned substances, and that system now needs to grow and incorporate greater intelligence and oversight of regional anti-doping and sports federations.

Media organisations such as *The Sunday Times* and the German TV channel ARD deserve huge credit for the investigatory journalism that they have provided to shine a light on these corrupt practices, but does that not also demonstrate a UK and world anti-doping regime that is reactive instead of proactive? Greater forward planning and a long-term strategy to change the culture are required, because the fight against doping in sport will be with us for the long term given the phenomenal amount of money in sport.

In closing, I want to mention the valuable research being undertaken at Stirling University in my constituency. Researchers have been working on these issues for 12 years, during which time they have developed expertise in the social, policy and educational aspects of it. Indeed, some of their work has been funded by WADA. The university’s focus is on excellence in sport and education, with the SportScotland institute of sport and other sports organisations in Stirling in close proximity. Given the expertise of the sports researchers and experienced athletes associated with the university, there is an opportunity to create a leading centre for anti-doping research and education here in the UK, and specifically in Stirling, where that expertise already resides. I hope that the Minister will consider that and perhaps meet me and university representatives in due course to discuss the idea in more detail. Again, I am very grateful for the opportunity to speak on this issue.

4.15 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Tracey Crouch):** It is always a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Turner, and I thank the hon. Member for Stirling (Steven Paterson) for securing this timely debate on an issue that strikes right at the heart of sporting integrity in the run-up to arguably the greatest sporting event on earth—the Olympics.

Although it is perhaps unavoidable that discussions on doping will be a factor around Rio 2016, given recent scandals, some of which the hon. Gentleman mentioned in his speech, we should remind ourselves how fortunate we are that the vast majority of athletes do not cheat and, from the British perspective, how fortunate we are to have UK Anti-Doping, one of the world's leading anti-doping organisations. Its reputation has been gained through its robust, intelligence-led Clean Sport programme, including successful education initiatives and athlete testing across Olympic, Paralympic and professional sports. That reputation saw the World Anti-Doping Agency invite UKAD to manage the testing programme in Russia as part of the work to once again make Russia compliant with the anti-doping code.

We managed to secure enhanced funding for UKAD in the recent spending round, but given the work it already does with sport here in the UK and across the world, there is no doubt in my mind that that organisation has great potential to commercialise and expand its expertise. In a month's time, our athletes will begin competing in Rio and UKAD is working with the British Olympic Association to create a robust and comprehensive pre-games testing plan. In addition, every athlete on the team will take part in a Clean Sport education programme and every member of the athlete support team will also undertake the Accredited Advisor of Coach Clean workshop, so they are fully versed on what to expect ahead of the games.

It would be helpful if that proactive approach could be replicated by every country ahead of a summer or winter games to help to guarantee a level playing field for all competitors. That desire drove the Prime Minister's discussions at the anti-corruption summit in May and will form the basis of action in future.

The governance codes that are being developed, which the hon. Gentleman referenced in his speech, were set out in the sports strategy that I published in December. The codes are to drive reforms in governance, and we expect all sports to encourage clean, drug-free activity among their participants. The codes will deal with a number of matters relating to integrity, including doping and match fixing.

As concerning as it has been to read of the doping scandals around Russian sport in particular, it is important to recognise the work of the international sporting community in mitigating such doping scandals. Although the hon. Gentleman cited high-profile cases that have brought sports into disrepute, we must remember that there are thousands of sportsmen and women who have broken records without drugs and inspired generations. It is really important that we continue to remember that, because although there are some high-profile cases, many of which he mentioned, there are lots of really clean athletes out there who do their sport the best they can without enhancement.

**Drew Hendry** (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey) (SNP): On the basis of fairness and high-profile cases, does the Minister have sympathy with Alain Baxter, the Olympic bronze-winning medallist of 2002 in the winter Olympics? He was banned and stripped of his medal for taking a Vicks inhaler made in the USA—as opposed to one made in the UK—as it had traces of levmetamfetamine. It was not on the banned list, but he still lost his medal as a result, even though he was not part of the scandal of cheating.

**Tracey Crouch:** There are always exceptions that make it difficult to create a rule. The hon. Member for Motherwell and Wishaw (Marion Fellows) talked about her constituent and the hon. Member for Stirling mentioned Sharapova. Of course, there are always lists of banned substances, but substances evolve and some people get innocently caught up in that. The athlete and all those around the athlete have a responsibility to ensure that whatever the athlete is taking is not on the banned list. We have deep sympathy for people such as the constituent of the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey (Drew Hendry), but we have to apply rules to everybody. It is a complex issue, but we should remember that the vast majority of athletes go to the Olympic games and compete in all other sports in a clean way and with integrity.

Without doubt, the International Association of Athletics Federations vote to ban Russian track and field athletes from international competition not only reflected the strength of feeling about cheating; it also told the world that doping will not be tolerated. Although it is important that Russia was sanctioned, it is equally important that the next steps, such as ensuring future compliance with the code, were addressed immediately.

It is reassuring that, as part of a five-point plan for Rio, the International Olympic Committee announced that Russian athletes outside of track and field, and countries currently non-compliant with the World Anti-Doping Agency code, will now be subject to strict additional pre-Rio testing before being allowed to compete at the games. It is only right that those competing in Rio can do so in the knowledge that athletes from non-compliant countries have been tested and declared clean ahead of competition. That should give us added confidence that our British athletes are competing against clean athletes.

It would be naive to think that the testing methods and intelligence expertise in operation across the world counteract all doping. The desire of those to cheat and profit from doing so will always mean that dopers will do all they can to try to be one step ahead of the testing process. The hon. Member for Stirling mentioned the constant development in pharmaceuticals and he is right. We have seen that in other areas of legislation, such as that on legal highs. However, with that evolution comes better testing. As we have seen in recent weeks, the re-testing of samples, from both Beijing and London, has found a number of positive tests. That is a result of the ever-evolving testing and intelligence techniques, and it sends a message that there is no hiding place for any athlete who chooses to cheat.

On the point made by the hon. Member for Motherwell and Wishaw, the IOC's "Olympic Agenda 2020" recommends that athletes who lose out on a medal to athletes who test positive receive their medals. I sincerely hope that the IOC takes forward that recommendation.

[Tracey Crouch]

The honourable thing would be to retrospectively take away a medal if it is proven that an athlete has cheated.

The hon. Member for Stirling mentioned WADA and the need for better transparency and accountability. I am not sure whether he is aware that I was recently appointed to WADA's foundation board, which is the agency's decision-making body. That is an important position for the UK at a time when a united, global approach to eliminating doping is required. The UK has long been an advocate of tough sanctions on doping and I look forward to working with my international partners to maintain the integrity of every sport.

At a national level, we cannot be complacent, and we are reviewing the effectiveness of our legislation to combat doping. Existing legislation under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 carries sentences of up to 14 years' imprisonment for trafficking and supply of banned substances. The world anti-doping code now includes an automatic four-year ban, under which an athlete misses an Olympic games cycle. The review is currently under way and, should it become clear that stronger criminal sanctions are needed, we will not hesitate to act.

The hon. Member for Stirling is right to speak about the work of the University of Stirling with such pride, and I was interested to hear about the work that it continues to undertake. I would be delighted to meet with representatives of the university, and he can feel free to contact the office to arrange that.

The reaction of the international community in response to the doping headlines over the past 12 months sends a powerful message ahead of Rio, not least that a successful track and field nation such as Russia can be banned from an Olympic games. It is an unfortunate truth that doping is a part of sport and will always be a threat as long as people look to gain an advantage. As a result, we must never be complacent in the fight against drugs cheats. Every positive test hardens our resolve in the fight against doping. For Rio and beyond, it is important that we give clean athletes the level playing field on which to compete, which their hard work and integrity deserve and from which the next generation will be inspired.

*Question put and agreed to.*

4.24 pm

*Sitting suspended.*

## Electric and Hybrid Electric Cars

4.30 pm

**Neil Parish** (Tiverton and Honiton) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered electric and hybrid electric cars.

It is a great pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Turner. It is great to see the Minister, who I am sure is very interested in electric cars.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Andrew Jones):** I am.

**Neil Parish:** I look forward to having electric cars running all along the A303 and A30, with that road, along with the A358, completely dualled—that is an aside for the Minister, but I am sure he has already got the message.

The electric and hybrid electric car market is booming in the UK, with the number of hybrid electric cars increasing by 31% and the number of electric cars by 52% in the past year alone. Electric vehicles decrease emissions, reduce noise pollution and, critically, can help to dramatically improve air quality in our city centres.

**Sir Greg Knight** (East Yorkshire) (Con): I declare an interest as chair of the all-party historic vehicles group and the owner of several historic vehicles. Does my hon. Friend agree that we should not accompany the incentivising of electric vehicles with a penalty against those who seek to keep part of Britain's motoring heritage on the road?

**Neil Parish:** If we can dramatically reduce pollution levels by using electric cars, particularly in our city centres, we should be able to allow—dare I say it?—a little pollution from older vehicles. It is a matter of balance, and I agree with my right hon. Friend. I prefer a carrot for people to move over to electric cars, rather than a stick for those who do not.

The April 2016 report on air quality by the Select Committee on Environment, Food and Rural Affairs stated that each year there are between 40,000 and 50,000 early deaths due to air quality problems. Polluting vehicles are part of the problem, especially in our inner cities. The UK has a legal obligation under EU directives to address air quality. Of course, we can probably now have our own directives, but most people in this country would agree that it is good to set a target to reduce nitrogen dioxide levels to 40 mg per cubic metre or less and to ensure that, particularly in our inner cities, not only our cars but our vans and lorries—the vehicles that are actually polluting—are electric or hybrid.

**Michelle Donelan** (Chippenham) (Con): Will my hon. Friend acknowledge that such measures would dramatically change areas, such as Bradford on Avon in my constituency, that suffer heavily from air pollution problems due to huge levels of congestion? Small pockets like that, as well as the big cities, could be dramatically transformed.

**Neil Parish:** My hon. Friend makes an interesting point. People who drive an electric car, especially a pure electric car, are not starting and stopping their engine in

queues of traffic, where the highest levels of pollution are often found. It will take a little while to get to the number of electric cars that we want, but it will make a dramatic difference in areas such as Bradford on Avon, which she represents so well.

Now that we have left the EU, it is vital that the Government double down on air quality issues. *[Interruption.]* Well, we are about to leave—it is rumoured that there was a referendum. The new targets that we set must be as rigorous as those set by the EU. During the referendum campaign, nobody on either side argued against that—before the hon. Member for Brent North (Barry Gardiner) glares at me, I was actually on the remain side. We must set tough targets on both the location and levels of pollution, because we all want a clean environment. The Mayor of London has outlined even tougher measures to address the problems, including a £10 pollution charge and a faster roll-out of clean buses, so everyone is working towards that aim.

I will now talk about the Norwegian model—not for entry to the single market, but for electric cars. Some 25% of all new cars in Norway are plug-in electric vehicles, which compares with 1.3% in the UK. Although we have had interesting increases in the number of electric cars, which I mentioned earlier, those increases were from a low base. The increase in Norway was due to a long-term infrastructure drive launched in 2009-10 and incentives for electric cars, which include the abolition of import tax; reduced annual registration tax, or road tax; no purchase taxes; road toll exemptions; 0% VAT; access to bus lanes; free access to road ferries; and guaranteed financial incentives until 2018. Norway has been very ambitious, and I expect the Minister to be equally ambitious.

**John Howell (Henley) (Con):** My hon. Friend is delivering a passionate exposition of his case. Will he join me in welcoming research such as that taking place at the Culham Centre for Fusion Energy in my constituency? The centre is particularly researching batteries, not only for electric cars but for driverless cars. The new generation of batteries that are being produced will power such cars for even longer.

**Neil Parish:** My hon. Friend makes a good point. Battery capacity affects mileage, the length of time between charges and, of course, how long the batteries last. One problem with the early hybrid cars was that their batteries did not last long enough. Such research is therefore key, as is research on hydrogen cars.

The two main barriers to increasing the number of electric cars are the number of charging points and the cost. According to Zap-Map.com, the UK currently has some 11,400 charge points at 4,000 different locations. By comparison, Norway has 6,500 charging stations at 1,580 locations. Norway has only a thirteenth the population of Britain, so comparatively it has many more charging points. The UK cannot be left behind. In Britain, on average, there are 4 miles between each public charging point; in Wales, it is a full 12 miles. Clear and visible charging points are a crucial way of encouraging more members of the public to invest in electric cars. The Government should commit to installing public electric chargers within 1 mile, on average, of every home in Britain—that is what the Minister has to do.

**Chris Davies (Brecon and Radnorshire) (Con):** I am delighted that my hon. Friend has mentioned Wales, and I am sure the Welsh football team will be in everyone's thoughts tonight. Many right hon. and hon. Members, and indeed the Minister, will know that Riversimple, a hydrogen-based car company in my Brecon and Radnorshire constituency, was out in New Palace Yard just a few weeks ago. I hope the Minister will tell us how the Government can support such interesting schemes and businesses. Such home-grown technology can help Britain to lead the way.

**Neil Parish:** I could not agree more. Although this debate is about electric cars, hydrogen will also play a really important role. May I take this opportunity to wish Wales all the very best for tonight? May they get through to the final, because England cannot seem to manage to do it. I hope Wales do very well.

A project in my constituency in Devon is currently considering a car hire hub at junction 27 of the M5. People will be able to come by train to Tiverton Parkway and hire electric cars. It has not been built yet but I hope it soon will be, because it is a really good idea for Devon and for the countryside.

It is also vital that the Government ensure that many of the new charging points offer rapid charging, either by alternating current or direct current. Rapid AC chargers can charge an electric vehicle up to 80% in 30 minutes. That is essential, because one reason why people do not always buy electric cars is that they fear they will take a long time to charge and that they do not travel a great distance. In 2015, only 20% of UK chargers were rapid chargers. When the Government roll out new charging points, they need to ensure that the majority of them are rapid, so that drivers can quickly recharge and continue their journey. The Government should ensure that every petrol station has rapid charging facilities.

**James Heappey (Wells) (Con):** My hon. Friend makes an excellent point. Our hon. Friend the Member for Montgomeryshire (Glyn Davies) secured a similar debate in this Chamber a few weeks ago, in which I made the point that when the petrol combustion engine was rolling out at the beginning of the last century, the cars came before the petrol stations. Rather than focusing on the provision of charging points, the Government should focus on incentivising the take-up of electric cars. The charging points will surely follow.

**Neil Parish:** My hon. Friend makes an interesting point, and I shall move on to incentivising people to buy electric cars to get more of them on the road. However, I emphasise that the two aspects need to come largely together. The shortage of charging points may be one reason for people not buying the cars in the first place. We have to have both.

Actions the Government have taken include the plug-in grant of up to £5,000 for cars and £8,000 for vans; setting up the Office for Low Emission Vehicles; additional conversion funding for vans and lorries; funding for all Government car fleets to go electric—I see the odd Land Rover and Range Rover here outside, but I think all Ministers ought to be in electric cars—and tax benefits and exemptions for electric vehicles.

The Government should supercharge their efforts to incentivise electric vehicles. The Chancellor has rightly cut fuel duty since 2010; the Brexiteers raised the prospect

[Neil Parish]

of exempting fuel from VAT during the referendum campaign, but they seem to have gone remarkably quiet about it since then. There should be a similar push to incentivise the use of electric and hybrid vehicles in the Department for Transport and in Government more widely.

What about future policy development? Some innovative towns and cities, such as Milton Keynes, have new schemes—free parking, charging hubs, bus lane priorities—to boost electric vehicles. The Government should copy local authority best practice on electric cars. They must recognise that electric vehicles are part of the future of our transport. Electric car registrations are predicted to outstrip petrol and diesel vehicles by 2027, and it would be good to achieve that before then. Private car ownership is dropping in many cities, including London, with a move towards car sharing, car pooling and taxi services. Shared transport becoming cheaper should encourage the business community to adopt rapid electric cars more quickly. Transport businesses support electric vehicles, because they are reliable and efficient. The Government must be alive to incentivising businesses, through better infrastructure and lower cost, to move their car fleets over to electric vehicles.

To ensure that electric and hybrid vehicles, which are much quieter than conventional vehicles, are safe for blind and partially sighted people, we must make sure that they make some sound so that people know they are coming. It is a huge advantage to have very quiet vehicles, but if they are too quiet there can be a danger.

I am now getting to my recommendations—I am sure the Minister will be pleased that I have made a few along the way. Electric and hybrid vehicles are the future; they are cleaner, quieter, greener and go a long way to reducing air quality problems. The Government should greatly enhance current programmes. Fewer than 1% of cars on British roads are hybrid or electric vehicles at the moment, so we need to go much faster. The Government's modern transport Bill will offer a great opportunity to take the necessary steps. I know we have heard this many times over recent months, but let us copy the Norwegian model. If we put the infrastructure in place and create the incentives, electric car usage will rocket.

Let us have a Government commitment to rapid AC or DC chargers within an average of 1 mile of every home in Britain, not the current 4 miles; proper, generous incentives for electric vehicles for both business and private ownership, including tax breaks, toll exemptions and access to bus lanes; an integrated part of the gov.uk website that shows every electric public charging point in the UK and how many rapid charging points are available; and a statutory obligation for every new petrol station to contain electric car charging points. Let's get this show on the road. I look forward to the Minister's response.

4.47 pm

**Alan Brown** (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship for the first time, Mr Turner. I congratulate the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish) on securing this debate. One quite good thing about Westminster Hall debates is that they give me a chance to agree with

Conservative Members, and I pretty much agreed with everything he said, including his recommendations and conclusions. He mentioned the need for continued tough regulations and targets on climate change and air quality after Brexit. I agree with that, but from a Scottish perspective I hope Scotland will remain in the EU, as the Scottish people wish.

The standard motion in a Westminster Hall debate is "That this House has considered" the topic. By default, for electric and hybrid cars, the answer is yes. The House has already considered the matter, and there have been different Government policies on it. However, those policies have changed, which is part of the reason why electric vehicle uptake is not as high as was originally predicted.

Everyone agrees that electric cars are good for the environment and they have the bonus that their running costs are estimated at 2p to 3p per mile, which is way cheaper than 16p per mile for the average family car that runs on conventional fuels. But, as the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton pointed out, up-front costs are a barrier to many people being able to purchase these cars, so the uptake has been way too small for us to start to make inroads in climate change targets. The Government need to take more action, and that action has to be joined up across the entire energy sector if it is to contribute to meeting climate change targets. I emphasise that I agree with the hon. Gentleman's recommendations.

**Sir Greg Knight:** Does the hon. Gentleman agree that another barrier to many of us leading by example and using an electric car is the range of the vehicle? If he or I wanted to travel from our constituencies to Westminster by electric car, we could not currently do so without breaking the journey to recharge it.

**Alan Brown:** I agree with the right hon. Gentleman. The point was made earlier that the up-front cost is one barrier, but another is the availability of charge points and the distance cars can travel. I hope to touch on that a little later.

In 2011, the coalition Government published their strategy paper for electric vehicles, which predicted that between 1% and 2% of new car registrations in 2015 would be electric. That was a very modest target, but sales for the third quarter of 2015 were less than 1%—effectively, the target was missed by 100%. Between 2010 and 2015, only 42,700 out of 3.4 million new cars registered were electric. That is only 1.3%, so there is a long way to go. A 2050 horizon for nearly every car being electric is a reasonable timeframe and an acceptable target for the Government but, if we are to achieve that, instinctively, it feels that we need a much higher uptake than we currently have. To achieve that will require more Government action. Will the Minister explain what additional steps are planned?

We heard earlier that that wee independent oil-rich country called Norway has managed to achieve a market share for electric vehicles of 18%—that is what my notes say; if it is 25%, as the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton said, that is even better—so there are clearly lessons to be learned.

**Douglas Chapman** (Dunfermline and West Fife) (SNP): The all-party group on energy heard last week from Statoil, the Norwegian state oil company. It said that,

although setting tough targets on emissions is important, we really need to take action to change people's behaviour. Does my hon. Friend agree that Norway is making a huge contribution in that regard? If we could mirror what Norway is doing—for example, by taking similar fiscal steps—that would be a good model on which the UK could base its plans.

**Alan Brown:** I totally agree. It is ironic that Norway has made so much money from oil but is now re-investing it and planning for the future by reducing emissions. There are clear lessons to be learned from how Norway set up an oil fund for future investment.

I return to Government policy. Further proof of inconsistency is shown by the fact that in March 2011 the coalition Government stated that by June 2011 they would publish a strategy to deliver 8,500 charging points throughout the UK. Come June 2011, the emphasis was on how charging would mainly take place at people's homes. That was seen as a retreat from the original commitment. I agree with the logic—most people would prefer to charge their cars overnight at a charge point in their home—but in cities in particular that option is not available to many people. It is now July 2016, and there are still only 4,094 connection points, so it is clear that the planned accessibility is not there and that, as we have heard from other Members, that is a barrier to the increased use of electric cars.

In 2014, it was pledged that there would be a rapid charge point at every motorway station and a network of 500 rapid chargers throughout the country by the end of 2014. In 2016, there are still only 689 rapid chargers, so it is fair to say that that target was missed. Can the Minister update us on the status of the plan for a rapid charger at every motorway station?

General availability is patchy as well. Some 33% of connectors are in London and the south-east. I am pleased to say that Scotland is punching above its weight, with 15% of the UK's total. That is partly thanks to the Scottish Government's investment of £11 million in 900 publicly available charging bays. There seems to be ambiguity about charge points, which are the locations, and the number of connectors. That ambiguity seems to suit the Government when they answer questions, because the number of chargers gets conflated with the number of charge point locations.

**Michelle Donelan:** Does the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that certain authorities, such as Wiltshire unitary authority, have led the way and are ensuring that there are multiple charging points? In fact, there are many in my constituency. I agree that coverage is patchy in certain areas, but there are areas that we should hold up as beacons of how to do it right.

**Alan Brown** *rose*—

**Mr Andrew Turner (in the Chair):** Order. I should inform Members that, when the hon. Gentleman has finished, there will be five minutes for each speaker.

**Alan Brown:** I will take that as a cue to hurry up, Mr Turner. I appreciate the point made by the hon. Member for Chippenham (Michelle Donelan): good practice should be held up and rolled out.

There is no doubt that the Government can and do drive behaviour. Things just cannot be left to the free market. Previous changes in road tax certainly led me to select a hybrid electric vehicle as a company car—the tax was lower—but for others diesel cars are currently more financially accessible and are seen as having great mileage coverage. We know, though, that the flip side is that diesel vehicles cause the highest pollution in terms of particle emissions. That is further proof that a better long-term strategy is required.

**Mr Andrew Turner (in the Chair):** Order. Are you about to finish your remarks?

**Alan Brown:** Yes. Sorry, Mr Turner.

It needs to be about more than just cars. The Scottish Government have led the way—Aberdeen now has Europe's largest fleet of hydrogen-powered buses—and are working towards a low-carbon economy, as the UK Government should be. This debate is related to renewables targets, which have not been helped by the removal of subsidies for renewables. Finally, if the use of electric vehicles increases, we need a regulatory framework for their maintenance and a qualification regime for the technicians who will be working on them. A 500 V hydrogen cell battery cannot be tinkered with lightly.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Andrew Turner (in the Chair):** Order. Members should note that three people are down to speak and they have until 5.10 pm, when I shall call the Front Benchers. I am sure Members can work it out for themselves.

4.56 pm

**Rebecca Pow (Taunton Deane) (Con):** I commend my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish) for bringing this important subject to our attention. As a member of both the Environmental Audit Committee and the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, which my hon. Friend chairs, I have been involved in two air-quality inquiries. The statistics are absolutely stark. We have to take action to improve air quality, not only on environmental grounds but very much on health grounds. Something like 40,000 to 50,000 people die every year because of air pollution, which is absolutely shocking.

I commend the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for taking steps towards a clean air strategy. I welcome that, but we need to do a lot more. In this brave new post-EU world, I urge the Government to bring all that legislation on air pollution back here under our own hat and keep to all the stringent targets that have been set. I am sure the Minister will take that on board because it is really important.

Even in Taunton Deane we have two serious air pollution hotspots. I know the Minister will be interested to hear that one is on the A358—a road the upgrade of which we are desperate for and the Minister has assured me we will get—at Henlade. The upgrade we are hoping for should help to tackle the congestion. The other hotspot is in East Reach. Such problems do need to be tackled, which is where this debate comes in.

[*Rebecca Pow*]

Electric and hybrid cars will really help—some are totally emission-free—but we need to encourage people to drive them. A Department for Transport survey showed that only 5% of people in the UK drive an electric car. The survey also found that 56% of people had never even thought about buying an electric car, so we have a long way to go and need to spread the message further.

What is the way forward? We need financial incentives and many of the things referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton and Honiton. I particularly urge the Government to consider the Norwegian methods. We must also remember that education is important in getting the messages across. People do not realise how cheap electric and hybrid cars are to run and that the purchase prices are not as expensive as they think. Per mile, electric cars are five times cheaper to run than an average car. They carry no vehicle excise duty and the costs can be as little as 2p a mile. My hon. Friend the Member for Louth and Horncastle (Victoria Atkins) has an electric car and told me in the Tea Room that it costs only £8 to charge it fully—and she runs miles on that. It is really a no-brainer. In Parliament, we have two fast chargers and quite a lot of slow charging points, but it is still not enough.

**Douglas Chapman:** Will the hon. Lady give way?

**Rebecca Pow:** Will that give me more time?

**Douglas Chapman:** On the subject of charging, there is currently no requirement for local authorities to provide electric charging points. Although it would be useful to receive revised guidance from the Minister, would it be preferable if local authorities were obliged to provide charging points, so that anybody who decided to go electric would never face the threat of running out of power mid-journey? Does the hon. Lady accept that point?

**Rebecca Pow:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for raising that matter because I was about to move on to it. It is such an important point and other people have already referred to it. In Taunton Deane, for example, I was involved in the launch of the first ever charging point. That was in 2012 and it was at Hestercombe Gardens, which is now an internationally famous landscape and gardening site. The person launching that charging point was Michael Eavis himself, from Glastonbury, and he was driving the very first all-electric car; he was trialling it.

Although that was a great start, there is a dearth of charging points in my constituency. There are some at the park-and-rides and I think there is one at an electric bike shop, but sadly that is it. How can we expect people to buy these cars if they are uncertain about whether they can get from A to B? For example, on Friday I am venturing to Dorset to talk about ancient trees, but how can I set off in an electric car if I do not know whether I will get back or not because I cannot charge it up on the way? In these rural areas, there are no charging points.

This is a really big issue, but I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton and Honiton has raised it today. As a result of my raising it with the

leader of my council, he has realised that it is a big issue and he is now feeding it into the new district centre plans and future transport strategy to ensure that the council addresses the issue, because it is really important.

I will end with a few upbeat facts about electric and hybrid cars. I went to the test of the car in New Palace Yard the other day and it was absolutely fascinating. I thought the car was quite trendy and state-of-the-art. I could see myself in it; it was rather lovely.

A lot of these models are well-built and designed to last; they are not throwaway culture, like a lot of our other cars. They are all about miles, so they have less impact on the environment, consideration of which I am particularly keen to encourage. Many of the models are designed to be built locally, so we could have them built in our own constituencies. They are not exactly kit cars, but we could bring back the industry and make it local. In our brave new post-EU world, perhaps we will have to think about that, rather than being quite so tied to the German car industry. There could be great mileage in that idea.

**Mr Andrew Turner (in the Chair):** Order. Can you please draw your remarks to a close?

**Rebecca Pow:** Thank you, Mr Chairman; I am absolutely about to draw my remarks to a close.

Electric and hybrid cars are a great way forward for a new and sustainable future. I fully support my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton and Honiton, and I really hope that the Minister is going to think about some of the incentives. Get sparky about this and get electrically charged.

5.2 pm

**Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP):** It is a pleasure to speak in this debate and I congratulate the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish) on securing it. He does excellent work in the other Committees that he chairs and it is good to know that he is also knowledgeable about electric cars.

In the very short time that I have, I will make a few comments. The global race to get ahead in the hybrid car game is really heating up. An example of that, as the hon. Gentleman said, is the hydrogen car that we had here just the week before last. I believe that there is an incentive from competition when it comes to performance of such cars and their price.

Let me take a few examples from the continent to show what other countries are doing in the race to consolidate the electric and hybrid cars industry. Some of them are from the EU; I have to say that I am glad that we are out of the EU, but I know that we cannot ignore the very important things that are happening within the EU. The German Government are giving a €1 billion subsidy to boost electric cars. There is a €4,000 incentive for each electric car, with a €3,000 incentive for a plug-in hybrid car. At present, there are 50,000 electric cars in Germany, but they hope to increase that figure. German automotive companies such as Volkswagen, Daimler and BMW have signed up to a programme that is open to all German brands and foreign brands.

The Netherlands is another country that has done a lot, although I have to say, in all honesty, that some have perhaps been a bit extreme. They were trying to vote

through a motion calling on the country to ban sales of new petrol and diesel cars, starting in 2025. That has not succeeded—at long last there is some sense when it comes to passing legislation—but the fact that they were considering that is an indication of how far they are prepared to take these matters.

Record numbers of electric vehicles continue to be sold in the UK year on year. In the last five years, more than 60,000 plug-in models have been registered. I say this to the Minister: credit where credit is due. The Government's "Go Ultra Low" scheme estimates that by 2027 electric-powered cars could dominate the market. I am not entirely convinced by that, but that is what the stats seem to indicate, with some 1.3 million sold every year. If that is the case and if that is what the Government are aiming at, it would be good news.

**Rebecca Pow:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Jim Shannon:** I am sorry, but it would be unfair on the hon. Member for Wells (James Heappey), who is following me.

The Government-backed plug-in car grant scheme has been instrumental in giving buyers an incentive to switch to electric power. I am conscious of the time, Mr Turner, so I will make this my last point. I have said this before in questions to this Minister and others with responsibility for the issue—I think another hon. Member also referred to this in an intervention—but what I want to know is: what comes first? Is it the plug-ins and the charging points or is it the new cars? They both have to go together. What comes first, the chicken or the egg? They have to go together, so let us look at that.

We cannot do it in Newtownards or in Northern Ireland, even though the Government have given a large amount of money to Northern Ireland through the Assembly to incentivise the process. I welcome that, but if we really want to do things in a constructive way, we need to have the charging points in the streets, to incentivise us as vehicle drivers to want to have an electric car, because we know it will get us from here to Coleraine and back or from here to Belfast. If we can do that as cheaply as the hon. Member for Taunton Deane (Rebecca Pow) suggested, I believe that is something we should do.

5.6 pm

**James Heappey (Wells) (Con):** I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish) on securing this debate.

I am enthusiastic about electric vehicles but realistic about the pace at which they can be rolled out, so while I will of course talk about the digitised and electrified nirvana that awaits, it is important to recognise that biofuels will probably need to do the heavy lifting in the meantime, as we try to meet our decarbonisation targets on the roads. I want to talk briefly about three areas of Government policy: fuel duty, low-carbon generation capacity and the preparedness of our energy system.

On tax, road duty is worth about £27.2 billion a year, which is about 4% of the Exchequer's money. That is a significant amount of money that Her Majesty's Treasury will not be ready to give up in a hurry. As far as I can work out, there are just over 30 million cars on the road, driving just under 400 billion kilometres a year, which

means an average of about 13,200 kilometres, 760 litres of petrol and therefore about £460 of fuel duty per vehicle. The big challenge for the Department for Transport is to work out how that £460 of fuel duty per vehicle can be transferred to some other tax, be that car tax—although then we could be talking about paying £500 or £600 of car tax per vehicle—or a road pricing scheme. However, there is no way that I can see the Treasury giving up that tax take all together, so surely the DFT has a plan for what might go in its place.

On generation capacity, Bloomberg envisages that, on current expectations, by 2040 electric cars will require about 1,900 terawatt-hours of electricity around the world. That represents about 10% of what we are currently generating globally. That is quite a challenge, because the easiest thing to do is to build gas-fired power stations or, worse, coal-fired stations to meet that increased requirement for generation immediately. However, then we would not actually be achieving any sort of decarbonisation, because the cars would be charged with electricity that has been produced from dirty fuels, which are potentially more polluting and send more carbon into the atmosphere than using some modern petrol engines.

Therefore, we need to be focused on creating the renewable generation capacity to meet that increase in demand. However, people will want to plug in their car and charge it when it needs to be charged. They will not be willing to do so only when the wind is blowing or the sun is shining, so in parallel with embracing the opportunities provided by EVs, we need to ensure that we are considering the opportunities for storage of power and demand-side response within our energy system, so that renewables can be made to work.

Finally, on the preparedness of our energy system, Ofgem's "My Electric Avenue" trial has demonstrated that there are significant limitations in the ability of our current distribution networks to provide charge, particularly when cars are clustered. As I understand it, around 30% to 40% of our energy system would immediately need to be improved if we are to make sure that charging is realistic. This is not just about the number of charging points; it is about the ability of the energy network behind those charging points to carry the energy to the required areas so that cars can be charged.

The Secretary of State has been to see the Energy and Climate Change Committee, on which I sit, on many occasions, and she has told us of a mythical cross-departmental Cabinet-level working group that is working on all these things. We have pushed her quite hard on who sits on it, how often it meets and where we can see the minutes of those meetings, but they do not seem to be forthcoming. Will the Minister reassure us that the Department of Energy and Climate Change, the Department for Transport and the Treasury are working on these issues in parallel? If he can give us an update on any of the issues I have raised this afternoon, that would be helpful.

5.10 pm

**Drew Hendry (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey) (SNP):** It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship for the first time, Mr Turner. I congratulate the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish) on bringing this important subject for debate today. I agree with a lot of what he said. This is an opportunity

[*Drew Hendry*]

for us for the future. I also reflect his ambition to see electric cars going up dualled carriageways. In my constituency, I am delighted that the Scottish Government are investing in dualling the A9, and I am looking forward to seeing electric cars on it soon. He is also right about the contribution of clean air and carbon reduction and mitigation effects. He is also right to call for faster action. There is an imperative to move more quickly to ensure that more people can take advantage.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Alan Brown) talked about the impact of energy policy on the ability to use these vehicles, which I will come to. He was right to point out that Scotland has 15% of UK rapid chargers. We are punching above our weight, as he said. He made an important point about ensuring that there is some maintenance regulation. The safety of people working on these vehicles—the kind of voltages that these vehicles carry have the potential to kill instantly—must be a priority going forward.

The hon. Members for Taunton Deane (Rebecca Pow) and for Strangford (Jim Shannon) rightly talked about infrastructure being vital. If we are to encourage the use of such vehicles, we have to see infrastructure coming forward. The hon. Member for Wells (James Heapey) was absolutely correct that the journey is not only for electric vehicles; alternative fuels will be involved, and I will touch on that if I have a moment or two. I do think, however, that it is a bit of a stretch of the imagination to ask the UK Government to come up with a plan for these things.

The Scottish Government have an ambitious climate change target that includes phasing out all petrol and diesel-fuelled vehicles by 2050, although I am sure we will continue to see classic car events to look at the history. The electric vehicle road map, “Switched On Scotland”, which was published in 2013, sets out the Scottish Government’s ambitious vision to free Scotland’s towns, cities and communities from the damaging emissions of petrol and diesel-fuelled vehicles by 2050. This year has already seen the introduction of more than 200 electric vehicles across Scottish local authorities.

To support the delivery of that vision, the Scottish Government have invested more than £11 million since 2011 in the development of ChargePlace Scotland—a network of more than 900 publicly available electric vehicle charging bays. We are also supporting electric vehicle uptake through our “Switched On Fleets” initiative, which offers free, evidence-based analysis of public sector fleets, in turn identifying new opportunities for the cost-effective deployment of electric vehicles. A total of £2.5 million of grant funding is being offered to each of the 32 community planning partnerships between 2014 and 2016 to help them to buy or lease electric vehicles. Through that scheme, we expect to introduce more than 250 new electric vehicles into the public sector fleet, reducing fuel use and emissions in the process.

The “Switched On Scotland” road map focuses specifically on battery electric vehicles and plug-in hybrid vehicles, which are collectively referred to as plug-in vehicles. Electric vehicles have a positive impact on health, wellbeing and the environment. They can help

to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve local air quality and reduce noise pollution. In Scotland, a third of all car journeys are less than two miles long, and nearly a quarter of all trips are one mile or less. Regular cars making those journeys emit a disproportionate amount of carbon into the air, whereas electric vehicles provide a cleaner method of transport.

I do not have time to go into all the issues, but I want to point out that the Scottish Government have been a key funding partner, along with the European Union, in the Aberdeen hydrogen project, which has seen Europe’s largest fleet of hydrogen-powered buses entering service on two routes in the city. As has been mentioned, we fully intend to reflect Scotland’s overwhelming democratic vote and retain our EU status, and we look forward to continuing that into the future.

Electric vehicles require power to run them, and the Scottish Government have done an incredible amount of work to ensure that renewable energy powers 100% of our energy use by 2020.

**Mr Andrew Turner (in the Chair):** Order.

**Drew Hendry:** I am just coming to the finish, Mr Turner.

That work is not being helped by the Tory Government’s policies on renewable energy. They need a rethink.

5.15 pm

**Barry Gardiner (Brent North) (Lab):** It is a great pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Turner. It is also a great pleasure to respond to the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish), who was as perspicacious as ever in introducing the debate. He has been plugging away at this issue for quite some time—no pun intended. I also welcome the contributions of the other Members who have spoken, particularly the sheer enthusiasm of the hon. Member for Taunton Deane (Rebecca Pow) and the analysis of the hon. Member for Wells (James Heapey), who made an important contribution to the debate.

The 60th anniversary of the Clean Air Act 1956 came this week. The hon. Member for Taunton Deane was absolutely right to refer to the number of people who die from polluted air in this country—the figure is 52,500 per annum. If that was the number of people dying from road accidents each year, the Minister would not still be in his place. The Government would have a crisis on their hands, and they would have had to respond, but because air pollution is a silent killer it has not got real traction in government.

I welcome the opportunity that this debate gives us to raise the issue up the agenda, particularly since the Mayor of London launched his air quality campaign on the landmark occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Clean Air Act. The former Mayor of London, sometimes known as the former future leader of the Conservative party, pledged in May 2009 that 25,000 charge points would be installed across the capital by 2015. The actual figure today is fewer than 1,000. In fact, the Government have said that they are committed to

“ensuring almost every car and van is a zero emission vehicle by 2050.”

I welcome that, but a target without a plan is just a wish, and so far the Government do not have a plan.

The Committee on Climate Change's progress report to Parliament last week showed that the UK is set to miss its legal climate commitments for the 2030s by 47%. That is a staggering shortfall. Boiled down, the reason is that outside the power sector there has been "almost no progress in the rest of the economy".

One of the principal reasons that the committee gives for that slow progress on decarbonising is the lack of progress on decarbonising transport. It says that

"improved vehicle efficiency has been offset by increased demand for travel as the economy has grown and fuel prices have fallen."

The committee notes the progress on funding being made available for electric vehicles up to 2018, but highlights that there are no vehicle efficiency standards beyond 2020. The long-term target of 2050 is simply hot air without a medium-term delivery plan.

I want to respect the Minister's time, so I will move over a number of comments that I wished to make, but I will pick up on the important points that the hon. Member for Wells made about the structure of the network and the importance of capacity. He is absolutely right in what he said about power generation—there is no point in running clean cars on dirty fuel.

The interesting point about battery technology is that it is now moving on at such a pace that the modular packs will be able to be fitted to the properties and, if we have a disaggregated grid, localised solar and wind will feed into each house when it is being produced and into the modular pack. Those packs can then be used to charge the vehicles overnight in the home. We are moving to a structure in which that is possible, but it requires the Minister to do precisely what he was challenged to do by the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey (Drew Hendry) with the mythical inter-ministerial group on clean growth. Will the Minister speak with his colleagues across Government to make sure that there is an integrated solution and not simply a transport solution?

5.20 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Andrew Jones):** I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish) on securing the debate and on imaginatively including the dualling of the A358, the A303 and the A30 in his speech. It is great to see the level of enthusiasm for electric vehicles. They can deliver a huge environmental benefit for our country and secure the future success of one of Great Britain's great leading industries. That is why we are committed to positioning the UK as a world leader in electric vehicle uptake and manufacture.

As colleagues have articulated, electric vehicles deliver many benefits. We are all aware of the air quality challenges in our towns and cities. We will introduce clean air zones in five cities to urgently tackle the worst locations, encourage greener transport and introduce targeted access charges where necessary. We have already seen some changes made by the new Mayor of London, such as the ultra-low emission zone.

**Sir Greg Knight:** Will the Minister give way?

**Andrew Jones:** I am under extreme time pressure. If I have any time, I will come right back to my right hon. Friend.

The UK is not alone in addressing the environmental impacts of road transport. Action is taking place on a global basis to compel manufacturers to bring forward an increasing choice of cleaner and more efficient vehicles, to meet growing consumer demand and expectations. Our automotive sector has a great history of innovation, and we are seeing some of that now. With the help of a strong domestic market, we are in a great position to benefit from global demand for electric vehicles as the transition takes hold in the coming years.

A number of Members have mentioned the referendum. Let me be clear that our determination on electric vehicles and standards is not in any way changed by the result of the recent referendum. The drivers of transition to zero emissions are global in nature and will continue to apply regardless of our place in Europe.

The benefits of electric vehicles include securing the manufacturing of the future and health benefits. Let me run through the actions that we are taking. In our manifesto, we committed to the goal that by 2050 nearly every car and van on our roads should be a zero-emission vehicle. That will require all new cars and vans on sale to be zero-emission by around 2040. We have in place one of the most comprehensive support packages anywhere in the world, with committed funding of more than £600 million in this spending review period. Progress to date puts us in a very encouraging position. Vehicles that used to be exotic are now considered commonplace on our streets. In total, about 28,000 ultra-low emission vehicles were sold in the UK last year, which is more than in all the years since 2010 combined. We have had more than 70,000 claims for our plug-in car and van grants. I am particularly pleased that many of those vehicles are manufactured by Nissan at its Sunderland plant, which last year produced 20% of all electric cars sold in the EU.

A number of colleagues have spoken about the importance of charge points. There is an ever-expanding network of charge points for electric vehicle drivers. We have more than 11,000 public charge points, including 850 rapid charge points—the largest network in Europe.

I note the comparisons with Norway. Norway's record is very impressive, and we work with the Norwegians and other leading markets. Our £40 million city scheme will introduce some of the measures that have been mentioned, such as bus lane access, free parking and rapid charging hubs. It is also worth noting that Norway has very high levels of vehicle taxation, which I am not generally in favour of. Many colleagues have spoken about that today.

There are 60,000 domestic charge points, which offer the cheapest and easiest way to charge up. Latest statistics suggest the average distance to the nearest charge point is just over 4 miles in Great Britain. I want to increase that density and reduce the distance even further.

One of the most important measures in support of electric vehicles is the plug-in car grant scheme, which provides a direct discount to consumers on the cost of an eligible plug-in car or van.

**Barry Gardiner:** On that point, will the Minister give way?

**Andrew Jones:** No, I am running short of time.

[*Andrew Jones*]

The grant currently stands at £8,000 for vans, £4,500 for pure electric vehicles and £2,500 for plug-in hybrids. We are spending at least £400 million on the scheme in the current spending review period, and with further incentives through the tax system, there are clear financial benefits to assist consumers with the up-front costs of electric vehicles.

The initial provision of charging and hydrogen refuelling infrastructure for electric vehicles, which many Members have spoken about today, is also something with which the Government must assist. Continued growth is possible only if the public have confidence in the infrastructure network. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (James Heappey) and the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) asked, what comes first, the car or the charge point? It is neither—we have to do both. That is the Government policy: doing both in parallel, to address the consumer concern. Drivers expect reliable, affordable, available and easy-to-use infrastructure.

The good network that we have in place has already been supported with more than £30 million of investment in public charge points since 2011. The electric vehicle homecharge scheme offers drivers £500 towards the cost of a private home charge point. There are public charge points in Parliament and two charge points in Downing Street. The ministerial fleet was mentioned. There are four UK-built Nissan Leafs in that fleet and many more across the public sector, and an initiative is in place to increase that number.

Highways England has a £15 million budget to ensure that there is a charge point every 20 miles across 95% of the strategic road network, which should be a rapid charge point if possible. As vehicles' ranges increase and infrastructure provision grows, it will be increasingly easy to travel the length and breadth of the UK in an electric vehicle.

Hydrogen vehicles have been mentioned. It was interesting to see the Riversimple vehicle, brought to Parliament in partnership with my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnorshire (Chris Davies). I had previously met representatives of the business at the London motor show. We are technology-neutral and I see hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicles playing an important role in decarbonising road transport. Because we are technology neutral, I prefer to talk about ultra-low

emission or zero-emission vehicles rather than electric vehicles. The Government are providing £5 million to help develop 12 hydrogen refuelling stations to support the roll-out of fuel cell vehicles. All 12 stations are being commissioned this year and will provide a significant step in the refuelling network.

Working with eight leading car manufacturers, our “Go Ultra Low” communications campaign has started to address the attractiveness of these vehicles. Nobody has mentioned that they are quite fun to drive. The driver puts their foot down and there is power; there is no delay. That is a key part of the attractiveness message.

Our agenda is about tackling the infrastructure, providing incentives to purchase and communicating the benefits. Colleagues have raised many questions, including about duty. Mercifully, that is a question for the Treasury, but I will highlight Members' concerns. These issues are being discussed at cross-departmental groups, particularly with the Department of Energy and Climate Change, because it is clearly understood that we only really see the benefits of moving to electric vehicles if we have sustainable power generation.

There are benefits that can be brought by different parts of local and national Government, including the “Go Ultra Low” city schemes—I am visiting Milton Keynes tomorrow. It is not a question of local government or national Government. It is a question of partnership, and using all our available levers to deliver these fantastic products.

I hope I am as enthusiastic about this agenda as colleagues have been throughout this debate, which has been great to see. This is an important part of our transport mix. We can see what the future looks like: it is connected and autonomous vehicles powered by electric motors. We can see the benefits to the public in air quality, cost and congestion. I want those benefits to come to people in this country as quickly as possible, which is why we have an attractive and powerful set of initiatives to deliver that.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered electric and hybrid electric cars.

5.29 pm

*Sitting adjourned.*





# Written Statements

Wednesday 6 July 2016

## EDUCATION

### School Teachers' Review Body: Twenty-Sixth Report

**The Secretary of State for Education (Nicky Morgan):** The 26th report of the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) is being published today. Its recommendations cover the remit that I issued in October 2015. The report contains recommendations on how to apply the pay award for teachers that is due to be implemented from September 2016. Copies of the STRB's 26th report are available in the Vote Office, the Printed Paper Office and the Libraries of the House, and online at: [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

The STRB has recommended a 1% uplift from September 2016 to the minima and the maxima of all classroom teacher and leadership pay ranges in the national pay framework, and to classroom teacher allowances (Teaching and Learning Responsibility (TLR) payments and Special Educational Needs (SEN) allowances). It has also recommended the school teachers' pay and conditions document (STPCD) be amended to make clear that schools can use a salary advance scheme for rental deposits as part of the existing recruitment and retention incentives and benefits. In addition, it has recommended that my Department should develop good practice guidance to help schools make effective use of their existing flexibility to tailor pay policies to meet local recruitment and retention needs in a competitive labour market. A full list of the recommendations is attached as an annex.

My officials will write to all of the statutory consultees of the STRB to invite them to contribute to a consultation on my acceptance of these recommendations. The consultation will last for four weeks.

I am grateful to the STRB for these recommendations and, subject to the views of consultees, I intend to accept all the key recommendations.

My detailed response contains further information on these matters.

[HCWS60]

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

### 2014 NATO Wales Summit

**The Minister for Europe (Mr David Lidington):** Today the Minister of State for Policing, Fire, Criminal Justice and Victims, my right hon. Friend the Member for Hemel Hempstead (Mike Penning), and I have put on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) the costs of hosting the 2014 NATO Wales summit.

#### *Summit Achievements*

The 2014 NATO summit was a significant international event, which saw one of the largest gatherings of world leaders ever held in the UK. The summit achieved all

major UK policy objectives with the UK playing a significant role in developing the summit conclusions and brokering agreement among allies.

The commitments agreed by all 28 NATO Heads of Government will contribute to our national security, strengthening NATO as the cornerstone of UK defence. Allies agreed to halt any decline in defence investment and aimed to attain 2% of GDP spend on defence within a decade. Allies also agreed on a new rapid reaction capability to enhance NATO's ability to respond to any threat. New initiatives were also launched to modernise NATO and ensure the alliance is fit for purpose to counter 21st-century threats, including in the hybrid warfare and cyber areas.

The hard work and dedication of the police officers deployed during the substantial operation to secure the event, which was delivered under budget, ensured the safety and security of local residents and all delegates.

[HCWS59]

## HEALTH

### Data Security, Consent and Opt-out Reviews

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Life Sciences (George Freeman):** Today, two independent reviews have been published which make recommendations about data security in the health and care system in England and a new consent and opt-out model for data sharing.

In September 2015, I commissioned the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to undertake a review of data security in the NHS and, in parallel, commissioned Dame Fiona Caldicott, the National Data Guardian for Health and Care (NDG), to undertake an independent review of data security and consent, with the purpose of:

Developing new data security standards;

Devising a method of testing compliance with the new standards; and

Proposing a new consent/opt-out model for data sharing in health and social care.

Both independent reviews have now completed, and the full reports are attached.

Healthcare, like all areas of modern life, is rapidly going digital. New technology and innovative approaches to the delivery of health and care have already driven significant progress, resulting in more people surviving the devastating effects of life-threatening and debilitating illnesses. If we are to deliver on our ambition to deliver the safest, most efficient healthcare possible for NHS patients, we must make the most of this digital information revolution, moving away from reliance on paper record keeping towards a 21st century, fully digital NHS, in which GP, pharmacy and hospital records, as well as diagnosis and condition monitoring are all based on digital platforms.

As the health and social care system becomes increasingly paperless and digital it also becomes ever more important that there are adequate and robust protections in place to protect the data and information held within it. All health and care organisations that handle sensitive

information should be working towards giving patients the highest levels of trust and confidence and reducing the risk of external threats and potential breaches. It is vital that we do all that we can to ensure that health and care staff have access to the safeguards, knowledge and capability to handle such information securely.

The technological revolution in health and care has benefited individuals, their families, friends and the country at large. But it would not have happened without a significant change in the availability and quality of digital health and care data and greater innovation in how that information is used. To achieve our ambition of a fully digital NHS, it is vital that the public trust health and care staff to keep their personal data safe and secure.

Dame Fiona's review found that, broadly, the public does trust the NHS with confidential data. However, we cannot be complacent. That is why we want to do more to realise the benefits that come from sharing information safely and consistently across the health and care system where there is a legitimate reason for doing so. For example, by giving patients more access to, and control over, the use of their personal confidential information, by improving the way that the NHS uses information to check the quality of care, or by researchers being able to use data to improve treatment and care.

Dame Fiona Caldicott has proposed 10 security standards to be applied in every health and care organisation that handles personal confidential information. These include measures which will protect systems against data breaches, ensuring that NHS leadership takes ownership and responsibility for data security and ensuring that organisations are as prepared as they can be to meet the challenges of the digital age. Dame Fiona has also emphasised the vital importance of data sharing and is proposing a new consent and opt-out model, which will give people a less complex choice about how their personal confidential information is used.

I am grateful to Dame Fiona and the CQC for their work on this important agenda. I am today publishing a consultation on two main aspects of Dame Fiona's independent review, namely the new data security standards and proposed consent and opt-out model. It is vital that a full consultation and dialogue with the public and professionals takes place before any implementation of the recommendations can take place.

I am also publishing today the Government response to the consultation carried out late last year into the role of the National Data Guardian for Health and Care. The response sets out the Government's key decisions in relation to the proposed functions for the role, and we remain committed to placing the role on a statutory footing at the next available opportunity.

In her review, Dame Fiona emphasises the importance of protecting anonymised data to give the public the assurances they need that they will not be re-identified. I can confirm today that the Government are supportive of the introduction of stronger criminal sanctions against those who use anonymised data to re-identify individuals.

On data security, both reviews highlight the importance of removing outdated IT systems. We are working with suppliers, including Microsoft, to help health and care organisations update their systems to make sure they are safe to use and store data. The Health and Social Care Information Centre will launch an initiative to support this work later this year.

The National Data Guardian review also recommends that the Government consider the future of the care-data programme, as the consent and opt-out model proposed by the review goes further than the approach that was planned for care-data and its pathfinder areas.

In light of Dame Fiona's recommendations, NHS England has taken the decision to close the care-data programme. However, the Government and the health and care system remain absolutely committed to realising the benefits of sharing information, as an essential part of improving outcomes for patients. Therefore this work will now be overseen by the National Information Board, in close collaboration with the primary care community, in order to retain public confidence and to drive better care for patients.

It is also available online at: [www.parliament.uk/writtenstatements](http://www.parliament.uk/writtenstatements).

[HCWS62]

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Police Remuneration

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mrs Theresa May):** The second annual report of the Police Remuneration Review Body was published today (CM 9296). In line with my letter setting the body's remit, it has made recommendations on pay and allowances for police officers up to and including the rank of chief superintendent in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. In addition, the supplement to the 2016 report of the Senior Salaries Review Body (SSRB) making recommendations on the pay of chief police officers has also been published today (CM 9282). I have considered the recommendations of both reports in so far as they relate to police officers in England and Wales.

I wish to express my thanks to the chairmen and members of both review bodies for their work on these reports.

I have accepted the recommendations in full. These will be implemented with effect from 1 September 2016.

The Police Remuneration Review Body report and the supplement to the Senior Salaries Review Body report have been laid before Parliament and copies are available in the Vote Office and on gov.uk.

[HCWS61]

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**not later than  
Wednesday 13 July 2016**

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